

STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH APPRENTICESHIP RETENTION AND TRAINING (SMART) INTERNSHIP GRANT PROGRAM

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Senate Bill 1012 (S-1) as reported from committee
Sponsor: Sen. Curtis S. VanderWall
House Committee: Health Policy
Senate Committee: Health Policy and Human Services
Complete to 6-30-22

Analysis available at
<http://www.legislature.mi.gov>

BRIEF SUMMARY: Senate Bill 1012 would create a new act to establish a student mental health apprenticeship retention and training (SMART) internship grant program to be administered by the Michigan Department of Education (MDE). Grants under the program would be available to certain individuals enrolled in graduate-level mental health professional programs who are interning in public schools while working toward obtaining specified school psychologist, school counselor, or social worker certifications, licenses, credentials, or endorsements. The internship would have to be in a discipline designated a critical shortage for the prior year or at a public school that meets specified criteria. Grants also would be available for professionals who supervise those interns. MDE would have to promulgate rules to implement the new act. Senate Bill 1012 (S-1) is identical to House Bill 6020 (H-1) as passed by the House of Representatives.

FISCAL IMPACT: The bill would not have a direct fiscal impact to school districts, intermediate school districts (ISDs), or public school academies (PSAs, or charter schools). (See **Fiscal Information**, below, for a detailed discussion.)

THE APPARENT PROBLEM:

Before the pandemic, behavioral health providers were seeing an uptick in mental health issues and suicidal ideation in teens and prepubescent children. Now the situation is worse. Whether driven by bullying, isolation, homelessness, trauma, violence in the home, loss of family members, or economic hardship experienced by the family, suicide and self-injury incidents in the first three quarters of 2021 in the US were 47% higher among five-to-eight-year-olds and an astounding 182% higher among nine-to-twelve-year-olds than reported during the same time period in 2016, according to statistics compiled by the Children's Hospital Association.*

There has been a nationwide shortage of behavioral health professionals who treat children, so school social workers, school counselors, and school psychologists can play an important role in providing early assistance to students struggling with mental, emotional, or behavioral health issues. However, there is also a shortage of these school behavioral health professionals. It has been suggested that Michigan establish an apprenticeship program whereby graduate-level students studying social work, counseling, and psychology could receive pay while training under licensed and certified professionals in public schools, in addition to or in conjunction with current field placement requirements. Such a program could not only enhance the educational experience of the graduate student, it also could attract and retain more professionals who attain certification as a school social worker, school counselor, or school psychologist.

* <https://www.choc.org/news/more-young-children-are-killing-themselves-the-covid-19-pandemic-is-making-the-problem-worse/>

THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:

Senate Bill 1012 would require MDE to create and administer a SMART internship grant program to provide grants to ***designated recipients*** and ***field supervisors, field instructors,*** and ***supervisors*** as described below. MDE would have to administer grant funding through the program in an amount per ***eligible designated recipient*** that is equal to either of the following:

- \$25 for each hour spent in an intern capacity for up to 20 hours per week of an internship in a public school that occurs over a 30-week period in a school year.
- A lump-sum amount equal to \$15,000 for up to 20 hours per week of an internship in a public school that occurs over a 30-week period in a school year. (The lump-sum amount would be paid at the end of the 30-week period.)

Designated recipient would mean an individual who is enrolled in a *graduate-level mental health professional program* described below, is in good standing as determined by the program, and is working toward obtaining any of the following:

- A preliminary school psychologist certificate issued by MDE under R 380.204 of the Michigan Administrative Code.[†]
- A preliminary school psychologist certificate issued by MDE under R 380.205 of the Michigan Administrative Code.[†]
- A school psychologist certificate issued by MDE under R 380.206 of the Michigan Administrative Code.[†]
- A preliminary school counselor credential issued by MDE under R 390.1304 of the Michigan Administrative Code.[‡]
- A school counselor license issued by MDE under R 390.1305 of the Michigan Administrative Code.[‡]
- A school counseling endorsement issued by MDE on the individual's teaching certificate.
- Temporary or full school social worker approval issued by MDE under R 340.1012 of the Michigan Administrative Code.[§]

An eligible *graduate-level mental health professional program* would include an MDE-approved school counselor education or preparation program, school social worker education or preparation program, or school psychology education or preparation program that offers designations, a focus, or special certifications in the provision of school mental health services. The program could be maintained by an institution of higher education located in or outside of Michigan.

