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Joint Committee on Finance

Paper #655

Mental Health Training Programs (DPI -- Administrative and Other Funding)

[LFB 2023-25 Budget Summary: Page 509, #6]

CURRENT LAW

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. Funding totaling \$420,000 GPR annually is provided for this training.

DISCUSSION POINTS

1. Funding for the mental health training program was first provided in 2017-18, and totaled \$220,000 GPR annually during the 2017-19 biennium. Under 2019 Act 9, funding was increased to \$420,000 GPR annually and has remained at that level since. DPI is required to use the funding to establish a mental health training program and provide training to school district and independent charter school staff on evidence-based strategies related to addressing mental health issues in schools.

2. Under the current law mental health training programs, trainings are coordinated through the Wisconsin Safe and Healthy Schools (WISH) Center. The WISH Center is a collaborative project between DPI and the Cooperative Educational Services Agency (CESA) Statewide Network, and offers training and resources to school district personnel across the state and online in alcohol and other drug abuse, mental health, school safety, and other topics, in addition to the training topics DPI is required to provide. According to its 2021-22 annual report, the WISH Center received \$1.5 million in revenue from grants, intergovernmental agreements, and events. In that same year, WISH Center expenditures totaled approximately \$1.5 million, including \$745,000 for salary and fringe benefits of employees, \$544,000 for programs and contracts, \$27,000 for supplies and materials, and \$178,000 for other, unspecified expenditures. The WISH Center staff includes four regional coordinators, three

project coordinators, and one director.

3. SBIRT is a process that can be used to identify problematic use of alcohol or drugs or other mental health issues that was originally designed for use in healthcare settings and adapted for delivery in middle and high schools. Typically, pupils 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 participants from 28 school districts during the 2021-22 school year, including 14 new districts and 14 returning districts. A total of 97 participants from new schools were trained through five virtual sessions, 60 participants attended two refresher trainings, and 199 participants attended practice sessions to increase learning and implementation of SBIRT. In addition, 254 pupils received SBIRT services for an average of four sessions each. Two separate screening tools were used at the initial and follow-up sessions, which found reductions in substance use and behavioral health symptoms.

4. "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. Aemilian-Lakeside, a human services agency located in Milwaukee providing foster care placement, mental health services, and education on trauma-informed care. DPI indicates that in 2021-22, state funding supported four sessions in professional development related to trauma sensitive schools and two virtual learning sessions to offer continuing education for individuals training others under the program. A total of 254 participants received professional development and training related to trauma sensitive schools.

5. The youth mental health first aid program trains school district staff to recognize early signs of addiction or mental health challenges, such as 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 2021-22, over 800 individuals participated in 57 youth mental health first aid trainings that were held throughout the state. In addition, federal coronavirus funding from the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) fund was used to provide five sessions to train individuals to increase capacity to provide training in schools and 70 additional trainers were certified statewide through these sessions.

6. Assembly Bill 43/Senate Bill 70 would provide an additional \$580,000 GPR annually for mental health training and require DPI to provide training to individuals employed by an out-of-school-time program, in addition to the other staff required under current law. The bill would also modify the program to add suicide prevention to the types of training required to be provided. DPI included the modification and additional funding in its agency budget request. [Alternative 1]

7. DPI indicates that the additional funding requested would be used specifically to provide the following in each year of the biennium: (a) 20 additional trainings in youth mental health first aid at a cost of \$2,930 per training; (b) \$24,000 to each of the 12 CESAs to provide regional training in trauma sensitive schools, social and emotional learning, and bullying prevention; (c) 12 trainings in social and emotional learning at a cost of \$1,800 per training; (d) 12 bullying prevention introduction sessions and 12 toolkits at a cost of \$1,800 each; (e) 12 three-day trainings in the school mental health framework at a cost of \$5,400 per training; (f) four trainings in compassion resilience at a cost of

\$2,800 per training; (g) three two-day trainings in restorative practices at a cost of \$3,600 per training; (h) two additional trainings of trainers in youth mental health first aid at a cost of \$30,000 per training; (i) one additional training of trainers in trauma sensitive schools at a cost of \$20,000; and (j) one mental health training for out of school time programs at a cost of \$1,800.

