

## DPI 2009-11 BIENNIAL BUDGET REQUEST

### DECISION ITEM 4507 – SCHOOL SAFETY GRANTS

#### 101 – General program operations

##### s. 20.255 (1) (a)

#### 216 - School safety grants

##### s. 20.255 (2) (dh) – New

FISCAL SUMMARY		
	2009-10 Request	2010-11 Request
Grants	\$0	\$5,000,000
State Operations	\$0	\$250,000 1.0 FTE
Total Request	\$0	\$5,250,000

#### Request/Objective

The Department requests \$5,000,000 GPR in FY11 to create a new continuing appropriation for grants to reimburse school districts for costs allowable under the federal Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities Act (SDFSCA), but not paid under that act. These competitive grants would be used to prevent violence, respond to emergencies, manage crises, and recover from major safety related events.

The Department also requests \$250,000 GPR and 1.0 GPR FTE in FY11 for state administration of the grant program, related training, and technical assistance services.

#### Background/Analysis of Need

The level of funding Wisconsin school districts have received through the SDFSCA grant program has decreased significantly over the past seven years, since the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

- Aids to Wisconsin schools decreased from \$5,400,000 in FY01 to \$3,600,000 in FY08, a reduction of 33 percent. The allocation now averages \$4 per pupil. This is the only federal fund source provided to all school districts for drug and violence prevention.
- If the president's proposal is accepted for FY09 funding, Wisconsin schools and communities will share in just \$1,758,500 under a vastly modified and reduced program. This would represent a 75 percent reduction in funding available to the state from that which was provided through this program in the first year of NCLB. Most schools would not receive any funds.

In addition to the steady erosion of funds provided through SDFSCA, there are caps included in the federal law that limit spending for this program:

- Expenditures for security equipment, including surveillance cameras, communication devices, lighting, fencing, and door and window locking systems are limited to just 20 percent of the total grant received by any single school district. This is often an inadequate amount of funding given the small base grant amount upon which this cap is applied.
- Expenditures for security personnel costs may not exceed 40 percent of the total annual award. This cap would also include the costs for equipment and is not in addition to the 20 percent limitation on security equipment. Security personnel costs might include the school's share of costs for resource or liaison officers as well as for hiring of security personnel that are not sworn law enforcement officers.

Activities allowable under SDFSCA that could be funded under the proposed grant, include:

- Youth suicide prevention.
- Expanding school-based mental health services.
- Services to reduce truancy, suspensions, and expulsions.
- Developmentally appropriate drug and violence prevention strategies.
- Law enforcement and security activities.
- Emergency intervention following traumatic events.

Effective youth suicide prevention involves schools implementing a comprehensive approach that provides: 1) developmentally appropriate instruction to all pupils, 2) additional, targeted services for pupils in high-risk groups, and 3) more intensive services for pupils who have demonstrated an individual risk for suicide. Evidence-based strategies include classroom instruction, detecting warning signs of potential suicide, screening for depression and suicide risk, crisis response, and parent support. Primary allowable costs may include personnel, materials, such as curricula and screening tools, and contracts for services.

In many cases of violence, warning signs are present prior to any acts. Therefore, systematic assessments of specific threats and ongoing risks for violence are essential in preventing violence. Providing these services, both by school staff and community professionals, may create greater cost effectiveness, result in safer schools, and result in greater pupil achievement. Costs related to mental health screening, threat and risk assessment related to violence, referral to community mental health providers, and provision of mental health services in school, would be covered under this proposal. These could include personnel, materials and contracts for services including training for school personnel, such as pupil services staff who may hold clinical licenses.

For some pupils, truancy and dropping out is a signal of not feeling safe at school. Efforts to provide a safe, civil and supportive school environment can result in fewer acts of violence, suspensions and expulsion. Research-based evidence on programs effective in reducing truancy, dropping out, suspensions and expulsions include key elements. For example, such programs use data to determine when and where problems arise. They communicate with pupils, parents, school staff, and the community so adults and pupils know about the rules, the problem, and their part in the plan. Implementing consistent school rules, counseling and supportive interventions such as restorative justice can help reduce suspensions and expulsions. Such programs also frequently monitor program progress, in order to sustain what works and modify what is not working. Primary allowable costs would include personnel, materials and contracts for services.

Developmentally appropriate drug and violence prevention strategies include the following. In the area of school environment, schools can develop policies and procedures related to AODA and violence prevention and implement schoolwide behavior strategies to prevent bullying and disruptive behavior. Curriculum and instruction helps build pupil knowledge, attitudes and skills to avoid drug use and violence. Co-curricular pupil programs support prevention activities outside the classroom or school day including peer programs, clubs and after-school enrichment activities. Pupil services programs include selected and targeted services such as support groups for anger management or recovering youth and individual screening and referral to community service providers. Adult programs support professional development, parent education and support and employee assistance. Family and community connections support involvement of parents/guardians and community organizations in drug and violence prevention. Allowable costs include personnel, materials and contracts for services.

School resource officers are increasingly viewed as important members of a team that can help school officials keep pupils and schools safe and orderly. While not employees of school districts, costs related to law enforcement officers assigned as resources to schools, are typically shared by school districts and law enforcement agencies. This proposal would allow the costs for the school district's share of these contracts to be covered under grants. Further, the costs of security equipment,

including, but not limited to, surveillance cameras, communication systems (including walkie-talkies), enhanced fencing and lighting, and threat assessment costs using the Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design System could be covered through this proposal.

