

Mental Health and Higher Education

Pass legislation to increase mental health literacy on campuses and encourage whole health parity. Include \$500 thousand in the budget for student, faculty and staff mental health training.

There's evidence of a college mental health crisis dating back to at least 2007. Data from an April of 2022 Active Minds study showed a 135% increase in depression and 110% increase in anxiety among college students between 2013 and 2021, and in 2021 60% of college students met the criteria for one or more mental health conditions.

A survey college presidents conducted by Inside Higher Ed, found that over 90 percent of presidents reported being very or somewhat concerned about student mental health during the COVID-19 crisis, making it their top concern. The American Council on Higher Education found that over 66 percent of all presidents are reporting an increase in the utilization of mental health services due to COVID-19.

This crisis is not limited to college students, but pervades the mental health and wellness of the whole college, including faculty, staff and students. More than half of college faculty report signs of professional burnout with 40% considering leaving their current jobs as a result of COVID changes. While stress was high at the onset of the pandemic, research has found that faculty anxiety appears to be increasing, with more faculty reporting peak stress now than at the beginning of the pandemic.

There are two ways to immediately support the mental health needs of colleges. First, targeted training is needed to raise mental health literacy on campuses tailored to the unique needs of students, faculty and staff. In addition, colleges need resources to improve their policies and practices for responding to student mental health challenges (i.e., whole health parity). These policies include, but aren't limited to, leave of absence and return to campus policies, as well as policies for suicide prevention, intervention and postvention.

Legislative Need

MHANYS is promoting public policies to increase mental health literacy on campuses and encourage whole health parity. We are calling on the Governor and the Legislature to begin addressing this crisis by including \$500 thousand in the 23/24 Executive Budget for resources to train college and university students, faculty and staff. MHANYS School Mental Health Resource and Training Center provides an existing platform to accommodate this function. MHANYS also supports the reintroduction of S.7659-A (Kaplan)/A.9753-A (Gunther), in the 2023 session.

Talking Points

- ✓ There's evidence of a college mental health crisis dating back to at least 2007.
- ✓ Depression among college students increased by 135% from 2013 to 2021; anxiety increased by 110%.
- ✓ 60% of college students met the criteria for one or more mental health conditions.
- ✓ Everyone involved in campus life including students, faculty and staff would benefit from higher mental health literacy through training. A \$500 thousand investment would accomplish this goal.
- ✓ Colleges should have access to model policies that foster whole health parity.