

Republic of the Philippines  
**House of Representatives**  
Quezon City, Metro Manila

**TWENTIETH CONGRESS**  
First Regular Session

House Bill No. **3397**



---

**INTRODUCED BY REPRESENTATIVE PM VARGAS**

---

**AN ACT**  
**IMPROVING THE MENTAL AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES IN**  
**COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY CAMPUSES**

**EXPLANATORY NOTE**

The Constitution, Article 2, Section 15, provides:

The State shall protect and promote the right to health of the people and instill health consciousness among them.

The passage of Republic Act No. 11036, also known as the Mental Health Act, has paved the way for the Philippines to establish a mental health framework in terms of understanding the mental health struggles of Filipinos and delivering better mental health care to those in need.

However, access to mental health services for the greater population remains limited due to existing economic constraints. Students who encounter heavy academic and personal challenges remain vulnerable to mental health problems in the absence of accessible mental and behavioral health services in colleges and universities. Thus, the government must increase its efforts to enable service users to equitably access appropriate care when needed.

This bill seeks to authorize the Chairperson of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) to award competitive grants to eligible entities to improve mental and behavioral health services and outreach in college and university campuses.

This proposed legislation further aims to increase access to, and reduce the stigma associated with, mental health services so as to ensure that college students have the support necessary to successfully complete their studies. This bill also directs the Secretary of Health to establish a College Campus Task Force, under the National Center for Mental Health, to discuss mental and behavioral health concerns in college and university campuses.

In view of the foregoing, the immediate passage of this bill is earnestly sought.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'PM Vargas', is positioned above the printed name.

**REP. PM VARGAS**

Fifth District, Quezon City

Republic of the Philippines  
House of Representatives  
Quezon City, Metro Manila

**TWENTIETH CONGRESS**  
First Regular Session

House Bill No. **3397**

---

**INTRODUCED BY REPRESENTATIVE PM VARGAS**

---

**AN ACT**  
**IMPROVING THE MENTAL AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES IN**  
**COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY CAMPUSES**

*Be it enacted by the Senate and the House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:*

**SECTION 1. Short Title.** – This Act shall be known as the “*Campus Mental Health Improvement Act*”.

**SECTION 2. Objectives.** – The objectives of this Act, with respect to college and university settings, are to:

- (a) Increase access to mental and behavioral health services;
- (b) Foster and improve the prevention of mental and behavioral health disorders, and the promotion of mental health;
- (c) Improve the identification and treatment for students at risk;
- (d) Improve collaboration and the development of appropriate levels of mental and behavioral health care;
- (e) Reduce the stigma for students with mental health disorders and enhance their access to mental health services; and
- (f) Improve the efficacy of outreach efforts.

**SECTION 3. Grants to Improve Mental and Behavioral Health in College Campuses.** – The Chair of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) shall award competitive grants to eligible entities to improve mental and behavioral health services and outreach in college and university campuses.

**SECTION 4. Eligibility.** – To be eligible to receive a grant, an entity shall:

- (a) Be an institution of higher education; and
- (b) Submit to the Chair an application at such time, in such manner, and containing such information as the Chair may require, including the

information required under Section 5 of this Act.

**SECTION 5. *Application.*** – An application for a grant under this Act shall include:

- (a) A description of the population to be targeted by the program carried out under the grant, the particular mental and behavioral health needs of the students involved, and the private and public institutional resources available for meeting the needs of such students at the time the application is submitted;
- (b) An outline of the objectives of the program carried out under the grant;
- (c) A description of activities, services, and training to be provided under the program, including planned outreach strategies to reach students not currently seeking services;
- (d) A plan to seek input from community mental health providers, when available, community groups, and other public and private entities in carrying out the program;
- (e) A plan, when applicable, to meet the specific mental and behavioral health needs of veterans attending institutions of higher education;
- (f) A description of the methods to be used to evaluate the outcomes and effectiveness of the program; and
- (g) An assurance that grant funds will be used to supplement, and not supplant, any other government funds available to carry out activities of the type carried out under the grant.

