



NYS Mental Health Education in Schools Law

Summary and Recommendations

Who	In NYS, health education is a K-12 requirement; therefore, all students in public and private schools, grades K-12 are learning about mental health.
What	<p>The law takes a holistic view of mental health ensuring that students “recognize the multiple dimensions of health by including mental health, and the relationship of physical health and mental health, so as to enhance student understanding, attitudes and behaviors that promote health, well-being and human dignity.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The NYS Education Department released a framework for Mental Health Education Instruction aligned with the NYS Health Education Standards as part of <i>Mental Health Education Literacy in Schools: Linking to a Continuum of Well-Being</i> (pages 13-24).
Where	While the law specifically pertains to the health education program, many schools have taken the opportunity to integrate mental health as a topic for discussion in other subjects, such as ELA, Participation in Government, History and Biology.
When	Considering that students only receive two semesters of Health between 7 th and 12 th grades, schools should consider developing an on-going, integrated approach to raising awareness about mental health. Some schools have established student-led wellness clubs that organize resource fairs, draft social media posts, coordinate guest speakers and facilitate mental health and wellness activities for younger students. Other schools have developed school-wide awareness campaigns, such as “Wellness Wednesdays”, using morning announcements to share health and safety information, such as stress management strategies, appropriate web-based resources, and the importance of sleep, staying hydrated or the use of sunscreen.
Why	Research suggests that an increase in mental health literacy leads to early intervention and better health outcomes. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, nearly half of all youth will experience a mental health challenge before the age of 18. We all have mental health and we all benefit from greater understanding of how we can support our own mental health and wellness and that of others.
How	The World Health Organization recommends a public health approach to mental health; a multi-tiered approach that includes the whole school community at the universal level (students, families and all school personnel). Strategies for promoting whole-school mental health and wellness should include a social-emotional learning framework, mental health literacy, attention to stress management, the development of learning environments that meet the needs of all students and the establishment of positive social connections.

To learn more, visit the
 School Mental Health Resource and Training Center at
www.mentalhealthEDnys.org or call **518.434.0439**

