

# House Bill 5001 - An Act Concerning Children's Mental Health

## BILL HIGHLIGHTS

### Workforce Development

- Establishes License reciprocity for out of state mental health professionals to increase the number of providers, and establishes a need-based state licensure fee scholarship with a focus on diverse applicants.
- Establishes a student loan forgiveness program for eligible mental health workers who serve children and adolescents and who work in shortage areas.
- Establishes a new grant program for hiring new child and adolescent psychiatrists and to retain currently employed child and adolescent psychiatrists.
- Appropriates funds to expand staffing for pediatric patients needing mental health care in Intensive Outpatient and Partial Hospitalization programs.
- Appropriates funds to DCF for Emergency Mobile Psychiatric Services to hire and train personnel, expand the geographic reach and extend hours of operation.
- Creates a partnership between graduating psychologists and DCF to receive clinical hour credits under supervision at the Department's new Behavioral Health Urgent Care centers.

### Supporting Mental Health in Schools

- Establishes a grant program to local school boards to hire social workers, school psychologists. Subsequent drafts will add School Counselors, LMFTs, and other mental health personnel. These grants will also be open to other youth serving entities.
- Establishes a new grant program for the delivery of school-based mental health services to children and adolescents; subsequent draft will add funding for Connecticut State Colleges and University system.
- Creates and funds the new position of "Trauma Coordinator" in SDE to oversee trauma informed practice training and best practices for teachers, administrators, coaches, SROs, and staff in all school districts.
- Requires schools to adopt an improved trauma-informed truancy intervention model developed by SDE, which takes in to account the differences in truancy and school refusal due to mental health issues.
- Requires school districts to assess the resources needed to address student trauma impacting children and staff in its schools.
- Develops a statewide peer-to-peer mental health support program for students in grades 6-12.

## BILL HIGHLIGHTS CONTINUED

### Supporting and Expanding Current Systems

- Expands ACCESS Mental Health to provide up to three follow-up telehealth visits directly to patients after a pediatrician has first utilized ACCESS Mental Health on behalf of a patient.
- Expands DCF online listings of mental health services by region created by PA 21-116 to assist local pediatricians' offices in referring patients to next-level care.
- Extends telehealth through 2024.
- Sets up procedures for diverting 911 calls to either 211, the suicide lifeline or mental health professionals when appropriate.
- Sets up the 988 National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.

### Redefining Insurance Coverage for Children with Mental Illness

- Prohibits “forced diagnosis”, a known barrier to continuing care.
- Requires individual and group health insurers to cover intensive evidence-based services used to treat mental and behavioral health conditions in children and adolescents.
- Requires individual and group insurers to cover collaborative care for behavioral healthcare.
- Prohibits individual and group insurers from being able to require prior authorization for patients who require acute psychiatric inpatient care.
- Requires the state study provider reimbursement rates to address lack of reimbursement parity.
- Requires the Healthcare Advocate to designate an employee to ensure the office provides its existing services to minors and to ensure access to mental health, behavioral health, and substance abuse services for minors.

### Resources for Providers and Programs to Directly Care for Children

- Provides and funds a Continuing Education program for pediatricians to help develop skills in treating pediatric behavioral health issues in the primary care setting.
- Directs DPH to develop or procure a mental and behavioral health screening tool which shall be completed by children and, when appropriate, parents prior to each annual pediatrician visit.
- Develops a peer support program for parents of children with mental illness.

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