31aa FAQ – 2025-2026 (Fiscal Year 26)

For questions, please email MDE-31aa@Michigan.gov

31aa Legislation (31aa can be found on pages 52-55)

Definitions

Application/applying/apply: The process of providing the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) plan for expending the funds awarded.

Opting in: The process of accepting the funds in Subsection 2 of Section 31aa; funding is determined on a per-pupil basis.

District: a public school, PSA, an ISD/RESA, non-public school, Michigan School for the Deaf

Safety dog: a dog that is **contracted** by a law enforcement agency of this state, a local unit of government of this state, or a district or an intermediate district. The dog should be trained for detection of firearms, explosives, narcotics, or vape substances.

Funding

What are the requirements for this funding?

There are multiple parts to this funding for FY26. To receive funding under subsection 2, districts will need to opt-in to the funding and agree to submit an expense report on how the funds were spent by July 1, 2026.The opt-in form will be housed in GEMS/MARS and can be accessed through the MiLogin portal. Information about opting in can be found in the slide deck on the Office of Health and Safety website and in the webinar hosted by MDE on October 20, 2025. To receive funding under subsections 4 and 5, districts will need to apply to receive the funding and submit all required plans. These competitive applications will be housed in NexSys and the availability date will be announced when the application development is completed.

Are there certifications that will need to be agreed upon to receive this funding?

Yes. Recipients of these funds will need to agree to the following items:

- To complete an expense report by July 1, 2026
- Return funds that were used on unallowable expenses
- Agree to be subject to a comprehensive investigation, waive any privilege that may otherwise protect information from disclosure in the event of a mass casualty event, and must agree to comply with a comprehensive investigation
- Coordinate with intermediate districts to avoid duplication of services and to streamline delivery of services to students
- Agree to spend funds from Subsection 2 by September 30, 2026, or request a 1-year extension on your expense report

Is this a competitive grant?

Subsection 2 of this grant is non-competitive with funding amounts based on a per-pupil formula. An opt-in form will need to be submitted to receive funds, and funding will be determined on a per-pupil basis. Subsections 4 and 5 are competitive and applications are required to be considered for funding.

Is coordination between the district and Intermediate School District (ISD) required?

Districts receiving funds under this section must coordinate with their ISD to avoid duplication of services and to streamline delivery of services to students.

Which students can be served with these funds?

Only K-12 students can be served with 31aa funds, early childhood and adult education programs are not included.

Applying

How will information about this funding stream be communicated to the field?

Communication regarding this funding stream will be communicated through the MDE Grants Repository and announced in the "MDE Grants Spotlight" section of the Thursday Communication sent by the Michigan Department of Education (MDE). To sign up for updates from MDE, or to access your subscriber preferences, please visit https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/MIMDE/subscribers/new?preferences=true. Information can also be found on the MDE School Health and Safety website.

Can private schools apply?

Non-public schools are eligible for all three subsections of this funding. Prior to opting in, or applying for funding, non-public schools will need to have an approved account within GEMS/MARS and NexSys. The process for gaining that approval can be found on the GEMS/MARS and NexSys websites. Non-public schools also need to ensure that they are registered in SIGMA for payment and that their annual Nonpublic School Membership Report (NSRM) required registration is complete.

Is there a deadline for districts to submit their application?

There will be a deadline of December 4, 2025, at 11:59 pm to opt-in to subsection 2 funding. Deadlines for subsections 4 and 5 applications that will be housed in NexSys will be determined after the application process is set. MDE anticipates that the applications for subsections 4 and 5 will be available in February or March of 2026.

What is the process for reviewing submitted applications?

MDE will review submitted opt-in forms and applications to ensure they meet the requirements of the legislative language. If MDE sees something in **either the opt-in form or application** that does not meet legislative intent, MDE may ask for further clarification or adjustments and applicants will be notified to make those modifications.

Can districts contract through a third party with these funds?

Yes.

How long do districts have to expend the funds?

Districts have the fiscal year that the funds are awarded under Subsection 2. Districts can request an additional fiscal year through the legislatively required expense report due July 1, 2026. Subsections 4 and 5 also have the fiscal year in which they are awarded, however, unexpended funds can automatically be carried forward to 9/30/2027.

A district is considering using these funds along with other funding sources to braid fund (split fund) initiatives. Is this allowable?

Yes.

Does MDE expect to fully fund all entities that opt-in to receive Subsection 2 funds?

All entities that opt-in to receive Subsection 2 funds and meet all requirements will be awarded funding, but MDE cannot anticipate the number of districts that will opt-in to Subsection 2. Per the legislation, the funding for Subsection 2 will be per-pupil. Exact awards will not be known until after the opt-in deadline passes. Funds from Subsection 2 will be disbursed prior to December 31, 2025, as legislatively required.

Subsections 4 and 5 will be awarded through a competitive grant process. Funds will be disbursed based on the application submitted, but all applications may not be funded.

How should applicants budget for Subsections 4 and 5 in the NexSys application?

Applications should include what future funding stream will be used, whether that funding is state or federal, how much of that funding is received annually, and include a plan for maintaining the position for the same amount of time that this funding allowed.

Disbursement of Funds

Is there a deadline to award districts the money if they meet the application standards?

Funds from Subsection 2 will be disbursed by December 31, 2025, as legislated. Funds from Subsections 4 and 5 will be disbursed after the application process is completed.

How will funds be disbursed?

