

FIFTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE REPUBLIC )  
OF THE PHILIPPINES )  
First Regular Session )

SENATE  
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

10 JUL -7 11:32

SENATE

Senate Bill No. 503

RECEIVED BY: 

---

INTRODUCED BY SEN. JINGGOY EJERCITO ESTRADA

---

### EXPLANATORY NOTE

The promotion of mental health among the youth, especially among the school children, is often neglected because of the focus given to the academic or curricular development in aiming to upgrade and improve the quality of education in our country. The government and its partners in the academe, however, fails to realize that the intellectual development of a child can only prosper if he is given the adequate mental health services.

Despite the immense need for counseling professionals, we have a very limited number of school-based counselors, psychologists and social workers who are serving in our educational institutions.

This bill seeks to recruit, hire, and train additional school-based guidance counselors, psychologists, school social workers and mental health personnel. This will enable the students to avail of services that will attend to their mental, emotional and developmental needs. Hence, we can expect a holistic approach to the development and learning of our students.

The immediate approval of this bill is earnestly sought.

  
JINGGOY EJERCITO ESTRADA  
Senator

10 JUL -7 AM 32

SENATE

Senate Bill No. 503

RECEIVED BY: 

---

INTRODUCED BY SEN. JINGGOY EJERCITO ESTRADA

---

AN ACT  
TO RECRUIT, HIRE, AND TRAIN ADDITIONAL SCHOOL-BASED GUIDANCE  
COUNSELORS, PSYCHOLOGISTS, SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKERS AND  
MENTAL HEALTH PERSONNEL

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

**SECTION 1. Short Title.** – This Act shall be known as the “**Students’  
Guidance Counseling Act**”.

**SEC. 2. Purposes.** – The purposes of this Act are to:

- (1) help elementary and secondary institutions to recruit, train, and hire additional school-based mental health personnel, counselors, social workers, and school psychologists;
- (2) help adequately address the mental, emotional, and developmental needs of elementary and secondary school students;
- (3) remove the emotional, behavioral, and psycho-social barriers to learning so as to enhance the classroom preparedness and ability to learn of students;
- (4) support school staff and teachers in improving classroom management, conducting behavioral interventions to improve school discipline, and developing the awareness and skills to identify early warning signs of violence and the need for mental health services; and,
- (5) support parents in improving the school behavior and academic success of their children.

**SEC. 3. Definitions.** – For purposes of this Act –

- (1) “Mental Health and Student Service Provider” includes a qualified school counselor, school psychologist, or school social worker.
- (2) “Mental Health and Student Services” includes direct, individual, and group services provided to students, parents, and school personnel by

mental health and student service providers, or the coordination of prevention strategies in schools or community-based programs.

- (3) "School Counselor" refers to an individual who has documented competence in counseling children and adolescents in a school setting and who:
  - (A) possesses licensure or certification granted by a professional regulatory authority;
  - (B) in the absence of such licensure or certification, possesses national certification in school counseling or a specialty of counseling granted by an independent professional organization; or,
  - (C) holds a minimum of a master's degree in school counseling.
- (4) "School Psychologist" refers to an individual who possesses a minimum of sixty (60) graduate semester hours in school psychology from an institution of higher education and has completed one thousand two hundred (1,200) clock hours in a supervised school psychology internship, of which six hundred (600) hours shall be in the school setting;
- (5) "School Social Worker" refers to an individual who holds a master's degree in social work.

**SEC. 4. *Hiring of Additional School-based Counselors, Psychologists and Social Workers.*** – The Secretary of Education shall, subject to existing rules and regulations of the Department of Education, the Civil Service Commission and the Department of Budget and Management, provide for hiring of additional school based counselors, psychologists and social workers such that each public elementary and secondary school will have at least three (3) counselors, one (1) psychologist, one (1) social worker, and other mental health and students service providers when the need arises.

**SEC. 5. *Guidelines.*** – The Secretary of Education shall, one hundred twenty (120) days after the enactment of this Act, issue the necessary guidelines in the selection, recruitment and hiring of personnel and the nature and scope of the mental health and services to be offered to students.

**SEC. 6. *Appropriations.*** – There shall be appropriated from the National Treasury such sums as may be necessary to carry out the provisions of this Act.

**SEC. 7. *Separability Clause.*** – If any provision or part hereof is held invalid or unconstitutional, the remainder of the law or the provision not otherwise affected shall remain valid and subsisting.

**SEC. 8. *Repealing Clause.*** – Any law, presidential decree or issuance, executive order, letter of instruction, administrative order, rule or regulation contrary to or inconsistent with the provisions of this Act is hereby modified or amended accordingly.

**SEC. 7. *Effectivity.*** – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

*Approved,*