

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2019 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

Senate Bill 993
Finance

(Senator Hester, *et al.*)

Task Force to Study Behavioral and Mental Health in Maryland

This bill establishes the Task Force to Study Behavioral and Mental Health in Maryland. The Maryland Department of Health (MDH) must provide staff for the task force. A member of the task force may not receive compensation but is entitled to reimbursement for expenses under the standard State travel regulations, as provided in the State budget. The task force must report its findings and recommendations to the Governor and specified committees of the General Assembly by December 1, 2020. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2019, and terminates June 30, 2021.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: MDH can staff the task force with existing budgeted resources. Revenues are not affected.

Local Effect: Local government operations or finances are not materially affected; local boards of education can consult with the task force with existing resources.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The task force must:

- consult with each local board of education’s mental health services coordinator to define “mental health services” for each local board of education;
- identify the number of full- and part-time school psychologists, school counselors, and school social workers working for each local board of education;

- identify the ratio of students to school psychologists, counselors, and social workers in each county;
- review best practices for treating immediate, short-term, and long-term behavioral and mental health issues in the State;
- identify successful behavioral and mental health initiatives in other states and recommend programs, tools, strategies, and funding sources needed to implement similar initiatives in the State;
- identify vulnerable populations and risk factors in the State for behavioral and mental health disorders;
- identify gaps in service for individuals with behavioral and mental health disorders and the resources necessary to fill the gaps identified;
- identify evidence-based practices to treat patients with behavioral and mental health disorders for health care providers and public health systems;
- study and assess the private and public mental and behavioral health funding model used in the State; and
- make specified recommendations based on the findings.

Current Law/Background: School counselors, school social workers, and school psychologists each provide mental health support in schools. A first line of support, school counselors and school social workers can identify students in distress and work with them to develop skills to handle the stress and disturbing social/emotional issues in their lives. Additionally, school counselors, school social workers, school health specialists, and school psychologists deliver a program of services to address student needs through classroom guidance. School psychologists also identify mental distress, complete assessments related to mental health, and provide supportive counseling as needed.

Chapter 30 of 2018 (The Maryland Safe to Learn Act of 2018) required the School Safety Subcabinet to report in general on the availability of mental health services and practitioners for school-age children, the mental health needs of school-age children, and the School Safety Subcabinet's plans for delivering behavioral health and wraparound services to students exhibiting behaviors of concern. A [report](#) was submitted in December 2018. The report identified gaps in available community-based mental and behavioral health services for school-aged children by jurisdiction and made a series of recommendations.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: HB 783 (Delegate P. Young, *et al.*) - Health and Government Operations.

Information Source(s): Maryland Association of County Health Officers; Maryland Department of Health; Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services; Mental Health America; Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration; Department of Legislative Services

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