

Mental Health Branch Presentation PPM 169- An Overview for Attendance Counsellors

Ministry of Education

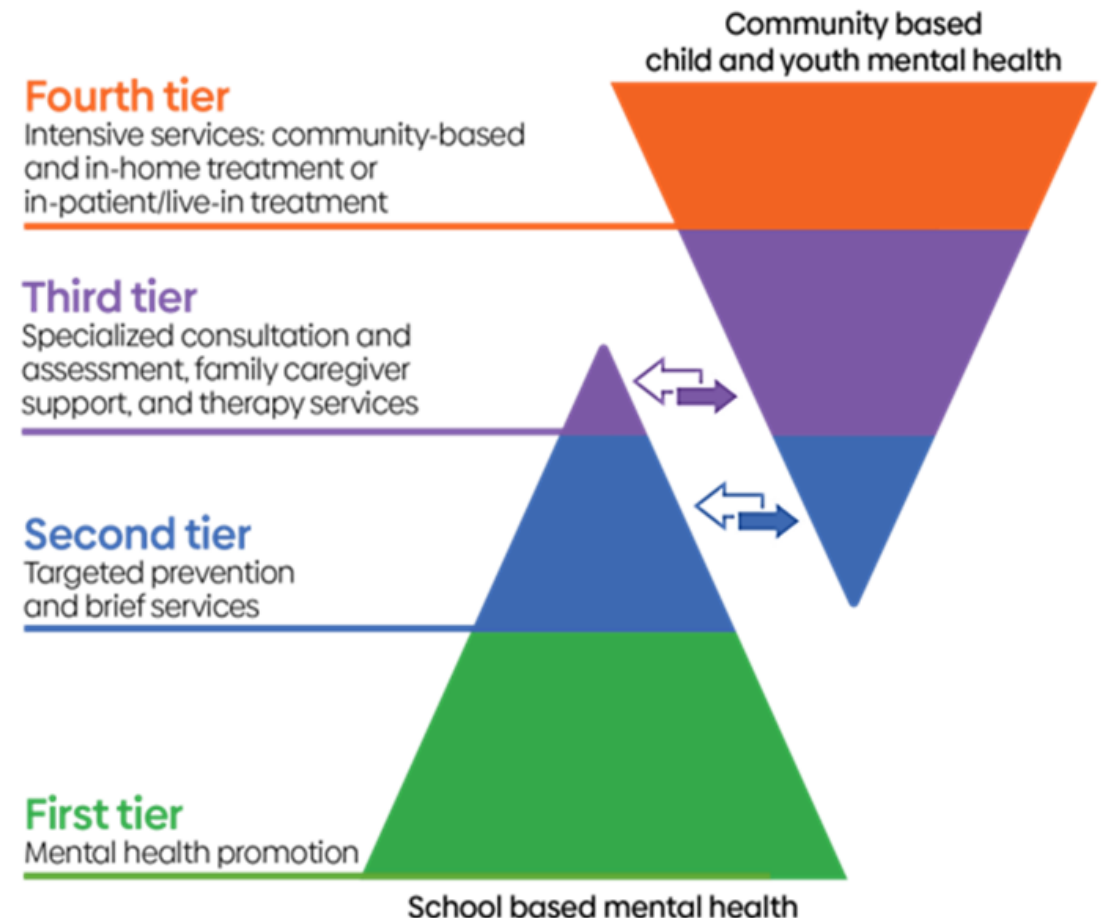
January 22, 2025



Student Mental Health in Ontario

- Schools are a critical part of the mental health care system in the province and are an ideal place for mental health promotion, the prevention of mental health issues, and the early identification of mental health concerns.
- The **Education Act** requires that all school boards “promote **student achievement and well-being** and promote a positive school climate that is inclusive and accepting of all pupils” (Section 169.1, Education Act).
- Schools provide students** with the **knowledge and skills** to be aware of, care for, and **advocate** for their own mental health and well-being.
- School Mental Health Ontario (SMH-ON)** is the ministry’s implementation partner for student mental health and provides implementation support to all 72 publicly funded school boards to promote consistent, evidence-based, made in Ontario programs, resources, training, and tools to standardize school based mental health across the province. (See Appendix A for more info)
- Mental health supports in Ontario schools are delivered across an **integrated tiered system of care**.
- EDU works closely with the Ministry of Health**, which is responsible for the broader provincial system of mental health and addictions in Ontario. EDU continues to participate in the whole of government approach to support strategic investments related to the Mental Health and Addictions Strategy.

Integrated Tiered System of Care



Funding for Student Mental Health

- Funding - For the 2024-25 school year, funding to support student mental health, including initiatives focused on student safety and physical activity, has reached nearly \$121M, an increase of 595% since 2017-18.
- This includes:
 - Funding for a variety of initiatives and staffing related to student mental health and wellness, including a mental health leader in every school board, frontline mental health workers in secondary schools, professional/paraprofessional staff (e.g., psychologists, social workers and child/youth workers), professional development for educators, and work with community partners.
 - Funding for mental health programs and supports, such as sport and injury prevention, preventing sexual exploitation, positive behaviour supports programs, swim to survive, leadership/mentorship opportunities, and resources to prevent cyber-bullying and cyber-violence.
 - To support the implementation of the updated PPM 128, the government has invested in wrap-around supports for student mental health and parent engagement in the 2024-25 school year.

PPM 169 Context

