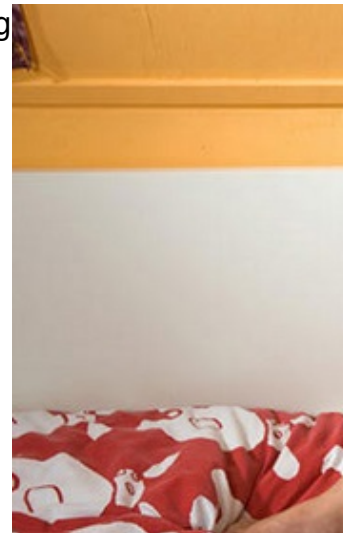


“Get Kids Ahead Initiative” Awards \$15 Million to Local Schools

Written by GOV Press Wisconsin
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Help Nearly Every Wisconsin School District Provide School-Based Mental Health Support for Kids

MADISON — Gov. Tony Evers last week [announced](#) nearly every school district across the state, including more than 450 local education agencies, will be awarded funds through the governor’s \$15 million [“Get Kids Ahead” initiative](#), as announced during his [2022 State of the State address](#).

As part of a statewide tour announcing allocations to school districts, the governor visited Milwaukee, Omro, Stevens Point, Eau Claire, West Bend, Weston, Arcadia, Hortonville, Friendship, and Ladysmith. Throughout his tour, the governor met with students, educators, administrators, and school staff, including counselors and mental health support staff, about student mental health needs and how the funding provided by the “Get Kids Ahead” initiative will support mental health programming in schools.

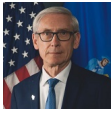
“We know that long before the pandemic hit, kids across our state were already facing immense challenges with their mental health, but as parents and educators are seeing firsthand, these challenges have only been made worse by the isolating and traumatic events of the past two years,” said Gov. Evers in his announcement of awards. “These funds will go directly towards whatever mental health support and services our kids need so they can be successful both in and out of the classroom to help them grow, learn, and get ahead.”

Every public school district in the state was eligible to opt in to receive these funds and was guaranteed to receive a minimum of \$10,000. The remainder of the funds were allocated on a per pupil basis. Schools can use these funds to provide direct mental healthcare, hire and

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support mental health navigators, provide mental health first aid and trauma-based care training, or provide family assistance programs. A breakdown of funding by local education agency is available [here](#).*



Gov. Evers started his statewide tour on Wed., April 6, 2022, at Journey House in Milwaukee. During his visit, the governor heard from representatives of Milwaukee Public Schools, H. W. Longfellow School, Journey House, and students about the work being done to bolster student mental health. Photos of the governor’s visit are available [here](#) and [here](#). Following his visit in Milwaukee, the governor continued on to Omro where he visited Omro High School and he heard from district leadership, teachers, and staff about the work being done in the school to support student and educator mental health. They were also joined by Matthew Rilling who is a member of the school’s student-led wellness and suicide prevention initiative, “Sources of Strength,” and the school’s support pet, Griffin. Photos of the governor’s visit are available [here](#) and [here](#).

The governor continued his tour on Thurs., April 7, 2022, with a visit to Northstar Middle School in Eau Claire. While at Northstar Middle School, Gov. Evers met with local school and district leadership, as well as students, including members of the Student Council, National Honor Society, and Equity Club, and discussed how these funds would go toward supporting increased mental health resources, such as hiring new school mental health professionals and supporting programs already in place. He also answered several questions from the students in attendance about his experiences with mental health, self-care, and public service. Photos of the governor’s visit are available [here](#) and [here](#). Following his stop in Eau Claire, the governor continued on to Stevens Point where he visited Stevens Point Area Senior High School. During his visit, the governor heard from school, district, and student leaders about the increased need for mental health services and how these funds would go toward expanding those services and increasing mental health training and resources for teachers in the classroom. Photos of the governor’s visit are available [here](#) and [here](#).

On Mon., April 11, 2022, the governor visited West Bend East and West High Schools in West Bend, where in addition to meeting with school and district leadership and community organizations like the Boys and Girls Clubs of Washington County, he heard from student representatives from several school clubs including the Youth Impact Club, CREW, and Peer 4 Peers which focus on student mental health and suicide prevention, support for incoming freshman students, and youth leadership, respectively. Photos of the governor’s visit are available [here](#) and [here](#). Following this stop, the governor continued on to Weston where he

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visited D.C. Everest Senior High School. The governor’s visit coincided with the school’s preparation for a day-long, student-led Wellness Day that took place on Thurs., April 14, 2022. During his visit, the governor met with students to discuss their leadership in planning the event and their efforts to increase conversations and services regarding student mental health in both the school and local community. In addition, Gov. Evers met with local community and district leadership from D.C. Everest Area School District and Wausau School District to discuss how the communities have come together to collaboratively work toward solutions for better supporting kids. A photo of the governor’s visit is available [here](#)
[e](#)

On Tues., April 12, 2022, the governor visited Arcadia Elementary School in Arcadia where he announced funds for the four local area school districts that make up the Trempealeau Valley Cooperative, including the School District of Arcadia, Blair-Taylor School District, Independence School District, and Whitehall School District. Following the award of funds to each respective school district, the governor visited with first and third grade students to talk about their school year and what they were learning about. Photos of the governor’s visit are available [here](#) and [here](#).

Following his visit to Arcadia, the governor continued on to Hortonville where he visited Hortonville High School. During his visit, the governor met with district leadership and student members of the school’s chapter of “Sources of Strength,” and discussed the group’s efforts to reduce the stigma surrounding mental health and the positive work being done to increase student mental health services across the district. A photo of the governor’s visit is available [here](#)

To conclude his statewide tour, on Thurs., April 14, 2022, the governor visited the Adams-Friendship Area School District in Friendship. During his visit, the governor met with leadership and staff, as well as with school counselors, psychologists, and social workers to discuss the district’s efforts to address student mental health, the ongoing mental health needs of students, and how the district plans to use the grant dollars to increase access to therapists and explore telehealth options. A photo of the governor’s visit is available [here](#). Finally, the governor visited Ladysmith Middle and High School in Ladysmith where he met district leadership, local school and mental health professionals, and community members to hear about the increased need for mental health programming for students and their plans for how to use the district’s allocation of funds. A photo of the governor’s visit is available [here](#)

The “Get Kids Ahead” initiative builds on the governor’s investments to support student mental health as the state continues to recover from effects of the coronavirus pandemic. In the 2021-23 biennial budget, the governor initially proposed \$53.5 million for student mental health services, but the Legislature reduced the combined funding to a \$19 million increase. And in [December 2021](#)

, Gov. Evers delivered on a promise he made when he signed the biennial budget by providing an additional \$110 million to support kids and schools that could be used by schools for anything kids needed to be successful, including mental health supports and more educational

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and extracurricular opportunities.

Additionally, [last month](#) , Gov. Evers announced a \$5 million investment to make telehealth services, including mental and behavioral health services, more accessible by creating two \$2.5 million grant programs for providers to expand and enhance child psychiatry telehealth services and partner with community organizations to establish neighborhood telehealth access points at food pantries, homeless shelters, libraries, long-term care facilities, community centers, and schools for people with limited access to technology and reliable internet service.

*Note that three tribally-controlled schools in Wisconsin eligible to receive these funds are not included in this list.