

# School-Linked Mental Health Services



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## **What are School-Linked Mental Health Services?**

School-linked mental health services is a collaboration between schools and community mental health providers to provide mental health services in schools across Minnesota. Providers work with schools to offer mental health assessments, treatment and supports on-site to children who have a mental health diagnosis with their parent's permission and involvement. Allowing students to receive the treatment they need in a school setting makes it easier for young people to access these services. Many of these students would not be served otherwise.

## **How are School-Linked Mental Health Services funded?**

School-linked mental health services are funded through grants to community mental health centers, which partner with schools to offer mental health care. The grants were initially funded through the 2007 mental health initiative.

## **Who uses School-Linked Mental Health Services?**

School-linked mental health services are available in 63 counties and have served over 8,000 children. The services are available to children in elementary, junior high and high school throughout the state. Over 50% of the children served through these grants have never received mental health services in the past, and of those students, 45% were identified as having a serious emotional disturbance.

## **Why are School-Linked Mental Health Services important?**

Many children with mental illnesses struggle in school. Without access to treatment and support, children with mental illnesses often have trouble academically and socially and are far more likely to drop out. The mental health needs of Minnesota's students are staggering. The 2010 Minnesota Student Survey revealed that over 2,800 6th grade girls and over 5,000 9th grade girls thought about killing themselves in the past year. Even more troubling is that over 950 9th grade girls admitted that they tried to commit suicide in 2010. In 2007, 85 of the 571 people who took their own lives were under the age of 24. Bringing mental health providers into schools to provide services offers a number of benefits including:

- Increased accessibility to mental health services;
- Reduces barriers to learning for children with mental illnesses as well as their classmates;
- Helps parents spend less time away from their jobs transporting children to and from therapy appointments
- Reduces the time students spend out of class.

Evidence has also shown that school-linked mental health services have helped reduce the number of suspensions among students receiving services. Of the students receiving services in Minneapolis, 50% had between 1 and 6 fewer suspensions than in the previous year. These children also showed improvement in a variety of areas including school attendance, functioning, environmental stress and resiliency.

For young people to excel and succeed in school, they need to be healthy. It is difficult to do well in school if you are deeply depressed, having anxiety attacks, hearing voices or have Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). For many families, access to mental health care is limited. School-linked mental health services seek to address this issue by bringing needed treatment and support to young people and their families. These grants improve children's lives, increase their access to services and ensure that every student in Minnesota can receive the support they need to be healthy and successful.

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