

Mindworks GA: HB 268 Overview

For Resilient GA Lunch
and Learn

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Presenter



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Mindworks Georgia

- Collaborative of child-serving agencies, non-profits, philanthropies, and providers
- Aligns people, policy and practice to connect the dots to the behavioral health system of care to improve access for children and families
- Formal workgroup of the BHCC
- 2023-2026 Strategic Plan with the following priority areas:
 - oEquitable Access
 - oSustainable Workforce
 - oWhole Person Health
 - oPurposeful Funding
 - oSystem Evaluation



The Need for Behavioral Health Services for Youth

- 4 in 5 children (aged 6-17) with mental health needs receive no treatment
- Suicide is the leading cause of death for young people (aged 5-24)
- 1 in 10 children have a mental health condition that impairs daily functioning
- 1 in 4 high school students report feelings of depression
- Elementary students with mental health needs are 3 times more likely to face suspension or expulsion

House Bill 268

- HB 268 is a comprehensive bill that includes mandates around student records and data sharing, behavioral health services in schools, and school safety infrastructure.
- The General Assembly appropriated funding for SFY 2026 to implement the items in this bill.
- Components of the bill are critical to GA's behavioral health system of care.
- Designates DBHDD as the state's authority on mental health and encourages interagency collaboration.



What is included in HB 268?

School Safety Infrastructure

- Requires schools to implement mobile panic alert systems to improve coordination between law enforcement officers and first responders
- Requires schools to procure school mapping data to allow law enforcement officers to have access to the school layout prior to entry into the building

Education Assurance

- Ensures children in state custody can enroll in public schools and receive appropriate education
- Creates procedures for following up with students who stop attending school consecutively for 30 days
- Revises definitions related to the juvenile code

What is included in HB 268? Cont.

Student Records and Data Sharing

- Ensures that parents and guardians can receive access to their student's records upon request and denies local boards of education from having policies that prevent parents from reviewing student records.
- Requires that schools receive complete records of transferring students and requires parents to disclose critical information to the transferring school related to the student's behavioral history.
- Allows schools to inform teachers if a student assigned to them has a criminal history.
- Requires law enforcement officers who have an encounter with a school-age child to report this encounter to the child's school within 5 days.
- Requires school boards to promote parental involvement in public schools.

What is included in HB 268? Cont.

Mental Health Services and School Climate

- Provides grants to local school systems to reimburse for one or more qualified student advocacy specialist.
- Encourages high needs schools to implement Tier 1 and Tier 2 PBIS interventions and RTI programs in their schools
- Requires all public school staff and students to receive training in youth violence and suicide awareness and prevention.
- Requires school safety plans to address the behavioral health needs of all school personnel and develop a behavioral threat assessment plan.
- Requires the establishment of a statewide alert system for school communities to report threats. Creates procedures for following up with parents and guardians about BH services when a student is added to the alert system.

HB 268 Implementation

Development of
the student
advocacy
specialist role by
EOY 2025

Creation of
guidance regarding
behavioral health
integration in
school safety
plans

Training and
technical assistance
to school systems
and agencies
regarding behavioral
health topics

Mindworks HB 268 Bill Explainer

HB 268:

GEORGIA'S STEPS TOWARD IMPROVING SCHOOL CLIMATE, SCHOOL SAFETY, AND STUDENT WELLBEING



School safety and school climate are top priorities of state leadership this year following the mass casualty incident at Apalachee High School in Winder, Ga., in September 2024. Following this incident, Georgia lawmakers expressed commitment to preventing further tragedies by improving safety in schools and ensuring student well-being. Several bills related to addressing school safety and improving mental health in schools were introduced during the 2025 legislative session.

The largest of these bills was **HB 268**, a comprehensive bill aimed at ensuring school safety primarily by increasing mental health services in schools and improving student data tracking. This bill was signed into law by Gov. Brian P. Kemp in April 2025. The General Assembly also **appropriated** funding for state fiscal year 2026 to implement the items in this bill, including \$108 million to provide grants to schools to support school security needs and to provide for student mental health support and \$19.6 million to the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD) to establish student mental health support grants. There are also several appropriations for specific line items.

- **4 in 5 children (aged 6-17) with mental health challenges receive no treatment.**
- **Suicide** is the leading cause of death for young people (aged 6-24).
- **1 in 10 children** has a mental health condition that impairs daily functioning.
- **1 in 4 high school students** reports feelings of depression.
- **Elementary students with mental health needs** are **3 times more likely** to face suspension or expulsion.

Source: [Georgia HOPE \(2025\)](#)

- **40.68%** of Georgia middle and high school students surveyed in 2022 reported anxiety or fear disrupting their daily lives within the past 30 days.
- **73,000** students reported seriously considering self-harm in the past year.
- **46%** of Georgia children needing mental health services struggle to access care, meaning nearly half of the 515,491 children (aged 3-17) seeking help may go without essential support.

Source: [School-Based Behavioral](#)

HB 268 is critical to Georgia's behavioral health system of care because it directs the state to prioritize services across all levels of the continuum of care, recognizing schools as an access point for many children and families. The bill includes prevention services such as Tier 1 Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and violence and suicide prevention training. The bill is also unprecedented in its requirement for school safety plans to address behavioral health needs and include a behavioral threat assessment, an evidence-based plan to identify and mitigate potential threats.

HB 268 addresses several of Mindworks' 2024-2026 priority objectives, including increasing awareness of and counteracting stigma around mental health challenges and advancing expanded roles of child-

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