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Contact: DPI Media Line, (608) 266-3559, media.inquiries@dpi.wi.gov

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State superintendent proposes critical \$304M investment in youth mental health

Dr. Jill Underly calls for increased access to mental health services in 2025-27 Biennial Budget request

PULASKI —State Superintendent Dr. Jill Underly laid out her vision on how the state can meet the growing mental health needs of students, announcing she will propose more than \$304 million in new investments to support youth mental health in her 2025-27 Biennial Budget request, during a visit today to Pulaski High School.

During the visit, Dr. Underly participated in a question-and-answer session with students, hearing from them on their current needs and learning how the DPI's budget request can help. [Data from the 2023 Youth Risk Behavior Survey](#) shows 59 percent of Wisconsin high school students have experienced at least one mental health challenge over the past year.

“As I said during the State of Education Address last month: The status quo is not sustainable,” Dr. Underly said. “We know what we need to do to act and stop this alarming mental health crisis. My budget makes a significant investment in youth mental health and increases access to critical student mental health services by making sure schools have the right staff in schools to address the very real challenges our kids face. We know what works, so we are going to fund it.”

The DPI's budget request, to be released in full in November, will propose significant investments in K-12 public education and includes a focus on youth mental health. In its budget, the DPI will:

- Expand [the School-Based Mental Health Services Program](#) and provide every local education agency in the state \$100 per pupil (\$100,000 minimum per school district) and broaden the purposes for which funding can be used (\$168 million over the biennium).
- Expand mental health costs eligible for aid from just school social workers to all pupil services staff – school counselors, school psychologists, and school nurses – and increase funding to target reimbursement at 20 percent of all prior-year aidable costs (\$130 million over the biennium).

(more)

- Increase funding to expand training to more schools and allow for more types of mental health training (\$760,000 over the biennium).
- Allow middle-school students to participate in the [Peer-to-Peer Suicide Prevention Grant Program](#), raise the maximum grant award to \$6,000, and allow for at least 100 grants to be awarded (\$700,000 over the biennium).
- Increase funding to schools for implementing or expanding existing Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse (AODA) programs (about \$5 million over the biennium).

The DPI will announce additional budget priorities over the next several weeks. Additional information on the DPI's effort to curb the youth mental health crisis [can be found on its Student Services/Prevention and Wellness webpage](#).

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