

# Gov. Evers: State of mental health “burgeoning crisis”

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MADISON — Gov. Tony Evers tonight, during his 2023 State of the State address, declared 2023 the Year of Mental Health, calling mental and behavioral health a “burgeoning crisis” affecting the state and Wisconsin’s kids, families, and workforce. Gov. Evers also announced his 2023-25 executive budget will include approximately \$500 million to expand access to mental and behavioral health services across Wisconsin.

In his 2023 State of the State address delivered tonight, Gov. Evers discussed the effects the coronavirus pandemic has had on mental and behavioral health, especially on Wisconsin’s kids, calling on the Legislature to take the state’s mental and behavioral health crisis seriously:

**“...We also have work to do to get our kids caught up from the past few years. We all want to improve outcomes and ensure our kids are prepared for success. And I believe that together we will. And we’ll start by making sure our kids can bring their full and best selves to our schools and our classrooms.**

**“We cannot overstate the profound impact that the past few years have had on our kids in many ways—and that includes their mental health. According to the Office of Children’s Mental Health’s 2022 Report, about a third of our kids experience feelings of sadness and hopelessness nearly every day—a 10-percent increase over the last decade.**

**“Kids in crisis are often distracted or disengaged in class, might not be able to finish their homework, and won’t be able to focus on their studies**

**at home or at school. Improving student mental health can also improve student learning outcomes and school attendance, while reducing bullying, risky behaviors, violence, involvement in the juvenile justice system, and substance misuse.**

**“So, over the last year, we doubled our investment in our “Get Kids Ahead” initiative—investing \$30 million of our federal pandemic relief funds to provide every Wisconsin public school district with new resources to expand school-based mental health services. Tonight, I’m announcing we’re going to make “Get Kids Ahead” a permanent state program, and we’re investing more than \$270 million to ensure every student has access to mental health services.**

**“The last few years have affected our kids’ mental and behavioral health—and adults’ mental health, too. We’ve seen record-high opioid-related overdose deaths, and Wisconsin’s 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline received 6,000 calls just in the first month of its launch this past July.**

**“The state of mental health in Wisconsin is a quiet, burgeoning crisis that I believe will have catastrophic consequences for generations if we don’t treat it with the urgency it requires. Mental and behavioral health is as much a health issue as it is an economic one: it affects kids in the classroom; it affects workers being able to join and stay in our workforce; it affects whether folks are able to stay in safe housing or have economic security; it affects folks’ ability to take care of and provide for their family and loved ones.**

**“So, tonight, I’m declaring 2023 the Year of Mental Health.**

**“Together with our “Get Kids Ahead” initiative investment, we’ll be making an overall investment of about \$500 million to expand access to mental and behavioral health services for folks across our state.**

**“A 2022 report by the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute indicated there are 440 people for each mental health provider in Wisconsin. And even before the pandemic, a 2019 report from the Institute indicated that 55 of Wisconsin’s 72 counties have significant shortages of psychiatrists. So, we’re also going to invest in making sure**

**we have adequate, available mental health professionals who can provide the treatment Wisconsinites need across our state.**

**“We’re going to invest in developing robust prevention strategies to reduce suicide, self-harm, and other mental and behavioral health-related injuries. And that includes state resources to support 988, the new Suicide & Crisis Lifeline—which went live in 2022 thanks to the hard work of our senator, Senator Tammy Baldwin—as well as increased support for peer-run and community-based services across the state.**

**“We cannot look back two years from now as we prepare the next budget and wonder whether we should’ve done more and sooner to take good care of our mental health. Let’s take this seriously, and let’s start today. ...”**

According to the Office of Children’s Mental Health’s [2022 Annual Report](#), about one-third of kids in Wisconsin experience feelings of sadness and hopelessness nearly every day—a 10-percent increase over the last decade. The report also states that more than half of Wisconsin youth report anxiety, and nearly a quarter report self-harm. Regarding how Wisconsin youth are connecting to needed mental healthcare, the report further states that, of the kids who receive treatment for mental health, 75 percent of the time that care is received at school, underscoring the importance of ensuring schools have adequate resources to meet the growing mental health needs of students across the state.

