

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2023 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 265
Ways and Means

(Delegate Guyton)

Public Schools - Standardized Behavioral Health Questionnaire for Students -
Development and Implementation

This bill clarifies that each behavioral health services coordinator must develop and implement a standardized behavioral health questionnaire (instead of screening). The questionnaire must be developed in accordance with Maryland Consortium on Coordinated Community Supports guidelines for developing a standardized questionnaire to identify students with behavioral health services needs. The guidelines must be (1) developed in consultation with specified stakeholders; (2) developed using an evidenced-based measurement approach; and (3) updated every five years. Under the bill, each local school system must give the standardized questionnaire to the parent or guardian of each student when the student enrolls and annually thereafter. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2023.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The consortium can develop the required guidelines and consult with specified stakeholders using existing budgeted resources. Revenues are not affected.

Local Effect: Local school systems can likely implement the bill's changes with existing resources; however, under certain assumptions, costs increase by an indeterminate but potentially significant amount, as discussed below. Revenues are not affected.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: Chapter 36 of 2021, The Blueprint for Maryland's Future (The Blueprint), required local boards of education to enhance and expand the availability of behavioral health services to students. Each local school system must appoint a behavioral health

services coordinator who, in addition to other responsibilities, must develop and implement a standardized screening to identify students with behavioral health services needs using an evidence-based measurement approach.

The Blueprint also established the Maryland Consortium on Coordinated Community Supports within the Maryland Community Health Resources Commission. The consortium must complete certain tasks related to the development of coordinated community supports partnerships to meet student behavioral health needs and other related challenges, including developing a statewide framework for the creation of coordinated community supports partnerships, implementing a related grant program, evaluating a payment reimbursement program for providers, and developing a program for uninsured students.

Local Expenditures: Under The Blueprint, local school systems must have a behavioral health services coordinator and develop a standardized screening. Under the bill, local school systems must instead develop a standardized questionnaire, which must be based on the guidelines established by the consortium. Each local school system can likely modify or adapt their standardized screening into a questionnaire that reflects guidelines established by the consortium using existing budgeted resources. However, any actual impact depends on the how the new guidelines for questionnaires compare with any standardized screening that a local school system has already implemented or plans to implement.

The bill also requires that the standardized questionnaire be given to the parent or guardian of each student at enrollment and annually thereafter. As discussed below, providing a questionnaire to the parents or guardians of each student likely requires significant expenditures. However, any actual impact depends on the process and timing for distributing the standardized screening that a local school system has already implemented or plans to implement (as timing and distribution of the standardized screenings are not specified under current law).

Local school systems advise that the cost to distribute a questionnaire to all parents is roughly equivalent to the cost to implement a behavioral health screening as required under current law. Montgomery County Public Schools advises that, based on the implementation of behavioral health screenings in similar school districts, their costs increase by approximately \$242,000 annually to distribute and collect the questionnaires, and by an additional \$1.6 million annually to review and interpret the questionnaires received from the parents of approximately 160,000 students. Baltimore City Public Schools similarly advises that administering questionnaires to the parents or guardians of each student entails significant expenditures, potentially millions of dollars. Therefore, to the extent the screenings required under current law would be distributed less than annually, costs to local school systems increase.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has been introduced within the last three years. See HB 657 of 2022.

Designated Cross File: SB 388 (Senators Lewis Young and Guzzone) - Education, Energy, and the Environment.

Information Source(s): Maryland Association of County Health Officers; Maryland State Department of Education; Maryland Department of Health; Baltimore City Public Schools; Montgomery County Public Schools; Department of Legislative Services

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