- In June 2023, through the ***Better Schools and Student Outcomes Act***, the Ministry of Education amended the ***Education Act*** to provide the Minister with the authority to issue guidelines and policies respecting student mental health.
- The Ministry of Education provides policy direction to school boards through **policy and program memoranda (PPM)**.
- In July 2023, [PPM169: Student Mental Health](#) was issued, to provide policy direction to school boards. The purpose of PPM 169 is to:
 - provide consistency in the delivery of mental health education and services across all school boards in the province;
 - consolidate previous communication to school boards on student mental health in one memo;
 - clarify roles and responsibilities of school boards, staff, schools, and the role of community mental health providers; and
 - align with recommendations made by stakeholders including from the [Right Time, Right Care](#) report that recommended joint local planning between school boards and community child and youth mental health agencies.
- The PPM includes 11 requirements that school boards must report to the ministry on, every June 30 through an annual reporting template, along with submitting their three-year mental health and addictions strategy and one-year action plan. Most of the requirements are not new for school boards, except for the requirement for mandatory mental health literacy learning for students which is new.
- PPM 169 became effective for implementation on January 1, 2024. School board feedback on PPM 169 has been positive to date as it gives boards the lever to make student mental health a priority.
- In June 2024, PPM 169 was revised to make the Mental Health Literacy Modules for Career Studies (GLC2O) mandatory for implementation. The revised PPM became effective on September 1, 2024.

11 School Board Requirements in PPM 169

1. Three-Year Mental Health and Addictions Strategy and One-Year Action Plan

2. Joint Local Planning with Community-based Child and Youth Mental Health Providers

3. Multi-Tiered System of Supports

4. Consistent Use of Evidence-informed Brief Interventions and Standardized Measurement

5. Suicide Prevention, Intervention and Postvention Protocols

6. Virtual Care Delivery

7. Enhanced Educator and Staff Mental Health Literacy

8. Mandatory Mental Health Literacy Learning for Students

9. Family Mental Health Literacy and Awareness

10. Social-Emotional Learning

11. Mental Health Absences

Requirement #1: Three-Year Mental Health and Addictions Strategy and One-Year Action Plan

Description:

- Every school board must develop and implement a three-year mental health and addictions strategy and one-year action plan and submit them the ministry by June 30th of each school year.
- The strategy and action plan will need to cover requirements outlined in the PPM including community input, and detail how each requirement will be evaluated and measured.

