

School Safety Interim Committee Bill

Support SB20-001: Expand Behavioral Health Training for K-12 Educators

About the Bill

SB20-001 would establish an optional behavioral health “train the trainer” program for educators, administrators, and non-certified school personnel in the state of Colorado. School personnel who choose to enroll in these programs would receive evidence-based instruction aimed at improving school culture, creating a safe and secure environment for all students, and providing behavioral health trainings to their colleagues. This legislation calls on Colorado’s Department of Education to select an evidence-based program that trains educators on:

- Identifying behavioral and mental health challenges and substance use disorders;
- Improving youth behavioral and mental health challenges, as well as social and emotional health;
- Suicide prevention;
- Bullying prevention;
- Encouraging positive bystander behavior and providing best practices for non-escalation situations;
- De-escalation of crisis situations; and
- Identifying resources for behavioral, mental health, and substance use disorder treatment.

SB20-001 was developed by the Interim School Safety Committee with an aim toward ensuring Colorado schools are safe and secure environments for all students.

Why We Need SB20-001

Teachers, administrators, and school personnel are on the frontlines of the growing mental health crisis in our schools. The statistics speak for themselves:

- The need for mental health education is growing in Colorado, which has rates of mental illness and suicide that are higher than the national average. Prevention, early intervention, and stigma reduction are key factors in improving mental health and wellness.¹
- America’s teen suicide rate is increasing. In Colorado, suicide was the leading cause of death among youth ages 10 – 18 between 2013 and 2017.²
- A report recently published by the United Health Foundation found that half of children aged 3 to 17 in Colorado do not receive the mental health counseling that they need.³

The Opportunity

To help address these troubling statistics, SB20-001 will provide funding to expand professional development opportunities via the Colorado Department of Education for school personnel related to youth behavioral and mental health issues. This bi-partisan bill will establish a network of qualified trainers in schools across the state. These trainers will be able to instruct their colleagues in the skills they need to identify students facing behavioral health or substance use issues and provide them with the tools and resources they need address this challenge.

This “train the trainer” model will allow educators to bring evidence-based instruction into their schools and communities. This program will have a lasting impact by placing qualified trainers in Colorado schools who will be able to support their colleagues, students, and communities.

¹ 2020-2025 MHFACO Growth Plan, Prepared by The Bridgespan Group, July 2019

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics (2018)

³ https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/health-of-women-and-children/measure/teen_suicide/state/CO

Growing support for SB20-001

This bipartisan legislation is being supported by a coalition of health and community non-profit organizations, including:

- Colorado Behavioral Healthcare Council
- Healthier Colorado
- Mental Health Colorado
- Colorado Education Association
- One Colorado
- Colorado Children's Campaign
- Education Reform Now
- Colorado Psychiatric Society
- Children's Hospital Colorado
- Suicide Prevention Coalition of Colorado
- National Association of Social Workers – Colorado Chapter

Examples of Education Focused Behavioral Health and Substance Use Trainings

Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA)

Youth Mental Health First Aid is designed to teach parents, family members, caregivers, teachers, school staff, and other caring citizens how to help an adolescent who is experiencing a mental health or addiction challenge or is in crisis. It is designed for adults who regularly interact with young people. The course introduces common mental health challenges for youth, reviews typical adolescent development, and teaches a 5-step action plan for how to help young people in both crisis and non-crisis situations.⁴ **YMHFA is an evidenced-based training program that aligns with the requirements laid out in SB20-001.**

Teen Mental Health First Aid (tMHFA)

This in-person training teaches high school students about common mental health challenges and what they can do to support their own mental health or help a friend who is struggling. It equips young people with the knowledge and skills they need to foster their own wellness and to support each other. Mental Health First Aid has teamed up with Lady Gaga's Born This Way Foundation to bring this program to the United States.⁵ tMHFA was piloted in 8 schools last year and is being piloted in 35 schools this fall (including one school district in Colorado – Re-1 Valley School District in northeast Colorado, in partnership with Centennial Mental Health Center).

To be eligible to provide tMHFA, sites are required to train at least 10 percent of their adult staff in Youth Mental Health First Aid, making the passage of SB20-001 a critical first step to prepare Colorado's schools for the roll out of tMHFA in 2020.

Supporting SB20-001: Expand Behavioral Health Training For K-12 Educators helps ensure educators have access to mental health training opportunities and will help schools across the state prepare for the roll out of Teen Mental Health First Aid in 2020.



HEALTHIER™
COLORADO



MENTAL HEALTH
COLORADO



⁴ <https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/population-focused-modules/youth/>

⁵ <https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/population-focused-modules/teens/>