

**STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA**  
**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

**MOLLY M. SPEARMAN**  
*STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION*



## Safe Schools Initiative Report

The Honorable Henry McMaster, Governor  
The Honorable Hugh K. Leatherman, Sr., Chairman, Senate Finance Committee  
The Honorable G. Murrell Smith, Jr., Chairman, House Ways and Means  
Committee

Fiscal Year 2018-19 Appropriations Act Proviso 1.98  
December 31, 2018

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## **Fiscal Year 2018-19 Appropriations Act Proviso 1.98**

**1.98.** (SDE: Safe Schools Initiative) (A) For the current fiscal year, the Department of Education and the State Law Enforcement Division must develop, within existing staff, a Crisis Intervention Team to coordinate, collect and compile Crisis Intervention & School Safety Plans from each school district with their input. The report shall include recommendations for the General Assembly to consider which may include, but are not limited to, physical building security, bullet proof and access controlled doors, RFID chip in student identification cards, mental health services, school resource officers, and other school safety measures. Total costs associated with each recommendation shall be included in the report. If additional funding is required to implement the recommendations, the Department of Education and the State Law Enforcement Division are directed to include the recommended funds in their Fiscal Year 2019-20 agency budget plan. The report shall be submitted to the Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, the Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee and the Governor by December 31, 2018.

(B) Of the lottery funds appropriated to the Department of Education for School Safety - Facility and Infrastructure Safety Upgrades, the department shall allocate the funds to school districts for the purpose of funding life safety infrastructure for school facilities projects. Eligible school facility projects shall include, but not necessarily be limited to items such as: (a) door locks, (b) security cameras, (c) metal detectors, (d) lifesaving medical equipment and (e) equipment related to school resource officers, excluding vehicles. For purposes of this provision, school facilities shall not include unimproved real property, centralized district administration facilities, or other facilities, including those normally identified with interscholastic sports activities.

The department shall develop and maintain an application process for school districts to request funding for qualified school projects and establish policies, procedures, and priorities for the making of grants pursuant to this provision. In establishing these procedures, the department shall utilize the school facilities report among other sources. At least twice a year and upon receipt of applications pursuant to the application process adopted by the department, the department shall prioritize the eligible projects with the greatest need and shall submit a list of recommended grant awards to the State Board of Education. Grants shall be awarded upon an affirmative vote of the State Board.

The financial assistance provided to school districts pursuant to this provision must be used for the eligible school facility project. The department is responsible for establishing policies and procedures to ensure that funds are expended in a manner consistent with this provision.

Following the close of the fiscal year, the department shall submit an annual report of its activities for the preceding year to the Governor, the Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee and the Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee.

### **Committee Appointments**

The Superintendent of Education is directed to appoint an independent grants committee to develop the process for awarding the grants or directly purchasing services. The grants committee must be comprised of seven members, three members selected from the education community and four members selected from the business community.

## **State Level Crisis Intervention Team**

Per Proviso 1.98 the following staff from the following agencies are identified to compose the state level crisis intervention/threat assessment team:

State Law Enforcement Division

- Kathryn Richardson
- Lt. Paul C. LaRosa
- Wayne Freeman

State Department of Education

- Emily Heatwole
- Sabrina Moore
- Karla Hawkins
- Kim Smith
- Sherrie Beaver

Department of Mental Health

- Allison Farrell
- Rochelle Caton

## **Other Key State Level Working Groups:**

*School Level Threat Assessment Team Focus Group:*

The State Superintendent called for this focus group to support individual schools and districts to ensure that proper and clear threat assessment protocols are in place. The Superintendent has requested each school identify existing staff to serve on the team and included pertinent language in the Fiscal Year 2019-20 proviso change request to the General Assembly. The department has contracted with Dr. Melissa Reeves from Winthrop University to work with the focus group to develop clear protocols and documentation to be used when assessing student need for services and interventions. Additionally, Dr. Reeves will support the department in providing regional trainings through the spring. Each training session will serve 75-100 and will support districts in implementing the teams. Tentative dates are below:

- 2/12, Midlands
- 2/19, Lowcountry
- 3/15, Upstate
- 4/11, Pee Dee

Dr. Reeves and the focus group will provide districts and schools with a user friendly full threat assessment, screener, flowchart and guide which will be ready in January.

*Supporting Educators with Discipline Focus Group:*

The group met in early November to discuss current discipline practices with a focus on what is working and what is not working. An overview of current policies was discussed:

- State Laws Related to Discipline
- School Board Policies Related to Discipline and Bullying
- The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and Multi-Tiered System of Supports
- Program for Assisting, Developing, and Evaluating Principal Performance
- Discipline Practices and Policies in Our Schools

The group then reported out through facilitators the roles and responsibilities of the following groups along with best practices for communication and systems related to discipline:

- District-Level Administrators
- School-Level Administrators
- Teachers
- School Board Members and Policy Recommendations
- Educator Preparation Providers
- Department of Education Supports

The group will finalize the work by the end of January at which time all the document will be posted on the agency website and disseminated to districts.

### **Federal Grants secured:**

#### *Project Aware:*

- \$8 million, 5-year grant from DHHS
- To increase mental health awareness and access
- Partners: SCDMH, SC Federation of Families, NAMI
- Districts: Anderson 2, Florence 1, and Sumter
- Deliverables: additional mental health clinicians, telehealth resources and equipment, professional development

#### *Enhancing Emergency Management:*

- \$3 million, 5-year grant from the USED
- To provide emergency management (school safety) training to districts and schools statewide
- The SCDE will hire an individual with law enforcement and emergency management credentials and experience

### **Fiscal Year 2019-20 Recommendations**

- EFA Safety weighting for all students
  - The department has requested an additional \$47 per student to provide state support for school safety. These funds must be used to assist districts in funding key staff that will provide services to students. Staff may include, but are not limited to: school resource officers, school counselors, school psychologists, school based mental health clinicians and/or school social workers. This will not fully fund such a position as salaries vary and there is not a mandate that new FTEs be hired. The intent is to provide stable, state level support for these staff and include them as support provided for all students.
- Safe Schools Initiative - Proviso 1.82
  - Will require each school to identify appropriate staff to serve on a threat assessment team

- Will direct the department and SLED to continue to provide support through the state level Threat Assessment Team and require the department to provide professional development to school staff that will serve on the team.
- Safety plans shall be exempt from FOIA (S.C. Code Ann. § 30-4-10, et seq.)
- Professional Development
  - Of the \$2,000,000 requested increase for professional development, \$500,000 would be used to support safety professional development specifically around the identification of school level threat assessment teams and protocols. The department will continue to partner with SLED and DMH on this work.
- Infrastructure
  - The agency has not requested a change in the lottery funds provided in Fiscal Year 2018-19 and would request that the General Assembly continue to provide this funding for Fiscal Year 2019-20 to ensure that district safety upgrades may be funded.
  - The State Board approved funding recommendations at the December meeting, which prioritized the physical security of the building (exterior and interior locks, communication systems, cameras, medical equipment and resource officer equipment). In working with SLED, the department has asked districts to first prioritize exterior building security to ensure all entrances are secure and that visitors do not have free access to the building.
    - <https://www.ed.sc.gov/finance/financial-services/payment-information/misc-payments/school-safety-infrastructure-funds-lottery/>