



STATE OF DELAWARE
STATE COUNCIL FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES
Margaret M. O'Neill Bldg., Third Floor, Suite 1
410 Federal Street
Dover, Delaware 19901
302-739-3621


The Honorable John Carney,
Governor

John McNeal, Director
SCPD

MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 30, 2023

TO: All Members of the Delaware State Senate
and House of Representatives

FROM: Mr. Benjamin Shrader, Chairperson 
State Council for Persons with Disabilities

RE: HB 6 (Proposed Amendment to § 1727, Title 14 of the Delaware Code
Relating to School Mental Health Services)

The State Council for Persons with Disabilities (SCPD) has reviewed HB 6 which seeks to amend § 1727 of Title 14 of the Delaware Code, awarding each school district and charter school one unit for the employment of a mental health professional and mental health coordinator position for each school district by the 2024-25 school year.

SCPD has the following observations:

- The amendment states the duties of the mental health coordinator and mental health professional will be to develop partnerships with community-based organizations with the goal of expanding behavioral health services. The employee will also “consult with mental health professionals employed by the school district to develop an implementation plan that is culturally competent, grief and trauma informed, developmentally appropriate, evidence based or evidence-informed, and follows the federal National Standards for Culturally Appropriate Services in Health and Health Care.”

- The amendment then states the implementation plan should include and consider: (1) a comprehensive mental health awareness program targeting youth, their families, and school staff that creates a de-stigmatized school climate that is conducive to addressing the mental health needs of students; (2) a workforce capacity-building plan to increase awareness and literacy of school staff, administrators, parents, and others who interact with school aged youth to recognize the signs and symptoms of mental health concerns; (3) the development of a process to screen and identify school-aged youth in need of mental health services and supports; (4) the incorporation of brief intervention services to support school-aged youth experiencing distress, trauma, bereavement, or are at-risk for development of mental health and substance abuse disorders, and; (5) a plan of immediate response for school-aged youth that exhibit behaviors warranting the need for emergent or urgent clinical attention.
- Additionally, the amendment states the mental health coordinator and mental health professional will establish relationships with families, community groups, support services, behavioral health providers, and local businesses to broaden and link available community resources to school-aged youth and their families. The Department of Education is responsible for determining the qualifications required for the mental health professional/mental health coordinator, noting that the Department will take the applicant's knowledge of the school district and the surrounding community into consideration as part of the eligibility criteria.
- Finally, within six months of hiring a mental health professional/mental health coordinator, every school district will provide to the Department a needs assessment and resource map, providing the status of mental health services for the entire school district and any relevant data indicating the district's disparities in behavioral health.

SCPD endorses this bill as it will serve to increase awareness for school districts and communities as it pertains to the mental well-being of students. Identifying students who are struggling with mental health while creating a network of support and resources in the community will bolster an atmosphere of care within Delaware schools. Providing intervention services may get students the help they need and help fewer students slip through the cracks.

Thank you for your consideration and please contact SCPD if you have any questions or comments regarding our position or observations on the proposed legislation.

cc: Ms. Laura Waterland, Esq.
Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens
Developmental Disabilities Council

HB 6 Amend Title 14-School Mental Health Services 5-30-23