



JIM STEINEKE MAJORITY LEADER

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 5th ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

(608) 266-2401
Toll-Free: (888) 534-0005
Rep.Steineke@legis.wi.gov

P.O. Box 8953
Madison, WI 53708-8953

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CONTACT: Rep. Jim Steineke

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(608) 266-2418

School-Based Mental Health Pilot Coming to Outagamie County

MADISON – A bill authored by Representative Jim Steineke (R-Kaukauna) and other northeast Wisconsin legislators creating a school-based mental health pilot program in Outagamie County was signed into law today in northern Wisconsin. [Assembly Bill 644](#) expands the Child Psychiatry Consultation Program capabilities to school districts, allowing teachers, school counselors, and administrators to address mental health needs in real-time.

The creation of the bill stemmed from a collaborative effort between legislators, Medical College of Wisconsin, and local school districts. The groups worked in tandem to tailor the pilot program to the specific needs that students and school districts are facing, including phone and email consultations, educational sessions for staff, and in-depth case consultations for individual students. Because the bill signing was in Ashland, WI, over a 4-hour drive from Outagamie County, local stakeholders were unable to attend.

“Being able to work so closely with our local school districts to really hone in on the specific challenges they’re facing – and how we can create legislation to address those challenges – was such a rewarding experience,” said Rep. Steineke. “I am confident that the work we’ve put in on the front-end will mean a successful pilot that gives our teachers, school nurses, counsellors, and administrators another needed tool to address student mental health concerns.”

The legislation draws on the success of the [Child Psychiatry Consultation Program](#) (CPCP), run by the Medical College of Wisconsin, by expanding its capabilities to school districts in Outagamie County. Because of its mixture of both rural and urban districts, as well as its existing CPCP infrastructure, Outagamie County proved to be an ideal location to launch the pilot program. The school-based mental health pilot program was designed to be scale-able, with an end goal of expanding it statewide.

“With one in five students experiencing a mental health issue, now is the time to give both our students and schools the support they need,” continued Rep. Steineke. “I’m excited to see this bill cross the finish line, knowing the incredible resource it can be for our students who are struggling.”

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