

Republican Attorneys General Association: Educator praises Brad Schimel's school safety grants

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Wisconsin Attorney General Brad Schimel takes school safety seriously; he is leading a statewide effort to distribute \$100 million in grants for local districts. The first round focused on security improvements, but this second round is focused on advanced mental health initiatives.

While most of the praise for these grants come from parents, it is also appreciated by teachers. Kristi Koschkee, a local educator in Kenosha, recently praised Attorney General Schimel's efforts, leadership, and commitment.

Here's what you missed in [Kenosha News](#):

As a professional educator, second only to the mothers and fathers out there, I probably spend more time with our beautiful Wisconsin students than just about anyone.

As an AP English teacher, I see the strain and anxiety students carry on their shoulders as I support and guide them to be the best possible student as they can be. I've also witnessed first-hand how the care we show for their mental well-being pays dividends over their educational — and personal — journeys.

Troubled children, whether as a result of turbulent home lives or misdiagnosed afflictions, grow into troubled adolescents, teens and, finally, adults. The key to

dealing with this sad, difficult problem is intervention, which is why the Wisconsin school community cannot be more thrilled with Attorney General Brad Schimel's recent announcement that the second round of school safety grants will focus on mental health.

But before getting into the details of the grant, I want you to try a little thought-experiment with me. Imagine a child, around five years of age, reared in a single-parent household where sufficient attention is not paid to his mental health. The teachers also suspect abuse.

At school, the child begins as tantrum-prone, then graduates into biting. He is frequently singled-out for punishment, further isolating him from his classmates. His schoolwork, to say the least, suffers. As he gets older, the teachers can barely manage him in class. He now engages in violent confrontations with other students and rumors swirl he plans on mass-harm. Then the unthinkable happens.

Of course, as we all know, this isn't much of a hypothetical these days. It is our reality. But as the finger-pointing swirls over who should have seen — and dealt — with the tell-tale signs, the problem continues to fester. However, like the attorney general, I deal with solutions. Because frankly, though we face a tough situation, it is not an impossible one, and teachers can do a lot.

Recognizing our position, AG Schimel's second round of school safety grant funding to Wisconsin public schools — approximately \$48 million — will offer “advanced training for teachers on mental health issues,” and create “local teams of educators, counselors, and law enforcement (called school safety intervention teams, or ‘SSIT’). These intervention teams will assess threats and identify students in need of support.”

To qualify, schools need only to agree to send 10 percent of full-time teachers and counselors to Wisconsin Department of Justice-approved mental health training and establish and SSIT based on a model provided by the federal Secret Service. Moreover, building on the first round of grant funding, money is set aside to beefing up security infrastructure.

Put into practice, this training, I suspect, will work wonders. Teachers will feel supported, and, thanks to their newfound skill-set, support other educators in kind. As this intervention and prevention knowledge grows, we will find our school community more prepared and confident in their ability to deal with all sorts of

mental health issues.

Now let's return to the hypothetical from above. Thanks to expert training, the troubled child's teacher now has the tools to spot early distress signs. Working with the guidance counselor and other school administrators, they evaluate the child. Depending on their determinations, social workers or law enforcement (if there is a troubled home life) can be called on for support. If the issues do not rise to that level, the teachers still have a roadmap to deal with the problem decisively.

We Wisconsinites are a proactive, can-do people. We have been given a wonderful opportunity to tackle our children's mental health issues head-on — let's take it. So, thank you Brad Schimel for your leadership and commitment to our children!