Intent:

- To give clarity and provide a framework for the public to understand what school boards are doing to support student mental health, and to ensure alignment with PPM 169.
- To continue the strategic work school boards are currently doing and ensure consistency across the province.
- Publicly posting the plan to build awareness and help ensure accountability to parents and families.

Requirement #2: Joint Local Planning with Community-based Child and Youth Mental Health Providers

Description:

- School board leadership will actively engage with and collaborate in local planning related to mental health and wellness.
- A description of the collaboration will be posted on the website in the school board's one year action plan.
- Key outcomes achieved will be provided to the ministry through the Annual School Mental Health Survey.

Intent:

- To ensure consistency, coordination, and efficiency in mental health service planning and delivery across the continuum of care.
- Builds on the work school boards are currently doing to develop a “collective school-community system of care” highlighted in the vision of the *Right Time, Right Care* report.
- To enable smooth flow and sharing of information between parties.
- To establish clear pathways to, through, and from mental health services for students who require services outside the school setting.

Requirement #3: Multi-tiered System of Supports

Description:

- School boards will utilize a Multi-tiered System of Supports approach to deliver school-based mental health services.
- A multi-tiered system of supports includes a continuum of services: mental health promotion, early identification, prevention and early intervention, and service pathways/clinical support for more intensive mental health needs.

Intent:

- To establish priorities, clarify roles, and ensure service coordination and quality.
- To establish and support a continuum of services that provides clear pathways to, through, and from more intensive community/hospital-based services.
- To provide appropriate supports for each student's individual, and diverse needs when and where they need it.

Requirement #4: Consistent Use of Evidence-informed Brief Interventions and Standardized Measurement

Description:

- School mental health professionals will utilize evidence-informed brief interventions and standardized measurement tools that align with their scope of practice and regulatory colleges' obligations for privacy and reporting.
- Additionally, the interventions and measurement tools are to be compliant with applicable legislation, such as the Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004 (PHIPA).

Intent:

- To support the consistent use of evidence-informed, therapeutic interventions across Ontario and help students meet their goals toward wellness.
- This may also help to reduce wait lists and move students off school-based mental health professionals' caseloads.
- To provide "quick access" to therapeutic encounters to address the immediate or presenting needs of a student, for mild to moderate mental health concerns, that can immediately support students.

Requirement #6: Virtual Care Delivery

Description:

- When possible, school boards should use an in-person mode of delivery for mental health supports.
- Remote mental health services using a virtual care platform can be used/offered when it is the most appropriate or accessible delivery vehicle to meet student needs.
- School boards must ensure that providers are using a virtual care solution that meets standards for privacy, security, and functionality.

Intent:

- Students and their families will continue to have the option of accessing virtual mental health services that are from a platform that is safe and secure.
- Students in rural/remote/isolated school boards can access mental health services more quickly or that may not be available in their community if services are available virtually.

Requirement #7: Enhanced Educator and Staff Mental Health Literacy

Description:

- School boards will support learning and share evidence-informed resources on mental health and addictions with educators and school staff, including guidance teacher- counsellors, so that they can embed mental health promotion and substance use prevention into the education experience for students and help to foster safe, and welcoming environments.

Intent:

- Educators and school staff will have more knowledge and confidence teaching students about mental health and well-being which may support their own mental health.
- Educators will have increased knowledge on how to identify and direct students to receive further mental health services/supports if needed.

Requirement #8 Mandatory Mental Health Literacy Learning for Students

Description:

- School boards will implement ministry-approved, teacher-led and culturally responsive mental health literacy learning modules for students in Grades 7 and 8 and for students enrolled in the Grade 10 Career Studies course that respect the individual and diverse needs of students and ensure consistency in mental health literacy learning across the province.

