

# Gov. Evers: Highlights investments to expand access to mental health support for kids at school

Posted on Monday, Apr 24, 2023

>> **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.](#)**

MADISON — Gov. Tony Evers this week will visit kids and schools and meet with children’s mental health professionals and advocates across the state to highlight initiatives included in his 2023-25 budget to invest in kids’ mental health and well-being. The governor’s proposed budget investments include more than \$270 million in permanent, ongoing funding for the “Get Kids Ahead” initiative, which Gov. Evers created last year to expand school-based mental health services. Gov. Evers is urging Republicans in the Wisconsin State Legislature to approve his 2023-25 biennial budget request to provide the largest increase for K-12 schools and education in state history.

**“I’ve always said that what’s best for our kids is what’s best for our state, and we know that the mental health challenges facing our kids, families, and communities across Wisconsin is a crisis that we must work urgently to address,” said Gov. Evers. “If we want to improve outcomes and ensure our kids are prepared for success, then we have to make sure our kids can bring their full and best selves to the classroom.”**

During his 2023 State of the State address, Gov. Evers [declared](#) 2023 the Year of Mental Health, and his 2023-25 budget proposal [invests](#) approximately \$500 million to bolster mental and behavioral health services across the state. This includes significant investments to ensure every kid has access to critical mental health services, such as those provided through the “Get Kids Ahead” initiative.

Earlier this year, the CDC [released](#) its Youth Risk Behavior Survey report, which includes alarming statistics about student mental health. In 2021, the survey

found more than 40 percent of high school students felt so sad or hopeless nearly every day for at least two weeks in a row that they stopped doing their usual activities. Nearly 60 percent of teen girls felt persistently sad or hopeless—nearly double the rate for teen boys—and nearly a third of teen girls seriously considered attempting suicide. About 70 percent of LGBTQ students experienced persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness, and more than 20 percent of LGBTQ students attempted suicide.

**“We cannot afford to look back and wish we would’ve done more and sooner to get our kids the mental health supports they need. It’s absolutely critical that the Legislature approve my budget investments into K-12 education, including our ‘Get Kids Ahead’ initiative to expand access to school-based mental health services for kids across our state,” Gov. Evers concluded.**

Gov. Evers [announced](#) the “Get Kids Ahead” initiative during his 2022 State of the State address, with an initial investment of \$15 million of the state’s American Rescue Plan Act funds to provide school-based mental health supports and services for nearly every school district in the state. Last fall, as kids, educators, and staff returned back to school, Gov. Evers [announced](#) he would be doubling his investment in the initiative, bringing his total investment to \$30 million.

Under Gov. Evers’ “Get Kids Ahead” initiative, every public school district in the state was eligible to receive funds to go toward providing direct mental healthcare, hiring and supporting mental health navigators, and providing mental health first aid and trauma-based care training, among other key needs to support student mental health. Every district that opted into the program received a minimum of \$20,000, with the remaining allocation distributed on a per pupil basis.

More information regarding the governor’s historic investment in Wisconsin’s kids and schools, including a more than \$2.6 billion increase for K-12 education, is available [here](#).

Additionally, more information regarding the governor’s plan to invest more than \$500 million to expand access to mental and behavioral health services across the state is available [here](#).

### **“Get Kids Ahead” Initiative**

Gov. Evers is meeting Wisconsin’s student mental health crisis head-on by

investing more than \$270 million over the biennium to make his “Get Kids Ahead” initiative a permanent program, including: \$235.8 million for a reformed, comprehensive school-based mental health services program based on per pupil payments instead of competitive grants; \$36 million per year to reimburse schools for costs around an expanded list of school mental health professionals; and More than \$1.1 million for staff training on evidence-based strategies. The governor’s investment will also provide nearly \$11 million to allow schools to receive Medicaid reimbursement for telehealth origination costs. An online version of this release is available [here](#).