



## 2023-24 School Mental Health Grants Funding Announcement Q&A Tracker

**Updated on February 26, 2024 at 3 PM**  
**\*New Questions & Responses Added in Red**

[FEBRUARY 6, 2024 RECORDED WEBINAR LINK](#)  
[PDF of the Webinar's PowerPoint](#)

About this Document:

This guide will provide an overview of questions and answers regarding the 2023-24 School Mental Health Grants funding announcement and application process, which opened on January 10, 2024. Responses will be provided as staff is able to process questions through February 29, 2024.

Questions?

Please contact PCCD staff at [RA-CD-SSSC@pa.gov](mailto:RA-CD-SSSC@pa.gov) with '2023-24 School Mental Health Grants' in the subject line.

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## 1. Eligible Activities/Expenses

**1.1.** Can we apply for the same items that were supported under the 2022 funding announcement even though the FY22 grant doesn't end until June 30, 2024?

**Answer:** Yes, you can apply for the same items that are supported until the end of your current grant, but you will need to specify this within the budget detail justification and pro-rate the costs within the first year given that these expenses are currently supported.

**1.2.** Can IU's apply to create programs/trainings that would serve all districts within their service area? For example, can an IU apply to hire and provide social workers/LPC's to districts, and have staff trained as trainers in trauma informed schools and classrooms?

**Answer:** Applicants can apply for a project that serves multiple districts as long as funding is used to support activities listed under section 5, Eligible Program Activities and Expenses, under the funding announcement. It is incumbent upon the applicant to submit an application that they believe complies with the statute.

**1.3.** Do we have to meet all Level 1 standards of the baseline criteria in order to use these funds for items in Level 2 or Level 3 or any other eligible project activity?

**Answer:** Level 1 represents the most basic behavioral health safety elements a school entity should have in place. If your school entity does NOT meet all Level 1 Baseline Criteria, you should utilize your grant funding on one or more of the available activities to meet the Level 1 standard OR explain to PCCD how other resources or means are being utilized to satisfy the criteria in the baseline criteria questions listed within Egrants. Additional information will be requested of any school entity that has gaps within the Level 1 criteria. Once Level 1 is met, school entities can expend funding on any other eligible mental-health related project activity.

**1.4.** In reference to the 23-24 School Mental Health Grant and the revised [Behavioral Health Criteria](#), do school districts have to arrange for the assessment to be conducted by an individual recognized to perform such assessments on the PCCD School Safety and Security Assessor Registry? Or can a District committee perform a self-assessment of our student assistance and behavioral health support needs?

**Answer:** School districts (and all school entities, for that matter) are not required to arrange for an assessment to be conducted by an individual on the [PCCD School Safety and Security Assessor Registry](#). A school entity may perform a self-assessment at any time using the [Student Assistance and Behavioral Health Support Assessment Criteria](#). However, for FY23-24 School Mental Health grant purposes, if a school district (or school entity) is seeking funding to meet any recommendation made in their assessment outside of Level 1 Behavioral Health baseline criteria and their school entity does not currently meet all Level 1 criteria, the assessment must be conducted by an individual on the PCCD School Safety and Security Assessor Registry.

**1.5.** Our district is in the process of creating and expanding our PBIS system. The district's School Psychologist is trained as a trainer and is responsible for assisting district staff in implementing the initiative. Can we put the salary/benefits of the school Psychologist into our School Mental Health Grant?

**Answer:** Per statute, grant funding must not be used to supplant/replace state, federal or local funds that would otherwise be available to provide for program-related services. PCCD funding is to be used in addition to other funds that are made available for services.

**1.6.** I wanted to make sure that we will be able to use this funding for contracted behavioral health services. Please let me know.

**Answer:** Yes, the School Mental Health grants can be used to support contracted behavioral health services.

**1.7.** I noticed the published May 2023 revisions to the Behavioral/Mental Health (B/MH) and Physical Security Baseline Criteria (PSBD). As I encourage school districts to work towards PCCD Level 3 standards, I was wondering if the May 2023 revisions serve as a replacement for 2021 standards developed by PCCD or if they are in addition to the 2021 standards.

**Answer:** The Revised Baseline Criteria Standards (2023) have replaced the 2021 standards. If you are interested in learning the revisions made between the 2021 standards and the May 2023 version, please view the crosswalk documents included on the [Baseline Criteria \(pa.gov\)](#) webpage. A webinar about the Baseline Criteria Standards for School Safety was recently posted on that webpage to provide an overview of these Standards and their development.

**1.8.** I have two school guidance counselors. Am I permitted to use the funds to pay for one of them to obtain the credits and coursework necessary to become a certified School Social Worker? Additionally, would I be able to use the funds to pay their salary, in a newly created position as a social worker, with a new job description? The position would begin with the 24-25 school year and our budget has not been developed yet.

**Answer:** As each request is unique to each applicant, PCCD cannot weigh in on individual proposals prior to application (e.g., there may be other factors, such as supplantation or meeting Level 1 Baseline Criteria, that we don't have context for at this time based on your question). On its face, however, all of what you are proposing here appears to be eligible, but we cannot confirm that officially until we see your full application.

