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Governor Signs Bill Expanding Mental Health Consultation for Students

At the State Capitol yesterday, supporters for expansion of school-based mental health services in Wisconsin gathered in the Governor's office to celebrate the signing of [2019 WI Act 88](#), which expands existing Medicaid-funded consultation services to include connections with parents.

Consultation services enable mental health therapists to work collaboratively with teachers and school staff to implement strategies in the classroom that are part of a students' mental health treatment plan. These supportive services make treatment in the school setting even more effective and contribute to improved school climate. WI Act 88 expands the scope of the consultation service to support therapist outreach and connection with parents. "Delivering quality mental health services for children requires active connection with their family system, as well as their school-based supports," stated WAFCA Executive Director Kathy Markeland.

The majority of WAFCA member agencies participate in integrated school-based mental health initiatives that are delivering results for students. "Students who access mental health services in school feel better, improve their grades and are more likely to stay in school and graduate," emphasized Markeland. WAFCA also collaborates with the [Coalition for Expanding School-Based Mental Health in Wisconsin](#), which includes school, mental health and parent representatives seeking to advance best practice in integrated school-mental health across the state.

The signing of WI Act 88 follows the release earlier this week of the [Wisconsin Office of Children's Mental Health Annual Report](#), which reports state and national data on child well-being indicators. Among the reported findings is that 44% of children who have a diagnosis of major depression do not receive services. "We have a long way to go to establish full access to needed mental health supports," observed Markeland. "School-based services are eliminating some barriers, but we know we have more work to do."

Markeland expressed appreciation for the ongoing bipartisan support for initiatives to improve student access to mental health services. She recognized the leadership of Senator Alberta Darling (River Hills) and Representative Mike Rohrkaste (Neenah) who have championed numerous school-mental health initiatives in recent years. "We are grateful for their leadership and their commitment to advancing the mental well-being of Wisconsin's children and youth."

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WAFCA is a member association that works to improve the lives of families and children in Wisconsin.

Our member agencies provide a wide array of prevention and supportive services such as foster care, in-home support, counseling, and mental health treatment. WAFCA represents over 50 child and family serving agencies and leaders in the field and advocates for the more than 225,000 individuals and families that they serve each year.