



Legislative Fiscal Bureau

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Joint Committee on Finance

Paper #571

Mental Health Programs (DPI -- Categorical Aids)

[LFB 2019-21 Budget Summary: Page 324-325, #6 and #7; Page 353, #2; and Page 355, #9]

CURRENT LAW

Under current law, aid for school mental health programs is provided to school districts, independent charter schools, and private choice program schools that increase their expenditures on school social workers from one year to the next. Aid reimburses districts or schools for 50% of the increase in these expenditures from one year to the next, and remaining funds are distributed based on each district or school's total expenditures on school social workers. Funding is equal to \$3,000,000 GPR annually.

Additionally, \$3,250,000 GPR annually is appropriated for a school-based mental health services grant to support collaboration between schools and community health agencies to provide mental health services to pupils.

DPI is required to provide training to school district staff and the instructional staff of independent charter schools regarding the following: (a) screening, brief interventions, and referral to treatment (SBIRT); (b) trauma sensitive schools; and (c) youth mental health first aid. Funding totaling \$420,000 GPR annually is provided for this training.

GOVERNOR

Provide an increase of \$22,000,000 GPR annually for aid for school mental health programs. Additionally, modify current law to include expenditures for any pupil services professional, rather than only social workers as under current law. Define pupil services professional as a school counselor, school social worker, school psychologist, or school nurse. Specify that any district or choice or charter school may receive aid under the program based on its total expenditures on pupil services professionals, rather than only districts or choice or charter schools that increase their

expenditures on pupil services professionals from one year to the next.

Provide \$7,000,000 GPR annually for grants to school districts and independent charter schools for collaboration with community health agencies to provide mental health services to pupils.

Provide an increase of \$2,580,000 GPR annually above base level funding of \$420,000 GPR for mental health training programs. Require DPI to provide training on pupil mental health, strategies to improve school climate, and school safety, and annually award grants to the following: (a) the Wisconsin Safe and Healthy Schools Training and Technical Assistance Center; (b) Wisconsin Family Ties, Inc., to train individuals to help families understand and access mental health services that are available to children in school and in the community; and (c) the Center for Suicide Awareness, Inc, to support staff, training, and expenses related to operating a text-based suicide prevention program.

Also provide \$72,100 GPR and 1.0 GPR position in 2019-10 and \$95,500 GPR in 2020-21 to support programming for mental health in schools.

DISCUSSION POINTS

1. In its 2018 report to the Legislature, the Wisconsin Office of Children's Mental Health indicated that in 2015-16, 24% of young adults in Wisconsin had been diagnosed with a mental illness, based on data collected by the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration (SAMSHA). The report also indicated that Wisconsin's youth suicide rate of 9.8 per 100,000 was higher than the national average of 6.7 in 2016, and that Wisconsin's rate had increased over the previous year. Wisconsin's 2017 Youth Risk Behavior Survey found that of the pupils surveyed, 39.9% reported high levels of anxiety, 27.0% indicated depression, and 16.6% reported that they had engaged in self-harm over the previous twelve months.

2. Over the past several years, DPI has received federal funding related to pupil mental health under the following grant programs: (a) a four-year grant totaling \$8.8 million from SAMHSA for the safe schools/healthy students project requiring the state and local communities to address several core areas including mental, emotional, and behavioral health, which expired in 2017; (b) a five-year grant totaling \$9.8 million awarded by SAMHSA in 2014 for Project Advancing Wellness and Resilience Education (AWARE), which promotes mental health awareness and training for school personnel; and (c) a five-year grant totaling \$2.9 million awarded by the U.S. Department of Education in 2014 for school climate transformation, including delivering training and technical assistance on school mental health.

3. Prior to 2018-19, the primary state funding related to mental health issues in schools was state funding totaling approximately \$1.3 million annually for alcohol and other drug abuse (AODA) grants to school districts. These grants fund prevention and early intervention activities, including K-12 curriculum development, family involvement, drug abuse resistance education, and pupil-designed AODA prevention or intervention projects. In 2017-18, grants were provided to 43 school districts and three CESAs, which administered grants on behalf of consortia representing 23 additional school

districts. In addition, administrative funding for AODA programming totaling \$0.6 million GPR annually is provided to DPI to provide training, technical assistance, and information regarding alcohol and other drug abuse to school districts.

