



## Legislation Text

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**File #:** 22-0355, **Version:** 1

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Health and Human Services Agency (HHS) recommending the Board:

- 1) Accept the Mental Health Student Services Act (MHSSA) grant, administered by the Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission (MHSOAC), for the term of execution through June 30, 2026, in the amount of \$4,000,000;
- 2) Delegate authority to the HHS Director to execute the funding agreement 21MHSOAC049 and related Exhibits; and
- 3) Authorize the HHS Director, or designee, to execute and administer any subsequent administrative documents relating to said award, including any amendment(s) that do not increase the amount or term of the agreement contingent upon County Counsel and Risk Management approval, and required fiscal and programmatic reports.

**FUNDING:** 100% Mental Health Services federal funding authorized pursuant to The Federal American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, appropriated through the State Fiscal Recovery Fund, to expand the MHSSA Partnership Grant Program throughout California. No matching funds are required.

**DISCUSSION / BACKGROUND:**

On November 1, 2021, the Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission (MHSOAC) released a competitive Request for Applications (RFA) for the Mental Health Student Services Act (MHSSA) grant, which solicited applications from California counties in partnership with local educational agencies to apply. The MHSSA was established under the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) of 2021 to be used to promote school mental health and reach, and to serve at-risk children, families and neighborhoods. The ARPA of 2021 provided \$100 million through the State Fiscal Recovery Fund, as authorized in the Budget Act of 2021, to the MHSOAC to support grants for partnerships between counties and schools pursuant to the MHSSA and targeted to economically disadvantaged communities throughout California. As identified in the RFA, economically disadvantaged communities is defined as Title 1 schools with free and reduced-price meal programs.

The purpose of the MHSSA is to establish additional mental health partnerships between county mental health or behavioral health departments and local education entities in order to provide increased access to mental health services at locations that are easily accessible to students and their families. The MHSSA is intended to foster stronger school-community mental health partnerships that can leverage resources to help students succeed by authorizing counties and local educational agencies to enter into partnerships that would create programs with targeted interventions for pupils with identified social-emotional, behavioral, and academic needs.

As required by the application process outlined in the RFA, the Health and Human Services Agency (HHS) Behavioral Health Division (BHD), acting as the lead applicant, is required to partner with at least one school district and the County Office of Education for the delivery of mental health services to the targeted population of children, youth and young adults. HHS has partnered with the El Dorado County Office of Education (EDCOE) to submit an application outlining the two agency's joint program goals for implementing the MHSSA grant funding to support fifteen school districts within the County, if awarded. This partnership should expand access to mental health services for children and

youth, including campus-based mental health services, and should facilitate linkages and access to ongoing and sustained services in the County. Careful consideration was given to the districts and schools that were included in the MHSA grant application, in which one of these considerations was schools where students recently experienced trauma from the Caldor Fire. All of the schools directly impacted by the Caldor Fire were included in the County's grant application.

This application was required to be submitted to the MHSAOC by December 6, 2021. On February 16, 2022, HHSA was notified that their MHSSA grant application was approved for award in the amount of \$4,000,000, which requires no match funding, for a term effective upon execution through June 30, 2026. Funding made available through the MHSSA is to be used to provide support services that include, at a minimum, services that are provided on school campuses to the extent practicable, suicide prevention, drop-out prevention, placement assistance, continuum-of-care for students in need of ongoing services, and outreach to high-risk youth. Grantees will have the discretion to use this funding to hire qualified mental health personnel; provide professional development for school staff; or support other strategies that respond to the mental health needs of children and youth. Grantees must agree to comply with the program requirements set forth in California Welfare Institutions Code (WIC) Section 5886

HHSA BHD intends to transfer the entirety of this funding award to EDCOE, with the condition that EDCOE will reimburse HHSA BHD for mental health treatment services rendered to students through the MHSSA program, during the term of the grant. In partnership with HHSA BHD, EDCOE plans to use this funding to primarily provide staff to operate the MHSA program, with the primary goals expected to: a) expand mental health services within the participating community schools to identify students who are experiencing mild to severe mental health issues, and connect these students to appropriate services; b) provide professional development for staff at participating schools and program staff to create positive social-emotional school environments and expand capacity at schools for addressing students' mental health needs; and, c) build upon mental health services currently existing in the County by partnering with EDCOE to fill in some existing gaps and help eliminate barriers for youth seeking or accessing mental health services.

The gaps this program is designed to address within the County are: (1) the lack of a systematic process for identifying students who are struggling with mental health issues; (2) the lack of access to services for students whose mental health needs are outside of the HHSA BHD's scope; (3) support for students and families on how to navigate the mental health services that are available and follow-through to help students and their families to access mental health services; (4) gaps in professional development on how to identify and address students' mental health needs in a school context, and; (5) having adequate staff to coordinate and provide services for school aged youth who need them.

HHSA BHD will draft Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with EDCOE and participating schools to outline the partnerships, outline the funding award transfer from HHSA to EDCOE, and define the reimbursement process from EDCOE to HHSA Behavioral Health for mental health treatment services provided to students, and define how these agencies will work together to implement the MHSSA program within the County. The MOUs will specify how to seamlessly provide access to services for students who will benefit from accessing mental health services within the school system. HHSA will return to the Board with each resulting MOU, once these agreements are finalized and approved by County Counsel.

If this grant award is accepted by the Board of Supervisors, HHSA BHD will begin the MHSSA

program planning phase in June 2022, with program implementation to begin in Fiscal Year 2022-23.

**ALTERNATIVES:**

Should the Board decline to accept this competitive funding award, or decline to authorize the HHSA Director to execute the MHSAA funding agreement, the County will not receive the \$4 million in funds to help support students experiencing mental health challenges within the community school system.

**PRIOR BOARD ACTION:**

N/A

**OTHER DEPARTMENT / AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:**

County Counsel approved the MHSSA funding agreement.

**CAO RECOMMENDATION:**

Approve as recommended.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:**

Federal funded MHSSA funds do not have a match requirement. There is no impact to County General Fund and this funding will be included in the Fiscal Year 2022-23 Budget request.

**CLERK OF THE BOARD FOLLOW UP ACTIONS**

N/A

**STRATEGIC PLAN COMPONENT:**

County Strategic Goal: "Healthy Communities, Improved Health, Well-being, and Self-sufficiency of El Dorado County communities, residents, and visitors."

**CONTACT**

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