

Wisconsin Association of Family & Children's Agencies: Mental health consultation helps students succeed

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At a State Capitol hearing today, supporters for expansion of school mental health services in Wisconsin spoke in favor of legislation to continue Medicaid-funded consultation services for students. Assembly Bill 192 amends current law to remove a sunset date on these newly-funded services that promote improved mental health in Wisconsin schools.

Consultation services enable mental health therapists to work collaboratively with teachers and school staff to implement strategies in the classroom that are part of a students' treatment plan. These supportive services make treatment in the school setting even more effective and contribute to improved school climate.

The committee heard testimony from school staff and mental health provider representatives, including WAFCA member agencies Lutheran Social Services of Wisconsin and Upper Michigan and Children's Hospital of Wisconsin. The majority of WAFCA's member agencies are involved in school-based mental health initiatives that are delivering results for students, emphasized WAFCA Executive Director Linda Hall. "Students who access these services in school feel better, improve their grades and are more likely to stay in school and graduate."

In addition to continuing Medicaid funding for consultation services, AB 192 expands the scope of the consultation service to include a therapist's time for connecting with parents. "Delivering quality mental health services for children requires active connection with their family system, as well as their school-based supports," noted Hall. "AB 192 will enable practitioners to work more effectively and provide support and expertise to all of those invested in a student's success."

"Our systems of care for our most fragile families and children can be difficult to

navigate,” noted Hall. “School-based mental health helps to break down one more barrier to accessing mental health services and allows the school system and the mental health system to integrate supportive services, providing more wholistic care for the child and family.”