Intent:

- Mental health literacy in Grades 7 and 8 and for students enrolled in the Career Studies course will be consistently taught across Ontario schools through the use of mandatory mental health literacy modules.
- Grades 7 and 8 students will have increased knowledge of self-care strategies for their mental health, know when, where and how to seek help for themselves or a friend, and learn how to confront the stigma of mental illness.
- Students enrolled in the Career Studies course will learn more about how to use strategies to manage stress, recognize signs that could indicate stress is becoming problematic, and how to find and access support when needed.

Requirement #9: Family Mental Health Literacy and Awareness

Description:

- Parents and families should be involved in their children's mental health journey when possible.
- School boards will make available, culturally responsive family mental health literacy resources to ensure that families have access to high quality information about how best to notice and respond when their child may be struggling with their mental health, reduce the stigma that surrounds mental health and mental illness, and provide appropriate supports for their child's individual needs. This includes educational and engagement opportunities for families through school community outreach efforts.

Intent:

- Students and their families will benefit from ongoing family mental health literacy so that they are aware of how to respond when their child may be struggling with their mental health.
- School boards are aware of the importance of meaningful engagement with families to ensure that families can support their children.

Requirement #10: Social-Emotional Learning

Description:

- Social-emotional learning (SEL) skills help students foster overall health and well-being, good mental health, and support the ability to learn and thrive. The SEL skills that are embedded in the Ontario curriculum include: identification and management of emotions, recognizing sources of stress and coping with challenges, maintaining positive motivation and perseverance, building healthy relationships, developing self-awareness and confidence, and thinking critically and creatively.
- Emerging research has showed the impact that the evaluation of SEL skills can have on particular groups of students (e.g., Black, Indigenous, racialized students, male students, students with disabilities and students experiencing other socio-demographic disadvantages).

Intent:

- To reinforce and formalize ministry direction (sent to school boards via ministry memo in December 2020) that SEL skills in the Ontario curriculum continue to be instructed but are not assessed, evaluated, or reported on.

PPM 169 Requirement #11: Mental Health Absences

Description:

- To recognize the importance of student mental health and self-care, this is a reminder to school boards that there are existing provisions in the *Education Act* to allow for student absences to be excused for reasons related to mental health concerns.
- If students are unable to attend school due to a mental health concern, their absence must be excused under s. 21(2)(b) (“by reason of sickness or other unavoidable cause”) of the *Education Act*.

Intent:

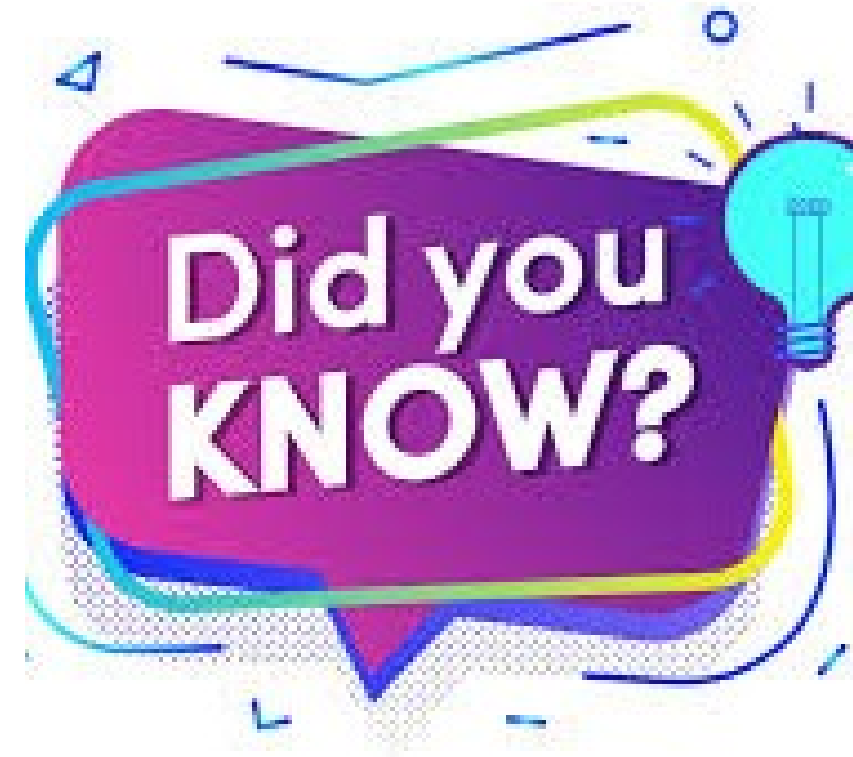
- School board teams may wish to review their attendance protocols and what mental health supports are provided and consider situations for when students are excused for a mental health concern for an extended period of time (i.e., more than 15 days), how students can be supported through other programs such as:
 - Board remote learning programs;
 - Remote learning through TVO/ILC or TFO/consortium;
 - Home instruction;
 - Program of study as determined by the principal;
 - Adult learning; and/or
 - Any other alternative program that the board may offer.
- Principals and school board staff responsible for student attendance may wish to work closely with their school board Mental Health Leader and should consult the Ministry of Education’s [Enrolment Register Instructions for Elementary and Secondary Schools](#) for further guidance.