8. DPI's proposed budget indicates that the additional funding requested by the agency and provided under the bill would expand trainings in the areas currently required in statute, and also would provide trainings in new areas, including cyberbullying, the school mental health framework, compassion resilience, and restorative practices. As noted above, the WISH Center provides various other mental health trainings and resources, including resources related to the school mental health framework (a framework for comprehensive systems of services and supports to promote student and staff mental health and wellbeing) and social and emotional learning, which provides youth and adults with the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve goals, feel and show empathy, establish and maintain healthy relationships, and make responsible decisions.

9. Cyberbullying is an increased concern due to pupil engagement in online learning as a result of COVID-19. Under current law, an appropriation totaling \$150,000 GPR annually provides a grant for bullying prevention, which is awarded to a nonprofit organization to provide training and support the creation of an online bullying prevention curriculum for pupils in grades kindergarten to eight. Rather than duplicating these efforts, DPI indicates that additional funding for training on bullying prevention could include the creation of online training modules for schools and related resources to help schools respond to bullying.

10. The WISH Center collaborates with Rogers Behavioral Health Community Learning and Engagement to provide training and technical assistance for schools implementing the compassion resilience toolkit, which is meant to build resilience of educators and the systems in which they serve. DPI indicates that compassion resilience training covers the impacts of stress, burnout, and compassion fatigue among educators, and the development of action plans to create resilience among educators. According to the WISH Center, such training also provides educators with strategies that can be used to work more effectively with students impacted by stress or other traumas.

11. The WISH Center utilized ESSER funds to provide training in restorative practices. DPI indicates that such training helps schools implement a behavioral program in which pupils who have engaged in inappropriate behavior must address the impact of their behavior on others and take responsibility for their actions. Rather than punishing misbehavior, which can cause a pupil to feel like a victim or disconnected from school, restorative practices emphasize learning to allow pupils to restore relationships by addressing the harm they cause in an intentional way. The WISH Center indicates that the goals of restorative practices are to: (a) understand harm and develop empathy; (b) listen and respond to the needs of all individuals involved; (c) encourage accountability and responsibility through personal reflection within a collaborative planning process; (d) reintegrate the individuals involved into the community as valuable, contributing members; (e) create caring environments to support healthy communities; and (f) avoid contributing to harm.

12. If the Committee wishes to provide additional funding for the mental health training program at a reduced cost, the Committee could consider providing an increase of \$138,600 GPR

annually, the amount DPI indicated would be used specifically to expand the trauma sensitive schools and youth mental health first aid training programs required under current law. [Alternative 2] Alternatively, the Committee could consider providing an increase of \$280,000 GPR annually and modifying the program to allow funding to be used on other types of mental health trainings. [Alternative 3] The Committee could also consider modifying the program to allow funding to be used on other types of mental health training without providing additional funds. [Alternative 4]

ALTERNATIVES

1. Increase funding for the school mental health training program by \$580,000 annually. Modify the program to require that training be provided on suicide prevention and to individuals employed by out-of-school-time programs, in addition to the other topics and staff required under current law.

ALT 1	Change to Base
GPR	\$1,160,000

2. Increase funding for the school mental health training program by \$138,600 annually to expand support for the trauma sensitive schools and the youth mental health first aid training programs required under current law.

ALT 2	Change to Base
GPR	\$277,200

3. Increase funding for the school mental health training program by \$280,000 annually. Modify the program to allow funds to be used on other types of mental health trainings in addition to the topics required under current law.

ALT 3	Change to Base
GPR	\$560,000

4. Modify the program to allow funds to be used on other types of mental health trainings in addition to the topics required under current law.

5. Take no action.

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