School Safety and Mental Health Funding (Section 31aa) FAQ – School Year 2026-2027 (Fiscal Year 27)

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

31aa Legislation (31aa can be found on pages 53-55)

Definitions

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

Applying: The process of applying for both Subsection 2 and 3 will be housed in NexSys; 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. Therapy dogs, and supplies to support them, do not meet this definition and are not an allowable expense with these funds.

Mass casualty event: an incident resulting in significant physical injuries to not fewer than 3 individuals on school grounds or at a school-sponsored event, an incident resulting in 2 or more fatalities, or an incident of such scope that the emergency response resources in the jurisdiction are not sufficient and resources from surrounding jurisdictions are required.

Significant physical injury: an injury that involves a risk of death, significant physical pain, protracted and obvious disfigurement, or a protracted loss or impairment.

School grounds: all properties owned or operated by the district including transportation vehicles.

School sponsored event: any activity organized or sanctioned by the district.

School Resource Officer (SRO): 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.

Michigan follows the definition of an SRO as defined by the National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO). NASRO defines an SRO as a carefully selected, specifically trained, and properly equipped law enforcement officer with sworn authority, trained in school-based law enforcement and crisis response and assigned by an employing law enforcement agency to work collaboratively with one or more schools using community-oriented policing concepts.

Funding

What are the requirements for this funding?

There are multiple subsections for this funding in FY27. Subsection 2 is disbursed on a per pupil basis with a cap of $73.53 per pupil. Subsection 3 requires agreeing to a comprehensive investigation in the event of a mass casualty event and is disbursed on a per pupil basis with a cap of $147.06. All recipients agree to submit an expense report showing how the funds were spent by July 1, 2027. All submissions will be housed in NexSys 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 September 8, 2026.

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

Yes. Recipients of funds allocated in Subsections 2 and 3 will need to agree to the following items:

- To complete an expense report by July 1, 2027 (this applies to both subsections)
- Return funds that were used on unallowable expenses (this applies to both subsections)
- 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 **(THIS ONLY APPLIES TO SUBSECTION 3 STUDENT SAFETY FUNDS)**
- Coordinate with intermediate districts to avoid duplication of services and to streamline delivery of services to students (this applies to both subsections)

Is this a competitive grant?

No. Both subsections 2 and 3 are awarded on a non-competitive basis with funding amounts capped at $73.53 per pupil for student mental health and $147.06 per pupil for student safety.

When does the expenditure period begin?

These funds were not given immediate effect in legislation. The expenditure window begins on October 1, 2026, with the start of the new state fiscal year.

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.

What is the final expenditure date for these funds?

Funds need to be spent in the year they are allocated. Recipients can request an additional year to spend the funds through the required reporting.

- Funds awarded in Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 (SY24/25): Final expenditure date is 9/30/26. Funds not spent by that date will need to be returned to MDE.
- Funds awarded in FY 2026 (SY25/26): Final expenditure date is 9/30/26 for Section 31aa(2). If an additional year is requested through the legislatively required reporting, the final expenditure date is 9/30/27.
    - Section 31aa(4) and 31aa(5) had a final expenditure date of 9/30/27 set in legislation. No written request is required to extend this date.
- Funds awarded in FY2027 (SY26/27): Final expenditure date is 9/30/27. If an additional year is requested through the legislatively required reporting, the final expenditure date is 9/30/28.

If funds are carried over into the next year, what legislative requirements do they follow?

Carry over funds are held to the same legislative requirements as the year they were allocated and awarded.

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 MDE email updates webpage. Information can also be found on the MDE School Health and Safety website.

Can private schools apply?

Non-public schools are eligible for both subsections of this funding. Prior to applying for funding, non-public schools will need to have an approved account within NexSys. The process for gaining that approval can be found on the NexSys website. 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. Failure to complete the NSRM will result in not being eligible for funding.

Is there a deadline for districts to submit their application?

Funds under this section will be disbursed on the following schedule:

- Window 1: Districts that apply by November 9, 2026, will receive funds in the December State Aid Payment.**
- Window 2: Districts that apply by December 7, 2026, will receive funds in the January State Aid Payment.
- Window 3: Districts that apply by January 4, 2027, will receive funds in the February State Aid Payment.
- Window 4: Districts that apply by April 12, 2027, will receive funds in the May State Aid Payment.

The deadline for submissions is 5 p.m. Eastern Time on each of the days listed above. Please be aware that entities can only apply once.

**The date in November may be adjusted based on when the application is finalized and made available to complete.

What is the process for reviewing submitted applications?

MDE will review submitted applications to ensure they meet the requirements of the legislative language. If MDE sees something in the 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 Subsections 2 and 3. However, districts can request an additional fiscal year through the legislatively required expense report due July 1, 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 apply to receive Section 31aa funds?

All eligible entities that choose to apply to receive these funds will be funded. The amount for each district is capped in legislation at $73.53 per pupil for mental health funding (Section 31aa(2)) and $147.06 per pupil for school safety funding (Section 31aa(3)). Please be aware that, depending on the number of submissions, the final amount awarded per pupil may be lower. The legislated amount is the maximum amount that can be awarded.

This is not a competitive process, any district that chooses to apply will receive the funding.

How should the budget be completed for Subsections 2 and 3 in the NexSys application?

Applications should ONLY include the budget item indicating that districts wish to receive these funds. In Spring 2027, applications will be returned for amendments and districts will then indicate how the funds were spent. Any applications that include more than one budget line (the one indicating that they'd like the funds), will be returned for modifications and funds will be delayed. This application will also serve as the legislatively required Final Expense Report (FER) due on July 1, 2027.

Disbursement of Funds

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 disbursed 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 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time, 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
- 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
- Purchasing and implementing an evidence-based character- and relationship-building education program that includes family engagement, service learning, and project-based character development, and that fosters positive student-educator relationships and whole-school culture

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 includes, but is 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 the general inbox at MDE-31aa@Michigan.gov
- A contract with a vendor for a comprehensive safety and security assessment and security event assessment
- An emergency response system

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 the general inbox MDE-31aa@Michigan.gov.

Unallowable Expenses

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 as this is not an all-inclusive list of unallowable expenses.

- 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. The dog should be trained in detection of firearms, explosives, narcotics, or vape substances.**
- **Direct purchase or contracting for therapy animals and supplies/training associated with therapy dogs**
- Hall monitors
- Classroom teachers
- Coaches including but not limited to academic coaches, counselor coaches, etc.
- Paraprofessionals
- Therapists that are not mental health providers are not an allowable expense with these funds. Examples include but are not limited to occupational therapists, speech therapists, physical therapists, etc.
- Security personnel that do not fall under the definition of SRO. Including but not limited to directors of security, contracted security guards, chief of security, etc.
- 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. Other personnel are not allowable expenses with these funds.

Are there positions that these funds cannot be used for?

Yes, please see the unallowable expenses listed above for positions that cannot be funded with this funding stream.

Braiding Funding

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

As this is not guaranteed recurring funding, 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

For more information, visit:

MDE's Office of Health and Safety website

MDE's School Safety website

MDE's Mental Health website

Link to Section 31aa in the Michigan Compiled Law **(MCL)**

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