Clarity on Mental Health Absence Requirement

- The intent of this requirement was to draw attention to the relationship between attendance and mental health.
- The requirement **does**:
 - direct boards to treat student absences for a mental health concern in the same way as a general absence (“G” code).
 - direct boards to continue to follow the Enrolment Registry Guidelines.
- The requirement **does not**:
 - ask boards to create a new code to document absences that are related to mental health.
 - ask boards to report to the ministry on the number of absences related to mental health.
- In this context, boards may wish to review their attendance protocols, identify what mental health supports could be provided, analyze attendance data to identify patterns and trends in student attendance, and determine how to best support the student’s continued learning.
- Note: The Enrolment Registry Guidelines for 2024-25 were updated to align with PPM 169.

Student Mental Health Literacy

- All curriculum includes information about the importance of mental health and well-being as part of the Program Planning section. Mental health literacy begins in Kindergarten and is taught throughout the Gr. 1-12 Health and Physical Education (HPE) curriculum.
- The government introduced mandatory resources on mental health literacy for Grades 7 and 8 students in the 2023-24 school year. Additional mandatory learning on mental health literacy as part of the Grade 10 Career Studies course was also introduced in September 2024. To support the implementation of the revised curriculum, the ministry introduced new modules on mental health literacy that are aligned with this new mental health learning.
- ***NEW*** A Grade 6 module is in development. More to come.



Grades 7 and 8 Mental Health Literacy Modules

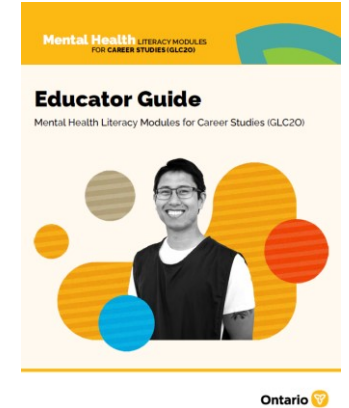
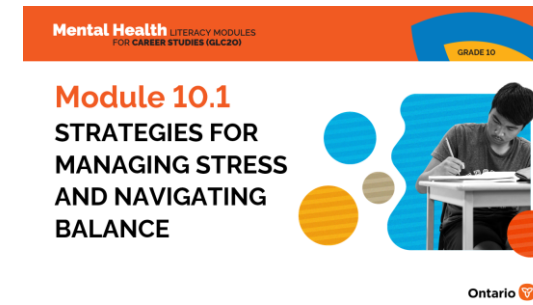
- The mandatory mental health literacy modules are teacher-led resources that align with *Strand D: Healthy Living* of the 2019 [Health and Physical Education curriculum](#).
- The modules were released to school boards in September 2023 and became mandatory for implementation in January 2024.
- There are three 40-minute modules in Grade 7 and three 40-minute modules in Grade 8 as well as resources such as discussion guides, parent/guardian letters, and student notebooks to further support module learning.
- Students will learn how to manage stress, understand the relationship between mental health and mental illness and recognize possible signs of mental health problems, counteract mental health stigma and know when and how to get support.

