



What You Need to Know:

- One in five children in DC have a mental health disorder, and almost half of our students have had at least one traumatic experience.
- Trauma-informed training, social emotional learning programs, and access to mental health professionals are proven solutions to support students with mental health issues.
- Program resources and additional mental health staff come with a large cost but are needed to transform school environments.



Why Are Mental Health Supports Important?

When students come to school, they bring their whole selves into the classroom. If students' basic needs are not met or they are dealing with trauma or mental health issues, their ability to learn is limited. **Right now, approximately one in five children in DC meet the criteria for having a mental health disorder.** The stresses of living in an urban environment or living in poverty take an additional toll on children and their brain development. **Alarmingly, almost half of all DC students have had at least one traumatic experience, and 22 percent have experienced more than one.** Students of color, who make up the majority of youth in the District, are even more likely to experience trauma.



Fortunately, these issues are treatable and with appropriate support and resources, and all of our students can learn and grow in a nurturing and positive school environment. **Every student deserves access to trauma-informed school staff, mental health professionals, social emotional learning programs and a school culture that teaches and allows students to be their best selves.**



How Can We Make Schools a Safe and Positive Place for All Kids?

PAVE parent leaders have asked for school-based mental health supports such as trauma-informed training, evidence-based social emotional learning programs, and access to mental health professionals to ensure that the whole child is supported.

Components of Mental Health Supports



- **Trauma-informed training** ensures that all school staff are prepared to recognize and respond to students who are impacted by traumatic stress. This approach seeks to shift adult mindsets, so that they are able to address root causes of behavior.
- **Social Emotional Learning Programs** teach children to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy, establish positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.
- **Mental Health Professionals** including social workers, psychiatrists, psychologists, and counselors, are crucial to ensuring that all students are well-supported.



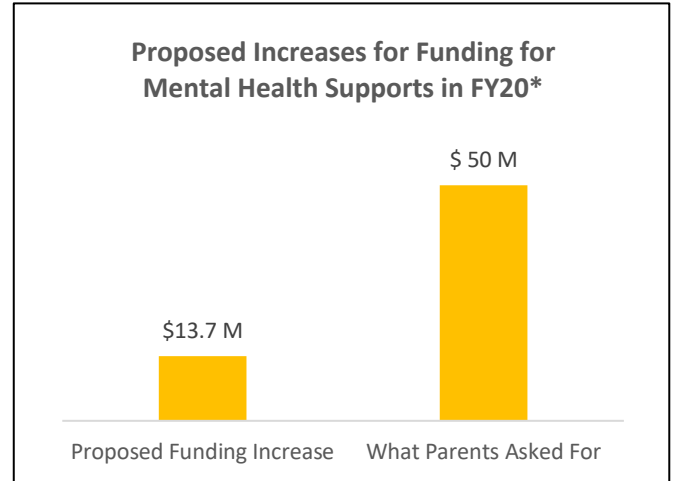


What is Needed to Improve Mental Health Supports?

Each and every adult in our school buildings should be responsible for supporting students in their journey to cope, heal, and grow. To support that work, PAVE parent leaders advocated for \$54 million for comprehensive mental health supports in schools.

In FY20, our city leaders proposed an increase of \$13.7 million towards mental health supports, including significant increases to OSSE's School Safety and Positive Climate Fund and DBH's School Mental Health Program.

DCPS also redirected \$2.6 million of their funding to their school mental health and school culture teams. The at-risk weight, which is a flexible and sustainable source of funding, increased by 0.001, which is still 14.5 below the recommended level. This resulted in a mere \$1.4 million increase for our highest need students. Overall, we are still more than \$36 million short of what we need to ensure that all of our students are supported and able to thrive.



*Data current as of 5/24/2019

In addition to more funding, the city leaders should work together to conduct a **needs assessment** to determine what mental health supports are currently available in schools and to identify where there are gaps in supports and services. This data should be used to inform the allocation of funding of mental health supports across schools and agencies. We also need to create a **standard of best practices on how to consistently and meaningfully engage parents, families, and communities** in the development of the school culture and the implementation of mental health supports.

How Can Parents Get Involved?

- Testify at a **public hearing** to call for increased mental health supports and trauma-informed training in all schools
- Contact the **mayor and your councilmember** to let them know this issue is a priority
- Contact PAVE's **community organizing team** at organizers@dcpave.org for more information



Learn More:

- ❖ Read more about a comprehensive approach to school-based mental health supports with Colorado's Mental Health Toolkit: <https://bit.ly/2YsljN8>
- ❖ For more information on restorative justice in schools, see Restorative DC's Implementation Guide: <https://bit.ly/30iN7ph>