



# STATE OF NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

**For Immediate Release**

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## **Governor Murphy and NJ Department of Education Invest in Strengthening the Pipeline of School-Based Mental Health Personnel**

**Trenton, NJ** – The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) has announced the selection of eleven high-needs local educational agencies (LEAs) to receive a combined \$15 million to expand school-based mental health services for students. This funding is provided through the federal School-Based Mental Health Services (SBMHS) Grant Program awarded to the NJDOE in December 2022 and will be used to increase the number of school psychologists, counselors, and social workers in New Jersey schools demonstrating need.

The NJDOE selected LEAs through a competitive grant process that targeted communities with higher levels of poverty that also had insufficient staffing according to the [National Association of School Psychologists](#), the [American School Counselors Association](#), and the [School Social Work Association of America](#). In addition to increasing the number of mental health professionals working in LEAs, the program will also increase the diversity of professionals who provide school-based mental-health services to students.

Recipients



Through this program, the eleven selected LEAs will train and place over 200 school-based mental health professionals over the course of the five-year grant period. Applicants are encouraged to develop retention and recruitment strategies to support and develop the respective workforce in New Jersey. The eleven LEAs represent diverse geographical regions of New Jersey, and are as follows:

1. Perth Amboy;
2. Hackensack;
3. Jackson Township;
4. Union Township;
5. Bogota;
6. Union City;
7. Pinelands Regional;
8. Cumberland Regional;
9. Collingswood Borough;
10. Gloucester Township; and
11. Hillside Township.

This program represents the Murphy Administration’s ongoing efforts to bolster comprehensive youth mental health services for students throughout the state.

“Increasing the support available to students in their schools is fundamental to addressing the ongoing youth mental health crisis,” **said Governor Murphy**. “Building up a mental health workforce to address the acute needs of New Jersey-students and their families is part of the broader continuum of support we are developing to enable the next generation to thrive and succeed both in and out of school for years to come.”

The program embeds the pillars from Governor Murphy’s “Strengthening Youth Mental Health: A Governor’s Playbook,” which include:

- **Addressing prevention and building resilience** by supporting youth with the necessary tools to respond to stressors and challenges, reducing the risk of mental health conditions, and proactively identifying and managing existing conditions to prevent crises.
- **Increasing awareness and reducing stigma** by promoting awareness of mental health knowledge and resources, and decreasing the social, self, and structural stigma around youth mental health challenges.
- **Ensuring access and affordability of quality treatment and care** by removing the barriers to care, including unaffordable costs, lack of insurance coverage, and a depleted workforce to ensure that high-quality, trauma-informed, and culturally relevant care is accessible to youth in appropriate places, spaces, and timeframes to meet their needs.
- **Training and supporting caregivers and educators** by expanding training and support so that those caring for and interacting with youth daily have the understanding and tools to identify mental health needs to access relevant supports.

“The awardees of the School-Based Mental Health Services Grant program exemplify the transformative impact that can be achieved when passionate educators come together to address the critical mental health needs of our students,” **said Dr. Angelica Allen-McMillan, Acting Commissioner of Education.** “By leveraging the resources provided through the federal award, we are taking substantial steps towards increasing our state’s capacity to support youth mental health. These awardees are pioneers in fostering mental health awareness, providing vital resources, and creating safe spaces for students to thrive. Their efforts align seamlessly with our ongoing commitment to prioritize the emotional well-being of every student in New Jersey.”

The NJDOE will work with the selected LEAs to begin implementing their respective proposals.

