



GOVERNOR JOSH SHAPIRO

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Governor Shapiro Highlights Budget Proposal's Comprehensive Approach to Increasing Mental Health Support for Students in Visit to Allentown High School

Governor Shapiro hosted a roundtable with students and shared his budget's proposed investment of \$500 million over the next five years to increase mental health support in PA schools

Allentown, PA – Today, **Governor Josh Shapiro** met with Parkland High School students in Lehigh County to hear about their mental health challenges and share his budget's proposed investments to ensure that all Pennsylvania students have access to mental health resources in schools.

The Governor's [commonsense](#) proposal includes **\$500 million over the next five years** so that schools can fund mental health counselors and services on site, prioritizing students' mental health in addition to their physical health, and **\$20 million in 2023-24** – growing to **\$60 million annually by 2027-28** – to restore mental health funding to Pennsylvania counties, who provide critical community-based mental health services for residents.

"This generation is leading the way in changing how we talk about and address mental health care support for our youth. The students I met today are speaking up, breaking down the stigma, and asking for our help – and I've heard them and am ready to work with them to find solutions," said **Governor Josh Shapiro**. "Keeping our children safe is my top priority – and my budget offers comprehensive solutions to put more money into our schools and our communities to better serve students and their mental health. These investments in Pennsylvania students are critical – let's work together to get this done and deliver for the students and families across our Commonwealth who need this help."

Governor Shapiro hosted a roundtable with Parkland students, counselors, teachers, and administrators to hear about their experiences and challenges firsthand and to discuss the mental health resources needed in Pennsylvania classrooms.

"I've made reducing mental illness the cornerstone of my career. That's why I am so, so honored to be standing with a Governor who has made reducing mental illness a top priority," said **State Representative Michael Schlossberg**. "Governor Shapiro has called for a half-billion-dollar investment in mental health in our schools over the next five years. This money will be used to give students better access to mental health supports and train more mental health professionals."

"We thank Governor Shapiro for visiting us today to listen to our students. Parkland High School has a great staff who work tirelessly to address mental health needs. Our school counselors and psychologists support students' social-emotional difficulties, but the need is constant. We constantly are being told there are not enough therapists and psychiatrists, that the waiting lists are long, or that health insurance does not cover therapy," said **Parkland High School Principal Nathan Davidson**. "These are issues that an increased investment by our state government may be able to help address and we appreciate the Governor's intent to increase funding in this area. We need to be vigilant as a community to monitor youth mental health. We, as a community, need to ask questions and show care and concern for each other."

"As a student and a young person in our community, I know I am personally grateful for the proposed investment of half a billion dollars in resources in schools over the next 5 years," said **Parkland High School Student Reva Gandhi**. "With students doing so much and facing potential stressors of their own, it is imperative that the Commonwealth supports them. It is heartening to see the potential that this proposed plan holds for our students."

Students in the Allentown area have reported an increase in mental health challenges over recent years. In 2021, 18 percent of students surveyed in Lehigh County reported engaging in self-harm and 40 percent of students surveyed felt depressed or sad most days. Lehigh County currently has three schools without a mental health counselor, leaving 1,441 students without those services.

Governor Shapiro knows that the mental health crisis cannot continue to be an afterthought in Pennsylvania. In addition to his budget's proposed investments to address this crisis, Governor Shapiro [directed](#) Insurance Commissioner Mike Humphries to make mental health parity a reality in Pennsylvania by continuing to hold insurers accountable so that mental health benefits are covered fairly.

As Attorney General, Governor Shapiro started [Safe2Say Something](#) – an anonymous tip reporting system for students that has seen over 100,000 tips – and his budget proposal will help ensure every Pennsylvanian student can receive the support they need.

Learn more about Governor Shapiro's budget and plans to support Pennsylvanians' mental health [here](#).

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