Funds will be disbursed through the State Aid Management System (SAMS) except for non-public schools, where the funds will be dispersed through the SIGMA system via check or direct deposit. Non-public schools must be registered in SIGMA to receive funding.

How do non-public schools register in SIGMA?

Please check with your business office if you do not know your registration status. If your organization needs to register in SIGMA, go to Michigan.gov/SIGMAVSS. If you have questions about registering and or verifying if your information in SIGMA is accurate, please contact the State of Michigan (SIGMA VSS) Support Center at SIGMA-Vendor@Michigan.gov or by calling 517-284-0550. The State of Michigan SIGMA VSS Support Center office hours are 7:00 AM until 5:00 PM EST, Monday - Friday.

Allowable Expenses

What mental health initiatives can funds be spent on?

Allowable mental health expenditures of funds under Section 31aa include:

- Hiring or contracting for support staff including:
    - Psychologists
    - Social workers
    - Counselors
    - Nurses

    - Community Health Workers
    - Marriage and Family Therapists
- Purchasing and implementing mental health screening tools
- Purchasing a statewide, integrated technology platform to streamline behavioral health documentation and care coordination
- Providing school-based mental health personnel access to consultation with behavioral health clinicians to respond to complex student mental health needs
- Purchasing and implementing an online behavioral health tool led by licensed behavioral health professionals
- Hiring or contracting a behavioral health coordinator
- Evidence-based trainings to support mental health
- Costs associated with collaboration between school employees, families, and community partners to address the academic, behavioral, and social needs of all students through collaborative partnerships, resource coordination, data collection, and data sharing
- Costs associated with conducting a systemic school mental health needs assessment and resource mapping that identifies programmatic and systemic needs and helps staff determine priorities and create action plans

What school safety initiatives can funds be spent on?

- Coordination with local law enforcement
- Training for school staff on threat assessment
- Training for school staff and students on threat response
- Training for school staff on crisis communication
- Safety infrastructure including, but not limited to:
    - Cameras
    - Door blocks
    - Hardened vestibules
    - Window screening
    - Technology to operate buzzer systems
    - Firearm detection software that integrates into existing security cameras to detect and alert school personnel and first responders to visible firearms on property
- Age-appropriate training for students and families on responsible firearm ownership, including safe handling and safe storage
- School resource officers and safety dogs. School resource officers must be properly licensed and in good standing with the Michigan Commission on Law Enforcement Standards, and must be in compliance with all applicable laws
    - **Dogs cannot be purchased, only contracted**
- Student Safety Management System, the information technology platform and related services to improve student safety by mitigating cyberbullying, school violence, human trafficking, and self-harm that supports students from grades K to 12
- A secure platform administered by the department of state police, for school officials, emergency responders, and emergency management coordinators to house all school safety-related items, including but not limited to:

    - EOP templates
    - EOP guidance
    - Reference documents
    - Security assessments
- Emergency infrastructure needs to respond to an immediate threat to the health or safety of students and staff in the district, intermediate district, nonpublic school, or the Michigan School for the Deaf. These funds **shall not be expended for this purpose without first obtaining approval from the department**.
    - Requests to use funds in this manner must be emailed to MDE-31aa@Michigan.gov
- A contract with a vendor for a comprehensive safety and security assessment and security event assessment
- An emergency response system
- Implementing cell phone free school policies
    - "Cell phone free school policy" means a policy that prohibits students from accessing or using a personal communication device capable of telecommunication or digital communication during instructional time, as determined by the school

Are there restrictions on what funds can be used for?

Allowable expenses, outlined in the legislation, are listed above. If there are additional questions about allowable expenses for these funds, please submit those questions to MDE-31aa@Michigan.gov.

Are there expenses that are not allowed?

The following expenses are not allowed under Section 31aa funding. If there are questions about allowability of an expense, please direct questions to MDE-31aa@Michigan.gov.

- Employee assistance programs
- Gym memberships
- Playgrounds including equipment, landscaping and materials
- Renovation costs not associated with safety of students
- Deans of Students
- Direct purchase of safety dogs—**Per legislation: safety dogs must be contracted by a law enforcement agency of the state, a local unit of government, or a district/intermediate district. It should be trained in detection of firearms, explosives, narcotics, or vape substances.**
- Direct purchase or contracting for therapy animals and supplies/training associated with
- Hall monitors
- Classroom teachers
- Security personnel that do not fall under the definition of SRO
- Student or staff branded items, including but not limited to shirts, toys, cup/mugs, pens, etc.
- Food for events, snack carts, prizes, staff rooms, etc.
- Mental health supplies not associated with resource mapping and needs assessments

Can funds be used for infrastructure?

Funds can only be used to respond to emergency infrastructure needs that pose an immediate threat to the health or safety of students and staff. Emergency infrastructure needs must be approved by MDE **prior** to spending the funds.

Can these funds be used for personnel?

Funds can be used to hire or contract mental health support staff, including, but not limited to, psychologists, social workers, counselors, and nurses. Funds can also be used to hire or contract school resource officers.

Can these funds be used to replace other funding streams to fund an already established position?

It is best practice that these funds should not be used to replace funding used for current positions, however, they can be used to braid fund positions.

Further Information

Further information can be found at:

https://www.michigan.gov/mde/services/health-safety/topics/school-safety or https://www.michigan.gov/mde/services/health-safety/mental-health

Link to the full Michigan Compiled Law (MCL)

Questions should be directed to: MDE-31aa@Michigan.gov