Comparison of Two Newly-Proposed U.S. Department of Education School Mental Health Grants

Howie Knoff, Ph.D., President Project ACHIEVE Educational Solutions

E-mail: howieknoff1@projectachieve.info
Cell: 813-495-3318

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GRANT 1

School-Based Mental Health Grant Program—ALN 84.184H

AGENCY: U.S. Department of Education.

SUMMARY: School-Based Mental Health (SBMH) Grant - ALN 84.184H: This is the "**Immediate Hiring**" grant. Its focus is on funding the recruitment, retention, and respecialization of *already credentialed* or soon-to-be-credentialed professionals. It is designed for LEAs that need to hire and place school psychologists into service roles quickly.

The final priorities, requirements, and definitions are designed to target activities with the purpose of increasing the number of credentialed school-based mental health services providers, specifically school psychologists, in high-need local educational agencies (LEAs) available to provide mental health services to students.

GRANT 2

Mental Health Service Professional Demonstration Grant Program—ALN 84.184X

AGENCY: U.S. Department of Education.

SUMMARY: Mental Health Service Professional (MHSP) Demonstration Grant - ALN **84.184X:** This is the "Pipeline Building" grant. Its focus is on funding partnerships between LEAs and higher education (or other training entities) to train *school psychology graduate candidates*. It is designed to build a long-term, sustainable workforce by investing in the next generation of professionals. Critically, only SEAs and LEAs are allowed to apply for this Grant. IHEs cannot independently apply, although they will certainly be included as partners.

These final priorities, requirements, and definitions are designed to better target activities to address shortages of school-based mental health services providers, specifically school psychologists, in high-need local educational agencies (LEAs).

© Purpose of Program SBMH Program (84.184H)

MHSP Program (84.184X)

To increase the number of credentialed school-based mental health services providers (specifically school psychologists) providing services in high-need LEAs.

To address the shortage of credentialed school-based mental health services providers (specifically school psychologists) in highneed LEAs by supporting training and placement of graduate candidates.

Feature	SBMH Grant (ALN 84.184H)	MHSP Demonstration Grant (ALN 84.184X)
Core Purpose	To increase the number of credentialed school psychologists <i>providing services</i> in high-need LEAs.	To address the shortage of school psychologists by <i>training and placing graduate candidates</i> into high-need LEAs.
Target of Funds	Credentialed school psychologists and professionals in related fields eligible for respecialization.	School psychology graduate candidates.
Eligible Applicants	SEAs, LEAs, and consortia of LEAs.	SEAs, LEAs, and consortia of LEAs.
Key Priorities	Recruiting & Retaining credentialed school psychologists. Respecialization of existing professionals into school psychology roles.	Training & Placing school psychology graduate candidates. Establishing and running school-based mental health partnerships.
Partnership Requirement	None required.	Required. Applicants must form a "school-based mental health partnership" with an eligible IHE or other state-recognized training entity. An MOU/MOA is required within six months of the award.
Timeline for Services	Strict Requirement. School psychologists funded by the grant must begin delivering services within 270 days of the award date.	No equivalent timeline. The focus is on the training and placement pipeline, not immediate service delivery from a new hire.

Feature	SBMH Grant (ALN 84.184H)	MHSP Demonstration Grant (ALN 84.184X)
Unique Definitions	Recruit/RecruitmentRetain/RetentionRespecializationTelehealth	 School psychology graduate candidate School-based mental health partnership Eligible institution of higher education partner

Priorities

SBMH Program

Priority 1: SEAs recruiting and retaining credentialed school psychologists in high-need LEAs.

Priority 2: LEAs recruiting and retaining credentialed school psychologists in high-need LEAs.

Priority 3: Increasing credentialed school psychologists delivering early intervention and intensive services.

Priority 4: SEAs implementing respecialization plans for professionals to become credentialed school psychologists.

MHSP Program

Priority 1: SEAs training and placing school psychology graduate candidates in high-need LEAs.

Priority 2: LEAs training and placing school psychology graduate candidates in high-need LEAs.

