



Arizona Department of Education

Arizona School Safety Program – Frequently Asked Questions

❖ What is the State’s “School Safety Program” and how did legislation from the 2019 session impact the program?

The School Safety Program (SSP) is a state-funded grant program established in 1994 to place School Resource Officers (SROs) and Juvenile Probation Officers (JPOs) on selected school grounds to contribute to safe school environments that are conducive to teaching and learning (A.R.S. § 15-154). Through comprehensive prevention and intervention approaches, SSP funded officers maintain a visible presence on campus, provide students and staff with law-related education instruction and training, deter delinquent and violent behaviors, serve as an available resource to the school community, and develop positive interactive relationships with the students, staff, and community that they serve.

In the 2019 Legislative Session, the Arizona Legislature passed [HB 2749](#) (K-12 education; budget reconciliation; 2019-2020), which expanded the scope of the SSP to include school counselors and social workers as an additional component under the program. The Legislature appropriated an additional \$20 million from the General Fund for the program in FY20 on top of the baseline amount of nearly \$12 million, which comes from Proposition 301 and General Fund appropriations.

❖ How are schools currently awarded School Safety Program (SSP) grants?

SSP grants are awarded in three-year cycles. Schools participating in the program have the option to reapply after the third year of the program. New schools can also apply every three years at the start of a new SSP cycle. SSP is currently in year three of its three-year cycle; and there are 114 schools participating in SSP under the SRO/JPO model. There were an additional 87 schools that applied in FY18 and have been on the program’s waitlist due to the uncertainty of available funds. All schools selected for the current program were scored by peer reviewers and ranked according to a rubric of indicators and cut scores.

ELIGIBLE POSITIONS

❖ How are School Resource Officers, Juvenile Probation Officers, school counselors, and social workers defined under the School Safety Program?

- **“School Resource Officer”** – a peace officer or a full-authority reserve peace officer who is certified by the Arizona Peace Officer and Training Board.
- **“Juvenile Probation Officer”** - a sworn court-appointed officer.
- **“School Counselor”** – a professional educator who holds a valid school counselor certificate issued by the Arizona Department of Education (ADE).
- **“School Social Worker”** – a professional educator who holds a valid school social work certificate issued by ADE.

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❖ **Do school counselors and social workers need to be certified in Arizona?**

School counselors must have a current certificate for PreK-12 from ADE regardless of whether s/he will be working in a charter school or a traditional public school. The certification is valid for 12 years and may be renewed with 15 clock hours of professional development activities per year of the certificate term. If a counselor certificate applicant otherwise qualifies but is deficient in the required semester hours of coursework and/or practicum or experience requirements, s/he has three years on a valid Arizona *Standard School Counselor, PreK-12 Certificate* to fulfill these requirements. If s/he does not complete the requirements within the allowable timeframe, the *Standard School Counselor, PreK-12 Certificate* will be suspended and will not be valid until the deficiency is corrected. A temporary suspension for failure to meet these requirements is not considered disciplinary action and a person may correct the deficiency within the remaining timeframe of the certificate. More information can be found [HERE](#).

For **school social workers**, the *Standard School Social Worker certificate* is optional but may be required by local governing boards. The certificate is valid for 12 years and is renewable. Please see [HERE](#) for more information.

❖ **What if the school counselors or social workers are coming from out of state?**

School counselors coming from out of state need to apply for an Arizona certificate. If the applicant, however, holds a valid, comparable school counselor certificate from another state and is in good standing, s/he can use this certificate as one of the qualifying documents for the Arizona application and is **not** required to meet the practicum or experience requirement.

For **school social workers**, if the applicant holds a valid, comparable school social worker certificate in another state and is in good standing, s/he must do the following:

- a. Submit a photocopy of the comparable out-of-state school social worker certificate and the official transcripts documenting completion of the school social worker preparation program that qualified you for the out-of-state certificate; **OR**
- b. Submit an official letter from the educator certification office that issued the comparable out-of-state school social worker certificate verifying that s/he is in good standing and holds a certificate is comparable to an Arizona *Standard School Social Worker Certificate*.