In addition to troubling statistics regarding youth and student mental health in Wisconsin, adults have similarly struggled in recent years. Since launching last July, callers to Wisconsin’s new 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline have reported struggling with suicidal thoughts and intent, as well as challenges with mental health, substance use, and interpersonal or relationship issues and abuse. The state has also seen record-high rates of substance use and overdose deaths, with more than 1,500 Wisconsinites having lost their lives to an overdose in 2020 alone. Compounded with findings from a 2022 report by the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute that indicated there are 440 people for each mental health provider in Wisconsin, the need to take urgent action to address the state’s mental health needs has never been more important.

During his [2022 State of the State Address](#) last year, Gov. Evers [announced](#) he

would be investing \$15 million into a new “Get Kids Ahead” initiative 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 “Get Kids Ahead,” 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. Under the governor’s total investment, every district that opted into the program received a minimum of \$20,000, with the remaining allocation distributed on a per pupil basis.

In Gov. Evers’ address tonight, he announced he will be proposing more than \$270 million in his 2023-25 executive budget proposal to make his “Get Kids Ahead” initiative a permanent, ongoing program to ensure kids across Wisconsin have access to school-based mental health services and can bring their best, full selves to our schools and our classrooms.

Additionally, the governor’s 2023-25 executive budget proposal will propose significant investments in developing robust prevention strategies to reduce suicide, self-harm, and other mental and behavioral health-related injuries, including providing more than \$3 million for the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline call center, creating a suicide prevention program to coordinate suicide prevention activities, develop educational materials, and conduct suicide prevention trainings, and increasing support for peer-run and community-based services across the state.

A full list of Gov. Evers’ \$500 million in mental and behavioral investments by state agency is provided below.

#### Department of Health Services

- *Crisis Urgent Care & Observation Center Grant Program*
  - Provide \$64,700 general purpose revenue (GPR) in fiscal year 2024 (FY24) and \$10,038,500 GPR in fiscal year 2025 (FY25) for grants to establish up to two crisis urgent care and observation centers to offer a

variety of behavioral health services, accept emergency detention cases, conduct medical clearances, and support up to 15 crisis stabilization beds.

- *Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility Grant Program*
  - Provide \$1,790,000 GPR in FY25 for grants to establish a 25-bed psychiatric residential treatment facility to serve children and youths with intensive behavioral health needs. Create a new Medicaid benefit for psychiatric residential treatment facilities.
- *Youth Crisis Stabilization Facilities Funding*
  - Provide \$996,400 GPR in annual, ongoing state support for the three Youth Crisis Stabilization Facilities.
- *Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind Behavioral Health Treatment Program*
  - Provide \$1,936,000 GPR in FY25 for a grant to establish a state-wide behavioral health treatment program for individuals who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing or Deaf-Blind.
- *Peer-Run Respite for Veterans Support*
  - Provide \$450,000 GPR in annual, ongoing state support for the Peer-Run Respite Center for Veterans.
- *Peer Recovery Centers Support*
  - Provide \$260,000 GPR annually to supplement existing Peer Recovery Centers and provide funding to support two new Peer Recovery Centers in areas not yet served.
- *988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline Support*
  - Provide \$898,700 GPR in FY24 and \$2,105,700 GPR in FY25 to cover operating costs of the state's 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline call center.
- *Stimulant Prevention & Treatment Programs Support*
  - Provide \$1,644,000 GPR annually for high-need counties to support stimulant treatment services and for individual trainings at stimulant use prevention programs.
- *Qualified Treatment Trainee Grants Program Expansion*
  - Provide \$1,576,600 GPR in FY24 and \$3,153,100 GPR in FY25 to replace current ARPA Treasury dollar investments into the Qualified Treatment Trainee grant program, which facilitates the licensure and certification of

those obtaining or with a graduate degree in psychology, counseling, marriage and family therapy, social work, nursing or a closely related field.

