

**FIRST RESPONDER MENTAL HEALTH
SERVICES GRANT PROGRAM AMENDMENTS**

2024 GENERAL SESSION

STATE OF UTAH

Chief Sponsor: Ryan D. Wilcox

Senate Sponsor: Don L. Ipson

LONG TITLE

General Description:

This bill amends the First Responder Mental Health Services Grant Program (program).

Highlighted Provisions:

This bill:

- defines terms;
- amends eligibility for the program;
- expands institutions at which a recipient may use a grant under the program;
- amends the computation of the grant amount;
- modifies the Utah Board of Higher Education's responsibilities related to accepting applications for the programs; and
- makes technical changes.

Money Appropriated in this Bill:

None

Other Special Clauses:

None

Utah Code Sections Affected:

AMENDS:

53B-8-117, as enacted by Laws of Utah 2023, Chapter 74

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the state of Utah:

Section 1. Section **53B-8-117** is amended to read:

53B-8-117 . First Responder Mental Health Services Grant Program.

(1) As used in this section:

- 27 (a) "First responder" means an individual who works in Utah as:
28 (i) a law enforcement officer, as defined in Section 53-13-103;
29 (ii) an emergency medical technician, as defined in Section 53-2e-101;
30 (iii) an advanced emergency medical technician, as defined in Section 53-2e-101;
31 (iv) a paramedic, as defined in Section 53-2e-101;
32 (v) a firefighter, as defined in Section 34A-3-113;
33 (vi) a dispatcher, as defined in Section 53-6-102;
34 (vii) a correctional officer, as defined in Section 53-13-104;
35 (viii) a special function officer, as defined in Section 53-13-105, employed by a local
36 sheriff;
37 (ix) a search and rescue worker under the supervision of a local sheriff;
38 (x) a forensic interviewer or victim advocate employed by a children's justice center
39 established in accordance with Section 67-5b-102;
40 (xi) a credentialed criminal justice system victim advocate as defined in Section
41 77-38-403 who responds to incidents with a law enforcement officer;
42 (xii) a crime scene investigator technician;
43 (xiii) a wildland firefighter;
44 (xiv) an investigator or prosecutor of cases involving sexual crimes against children;
45 or
46 (xv) a civilian employee of a first responder agency who has been authorized to view
47 or otherwise access information concerning crimes, accidents, or other traumatic
48 events.
- 49 (b) "First responder agency" means the same as that term is defined in Section 53-21-101.
- 50 (c) "First responder volunteer" means:
- 51 (i) an individual who donates services as a first responder to a first responder agency
52 located in Utah without pay or other compensation except:
53 (A) expenses that the individual actually and reasonably incurs as the supervising
54 first responder agency approves; and
55 (B) health insurance that a participant in the Volunteer Emergency Medical
56 Service Personnel Health Insurance Program described in Section 26-8a-603
57 receives; or
- 58 (ii) a volunteer firefighter who is not regularly employed as a firefighter service
59 employee, but who:
60 (A) has received training in firefighter techniques and skills;

- 61 (B) continues to receive regular firefighter training; and
 62 (C) is on the rolls of a legally organized volunteer fire department that provides
 63 ongoing training and serves a political subdivision of the state.
- 64 (d) "Retiree" means the same as that term is defined in Section 49-11-102.
- 65 (2) This section creates the First Responder Mental Health Services Grant Program.
- 66 [(2)] (3) Subject to legislative appropriations and Subsection [(6)] (8), the board shall award
 67 a grant to an applicant who:
- 68 (a) is a ~~[full-time employee or a retiree, as that term is defined in Section 49-11-102,~~
 69 ~~who is an active member of or has qualified for an allowance under the requirements~~
 70 ~~of:]~~
- 71 [(i) Title 49, Chapter 14, Public Safety Contributory Retirement Act;]
 72 [(ii) Title 49, Chapter 15, Public Safety Nonecontributory Retirement Act;]
 73 [(iii) Title 49, Chapter 16, Firefighters' Retirement Act; or (iv) Title 49, Chapter 23,
 74 New Public Safety and Firefighter Tier II Contributory Retirement Act;] first
 75 responder, a first responder volunteer, or a retiree who worked as a first responder
 76 in the state; and
- 77 (b) is seeking a post-secondary degree or certification to become a mental health
 78 therapist, as that term is defined in Section 58-60-102, from:
- 79 (i) an institution of higher education within the state system of higher education,
 80 described in Section 53B-1-102; or
- 81 (ii) a private, nonprofit institution of higher education in the state that is accredited by
 82 the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities.
- 83 [(3)] (4) (a) Subject to Subsection [(3)(b)] (4)(b), the board may award a qualified
 84 applicant ~~[up to the cost of tuition and fees.]~~ a grant in an amount that is equal to the
 85 difference between:
- 86 (i) the total cost of tuition and fees for the program in which the recipient is enrolled;
 87 and
- 88 (ii) the total value of all other grants, tuition waivers, fee waivers, and scholarships
 89 that the recipient receives to attend the institution.
- 90 (b) A grant award under Subsection [(3)(a)] (4)(a) is limited to:
- 91 (i) a maximum of \$6,000 each academic year; and
- 92 (ii) a maximum of four academic years.
- 93 [(4)] (5) The board shall design the program to ensure that institutions combine loans,
 94 grants, employment, and family and individual contributions toward financing the cost

95 of attendance.

96 (6) The board shall:

97 (a) select two periods during each calendar year to accept applications for the program;

98 and

99 (b) accept applications for no fewer than 30 days during each period described in

100 Subsection (6)(a).

101 ~~[(5)]~~ (7) (a) The board shall make rules in accordance with Title 63G, Chapter 3, Utah
102 Administrative Rulemaking Act, to:

103 (i) set deadlines for receiving grant applications and supporting documentation; and

104 (ii) establish the application process and an appeal process for the First Responder
105 Mental Health Services Grant Program.

106 (b) The board shall include a disclosure on all applications and related materials that the
107 amount of the awarded grants may be subject to funding or be reduced, in accordance
108 with Subsection ~~[(6)]~~ (8).

109 ~~[(6)]~~ (8) (a) Subject to future budget constraints, the Legislature shall make an annual
110 appropriation from the Income Tax Fund to the board for the costs associated with
111 the First Responder Mental Health Services Grant Program authorized under this
112 section.

113 (b) Notwithstanding the provisions of this section, if the appropriation under this section
114 is insufficient to cover the costs associated with the First Responder Mental Health
115 Services Grant Program, the board may:

116 (i) reduce the amount of a grant; or

117 (ii) distribute grants on a pro rata basis to all eligible applicants who submitted a
118 complete application before the application deadline.

119 Section 2. **Effective date.**

120 This bill takes effect on May 1, 2024.