

Media Release

The Hon James Merlino MP

Deputy Premier

Minister for the Coordination of Education and Training – COVID-19

Minister for Education



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MORE MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT FOR VICTORIAN STUDENTS

More Victorian secondary school students will soon have access to the school-based mental health support they need, thanks to the Victorian Government.

Minister for Education James Merlino today announced the timeline for the 2021 roll-out for Victorian government secondary schools across the state that will receive extra support under the Mental Health Practitioners initiative.

In recognition of the increased mental health challenges posed by the coronavirus pandemic, the roll-out has been brought forward to be completed by the end of 2021.

Under the initiative, schools in Outer Eastern Melbourne (Term 1), Ovens Murray (Term 2), Mallee (Term 2), Inner Gippsland (Term 3), Inner Eastern Melbourne (Term 3), Goulburn (Term 4), Wimmera South West (Term 4) and Brimbank Melton (Term 4) will benefit from access to additional mental health support for their students in 2021.

The \$51.2 million initiative, which began in July last year, provides funding to schools to recruit a mental health practitioner. It will see qualified mental health professionals in every government secondary school campus across the state, including psychologists, social workers, occupational therapists and mental health nurses.

Mental health practitioners offer counselling and early intervention services, and coordinate support for students with complex needs, linking them with broader allied and community health services.

All government secondary schools will receive between one and five days a week of support from a mental health practitioner depending on its size and requirements.

This builds on the \$65.5 million investment in student health and wellbeing initiatives in schools, including the Victorian Anti-Bullying and Mental Health Initiative, the School-Wide Positive Behaviour Support program, as well as increased investment in allied health and nursing services.

All Victorian government school students, whether they are learning remotely or attending school on-site, have been able to access mental health and wellbeing support during the pandemic. Secondary school students can access counselling via a voice call or video conference through the headspace counselling partnership or via their school-based mental health practitioner.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Education James Merlino

“So many of our young people are experiencing mental health challenges - this will make it easier for them to access the support they need at school. This is one of the biggest issues raised with me when I talk to students, parents and carers and schools.”

“We know that when our kids are happy and well supported, they can focus on their learning, succeed in their education and excel in life.”