**SECTION 6. *Special Considerations.*** – In awarding grants under this Act, the Chair shall give special consideration to applications that describe programs to be carried out under the grant that:

- (a) Demonstrate the greatest need for new or additional mental and behavioral health services, in part by providing information on current ratios of students to mental and behavioral health professionals;
- (b) Propose effective approaches for initiating or expanding campus services and supports using evidence-based practices;
- (c) Target traditionally underserved populations and populations most at risk;
- (d) Where possible, demonstrate an awareness of, and a willingness to, coordinate with a community mental health center or other mental health resource in the community, to support screening and referral of students requiring intensive services;
- (e) Identify how the college or university will address psychiatric emergencies, including how information will be communicated with families or other appropriate parties; and
- (f) Demonstrate the greatest potential for replication and dissemination.

**SECTION 7. *Use of Funds.*** – Amounts received under a grant may be used

to:

- (a) Provide mental and behavioral health services to students, including prevention, promotion of mental health, screening, early intervention, assessment, treatment, management, and education services relating to the mental and behavioral health of students;
- (b) Provide outreach services to notify students about the existence of mental and behavioral health services;
- (c) Educate families, peers, faculty, staff, and communities to increase awareness of mental health issues;
- (d) Support student groups on campus that engage in activities to educate students, reduce stigma surrounding mental and behavioral disorders, and promote mental health wellness;
- (e) Employ appropriately trained staff;
- (f) Expand mental health training through internship, post-doctorate, and residency programs;
- (g) Develop and support evidence-based and emerging best practices, including a focus on culturally- and linguistically-appropriate best practices; and
- (h) Evaluate and disseminate best practices to other colleges and universities.

**SECTION 8. *Duration of Grants.*** – A grant shall be awarded for a period not to exceed three years.

**SECTION 9. *Evaluation and Reporting.*** –

- (a) *Evaluation.* – Not later than 18 months after the date on which a grant is received, the eligible entity involved shall submit to the Chair the results of the evaluation conducted by the entity concerning the effectiveness of the activities carried out under the grant and plans for the sustainability of such efforts.
- (b) *Report.* – Not later than two years after the date of the effectivity of this Act, the Chair shall submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a report concerning the results of: the evaluations conducted under Section 9, Paragraph (a) of this Act; and an evaluation conducted by the Chair to analyze the effectiveness and efficacy of the activities conducted with grants under this Act.
- (c) *Technical Assistance.* – The Chair may provide technical assistance to grantees in carrying out this Section.

**SECTION 10. *Mental and Behavioral Health Outreach and Education in College Campuses.*** –

- (a) *Purpose.* – It is the purpose of this Section to increase access to, and reduce the stigma associated with, mental health services so as to ensure that college students have the support necessary to successfully complete their studies.

- (b) *National Public Education Campaign.* – The Chair shall convene an interagency, public-private sector working group to plan, establish, and begin coordinating and evaluating a targeted public education campaign that is designed to focus on mental and behavioral health in college campuses. Such campaign shall be designed to:
  - i. Improve the general understanding of mental health and mental health disorders;
  - ii. Encourage help-seeking behaviors relating to the promotion of mental health, prevention of mental health disorders, and treatment of such disorders;
  - iii. Make the connection between mental and behavioral health and academic success; and
  - iv. Assist the general public in identifying the early warning signs and reducing the stigma of mental illness.
- (c) *Composition.* – The working group under paragraph (B) shall include:
  - i. Mental health consumers, including students and family members;
  - ii. Representatives of colleges and universities;
  - iii. Representatives of national mental and behavioral health and college associations;
  - iv. Representatives of college health promotion and prevention organizations;
  - v. Representatives of mental health providers, including community mental health centers; and
  - vi. Representatives of private- and public-sector groups with experience in the development of effective public health education campaigns.
- (d) *National Public Education Plan.* – The working group under paragraph (B) shall develop a plan that shall:
  - i. Target promotional and educational efforts to the college age population and individuals who are employed in college and university settings, including the use of roundtables;
  - ii. Develop and propose the implementation of research-based public health messages and activities;
  - iii. Provide support for local efforts to reduce stigma by using the National Center for Mental Health as a primary point of contact for information, publications, and service program referrals; and
  - iv. Develop and propose the implementation of a social marketing campaign that is targeted at the college population and individuals who are employed in college and university settings.

