

WSPTA recognizes the mental health, safety and well-being of Washington’s children and youth as our number one concern for the upcoming session. Current staffing and funding models for nurses, counselors, social workers and psychologists create huge inequities across our state when it comes to accessing appropriate and timely care. Providing students the help they urgently need should be everyone’s priority and reflected in thoughtful action by all stakeholders and decision makers.

School Health Professional	Type of Student Population	Recommended Ratios	Nationwide Actual Ratios	WA State Prototypical School Funding Model Ratios		
				Elementary Schools	Middle Schools	High Schools
Nurses	Healthy	1: 750	1: 1,515	1: 5,263	1: 7,200	1: 6,250
	Needs daily services	1: 225				
	Needs complex services	1: 125				
	Needs continuous services	1: 1				
Counselors	General	1: 250	1: 455	1: 811	1: 360	1: 236
Social Workers	General	1: 250	1: 1,400	1: 9,523	1: 72,000	1: 40,000
	Intensive Needs	1: 50				
Psychologists	General	1: 500	1: 1,245	1: 23,529	1: 216,000	1: 85,714

Background

- Washington state’s Prototypical Staffing Model funds school nurses at a rate less than 15% the recommended nurse to student ratio.¹
- School counselors and social workers in Washington state are funded by a rate of 1:811 compared to the recommended counselor/social worker to student ratio of 1:250.²
- Increased health and safety concerns due to COVID-19 require health monitoring such as temperature checks and protocols for students who may become ill while at school. The CDC identifies school nurses as essential in every aspect, including acute care, emergency care, care coordination, chronic disease management, and family engagement.³
- The critical role of mental health professionals in schools has already been officially recognized by an overwhelming majority of the Washington House, Senate, and Governor, in House Bill 1377.⁴
- In a Washington student-developed survey conducted in the spring of 2020, one student replied, “Everything feels like things are piling up, and there’s not mental help support available.”⁵

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For More Information	
Lizzy Sebring, WSPTA Advocacy Director ptaadvocacydir@wastatepta.org	Marie Sullivan, WSPTA Legislative Consultant legconsultant@wastatepta.org
For more information on the WSPTA advocacy program, please visit our website (www.wastatepta.org).	

Proposed Solutions

- Increasing the Prototypical Staffing Model to include lower student to staff ratios for school nurses, counselors, social workers and psychologists.
- Innovative funding solutions for increased staffing, including but not limited to nurses, counselors, psychologists, and social workers in schools.
- Telehealth access for medical and mental health in schools or districts that cannot provide in person services or during emergency closures.

Citations

1. Washington State’s Prototypical Staffing Model SOURCE: [WA RCW28A.150.260](#)
2. <https://www.schoolcounselor.org/About-School-Counseling/School-Counselor-Roles-Ratios>
3. Health and safety concerns. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/schoolhealthservices.htm>
4. 2SHB 1377 (Chapter 200, Laws of 2018). <https://lawfilesexternal.wa.gov/biennium/2017-18/Pdf/Bills/Session%20Laws/House/1377-S2.SL.pdf#page=1>
5. <https://www.seattletimes.com/education-lab/washington-students-surveyed-their-peers-heres-what-their-answers-tell-us-about-online-learning-socializing-and-mental-health/>