4. Under 2017 Act 59, two new categorical aid programs were created to provide funding for mental health in schools. Additionally, funding was provided for mental health training for school staff. Under the Governor's proposal, each of these programs would be expanded, and a new position would be created under DPI to coordinate school mental health programming.

Aid for School Mental Health Staff

5. Under current law, the program reimburses eligible school districts, independent charter schools, and private schools participating in a private school choice program for expenditures on social worker services as follows: (a) 50% reimbursement of the increase in expenditures for school social worker services in the prior school year compared to two years' prior; and (b) a proportion of unreimbursed total expenditures for social workers, based on the amount remaining in the appropriation after payments are made under (a). Eligible districts and schools are defined as school districts, independent charter schools, and private schools participating in a choice program that increased their expenditures on social workers in the prior school year compared to two years' prior. Eligible expenditures include salary or fringe benefits paid to employ, hire, or retrain social workers or the costs to contract for the services of a social worker.

6. Aid under the program, equal to \$3,000,000 GPR, is first provided in 2018-19. School districts, independent charter schools, and private choice schools are eligible to receive aid in this year if they increased their eligible expenditures in the 2017-18 school year compared to the 2016-17 school year. Aid payments have not yet been determined, so it is unknown how many districts and schools will qualify for funding in the first year of the program.

7. School social workers work with school staff, pupils, parents, and community resources to address issues that may impede pupils' academic success and participation in school. DPI indicates that services are most often provided to the following pupils: (a) pupils who are chronically absent from school; (b) pupils who are at a high risk of dropping out or not graduating, including school-aged parents or pregnant pupils, adjudicated delinquents, or pupils who abuse alcohol or other drugs; (c) pupils in special education programs or being evaluated for special education needs; (d) pupils with behavioral issues, such as aggression; (e) pupils experiencing family challenges, such as domestic violence, alcohol or drug abuse, homelessness, or mental illness; or (f) pupils who have experienced traumatic events such as child abuse or neglect, sexual assault, neighborhood violence, harassment, or bullying.

8. At the time the proposal was introduced, social workers were targeted for inclusion in the program because their role in collaborative work with pupils, families, school personnel, and community-based services was considered particularly valuable for addressing pupils' mental health needs, and because of concern that relatively few pupils had access to a social worker in their school. According to staffing data reported through WISEstaff, 323 out of 422 school districts in Wisconsin did not report employing a school social worker in 2016-17. DPI indicated that in 2016, the ratio of pupils to school social workers in Wisconsin totaled 1,528:1.

9. State law defines a "pupil services professional" as a school counselor, social worker, psychologist, or nurse. Under current law, school districts are required to provide guidance and counseling services and provide for emergency nursing services, but are not required to fill other pupil services positions. It could be argued that the number of schools employing staff in each of these categories is too low, and increasing expenditures on these positions would also be beneficial to pupils. Based on WISEstaff data collections, in the 2016-17 school year, 190 school districts did not report any general fund expenditures for school psychologists, 113 school districts did not report any general fund expenditures for school health care personnel such as nurses, and 4 did not report expenditures for school counselors.

10. School districts are also eligible for special education categorical aid for social workers and other pupil services professionals for the portion of their time spent providing services to special education services, subject to maximum percentages. State law indicates that the maximum percentages must be set in administrative rule to be equal to the average percentage of work time spent by each position to provide services to pupils with disabilities. The maximum percentage is equal to 59% for school social workers, 10% for guidance counselors, 29% for nurses, and 84% for psychologists.

11. Under current law, if funds remain in the appropriation after payments are made under the first tier of aid (50% reimbursement of the increase in expenditures for school social worker services in the prior year compared to two years prior), the remaining funds are distributed among eligible schools and districts based on their total unreimbursed expenditures for social workers. Under the bill, this funding distribution would be modified so that all districts, independent charter schools, and private choice schools could qualify for funding under the second tier of aid, even if they did not increase their expenditures on pupil services professionals in the prior year. DPI estimates that the funding under the bill would be sufficient to fully fund payments under the first tier of aid at a total cost of approximately \$6.6 million, and fund approximately 8% of remaining costs under the second tier of aid with the remaining \$18.4 million.

