

# Speaker's Task Force on Suicide Prevention

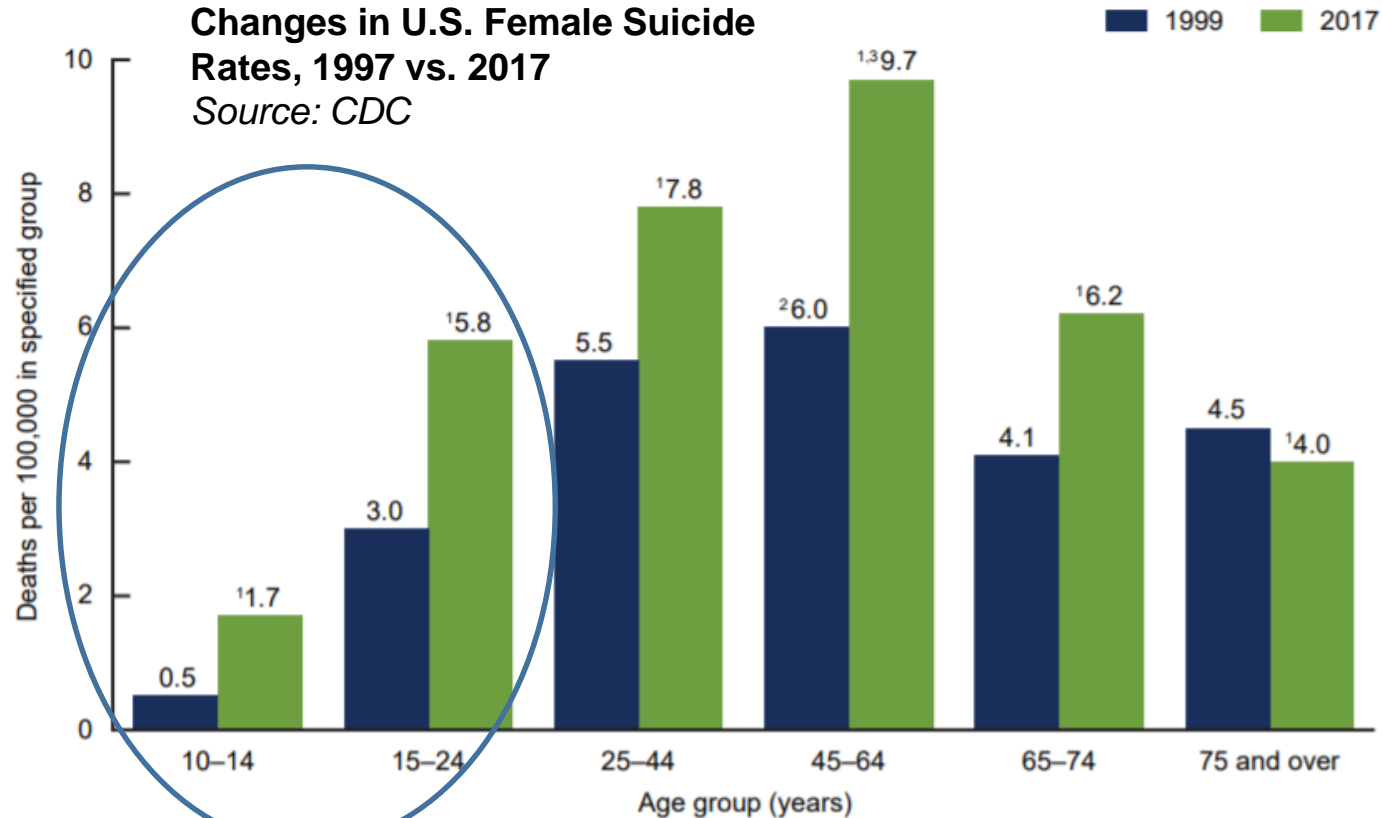
## Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data and School-based Suicide Prevention

