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Proposal: to expand the Mental Health Association in New York State, Inc. (MHANYS) School Mental Health Resource and Training Center to include mental health resources for colleges and universities in New York

This proposal is intended to draw attention to a national college mental health crisis that is no less severe here in New York State, and to recommend an actionable step to begin addressing this crisis. On behalf of 1.2 million postsecondary students, and over 300 thousand faculty and staff, we respectfully request your leadership on this issue.

Background

Colleges and universities are in desperate need of mental health resources and supports. An Active Minds study released in April of 2022, 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 condition, double the rate from 2013. This crisis is not limited to college students, but pervades the mental health and wellness of the whole college, including faculty, staff and students.

In order to advance a conversation about this crisis, MHANYS convened a summit in October 2022 to raise awareness and take a first step toward developing consensus around how New York might respond. The event brought together over 100 participants including statewide college associations, mental health advocates, state agency officials, legislators, national experts and area colleges. In response to the Summit the New York State Assembly Committee on Higher Education and the Committee on Mental Health held a joint hearing on November 30, 2022.

Proposal

Based on what we learned through these two events MHANYS proposes an important step to help mitigate this crisis by providing mental health resources on campuses across the state. These resources include: mental health literacy training for college and university students, faculty and staff, resources to help faculty better support student mental health, and best practice resources to foster whole health parity¹. MHANYS believes that these resources can be delivered effectively and efficiently through the expansion of an existing [School Mental Health](#)

¹ Whole health parity represents an ideal wherein college and university policies related to the mental health of students, faculty and staff are consistent with polices addressing physical health and conform to protected rights under the ADA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. Such policies include, but are not limited to, leave of absence and return to school policies, as well as policies associated with suicide prevention, intervention and post-vention.

Healthy Minds For A Healthy New York

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[Resource and Training Center](#) that has successfully supported the mental health literacy needs of K-12 education since 2018. Expanding the Resource Center’s mission to include higher education will provide continuity in building mental health literacy from K through college; building on the groundwork currently being laid in primary and secondary education pursuant to Chapter 390 of the Laws of 2016.² We urge you to invest in making comparable resources available to college communities as well. An investment of \$500,000 would help provide mental health resources for students, faculty and staff on every campus in the state.

School Mental Health Resource and Training Center

The Resource Center was established and made available to all New York State public and private K-12 schools at no cost to schools. The Resource Center helps schools identify evidence-based resources to develop mental health curricula, provide resources and guidance to support schools’ ability to comply with the required mental health education of students, to make available and accessible mental health training for staff, and to provide schools with assistance identifying local mental health services for students in need. The NYS Assembly provided \$1 million in funding in year one to create and maintain the Resource Center and \$500 thousand has been included in the Executive Budget for each subsequent year to date.

The Resource Center was established and is currently maintained by MHANYS, a statewide entity with: 1) competency and experience providing mental health and wellness training to the general public as well as professionals, including teachers; 2) an understanding of the assistance that colleges and universities need in order to provide mental health resources to students, faculty and staff; 3) established relationships with higher education stakeholders in New York and; 4) the ability to foster local partnerships with community-based mental health providers, which includes a network of 26 affiliates.

Mental Health Resources for Colleges and Universities

Under this proposal, the Resource Center would be expanded to make available the following training, technical assistance, resource development, and best practice resources to support whole health parity for all colleges and universities in New York:

- Student, faculty and college/university staff mental health literacy training, to include an understanding of:
 - mental health as an integral part of overall health;
 - typical adolescent, transition age youth and young adult development as it relates to possible signs and symptoms of an emerging mental health problem;
 - high school to college mental health transitional readiness tools for students and families;

² The passage of Chapter 390 of the Laws of 2016, effective July 1, 2018, requires all New York State schools to include mental health instruction as part of the K-12 health curricula.

- knowledge that aids in seeking professional mental health treatment and self-help and other mental health and wellness support strategies;
 - strategies for supporting stress management skills; and
 - the recognition and management of mental health crises, trauma-informed approaches and practices, and substance use prevention and education.
- Best practice model policies and guidance that support the tenets of whole health parity and are consistent with disability rights protections under provisions of laws such as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. Such guidance shall include:
 - student, faculty and staff leaves of absence and return to school policies; and
 - suicide prevention, intervention and post-vention policy guidance.
 - Facilitating collaboration between colleges/universities and community partners (e.g., community-based mental health providers, county governments, prevention education providers, hospitals, rehabilitation, etc.) for the purpose of creating linkages between students and their families, and mental health-related services.