

SCHOOL-BASED MENTAL HEALTH REVIEW

Review

- The Commission on Youth shall receive a presentation from the Behavioral Health Commission on their 2023 report “Maximizing school-based mental health services.” Further, the Commission shall receive and review any findings and recommendations made by the Department of Education from their survey of local education agencies on school-based mental and behavioral health services as directed by the 2025 General Assembly Session.

Background

- During the 2025 General Assembly Session, House Joint Resolution 441 (Martinez) directing the Virginia Commission on Youth to study policies to support student mental health in Virginia’s elementary and secondary schools failed to pass on a motion to table with a letter to the Commission on Youth from the Chair of the House Rules Committee.
- As introduced, HJ 441 highlighted the following:
 - Serious and persistent mental health issues afflict public elementary and secondary students across the Commonwealth.
 - Such issues manifest in a variety of academic and personal issues that can prevent students from excelling in school.
 - Public elementary and secondary schools across the Commonwealth are under-resourced to meet the individualized needs of each student who struggles with mental health issues.
- This house joint resolution was tabled with a letter to the Commission on Youth from the Chair of the House Rules Committee.

Identified Issues

- In the 2022-2024 Appropriation Act, the General Assembly directed the Behavioral Health Commission to study how to maximize school-based mental health services across the Commonwealth.
- In 2023 the Behavioral Health Commission conducted a comprehensive study of school-based mental health services that involved extensive research, including a survey of all Virginia school divisions, interviews with numerous stakeholders, visits to six Virginia school divisions, a survey of parents of Virginia PreK-12 students, a workgroup with agency staff and other stakeholders, and a review of the research literature on youth mental health.
- In the Commission on Youth’s 2024 Relief of Custody study, the Commission identified the issue of local education agencies not granting access to local departments of social services, community services boards, and other community-based providers as a barrier to students receiving needed mental health services.
- The 2025 General Assembly passed and the Governor approved Senate Bill 768 (Favola) and House Bill 1947 (Seibold) directing the Department of Education to survey each local education agency (LEA) in the Commonwealth to determine (i) how public schools governed

by such LEA currently grant access to local departments of social services and community services boards and other community-based providers of mental and behavioral health services and (ii) what school-based mental and behavioral health services are made available by such LEA.

- Senate Bill 768 and House Bill 1947 require the Department of Education to report to the Commission on Youth by November 1, 2025, any findings and recommendations that result from the survey.

Study Activities

- Monitor and review updates and changes to state or federal initiatives on school based mental health.
- Receive a presentation from the Behavioral Health Commission on their 2023 report “Maximizing school-based mental health services.”
- Receive and review any findings and recommendations made by the Department of Education from their survey of local education agencies on school-based mental and behavioral health services.