

Governor Phil Murphy



photo: view of NJ Trenton DOM

Murphy Administration Announces \$16 Million in Grants to Support Mental Health Needs of Higher Education Students

11/22/2022

TRENTON – The Murphy Administration today announced the availability of \$16 million in grants to address the mental health needs of New Jersey students in higher education settings, since many of the mental health challenges facing young people today have been exacerbated by the toll of the COVID-19 pandemic. Leveraging American Rescue Plan (ARP) dollars appropriated in the Fiscal Year 2023 budget, the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education (OSHE) will administer these grants to fund mental health initiatives at New Jersey public and public-mission independent institutions of higher education that receive State operating aid.

Today's announcement is part of Governor Phil Murphy's \$55 million multiagency ARP investment in the FY23 budget, including additional programs from the Departments of Education, Children and Families, and Human Services. Programs will launch throughout the fiscal year. This announcement complements Governor Murphy's national commitment to Strengthening Youth Mental Health through his work as the 2022-2023 Chair of the National Governors Association.

Of the \$16 million available for these grants, \$15 million will be distributed to eligible institutions of higher education for the creation of community partnerships that will allow the institutions to increase capacity to meet the mental health needs of students. Institutions are encouraged to partner with local, state, or national organizations to deliver services tailored to the unique needs of their student populations. To ensure a fair and equitable distribution, this funding will be allocated to eligible institutions based on a formula composed of two parts: 1) a flat dollar amount awarded to all institutions in the sector based on the sector's percentage share of the state's overall student enrollment; and 2) the institution's total student enrollment.

The remaining \$1 million will be directed towards professional development opportunities for faculty and staff to build multicultural competencies and increase engagement with their diverse student bodies. Each eligible institution can apply for up to a maximum of \$21,739 for this purpose.

"With sharp increases in the rates of depression, anxiety, and stress among youth in New Jersey and around the nation, it is clear many young people are struggling right now," **said Governor Murphy**. "We must do everything in our power to support youth mental health as we emerge from the pandemic and look towards the future. These grants will fund critical initiatives at our institutions of higher education to help address the mental health needs of New Jersey students – which is essential to both their success and the success of our State as a whole."

"Addressing mental health is critical to our students' overall health, wellness, and success," **said Dr. Brian K. Bridges, Secretary of Higher Education**. "Students' mental health may impact their academic progress, including retention and on-time graduation, particularly for those from historically underserved backgrounds. These grants will help our institutions deliver high-quality mental health services to all students and ensure that no student is turned away in their time of need."

In a fall 2021 OSHE questionnaire focused on the ongoing impact of COVID-19 on New Jersey students' mental and physical health, over 70 percent of surveyed students rated their level of stress and anxiety as higher than in 2020, when the pandemic first hit.

"We made this funding available through the state budget because we recognize the importance of providing mental health services to students on our college campuses," **said Senate President Nick Scutari**. "There is a critical need for this help to address a mental health crisis that extends to our colleges and universities. The collaboration among mental health organizations that possess expertise and our institutions of higher education will help provide valuable services to those in need so they can to succeed in their college work and beyond."

"Mental health matters. With leadership that understands that, our investments into mental health care and services this year far outpaced any other year in our state's recent history," **said Assembly Speaker Craig J. Coughlin**. "Prioritizing strategic community partnerships that enhance access to support and resources for students, these grants not only address the existing mental health need on campuses but will go great lengths in fostering a broader culture and environment that is supportive of mental wellness. Young people deserve to have the tools they need for success and to be positive about their futures. I am thankful for the shared commitment of the Governor, OSHE, and legislative partners to help ensure they can be."

OSHE will also use an additional \$10 million in ARP funds to establish a statewide telehealth program. This program, which is estimated to launch early next year, will increase the accessibility of mental health services for all New Jersey higher education students through virtual services available on and off campus.

Applications will be due by 5:00 pm on January 31, 2023, with an anticipated release of grant dollars early next year. Questions regarding the mental health grants can be directed to OSHE@OSHE.nj.gov (<mailto:OSHE@OSHE.nj.gov>).

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