[Mental Health Literacy Modules for Grades 7 and 8 | Introduction on Vimeo](#)



Mental Health Literacy Modules for Grade 10 Career Studies (GLC20)

- The mandatory modules are teacher-facilitated resources that align with new mental health literacy learning in the [2024 Career Studies course](#).
- The modules were released to school boards in June 2024 and were mandatory for implementation starting September 2024.
- There are two 60-minute modules along with resources including discussion guides, parent/guardian communication material, and student worksheets to further support module learning.
- Modules can be delivered in-person or online.
- Using a school board email address, educators can access the modules through their school board instance of the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).
- Students will learn how to use strategies to help manage stress, recognize signs that could indicate stress is becoming problematic, and how to find and access support when needed.



Appendix A

School Mental Health Ontario

**Supporting the mental
health needs
of students**



**School
Mental Health
Ontario**

**Santé mentale
en milieu scolaire
Ontario**

Providing mental health supports to school districts that are:

- culturally responsive
- Identity responsive
- aligned with the Ontario curriculum
- available in both English and French
- aligned Public and Catholic
- evidence-informed



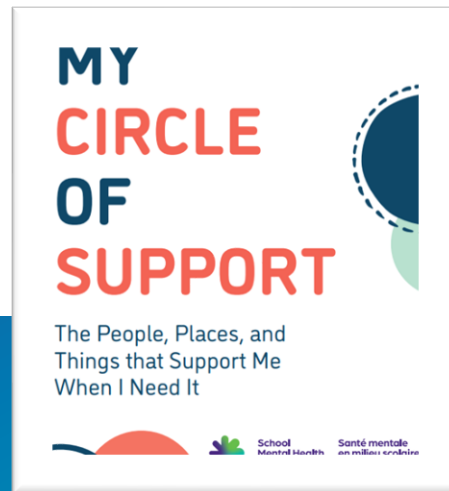
**This is the work of
School Mental Health Ontario**

School Mental Health Ontario Tools & Resources: For Students



[No Problem Too Big or Too Small: student help-seeking resource - School Mental Health Ontario \(smho-smso.ca\)](https://smho-smso.ca)

- A help-seeking resource for students created by SMH-ON's provincial student reference group.
- The aim of this resource is to support help-seeking in young people by providing them with information on self-care, noticing when they need help, where to go for help, and conversation starters about their mental health.



[My Circle of Support Pocketbook \(Accessible\) \(smho-smso.ca\)](https://smho-smso.ca)

- A fillable resource that students can add the people, places (i.e., school and community) and things that support them.

**School
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en milieu scolaire
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Provincial Student Mental Health Key Indicators

Latest Findings from the Ministry of Education's 2023 Annual School Mental Health Survey



152,783 students were served by school-based regulated mental health professionals in 2022-23



1,767 regulated mental health professionals were directly employed by a school board in 2022-23. Of these:

69% were Social Workers

16% were Psychologists

7% were Psychological Associates



43% of boards (n=31) were not able to fill all posted positions for regulated mental health professionals since 2021-22

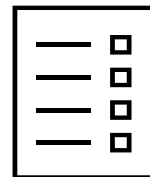


The **average caseloads** for regulated mental health professionals employed in school boards in 2022-23 were:

43 students (or 43:1)* at the elementary level

50 students (or 50:1)* at the secondary level

*It is important to note that caseloads will differ depending on the type of regulated mental health professional.



47% of boards (n=34) reported having a **waitlist** for school-based mental health services in 2022-23, with an average wait time of **12** days



22,924 referrals to community-based supports were reported for 2022-23 by 65 boards