**SECTION 11. Interagency Working Group on Campus Mental Health. –**

- (a) *Establishment.* – The Secretary of Health shall establish a College

Campus Task Force, under the National Center for Mental Health, to discuss mental and behavioral health concerns in college and university campuses.

(b) *Membership.* – The Task Force shall be composed of a representative from each department that has jurisdiction over, or is affected by, mental health and education policies and projects, including the Commission on Higher Education and the Department of Health.

(c) *Duties.* – The Task Force shall:

(1) Serve as a centralized mechanism to coordinate a national effort to:

- i. Discuss and evaluate evidence and knowledge on mental and behavioral health services available to, and the prevalence of mental health illness among, the college age population of the Philippines;
- ii. Determine the range of effective, feasible, and comprehensive actions to improve mental and behavioral health in college and university campuses;
- iii. Examine and better address the needs of the college age population dealing with mental illness;
- iv. Survey government agencies to determine which policies are effective in encouraging, and how best to facilitate outreach without duplicating, efforts relating to mental and behavioral health promotion;
- v. Establish specific goals within and across Federal agencies for mental health promotion, including determinations of accountability for reaching those goals;
- vi. Develop a strategy for allocating responsibilities and ensuring participation in mental and behavioral health promotions, particularly in the case of competing agency priorities;
- vii. Coordinate plans to communicate research results relating to mental and behavioral health amongst the college age population to enable reporting and outreach activities to produce more useful and timely information;
- viii. Provide a description of evidence-based best practices, model programs, effective guidelines, and other strategies for promoting mental and behavioral health in college and university campuses;
- ix. Make recommendations to improve government efforts relating to mental and behavioral health promotion in college campuses and to ensure government efforts are consistent with available standards and evidence and other programs in existence as of the date of effectivity of this Act; and
- x. Monitor progress in meeting specific mental and behavioral health promotion goals as they relate to college and

university settings;

- (2) Consult with national organizations with expertise in mental and behavioral health, especially those organizations working with the college age population; and
- (3) Consult with and seek input from mental health professionals working in college and university campuses as appropriate.

(d) *Meetings.* – The Task Force shall meet at least three times each year. The Chair shall sponsor an annual conference on mental and behavioral health in college and university settings to enhance coordination, build partnerships, and share best practices in mental and behavioral health promotion, data collection, analysis, and services.

**SECTION 12. *Appropriations.*** – The funds needed for the initial implementation of this Act shall be charged against the appropriations of the Commission on Higher Education. Thereafter, such amount as may be necessary for its full implementation shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act as a distinct and separate item.

**SECTION 13. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.*** – Within sixty (60) days from the effectivity of this Act, the Chairperson of the Commission on Higher Education and the Secretary of the Department of Health shall, in coordination with other stakeholders, issue the necessary rules and regulations for the effective implementation of this Act.

**SECTION 14. *Non-Impairment Clause.*** – Nothing in this Act shall be construed as to diminish, impair, or repeal rights recognized, granted, or made available to disadvantaged, marginalized, or specific sectors under existing laws.

**SECTION 15. *Separability Clause.*** – If, for any reason, any provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional or invalid, parts or provisions of this Act which are not affected shall continue to be in full force and effect.

**SECTION 16. *Repealing Clause.*** – All laws, executive orders, presidential decrees, Implementing Rules and Regulations inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

**SECTION 17. *Effectivity.*** – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

*Approved,*