

SENATE, No. 2715

STATE OF NEW JERSEY 219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED JULY 22, 2020

Sponsored by:

Senator JAMES BEACH

District 6 (Burlington and Camden)

Senator KRISTIN M. CORRADO

District 40 (Bergen, Essex, Morris and Passaic)

Co-Sponsored by:

Senator Pou

SYNOPSIS

Creates grant program to encourage school districts to partner with institutions of higher education in training school-based mental health services providers.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 12/21/2020)

1 AN ACT establishing a grant program for the training of school-
2 based mental health services providers and supplementing
3 chapter 6 of Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes.

4
5 **BE IT ENACTED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State*
6 *of New Jersey:*

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8 1. a. There is established in the Department of Education a
9 grant program to assist school districts in the training of school-
10 based mental health services providers, expand the pipeline of high-
11 quality, trained providers, and address the shortages of mental
12 health professionals in schools. As used in this section, “school-
13 based mental health services provider” means a State-licensed or
14 State-certified school counselor, school psychologist, school social
15 worker, or other State-licensed or State-certified mental health
16 professional qualified under State law to provide mental health
17 services to children and adolescents.

18 b. Grants under the program shall be awarded on a competitive
19 basis. School districts that receive a grant under the program shall
20 use the funds for efforts to create and grow programs and
21 partnerships that train students who are attending graduate school to
22 become school-based mental health services providers.

23 c. To be eligible for consideration of a grant award under the
24 program, a school district shall submit an application to the
25 Commissioner of Education, in accordance with application
26 procedures and requirements prescribed by the commissioner. A
27 school district applying for a grant award under the program shall,
28 prior to submitting an application, form a partnership with one or
29 more institutions of higher education that offer graduate programs
30 in school-based mental health fields. The partnership shall allow a
31 student enrolled in an institution of higher education’s graduate
32 program to perform applicable fieldwork, credit hours, internships,
33 externships, or other related training as applicable for the academic
34 program of the student.

35 A grant application submitted by a school district shall include
36 information regarding the following:

37 (1) the details of the partnership formed between the school
38 district and an institution of higher education, including plans for
39 supervising the graduate students in school settings and ensuring
40 that the students are trained in providing mental health supports and
41 services to students in the school district;

42 (2) a description of how the lack of school-based mental health
43 services providers is affecting students in the school district;

44 (3) the school district’s unmet need for student mental health
45 supports and services;

46 (4) the number of school-based mental health services providers
47 currently employed by the school district and their caseloads;

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- 1 (5) the existing ratio of school-based mental health services
2 providers to students enrolled in the district;
- 3 (6) the schools and student populations that will benefit from
4 the grant funding;
- 5 (7) the objectives for the number of graduate students the school
6 district anticipates training under the grant program;
- 7 (8) plans to collaborate with federal, State, regional, and local
8 entities to expand the pipeline of school-based mental health
9 services providers and achieve partnership goals and objectives; and
- 10 (9) any other information as required by the commissioner.
- 11 d. (1) The commissioner shall establish selection criteria for
12 the awarding of grants under the program, including consideration
13 of the information listed in subsection c. of this section. Grants
14 shall be awarded based upon review of the applications and subject
15 to the availability of funds. The commissioner shall establish the
16 amount for each grant that is approved.
- 17 (2) Priority for grants awarded under the program shall be given
18 to high-need school districts. The Commissioner of Children and
19 Families, in consultation with the Commissioner of Education, shall
20 establish criteria for designating high-need school districts based
21 upon evidence that the school district is located in an area of the
22 State that has significant mental health needs that are not currently
23 being met.
- 24 e. The Department of Education shall annually apply for and
25 use any federal grant funds or other federal assistance which may be
26 available to be used for the grant program established pursuant to
27 this section including, but not limited to, funds under the federal
28 Mental Health Service Professional Demonstration Grant Program
29 and the federal “Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security
30 (CARES) Act,” Pub.L.116-136. The department may, if applicable,
31 apply for federal grant funds or other federal assistance on behalf of
32 one or more school districts approved for participation in the grant
33 program established pursuant to this section. Any federal grant
34 funds or other federal assistance awarded to the department shall
35 first be used to provide grant awards to school districts, prior to
36 using State funds under the grant program established pursuant to
37 this section.
- 38 f. Within three years after receiving a grant award under the
39 program, a school district shall submit a report to the Commissioner
40 of Education containing information on the district’s use of the
41 grant funds. The report shall include, at a minimum, information on
42 the number of graduate students trained under the program, the
43 number of graduate students who were hired as school-based mental
44 health services providers using grant funds, increases or
45 improvements in the provision of student mental health supports
46 and services as a result of the grant, and any notable changes in
47 school climate, attendance rates, student achievement, school
48 discipline, or other measures since receiving the grant.

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1 2. The Commissioner of Education shall submit a report to the
2 Governor, and to the Legislature pursuant to section 2 of
3 P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1), no later than four years after the
4 establishment of the grant program established pursuant to section 1
5 of this act. The report shall include, but need not be limited to,
6 information on the number of grant applicants, the number and
7 amounts of the grant awards, information provided by school
8 districts in the reports submitted pursuant to subsection f. of section
9 1 of this act, and any recommendations concerning the continuation
10 or expansion of the grant program.

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12 3. The State Board of Education shall adopt, pursuant to the
13 “Administrative Procedure Act,” P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et
14 seq.), rules and regulations necessary to carry out the provisions of
15 this act.

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17 4. This act shall take effect immediately and shall first apply to
18 the first full school year following the date of enactment.

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STATEMENT

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23 This bill establishes a grant program to assist school districts in
24 the training of school-based mental health services providers to
25 expand the pipeline of high-quality, trained providers and address
26 the shortages of mental health professionals in school districts.
27 School districts that receive a grant under the program will use the
28 funds for efforts to create and grow programs that train students
29 who are attending graduate school to become school-based mental
30 health services providers. School-based mental health services
31 providers are defined under the bill as State-licensed or certified
32 school counselors, school psychologists, school social workers, or
33 other mental health professional qualified under State law to
34 provide mental health services to children and adolescents.

35 Prior to applying for the grant program, a school district is
36 required to form a partnership with one or more institutions of
37 higher education that offer graduate programs in school-based
38 mental health fields. The partnership would allow a student
39 enrolled in the graduate program to perform applicable fieldwork,
40 credit hours, internships, externships, or other related training as
41 applicable for the academic program of the student.

42 The Commissioner of Education will establish selection criteria
43 for the awarding of grants under the program, including
44 consideration of various information regarding the need for school-
45 based mental health professionals and an increased level of student
46 mental health services and supports. In awarding grants, priority
47 will be given to high-need school districts, which will be designated

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1 according to criteria established by the Commissioner of Children
2 and Families, in consultation with the Commissioner of Education.

3 Under the bill, the Department of Education is required to
4 annually apply for and use any federal grant funds or other federal
5 assistance which may be available to be used for the grant program
6 including, but not limited to, funds under the Mental Health Service
7 Professional Demonstration Grant Program and the Coronavirus
8 Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. The department
9 may, if applicable, apply for federal grant funds or other assistance
10 on behalf of one or more school districts approved for participation
11 in the grant program established under the bill. Any federal grant
12 funds awarded to the department will first be used to provide grant
13 awards to school districts, prior to using State funds.