



NASSP PRINCIPAL
RECOVERY NETWORK (PRN)

Legislative Agenda

▶ MENTAL HEALTH AND VIOLENCE PREVENTION SERVICES IN SCHOOLS

Providing students and educators with mental health services and supports is a critical component of preventing violence and improving school climate, safety, and learning. Unfortunately, most schools and districts face a severe lack of funding to employ qualified full-time mental health professionals. The recommended student-to-counselor ratio is 250 students per counselor, but the national average is 455 students per counselor and continues to rise. For school psychologists, the recommended ratio is 500–700 students per provider and 250 to 1 for school social workers.

With the increasing prevalence of mental health conditions, anxiety, and stress among K–12 students and the increasing responsibility placed on schools to manage those issues, it's critical that schools receive federal support to be properly equipped to provide students with the care they need. School is often the only place where children have an opportunity to receive these important mental health services.

- **Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Act (S.2499/H.R.4381)** introduced by Sen. Jeff Merkley (D-OR) and Rep. Katherine Clark (D-MA)
 - Allocates \$5 billion annually in new federal funding to support states and school districts in recruiting, hiring, and training school counselors, school psychologists, and school social workers.

The Principal Recovery Network urges Congress to pass the Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Act and provide critically needed federal funding and support to place more qualified mental health professionals in schools.

- **Mental Health Services for Students Act (S.1122/H.R.1109)** introduced by Sen. Tina Smith (D-MN) and Rep. Grace Napolitano (D-CA)
 - Increases funding in the Project AWARE State Educational Agency Grant Program to \$200 million annually.
 - Additional investment will provide for comprehensive, universal, evidence-based screening to identify children and adolescents with potential mental health disorders or unmet emotional health needs and provide training to serve their needs.
 - Funds comprehensive staff development for educators and community service personnel working in the school.

The PRN urges Congress to pass the Mental Health Services for Students Act and improve mental health screening and support for students and educators.

- **Title IV, Part A, of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)—Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants**
 - ESSA included a flexible block grant program under Title IV, Part A, authorized at \$1.65 billion annually. Under this grant, every state receives an allocation based on the Title I funding formula. Unfortunately, the program received only \$1.21 billion in allocated funding in FY 2020.
 - One of the allowable uses for the flexible funding in Title IV is school safety and violence prevention programs, which can include



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Legislative Agenda

school-based mental health support, training for assisting students who are victims of trauma, and other preventive programs and services.

The PRN urges Congress to fund Title IV, Part A, of ESSA at its authorized level of \$1.65 billion in FY 2021. PRN also urges members to oppose any initiative that attempts to divert Title IV funding from its intended purpose of preventive services and mental health support for students and educators toward the purpose of arming educators or hardening schools.

▶ TRAUMA-INFORMED SCHOOLS

In a trauma-informed school, the adults in the school community, including administrators, teachers, staff, parents, and law enforcement are prepared to recognize and respond to those who have been impacted by traumatic stress. Forty-five percent of children in the United States have experienced at least one adverse childhood experience (ACE) that could be trauma-inducing and affect learning and/or behavior, and 21st-century schools need to implement new evidence-based practices to support those students.

- **Trauma-Informed Schools Act (H.R.4146)** introduced by Rep. Katherine Clark (D-MA), Rep. Mike Quigley (D-IL), and Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA)
 - Formally defines "trauma-informed practices" in the federal education code and ensures that states and school districts can assist educators in accessing professional development opportunities to optimize their support of children suffering from ACEs.
 - Requires states to incorporate trauma-informed practices into their ESSA plans and demonstrate progress in implementing those practices in schools.

The PRN urges Congress to pass the Trauma-Informed Schools Act and support measures that will implement trauma-informed practices in schools.

- **Title II, Part A, of ESSA**
 - Title II provides formula grants to states to improve academic achievement by improving the professional quality of teachers and principals. It allows districts and schools to invest in principal residencies, job-embedded and cohort-based professional learning, and mentorship opportunities for aspiring principals.
 - Title II is authorized at \$2.3 billion under ESSA, but the program only received \$2.13 billion in allocated funding in FY 2020.
 - Title II can be used by school districts to provide in-service training for school personnel on how to refer students affected by trauma, the use of referral mechanisms that effectively link such children to appropriate treatment and intervention services in the school and the community, and guidance on forming partnerships between schools and mental health providers.
 - Despite a growing need for increased professional development for principals, assistant principals, and other school leaders to help them build their capacity to improve and secure their schools, President Trump has proposed eliminating all funding for Title II in his budget.

The PRN urges Congress to fund Title II, Part A, of ESSA at its FY 2020 House-passed level of \$2.6 billion in FY 2021.



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▶ RECOVERY ASSISTANCE FOR SCHOOLS

Schools that have endured gun violence face a unique and especially difficult form of trauma that lasts for years after funerals, commemorations, and many initial offers of assistance have passed. Federal funding can provide critical assistance to these schools in the days, months, and years after a shooting has taken place.

→ Project SERV (School Emergency Response to Violence) Grants

- Authorized under Title IV-F-3, Section 4631 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Project SERV grants fund short-term and long-term education-related services for local educational agencies and institutions of higher education to help them recover from a violent or traumatic event.
- Project SERV received \$5 million in additional funding in FY 2018. Appropriations not used in the year in which they were appropriated also remain available for awards in subsequent years.

The PRN urges Congress to increase allocated funding for Project SERV grants to \$10 million annually to more adequately assist the growing number of schools impacted by gun violence tragedies.

Founded in April 2019, the NASSP Principal Recovery Network (PRN) is a national network of current and former school leaders who have experienced gun violence tragedies in their buildings. Together, the PRN seeks to assist principals in the immediate aftermath of a crisis and beyond. PRN members reach out directly to their colleagues to provide much-needed support, share the combined wisdom of their experience with the larger principal community through various outlets, assist schools during recovery, and advocate for national school safety enhancements and violence prevention programs.

 For more information, visit nassp.org/PRN