Kate McCoy, Ph.D.  
Gregg Curtis, Ph.D.  
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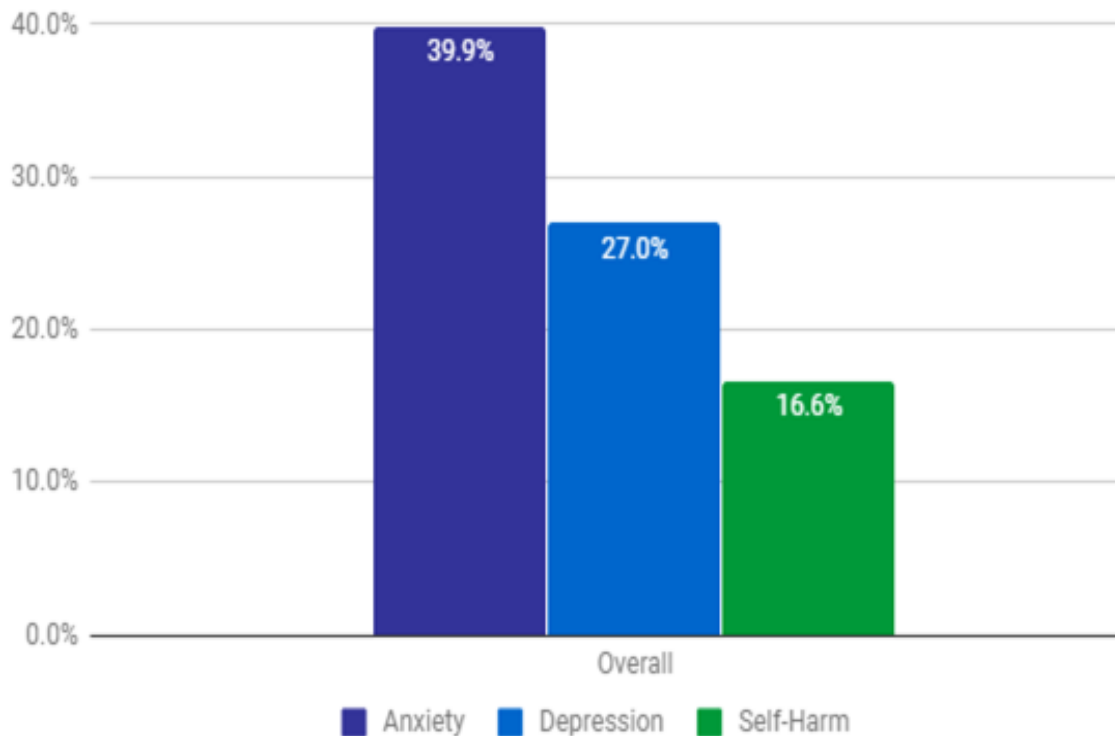
WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF  
**PUBLIC INSTRUCTION**  
Tony Evers, PhD, State Superintendent

# Suicides Are Up Across Age Groups



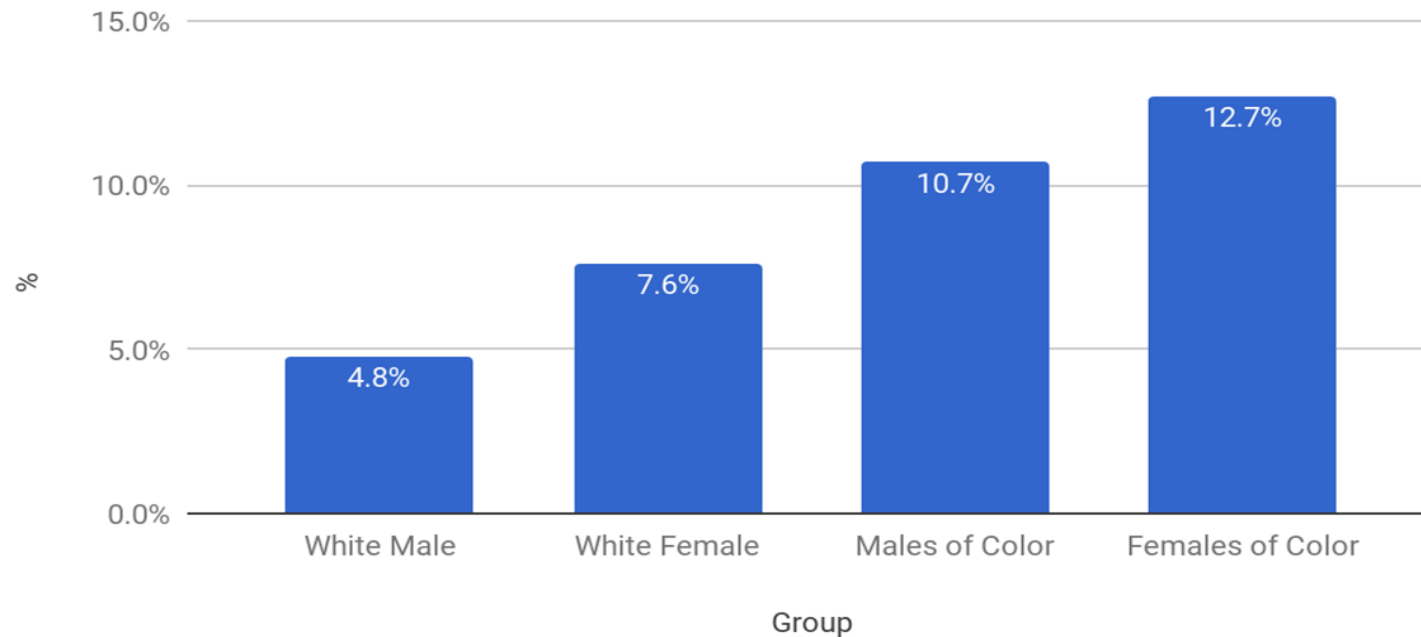
# WI YRBS 2017: Mental Health Needs Are High

