New York State
EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

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Dear Colleagues:

With Mental Health Awareness Month rapidly approaching in May, we are writing to you to offer some guidance on supporting student mental health over the remaining months of the school year.

Many media outlets have recently highlighted the growing concern around youth mental health D V W K H SFDQGHPLZQLXW K V R P H H [S H U W V F D O O L Q J L W D µ J O R E D O P H Research suggests that during the pandemic, prevalence rates in the general population have quadrupled and tripled for depression and anxiety disorders, respectively. A recent national survey of parents that nearly half noticed a new or worsening mental health condition in their teenage children since the pandemic started. All of this has added to concern regarding the potential for increased suicides. Though suicide surveillance reporting lags by several months, preliminary data have not borne this out thus far. As leaders, it is our responsibility to both raise awareness and create a sense of urgency to meet the very real mental health challenges students are facing during the pandemic without creating panic.

As disruptive and challenging as the pandemic has been, it has created a unique opportunity for trained school personnel to have a more impactful conversation about student mental health with students, families, and community partners. We would like to offer schools assistance to take advantage of the moment before us.

As the pandemic wears on, schools may see students on many paths. Less vulnerable students may be able to leverage protective factors and make the transition to post-traumatic growth, W K R X W K H H [L V W H Q gr3 H 8 7 7 I (anu-3 R 6 1 2 5 F W t) S U 3 R 6 1 2 5 F W t) -3.795 (h)4(t)-3.77 0cTw [o8 Tw 53w (t)-3.795 (s,)1