❖ **Can a teacher work part-time as a school counselor (SC) under this grant?**

Yes, a teacher could work part-time as an SC if that person holds a *Standard School Counselor, PreK-12 Certificate* issued by ADE.

APPLICATION & GRANT PROCESS

❖ **When will the new School Safety Program application be released?**

The new grant application is scheduled to open on Monday, September 16, 2019. The grant application will be available on the [ADE Grants Management](#) webpage. ADE will also release a grant notification on September 9, 2019.

❖ **When will the fall application window close?**

The fall application window will close on September 27, 2019 and awardees will be determined as early as October 28, 2019 and no later than December 2, 2019 depending on the volume of applications. ADE will bring recommended awardees before the State Board of Education for approval at one of those meeting dates or during a special session in November.

❖ **Will there be another window for grant applications?**

Pending available funds, ADE will open a second application window on March 1, 2020 for additional applications and applicants resubmitting due to incomplete application submissions during the fall window. Spring applications will be due by April 15, 2020, and ADE will bring awardees before the State Board for approval in May 2020. Awards will go out as soon as the awardees demonstrate proof of hire (see Awards section below).

❖ **Are the applications LEA or site-based?**

All applications are site-based (i.e., for an individual school), but the application itself must be submitted by the LEA that oversees the school site.

❖ **Will applications for School Resource Officers (SROs)/ Juvenile Probation Officers (JPOs) be prioritized over school counselors (SCs)/social workers (SWs) or vice versa?**

No—ADE will consider each school's first choice of position as the priority for that applicant. A school, however, can apply for an SRO, JPO, SC, and/or an SW at the same time, under the same application. ADE will require all applicants to rank their first choice of position and fill out all required fields and descriptions for the positions requested, including how the positions will coincide and work together to drive positive outcomes. Applications that indicate an interest in one or more of the positions will not be considered unless all relevant fields are completed. For example, if a school is applying for both an SW and an SRO, but ranks an SW as its first choice, it must include all required descriptions for both positions.

❖ **Can a school apply for all four positions (SRO, JPO, SC, and SW)?**

Yes—but an applicant must rank its top choice for a position. ADE will aim to fund the top choice of all applicants that have completed applications. Additional resources for a given school site will only be considered based on funding available. ADE encourages schools to describe in their applications how the different types of positions for which they are applying will work in coordination with each other and other school staff as part of a multidisciplinary team-based approach to school safety.

❖ **Can schools with SY 19/20 grant awards for SROs apply in September 2019 for an SRO, SC, or SW?**

Yes—but SRO funds to renew an existing SRO will not be available until FY21. Funds for an SC/SW at that existing program site will be available in FY20. If a current SRO school applied for a SC and to renew its SRO, but ranked the SC higher than the SRO, ADE cannot guarantee that the site would be awarded its second choice to renew an SRO. The rationale for this is that existing SRO sites are being funded by the \$12M allocated to the program before the \$20M expansion, and the \$12M has already been allocated. All fall applicants, however, are applying to be part of the new three-year cohort regardless of whether they part of year three of the current cohort.

❖ **Can schools apply for a 0.5 FTE for a school counselor?**

Yes – but that 50% of the time of that school counselor would have to be at that school awarded under the School Safety Program.

❖ **Is there enough money to fund every school with every position for which they apply?**

ADE currently does not have a way to anticipate the number of applications ADE will receive once the application window opens. Ideally, ADE will be able to fund the first choice of position for every site that applies with a completed application. If there are more schools than funds available, ADE will need to apply a rubric to determine the need and other factors.

❖ **What if there are more applications than funding available? Will the process be competitive or on a first-come, first-serve basis?**

The process will be a hybrid depending on the ratio of available funds and the number of applications received. ADE will try and accommodate ALL applicants' first choice. In a situation where there are more applications than funding available, as well as demand for a second or third position after first choices are awarded, ADE will employ a rubric to prioritize awards.