Eligible designated recipient would mean a designated recipient who meets both of the following (one condition from the first group and one or more from the second):

- Either of the following:
 - The individual is in the first year of an internship period required by the program they are enrolled in and is serving as a substitute teacher or in a paraprofessional role in a public school as described above or is in a ***supervised role*** in a public school and following best-practice

[†] See https://www.michigan.gov/-/media/Project/Websites/mde/educator_services/rules/sch_psych_cert_code.pdf

[‡] See https://www.michigan.gov/-/media/Project/Websites/mde/educator_services/rules/sch_couns_cert_code.pdf

[§] See https://www.michigan.gov/-/media/Project/Websites/mde/educator_services/rules/sch_social_worker_cert_code.pdf

- training and supervision requirements as indicated by national standards set forth by appropriate national professional organizations.
 - The individual is in the second year of an internship period required by the program they are enrolled in and is in a supervised role in a public school as described above and following best-practice training and supervision requirements as indicated by national standards set forth by appropriate national professional organizations.
- At least one of the following:
 - The individual is interning in a discipline that has been designated by the superintendent of public instruction as critical shortage for the immediately preceding school fiscal year under the Public School Employees Retirement Act.
 - The individual is interning in a public school where at least 50% of pupils enrolled are eligible for free or reduced-price meals under the federal Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act.**
 - The individual is interning in a public school that received funding under section 22d of the School Aid Act in the immediately preceding school fiscal year.††

Supervised role would mean a role in which the individual is supervised by a field supervisor, field instructor, or supervisor.

Field supervisor, field instructor, or supervisor would mean an individual who supervises an ***eligible designated recipient***. A field supervisor, field instructor, or supervisor would be required to do the following, as applicable:

- Maintain a school psychologist certificate during the supervision of a designated recipient working toward obtaining a school psychologist certificate or preliminary school psychologist certificate.
- Maintain full school social worker approval during the supervision of a designated recipient working toward obtaining temporary or full school social worker approval.
- Maintain a school counselor license or school counselor teaching certificate endorsement or be a school counselor educator in an MDE-approved school counselor preparation program during the supervision of a designated recipient working toward obtaining a school counselor license, preliminary school counselor credential, or school counselor teaching certificate endorsement.

Grant funds would have to be paid as follows to designated recipients, pursuant to an agreement between the recipient, the public school where the recipient is interning, and the program the recipient is enrolled in:

- On the same pay period or schedule offered to other educational professionals at the public school where the recipient is interning.

** See https://www.michigan.gov/mde/-/media/Project/Websites/mde/Year/2021/08/23/Determining_F-R_Eligibility_SY_21-22_FAQ.pdf

Also <https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/NSLPFactSheet.pdf>

†† Funding is available under that section for school districts with fewer than 10 pupils per square mile; for school districts that are greater than 250 square miles; or for school districts with fewer than 250 students if each school building operated by the district is either located in the Upper Peninsula at least 30 miles from any other school building or located on an island that is not accessible by a bridge. <http://legislature.mi.gov/doc.aspx?mcl-388-1622d>

- Through one lump-sum payment on the date the recipient's qualifying internship ends.

MDE would have to administer grant funding to designated recipients through agreements that include a requirement that a designated recipient who receives funding through the program must work at a public school for at least three school years as of the date of the agreement.

Debt or expense repayment

For *extenuating circumstances*, MDE could make a *debt or expense repayment* to a designated recipient before or during each year of qualifying service.

Extenuating circumstance would mean a circumstance determined by MDE in consultation with the recipient affected by the circumstance.

Debt or expenses repayment would mean debt or expenses connected to a recipient's student loans.

Evaluations

A state university with a graduate-level mental health professional program that a designated recipient is enrolled in could continue to implement any existing evaluation processes required as part of certification, licensing, or approval requirements associated with serving as a school mental health professional. The results from such an evaluation could be used as a reason for a recipient's disqualification for grant funding under the act. A designated recipient receiving a grant under the act would have to submit to MDE any evaluations the recipient receives as described above and any evaluations received from the public school where the recipient is interning. Upon receiving an evaluation, MDE would have to determine whether the recipient is still eligible to receive grant funding and notify the recipient of its determination.

Temporary or permanent failure to qualify

Payments of \$25 per hour to a recipient would have to stop on the date the recipient *permanently* ceased to satisfy eligibility requirements for funding under the act. If such an individual *temporarily* ceased to satisfy those requirements due to a leave of absence or a relocation to intern in another public school, payments would have to stop while the requirements were not met, but could be continued when they were met again. However, payments could not be continued beyond 30 weeks from the date the individual started the internship at the public school.

If a recipient of the \$15,000 lump sum *permanently* ceased to satisfy eligibility requirements, the recipient could receive an amount of the lump sum prorated to reflect the number of hours the recipient interned at the public school while meeting the requirements. If such a recipient *temporarily* ceased to satisfy those requirements due to a leave of absence or a relocation to intern in another public school, the recipient would still be eligible to receive the full amount of the lump sum as long as the recipient completed all of the requirements for qualifying for funding under the act.

