

STATE OF NEW YORK

5491

2025-2026 Regular Sessions

IN SENATE

February 21, 2025

Introduced by Sen. ASHBY -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Mental Health

AN ACT to amend the mental hygiene law, in relation to establishing a mental wellness group pilot program

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

1 Section 1. The mental hygiene law is amended by adding a new section
2 7.48 to read as follows:

3 § 7.48 Mental wellness group pilot program.

4 1. (a) There is hereby created within the office the mental wellness
5 group pilot program. The purpose of the pilot program is to partner with
6 insurance companies to facilitate group therapy sessions for children
7 ages ten through eighteen.

8 (b) The office shall be authorized and directed to promulgate all
9 necessary rules and regulations required to implement the mental well-
10 ness group pilot program. Such pilot program shall gather together two
11 or more children to form mental wellness groups. Such children shall be
12 at least ten years old and no older than eighteen. Such children shall
13 be active participants in the group and shall help to develop the goals
14 they wish to reach. The mental wellness group shall help students iden-
15 tify problems, causes, alternatives and possible consequences so they
16 can make decisions and take appropriate actions and help students over-
17 come issues impeding achievement or success;

18 2. (a) The office shall contract with regional insurance companies to
19 administer the pilot program under this section. The office shall award
20 competitive grants of up to five hundred thousand dollars each year for
21 a period of up to five years to each insurance company that demonstrates
22 the ability to implement the pilot program under this section in their
23 region, has an outreach plan, and has the ability to contract with coun-
24 seling services. The office shall determine the qualifications and
25 professions that are eligible to supply counseling services.

EXPLANATION--Matter in italics (underscored) is new; matter in brackets
[-] is old law to be omitted.

LBD08912-01-5

1 (b) Contracts with insurance companies under this subdivision shall be
2 for a period of five years and shall be reevaluated by the office every
3 twelve months to ensure such companies continue to provide a positive
4 benefit to the community and conform to the program criteria.

5 (c) Contracted insurance companies under this subdivision shall work
6 with regional school districts to implement mental wellness groups, as
7 developed by the pilot program to coordinate their efforts with the
8 local county mental health departments or programs or other lead mental
9 health organizations in counties and cities within the region of the
10 contracted insurance company and shall establish a referral system and
11 linkages to existing area mental wellness programs and financing sourc-
12 es.

13 3. A contracted insurance company administering the pilot program
14 shall provide technical assistance to implement the program which
15 includes, but is not limited to:

16 (a) Access to affordable information services and counseling services,
17 including information on the region and demographics of the children;

18 (b) Development of mental wellness connections, including interaction
19 and exchange among local mental health groups, and resource providers,
20 including, peer-to-peer learning sessions, and mentoring programs;

21 (c) Assistance in understanding state laws and regulations applicable
22 to such insurance companies; and

23 (d) Any other form of consultation and technical assistance that may
24 be provided to the eligible business to assist with its marketing needs.

25 4. The commissioner shall by regulation, establish the mandatory
26 reports, the persons or entities with whom such reports shall be filed,
27 and the treatment services that may be offered or directed by a mental
28 wellness group.

29 5. The department shall review the progress of the pilot program at
30 least once every twelve months and shall determine whether the
31 contracted entity is meeting its contractual obligations for administer-
32 ing the pilot program. The department may terminate and rebid a contract
33 if the contracted insurance company does not meet.

34 6. For the purposes of this section, the term "insurance company"
35 shall mean a company doing an insurance business pursuant to section
36 eleven hundred one of the insurance law.

37 § 2. This act shall take effect on the thirtieth day after it shall
38 have become a law.