



**BUSINESS OF THE CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF MERCER ISLAND**

**AB 6148
September 6, 2022
Regular Business**

AGENDA BILL INFORMATION

TITLE:	AB 6148: YFS Programs Update	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Discussion Only <input type="checkbox"/> Action Needed: <input type="checkbox"/> Motion <input type="checkbox"/> Ordinance <input type="checkbox"/> Resolution
RECOMMENDED ACTION:	Receive report. No action necessary.	

DEPARTMENT:	Youth and Family Services
STAFF:	Ali Spietz, Chief of Administration Tambi Cork, YFS Administrator
COUNCIL LIAISON:	n/a
EXHIBITS:	1. MISD Mental Health and Wellbeing HYS Fact Sheet
CITY COUNCIL PRIORITY:	n/a

AMOUNT OF EXPENDITURE	\$ n/a
AMOUNT BUDGETED	\$ n/a
APPROPRIATION REQUIRED	\$ n/a

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this agenda bill is to update the City Council on Youth and Family Service (YFS) Department programming related to school-based mental health programs.

- The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated an existing mental health crisis in the United States by significantly increasing population level rates of depression and anxiety across Washington.
- Specifically, when looking at the youth population, despite extensive protective factors and community resources, Mercer Island has not escaped this unprecedented mental health crisis.
- The partnership between the City and the Mercer Island School District to place YFS School-Based Mental Health Counselors directly in all Mercer Island public schools decreases barriers to accessing mental health care and provides targeted interventions and social-emotional education, increasing protective factors and decreasing risk factors for youth in Mercer Island at this critical time.
- Community members are encouraged to educate themselves regarding signs and symptoms of mental health distress and what to do if they or someone they know is in crisis. Resources and trainings are offered by the YFS Healthy Youth Initiative (www.mihealthyyouth.com) and Islanders can access mental health support by reaching out to YFS School-Based Counselors or the YFS Confidential Intake Line at 206-275-7657.

BACKGROUND

Youth mental health has been an area of concern for some time, and prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, suicide was already the second-leading cause of death among people aged 10-34 nationally. The COVID-19 pandemic has strongly influenced behavioral and emotional health of individuals and is believed to have dramatically accelerated this decline in youth mental health across the United States and in Mercer Island. Currently, suicide is the second leading cause of death for Washington teens 15-19 years old.

According to the most recent [Washington State Department of Health High-Level Analysis of Forecasted Behavioral Health Impacts from COVID-19 \(June 2022\)](#), mental well-being for children, youth, teens, and young adults needs to be a top priority as evidenced by the increasing suicidal ideation and suicide attempts in Washington. The report further explains that behavioral health symptoms will continue to present in phases, with recovery expected to be ongoing at least through 2024 for the most impacted individuals, which includes the youth population. Additional phases of the pandemic will impact the recovery timeline as symptoms of anxiety, impulsivity, reduced frustration tolerance, anger, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) are tied to increases in infection and hospitalization rates.

ISSUE/DISCUSSION

Despite far reaching protective factors, Mercer Island has not escaped this unprecedented national youth mental health crisis. On Mercer Island, the Mercer Island School District (MISD) and YFS department gather information in a variety of ways to assess current and emergent trends, plan for future services, and monitor progress. Staff from MISD and MIYFS depend on direct student feedback, observations from adults, and surveys to collect data on the status of mental health of the youth population.

The MISD Mental Health and Wellbeing Healthy Youth Survey Fact Sheet (Exhibit 1) is an overview of mental health trends amongst the youth population; this information is compiled from the 2021 Healthy Youth Survey. Mental Health Indicators in all three grades surveyed (8th, 10th, 12th) are concerning. For example, 39% of 12th graders, 33% of 10th graders, and 19% of 8th graders report they felt so sad or hopeless for two weeks or more that they stopped doing their usual activities.

In addition to this quantitative data, MISD and YFS rely on MISD School Counselors and MIYFS School-Based Mental Health Counselors to provide macro level feedback about the themes and trends they are seeing and hearing. The ability to identify emerging mental health and substance use issues early helps youth avoid the need for more significant future interventions. Islander Middle School and Mercer Island High School are part of the Screening Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT) grant through [King County Best Starts for Kids](#), which is administered to designated groups of students, and provides staff with information to further identify student need for services.

Access to YFS School-Based Mental Health Counselors is important to efforts to address the trauma, loss, and evolving behavioral health concerns related to the pandemic. While unable to stop the various traumas and developmental disruptions from the pandemic that can serve as barriers to school success and general well-being, the YFS school-based team can help students, families, and the entire school community effectively transform adversity into resiliency. Individual psychotherapy, social-emotional skill building, parent support and teacher consultations are effective strategies for decreasing risk factors including mental health symptoms, suicidality, substance abuse, family conflict and interpersonal violence.

NEXT STEPS

The impacts of the youth mental health crisis and pandemic-related distress are apparent in the Mercer Island community. YFS School-Based and Community-Based mental health staff report rates of depression, anxiety, family conflict, substance abuse and suicide ideation remain elevated locally. YFS encourages all community members to educate themselves regarding signs and symptoms of mental health distress and learn how to intervene when someone they know is in crisis.

To support community awareness and education, YFS offers suicide prevention trainings in November and April each year, as a collaborative effort of YFS School-Based Mental Health Counselors and Mercer Island School District staff and supported by the University of Washington Forefront Suicide Prevention team. Additionally, the grant funded YFS Healthy Youth Initiative offers community Mental Health First Aid Trainings in partnership with Jewish Family Services; updated dates and times and additional programming announcements can be found at www.mihealthyyouth.com.

Mental health conditions can affect anyone regardless of age, gender, socio-economic status, race, ethnicity, or background. YFS offers community and school based mental health counseling, consultation, and referral via a confidential intake line at 206-275-7657. If a community member or someone they know is experiencing a mental health emergency, call 911 immediately or the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 9-8-8.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Receive report. No action necessary.