

To: Senate Committee on Government Operations
From: Claire Zandstra, Youth Mental Health Committee Chair of Vermont State Youth Council,
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Hello, my name is Claire Zandstra and I'm 14 years old. I live in Topsham Vermont and I'm the Chair of the Vermont State Youth Council's Youth Mental Health Committee. Thank you for having us.

Eating disorders

The Vermont State Youth Council's Youth Mental Health Committee's vision is to establish at least one inpatient eating disorder facility in the state. Our audience is teens from 11-15 who have severe eating disorders including anorexia, bulimia, and binge-eating.

Currently, there are no facilities within the state that accept teens under the age of 15, and therefore families are having to uproot their lives and move if their child develops an eating disorder. Even if the facilities in Vermont let people under 15 enter, no one would be able to get in because the waiting lists are lengthy and eating disorders often need immediate care, so that the patient doesn't end up in the hospital.

Due to the fact that there are currently no eating disorder facilities for people under 15, and that the ones in the state have chronically long wait times. We, on the Youth Mental Health Committee, and the Vermont State Youth Council as a whole, recommend that the General Assembly pass legislation to: Have an inpatient eating disorder facility built within the state that accepts people from the ages of 11-17.

- Action Point One, We would like you to help fund the building of an inpatient eating disorder facility in the state of Vermont.
- Action Point Two, If that is too much for this biennium, we would strongly encourage you to help fund/build the expansion of the Kahm center in Burlington.

[Eating Disorder Treatment in Vermont Bulimia and Eating Disorder Treatment | The Bulimia Project.](#)

[SANA Drug-Treatment-Facility-in-Vermont](#)

[Neurishwellness.com/mental-health-treatment](#)

[The Kahm Center for Eating Disorders Opens as Vermont's First High-Level Clinic](#)

Mental Health Days

Our vision is to instate 3 excused mental health days per semester for middle and high school students in the state of Vermont. Students who have a diagnosis from a certified clinician would have 5 mental health days per semester. In schools that have a trimester system, there would be 2 days for students without a diagnosis, and 3–4 days for students that have a clinical diagnosis.

Having mental health days would help Vermont students learn in a space where they feel safe, and can feel that they can get their needs met. If students don't have a home where they feel safe to be for a day, or if they don't have parents who accept that mental health days are important, the student should have the option to take the day in the principal or guidance counselor's office. Some opposers of this would say that kids who don't want to be in school would abuse this privilege. We on the Vermont State Youth Council understand that concern, but we also know from the experience of being in schools that these people will skip anyway. Even if this gives the people skipping a free getaway, it will help a disproportionate amount of people get the rest necessary to work hard in schools the rest of the time. A precaution for this worry would be that you couldn't take multiple mental health days in a row. Depending on the student's teacher, they could be asked to make up the day's work as homework or during the day they are taking but not as part of class.

Due to the thoughts and feelings we have placed before you today, and the fact that according to a study, 74% of parents think that kids should have mental health days, and 77% of parents who have let their student have a mental health day say that it was beneficial ([CBNC on Mental Health Days](#)). The Vermont State Youth Council Recommends that the General Assembly pass legislation to allow students to take 3 excused mental health days per semester (two per trimester), and allow students with a clinical diagnosis to take 5 mental health days per semester (3-4 per trimester). These mental health days would not turn over into the next semester or trimester and would not be allowed to be taken in a row. It would also be an option for students to take the day in the guidance counselor's or principal's office. Students would be expected to make up work but would be given extra time, the same as if it were a sick day.

[CBNC on Mental Health Days](#)

[Mental Health Days: School Absence Policies | NAM](#)

[More Schools Are Offering Student Mental Health Days. Here's What You Need to Know](#)

[Countries that have mental health days](#)

[Sick Leave, Netherlands: Mandatory Regulations & Rules.](#)