- *Medicaid Community Support Program Funding*
  - Provide \$19,733,400 GPR in FY24 and \$21,516,500 GPR in FY25 to fund the nonfederal share of the Medicaid Community Support Program with GPR. This item's funding amount will be reestimated in the future.
- *Medicaid School Telehealth Origination Cost Reimbursement*
  - Provide \$3,644,900 AF in FY24 and \$7,322,000 AF in FY25 for Medicaid to reimburse schools for telehealth origination costs.
- *Medicaid Psychosocial Rehabilitation Benefit*
  - Provide \$2,027,200 AF in FY25 to create a new Medicaid psychosocial rehabilitation benefit.
- *Medicaid Withdrawal Management and Intoxication Monitoring Benefit*
  - Create a new Medicaid benefit for residential intoxication monitoring services, residential withdrawal management programs and adult residential integrated behavioral health stabilization services (alcohol and other drugs detoxification services).
- *Medicaid Certified Peer Specialists Expansion*
  - Provide \$3,715,500 AF in FY25 to expand the use of certified peer specialists in the Medicaid program.
- *Medicaid Residential Substance Use Disorder Treatment Room and Board Coverage*
  - Provide \$8,309,500 GPR in FY24 and \$8,309,500 GPR in FY25 for Medicaid to begin covering room and board costs for individuals receiving residential substance use disorder treatment.
- *Injury & Violence Prevention Program Position*
  - Provide 1.0 FTE GPR position, \$66,800 GPR in FY24 and \$87,300 GPR in FY25 to the DHS Injury and Violence Prevention Program to act as the program's suicide/self-harm prevention coordinator.
- *First Responders Worker's Compensation Improvements*
  - Create statutory language that removes the barriers first responders with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder face when seeking worker's

compensation.

- *Medicaid Autism Treatment Services Rate Increase*
  - Provide \$4,075,200 all funds (AF) in FY24 and \$8,150,400 AF in FY25 for a Medicaid rate increase for certain autism treatment services.
- *Additional Medicaid Behavioral Health Services Rate Increases*
  - Provide \$17,000,000 AF over the biennium for a Medicaid rate increase for various outpatient mental health and substance use services and child/adolescent day treatment.
- *Mendota Juvenile Treatment Center*
  - Provide 114.5 FTE program revenue-service (PR-S) positions in FY24 and 174.0 FTE PR-S positions and \$24,691,800 PR-S over the biennium to fully staff the expansion of the Mendota Juvenile Treatment Center.
- *Service Animal Training Grants*
  - Provide \$250,000 GPR to make grants to help providers achieve accreditation from Assistance Dog International for providing PTSD training to service dogs who serve veterans.
- *Office of Children's Mental Health Support*
  - Provide 1.0 FTE position, \$63,800 GPR in FY24 and \$78,500 GPR in FY25 to the Office of Children's Mental Health to support carrying out the duties of the office.
- *Suicide Prevention Program*
  - Provide \$500,000 GPR annually for grants for suicide prevention efforts. Create a suicide prevention program to coordinate suicide prevention activities, develop educational materials, provide public awareness campaigns, conduct suicide prevention trainings for those interacting with at-risk individuals, and centralize suicide prevention resources online.
- *Addiction Treatment Platform Funding*
  - Provide \$30,000 GPR annually to support an on-line substance use disorder treatment program aggregator which locates, compares and reviews available substance use disorder treatment programs in the state.
- *Marijuana Excise Tax Revenue Payments to Counties for Behavioral Health*

### *Services*

- Direct DHS to distribute marijuana excise tax revenue to the counties to support mental health and substance use disorder services.
- *Mental Health Consultation Program*
  - Provide \$2,000,000 GPR in FY24 and \$2,000,000 GPR in FY25 to expand the existing Child Psychiatry Consultation Program into a broader Mental Health Consultation Program.
- *Maternal and Infant Mortality Prevention Grief and Bereavement Support*
  - Provide \$200,000 GPR in FY24 and \$200,000 GPR in FY25 to expand an initiative that provides grief and bereavement support for families that have lost a fetus or infant.
- *Resilient Wisconsin*
  - Provide \$1,000,000 GPR over the biennium to convert funding for the Resilient Wisconsin program from FED to GPR.