Self-Reported Rates of Anxiety, Depression and Self-Harm



# WI YRBS 2017: High Risk Groups

% of Students who Attempted Suicide, by Sex and Minority Status



- Girls\*
- *\*(But boys still die at higher rates)*
- LGBT students
- Students of color
- Students with disabilities or health conditions
- Students with low grades



## Background/Context:

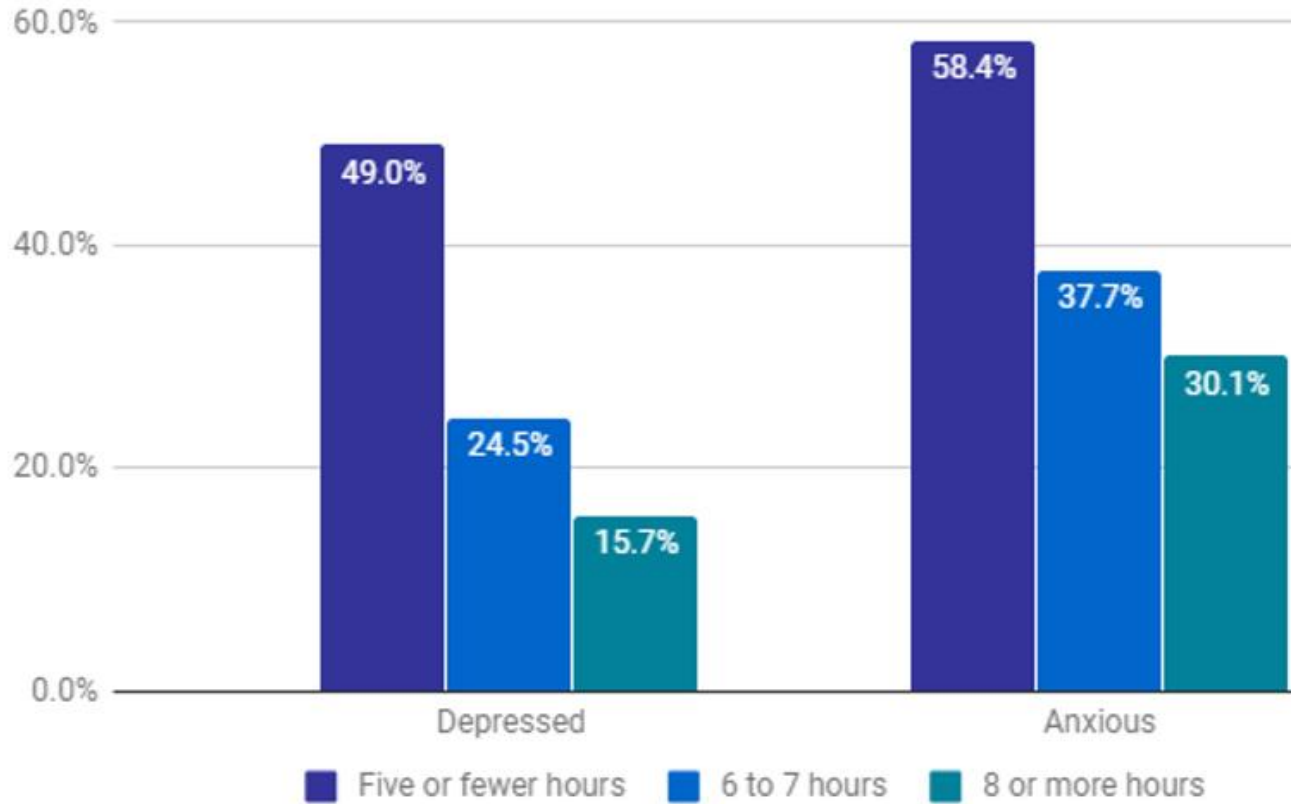
- Fewer opportunities and supports for lower-income students
- Stressed families (jobs, housing, increased inequality, busyness)
- Rural/urban divide
- Weaker social connections
- Overburdened schools
- Fewer opportunities for normal risks and play
- Lack of mental health providers

