



According to data cited by the Mental Health Association in NYS, half of all chronic mental health conditions begin by age 14.

Further, half of all lifetime cases of anxiety disorders begin as early as age 8. 1 in 4 youth aged 13-18 experience serious mental disorders in a given year.

These statistics are alarming because we know that “early intervention and treatment of mental illnesses hold the best prospect for treatment efficacy and recovery, and adolescence is such a crucial developmental stage of life.”

Sadly, this data is trending upwards, especially now due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Our children are in trauma. They need our support.

NYS was the first state in the nation to have a statewide mandate for mental health instruction and curriculum for all students. And NYS PTA proudly served on the State Education Department’s Mental Health Advisory Committee.

Support for the Whole Child has never been more important.

Support the Whole Child

School-Based Mental Health Services for Students

We call on policymakers to include direct support of school-based mental health programs in non-competitive funding and restore cuts to state support for schools.

We seek full restoration of cuts to state support for schools. Adequate increases in Foundation Aid could support critical personnel like school counselors, health professionals, school nurses, school psychologists, and clinical licensed social workers. These professionals work not only to address mental health concerns, but also identify behavioral issues, develop individual child plans, connect families with outside service providers, and be a positive support system for the academic setting, family and community.

We must support adequate and equitable funding for mental health services and appropriate student to educator and professional ratios for these critical areas.

The recommended maximum ratio is 1 school counselor for every 250 students. Very few schools achieve this support level, with ratios averaging 1 counselor to 400 students. Some of our schools in New York don’t even have a counselor at all.

School districts continue to use available resources to implement new measures to keep students physically safe and support their mental, social and emotional health. Schools also seek to strengthen other programs, but don’t have the resources to do it all.

The pandemic has drastically increased the need for mental health services for students for many reasons, including but not limited to trauma, loss of loved ones, isolation, depression, and anxiety. NOW is the time where we need MORE services for students, MORE counselors, social workers, psychologists and professional and support staff to see that each child, no matter their zip code, is adequately supported.

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