

# 2023 SESSION

INTRODUCED

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## SENATE BILL NO. 856

Offered January 11, 2023

Prefiled December 30, 2022

A *BILL to amend the Code of Virginia by adding a section numbered 22.1-209.001, relating to public elementary and secondary schools; comprehensive school counseling program; development and implementation.*

Patrons—Spruill; Delegate: Kory

Referred to Committee on Education and Health

### **Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**

**1. That the Code of Virginia is amended by adding a section numbered 22.1-209.001 as follows:**

#### **§ 22.1-209.001. Comprehensive school counseling program.**

A. As used in this section, "student mental health screening assessment" or "screening assessment" means a mental health screening program selected by a local school board and approved by the Department to be administered to students for the purpose of identifying mental health conditions that may require intervention.

B. Each local school board shall develop and implement a written plan for a comprehensive school counseling program for the purpose of providing support that meets the mental and emotional health needs of all students and guiding students in academic progress, postsecondary planning, and social-emotional learning. The plan shall:

1. Be developed and implemented by a licensed school counselor;

2. Be based on regularly updated standards developed by a national organization representing school counselors, utilize nationally recognized and state recognized counselor frameworks, and align with the Standards of Learning and standards of accreditation;

3. Be age-appropriate and systematically aligned to all grades, kindergarten through grade 12;

4. Provide a process for identifying student needs through a school data review integrating use-of-time data, program results data, and communication with administrators, parents, and students;

5. Include an evidence-based student mental health screening assessment that (i) is age-appropriate for each grade in which the screening assessment is administered, (ii) screens for the mental health conditions determined by the Board, and (iii) is an effective tool for identifying when a student has a mental health condition that requires intervention;

6. Include policies for the implementation and administration of the student mental health screening assessment adopted pursuant to subdivision 5 that shall, at a minimum, require (i) written parental consent prior to any student's participation in such screening assessment and (ii) notification to the parent of any participating student whose results on a screening assessment indicate a potential mental health condition, including (a) the participating student's results and (b) resources available to the participating student, including any services that can be provided by the school mental health provider or counselor or by a partnering entity; and

7. Establish an annual review process for the comprehensive school counseling program that includes licensed school counselors, school and school division administrators, and stakeholders.

**2. That each local school board shall develop and implement a written plan for a comprehensive school counseling program pursuant to this act by the beginning of the 2024-2025 school year.**

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SB856