

Non-binding Recommended Ratios for Specialized Instructional Support Personnel (SISP)

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Senate Bill 89 (2019)

- Senate Bill (SB) 89 is the school safety omnibus bill through which the recommendations of the Governor’s School Safety Task Force were enacted.
- “The State Board of Education shall develop non-binding recommendations for the ratio of pupils to specialized instructional support personnel (SISP) in this State for kindergarten and grades 1 to 12, inclusive.” (SB 89, Section 7).
- The recommendations must:
 - Prescribe a suggested ratio of pupils in grades K-12 per each type of SISP;
 - Be based on evidence-based national standards; and
 - Take into account the unique needs of certain pupils, including English learners.

Specialized Instructional Support Personnel (SISP)

- NRS 388.890: “Specialized instructional support personnel’ includes persons employed by each school to provide necessary services such as assessment, diagnosis, counseling, educational services, therapeutic services and related services, as defined in 20 U.S.C. § 1401(26), to pupils.”
- SISP include:
 - (1) A school counselor;
 - (2) A school psychologist;
 - (3) A school social worker;
 - (4) A school nurse;
 - (5) A speech-language pathologist;
 - (6) A school library media specialist; and
 - (7) Any other qualified professional.

Evidence-Based National Standards

- Most national associations for Specialized Instructional Support Personnel publish recommended ratios; however, there is no single federal entity that collects data on existing or formally adopted ratios
- Most ratios are per pupil, while others are per school building or per capita of the general population
- There is no formal definition of “other qualified professional” (federal or state)

Best Practice Recommended Ratios

- The following ratios represent national best practice recommendations for each category of Specialized Instructional Support Personnel:
 - for School Counselors, one per 250 pupils
 - for School Psychologists, one per 500-700 pupils
 - for School Social Workers, one per 250 pupils
 - for School Nurses, one per 750 pupils
 - for School Library Media Specialists, one per school
- Please note that there are no best practice recommendations for ratios of Speech-Language Pathologists per student or school population, as those services are provided on an as-needed basis.

Current Ratios

Specialized Instructional Support Personnel	Nationally Accepted Best Practice Ratios	Current Nevada Ratios (statewide)
School Counselors	1 : 250	1 : 463
School Psychologists	1 : 500-700	1 : 1,843
School Social Workers	1 : 250	1 : 1,174
School Nurses	1 : 750	1 : 1,483
Speech-Language Pathologist	N/A	N/A
School Library Media Specialist	1 : School	1 : 2.6 Schools

Data collected by NDE from school districts as of April 14, 2020.

Projected Staffing Needs

Specialized Instructional Support Personnel	Total number of professionals estimated to meet best practice ratios based on student enrollment (2018-19 school year)	Current Staffing Levels (statewide)	Number of SISP Needed to Meet Best Practice Ratios
School Counselors	1,770	951	819
School Psychologists	888	239	649
School Social Workers	1,770	375	1,395
School Nurses	595	297	298
Speech-Language Pathologist	N/A	482	N/A
School Library Media Specialist	689	269	420



Data collected by NDE from school districts as of April 14, 2020.

Average Starting Pay

Specialized Instructional Support Personnel	Average Annual Starting Pay (Salary + Benefits)
School Counselors	\$74,471
School Psychologists	\$76,575
School Social Workers	\$62,294
School Nurses	\$64,178
Speech-Language Pathologist	\$64,583
School Library Media Specialist	\$41,430

Data collected by NDE from school districts as of April 14, 2020.

Projected Funding Needs

Specialized Instructional Support Personnel	Funding needed to meet nationally recommended best practice ratios
School Counselors	\$60,992,035.00
School Psychologists	\$49,697,148.00
School Social Workers	\$86,900,347.00
School Nurses	\$19,124,913.00
Speech-Language Pathologist	N/A
School Library Media Specialist	\$17,400,765.00
TOTAL FUNDING NEEDED	\$234,115,208.00

District 15-Year Plan Requirement

- “The board of trustees of each school district shall develop a 15-year strategic plan to achieve the ratio of pupils to specialized instructional support personnel in the district” (Section 7, SB 89).
- The Office for a Safe and Respectful Learning Environment has been working with stakeholders from our monthly School Mental Health Partnership meetings to draft a guidance document and sample template to support Boards of Trustees in this requirement.

Medicaid Free-Care Expansion for Sustainability of SISP Services

- NDE has been working with Nevada Medicaid (DHCFP) and our LEAs to expand the services available for reimbursement for Nevada's schools under the reversal of the "free care" rule.
- The State Plan Amendment to expand school-based services was approved at the federal level by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services on October 24, 2019.
- This allows districts/charters to seek Medicaid reimbursement for eligible services provided in a school by an eligible provider to **all** Medicaid eligible students (and not just those who receive services under IDEA).

Funding for Expanding Access to School Health Services

- Relevant covered services include:
 - Screening and diagnostic services
 - Mental health and alcohol and substance abuse treatment
 - Nursing services
 - Physical therapy
 - Occupational therapy
 - Speech therapy
- It has been estimated that approximately 51% of Nevada school aged children are enrolled in Medicaid. Others may qualify and not be enrolled.
- **Many states fund comprehensive SISP services entirely through Medicaid funding.**

Recommendations

- Adopt a range of ratios for each SISP category, which can account for the unique challenges and needs of school communities.
- Direct the Nevada Department of Education to continue to collaborate with stakeholders on the development of support documents for the 15-year plan required of Boards of Trustees.
- Support the development of a representative group of SISP to continue to collaborate in addressing the critical shortages in all SISP.
 - Modeled after the National Alliance of Specialized Instructional Support Personnel (NASISP)
 - Aligned with State Improvement Plan (STIP) Goal 6, Community Objective: “NDE will lead and collaborate with public schools and districts to support and improve student and staff wellness as demonstrated by improved student to behavioral health professional ratios by 10% each year, diversified and increased funding for health and support services by 30% and increase school and community provider partnerships by 20% by 2025.
- Support sustainability through the expansion of Medicaid reimbursement and recommendations that all funds recouped for School-Based Health Services go toward sustaining and expanding the number of SISP’s in each local education agency.

Questions?

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References

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- **School Social Work Association of America** (2013). [School Social Workers Helping Students Succeed: Recommended School Social Worker to Student Ratios.](#)
- **National Association of School Nurses.** (2015). [School nurse workload: Staffing for safe care \(Position Statement\).](#)
- **American Speech-Language-Hearing Association** (2019). [Supply and Demand Resource List for Speech-Language Pathologists.](#)
- **National Education Association** (2016). [Library/Media Centers in U.S. Public Schools: Growth, Staffing, and Resources.](#)
- **National Alliance of Specialized Instructional Support Personnel.** [Student Health and Well-Being](#) and [Safe and Supportive School Climate.](#)