**1.9.** With regard to social workers: I have followed all the links, including section 1306-B(J)(1-30). The words used are 'licensed' and 'qualified.' It is critical that we know exactly what PCCD is looking for as we do not have a social worker and we need this defined (regarding the credentials/requirements).

**Answer:** School entities might find the newly developed [webinar](#) Baseline Criteria Standards for School Entities helpful in finding clarification in eligible activities as well as identifying needs of their schools. In recognition of broad workforce challenges, the reframed criteria provide greater flexibility for school-based mental health services/supports that meet Baseline Criteria (e.g., contracted services) while aligning with statutory requirements related to school safety and mental health. While we recognize that the language of Section 1306-B(j) references specific professions, several activities also allow for flexibility in service provision.

**1.10.** Do social workers need to be licensed?

**Answer:** Pursuant to the PA Public School Code, School Safety and Security Grants (including School Mental Health Grants) may be used for costs associated with training, compensation, hiring, and/or contracting with school social workers, licensed social workers, and licensed clinical social workers, among other eligible services/positions. There are minimum qualifications established for each of these positions by various state agencies responsible for oversight, certification, and/or licensure (e.g., the PA Department of Education's Certification and Staffing Policies and Guidelines #87 for [School Social Workers](#) or licensure requirements for [social workers](#) and [clinical social workers](#) established by the Pennsylvania Department of State). As noted in the response to question 1.9, the Behavioral Health Baseline Criteria were reframed in order provide greater flexibility for school entities to increase student and

employee access to quality trauma support services and behavioral health care. If choosing to apply for a school social worker, please pay attention to licensing requirements for said position. If access to a licensed social worker is limited in your area, social work services by a qualified individual is acceptable.

**1.11.** Are indirect costs allowable for the FY23-24 School Mental Health Grant program?

**Answer:** Since the FY23-24 School Mental Health Grant program is being supported by federal funding, indirect costs are allowed pursuant to 2 CFR 200; however, given the limited amount of funding available for each school entity under this solicitation, we strongly encourage school entities' funding requests to be focused on direct costs.

**1.12.** Could you please explain the student services plan? Is it a separate plan with specific guidelines?

**Answer:** Under Pennsylvania state law (i.e., 24 P.S. §26-2603-B, 22 Pa. Code §12.41, 22 Pa. Code Chapter 4), every six years, each school entity must prepare a written plan for the implementation of a comprehensive and integrated K-12 program of student services based on the needs of its students. Additional information regarding these planning requirements is available on the PA Department of Education's [Comprehensive Planning webpage](#).

**1.13.** Can attendance incentives be included as a budget line item for this grant solicitation. For example, we would like to add gift cards and food as an item. Is that allowed?

**Answer:** If a school entity is applying to develop or implement a research-based program within their school that aims to address risk factors to reduce incidents of problem behaviors (see Eligible Project Activity #10 allowed under [24 P.S. §13-1306-B\(j\)\(1-30\)](#)) and incentives are a component within the program, then yes, those types of incentives would be allowed.

**1.14.** Does the Pennsylvania Youth Survey (PAYS Survey) qualify for a Student Assistance and Behavioral Health Assessment aligned with standards and guidance adopted by the SSSC?

**Answer:** No. While the PAYS data may inform the assessment, the intention of the [Student Assistance and Behavioral Health Assessment](#) is to gather information and analysis on the school entity's climate, including the availability of Student Assistance Programs and behavioral health professionals to provide assistance to the school entity.

**1.15.** We are applying for the school mental health grant. I have a question about the Student Assistance & Behavioral Health Assessment. Is this a mandatory assessment in order to receive the funds? Most districts that I spoke to were unaware of this assessment, as were we. Was that information disseminated through superintendents? I also have the same question about the Physical Security Assessment.

**Answer:** Adopted as part of Act 44 of 2018, [Section 1303-B of the PA Public School Code](#) directed the School Safety and Security Committee to develop [assessment criteria](#) for schools to use as a resource to conduct a Physical Security Assessment of their facilities as well as a Student Assistance and Behavioral Health Support Assessment of their mental health needs. For the FY23-24 School Mental Health Grant solicitation, conducting the assessment is part of the [Level 1 Baseline Criteria](#) for school entities. Thus, it is required that a school entity complete the assessment during their project period phase if they have not previously done so. Please note that school entities may conduct their own assessment to meet this criterion or select an individual from the [School Safety registry of assessors](#) to conduct their assessment.

Please see the other school safety and security solicitations' Questions & Answers for more information about how the assessments are addressed in other funding opportunities.

**1.16. If a school entity has used an approved assessor for the Student Assistance and Behavioral Health Assessment and their name does not appear in the dropdown list, what should we do?**

**Answer:** If your school entity has had an individual approved for the current PCCD School Safety and Security Assessor Registry complete a Student Assistance and Behavioral Health Assessment aligned with SSSC standards, please mark the first question in the Student Assistance & Behavioral Health Assessment as YES. If the individual's name is NOT included in the list of assessors, please select the first name on the list. When you scan the appropriate assessment pages, please include a note within your attachment indicating the actual name of your assessor.

