



For Immediate Release

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Governor Murphy and NJ Department of Education Announce Partnership to Strengthen Mental Health Supports in New Jersey Schools

Trenton, NJ – Governor Phil Murphy and the New Jersey Department of Education (Department) today announced the Enhancing School Mental Health Services Project, a groundbreaking initiative to augment mental health support services in New Jersey schools. As part of an ongoing commitment to prioritizing the well-being of students, the Department is partnering with the Rutgers University Center for Comprehensive School Mental Health to provide three years of intensive training to staff in 50 selected schools from across the state, enabling them to implement a robust tiered system of mental health supports.

The Enhancing School Mental Health Services Project is a significant step forward in equipping New Jersey schools with the necessary tools and resources to more effectively support their students' mental health needs.

In the spring of 2023, the Department, in partnership with Rutgers, invited all districts to apply to be part of the project. The Department and Rutgers identified 50 schools in 38 districts/charter schools with strong applications. The administrators of the selected school districts will participate in a project orientation in August, and the school-based mental health educator teams from each project school will begin project activities in September.

“The mental well-being of young people throughout our state is of the utmost importance, and it is our responsibility to provide them with the support they need to thrive,” **said Governor Murphy**. “This collaborative initiative is another proactive approach our Administration is taking to ensure New Jersey schools are equipped with the proper tools to address the mental health needs of students. By further expanding mental health supports for our youth, we will continue to foster a nurturing environment in our schools that encourages the overall well-being and success of our students.”

Under the guidance and expertise of the Rutgers University Center for Comprehensive School Mental Health, the 50 selected schools will receive intensive training on implementing evidence-based practices and strategies to strengthen mental health support services. While mental-health based services historically may have been handled individually on a case-by-case basis in some districts, the initiative aims to provide school communities with a comprehensive schoolwide system to better identify and address mental health concerns.

Rutgers trainers will work with school teams of educators, counselors, school psychologists, social workers, administrators, and other school staff, and the school teams will, in turn, review approaches to mental health within their school and identify areas that need to be strengthened; explore opportunities for ongoing coaching and training of staff; promote best practices for identifying struggling students; evaluate possible partnerships with community mental health agencies; and examine improvements to how the school provides counseling and other needed supports.

“This collaboration represents a significant step in fostering a more resilient and empathetic educational system in New Jersey,” **said Dr. Angelica Allen-McMillan, Acting Commissioner of Education**. “Implementing a tiered

system of mental health supports equips more New Jersey schools with the tools necessary to foster a culture of care and understanding for students. By partnering with Rutgers University Center for Comprehensive School Mental Health, more New Jersey educators will be supported and empowered to effectively identify and address mental health needs, ensuring that every child receives the support they deserve to thrive academically and emotionally.”

“We are very excited to have the opportunity to connect with 50 schools across the state and work intensively with them to support their implementation of a comprehensive school-based mental health system,” **said Dr. Ann Murphy, Rutgers Project Director.** “This project comes at a critical time, as students continue to experience increased mental health needs. Implementing new services and systems is always challenging, but our team at the Rutgers Center for Comprehensive School Mental Health has the experience and expertise to effectively partner with schools. Utilizing training, coaching, consultation, and ongoing assistance, we’ll facilitate the development of high-quality mental health supports for students.”

Recognizing the crucial role of mental health in overall student success, Governor Murphy has championed initiatives that address the well-being of young people throughout the state and the country. In February 2020, Governor Murphy announced the formation of a Statewide Mental Health Working Group with representation across school leadership roles, state agencies, advocacy groups, community mental health providers, and parents to develop resources that support the mental health needs of their students. The 50-person Mental Health Working Group convened remotely in May and June 2020 to obtain valuable input toward building a chapter outline for a mental health guide. The final product of this collaboration, the [New Jersey Comprehensive School Mental Health Resource Guide](#), was released in February 2022.

Today’s launch of the Enhancing School Mental Health Services Project represents the next step following the collaborative development of the New Jersey Comprehensive School Mental Health Resource Guide. It will build on other efforts across the Murphy Administration to address youth mental health and support the mental health needs of students throughout New Jersey.

Schools Selected for Participation in the Enhancing School Mental Health Services Project

County	District	School(s)
Atlantic	Northfield Community School District	Northfield Middle School
Bergen	Alpine School District	Alpine School
Bergen	Hackensack Public Schools	Hackensack High School Jackson Avenue Elementary School
Bergen	Moonachie School District	Robert L. Craig School
Burlington	Burlington County Special Services School District	Burlington County Special Services, Westampton Campus
Burlington	Burlington Township School District	B. Bernice Young Elementary School Fountain Woods Elementary School
Burlington	Medford Township Schools	Allen Elementary School Medford Memorial Middle School
Camden	Pine Hill School District	Dr. Albert Bean Elementary School Pine Hill Middle School
Camden	Waterford Township	Waterford Elementary School
Cape May	Dennis Township School District	Dennis Township Elementary/Middle School
Cape May	Middle Township Public Schools	Middle Township High School

County	District	School(s)
Cumberland	Bridgeton Public Schools	Bridgeton High School
Cumberland	Deerfield Township School District	Deerfield Township School
Essex	Irvington School District	University Middle School
Essex	Newark School District	Franklin School
Gloucester	East Greenwich Township School District	Jeffrey Clark School Samuel Mickle School
Gloucester	Glassboro Public Schools	Dorothy L. Bullock Elementary School
Hudson	Serving Jersey City	The Ethical Community Charter School
Hudson	Secaucus Public Schools	Huber Street School Secaucus Middle/High School
Hudson	Union City Board of Education	Union Hill Middle School
Hunterdon	Flemington-Raritan School District	Barley Sheaf Elementary School
Hunterdon	Hunterdon Central Regional High School District	Hunterdon Central Regional High School
Mercer	Mercer County Special Services School District	Mercer High School
Middlesex	Monroe Township School District	Monroe Township Middle School
Middlesex	New Brunswick Public Schools	New Brunswick Middle School Paul Robeson Community School of the Arts
Middlesex	Old Bridge Township Public Schools	Old Bridge High School
Monmouth	Matawan Aberdeen Regional School District	Matawan Aberdeen Middle School Matawan Aberdeen High School
Ocean	Central Regional School District	Central Regional High School
Ocean	Lakewood Public Schools	Lakewood High School Oak Street Elementary School Spruce Street School
Ocean	Toms River Regional School District	Toms River East High School
Passaic	Passaic County Technical Vocational Schools	Passaic County Technical Institute
Passaic	Passaic Valley Regional High School District	Passaic Valley Regional High School
Passaic	Pompton Lakes School District	Pompton Lakes High School
Passaic	Prospect Park School District	Prospect Park Elementary School
Union	Hillside Public Schools	Hillside High School
Union	Union County Educational Services Commission	Hillcrest Academy North Hillcrest Academy South
Union	Westfield School District	Westfield High School
Warren	Lopatcong Township School District	Lopatcong Township Elementary School

County	District	School(s)
		Lopatcong Township Middle School