Association of Metropolitan School Districts

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Position on Student Mental Health

The Association of Metropolitan School Districts supports enhanced funding for school-based mental health programs and suicide prevention and trauma intervention programs. In addition, AMSD supports increased and improved mental health training and resources for school staff, as well as increased, sustainable funding for student support personnel. At the same time, state policymakers must ensure comprehensive community support systems, outside of school, are available that include treatment and services, as well as short-and long-range plans, for people with serious mental illness.

AMSD BELIEVES

- It is critical to reduce stigma and increase knowledge of mental health challenges and ensure access to high quality mental health treatment.
- Public schools have become the de facto mental health system for children and youth. Yet, schools are not funded or structured to be the primary provider of mental health support for students.
- School districts must be given the resources needed to provide safe learning environments for students and staff, including resources to provide mental health training for staff so they can support students' and their own mental health challenges.

BACKGROUND

The 2025 Minnesota Student Survey showed some progress in addressing student mental health but challenges remain. According to the survey results:

- 40 percent of 11th grade students reported feeling down, depressed or hopeless, compared to 54 percent in 2023 and 46 percent in 2019. 28 percent of 11th grade students reported long-term mental health problems, compared to 32 percent in 2023 and 26 percent in 2019.

- 22 percent of 11th graders have seriously considered suicide at some point in their life (compared to 27 percent in 2023, and 24 percent in 2019), and at significantly higher rates for our LGBTQ+ students.

- 15 percent of 11th grade students reported being bullied or harassed weekly in at least one way during the 30 days preceding the survey; the results are higher for LGBTQ+ students (21 percent).

The American Academy of Pediatrics notes that because "children spend a large portion of their lives attending school, schools have become the largest provider of mental health services," with districts providing support including screenings, counseling, assessments and crisis response services.

In July 2024, the National Center for Education Statistics reported that in the 2021-22 school year, 49 percent of public schools reported providing diagnostic mental health assessments and 38 percent reported providing treatment to students for mental health disorders. These percentages were lower than the percentages reported in 2019–20. In response to the COVID pandemic, 90 percent of public schools reported providing increased social and emotional supports for students, and 78 percent reported doing so for staff.

Research indicates that School Based Mental Health (SBMH) programs have an impact. In 2023, a study from the University of Minnesota School of Public Health, published in the Journal of Human Resources, using data from 263 K-12 schools in Hennepin County, many of which implemented school based mental health services between 2001-19, found rates of attempted suicides among students decreased by up to 15 percent when districts increased access to mental health services.

A 2023 Pew Poll on Parenting in America showed mental health topped the list of parents' concerns with 76 percent of respondents either extremely, very worried, or somewhat worried about their children struggling with anxiety or depression.

REFERENCES

- Minnesota Student Survey Results 2013-2025.
- The American Academy of Pediatrics: Mental Health in Schools.
- National Center for Education Statistics: Prevalence of Mental Health Services Provided by Public Schools.
- University of Minnesota School of Public Health: School based Mental Health Services Can Improve the Well Being of Children and Adolescents.

Approved by the AMSD Board of Directors, January 2026