



# TEEN MENTAL WELLNESS: EMPOWERING MINDS

## Why It's Important

It's not easy being an adolescent or a young adult. Not only are they experiencing physical, hormonal, and emotional changes that can be uncomfortable and confusing, but they're also dealing with societal expectations and challenges.

According to the World Health Organization, half of all mental health conditions start by age 14. Most cases go undetected and untreated until many years later or sometimes not at all.

Adolescence is a pivotal time for young people. When we can help kids here, we help launch successful futures.

When we, as a community, focus on Teen Mental Wellness, we are:

- Creating systems level change. Comprehensive school mental health systems will have positive effects at school, in the community, and at home.
- Supporting our children so they feel less sad and hopeless.
- Reducing mental health disparities among students.
- Improving student learning, attendance, engagement, and graduation rates.
- Reducing bullying, risky behaviors, substance abuse, school violence, and involvement in the juvenile justice system.

## What We're Doing Together

**Our goal: Empowering Minds schools will elevate the mental wellness of 21,000 high school students by 2030.**

We can change the lives of high school students by focusing on prevention, equity, and access to mental health services.

## How it Works

- Achieving targeted milestones is the centerpiece of this initiative; this is how we will measure success.
- The six milestones are based on Wisconsin's Department of Public Instruction's School Mental Health Framework.



**Needs Assessment:** mapping the current state and sharing all existing resources with students and parents.



**Collaboration:** building bridges with students, parents, community providers and the school to regularly engage on mental health.



**Referral Pathways:** knowing when and how to triage students who need support into the right level of help.



**Comprehensive Resources:** promoting and supporting overall mental wellness and early interventions, as well as having the ability to get care for students who need a higher level of support.



**Sustainability:** identifying strategies that optimize financial and nonfinancial assets needed to maintain and improve the Comprehensive School Mental Health System.



**Evaluation:** collecting both quantitative and qualitative data to inform priorities and action steps to continuously improve the Comprehensive School Mental Health System.



### How will we know when a school has implemented a milestone?

A milestone is achieved when schools implement the necessary components that improve their specific Mental Health System. Both quantitative and qualitative data is collected to ensure each component and milestone functions as intended.

We are not re-inventing the wheel with this initiative. We're helping to scale existing, proven research.

### How We're Changing Lives

#### In the 2024-25, nine schools participated in Teen Mental Wellness: Empowering Minds.

- Grafton High School
- Dr. Howard Fuller Collegiate Academy High School
- James Madison Academic Campus
- Messmer High School
- Milwaukee Academy of Science High School
- Pius XI Catholic High School
- Waukesha South High School
- Waukesha West High School
- Wauwatosa West High School

#### For the 2025-26 school year, we are adding:

- Cristo Rey Jesuit High School Milwaukee
- Marquette University High School
- Pewaukee High School
- Ronald Reagan High School
- Shorewood High School
- St. Augustine Preparatory Academy
- Vel R. Phillips Juvenile Justice Center School
- Wauwatosa East High School

## IMPACT IN ACTION



Dr. Howard Fuller Collegiate Academy (pictured above) focused on improving systems of support for their students' mental health strategies and needs by identifying gaps and efficiencies within their resources and developing a plan to improve access to these resources.

Waukesha South High School (pictured left) focused their efforts on collaboration. They brought partners together to share their expertise and insights, with a clear focus on students' well-being. This work isn't a blip in time, but is real, sustained change.

### Mental Health Improvement Fund

To support the entire family, United Way partners with the Milwaukee Health Care Partnership\* on the Mental Health Improvement Fund.

This fund supports organizations that provide behavioral and mental health services for low-income, underserved adult and youth populations in Milwaukee County with the goal of increasing access to mental health care, improving mental health outcomes, and promoting health equity.

#### 2025-26 Grantees

Aurora Walker's Point Community Clinic  
 Ascension Wisconsin Foundation  
 Benedict Center  
 Bread of Healing Clinic  
 City on a Hill  
 Jewish Family Services  
 Meta House  
 Milwaukee LGBTQ Community Center  
 Outreach Community Health Centers  
 Pathfinders  
 Penfield Children's Center  
 Sixteenth Street Community Health Clinic  
 Wellpoint Care Network

\*Milwaukee Health Care Partnership consists of: Ascension Wisconsin, Aurora Health Care, Children's Wisconsin, and Froedtert Health



**UNITED WAY**  
 Greater Milwaukee  
 & Waukesha County