

Gov. Evers: Announces “Get Kids Ahead” initiative, provides \$20 million in mental health support for students

Posted on Wednesday, Feb 16, 2022

>> **WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

Contact: GovPress@wisconsin.gov

Governor's announcement includes \$15 million for K-12 schools, \$5 million for UW System

MADISON — During his 2022 State of the State address tonight, Gov. Tony Evers announced his “Get Kids Ahead” initiative which will provide \$15 million to support school-based mental health services in K-12 schools across the state. Gov. Evers also announced a \$5 million investment for the University of Wisconsin (UW) System to help students access mental health supports remotely and on campus.

“We know this pandemic has affected our kids in more ways than one, including their mental health. And a kid who’s in crisis isn’t going to be able to pay attention at school, finish their homework, or engage with their friends or teachers,” said Gov. Evers during his address. “If the folks in this room want to have real conversations about our kids’ success and achievement, then start by fully funding our schools and making sure our kids can bring their full and best selves to classrooms and to their studies.

“If that’s not where we’re starting this conversation, then all you’re talking about is our kids barely getting by when we should be making sure kids can get ahead. So, tonight, I’m announcing our new ‘Get Kids Ahead’ initiative to invest \$15 million into additional mental health services in our schools.”

Every public school district can opt in to receive these funds and will receive a minimum of \$10,000 with the rest being allocated on a per-pupil basis. Schools will be able to use these funds to provide direct mental healthcare, hire and support mental health navigators, provide mental health first aid and trauma-based care training, or provide family assistance programs—whatever kids need. A breakdown of funding available for each school district is available [here](#).

In the 2021-23 biennial budget, the governor initially proposed a \$53.5 million increase for student mental health services, but the Legislature reduced the combined funding to a \$19 million increase.

“And students in our higher education institutions need our help, too,” Gov. Evers continued. “Students have had to adapt, keep up with their coursework, and juggle work, family, and keeping themselves and their classmates safe. So, we’re also investing \$5 million into our UW System to provide more mental health services through telehealth counseling and additional mental health staff support on our campuses.”

The COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated the pressing need for additional or improved student health services related to mental and behavioral health. With this allocation of \$5 million the UW System will be able to provide remote psychiatric services to augment the shortage of currently available in-person psychiatric services, tele-counseling, and therapy to increase availability and shorten wait-times for counseling, 24/7 on-demand emotional support and crisis intervention services to provide access to professional support for a greater number of students on the stress continuum, and fund post-masters and post-doctoral counselors to allow recent graduates of mental health programs to receive supervision for licensure while providing counseling and therapy services at a lower cost.

In his 2021-23 biennial budget proposal, Gov. Evers proposed providing \$2.5 million in 2021-22 and \$7.5 million in 2022-23 in a new, annual appropriation to provide additional or improved student health services related to mental and behavioral health, including additional or improved staffing, training, operations, assessment, and prevention. The Legislature removed this provision.