

Behavioral Specialist Budget Rider Request

TCASE, DRTx, and TSTA advocate that the legislature appropriate funds for each Regional Education Service Center (ESC) to employ a professional who specializes in child behavior.

Justification: Employing a behavioral specialist at each ESC utilizes economies of scale and is an immediate solution to the increased behavioral needs of both general education and special education students in public schools – it is much more practical to find 20 trained professionals than hundreds or even thousands to fill spots in individual districts and schools.

After speaking with ESC staff, we believe this professional would:

- Train school staff and teachers on crisis prevention, mental health, and related topics.
- Offer consulting, including behavior program improvement and crisis intervention.
- Coordinate services with mental health entities.
- Coordinate interlocal agreements between districts to maximize staffing resources.
- Provide variety of technical assistance.
- Spend time in schools observing classrooms and meeting with teams.

ESC staff also advises that employment of the professional would cost on average \$125,000 annually to each of the 20 ESCs. The cost breakdown for a comparable professional for 2023-2024 would vary from ESC to ESC, but could reasonably look as follows:

Fixed Costs (Annual)

Professional Salary	\$ 93,968
FICA	\$ 1,363
Health Insurance	\$ 6,000
Workers Comp	\$ 235
Unemployment	\$ 125
Retirement	\$ 11,417
Infrastructure Support (e.g. technology)	\$ 3,000
Facility Use Fee	\$ 5,000
Liability Insurance	\$ 250
<i>Total Fixed Cost</i>	<i>\$ 121,357</i>

Variable Costs (Annual)

Travel Reimbursement	\$2,400-9,600
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Total Annual Cost Estimate: \$123,757 – 130,957
Biennial Estimate for 20 ESCs: \$ 4.95M – 5.24M

The budget rider on the next page requests \$5M over the biennium to fund these critical positions.

Suggested rider language below:

Texas Education Agency, Article III
Proposed Funding and Rider
Provide Funding for Behavioral Specialists at Regional Education Service Centers

Overview

The purpose of this rider is to provide funding to the 20 Regional Education Service Centers for the employment of behavioral specialists to assist local educational agencies with the direct provision of behavioral interventions and supports to students.

Required Action

In SB 1/HB 1, on page III-x of the Texas Education Agency bill pattern, add the following rider:

XX. Funding for Regional Education Service Center Behavioral Specialists. Out of the funds appropriated for Strategy A.2.3, Students with Disabilities, and for Strategy A.2.4, School Improvement and Support, \$2,500,000 in each fiscal year is allocated to the Regional Education Service Centers for each Regional Education Service Center to employ or contract with professionals in child behavior, including but not limited to licensed or certified professionals with extensive school-based expertise in child behavioral health, analysis, and management, to provide direct support to local educational agencies served by the Regional Education Service Center for all students enrolled in the local educational agency. Direct support includes assistance to administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals, school counselors, transportation personnel, students, and families of students with training, positive behavior interventions and supports, positive behavior learning, behavior management techniques, accommodations, and behavioral services identified in the individualized education program of a student with a disability. Direct support does not include assistance in evaluations and assessments required for the determination of eligibility for special education.

Any unexpended balances as of August 31, 2024, are hereby appropriated to fiscal year 2025 for the same purposes.

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