

S.197

An act relating to the provision of mental health supports

It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

* * * Mental Health Crisis Response Inventory * * *

Sec. 1. INVENTORY OF MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS RESPONSE
PROGRAMS

On or before January 15, 2023, the Department of Mental Health, in consultation with the Agencies of Education and of Human Services and the Department of Public Safety, shall submit the Mobile Crisis Needs Assessment report required by the Department's federally-funded mobile crisis state planning grant, including the stakeholder engagement summary and the mobile crisis benefit implementation plan, to the House Committee on Health Care and to the Senate Committee on Health and Welfare.

* * * Integrating Mental Health for Educators and Students * * *

Sec. 2. PROVISION OF MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING
SUPPORTS FOR EDUCATORS

In fiscal year 2023, the Agency of Education, in consultation with the Department of Mental Health, shall contract with one or more organizations to provide statewide COVID-19 recovery supports for educators and school staff. The supports shall be provided by mental health clinicians and focused on COVID-19 recovery, including wellness and trauma-responsive school

practice supports on a statewide, regional, or supervisory union or supervisory district-specific level as needed.

Sec. 3. GRANTS TO EXPAND MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING
SERVICES TO YOUTH

(a) In fiscal year 2023, the Agency of Education shall work collaboratively with the Department of Mental Health to establish and administer a two-year program utilizing a tiered-support approach to ensure continuous support to children and youth in a variety of settings, including supervisory union and district-wide, in-school, community technical education centers, and afterschool, by providing grants to:

(1) expand existing school-based counseling services in underserved districts of the State; or

(2) develop either school-based or community-based afterschool programs, operating in a variety of settings outside the school day and over the summer, including before and after school, in-service days, and school vacation week, that support the mental health and wellness needs of students, families, and staff.

(b) The Agency shall adopt policies, procedures, and guidelines necessary for implementation of the program described in subsection (a) of this section.

(c) The Agency shall issue grants to in-school counseling programs and afterschool programs in geographically diverse regions when the applicant

meets all of the eligibility criteria listed in subdivision (1) of this subsection and at least one eligibility criterion listed in subdivision (2) of this subsection:

(1) Mandatory eligibility criteria.

(A) The applicant uses evidence-based strategies to address students' social, emotional, mental health, and wellness needs. As used in this subdivision, "evidence-based" means the same as in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, 20 U.S.C. § 8101.

(B) The applicant collects data to demonstrate the effectiveness of the mental health and wellness supports and interventions utilized in the program.

(C) The applicant meets student needs by incorporating multitiered systems of supports, trauma-informed and responsive approaches, and approaches such as the Whole Child, Whole School, Whole Community model or the Strengthening Families curriculum's Youth Thrive program.

(2) Additional eligibility criterion.

(A) The applicant works in close partnership with classroom teachers and school guidance counselors to coordinate supports, communication, and strategies.

(B) The applicant uses specially trained staff to provide one-on-one and small group supports and resilience sessions for children and youth, including addressing specific needs, such as suicide prevention, social isolation, anxiety, and substance use.

(C) The applicant provides participating families with assistance in navigating behavioral health resources in their communities.

(D) The applicant provides opportunities for children and youth to participate in activities that heal and prevent social isolation, such as outdoor activities, art therapy, recreation, and time in nature.

(E) The applicant consults with local pediatricians to provide referrals for support.

(F) The applicant provides staff training on Youth Mental Health First Aid and other evidence-based techniques and approaches to crisis prevention and intervention, such as trauma-responsive practices, adolescent brain development, and how to build a culture of connection.

(d) On or before January 15, 2025, the Agency, in collaboration with the Department, shall submit a report to the House Committees on Education and on Human Services and to the Senate Committees on Education and on Health and Welfare summarizing the programs to which grants were awarded and recommending a model for the integration of mental health and in-school and afterschool programming that provides consistency and reliability to children and youth, is fiscally sustainable, and does not create further workforce capacity challenges for afterschool organizations, schools, community technical education centers, the Agency, or the Department.

Sec. 4. ALLOCATION OF UNEXPENDED ESSER III FUNDS

In fiscal year 2023, ESSER III funds appropriated pursuant to 2021 Acts and Resolves No. 74, Sec. E.501.3 shall be used as follows:

(1) \$500,000.00 for statewide COVID-19 recovery supports for educators and school staff pursuant to Sec. 2 of this act; and

(2) \$2,500,000.00 for grants to expand mental health and well-being services for children and youth pursuant to Sec. 3 of this act.

* * * Interagency Youth Afterschool Task Force * * *

Sec. 5. VERMONT INTERAGENCY AFTERSCHOOL YOUTH TASK

FORCE; REPORTING

The Vermont Interagency Afterschool Youth Task Force established pursuant to Executive Order No. 08-21 shall submit to the House Committees on Education and on Human Services and to the Senate Committees on Education and on Health and Welfare copies of its bimonthly progress reports on achieving expanded universal afterschool and summer programming. The Task Force shall also provide advice and recommendations to the General Assembly upon request.

* * * Effective Date * * *

Sec. 6. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on July 1, 2022.