Other provisions

A designated recipient who receives a grant under the act would not be prohibited from applying for another grant as long as the recipient meets the qualifications for grant funding.

MDE would have to administer grant funding through the program to field supervisors, field instructors, or supervisors. Those grants could not exceed \$250 for each designated recipient supervised.

MDE would have to report the status and outcomes of the grant program to the governor, the House and Senate appropriations subcommittees on the MDE budget, the House and Senate Fiscal Agencies, and the advisory council maintained by MDE and the Department of Health and Human Services under section 31n of the School Aid Act.

FISCAL INFORMATION:

By itself, Senate Bill 1012 would have no direct fiscal impact on the state or local school districts, ISDs, or PSAs. While the bill creates the statutory framework for the SMART Internship Grant Program, funding for the program would be subject to annual legislative appropriations.

Assuming the program is funded, MDE would incur costs to administer the SMART Internship Grant Program. MDE estimates that administrative costs would equal up to \$300,000 annually and require two additional full-time equated (FTE) positions. Additionally, MDE notes it would need \$150,000 and one additional FTE for auditing program procedures and recipients.

(NOTE: House Bill 5795 (H-4) as passed by the House includes \$20.0 million Federal for the SMART Internship Grant Program for Fiscal Year 2022-23.)

ARGUMENTS:

For:

Michigan has long had a shortage of children's mental health professionals. For instance, there is only one practicing child psychiatrist to serve the entire Upper Peninsula. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic hit in early 2020, many parents found it difficult if not impossible to access services for their children. The situation has been even worse in rural areas of the state. The connection between this situation and the bill lies in the fact that most of these children attend public school. However, the ability of a child to focus and learn, or engage in healthy interactions with other students, is greatly diminished if struggling with anxiety or facing abuse in the home or bullying at school. A teacher who has a student on the autism spectrum may find it difficult to teach, or fellow students find it difficult to learn, if that child is biting, kicking, or hitting other students, running out of the classroom, or screaming. But just as there is a shortage of child psychiatrists and child behavioral health providers, there is also a shortage of school social workers, school counselors, and school psychologists. The student-to-counselor ratio in Michigan schools currently far exceeds recommended standards, with these school-based professionals handling three to five times the number of cases recommended.

To help alleviate the burden on school behavioral health professionals in the state, SB 1012 proposes an apprentice program that would bring into underserved public schools additional master's students who are studying to work as school social workers, school counselors, and school psychologists. All of these graduate programs require students to do a field placement or practicum in a school in the last year of their studies. The bill would enable students to participate in an apprenticeship in addition to the year of the field placement. According to school behavioral health professionals and students who participated in pilot apprenticeship programs or in programs in other states, the graduate students benefited from the additional time working with children and collaborating and assisting in their care under the tutelage of teachers and the supervising school social worker, school counselor, or school psychologist. In turn, the supervisors were able to train the student apprentices to allow delegation of certain tasks to them, thus alleviating some of their own burdens and freeing them to spend more time with students needing more specialized services. For instance, one former student apprentice

testified that she was able to assist her supervisor in developing a plan that helped reduce the disruptive behavior of a child on the autism spectrum who was in a general education class, thus helping that child to achieve more academic success and bettering the learning environment for the teacher and the other students.

Often graduate students seek placements in schools nearer to their college or university. The bill, with its focus on underserved schools and paid apprenticeships, could help attract, and hopefully retain, graduate students to rural areas that do not have nearby colleges or universities that offer these specialized graduate degrees and school certifications. The requirement to work in a public school for three years may also encourage an apprentice to stay on in the community in which they served.

For:

Enactment of the legislation could help make schools safer. School social workers, school counselors, and school psychologists are trained to recognize problems and could be instrumental in helping schools establish a nurturing, supportive, and inclusive environment that would foster a culture of respect likely to reduce incidents of school violence. However, many are simply overwhelmed due to staff shortages and are reduced to triaging cases. Although apprentices are limited in some of the tasks they could perform, the assistance they can provide to current staff would enable them to reach more struggling students and provide help sooner. If the bill results in encouraging more graduate students in social work, counseling, and psychology to seek certification to work in schools, current and future professionals could use their training more fully, reach more students, and run programs that may mitigate school violence incidents or prevent them from happening.

Against:

No major concerns about the bill were raised in House committee.

POSITIONS:

The following entities indicated support for the bill (6-30-22):

- Michigan Association of School Boards
- Michigan Association of School Psychologists
- Michigan Association of School Social Workers
- Michigan School Counselor Association
- Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan

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■ This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan House Fiscal Agency staff for use by House members in their deliberations and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.