Priority 3: Increasing credentialed school psychologists available to deliver early intervention and intensive services.

No equivalent priority.

Shared Requirements & Definitions Across Both Grants

Both grant programs include the following identical or near-identical requirements and definitions:

- Eligible Applicants: State Educational Agencies (SEAs), Local Educational Agencies (LEAs), and consortia of LEAs are eligible for both grants.
- Focus on School Psychologists: Both grants are exclusively focused on increasing the number of school psychologists, rejecting public comments to include school counselors, social workers, or other professionals.
- Focus on Service Type: Both prioritize funding for *early intervention* and *intensive mental health services*, not universal/preventive (Tier 1) approaches.
- Use of Funds Prohibition: Both grants explicitly prohibit using funds for: (1) gender ideology, (2) political activism, (3) racial stereotyping, or (4) hostile environments for students of particular races.

- Parental Consent: Both require grantees to comply with ESEA Section 4001(a) regarding informed written parental consent, with specific documentation required for exceptions.
- Compliance: Both require that all services be delivered in a manner consistent with FERPA, PPRA, IDEA, Section 504, and other applicable laws.
- Shared Definitions: Both use identical definitions for credentialed, early intervention mental health services, intensive mental health services, and high-need LEA.
 - Note: The MHSP notice includes a clarifying discussion point that an LEA can still qualify as "high-need" based on student-to-provider ratios and risk factors even if it hasn't experienced a recent traumatic event or received a SERV grant.

Requirements SBMH Program

No partnership required.

Program Requirement (e): Credentialed school psychologists must begin delivering services within 270 days of award.

Program Requirement (f): School psychologists must be credentialed to work in elementary or secondary schools.

Program Requirement (g): Parental consent procedures required.

Program Requirement (h): Compliance with Program Requirement (g): Same compliance FERPA, PPRA, IDEA, etc.

MHSP Program

Requires a formal school-based mental health partnership with an eligible institution of higher education (IHE) or other recognized entity.

No equivalent timeline requirement.

Program Requirement (g): Graduate candidates must be enrolled in accredited programs and deliver services under supervision.

Program Requirement (f): Same parental consent procedures.

requirements.

Definitions

SBMH Program

Defines "respecialization," "recruitment," "retention," and "telehealth."

Shared definitions for "early intervention," "intensive mental health services," and "high-need LEA."

MHSP Program

Defines "school psychology graduate candidate," "school-based mental health partnership," and "eligible institution of higher education partner." Same shared definitions, with additional clarification that LEAs not meeting trauma criteria

may still qualify based on ratios and risk factors.

№ Public Comment and Analysis of Changes

SBMH Program

Emphasized focus on credentialed professionals and rejected expansion to other roles.

MHSP Program

Emphasized training pipeline and partnerships with IHEs.

ii Side-by-Side Matrix: Eligibility, Allowable Costs, Application Components

Category	SBMH Program	MHSP Program
Eligible Applicants	SEAs, LEAs, consortia of LEAs	SEAs, LEAs, consortia of LEAs
Required Partnerships	None required	Required with eligible IHE or other recognized entity
Allowable Costs	Salaries and benefits for credentialed school psychologists; recruitment and retention incentives; training and supervision; telehealth infrastructure	Stipends for graduate candidates; supervision costs; training and placement expenses; partnership coordination; telehealth infrastructure
Application Components	Project narrative, budget narrative, assurances, appendices	Same components, plus documentation of partnership (MOU/MOA) within six months
Credentialing Requirement	Must be credentialed to work in elementary or secondary schools	Graduate candidates must be enrolled in accredited programs leading to credentialing

Page Limitations for Narratives

SBMH Program

than a recommendation for a 15-page Narrative.

MHSP Program

No page limit specified in the document other No page limit specified in the document other than a recommendation for a 15-page Narrative.

i Funding and Other Details

Assistance Listing Number: 84.184H.

Estimated Available Funds: \$180,000,000.

Estimated Range of Awards: \$1,250,000-\$1,750,000.

Estimated Average Size of Awards: \$1,500,000.

