SENATE, No. 3543

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

220th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED JANUARY 30, 2023

Sponsored by:
Senator VIN GOPAL
District 11 (Monmouth)
Senator SHIRLEY K. TURNER
District 15 (Hunterdon and Mercer)

SYNOPSIS
Directs DOE to develop guidelines for school districts concerning student mental health services.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT
As introduced.
AN ACT concerning student mental health services and
supplementing chapter 40 of Title 18A of the New Jersey
Statutes.

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

1. a. The Department of Education, in partnership with the
Department of Human Services and the Department of Children and
Families, shall develop and distribute to school districts guidelines
for providing mental health services to students. The purpose of the
guidelines shall be to assist school districts in enhancing and
improving mental health services for students and shall reflect the
findings of the “New Jersey Comprehensive School-Based Mental
Health Resource Guide” published by the Department of Education
in February 2022. The department shall review and update the
guidelines annually. In developing and updating the guidelines, the
department shall seek the input and recommendations of school
district administrators, educators, mental health professionals, and
other appropriate stakeholders.

b. The guidelines, developed pursuant to this section, at
minimum, shall include recommendations on:
   (1) implementing a quality-based multi-tiered student mental
   health system of care that prevents mental health concerns and
   mitigates trauma;
   (2) establishing sustainable school partnerships with community
   mental health service providers;
   (3) providing mental health services to English language
   learners;
   (4) providing culturally sensitive mental health services;
   (5) incorporating new technology and innovations into existing
   mental health services, including, but not limited to, providing
   mental health services to students through virtual or remote means;
   (6) evaluating the effectiveness of available student mental
   health services;
   (7) identifying and maximizing the use of available State, federal,
   nonprofit, and private funding to support a multi-tiered
   student mental health system of care; and
   (8) the ratios of student mental health providers to students.

c. The Department of Education shall post the guidelines
developed pursuant to this section on its Internet website. The
department shall also include on its Internet website links to
professional development resources related to student mental health
for school administrators, educators, and staff.

d. The Department of Education, in partnership with the
Department of Human Services and the Department of Children and
Families, shall create and maintain a database consisting of
available mental health resource providers throughout the State.
The database shall be available to school districts and students and their families.

2. This act shall take effect immediately and shall first apply to the first full school year following the date of enactment.

STATEMENT

This bill directs the Department of Education, in partnership with the Department of Human Services and the Department of Children and Families, to develop and distribute to school districts guidelines for providing mental health services to students. The purpose of the guidelines will be to assist school districts in enhancing and improving mental health services for students. Under the bill, the guidelines will be reviewed and updated annually by the Department of Education. In developing and updating the guidelines, the department will seek the input and recommendations of school district administrators, educators, mental health professionals, and other appropriate stakeholders.

The guidelines established under the bill, at minimum, will include recommendations on:

(1) implementing a quality-based multi-tiered student mental health system of care that prevents mental health concerns and mitigates trauma;
(2) establishing sustainable school partnerships with community mental health service providers;
(3) providing mental health services to English language learners;
(4) providing culturally sensitive mental health services;
(5) incorporating new technology and innovations into existing mental health services, including, but not limited to, providing mental health services to students through virtual or remote means;
(6) evaluating the effectiveness of available student mental health services;
(7) identifying and maximizing the use of available State, federal, nonprofit, and private funding to support a multi-tiered student mental health system of care; and
(8) the ratios of student mental health providers to students.

Under the bill, the Department of Education will post the guidelines on its Internet website. Also under the bill, the Department of Education, in partnership with the Department of Human Services and the Department of Children and Families, will create and maintain a database consisting of available mental health resource providers throughout the State. The database will be available to school districts, as well as students and their families.