

1 **School Social Worker Amendments**

2026 GENERAL SESSION

STATE OF UTAH

**Chief Sponsor: Emily Buss**

House Sponsor:

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3 **LONG TITLE**

4 **General Description:**

5 This bill amends provisions related to a social service worker in a public school.

6 **Highlighted Provisions:**

7 This bill:

8 ▶ amends a definition related to personnel providing health and counseling support to a  
9 student;

10 ▶ requires the State Board of Education to align certain requirements with the Department  
11 of Professional Licensing; and

12 ▶ makes technical and conforming changes.

13 **Money Appropriated in this Bill:**

14 None

15 **Other Special Clauses:**

16 None

17 **Utah Code Sections Affected:**

18 AMENDS:

19 **53F-2-415**, as last amended by Laws of Utah 2025, First Special Session, Chapter 9

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21 *Be it enacted by the Legislature of the state of Utah:*

22 Section 1. Section **53F-2-415** is amended to read:

23 **53F-2-415 . Student health and counseling support -- Qualifying personnel --**

24 **Distribution formula -- Rulemaking.**

25 (1) As used in this section:

26 (a) "Behavioral health support personnel" means an individual who:

27 (i) works under the direct supervision of qualifying personnel to:

28 (A) support and track a student's progress and access to and completion of school  
29 curriculum; and

30 (B) support students by prompting, redirecting, encouraging, and reinforcing

- 31 positive behaviors;
- 32 (ii) is not certified or licensed in mental health; and
- 33 (iii) meets the professional qualifications as defined by state board rule.
- 34 (b)(i) "Qualifying personnel" means a school counselor or other counselor, a school
- 35 psychologist or other psychologist, a school social worker or other social worker,
- 36 or a school nurse who:
- 37 [(+)] (A) is licensed; and
- 38 [(+)] (B) collaborates with educators and a student's parent on:
- 39 [(A)] (I) early identification and intervention of the student's academic and
- 40 mental health needs; and
- 41 [(B)] (II) removing barriers to learning and developing skills and behaviors
- 42 critical for the student's academic achievement.
- 43 (ii) "Qualifying personnel" includes:
- 44 (A) a social service worker licensed under Title 58, Chapter 60, Part 2, Social
- 45 Worker Licensing Act; and
- 46 (B) a social service worker intern.
- 47 (c) "Telehealth services" means the same as that term is defined in Section 26B-4-704.
- 48 (2)(a) Subject to legislative appropriations, and in accordance with Subsection (2)(b),
- 49 the state board shall distribute money appropriated under this section to LEAs to
- 50 provide targeted school-based mental health support, including clinical services and
- 51 trauma-informed care, through:
- 52 (i) employing qualifying personnel;
- 53 (ii) employing behavioral health support personnel; or
- 54 (iii) entering into contracts for services provided by qualifying personnel, including
- 55 telehealth services.
- 56 (b)(i) The state board shall, after consulting with LEA governing boards, develop a
- 57 formula to distribute money appropriated under this section to LEAs.
- 58 (ii) The state board shall ensure that the formula described in Subsection (2)(b)(i)
- 59 incentivizes an LEA to provide school-based mental health support in
- 60 collaboration with the local mental health authority of the county in which the
- 61 LEA is located.
- 62 (iii) The state board shall provide guidance for LEAs regarding the training,
- 63 qualifications, roles, and scopes of practice for qualifying personnel and
- 64 behavioral health support personnel that incorporates parent consent and

- 65 partnership as key components in addressing the mental health and behavioral  
66 health needs of students.
- 67 (3) To qualify for money under this section, an LEA shall submit to the state board a plan  
68 that includes:
- 69 (a) measurable goals approved by the LEA governing board on improving student  
70 safety, student engagement, school climate, or academic achievement;
- 71 (b) how the LEA intends to meet the goals described in Subsection (3)(a) through the  
72 use of the money;
- 73 (c) how the LEA is meeting the requirements related to parent education described in  
74 Section 53G-9-703; and
- 75 (d) whether the LEA intends to provide school-based mental health support in  
76 collaboration with the local mental health authority of the county in which the LEA is  
77 located.
- 78 (4) The state board shall[-] :
- 79 (a) ensure that the use of funds for a social service worker under this section aligns with  
80 the supervision requirements the Department of Professional Licensing establishes,  
81 ensuring no lapse in clinical oversight; and
- 82 (b) distribute money appropriated under this section to an LEA that qualifies under  
83 Subsection (3), based on the formula described in Subsection (2)(b).
- 84 (5) An LEA may not use money distributed by the state board under this section to supplant  
85 federal, state, or local money previously allocated to:
- 86 (a) employ qualifying personnel;
- 87 (b) employ behavioral health support personnel; or
- 88 (c) enter into contracts for services provided by qualified personnel, including telehealth  
89 services.
- 90 (6) In accordance with Title 63G, Chapter 3, Utah Administrative Rulemaking Act, the  
91 state board shall make rules that establish:
- 92 (a) procedures for submitting a plan for and distributing money under this section;
- 93 (b) the formula the state board will use to distribute money to LEAs described in  
94 Subsection (2)(b); and
- 95 (c) in accordance with Subsection (7), annual reporting requirements for an LEA that  
96 receives money under this section.
- 97 (7) An LEA that receives money under this section shall submit an annual report to the state  
98 board, including:

- 99 (a) progress toward achieving the goals submitted under Subsection (3)(a);  
100 (b) if the LEA discontinues a qualifying personnel position or a behavioral health  
101 support personnel position, the LEA's reason for discontinuing the positions; and  
102 (c) how the LEA, in providing school-based mental health support, complies with the  
103 provisions of Section 53E-9-203.
- 104 (8) Beginning on or before July 1, 2019, the state board shall provide training that instructs  
105 school personnel on the impact of childhood trauma on student learning, including  
106 information advising educators against practicing medicine, giving a diagnosis, or  
107 providing treatment.
- 108 (9) The state board may use up to:  
109 (a) 2% of an appropriation under this section for costs related to the administration of  
110 the provisions of this section; and  
111 (b) \$1,500,000 in nonlapsing balances from fiscal year 2022 for the purposes described  
112 in this section to provide scholarships for up to four years to certain LEA employees,  
113 as defined by the state board, for education and training to become a school social  
114 worker, a school psychologist, or other school-based mental health worker.
- 115 (10) Notwithstanding the provisions of this section, money appropriated under this section  
116 may be used, as determined by the state board, for:  
117 (a) the SafeUT Crisis Line described in Section 53H-4-210;  
118 (b)(i) youth suicide prevention programs described in Section 53G-9-702 ; or  
119 (ii) a comprehensive prevention plan, as that term is defined in Section 53F-2-525; or  
120 (c) providing grants to LEAs as provided in Subsection 53F-2-522(5).

121 Section 2. **Effective Date.**

122 This bill takes effect on May 6, 2026.