12. It could be argued that allowing more districts, charter schools, and independent choice schools to qualify for funding under the second tier of aid would provide a more sustainable source of funding for those districts or schools considering increasing their funding for pupil services professionals. Under current law, if a school district or school increases its expenditures for school social workers, it receives significant state support in the second year of the increased expenditures from the categorical aid, but no ongoing state funding in the following years. This approach may prevent some school districts or schools from increasing their expenditures for social workers or other pupil services professionals if they anticipate difficulty providing ongoing funding for the new staff.

13. The Committee may wish to consider providing an increase of \$3,600,000 GPR annually, rather than the \$22,000,000 GPR provided under the bill. This additional funding would fully fund estimated eligible costs related to increased expenditures for pupil services professionals, including counselors, psychologists, and nurses in addition to social workers. It could be argued that this portion of the funding would have the greatest impact on encouraging districts and schools to increase their expenditures on pupil services professionals. [Alternative 1b]

School-Based Mental Health Services Grants

14. Under current law, \$3,250,000 GPR is awarded annually through a competitive grant process for providing mental health services to pupils in collaboration with community health agencies. Eligible applicants include school districts, independent charter schools, or consortia of school boards, charter schools, or both.

15. In its program guidance, DPI indicates that applicants can apply for either a program development grant or a program expansion grant. Program development grants are for school districts or schools that have no or limited mental health programming at the time of their application, and can be used to locate and work with community providers to bring mental health supports into a school, create a referral process, and work with county mental health providers to provide wraparound services. Program expansion grants are intended for schools or school districts that have existing programs that they want to expand or ensure are sustainable, and may be used to increase the current level of services provided. Either grant program could include developing or refining referral procedures, providing support or training to parents or other adults, or engaging in prevention activities. Grant applications must also include a memorandum of understanding from a partnering community mental health provider.

16. DPI indicates that in 2018-19 (the first year of the grant program), 141 grant applications were received, representing 182 school districts and charter schools and requesting a total of approximately \$8 million in grants. Of the applicants, 52 received funding under the program, representing a total of 64 school districts. Grant amounts ranged from \$11,000 to the maximum award of \$75,000. DPI indicates that projects funded through the grants include providing pupil support groups led by school and community mental health providers, developing referral processes to ensure that pupils are referred to qualified providers, creating spaces in schools for mental health professionals to work with pupils, and providing training to staff and pupils to recognize and respond to mental health challenges. The second set of grant awards will be announced in June, 2019.

17. The bill would provide an additional \$7.0 million GPR annually for the grants, bringing total grant funding to \$10.3 million annually. This funding level would be sufficient to fully fund the grant requests received in 2018-19, while also allowing for growth in the amount of funding requested in future years. It could be the case that additional school districts or independent charter schools will apply for grants in future years, if more funding is available and as the program becomes more well established.

18. The Blue Ribbon Commission on School Funding recommended additional funding for mental health collaboration grants in January, 2019. The bipartisan Commission, which consisted of sixteen members, including legislators, school administrators, and other stakeholders, held public hearings and informational hearings throughout 2018 in locations throughout the state. During public hearings, the Commission heard testimony regarding the growing mental health needs of pupils, and the cost to school districts of providing mental health services. The Commission recommended increasing funding by \$5 million GPR annually, which would have fully funded grant applications received in 2018-19. [Alternative 2b]

Mental Health and School Climate Training Programs

19. Under current law, DPI is required to provide training to school district staff and the instructional staff of independent charter schools regarding the following: (a) screening, brief interventions, and referral to treatment (SBIRT); (b) trauma sensitive schools; and (c) youth mental health first aid. Base level funding is equal to \$420,000 GPR annually. Funding was first provided in 2017-18.

