



Mental Health Association in New York State, Inc.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New State Law Ensures Mental Health Education in Schools

This first-in-nation law takes effect July 1

Mental Health Association in New York State prepares resource and training center to help school districts teach mental health to students

ALBANY, N.Y.; JULY 2, 2018—A new state law that will ensure mental health education is provided in classrooms across New York State goes into effect July 1, 2018, the Mental Health Association in New York State, Inc. (MHANYS) announced today.

MHANYS led a persistent, five-year legislative advocacy effort that rallied mental health professionals and advocates in communities across the state in order to urge lawmakers to approve the legislation, which Governor Andrew Cuomo signed into law in September 2016.

“This groundbreaking law lays the path to better health for all New Yorkers,” said **Glenn Liebman, CEO of MHANYS**. “While first starting in schools, we believe that ultimately this law will have a far-reaching effect for communities across New York State.”

This first-in-nation law requires that all elementary, middle and high schools in New York State now include mental health, as part of existing physical health instruction, in their education curriculum. It will advance the movement to expand mental health literacy among young people statewide.

By emphasizing mental health literacy, schools can prepare students with lifelong skills to understand mental health and wellness and increase their awareness of when and how to access treatment or support for themselves or others.

“Unrecognized, untreated and late-treated mental illness elevates the risk of mental health crises such as suicide and self-injury. Early treatment enhances potential for recovery and also diminishes negative coping behaviors such as substance abuse,” Liebman added. “Empowering young people with knowledge will have a powerful impact in helping them protect and preserve mental health and wellness for themselves and their peers.”

Approximately one in five adults in the U.S. lives with a mental illness. Additionally, about half of all chronic mental health conditions begin by age 14, half of all cases of anxiety disorders begin as early as age 8, and about 22 percent of youth aged 13-18 experience serious mental disorders in a given year, according to the National Institute of Mental Health.

NYS Office of Mental Health Commissioner Dr. Ann Sullivan said, “By introducing mental health education at age appropriate levels from elementary through high school, mental health will be normalized just as physical health is, stigma will be reduced and children and parents will learn about prevention and when and how they should ask for help. Through education, we can change people’s perception of mental illness, and encourage future generations to ask for help if they’re feeling depressed or anxious as easily as they ask for help for an injured leg or a sore throat.”

“The public is finally coming around to the notion that to properly address mental health issues, we must first acknowledge and openly discuss them,” said **State Education Commissioner MaryEllen Elia**. “The Board of Regents, the Education Department and I are fully committed to this effort. Together with many partners across many disciplines we are working to promote mental health literacy and awareness in New York’s schools. We will soon provide our schools with resources – developed together with the NYS Office of Mental Health and MHANYS – on mental health instruction that extends beyond the classroom, to promote a climate of wellness that enhances the whole child, the whole school and the whole community.”

New York’s law is the first in the nation to require mental health instruction in schools, and many mental health professionals expect others states to follow New York’s lead. Great interest has been generated across the country in modeling New York’s legislation.

The new law enacts the mental health education requirement, but does not mandate a specific curriculum. That’s why MHANYS is taking action to help schools implement their own mental health curricula and serve as a resource for ongoing support.

MHANYS will soon launch the School Mental Health Resource and Training Center, which will be available to all public and private schools statewide to help with effective implementation of the new law at the local level.

The Center, which is supported through grant funding from the New York State Legislature and Governor, will provide assistance and guidance through an online platform, a hotline for school districts and a team of experts in education and mental health. Additionally, the Center will offer mental health training for staff and help schools establish community partnerships to meet the mental health needs of students and families. Starting immediately, schools can contact the Mental Health Training and Resource Center with questions or requests for assistance at schools@mhanys.org.

The School Mental Health Resource and Training Center’s website will be live starting July 1 at www.mentalhealthdnys.org, and its full services will be launched later this summer. MHANYS is building its dedicated team of experts to staff the Center and adding in-depth content to the online platform, which will house lesson plans and information on mental health resources and the new law. Further details about Center will be announced in the coming weeks.

About Mental Health Association in New York State, Inc.

The Mental Health Association in New York State, Inc. (MHANYS) is a nonprofit organization that works to end the stigma against mental illness and promotes mental health wellness in New York State. MHANYS achieves this through training, education, advocacy and policy, community-based partnership programming, and by connecting individuals and families to help. Following its successful efforts to secure approval of a law requiring mental health instruction in schools, MHANYS is now establishing the School Mental Health Resources and Training Center to facilitate effective implementation of the new law. Across the state, MHANYS has 26 regional MHA affiliates that are active in 50 counties. For more information, visit <https://mhanys.org/>.

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