

Stories in this newsletter



Interim Legislative Studies Selected

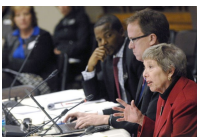


Tips for De-Stressing from School Year



Literature Review with Matthew

Interim Legislative Session Studies Selected



Didn't we just finish a legislative session? Yes, we did. Even though the North Dakota legislature meets once every two years for roughly 80 days, their work does not stop at "*sine die*" (the legislature's formal declaration that the legislative session has concluded).

In the months following the general legislative session, the legislature creates committees that will periodically meet to study issues that were raised by citizens, government agencies, and legislators throughout the state. These interim committees are assigned specific topics to study, which at the conclusion of their work, may be prepared to submit legislation for consideration during the next general assembly (which will next start in January 2025).

The number of studies approved for study in 2023-2024 are numerous (you can get the approved studies [here](#)), but we will highlight a few that are likely of interest.

Human Services Committee:

- Study the implementation of the recommendations of the 2018 North Dakota behavioral health system study conducted by the Human Services Research Institute and the 2022 acute psychiatric and residential care needs study conducted by Renee Schulte Consulting, LLC.
- Study the early child care programs and child care services to identify major needs and systemic approaches to stabilize child care infrastructure.
- Study the increasing need for inpatient mental health care for children and whether there are adequate home- and community-based care and outpatient services for the number of children and the location of need.

Education Committee:

- Study school choice models implemented nationally for K-12 schools, including charter schools, magnet schools, private schools, voucher systems, and home schools. [...]The study also must include a review of regulations implemented by state regulatory agencies to ensure accountability for various school choice models; a comparison of nontraditional school choice models implemented by other states; an analysis of the impact of enrollment fluctuation, including the impact on state aid; a review of the state's student population and enrollment capacity and tuition costs of nonpublic schools; **and a review of services nonpublic schools are able to offer students with special needs.**

School Funding Task Force:

- The school funding task force shall review litigation the state was a party to relating to school funding and the resulting implications for school funding models; analyze higher education funding sources to determine whether the sources may be used in whole or in part for the K-12 system; review school payment formulas to determine whether education costs can be equalized across the state; study the size, student population, and economics of school districts and the number of facilities within the district per square mile compared with student population; develop and study sliding-scale models within school districts based on size, student populations, and economics; assess the negative impacts of the current funding formula; study school funding formulas used by other states; determine the benefits of and incentives to promote school district consolidation; review school transportation costs considering location, size, and student enrollment; **study high-cost student and special education student costs as those costs relate to the formula weighting factors;** and analyze the cost of distance education, comparing the costs of different methods of instruction delivery, including synchronous as compared to asynchronous instruction. The task force may study the funding of school building maintenance and repairs considering location and whether buildings are located in a rural or urban area; and review ending fund balances and analyze how the current funding formula impacts ending fund balances.

North Dakotans can keep informed of the legislature's deliberations on their website: www.ndlegis.gov/. There citizens can get updates on committee hearings and agendas, be able to watch hearings live or recordings of prior hearings.

American Psychiatric Association: Tips for De-Stressing from School Year



Lauren Schooner submitted an article for the American Psychiatric Society that we think is filled with good advice:

“Summer is both an exciting time and an anxiety-inducing transition, as the end of the school year can mean a loss of contact with close friends. In truth, we have seen a significant rise in young people’s mental health struggles, and parents and caretakers feel more pressure than ever to try and tackle them. While kids enjoy unwinding, it can be unsettling as well. Thus finding a balance between structure and freedom can be challenging. Below are tips to consider”

Schooner points out that children being outside is beneficial for more than just creativity and imaginative play, it also releases endorphins and boosts vitamin D. Another idea is to develop a family goal to practice at least 5 minutes of mindfulness a day to help reduce anxiety and depression. You can find other suggestions through the APA’s website, here: <https://www.psychiatry.org/news-room/apa-blogs/schools-out-tips-to-destress>

Literature Review: Children in the 2023 ND Behavioral Health Databook



Matthew
McCleary

Each year teenage students in North Dakota participate in the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS). This survey has been used to inform the general public about the state of children’s behavioral health: whether their use of illicit and illegal substances has increased or decreased, how many young people are dealing with mental health struggles, and whether or not behavioral health struggles are being experienced by those they live with. While many of the findings may not surprise specialists, promotion of YRBS findings have been influential in shaping the public discussion and policy surrounding children’s behavioral health.

The 2023 North Dakota Behavioral Health Databook, which can be found on the Department of Health and Human Services' website, says that children’s mental health is not good. 35-36% of North Dakota middle school and high school students have reported feeling sad or hopeless nearly every day for two weeks or more in the past year. For high school students, this was a substantial increase from what students reported in 2011. Since 2009, North Dakota youth have been much more likely to report having seriously contemplating suicide and having made a plan. Currently, over 18% of North Dakota youth have seriously considered attempting suicide, and nearly 15% have made a plan. Although the trendlines for thoughts and plans have steadily increased, the only saving grace was that in 2021 self-reported suicide attempts dropped by half (at 6.1%) from 2019’s totals (13%).

Of those who died by suicide, children aged 10 to 19 represented 7% of all suicides in North Dakota. Statistics have shown that the risk is much higher in young adulthood, as those youth and young adults aged 20 to 29 represented 23% of all suicides in North Dakota. Unfortunately, suicide in North Dakota has become a more prevalent issue, especially for boys and men and those who are service members or veterans in the armed forces.

The YRBS is by no means the primary document we have available to judge the state of children’s mental health in North Dakota, but it remains a valuable one.

You can access the 2023 ND Behavioral Health Databook here:

https://www.hhs.nd.gov/sites/www/files/documents/BH/BehavioralHealthDataBook_March2023_web.pdf

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Next Edition: Fall 2023