## 2. Application Process/General Questions

**2.1. I just logged into my Egrants account and I am unable to find the grant application for this grant. Can you help?**

**Answer:** In order to apply and access the School Safety and Security Funds, applicants must FIRST register for [PCCD's Egrants system](#). Please note that PCCD's Egrants system is separate and distinct from the PA Department of Education's Egrants system. If you are already registered within the system, but do not have access to the school entity that you are associated with, please contact the PCCD Egrants helpdesk for assistance at (717) 787-5887 or (800) 692-7292 and select option 9 and then option 6, when prompted. You can also email the PCCD Egrants helpdesk at: [RA-eGrantsSupport@pa.gov](mailto:RA-eGrantsSupport@pa.gov).

**2.2. Who should sign the signature page and where do I attach it?**

**Answer:** An individual with documented authority to sign contracts on behalf of your organization must sign on the top, right side of the page (e.g., the Chief School Administrator, such as the Superintendent or the Board Chair). The Attesting Officer signature can be another organization official that can attest to the validity of the person signing (e.g., another Board Member or Business Manager). The executed signature page (page 2 of the application) must be uploaded to the Project Summary section of your application. A guide to assist you with this is available on our website at [Signature Page Instructions](#).

**2.3. I know my school has received funding in the past, but due to administration changes, we are unsure who is registered and who has access. What should we do?**

**Answer:** Please contact the PCCD Egrants helpdesk for assistance at (717) 787-5887 or (800) 692-7292. You can also email the PCCD Egrants helpdesk at: [RA-eGrantsSupport@pa.gov](mailto:RA-eGrantsSupport@pa.gov). They will be able to provide you with information on who may be registered as a User Manager within your school that can assist you with obtaining the required roles.

**2.4. In the past, we did not have to report any information within the Federal Transparency Act Certification section in Egrants except the address of our school. Are we now required to fill out this entire section, including the UEI number?**

**Answer:** Since funding under this specific solicitation is federal ARPA funds, you will be required to provide all information requested in this section.

**2.5.** Does there need to be a separate application for Meritorious Grants and Mental Health Grants? If yes, is the dual budget needed for both grants for Physical Security (PS) and Mental Health (MH) or only if needed?

**Answer:** For the FY23-24 school safety grants, school districts should submit a separate application under each noncompetitive solicitation. Both noncompetitive solicitations (i.e., Meritorious and School Mental Health) only require one budget.

**2.6.** The project period dates of 1/1/24 to 12/31/25 are challenging to align with a school year budget, particularly when using funds for staff. Does PCCD offer any wiggle room to address this issue?

**Answer:** PCCD appreciates that schools may find the current timeframe challenging to implement over the course of a school year. Nothing precludes a school from crafting their grant around the school year (e.g., budget for school year 24-25) or from taking advantage of a project modification request to extend the life of their funding past the December 31, 2025 end date. However, please note that grant extensions should not be requested past 6/30/2026 as PCCD must be able to ensure that all payments for eligible expenditures are made prior to the 12/31/2026 end date of the federal ARPA funding. PCCD staff may also consider requests to move the start date of the project on a case-by-case basis; however, PCCD staff will be required to ensure that funding is being used to supplement, and not supplant, current funding.

**2.7.** On the grant application signature page, there is a line for the solicitor and controller. Must those be signed to submit the application? We have never had our solicitor sign any grant application before. Please let me know.

**Answer:** The solicitor and controller are not required to sign the signature page to submit the application. Applicants ARE required, however, to provide two signatures: the Chief School Administrator (top right side of the signature page) and attesting officer (top left side of the signature page). The Chief School Administrator should be Superintendent or Board Chairperson and the attesting officer can be any school official such as a Board Member or Business Manager.

**2.8.** Do we have to fill out the nonprofit agency checklist section in Egrants?

**Answer:** The nonprofit agency checklist section in Egrants is not applicable to school districts, intermediate units and other government agencies; if you are a school district, intermediate unit or area career and technical school, please respond 'not applicable' to the first question in this section. Charter schools should supply their information.

### 3. Eligible Applicants

**3.1.** Who is eligible to apply under the 2023-34 School Mental Health Grants?

**Answer:** [Per Section 1315.1-B of the PA Public School Code](#), only school districts, area career and technical centers (CTCs), intermediate units (IUs), and charter schools, including regional charter schools and cyber charter schools) are eligible to apply under the **2023-24 School Mental Health Grants**.

**3.2.** Our school is currently working on expending the previous School Safety Grant. Are we permitted to apply for the new grant that just out as well?

**Answer:** Yes. School districts, area career and technical centers (CTCs), intermediate units (IUs), and charter schools, including regional charter schools and cyber charter schools are eligible to apply under the **2023-24 School Mental Health Grants**.