

Media Release

The Hon James Merlino MP
Deputy Premier
Minister for Education
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EXPANDING MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT TO VICTORIAN STUDENTS

Every Victorian government secondary school will soon have access to a mental health professional, thanks to the Andrews Labor Government.

Minister for Education James Merlino today announced a new Mental Health in Schools program, which will ensure students are receiving quality mental health care when they need it most.

One in seven Victorians between the ages of four and 17 are estimated to have a mental health issue, with prevalence higher in secondary school.

This \$51.2 million program will allow schools across the state to employ over 190 qualified mental health professionals such as counsellors, youth workers or psychologists.

The Labor Government will also partner with the Orygen National Centre of Excellence in Youth Mental Health to promote student wellbeing within secondary schools.

Schools will have access to expert advice online through a central web portal which will support school-based health and wellbeing teams to deliver mental health plans and support to students, and receive advice on how schools should interact with allied community and health services.

Every government secondary school will receive between one and five days a week of support from a mental health professional, depending on their enrolment numbers.

It means every government secondary school student will be able to access mental health support at school, with the program to provide at least 385,000 hours of additional mental health support in schools over four years.

The mental health professionals will provide direct counselling support and other early intervention services for students that need it, as well as coordinating support for students with severe needs.

They will also lead prevention activities by giving school staff the skills they need to manage student mental health and help embed mental health promotion and prevention programs and strategies in schools.

This announcement builds on the Labor Government's \$65.5 million investment in student health and wellbeing initiatives in all schools. This includes the Victorian Anti-Bullying and Mental Health Initiative, targeted mental health programs delivered by headspace and the School-Wide Positive Behaviour Support program, as well as increased investment in allied health and nursing services.

Quotes Attributable to Minister for Education James Merlino

"We know that when our kids are happy and healthy they can focus on their learning and have the best opportunity to succeed in education and excel in life. That is why we are providing additional funding to ensure that every child is supported to achieve their best."

"More health professionals in schools will mean the kids who need extra help will get it, and won't be left behind."

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