

Mental Health Instruction in Schools



Mental Health Association in New York State, Inc.

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Mental Health Instruction in Schools

Chapter 390 of the Laws of 2016
Amended:

New York State Education Law
Article 17 - (801 - 816) Instruction in Certain Subjects
Section 804 subdivisions (1) and (6)(c)



The Mental Hygiene Movement

The National Committee aimed to:

- Improve conditions in mental hospitals
- Stimulate research in psychiatry
- Improve the quality of psychiatric education
- Develop measures preventing mental illness
- Popularize psychiatric and psychological perspectives.



In 1928, the *Sixth Yearbook* of the Department of Superintendents of the National Education Association outlined the following content guidelines for health education:

- **Mental hygiene must be emphasized and protected;**
- The establishment of health habits depends upon the pupil's understanding something of the function of his own body;
- A discussion of the causes of disease merits a place in the secondary school program;
- A thorough study of nutrition should be placed in the upper grades.
- Posture should be emphasized.
- The hygiene of the home should be taught.
- Sex hygiene cannot be overlooked.



School Health Education Study (1960s)

Defined health as a dynamic, multidimensional entity and outlined instructional content areas:

- Human growth and development;
- Personal health practices;
- Accidents and disease;
- Food and nutrition;
- Mood-altering substances, and;
- Role of the family in fulfilling health needs.



Mental Health Literacy

Mental Health Literacy – Is an extension of Health Literacy and is defined as “knowledge and beliefs about mental disorders which aid their recognition, management or prevention”

– Jorm, A.F. et al (1997)

Jorm, A. F. (2011, October 31). Mental Health Literacy: Empowering the Community to Take Action for Better Mental Health. American Psychologist. Advance online publication.



Core Argument

“We possess the knowledge and tools necessary to increase awareness in young people about mental health, how to recognize signs and symptoms in themselves and others and how to get help. Why in the world would we withhold this lifesaving information from our youth?”

From MHANYS “Mental Health Education in Schools: Legislative Issue Brief – 2016”

§ 804. Health education regarding **mental health**, alcohol, drugs, tobacco abuse and the prevention and detection of certain cancers.

1. All schools under the jurisdiction of the department shall ensure that their health education programs recognize the multiple dimensions of health by including mental health and the relation of physical and mental health so as to enhance student understanding, attitudes and behaviors that promote health, well-being and human dignity.

2. All schools shall include, as an integral part of health education, instruction so as to discourage the misuse and abuse of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs and promote attitudes and behavior that enhance health, well being, and human dignity.



Implementation

MHANYYS Objectives:

- Solidify primary advocacy role and recognition
- Assure the legislative intent is maintained throughout implementation

Action Steps:

- Mental Health Education Summit
- White Paper
- Partnering with NYS Department of Education
- Statewide Advisory Group



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