



## Legislative Fiscal Bureau

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Joint Committee on Finance

Paper #366

### **Office of Children's Mental Health Travel Reimbursement (Health Services -- Mental Health, Public Health and Other Programs)**

[LFB 2017-19 Budget Summary: Page 241, #3]

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#### **CURRENT LAW**

The Wisconsin Office of Children's Mental Health (OCMH) was created in the 2013-15 budget act to enhance communication within and between state agencies that serve children and families, coordinate initiatives, and monitor the performance of mental health programs that service children in the state.

OCMH is budgeted in a general program operations appropriation that supports Department of Health Services administrative services. In that appropriation, \$453,200 GPR annually is budgeted for OCMH, including 4.0 GPR positions.

#### **GOVERNOR**

Provide \$10,000 GPR annually for OCMH to reimburse travel expenses for individuals who have first-hand experience with mental health systems who participate in meetings arranged by the OCMH.

#### **DISCUSSION POINTS**

1. One of the primary functions of OCMS is to solicit information from families who have sought and received help for their children as a means of understanding barriers families face in seeking help for their children. OCMH believes that arranging face-to-face meetings between family members and other stakeholders that attend these meetings, including staff from government agencies, businesses, and nonprofit organizations, will provide useful information to assist in

informed policy development.

2. OCMH wishes to ensure that families from all over the state are represented at these meetings. In the past, it has been difficult for OCMH to receive input from families who live far from Madison. Some families have declined to attend meetings due to the Department's current policy not to provide travel reimbursement for their travel expenses.

3. Currently, DHS reimburses all members of DHS advisory committees for their travel expenses to attend meetings. DHS travel reimbursement policies for advisory committee members is governed by state law, which permits (but does not require) state agencies to reimburse for actual, reasonable, and necessary travel expenses for individuals who volunteer their services to the state agency. Reimbursement may not exceed the maximum amounts for travel expenses established for state officers and employees under the Department of Administration's uniform schedule. The reimbursement policies relating to families who attend OCMH functions would be consistent with these policies.

4. OCMH has six meetings scheduled for 2017. The amount in the bill would permit DHS to budget \$1,667 per meeting for travel reimbursement for families to attend OCMH meetings. If it is assumed that each family would be reimbursed an average of \$300 per meeting to pay for motel rooms, meals and mileage reimbursement, DHS could provide reimbursement for approximately five families to attend each meeting. If the Committee determines that additional funding should be provided for this purpose, it could adopt the Governor's recommendation [Alternative 1].

5. Alternatively, the Committee could choose to reduce the amount in the bill if it determines that it is unnecessary to provide funding at the level recommended by the Governor. It is possible that not all OCMH meetings require participation by families, and that some families that live in southern Wisconsin would not request reimbursement for overnight lodging expenses. For this reason, the Committee could reduce the amount of funding on the bill by \$5,000 GPR annually so that \$5,000 annually, rather than \$10,000, would be budgeted to reimburse families for their travel expenses to attend OCMH meetings [Alternative 2].

6. Finally, the Committee could delete the funding increase provided in the bill for this purpose if it determines that: (a) DHS should not establish a policy of reimbursing families for their travel expenses to attend OCMH meetings; or (b) if DHS wishes to establish such a reimbursement policy, it should reallocate base funding for this purpose [Alternative 3]. OCMH is currently budgeted \$66,000 GPR to fund all of its supplies and services costs.

7. As previously indicated, OCMH is budgeted within an appropriation that funds DHS administrative services general program operations. Base funding for supplies and services funded from that appropriation is \$314,100 GPR, which include OCMH's supplies and services budget (\$66,000). However the actual supplies and services costs that have been funded from that appropriation have exceeded the base amount, as some supplies and services costs, such as rent, training, charges for other DHS programs, have been funded from the DHS administrative services general program operations appropriation through the Department's cost allocation process.

## ALTERNATIVES

1. Adopt the Governor's recommendation to provide \$10,000 GPR annually to fund travel reimbursement for families with first-hand experience with children's mental health services.

ALT 1	Change to	
	Base	Bill
GPR	\$20,000	\$0

2. Reduce funding in the bill by \$5,000 GPR annually so that \$5,000 GPR annually would be budgeted to fund travel reimbursement for families with first-hand experience with children's mental health services.

ALT 2	Change to	
	Base	Bill
GPR	\$10,000	- \$10,000

3. Delete provision.

ALT 3	Change to	
	Base	Bill
GPR	\$0	- \$20,000

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