



Mental Protection for Children's Act 2019

*Mar a tionscnaíodh
As initiated*

BILL ENTITLED

This bill creates a framework for the the extension of mental health checks for children and a pathway to care for those issued a formal diagnoses.

The Dáil recognises that:

1. Between 20 and 30 percent of the Irish population you have an identifiable mental health problem.
2. Among this population, the estimated rate of access is estimated to be less than 20%. For those with moderate problems it is estimated to to be less than 5 percent.
3. Those with mental health problems are at a higher risk of academic failure, exclusion from school, entanglement with the Justice System, failure to find employment after graduation, and suicide.
4. The price to the exchequer of mental health problems approaches 300 million.
5. Untreated these problems tend to accumulate - as do their costs.
6. The total cost of mental health illnesses in Ireland is estimated to be 3 billion euros.
7. It is well established in the academic literature that within Ireland, '[p]athways to care for young people [are] non-existent or dysfunctional'.

Be it enacted by the Oireachtas as follows:

1. The government shall ensure that, during each annual period, each child currently enrolled in either the final two years of primary education, or in secondary education, shall receive a mental health check. This will be conducted through a two-staged, multi-gated approach:
 - a. The first stage will see class-groups tested with an academically-supported diagnostic instrument with the results interpreted by an accredited professional.
 - b. Those students who are identified by this diagnostic as being at risk shall be interviewed by an accredited professional and a formal diagnosis prepared.
2. Where possible these assessments will be conducted outside of classroom hours.

3. Children diagnosed with a mental illness in the second stage shall be entitled to at least 15 hour-long sessions with an accredited councillor commencing within four weeks of a formal diagnosis being made. These sessions are to be renewed as deemed necessary.
4. If a public sector councillor cannot be located and scheduled to meet within four weeks, then the government must issue a voucher covering the cost of attending private services.

Submitted by /u/inoticeromance on Behalf of the 3rd Government