## Foreground/Individual

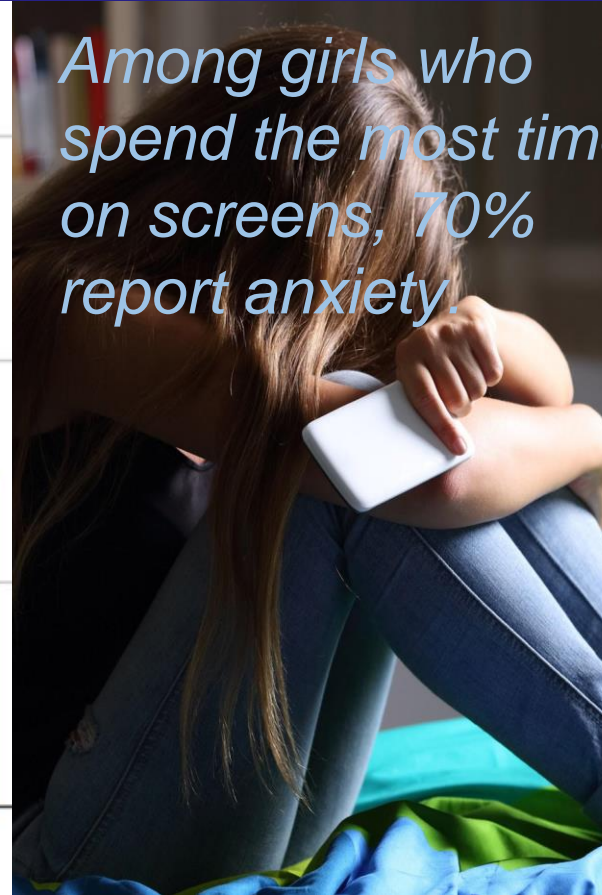
- Exposure to trauma
- Low sense of belonging
- Exposure to bullying
- High screen use
- Lack of sleep
- Poor health

# Less sleep, more screens, more anxiety

Mental Health by Avg Hours of Sleep



*Among girls who spend the most time on screens, 70% report anxiety.*



## PROTECTIVE FACTORS

### **Schools can provide:**

- Safe, warm, predictable environments
- Supportive & attentive adults
- Sense of belonging
- Help with basic needs (e.g., food)
- Reprieve from social media
- Skills training (social and emotional)
- Practice tackling challenges & overcoming failures
- Future orientation
- Some mental health assistance & referrals

