MEMORANDUM

TO: School District Superintendents
    School District Finance Officers

FROM: Jacob Oliva, Chancellor
      Division of Public Schools

Suzanne Pridgeon, Deputy Commissioner
Division of Finance and Operations

DATE: June 21, 2019

SUBJECT: Mental Health Assistance Allocation Amendments – Senate Bill 7030

The 2019 Florida Legislature passed Senate Bill 7030, Implementation of Legislative Recommendations of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Commission, which comprehensively addresses school safety. Governor Ron DeSantis signed the bill on May 8, 2019 (Chapter 2019-22, Laws of Florida). Section 15 of SB 7030 goes into effect on July 1, 2019, and amends the Mental Health Assistance Allocation (MHAA), which provides funding to assist school districts in establishing or expanding school-based mental health care.

SB 7030 amended the MHAA, in part, to ensure that each Florida public school student has access to a mental health professional at school by the 2019-2020 school year by training educators and other school staff to detect and respond to mental health issues, and by connecting children, youth and families who experience behavioral health issues with appropriate services. The following summarizes the changes to the MHAA in SB 7030.

Each school district’s Mental Health Assistance Allocation Plan (MHAA Plan) must include all district schools, including charter schools, unless a charter school submits a MHAA Plan independent of the school district. Each MHAA Plan must include:

- A focus on a multi-tiered system of supports to deliver evidence-based mental health care assessment, diagnosis, intervention, treatment and recovery services to students with one or more co-occurring substance abuse diagnoses and to students at high risk of such diagnoses. The provision of these services must be coordinated with a student’s primary mental health care provider and with other mental health providers involved in the student’s care.
• Direct employment of school-based mental health services providers to expand and enhance school-based student services and to reduce the ratio of students to staff in order to better align with nationally recommended ratio models. These providers include, but are not limited to, certified school counselors, school psychologists, school social workers and other licensed mental health professionals.

• Strategies to increase the amount of time that school-based student services personnel spend providing direct services to students, which may include the review and revision of district staffing resource allocations based on school or student mental health assistance needs.

• Contracts or interagency agreements with one or more local community behavioral health providers or providers of Community Action Team services to provide a behavioral health staff presence and services at district schools. Services may include, but are not limited to, mental health screenings and assessments, individual counseling, family counseling, group counseling, psychiatric or psychological services, trauma-informed care, mobile crisis services and behavior modification. These behavioral health services may be provided on or off the school campus and may be supplemented by telehealth.

• Policies and procedures, including contracts with service providers, that will ensure students who are referred to a school-based or community-based mental health service provider for mental health screening for the identification of mental health concerns and ensure that the assessment of students at risk for mental health disorders occurs within 15 days of referral. School-based mental health services must be initiated within 15 days after identification and assessment, and support by community-based mental health services providers for students who are referred for community based mental health services must be initiated within 30 days after the school or district makes a referral.

• Strategies or programs to reduce the likelihood of at-risk students developing social, emotional or behavioral health problems, depression, anxiety disorders, suicidal tendencies or substance abuse disorders.

• Strategies to improve the early identification of social, emotional, or behavioral problems or substance abuse disorders to improve the provision of early intervention to assist students in dealing with trauma and violence.

In addition, Section 15:
• Specifies that charter schools that submit a MHAA Plan separate from the school district are entitled to a proportionate share of district mental health allocation funding. Each school district must work with its charter schools to ensure the school district submits all approved MHAA Plans to the Commissioner of Education by August 1.
• Amends the school district annual program outcomes and expenditures report due September 30 to include, at a minimum, the number of each of the following:
  
  - Students who receive screenings or assessments.
  - Students who are referred to either school-based or community-based providers for services or assistance.
  - Students who receive either school-based or community-based interventions, services or assistance.
  - School-based and community-based mental health providers, including licensure type, paid for from funds provided through the allocation.
  - Contract-based collaborative efforts or partnerships with community mental health programs, agencies or providers.

The school district annual program outcomes and expenditures report should be submitted to Andrew Weatherill via email by September 30, 2019.

The required MHAA Plan checklist, MHAA Plan certification form and MHAA Plan outcome and expenditures report checklist are available at http://fldoe.org/safe-schools/mental-health.stml. Additional resources to assist school districts in creating the MHAA Plan can also be found at that link.

The MHAA Plan checklist, MHAA District Plan and MHAA Plan certification form should be submitted to Andrew Weatherill via email by August 1, 2019.

For further information on best practices and to view your district’s mental health assistance allocation, visit the Florida Department of Education Office of Safe Schools web page at http://fldoe.org/safe-schools/mental-health.stml.

If you have questions about the allocation or expenditures, please contact Mark Eggers at Mark.Eggers@fldoe.org or 850-245-0405. If you have questions about the mental health contents of the MHAA Plan, please contact Andrew Weatherill at Andrew.Weatherill@fldoe.org or 850-245-7840.

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cc: School District Student Services Directors
    School District School Safety Specialists
    School District Charter School Contacts