

Testimony
House Bill No. 1312
House Education Committee
Representative Heinert, Chairman
February 6, 2023

Chairman Heinert, and members of the House Education Committee, I am Pamela Sagness, Behavioral Health Executive Director with the Department of Health and Human Services (Department). I appear before you in support of House Bill 1312.

The proposed change in this bill is to extend the current expiration date of section 50-06-05.1, from June 30, 2025 to June 30, 2027.

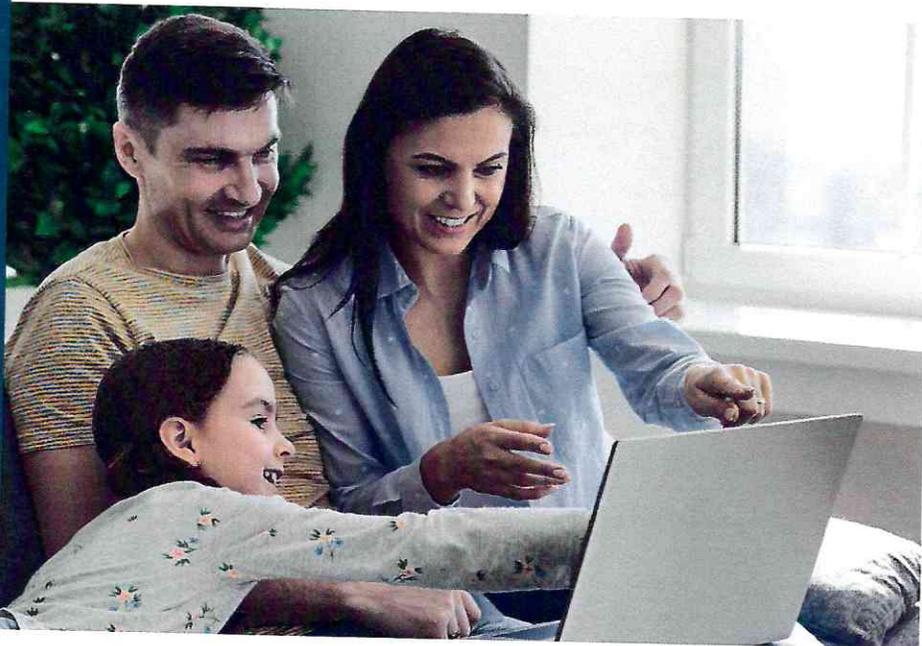
Last session language was added to subsection 28 on page 6 regarding the powers and duties of the Department of Health and Human Services directing the Department:

To provide resources on mental health awareness and suicide prevention to the behavioral health resource coordinator at each public school and to the designated individual at a nonpublic school. The resources must include information on identifying warning signs, risk factors, and the availability of resources in the community, and also must include an evidence-based, online virtual mental health and suicide prevention simulation-based training program that incorporates hands-on practice, contextual learning, and personalized feedback through interactive role-playing. The provisions of chapter 54-44.4 do not apply to the online virtual mental health and suicide prevention simulation-based training program under this subsection.

Kognito is an online, role-playing simulation for educators that builds awareness, knowledge, and skills about mental health and suicide prevention, and prepares users to lead real-life conversations with students to build resilience, strengthen relationships, and connect them with support.

The Department of Health & Human Services' Behavioral Health Division is offering these simulations to all North Dakota school personnel at no cost through the 2023-2024 school year.

Virtual Behavioral Health Professional Development – Education System (Kognito)



Kognito is for all school personnel in K-12 public, private, tribal schools, and special education units in ND including, but not limited to teachers, support staff, custodians, paraprofessionals, district leaders, administrators, etc. Kognito is also available to student teachers attending ND accredited teacher preparation programs.

Modules are available at the elementary, middle and high school levels. Users can complete the 45–60 minute interactive, evidence-based modules at their own pace and receive feedback in real time.

Module Objectives

- + Increase knowledge and awareness about child/adolescent/teen mental health and suicide
- + Identify warning signs of psychological distress
- + Increase knowledge and awareness about bullying and cyberbullying
- + Build skills in leading conversations with students in distress, discuss concerns, build resilience, and increase connectedness
- + Assess the need for referral, motivate a student to seek help, and make a warm hand-off to support
- + Understand school's specific support services and availability