While each district has developed a basic school safety/crisis plan, ongoing collaboration with first responders, regular refinements of plans, and practice of procedures are needed to assure appropriate responses. When a violent or other traumatic event occurs, school administrators and pupil services staff must communicate effectively with pupils, parents and community members. Schools must take effective steps to respond swiftly to minimize injury and loss of life and provide recovery support for surviving members of the school community, including debriefing and grief counseling. Efforts must be taken to restore the teaching and learning environment as quickly as possible. Good planning and a well-developed crisis plan will facilitate a well-coordinated effective response. Recovery planning and programming is critical, and may be continuous and ongoing. Grant funds could support personnel, materials and contracts for services including staff development and training to assist school districts in responding effectively to traumatic events.

There is a great need for drug and violence prevention and early intervention activities that could be funded under this proposal. For example, the 2007 Wisconsin Youth Risk Behavior Survey representing public high school pupils statewide found that one in seven (14 percent) pupils reported seriously considering suicide in the past 12 months; one in 15 (seven percent) attempted suicide; and 23 percent of pupils reported that they were offered, sold or given an illegal drug on school property in the last 12 months.

Eighty-four percent of middle and high schools report offering some instruction on violence prevention in a required health education class. However, use of evidence-based violence prevention programs is limited.

Many schools lack basic types of violence prevention programs. Fifty percent of Wisconsin middle and high schools lack peer mediation, 80 percent lack gang violence prevention, and nearly 50 percent lack bullying prevention.

A variety of evidence-based violence prevention programs are available for schools, and some have been effectively implemented in some Wisconsin schools. The requested funds would permit greater dissemination and use of these programs. Based on previous evaluations, greater implementation of these programs would lead to decreases in violent incidents at schools. Since 2004, an increasing number of Wisconsin school districts use Safe and Drug Free Schools funding to purchase and implement evidence-based programs to decrease alcohol and drug usage and violence. With the drastic reduction in these federal funds, there is a great need to support current initiatives and new districts in implementing evidence-based programs that make a difference in changing pupils' attitudes, beliefs and behaviors. Staff development is also needed to implement the programs with fidelity. Funds are also needed to address the need for ongoing professional development training on school security and emergency preparedness issues for teachers, administrators and support staff.

School safety grants could help address drug-, violence-, and weapon-related incidents at schools. Such incidents are increasingly common at schools, as seen by the state expulsion data collected by the Department. Expulsions have nearly quadrupled in the past 15 years from about 400 to 1,500. Seventy-nine percent or 1,182 of these were the result of drug-, violence-, or weapon-related incidents in 2006-07. The safety grants could be used for prevention or early intervention programs and to maintain services to expelled pupils while keeping the school campus safe.

These school safety grants would encourage schools to develop or supplement school safety programs to prevent violence and respond to and recover from critical incidents. Such efforts are critical to learning.

The \$250,000 of administrative funds and the 1.0 GPR FTE position would be used to:

- Administer the grant program, including publishing guidance and application forms, conducting workshops for grant writers, and conducting external reviews of grant applications.
- Provide training and technical assistance, including best practices in violence prevention, crisis response and recovery.
- Provide monitoring of grant funded programs. This could include on-site monitoring, perhaps done in conjunction with NCLB consolidated monitoring. On-site monitoring of school building safety practices, procedures and drills in order to provide school specific technical assistance.

The 1.0 GPR FTE position would be classified as an educational consultant, with estimated costs to be \$96,700 in FY11.

There is currently a high demand for training on school safety and violence prevention. Training conferences, workshops and webcasts in 2007 served more than 2,000 school personnel. Seventy-three percent of school health educators report a desire for additional training in violence prevention and 71 percent want more training on suicide prevention.

A 2004 survey of 758 school resource officers nationally revealed the following key findings:

- School crime, violence, and safety offenses continue to threaten the nation's schools. A significant increase in gang activity and an increase in violent incidents on school buses, along with increased concerns about technology based misconduct and crimes, were also reported.
- Over 78 percent of school based police officers reported they had taken a weapon from a pupil on school property in the past year.
- Over 37 percent of the officers stated that gang activity in their school/district had increased during the past year. Approximately eight percent reported that gang activity in their schools actually decreased.
- Over 35 percent of School Resource Officers (SROs) indicated that violent incidents on school buses had increased in their districts during the past two years. Fewer than 13 percent of the respondents reported that violent incidents aboard school buses had decreased during this time.
- Almost 55 percent of the SROs indicated that concerns regarding internet based crimes had increased in their school community in the past two years. Over 41 percent of the officers stated that they had dealt with cases of pupils using cell phones for improper reasons (cheating on exams, taking photos in restrooms and/or locker areas, etc.) during the past year.
- Over half of the officers reported that their school crisis/emergency plans are not adequate. Over two-thirds reported that their school emergency plans are not exercised (tabletop drills, full scale drills, etc.) on a regular basis. A significant percentage (over 43 percent) of the SROs indicated that school officials do not formally meet at least once a year with police, fire, emergency medical services, emergency management agencies, and other public safety officials to review and revise school plans.
- More than half of the respondents indicated that teachers, administrators, and support staff do not receive ongoing professional development training on school security and emergency preparedness issues. Almost two-thirds of the officers stated that school bus drivers and transportation personnel have not had any training in the past three years related to security measures, emergency planning and response, terrorism, and associated topics.
- Seventy percent of the surveyed school officers indicated that funding for school safety in their districts is either decreasing or remaining the same. Only 15 percent of respondents reported an

increase in safe schools funding. The vast majority of officers believe that when considering the amount of federal funding being provided to improve homeland security for non-school entities, the amount of funding made available specifically for K-12 school security and emergency preparedness planning is not enough.

**Statutory Language**

The Department is proposing statutory language related to this request. See *School Safety Grants* in the Statutory Language section of this document.