

## Revenues Generated for School Districts by School Social Work Services

### Overview

School social work services generate a variety of revenues for school districts above and beyond the state-imposed revenue caps, which substantially offset the local financial costs to the school district. These revenues include:

- State special education categorical aid that reduces the local costs of school social work services,
- Aid for school mental health programs to partially reimburse increases in salary and fringe of social workers,
- Federal school-based mental health professionals grant program,
- Medicaid funds for school-based services provided by school social workers to income-eligible students,
- Additional general state aid generated by school social workers contributing to better school attendance, students staying in school through graduation, and improved student wellness,
- Additional federal funds generated by school social workers ensuring income-eligible students are accessing free and reduced school meals, and
- Grants written and managed by school social workers to provide supplemental services and programs.

Because of these revenues, the fiscal cost of additional or increased school social work services to a local school district budget is significantly less than the associated salary and fringe costs.

### State Special Education Categorical Aid

Local Education Agencies (LEAs) complete the Special Education Fiscal Report (PI 1505-SE) twice annually; the budget report is due November 15<sup>th</sup> for the current year and the claim report is due September 15<sup>th</sup> for the previous year. The amount of funding for categorical aid available is determined by the Wisconsin Legislature. The percentage of categorical aid a school district receives is dependent upon the total claims received by the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) from all school districts for any given school year.

School districts may claim 59 percent of salary and fringe costs for school social work services for special education categorical aid reimbursement. Because the amount of funds for categorical aid appropriated by the Wisconsin Legislature has historically been less than what school districts are eligible for, the actual reimbursement is prorated. For example, if categorical aid reimbursement is pro-rated at 30 percent of all eligible costs, and a school district submits a claim for 59 percent of \$70,000 in salary and fringe costs for a school social worker, the school district would receive approximately \$12,390 in additional aid from the state for this position.

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### Aid for School Mental Health Programs

Eligible school districts, Private School Choice Programs schools, and independent charter schools may receive up to 50 percent reimbursement for increases in expenditures on salary and fringe benefits paid to employ, hire, or retain social workers or the costs to contract for the services of a social worker when the eligible entity increased its expenditures in the prior school year compared to the immediately preceding school year. See Wis. Stat. § 115.364 and Administrative Code sec. PI 31 for more information.

### Federal School-Based Mental Health Professionals Grant Program

Wisconsin's Expanded School-Based Mental Health Professionals Grant Program targets increasing the number of school-based mental health service professionals through a multi-faceted approach. This grant focuses on the following:

- Increasing the number of qualified school-based mental health service professionals in local education agencies with demonstrated need through various strategies including targeted recruitment and retention activities,
- Respecialization training for existing mental health service professionals to qualify for work in local education agencies with demonstrated need, and
- rural areas, qualified opportunity zones and local education agencies that serve American Indian students.

### Medicaid for School-Based Services

Many school districts and independent charter schools now receive additional funds through Medicaid for services, including school social work services, provided to income-eligible students. Generally, services are documented within a student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Most school districts taking advantage of this funding source contract with an outside agency to manage the claims. How much money is generated through this avenue is dependent upon the number of income-eligible students receiving services and the level of services provided. Information about the Wisconsin Medicaid School-Based Services Benefit can be found at the [ForwardHealth Portal](#). Click on "Provider-specific Resources" under "Providers." Then scroll down to "School Based Services."

### General State Aid

General state aid and state-imposed revenue caps are tied directly to the number of students enrolled in a school district. Specifically, a school district is allowed to raise a fixed amount of revenue (a combination of state aid and local property taxes) for each student enrolled. The more students enrolled in a school district, the more money the school district is allowed to raise and spend. School districts count the number of students in school on or around two dates each year (i.e., third Friday in September and the second Friday in January) to determine how many students are enrolled for the purposes of determining their spending limits.

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All school districts have some students whose attendance is poor. Typically, these are some of the students that school social workers target for services. The home visits, connections, and interventions a school social worker provides to students and families can help to remove barriers to attendance and improve outcomes for students, such as more resident children attending school, continuing to attend school, and graduating from school. As a result, this can improve a school's ability to collect state aid and achieve the primary goals of schools; to improve the student's ability to go on to contribute meaningfully in the community.

### **School Meals**

Some income-eligible families may not be enrolled for free or reduced price school meals and may fall behind in their payments to the school. By identifying these families and helping them to enroll in this program, the school social worker has generated additional revenues for the school district and independent charter schools that it may not have been able to otherwise recover; ensuring students continue to receive healthy meals.

### **Grants**

Some school social workers successfully write and manage grants administered through the Department of Public Instruction and other organizations. These grants fund programs and services that the school district and independent charter schools would not otherwise be able to provide.