



Substance Abuse and Mental Health  
Services Administration

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October 11, 2022

Dear State Mental Health Commissioners:

The Bipartisan Safer Communities Act (BSCA) (P.L. 117-159) provides \$250 million in supplemental funding for the Community Mental Health Services Block grant (MHBG), to enable States, the District of Columbia, and territories to expand access to mental health care. With the impact of COVID-19 and mass shootings prominent in the national discourse, there is much work ahead for mental health treatment and recovery services. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) is recommending that state behavioral health systems examine what is needed to address the need for mental health services in the aftermath of mass shootings and other traumatic events in communities.

As the United States works to address the massive disruption and loss of life caused by these crises, as well as other natural and man-made disasters, SAMHSA is recommending that states utilize this funding to strengthen and enhance mental health emergency preparedness and crisis response efforts. This funding provides a unique opportunity for policymakers to develop improved and sustainable public mental health systems that are more adept at meeting the needs of vulnerable people, including those with more complex presentations.

Starting October 17, 2022, SAMHSA will distribute approximately \$59.4 million per year through fiscal year 2025 to the states and territories based on the congressionally mandated MHBG formula. The performance period for these funds will be two years. The first set of allotment for states/territories is attached. States are required to submit a proposal prior to using these funds. The proposal should be based on the following recommendations. SAMHSA will require grantees to submit an updated proposal to receive the BSCA funds for following years. The proposal from states/territories should include proposed activities for the performance period listed in your Notice of Award. States/territories should not start expending funds until SAMHSA review and approve the proposal. SAMHSA recommends that states use the BSCA supplemental funding for the following activities:

- Develop a statewide mental health emergency preparedness and response plan focused on behavioral health and update annually. The plan should describe collaborations between behavioral health, law enforcement, justice systems, local agencies, and public health to ensure that the identified services are integrated and sustainable.
- Develop a statewide mental health emergency preparedness team as a point of contact for guidance and direction related to any anticipated or unanticipated mental health crisis.
- Identify multidisciplinary mobile crisis team(s) that can be deployed rapidly, 24/7, throughout the state to address the mental health components during an emergency/crisis.

- Provide behavioral health crisis response trainings (for e.g., therapeutic crisis intervention and de-escalation) to agencies and providers identified in the statewide plan.
- Develop culturally and linguistically tailored messaging about behavioral health to provide in a crisis/mental health emergency and/or identify culturally/linguistically appropriate supports for diverse populations. Leverage relationships with Lifeline 988, statewide call centers, peer recovery organizations, faith-based organizations, warmlines, telehealth and provider mutual aid agreements to disseminate. Ensure that electronic bed registries include information about the availability of culturally/linguistically accessible services.
- Build collaborations with child welfare organizations, schools, juvenile justice authorities, and children's behavioral health services. Develop multidisciplinary youth-serving state/regional advisory groups to provide input on infrastructure and policy development.
- Coordinate with Medicaid and Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT) to ensure access to comprehensive mental health services for children and youth diagnosed with serious emotional disturbances (SEDs).
- Develop and provide specific, evidence-based services for those affected by mental health emergency/crisis-related trauma, including mass shootings/school violence.

SAMHSA requests that the following information is included when submitting the proposals.

1. Describe any plans to utilize the BSCA supplemental funds to develop/enhance components of your state's mental health emergency preparedness and response plan that addresses behavioral health. Please include in your discussion how you plan to coordinate with other state and federal agencies to leverage crisis/mental health emergency related resources.
2. Describe any plans to utilize the BSCA supplemental funds to develop/enhance a state behavioral health team that coordinates, provides guidance, and gives direction in collaboration with state emergency management planners during a crisis.
3. Describe any plans to utilize the BSCA supplemental funds to develop/enhance a multidisciplinary mobile crisis team that can be deployed 24/7, anywhere in the state rapidly to address any crisis.
4. Describe any plans to utilize the BSCA supplemental funds to develop/enhance crisis/mental health emergency services specifically for young adults, youth and children, or their families, including those with justice involvement and having SED/serious mental illness (SMI).
5. Describe any plans to utilize the BSCA supplemental funds to develop/enhance services provided to communities that are affected by trauma and mass shootings/school violence.
6. Describe any plans to utilize the BSCA supplemental funds to develop/enhance culturally and linguistically tailored messaging to provide information about behavioral health in a crisis/mental health emergency and/or to identify culturally/linguistically appropriate supports for diverse populations.
7. What other mental health emergency/crisis behavioral health practices or activities does the state plan to develop or enhance using the BSCA supplemental funds?

8. Clearly describe the proposed/planned activities utilizing the funds for both FY 2022 and FY 2023 as two separate sections, including an estimated budget for each year. States will be required to report on what activities have been completed using this funding.

Using the WebBGAS Revision Request for the federal fiscal year 2023 Block Grant Application, please upload the document (Microsoft Word or pdf) using the tab into the State Information Section, Chief Executive Officer's Funding Agreement – Certifications and Assurances/Letter Designating Signatory Authority. Please title this document "BSCA Funding Plan 2023." Upon submission, SAMHSA will review the proposal to ensure it is complete and responsive. States must upload the proposals based on this guidance into the WebBGAS system by Thursday, December 1, 2022, 11:59 EST.

SAMHSA is ready and willing to assist you in addressing the needs of individuals with mental illness and substance use disorders. Please feel free to contact your SAMHSA state project officers and grants management specialists with any questions that you may have.

Sincerely,

*/Anita Everett/*

Anita Everett, MD, DFAPA  
Director  
Center for Mental Health Services