## RISK FACTORS

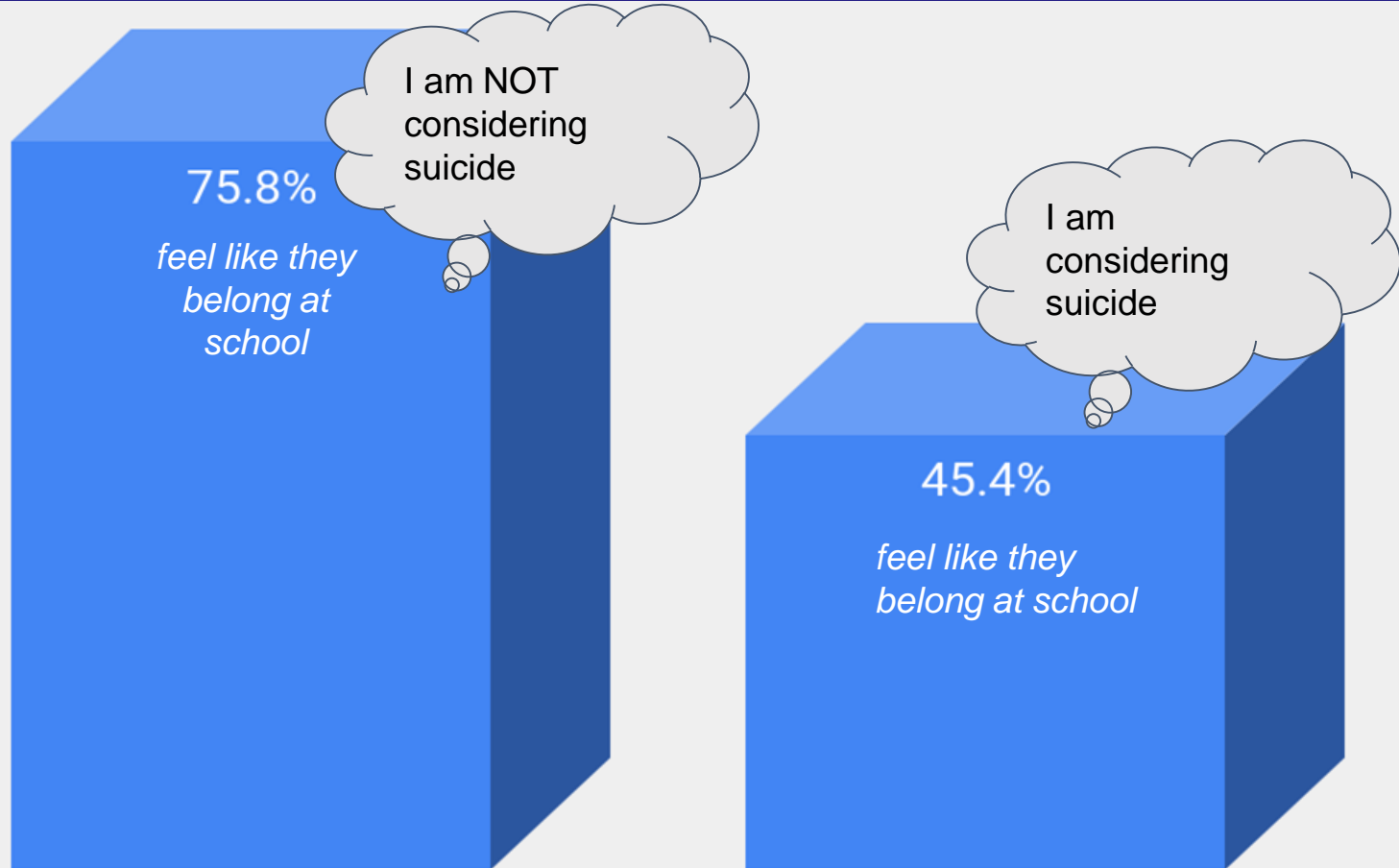
### **Students might come to school with:**

- Unstable or unsupportive family/home life
- Trauma
- Hunger, homelessness
- Poor physical health
- Poor coping skills
- Predisposition towards anxiety, depression
- Unhealthy social media/screen use
- Online bullying/victimization





# Belonging Matters



Source: WI 2017 YRBS



# WI Suicide Prevention Laws

## School-based Suicide Prevention Requirements in Wisconsin Law:

- Educate students
  - 118.01 (Educational Goals): ... schools must address suicide prevention with students. Specifically: conditions that cause and signs of suicidal thinking, the relationship between suicide and the use of alcohol and other drugs, and services available in local communities.
- Health curriculum
  - PI-8.01(2)(j)1: ... requires suicide prevention instruction take place in the health curriculum. DPI encourages classroom collaboration between health educators and pupil services on this topic.
- DPI requirements
  - 115.365 (Assistance to schools for suicide prevention):
    - gives direction to DPI: we must train school staff to assist in positive emotional development, recognize risk factors and warning signs, and intervene appropriately
    - establishes a clear role for schools in screening for suicidal thinking (detection of signs...), crisis response (proper action...), and referrals to outside agencies and law enforcement if the student is in crisis
    - requires DPI to make a model annual notice for schools to inform staff about youth suicide prevention resources and directs districts to use DPI's model or make their own annual notice.