Estimated Number of Awards: 25-35. *Project Period:* Up to 48 months.

Assistance Listing Number: 84.184X.

Estimated Available Funds: \$90,000,000.

Estimated Range of Awards: \$750,000-\$1,250,000. Estimated Average Size of Awards: \$1,000,000.

Estimated Number of Awards: 18-24. *Project Period:* Up to 48 months.

Strategic Recommendation for Applicants

Your choice between these two grants should be driven by your agency's most pressing need and existing capacity.

- Apply for the SBMH Grant (84.184H) if: Your primary challenge is attracting and affording *already qualified* school psychologists. If you have open positions you can't fill or are losing staff to other districts, this grant's focus on recruitment/retention incentives and respecialization is the correct fit. You must be confident you can hire and onboard staff to meet the 270-day service delivery deadline.
- Apply for the MHSP Grant (84.184X) if: Your primary challenge is a lack of a sustainable, local talent pipeline. If there are no nearby graduate programs or if graduates are not choosing to work in your LEA, this grant is the correct fit. It allows you to build the infrastructure for the future. You must have a willing and eligible IHE or training partner to meet the mandatory partnership requirement.

School-Based Mental Health Services (SBMH) Program – ALN 84.184H Key Changes Made Based on Public Feedback:

1. Clarification of Eligible Roles:

- o **Comment**: Requests to expand eligibility to other mental health professionals (e.g., social workers, counselors).
- **Response**: No change. The Department clarified that this grant is specifically for **school psychologists**.
- o **Quote**: "The Department has not made changes to the priorities or definitions to include other types of school-based mental health services providers."

2. Definition of "Credentialed":

- Comment: Asked for clarification on what constitutes a credentialed school psychologist.
- Response: The Department clarified that credentialing must meet state requirements for practice in elementary or secondary schools.

3. Respecialization Priority:

- o **Comment**: Some commenters supported the inclusion of respecialization; others requested its removal.
- o **Response**: The Department retained **Priority 4** focused on respecialization and clarified its intent.
- **Quote**: "The Department has retained Priority 4 and clarified that respecialization must result in credentialing as a school psychologist."

4. Telehealth Definition:

- o **Comment**: Requested clarification on telehealth services.
- **Response**: The Department added a definition for "telehealth" to support implementation.

5. Timeline for Service Delivery:

- o **Comment**: Concerns about feasibility of the 270-day requirement.
- o **Response**: No change. The Department maintained the requirement that school psychologists begin delivering services within **270 days** of award.

6. Parental Consent Procedures:

- o **Comment**: Requests for clarification on consent requirements.
- Response: The Department clarified that parental consent must be obtained before services are provided.

Mental Health Service Professional Demonstration (MHSP) Program – ALN 84.184X

Key Changes Made Based on Public Feedback:

1. Clarification of Eligible Roles:

- o **Comment**: Requests to include other mental health professionals.
- **Response**: No change. The Department reaffirmed that the program is focused on **school psychologists**.

2. Definition of "Graduate Candidate":

- o **Comment**: Asked for clarification on who qualifies.
- Response: The Department added a definition for "school psychology graduate candidate" to ensure clarity.

3. Partnership Requirements:

- o Comment: Questions about the nature and timing of required partnerships.
- o **Response**: The Department clarified that applicants must formalize partnerships with eligible IHEs or entities **within six months** of award via MOU or MOA.

4. Service Delivery by Graduate Candidates:

- o Comment: Concerns about supervision and compliance.
- o **Response**: The Department clarified that graduate candidates must deliver services **under supervision** and in compliance with FERPA, PPRA, and IDEA.

5. Parental Consent Procedures:

- o **Comment**: Requests for clarification.
- o **Response**: The Department retained the requirement and clarified that written parental consent is required before services are delivered.

6. Clarification of "High-Need LEA":

- o Comment: Asked whether LEAs not meeting trauma criteria could still qualify.
- o **Response**: The Department clarified that LEAs may qualify based on **student-to-provider ratios** and **risk factors**, even without recent trauma.