Governor Phil Murphy

ICYMI: Murphy Administration Announces Free, 24/7/365 Digital Mental Health Services Secured for New Jersey College Students through April 2026

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(MONTCLAIR, NJ) – Today, during Mental Health Awareness Month, Lieutenant Governor Tahesha Way and Secretary of Higher Education Brian K. Bridges, Ph.D., announced New Jersey college students will have free, 24/7/365 access to teletherapy, crisis connection and wellness programming through the remainder of the Murphy Administration. Launched (https://nj.gov/governor/news/news/562023/approved/20230523a.shtml) one year ago, the state's first-in-the-nation partnership with mental health and wellness platform, Uwill, currently serves students at 45 eligible institutions of higher education in New Jersey who opted into the partnership.

"There is no question that young people have been facing a mental health crisis for some time – the causes of which are multi-faceted and include everything from the rise of social media, to increased academic pressures, the impact of the pandemic, and much, much more. While we are still at the beginning of our fight to strengthen youth mental health, I am incredibly proud of the serious way our administration has approached this issue," **said Lieutenant Governor Way.** "Today's announcement that we have secured additional funding for New Jersey's first-in-the-nation partnership with Uwill continues to demonstrate the Governor's commitment and leadership on youth mental health. With this program, we are ensuring college students who are struggling will have access to mental health support services 24/7/365 days a year."

"We affirm that mental health is a key determinant of any student's success and that safe, empowered access to care can make all the difference in seeking out support," **said Secretary Bridges.** "That's why our statewide efforts have worked to complement the best of what our institutions already offer through in-person counseling and wellness centers with opportunities that expand their reach and help to meet students where they are and at whatever stage in their mental health journey. The announcement today advances our steadfast commitment to cultivating stronger well-being on campus and better life and educational outcomes for all students pursuing a degree or credential in the Garden State."

As of April, over 10,000 students have registered on Uwill's digital platform and have scheduled nearly 32,000 sessions with the diverse network of licensed and qualified mental health providers available. The impact data OSHE collected through student and institution staff feedback surveys, in addition to utilization data, reflect the positive impact and success of the partnership in strengthening well-being among New Jersey college students and filling previously unmet mental health needs:

- **We are reaching college students who had not previously accessed support:** 61% of students registered on the platform indicated that they had not previously made an appointment with a therapist or mental health counselor at their institution.
- **We are reaching students when on-campus services cannot:** 79% of institution staff agreed the partnership has enabled them to provide or enhance mental health support to students after hours, when they would otherwise be unavailable. Utilization data further illustrates this with roughly 33% of the appointments

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made through the Uwill platform occurring during 'off-peak' hours—on the weekends and before 9:00 am and after 5:00 pm on weekdays.

- **We are seeing early indications of improving outcomes:** 59% of institution staff agreed this increased access to mental health services is likely to further retention and graduation rates (only 3.4% disagreed).

The announcement today means currently enrolled students, students enrolling to start college in New Jersey this fall, and those who plan to enroll with the Class of 2028 will all benefit from this free support until April 2026.

"During trying times, it's more important than ever that we work together to ensure everyone feels seen and supported," **said Jonathan Koppell, President of Montclair State University.** "While we can't always change the world around us, we can foster a culture that empowers our students and employees to overcome obstacles, and provide them with the resources to thrive. We are grateful for the state's commitment to investing in services like Uwill, and are relieved that today's announcement means thousands more students across the state will have the opportunity to get the support that they need."

"Given the increased need for mental health support, Montclair State University's Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) has been eager to partner with Uwill to increase access and provide an option for longer term care for students," **said Jaclyn Friedman-Lombardo, Director of Montclair CAPS.** "The telehealth program is particularly useful in filling service gaps for students who commute, prefer virtual support and/or need services after business hours and on weekends. The partnership has also allowed CAPS staff to focus efforts on prevention as well as addressing crises and more acute clinical issues."

"We're grateful for the efforts of Governor Murphy, Secretary Bridges, and every New Jersey leader who has solidified this statewide commitment to campus mental health. These advocacy efforts will help change the lives of students and families across the state and unlock opportunity and a better future for the students we serve today," **said Michael London, Uwill Founder and CEO.** "Investments in student mental health and well-being truly are investments in student health, success, and college completion. Ensuring the continuity of digital mental health and wellness support is critical, particularly as students navigate the end of the academic year and head into summer break, when they may not have access to on-campus support services."

Though the spring semester is ending, students currently enrolled at a New Jersey institution and registered on Uwill's platform will be able to access services throughout the summer.

"It's crucial to recognize the immense challenges our students are facing today. Data from the New Jersey Office of the Secretary of Higher Education emphasizes the urgency of delivering mental health support to our college students, as over 70 percent have reported heightened levels of stress and anxiety compared to the previous year," **said Assemblywoman Carter (D-Somerset, Union).** "We must strive to destigmatize mental health care to ensure that every individual feels empowered to seek the support they need. That is why I have co-sponsored a bill advocating for health benefits plans to prioritize access to mental health providers, ensuring everyone, including our students, have the necessary resources for their well-being."

"As an educator, I've seen firsthand the impact that a supportive environment can have on a student's well-being," **said Assemblywoman Rosy Bagolie (D-Essex, Passaic)**. "No student should have to fight their battles alone, and by establishing this partnership we set forth a framework that fosters an environment where students feel valued, supported, and empowered to take charge of their mental health."

"With mental health issues, depression, and anxiety lurking in the shadows far too often, it's imperative that we provide college students with resources and support," **said Assemblywoman Andrea Katz (D-Burlington, Atlantic).** "Whether through virtual therapy sessions or 24/7 access to mental health services, thousands of students are benefiting from services available here in New Jersey. As a mom of teenagers heading to college in the next few years, I cannot stress enough the importance of continuing to strengthen our mental health support networks on college campuses so that these tools are available to students well into the future."

The partnership continues to work in complement to Governor Murphy's Administration-wide strategy to strengthen youth mental health in New Jersey, which included $16 million (https://www.nj.gov/governor/news/news/562022/20221122b.shtml) in grants for institutions of higher education to increase the capacity of campus-based services. Grants awarded by OSHE last summer are supporting 44 institutions in establishing community provider partnerships as well as professional development opportunities for

faculty and staff that are building multicultural competency.

For a list of the New Jersey institutions that are partnered with Uwill to provide services, visit https://www.nj.gov/highereducation/mentalhealth/telehealth.shtml (https://www.nj.gov/highereducation/mentalhealth/telehealth.shtml)

Students looking to register on the platform to access the digital mental health support and services should contact their college or university directly.

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