# School-based Suicide Prevention

## Specific School-based Suicide Prevention Programs:

- Adult-led
  - Signs of Suicide
  - DPI Suicide Prevention Curriculum:  
<https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/sspw/pdf/spcurriculumgrades7-12.pdf>
- Peer-led; Adult-supported
  - Sources of Strength
  - HopeSquad
- Overall prevention strategy from Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)
  - *Preventing Suicide: A Toolkit for High Schools:*  
<https://store.samhsa.gov/system/files/sma12-4669.pdf>

# School-based Suicide Prevention

## Programs That Complement Specific Suicide Prevention:

- Promoting positive and safe school climate:
  - [Positive Behaviors Interventions and Supports \(PBIS\)](#)
  - [Social/Emotional Learning](#) (SEL) programming: i.e. [Responsive Classrooms](#), [Positive Action](#), [Second Step](#), etc.
  - [A Comprehensive Approach to Bullying Prevention](#)
  - [Restorative Practices](#)
  - Comprehensive School Counseling programs grounded in [American School Counselor Association's National Model](#) and [Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success](#)
- Supporting transitions or increase belonging/inclusion:
  - [Link Crew](#)
  - [Tribes Learning Community](#)
  - [Connections](#)

# School-based Suicide Professional Development

- **DPI's online gatekeeper training module**
  - <https://dpi.wi.gov/sspw/mental-health/youth-suicide-prevention/training>
- **Social Emotional Learning:**
  - *Moving SEL Forward* regional schoolwide implementation trainings at all 12 CESAs
    - 900+ individuals; all school roles; multiple community roles
  - Summer SEL Symposium - national experts; 300+ attendees
- **Trauma-sensitive Schools online modules**
  - <https://dpi.wi.gov/sspw/mental-health/trauma/modules>
- **Youth Mental Health First Aid**
  - WI Safe and Healthy School Center
  - <https://www.wishschools.org/resources/youth-mental-health-first-aid.cfm>
- **Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT)**
  - WI Safe and Healthy School Center
  - <https://www.wishschools.org/resources/schoolsbirt.cfm>

# School-based Suicide Concerns/Opportunities

## → 2019-21 Biennial Budget:

- ◆ Concern: Currently only funding increase for social workers in schools.
  - Opportunity: Include expenditures for current positions for all pupil services professionals.
- ◆ Concern: Current student-to-pupil services professional ratios for all professions exceed recommendations of professional organizations.
  - Opportunity: Provide funding aid for adding new positions for any pupil service professional.
- ◆ Concern: Currently increased funding for assistance in youth mental health at \$6+ million.
  - Opportunity: Requests in 2018 and 2019 grant applications exceeded \$8 million.
- ◆ Concern: Currently schools need to fund any peer-to-peer programming themselves. The two with the best evidence-base are *Sources of Strength* and *HopeSquad*. They are expensive to onboard and carry an annual cost.
  - Opportunity: Assist districts in offsetting initial and/or ongoing costs for implementing evidence-based peer-to-peer suicide prevention programming.
- ◆ Currently no state-level position solely dedicated to coordinating &/or overseeing comprehensive suicide prevention for either school-based or community-based systems.

# School-based Suicide Concerns/Opportunities

## → Shortage of clinical mental health providers:

- ◆ How do we increase the pipeline?
  - What creative ways exist to incentivize community mental health providers to locate in Wisconsin or to 'home-grow' more mental health professionals?



# Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

**Kate McCoy, PhD; Research & Evaluation  
Consultant**

**[katherine.mccoy@dpi.wi.gov](mailto:katherine.mccoy@dpi.wi.gov)**

**608-266-0506**

**Gregg Curtis, PhD; School Counseling Consultant**

**[gregg.curtis@dpi.wi.gov](mailto:gregg.curtis@dpi.wi.gov)**

**608-266-2820**



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Tony Evers, PhD, State Superintendent