

## **Mental Health Support in Florida Schools (2017)**

- Whereas, Research shows that up to one in five youth experience a mental health disorder, which is described as serious deviations from expected cognitive, social and emotional development such as anxiety, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, alcohol or substance abuse or depression. Research also indicates that most mental health conditions will emerge or begin to manifest symptoms between the ages of two to seventeen; and
- Whereas, The prevalence of mental health illness among children is a critical issue due to the effects on the child, their family and the community. Amply documented evidence confirms that early intervention and prevention can help to address a child’s behavioral and mental needs before symptoms exacerbate into more detrimental social, emotional or academic behaviors or activities; and
- Whereas, Increasing the ratio of school counselors, school psychologists, school social workers and school nurses to students to minimally meet research-based best practices, would provide students more individual attention for academic or social guidance, early detection of learning problems and difficulties, and mental health service referrals and support; and
- Whereas, Studies have shown that when mental health prevention and intervention programs are coordinated with families and communities, they are likely to be more effective than stand-alone programs. A strong and trusting relationship among providers, school-based mental health professionals, school administrators, educators and parents is essential to support positive student mental, behavioral, interpersonal and academic outcomes; now, therefore, be it
- Resolved, That Florida PTA and its constituent associations urge state and local policymakers and school districts to provide necessary resources and support to ensure students have access to a proactive continuum of behavioral and mental health services; and therefore, be it further
- Resolved, That Florida PTA and its constituent associations call upon state and local policymakers and school districts to employ evidenced-based best practice ratios of school counselors, school psychologists, school social workers and school nurses, who are the most qualified professionals to provide school-based mental health services to students; and therefore, be it further
- Resolved, That Florida PTA and its constituent associations recommend that any mental health intervention, prevention programs or services must include a strong family engagement component—including collaborative relationships with the family, school and community partners (e.g., early learning caregivers, physicians, and other related health providers)—as well as transparent and open communication and coordination between provider, school, parents and families.