20. SBIRT is a process that can be used to identify problematic use of alcohol or drugs or other mental health issues. Typically, participants participate in a short standardized screening assessment to identify potential issues, followed by a brief intervention for pupils that need additional support. DPI indicates that coaching and technical assistance related to SBIRT were provided to 135 participants from 38 schools in 2017-18.

21. "Trauma sensitive schools" refers to a program consisting of self-guided training modules that train school staff to address behavioral or mental health challenges in pupils who have experienced trauma. The program was developed through a partnership between DPI and St. Amelian-Lakeside, a human services agency located in Milwaukee providing foster care placement, mental health services, and education. DPI indicates that in 2017-18, state funding supported 32 schools participating in professional development related to trauma sensitive schools. In total, through a combination of the new state funding and a federal school climate transformation grant, 160 schools are participating in one of four cohorts relating to trauma sensitive schools.

22. The youth mental health first aid program trains school district staff to recognize early signs of depression or generalized anxiety disorder, provide initial help to a pupil experiencing a mental health crisis, and refer pupils to appropriate professional resources. DPI indicates that in 2017-18, 70 youth mental health first aid trainings were held in different locations around the state, as well as two week-long trainings for individuals learning to train others under the program.

23. Under the bill, an increase of \$2,580,000 GPR annually would be provided, and DPI would be required to provide training on pupil mental health, strategies to improve school climate, and school safety. DPI would be required to annually award grants to the following: (a) the Wisconsin Safe and Healthy Schools Training and Technical Assistance Center; (b) Wisconsin Family Ties, Inc.; and (c) the Center for Suicide Awareness, Inc.

24. Although the amounts of the annual grant for each organization are not specified in the bill and therefore would be determined by DPI, DPI indicated in its agency request document that the following amounts would be provided to each: (a) for the WISH Center, \$1,000,000 GPR annually; (b) for Wisconsin Family Ties, \$310,000 GPR annually; and (c) for the Center for Suicide Awareness, \$110,000 GPR annually. In sum, DPI anticipates that \$1,420,000 of the increased spending would be distributed to these organizations.

25. The Wisconsin Safe and Healthy Schools Center, or WISH Center, is a collaborative project between DPI and the CESA Statewide Network, and offers training to school district personnel across the state and online in youth mental health, suicide prevention, school safety, and other topics. The Center has partnered with DPI to provide training related to trauma sensitive schools, coordinates

youth mental health first aid trainings statewide, and houses the state's five certified SBIRT instructors. DPI indicates that in 2017-18, the Center provided training to 1,455 educators from 207 school districts and 61 private schools or other organizations.

26. Wisconsin Family Ties is a parent-run organization whose mission is to provide support to families of children and adolescents experiencing mental health challenges. DPI indicates that funding for the organization would be used to support training of parent peer support specialists to help families access school and community-based mental health services.

27. The Center for Suicide Awareness is a non-profit organization based in Kaukauna, Wisconsin, that provides education, support, and intervention related to suicide prevention. The Center operates HOPELINE, a text-based service that provides support and resources to individuals struggling with depression or suicidal thoughts. DPI indicates that the funding in the bill would be used to support staff, training, and expenses related to HOPELINE.

28. DPI indicates that the remaining \$1,580,000 of the increased funding would be used for the following: (a) training and curriculum for a peer-to-peer youth suicide prevention program; (b) an online bullying prevention module for parents and revised online and printed information about bullying; (c) training related to social and emotional learning, which includes skills such as understanding and managing emotions, feeling and showing empathy for others, and maintaining positive relationships; (d) online modules and other training materials for the Signs of Suicide (SOS) depression awareness and suicide prevention curriculum; and (e) increased funding for trauma sensitive schools and youth mental health first aid programs.

Mental Health Program Position

29. The bill would also provide \$72,100 GPR and 1.0 GPR position in 2019-10 and \$95,500 GPR in 2020-21 to support programming for mental health in schools. Funding under the bill would provide \$41,800 for salary, \$17,800 for fringe benefits, and \$12,500 for supplies and services in 2019-20, and \$55,800 for salary, \$23,700 for fringe benefits, and \$16,000 for supplies and services in 2020-21.

