



STATE OF NEW JERSEY
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

A Memo from the New Jersey Department of Education

Date: November 12, 2020

To: Chief School Administrators, Charter School and Renaissance School Project Leads, Administrators of Nonpublic Schools, Administrators of Approved Private Schools for Students with Disabilities

Route To: Principals, Directors of Guidance, Directors of Special Education, School Nurses, School Counselors, School Psychologists, School Social Workers, Student Assistance Counselors, Other School Staff Involved with Mental Health Issues

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Acting Commissioner of Education

New Statewide Resource: Mental Health Quick Guide

The start of the 2020-2021 school year has been unlike any other in history, as schools have adjusted to new instructional models and heightened safety and security standards as a result of the on-going COVID-19 public health emergency. The resilience of our educators, students, and families has been demonstrated by the countless hours spent drafting return-to-school plans, communicating and collaborating with families and communities, and implementing and adjusting those plans to meet students' needs. One critical area of need is the mental health of our students and educators.

In February, Governor Murphy [announced](#) the formation of a Statewide Mental Health Working Group with diverse representation across school leadership roles, state agencies, advocacy groups, community mental health providers, and parents. Since its creation, the group has grown to over 50 members and has convened online as one group and in subcommittees to begin developing a comprehensive resource guide to address the mental health needs of all students. When schools transitioned to remote learning in March, the focus of the working group shifted to gathering data on the impact of remote learning on mental health and identifying supports and interventions relevant for remote learning and for the transition back to in-person instruction this fall.

The [Quick Reference Mental Health Guide](#) represents Phase 1 of the supports and guidance that will be provided by the Mental Health Working Group to assist schools with building a continuum of social-emotional and mental health supports for students and staff, within schools and with community partners. Developed collaboratively by the New Jersey Department of Education and the New Jersey Department of Children and Families, the Mental Health Quick Guide provides fundamental tools that schools can use to build an array of supports in an organized and systemic manner.

November 9-13 has been designated by the National Association of School Psychologists as **National School Psychologists Week**. As districts review their strategies and services available both in schools and within their communities, school psychologists can play an integral role in this process. The Mental Health Quick Guide provides key resources teams can consider enhancing the array of services available both within schools and within the community. The Mental Health Working Group will continue its work to maintain a statewide focus on mental health and share more in-depth resources on models of service delivery that promote positive mental health and social-emotional wellbeing in a variety of educational contexts.

c: Members, State Board of Education
NJDOE Staff
Statewide Parent Advocacy Network

Garden State Coalition of Schools
NJ LEE Group