❖ **If necessary, what will the rubric look like to prioritize schools?**

ADE will have tiers of data to help prioritize awards. ADE will continue to go down the tiers based on the number of applicants to resources available. The tiers are as follows:

- 1) Schools that have no existing eligible positions, or schools that have such large ratios of students to that eligible position that there is presumably similar effect to schools without any positions (e.g., over 250 students to one school counselor); this tier will include schools that are applying for a renewal that would otherwise not have any resources.
[If there are still more applicants than resources, then ADE will use...]
- 2) [School report card data and grades](#) – giving preference to schools that are struggling the most across statewide performance indicators, including schools with low graduation rates for high schools.
[If there are still more applicants than resources, then ADE will use...]
- 3) [School discipline and suspension data](#) reported to the U.S. Office of Civil Rights by Arizona schools and districts.

Since ADE is enacting a fast-track application process for the School Safety Program, it will not use peer reviewers to subjectively score the quality of an application. Moreover, ADE is not requiring schools to include academic or crime data in their application as ADE has in previous cycles; therefore, ADE has identified already available, school-level statewide data sources that it can use for relevant statistics to assess need.

❖ **Will there be a chance to apply next year?**

Pending available funds that are unencumbered or an increase in funds from the Legislature, ADE will open a mini-grant application in September 2020.

AWARDS

❖ **When will the award funds be distributed? Will schools get the money right away?**

Once a school has secured an award, it is eligible to receive funds. It must, however, demonstrate that it has a contract on file with a position for which a) it was granted an award and b) meets the definition and eligibility criteria (e.g., is certified as a school counselor by the State of Arizona).

❖ **How long will the schools have to secure personnel?**

Schools will have a grace period from the time of the award until August 1, 2020. At that time, funds will be rolled over for a new school to apply for a grant for the remaining two years of the grant cycle.

❖ **How long is a school guaranteed funding for the position?**

The statute allows schools awarded under the program to receive funds up to three years before reapplying. Available funding will depend on the appropriation from the Legislature. Presumably, this program will continue to be part of the State's baseline. The School Safety Program also receives some of its funding through the Prop 301 formula. ADE is seeking to extend the upcoming cohort to 3.5 years to account for the mid-year release of FY20 funds.

❖ **Can I use the funding to pay for existing personnel?**

No – funding must be used for an additional staff member or a repurposed staff member into a new role that meets the qualifications under the School Safety Program. Nonetheless, ADE encourages schools to leverage all monetary resources outside of this grant program alone to employ a multidisciplinary team approach to school safety and student wellness.

❖ **Will the positions be interchangeable? Meaning, if a school applies for an SRO that they cannot secure, can they hire a school counselor instead?**

Yes— an LEA that receives State Board of Education approval for a three-year program for a school site may annually submit a modified spending plan for its approved program. However, the difference in spending must be equal or lower than the amount for which a school was awarded.

❖ **What are the award amounts? Is each award enough to cover the position being awarded?**

Arizona is a local control state; and as such, local school boards set salary schedules and maintain MOUs with local law enforcement. ADE awards schools based on the amount requested in their applications and verifies that amount through the submission of a contract by the awardee.

❖ **What type of assurances does a school site and LEA need to provide under the School Safety Program?**

Each school site is required to complete assurances related to program requirements, verification of certification status for counselor and social worker positions, definition of school guidance and counseling program, and confidentiality of data.

❖ **What type of training and technical assistance will a school receive after it is awarded?**

ADE will provide annual trainings for program participants to support their understanding of the School Safety Program philosophy, roles, and requirements, and to help participants successfully implement and monitor the program across the duration of the grant. ADE will provide school resource officers and juvenile probation officers new to the grant with training on child development, supporting students with special needs, and law-related education. Officers continuing the grant will attend an Advanced Law-Related Education Academy annually. ADE will provide technical assistance by phone and via site visits as needed.