

Support SB19-010 Professional Behavioral Health Services for Schools

Sen. Fields / Rep. Mclachlan / Rep. Valdez

The School Health Professionals Grant Program was created in 2014 and provides time-limited funding to schools to increase the presence of school health professionals and support the behavioral health needs of students. School health professionals facilitate prevention education, screening for early identification, and referral care coordination for students with substance use and other behavioral health needs.



There is an enormous need for behavioral health professionals in schools

In 2017, 42 districts were funded by the grant program at \$9.4M; an additional 24 districts applied but did not receive grant funding. The unfunded districts' requests, which would have increased behavioral health services in 95 schools, totaled approximately \$10M. Almost every school district that was denied funding is below nationally recommended staff to student ratios.

- Nearly 70 percent of Colorado's 178 school districts do not meet national ratio recommendations for mental health or health professionals. Our state ratios are nearly two to five times higher than the nationally recommended ratios.
- A total of 896,334 Colorado students are underserved based on nationally recommended ratios.
- Thirty-three school districts operate below nationally recommended ratios for all of their mental health or health professionals.
- Nineteen school districts have fewer than one full-time school psychologist or social worker.
- Seventy-seven school districts do not meet national requirements for nurse to student ratios. Eight districts have no nurses. Only 37 schools meet or exceed national requirements.

Average Colorado Professional to Student Ratios vs. Recommended Ratio

Professional	Colorado Ratio	Recommended Ratio	Information Date
Nurses	1:1432	1:750	2017-18
Social Workers	1:1380	1:250	2017-18
Psychologists	1:1112	1:700	2017-18
School Counselors	1:455	1:250	2017-18



SB19-010 strengthens the School Health Professionals Grant program by:

- Clarifying the definition of behavioral health to include mental health
- Allowing schools to use the funding to use telehealth technology for direct services by a school health professional
- Allowing schools to use the funding to contract with a community partner for behavioral health services
- Allowing, but not requiring, professionals hired through this grant program to provide therapy to students
- Changing the criteria by which schools are prioritized for grants, by including:
 - Suicide attempts, deaths by suicide, prevalence of adverse childhood experiences, and bullying
 - Student drug or alcohol use
 - The school's access to a behavioral health care provider
 - The prioritization of grant funding for staff training related to behavioral health



Supporters

Children's Hospital Colorado
Children's Campaign
National Association of Social Workers-
Colorado Chapter
Huerfano and Las Animas Counties (HuLA)
Early Childhood Council
National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)
Colorado School Counselor Association
Colorado Association of School Nurses

Colorado Society of School Psychologists
Rural Schools Alliance
Colorado Psychological Association
Colorado Behavioral Healthcare Council
Mt. St Vincent
Public Education & Business Coalition
Health District of Northern Larimer County
Teach Plus Colorado
Together Colorado