### Office of the Commissioner of Insurance

- *Balance Billing Regulation*
  - Codify the federal No Surprises Act into state law, which protects insured individuals against surprise/balance billing when receiving services outside of their control at either out-of-network facilities or by out-of-network ancillary providers at in-network facilities. Additionally, expand protections to include services provided during a mental health emergency.
- *Qualified Treatment Trainee Coverage Requirement*
  - Mandate all health insurance plans cover services provided by a Qualified Treatment Trainee.
- *Substance Use Disorder Counselor Coverage Requirement*
  - Mandate all health insurance plans cover services provided by a substance use disorder counselor.

### Department of Public Instruction

- *Comprehensive School Mental Health Aid*
  - Provide \$117,900,000 AF annually for comprehensive school mental health aid, such as navigators, parent training, and the implementation of

best practices.

- *School Mental Health Staff Reimbursement*
  - Provide \$18,000,000 AF annually to reimburse schools for certain school staff who assist students with mental health issues, such as counselors, school nurses, and social workers.
- *Mental Health Staff Training Funding*
  - Provide \$580,000 AF annually for staff training in mental health areas.

#### Department of Children and Families

- *Wisconsin After 3 Program*
  - Increase funding to the Boys and Girls Clubs by \$500,000 Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funding in each year for the Wisconsin After 3 program to improve the literacy skills and math proficiency for low-income children. Additionally, provide \$1,300,000 GPR annually to support youth mental health and substance use prevention.
- *Support for Child Care Setting Behavioral Issues*
  - Provide \$1,327,200 TANF in FY24 and \$1,963,900 in FY25 for social emotional training and technical assistance in child care settings with the goal of reducing instances of children being removed from daycare for behavioral issues.
- *Continuum of Care – Milwaukee Child Welfare System*
  - Provide \$1,820,000 GPR in FY24 and \$3,640,000 GPR in FY25 for behavioral and mental health services for youth as part of a larger initiative to provide a continuum of care for families in Milwaukee involved with the child welfare system.
- *Tribal Healing to Wellness Court*
  - Provide \$259,100 tribal gaming revenues annually to the Oneida Nation for staff and service costs in their Healing to Wellness Court to support a coordinated, post-conviction substance use program that will reduce recidivism and break the cycle of substance use.

#### Department of Veterans Affairs

- *Veterans Outreach and Recovery Program*
  - Provide \$272,300 segregated funds (SEG) in FY24 and \$684,900 SEG in

FY25 and 7.0 FTE SEG positions to expand the Veterans Outreach and Recovery Program. The program would expand by 5.0 FTE additional outreach and recovery specialists to work with local partners to provide appropriate recovery supports to aid veterans and 2.0 FTE additional clinical coordinators to conduct mental health diagnosis.

#### Department of Military Affairs

- *Comprehensive Wellness Office*
  - Provide \$821,400 GPR and 11.0 FTE positions to maintain an expansion of the Comprehensive Wellness Office, which is an initiative that takes a comprehensive approach to help Wisconsin citizen Soldiers and Airmen improve not only their mental health, but financial, social, spiritual and physical well-being.

#### Medical College of Wisconsin

- *Wisconsin Community Safety Fund*
  - Provide \$7,500,000 GPR annually to the Medical College of Wisconsin for their Wisconsin Community Safety Fund, which supports local, evidence-informed activities that enhance the safety and wellbeing of children, youth and families throughout Wisconsin and aim to prevent violence.

The governor's full 2023-25 executive budget proposal will be announced following his 2023-25 Biennial Budget Message to the Legislature on Wed., Feb. 15, 2023, at 7 p.m.

An online version of this release is available [here](#).