ADVOCATE FOR SCHOOL MENTAL HEALTH WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT GRANTS TO ADDRESS SHORTAGES

NASP has long focused on advancing policy to **address workforce shortages** in school psychology. Two federal grant programs are exclusively focused on developing the school mental health workforce and increasing access to school mental health services, and investments in these programs and related state efforts to address workforce shortages are needed.

Mental Health Service Professional Demonstration (MHSP) Grant

- Supports efforts to strengthen and expand the workforce pipeline of school mental health professionals, including school psychologists.
- Increases the available school mental health workforce and addresses nationwide shortages.

School-Based Mental Health Services (SBMH) Grant

- Supports state and local efforts to recruit, hire, and retain school-based mental health professionals in high need, underserved schools and districts.
- Increases access to services for students and their families.

School psychologists can support NASP's efforts by advocating for these grants and supporting similar programs at the state level. Use the talking points and recommendations below to take action!



TALKING POINTS TO SUPPORT WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS

- 1 in 7 children are navigating mental and behavioral health challenges. These challenges impact a child's academic performance, health and safety, job prospects, and family life.
- Early intervention and prevention efforts are proven to be the most *cost-effective* way to address child and adolescent mental health challenges, especially when provided in schools.
- School psychologists are uniquely trained to provide comprehensive prevention, early identification and intervention, and crisis response services to children and youth.
- 80% of parents—regardless of location, socioeconomic status, or political affiliation—support schools providing access to school mental health services and professionals.
- A lack of resources and an insufficient pipeline of school mental health professionals prevents schools and families from getting the needed help and supports for their children.
- 59% of public schools cited insufficient school-employed mental health professional staff as a factor limiting their ability to effectively provide mental health services to students.
- NASP recommends a ratio of one school psychologist for every 500 students, but the national ratio for the 2023–2024 school year was 1:1,065, with some districts and states operating with ratios more than four times the recommendation (find your state's ratio here).

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NASP ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

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The MHSP and SBMH grants have proven to be highly effective at reinforcing the workforce pipeline and supporting the recruitment and retention of staff in schools. In just the first year of one cohort:

- The MHSP program trained 1,767 school mental health professionals and supported 1,191 supervised practicum placements.
- The SBMH program enabled the hiring of 1,163 mental health professionals, helped retain 13,155 professionals, and provided services to over 774,000 students.

We need continued support for the bipartisan MHSP and SBMH grants to develop the school mental health workforce and increase access to services—especially in rural and underserved areas. Without continued investment in current and future projects, shortages will worsen, and students and families—especially in rural and underserved areas—will feel the burden.

HOW TO TAKE ACTION

Contact Congress to support continued federal investment in current and future projects of the MHSP and SBMH grants!

Contact your state legislators about the importance of addressing workforce shortages and increasing access to comprehensive school psychological services for students and families (and get involved with your state association).

Share your personal story with NASP about how you and your school community have been affected by pervasive school psychology workforce shortages.



Read NASP's white paper on the positive impact of the only two federal school mental health workforce grants here!

If you have been affected by discontinuations, we encourage you to use the following resources:

- Template letter for graduate students to contact Congress
- Submit video about the impact of discontinuation to NASP

If you have any questions or need additional support, contact NASP's Policy and Advocacy staff:

- Dr. Kelly Vaillancourt Strobach, kvaillancourt@naspweb.org
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