



Deputy Grace Boland
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

29th September 2025

PQ Number: 52480/25

PQ Question: To ask the Minister for Health the supports which are available for parents and guardians of students experiencing mental health challenges; the way in which these are communicated to families; and if she will make a statement on the matter. -Grace Boland

Dear Deputy Boland

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question, which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response. I have examined the matter and the following outlines the position.

Supports Available for Parents/Guardians

- Parentline: A confidential helpline offering support, guidance and information on parenting issues, including those arising from children's mental health.
- Aware: Offers support for those affected by depression, anxiety, etc., which also includes concerns of family & friends.
- Shine: Provides support, advocacy, education for mental health, with services for family members or supporters.
- Grow: Peer-support groups for adults, which can include parents/carers.
- Childline, Jigsaw, Pieta House, BeLonG To, Barnardos etc., which often have services for young people *and* avenues for parents/guardians to seek information/advice.

Health Service Supports

HSE (Health Service Executive) supports for carers, family and friends: Includes support groups, information, resources, advice on how to help a young person, and also emphasises carers looking after their own wellbeing.

Local counselling or mental health services via GP referrals, or school referrals to counselling. The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) assists in school-based counselling in collaboration with parents.

Informational / Educational Resources

Booklets and leaflets from HSE and other bodies (e.g. "Journey Together" for families & friends; "Youth Mental Health Resource") that explain what mental health difficulties may look like, what supports are available locally, what to expect, etc.

Courses or workshops for parents via Parentline, to build skills in supporting children's mental health, recognising warning signs, communication, self-care etc.



Peer Support & Community Groups

Support groups (in-person or online) for parents/carers to share experiences, strategies, emotional support. Shine and Grow provide some of these groups.

Local community or voluntary organisations may also offer supports tailored to specific issues (e.g. anxiety, bereavement, family breakdown).

How Supports Are Communicated to Families / Guardians

From existing policies, reports and practice (as found in recent sources), the following are common ways supports are communicated to parents/guardians:

Student Support Teams: Schools often have a support structure (principal or deputy, guidance counsellor, SEN coordinator etc.) who are the first point of contact. Schools communicate to parents that these staff are available for concerns relating to mental health

Parent-Teacher Meetings / Consultations: Meetings where teachers / guidance counsellors may raise concerns about a student's wellbeing, suggest involvement of supports, or discuss possible referrals.

Letters / Emails / Newsletters: Schools may send out information about mental health supports (both in school and in the community), including contact info for local counselling, helplines, etc.

Policy / Guidance Documents

The Department of Education publishes guidance for schools on wellbeing, which is (in many cases) made available to parents via school websites or when new policies are introduced.

Government web portals and leaflets for parents/guardians/public outlining what mental health supports exist, what schools should be doing, and what families can do.

Health Services / NGOs

Organisations like Jigsaw, Childline etc., often provide outreach to schools or communities, advertising their services. Parents may be made aware of them via school counsellors, GP surgeries, or via school-referral.

The HSE provides online resources, leaflets, and support lines which parents can access directly.

During Referral Processes

When a school identifies a student needing counselling or other professional support, parents are usually informed and required to give consent. In cases like NEPS-funded counselling, parents are involved in those points, parents are typically given information about the nature of the support, what to expect, timelines, confidentiality, etc.

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours Sincerely,

Tony McCusker

General Manager

Access and Integration; HSE Mental Health Services