SYNOPSIS

“College Mental Health Services Act”; establishes grant program for public institutions of higher education and requires public institutions of higher education to report certain information concerning mental health treatment and suicides.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.
AN ACT concerning mental health on college campuses and 
supplementing chapter 62 of Title 18A of the New Jersey 
Statutes.

BE IT ENACTED by the Senate and General Assembly of the State 
of New Jersey:

1. This act shall be known and may be cited as the “College 
Mental Health Services Act.”

2. a. There is established in the Office of the Secretary of 
Higher Education the “College Mental Health Services Grant 
Program.” The purpose of the program shall be to allocate grant 
moneys to public institutions of higher education to improve access 
to mental health services on the campuses of the institutions.
b. A grant received by a public institution of higher education 
under the program shall be specifically used for efforts to improve 
student access to, and the timeliness of the provision of, mental 
health services and supports. The grant may be used for, but is not 
limited to:

   (1) developing initiatives to reduce wait times for students 
seeking mental health services and supports;
   (2) hiring additional mental health professionals to provide 
mental health services and supports to students at the institution;
   (3) contracting with independent public or private entities to 
provide mental health services and supports;
   (4) creating methods to enhance the identification of students 
who may be experiencing personal, school, or family difficulties 
impacting the student’s mental health; and
   (5) implementing efforts to increase awareness among students 
of existing on-campus and community resources for students 
experiencing mental health difficulties.

c. To be eligible for consideration for a grant award, a public 
institution of higher education shall submit an application to the 
Secretary of Higher Education, in accordance with application 
procedures and requirements prescribed by the secretary. A grant 
application shall include a complete description of the institution’s 
specific plans and objectives for the use of the grant funds and any 
other information specified by the secretary.
d. The secretary shall establish selection criteria for the 
awarding of grant funds under the program. The secretary shall 
establish the amount for each grant that is approved.

3. a. There is created within the Office of the Secretary of 
Higher Education a fund to be known as the “College Mental Health 
Services Grant Fund.” The fund shall be used to provide grants to 
New Jersey public institutions of higher education under the 
“College Mental Health Services Grant Program” established 
pursuant to section 2 of this act.
b. The fund shall annually be credited with moneys appropriated by the State, any moneys received by the State from corporate donors or other private sector support, and any federal funds which may become available for higher education and mental health services and supports purposes.

4. Beginning with the first full academic year following the date of enactment, a public institution of higher education shall provide for public inspection on its Internet website information on:
   a. the total number of students enrolled in the institution who committed suicide;
   b. the total number of students enrolled in the institution who attempted to commit suicide;
   c. the ratio of students to mental health professionals at the institution;
   d. the total number of students who had appointments with a mental health professional at the institution;
   e. the number of students who had only one appointment with a mental health professional at the institution;
   f. the number of students who had three or more appointments with a mental health professional at the institution;
   g. the total number of appointments made by students with mental health professionals at the institution;
   h. the average number of appointments for those students who had more than one appointment with a mental health professional at the institution;
   i. the average wait time for students to meet with a mental health professional at the institution;
   j. the number of students who were referred to outside mental health services; and
   k. the number of students who were referred to emergency care due to mental health concerns.

The information required pursuant to this section shall be recorded for each semester and shall be posted no more than 60 days following the end of each semester. The information shall be posted on the institution’s Internet website in a prominent and easily accessible location.

5. This act shall take effect immediately.

STATEMENT

This bill, known as the “College Mental Health Services Act,” establishes in the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education the “College Mental Health Services Grant Program.” The purpose of the program will be to allocate grant moneys to senior public institutions of higher education and county colleges in the State to
establish or improve access to mental health services on the
1 campuses of the institutions.
2
3 A grant received by a public institution of higher education
4 under the program is to be specifically used for efforts to improve
5 student access to, and the timeliness of the provision of, mental
6 health services and supports. The grant may be used for, but is not
7 limited to: developing initiatives to reduce wait times for students
8 seeking mental health services and supports; hiring additional
9 mental health professionals to provide mental health services and
10 supports to students at the institution; contracting with independent
11 public or private entities to provide mental health services and
12 supports; creating methods to enhance the identification of students
13 who may be experiencing personal, school, or family difficulties
14 impacting the student’s mental health; and implementing efforts to
15 increase awareness among students of existing on-campus and
16 community resources for students experiencing mental health
difficulties.
17
18 The bill also requires public institutions of higher education to
19 post on their Internet websites the following information for each
20 semester: the total number of students enrolled in the institution
21 who committed suicide; the total number of students who
22 attempted to commit suicide; the ratio of students to mental health
23 professionals at the institution; the total number of students who
24 had appointments with a mental health professional at the
25 institution; the number of students who had only one appointment
26 with a mental health professional; the number of students who had
27 three or more appointments with a mental health professional; the
28 total number of appointments made by students with mental health
29 professionals; the average number of appointments for those
30 students who had more than one appointment with a mental health
31 professional; the average wait time for students to receive
32 appointments with a mental health professional; the number of
33 students who were referred to outside mental health services; and
34 the number of students who were referred to emergency care due to
35 mental health concerns. The information will be updated no more
36 than 60 days following the end of each semester and will be posted
37 on the institution’s website.
38
39 The demand and need for mental health services and supports by
40 students on college campuses has increased significantly in recent
41 years. The grant program established under this bill seeks to help
42 public institutions of higher education in the State that may be
43 facing challenges in providing a sufficient level of mental health
44 services and supports to their students. In addition, the bill’s
45 provisions requiring a public institution of higher education to
46 provide information regarding mental health treatment and student
47 suicides will help raise awareness of, and provide insight into, the
48 critical issue of mental health on college campuses.