30. Under 2017 Act 59, two new categorical aid programs were created related to school mental health, as well as a requirement for DPI to provide training to school districts related to (a) screening, brief intervention, and referral to treatment; (b) trauma sensitive schools training modules; and (c) youth mental health first aid. The act also provided 1.0 GPR position to administer state mental health programs. DPI indicates that this position was added under the student services/prevention and wellness (SSPW) team, and is primarily responsible for implementing and managing the school-based mental health service collaboration grant program and serving as a liaison with the WISH Center on school climate and school safety.

31. In its agency budget request, DPI indicated that the new position would also serve as an education consultant on the SSPW team. The position would provide state support to the expansion of the mental health programs that would be provided under the bill, as well as support for existing team responsibilities. Currently, the team consists of 25.25 positions, including 3.00 GPR positions. The remaining positions are supported with federal funds, or program revenue transferred from other

agencies for specific programs.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Aid for Mental Health Staff

a. Approve the Governor's recommendation to provide \$22,000,000 annually for school mental health programs. Additionally, expand the existing program to include expenditures for any pupil services professional, and specify that if funds remain in the appropriation, any school district, private choice school, or private charter school may receive aid under the program based on its total expenditures on pupil services professionals.

ALT 1a	Change to	
	Base	Bill
GPR	\$44,000,000	\$0

b. Provide \$3,600,000 annually to fully fund payments of 50% of increased expenditures for school districts or schools that increase their expenditures on pupil services professionals from one year to the next. Additionally, expand the existing program to include expenditures for any pupil services professional.

ALT 1b	Change to	
	Base	Bill
GPR	\$7,200,000 - \$36,800,000	

c. Take no action.

ALT 1c	Change to	
	Base	Bill
GPR	\$0	-\$44,000,000

2. School-Based Mental Health Services Grants

a. Approve the Governor's recommendation to provide \$7,000,000 annually for grants to school districts and independent charter schools for collaboration with community agencies to provide mental health services to pupils.

ALT 2a	Change to	
	Base	Bill
GPR	\$14,000,000	\$0

b. Provide an additional \$5,000,000 annually for the grants, as recommended by the Blue Ribbon Commission on School Funding.

ALT 2b	Change to	
	Base	Bill
GPR	\$10,000,000	-\$4,000,000

c. Take no action.

ALT 2c	Change to	
	Base	Bill
GPR	\$0	-\$14,000,000

3. Mental Health and School Climate Training Programs

a. Approve the Governor's recommendation to provide an increase of \$2,580,000 annually for mental health and school climate training programs, and require DPI to annually award a grant to each of the following: (a) the Wisconsin Safe and Healthy Schools Training and Technical Assistance Center; (b) Wisconsin Family Ties, Inc.; and (c) the Center for Suicide Awareness, Inc.

ALT 3a	Change to	
	Base	Bill
GPR	\$5,160,000	\$0

b. Provide an increase of \$1,500,000 annually, and also require DPI to award annual grants to each of the following: (a) the Wisconsin Safe and Healthy Schools Training and Technical Assistance Center; (b) Wisconsin Family Ties, Inc.; and (c) the Center for Suicide Awareness, Inc. The additional funding could be used for the grants, and for additional training for schools and school districts related to mental health and school climate.

ALT 3b	Change to	
	Base	Bill
GPR	\$3,000,000	-\$2,160,000

c. Take no action.

ALT 3c	Change to	
	Base	Bill
GPR	\$0	-\$5,160,000

4. Mental Health Position Authority

a. Approve the Governor's recommendation to provide \$72,100 and 1.0 position beginning in 2019-20 and \$95,500 in 2020-21 to support programming for mental health in schools.

ALT 4a	Change to Base		Change to Bill	
	Funding	Positions	Funding	Positions
GPR	\$167,600	1.00	\$0	0.00

b. Take no action.

ALT 4b	Change to Base		Change to Bill	
	Funding	Positions	Funding	Positions
GPR	\$0	0.00	-\$167,600	- 1.00

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