



STATE OF ALABAMA  
**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**



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**Alabama State Department of Education, State Legislature Create Needed Positions to Help Address Mental Health Support for Alabama Students**

*\$4.5 Million Grant for Mental Health Service Coordinators throughout the State*

**MONTGOMERY, AL** – State officials recognize the important role mental health plays in student development and overall academic success.

As such, the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) worked with the Alabama State Legislature to establish the position of Mental Health Service Coordinator (MHSC) and appropriate \$4.5 million in grants for school systems to employ MHSCs to help coordinate mental health services in schools throughout Alabama.

State Superintendent of Education, Dr. Eric Mackey, said the role of mental health professionals is invaluable – especially given the unprecedented strains recently experienced in education.

“The mental health experts that this grant allows *schools* to employ will help identify barriers to student success and facilitate services within a comprehensive, multi-tiered support systems to support students and families with emotional and behavior issues demonstrated during school,” Mackey said. “The interventions and supports available to students through the creation of this position is a major move forward in the goal of providing help to some of our most vulnerable student populations.”

Dr. Kay Warfield, ALSDE Education Administrator, said that in 2016, the third leading cause of death for 10-17-year-olds in Alabama was suicide. She said 26 percent of Alabama children (approximately 282,396) live in poverty. MHSCs from the 102 grant-awarded school systems convened in Tuscaloosa in the fall of 2020 for a two-day training.

“With the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic students’ mental health has been negatively impacted by the exacerbated levels of stress from learning and everyday life tasks,” Warfield said.

“Trainings to date have focused on the importance of emotional temperature checks or an early warning system, interventions and strategies to design a Mental Health Matters Multi-Tiered Plan that includes virtual students, and the positive impact and stability of building relationships between the mental health and school communities.”

The ALSDE will focus on a host of recommendations, including having Mental Health Services Coordinator Positions in ALL 144 school systems; a statewide “Mental Health Matters” public engagement campaign across Alabama; professional development on multi-tiered student support services; increasing community support partnerships, increasing the official School-Based Mental Health Collaborative; Youth Mental Health First Aid, and Mental Health Certification for MHSCs who complete a 10-module course.

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