



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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The Biden-Harris Administration Takes Additional Actions to Address Mental Health Needs of Young People and Make Communities Safer from Gun Violence

Today, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) took additional steps to advance the investments and efforts set forth by President Biden's Bipartisan Safer Communities Act (BSCA) -- the most significant bipartisan gun safety legislation in nearly 30 years. BSCA set forth crucial mental health investments and actions to prevent and respond to gun violence in communities, ensure that those experiencing grief and trauma resulting from gun violence have access to high-quality mental health services, and supports to make our schools safer and expand community violence interventions.

"It's no secret that we are facing a mental health crisis in this country, and our children are hurting," said U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Xavier Becerra. "That is why this Administration is committed to addressing this crisis through continued efforts, investments, and more. The actions being announced today will make it easier for schools to receive payment for the mental health services they deliver to students impacted by gun violence. At HHS, we will continue working to ensure young people have more places to turn to for help."

"Too many students have experienced gun violence in their schools and communities. The grief and trauma caused by gun violence undermines their ability to learn and thrive and has

only heightened the national youth mental health crisis,” said U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona. “The Department of Education is using every available resource to maximize the investments made through the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act to help schools build an infrastructure of care and support for students. The Biden-Harris administration will continue working to break down silos between education and health care, raise the bar for our support of students’ mental health and wellbeing, and ensure our schools are safe havens for teaching and learning.”

To advance the mission of the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, Secretaries Becerra and Cardona sent a joint [letter](#) to governors highlighting resources to help states, communities, and schools support students’ mental health and well-being, particularly students impacted by gun violence. The letter highlights ED’s investments and capacity-building efforts that will expand and improve school-based mental health services, address community violence, provide wraparound supports, and promote a safe and supportive school climate. The letter also outlines HHS’s efforts to support the development of school-based mental health supports; prepare and train school personnel, emergency first responders, law enforcement and others to recognize the signs and symptoms of mental health impacts from gun violence; and increase treatment and support services for individuals and communities affected by trauma, including trauma caused by gun violence.

ED and HHS are working together on BSCA implementation because today’s young people are facing unprecedented challenges and disruptions in their school lives and communities, including increased disconnection and social isolation as well as increased gun violence. These challenges have had devastating effects on students’ mental health and well-being, which in turn have profound implications for their academic success and their overall life outcomes. These new actions help extend the impact of BSCA in keeping our communities safe, bringing new resources and protections to bear both in addressing the mental health challenges that young people face so that all students can learn freely and safely every day and curbing gun violence in our communities.

The Biden Administration has taken a multifaceted approach to BSCA implementation to deliver on crucial protections and resources to help prevent gun violence in schools and support the development of high-quality school-based mental health services.

At ED, this includes awarding \$286 million to date across 264 grantees in [48 states](#) and territories to boost the training, hiring, and diversification of mental health professionals in schools through its School-Based Mental Health and Mental Health Service Professional Demonstration grant programs (which will result in an estimated 14,000 additional mental health professionals in schools); distributing \$1 billion in the Stronger Connections Grant program to help schools in high-need districts provide students with safe, welcoming, and supportive learning opportunities and environments that are critical for their success; and providing an additional \$50 million to supplement before and after-school programming for young people through the Nita M. Lowey 21st Century Community Learning Centers, through evidence-based practices that increase attendance and engagement among middle- and high-school aged youth.

At HHS, nearly \$245 million in funding has been awarded to support youth mental health, help the health care workforce address mental health needs, and fund other critical mental health supports; \$70 million to help develop and support school-based mental health programs; almost \$60 million to prepare and train school personnel, emergency first responders, law enforcement and others to recognize the signs and symptoms of mental health challenges; and almost \$55 million to increase treatment and support services for individuals and communities affected by trauma caused by gun violence. In the coming months, HHS will also provide almost \$60 million to states and territories for the second of four increments in supplemental funding for the Community Mental Health Services Block Grant for mental health treatment and recovery services including crisis services and early serious mental illness treatment programs.

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