



MENTAL HEALTH EDUCATION LITERACY IN SCHOOLS LINKING TO A CONTINUUM OF WELL-BEING

New York State Education Department (NYSED) Amendments to Commissioner's Regulation (CR) Part 135 regarding Health Education

(May 2018 NYSED Board of Regents Permanent Adoption for a July 2018 implementation date in schools; [NYSED Board of Regents](#)).

As outlined in the May 2018 NYSED's Board of Regents Memo;¹ Education Law §804 was amended by Chapter 390 (Laws 2016) and Chapter 1 (Laws 2017) clarifying that a satisfactory program in health education in accordance with the needs of pupils in all grades that includes the several dimensions of health, is now required to:

- include mental health and the relation of physical and mental health; and
- be designed to enhance student understanding, attitudes and behaviors that promote health, well-being and human dignity.

Schools may already be providing “mental health” education as previously required in CR Part 135, however these new statutory provisions formalize the new requirements noted above.

With elementary and secondary health education in schools being required to instruct on mental health; staff, students, families, and communities may be more openly discussing both mental health well-being and mental health challenges, and may also be able to address awareness, prevention, and treatment.

Mental Health Facts

Mental health is a critical part of overall health and *well-being* and is important throughout the life cycle; affecting thinking and learning, feelings and actions, influencing healthy decision making.²

According to the World Health Organization “there is no health without mental health” with health being a state of complete physical, mental and social *well-being*; not only absence of disease.³

Education on the importance of the mind-body connection,⁴ and the several dimensions of health including mental health and the relation of physical and mental health, will enhance student understanding, attitudes and behaviors that promote health, well-being and human dignity.

“In childhood and throughout adolescence, mental health means attaining developmental and emotional milestones, learning healthy social skills and coping with challenging situations. Mentally healthy children/youth have a positive quality of life and function well at home, in school, and in their communities”⁵

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), “focusing on establishing healthy behaviors during childhood is more effective than trying to change unhealthy behaviors during adulthood.”⁶

NEW YORK STATE MENTAL HEALTH EDUCATION ADVISORY COUNCIL (ADVISORY COUNCIL)

In August of 2017, NYSED, the New York State Office of Mental Health (OMH), and the Mental Health Association in New York State, Inc. (MHANYs), established the Advisory Council of over 75 expert cross-disciplinary and cross-sector partners, to develop resources and recommendations supporting mental health education.

Advisory Council is developing an “Instructional Framework” for educators aligned with the New York State Learning Standards for health education, reflective of skills and functional knowledge, scope and sequence for all levels focused on health-related outcomes.

Advisory Council recommending schools understand and expand obligations to support elementary and secondary level educator’s instruction on mental health, by including a comprehensive approach supporting the enhancement of mental health well-being. Schools can and should go beyond providing only classroom instruction on mental health and focus efforts on developing a positive school climate and culture.

WHAT SCHOOLS CAN DO NOW

Review and assess current elementary and secondary level health education curricula for alignment to new mental health education requirements;

Recommended to build capacity and strengthen relationships between educators and pupil personnel services (school psychologist, social worker, school counselor, nurse);

Recommended to develop school and community partnerships;

Recommended to identify strategies to engage families and students in supporting mental health and well-being;

Recommended to support a positive school climate; and

Recommended to leverage mental health partnerships.



NYSED’S NEXT STEPS

Continue a multi-prong, transparent, timely approach to address next steps.

June of 2018 – Release of the “Instructional Framework” and additional best practice resources.

December of 2018 - Advisory Council Meeting for a debriefing opportunity and to discuss any lessons learned to improve ongoing implementation.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

NYSED’s Office of Curriculum and Instruction:
<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/ciai/health/>

NYS Center for School Health:
<http://www.schoolhealthny.com>

NYSED’s Office of Student Support Services Social Emotional Learning: <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/ssss/sel>

Mental Health Association in NYS, Inc.:
<https://mhany.org/>

NYS Office of Mental Health:
<https://www.omh.ny.gov/omhweb/about/>

NYS Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services:
<https://www.oasas.ny.gov/>

NYS Department of Health Prevention Agenda:
https://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/prevention_agenda/2013-2017/

¹ <http://www.regents.nysed.gov/common/regents/files/518p12ppca1.pdf>

² <https://www.mentalhealth.gov/basics/what-is-mental-health>

³ http://www.who.int/features/factfiles/mental_health/en/

⁴ <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/a-to-z/p/physical-health-and-mental-health>

⁵ <https://www.cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/basics.html>

⁶ <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/wscc/index.htm>