

## **OPTIMISE School Psychologist Shortage Workgroup Recommendations**

**Recommendation #1:** Create a New In Person Program and Add Online School Psychology Options to a Current in Person Program in MI

**Data to Support Recommendation-**Michigan currently has five school psychology programs. In contrast, Ohio, which has a similar population to Michigan, has ten school psychology programs and a lower school psychologist to student ratio (1:840 in Ohio compared to 1:1445 in Michigan). Three school psychology programs in Michigan have expressed interest in adding an online option to a current in person school psychology program and two universities have outlined that they are interested in starting a new in person school psychology program if funding is available. The addition of an online program to a current in person program would help address the lack of school psychology programs north of Mt. Pleasant. One barrier to the creation of new school psychology programs is the high cost of starting and running the program. The creation of new school psychology programs and expansion of current programs will decrease the shortage of school psychologists in Michigan.

**Total Funding Needed-** \$5 million (one million for each university, up to a total of five colleges, that create a new in person program or add to an online component to an existing in person program), with an additional \$15,000 for MDE/other agency to address the cost of managing/providing oversight of the program

**For How Many Years-** \$1 million for each university would be split across two to three fiscal years

**Process to Obtain Dollars-**Universities would apply for the funds through MDE and then begin the process outlined [here](#) to add the online school psychology program to their current in person program or start a new school psychology program.

**Recommendation #2:** Advisory Panel for Student Mental Health Apprenticeship Training (SMART) Program, FTE from MDE, and the Continuation of Funds for SMART

- The SMART “Grow Your Own” program provides paid work experiences and practicum opportunities for 1st and 2nd year School Psychology, School Social Work, and School Counseling graduate students to attract more people to school based mental health professions to address the shortage of practitioners. Each school psychology graduate student earns \$25/hour for 20 hours a week for 30 weeks, which is equivalent to \$15,000 per year. This program provides graduate students with paid work that helps offset the high cost of college and address the significant shortage of mental health professionals

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in the schools as graduate students can provide support for school based mental health professionals with appropriate supervision/assist with routine tasks to help free up practitioners for more complex or sensitive work.

- For only the 2023-2024 fiscal year (FY) there has been \$15 million allocated for SMART. It has been deemed a "work project." Any funds not spent in FY '24 carry to FY '25, but the whole initiative has a "completion date" of 2027. In order to decrease the shortage of school based mental health professionals in Michigan SMART should continue beyond three years.
- MDE will receive \$500,000 to hire (one FTE) staff member to administer the program with materials and support; this means there will be someone responsible at MDE for the shape of the program (as dictated by the thorough statute). The funding for the MDE position (\$500,000) should also extend beyond three years to ensure proper oversight and integrity of the program. We also need an advisory board made up of representatives from the field of school psychology, school social work, and school counseling to collaborate with this staff member to ensure proper implementation of the SMART/'grow your own' program. There should also be a representative from ISDs.