

Dane County Exec. Parisi: County awards over \$265,000 to increase mental health staffing, supports at five local school districts

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Dane County will provide five local school districts \$265,554 in funding to help meet the increasing behavioral health needs of K-12 kids, County Executive Joe Parisi announced today. The funds will help schools add staff and resources to support the work of teachers, young people, and their families.

“With this funding, Dane County and local school districts will be able to enhance mental health supports for students heading into the new school year,” said Dane County Executive Joe Parisi. “Dane County remains committed to addressing the behavioral health needs of our young people, especially given the challenging events that have unfolded over the past few years. We are excited to partner with these five school districts to meet students where they are at and provide the support services they need to thrive.”

The program will provide mental health or substance use treatment services (individual or group treatment) within school buildings and/or via telehealth platforms, or specific outreach to students not yet engaged in mental health or substance use treatment. Mental health or substance use treatment modalities will be delivered by persons trained and credentialed to provide the service, be evidenced-informed, and time limited.

The county sought proposals from local school districts with the goal of having dollars awarded for districts to hire staff or contract with providers when school is back in session this fall. Funding will be available for the next couple of years to

provide the programs an opportunity to build relationships with the young people they are looking to support. These funds were authorized by the County Executive and County Board in adoption of the 2022 Dane County budget.

The need for mental health and substance use services for children and youth has increased substantially in recent years and has been exacerbated by the pandemic. The [2021 Dane County Youth Assessment](#) data shows increased rates of anxiety, depression, suicidality, and self-harm amongst Dane County middle and high school age youth, and in December 2021 the US Surgeon General issued an advisory to highlight the urgent need to address the nation's youth mental health crisis.

Recipients Include:

Madison Metropolitan School District (\$62,558.80) — is proposing outreach using a bilingual mental health navigator.

Oregon School District (\$49,552.24) — is expanding direct mental health and substance abuse services with existing community providers to their district, including Oregon Mental Health, New Beginnings, and Catholic Charities.

Stoughton Area School District (\$90,105.60) — is hiring a Mental Health Coordinator to develop and facilitate referral pathways.

Sun Prairie Area School District (\$43,200) — is expanding mental health capacity through their partnership with Catholic Charities.

Wisconsin Heights School District (\$20,137.60) — is starting a telehealth service using DotCom therapy.

This new county funding is in addition to Dane County's popular "Building Bridges" school-based mental health program. Created by the County Executive in 2013, this innovative mental health initiative works daily in ten Dane County school districts. Behavioral health professionals offer direct case management with school aged children and their families, providing in-school resources to help overcome anxiety and other mental health barriers to learning. Dane County allocates over \$1.1 million in local tax dollars for this program each year.