



Advancing the Recruitment and Retention of Our Workforce Retention Bonus Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the retention bonus?

With funding from the US Department of Education (USED) School Based Mental Health Services (SBMH) grant program, the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) is offering a one-time retention bonus of \$1,000 to school-based behavioral health providers placed full-time at DC public and public charter schools serving pre-K 3 through grade 12 and are employed by the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS), a DC public charter school serving students, the Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) School Behavioral Health Program, or a community-based organization (CBO) that participates in the DBH Comprehensive School-Based Behavioral Health System. This is part of the Advancing Recruitment and Retention in Our Workforce (ARROW) program.

2. What is the ARROW program?

ARROW is an opportunity for the District of Columbia to launch recruitment and retention activities that build knowledge, skills, professional opportunities and job satisfaction for school behavioral health professionals to enter and remain in the workforce through collaboration with local education agencies (LEAs), District colleges and universities and school behavioral health organizations and partners. ARROW is funded by the USED SBMH grant program. More information about ARROW can be found [here](#).

3. Who is eligible to receive the retention bonus?

Those eligible for the retention bonus must meet the following criteria:

- Employed as a school-based behavioral health provider, defined as a school social worker, school psychologist, or counselor (school counselor or licensed counselor).
- Employed by 1) a DCPS school serving pre-K 3 through grade 12; 2) a DC public charter school serving pre-K 3 through grade 12; 3) DBH School Behavioral Health Program; or 4) a CBO that participates in the DBH Comprehensive School-Based Behavioral Health System and is placed with a DC public or public charter school serving pre-K 3 through grade 12.
- Maintained full-time (on average at least 32 hours per week) employment as a school-based behavioral health provider since Oct. 31, 2022 with no more than a 30-calendar day lapse* in employment during the school year (subject to verification).

Individuals who do not meet all three criteria are ineligible for the one-time retention bonus. Eligibility is subject to verification by OSSE if the applicant is employed by a DC charter school or a CBO and by the applicant's employer if employed by DCPS or DBH.

*If your lapse in employment is greater than 30-calendar days **and** that lapse is solely due to the typical summer break for most DC public and public charter schools, please complete the

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application form, submit the required documentation for review, and eligibility will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

4. How is the retention bonus funded?

The one-time retention bonus is funded through the ED SBMH grant program. OSSE was awarded this grant in January 2023 and this is an approved activity for the 2023-24 school year only.

5. How do I apply for a retention bonus?

If you are an eligible school-based behavioral health provider, i.e., a school social worker, school psychologist, or counselor (school counselor or licensed counselor), who is employed by DCPS, a DC public charter school, the DBH School Mental Health Program, or a CBO that participates in the comprehensive school behavioral health system you will need to complete this application form. [ARROW Retention Bonus Application](#)

Applicants employed by a DC public charter school or a CBO that participates in the Comprehensive School Behavioral Health System will need to attach a completed employment verification form to the application. The employee verification form for charter schools can be found [HERE](#) and the form for CBOs can be found [HERE](#). Once received, an OSSE staff person will confirm if you meet the eligibility criteria, notify you of your status, and if eligible, provide next steps to receive payment.

Applicants employed by DCPS or the DBH School Mental Health Program will not need to submit an employment verification form. As a DC government employee, your eligibility will be verified by your employer and the retention bonus added directly to your paycheck.

6. I started less than a month after the cut-off date (Oct. 31, 2022). Am I eligible for the bonus?

To ensure fairness in this process we are adhering to a hard cut-off date for eligibility, and anyone hired after Oct. 31, 2022 will not be eligible.

7. The application has closed. Can I still apply?

No.

8. What is the timeline for receiving the retention bonus?

Retention bonuses will be provided as expeditiously as possible. Applicants must follow all instructions and complete all steps to ensure timely delivery of the retention bonus.

OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION

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9. What do I do after my application is submitted? Is further action required on my part?

If you are employed by DCPS or the DBH School Based Behavioral Health Program, your eligibility will be verified by your employer and the retention bonus added directly to your paycheck.

If you are employed by a DC public charter school or a CBO that participates in the DBH Comprehensive School-based Behavioral Health System, OSSE will determine your eligibility. For your eligibility to be verified, you must have a human resources professional at all applicable places of employment complete an Employment Verification Form, and completed verification forms must be attached to your application at time of submission.

If you are determined to be eligible you will be contacted to complete the following steps:

- Provide required documents to be registered in the [District Integrated Financial System \(DIFS\) Portal](#). This system is used by DC government for payment dispersal via check or direct deposit. More information will be provided at time of approval.
- Before payment is issued you will receive a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) from OSSE for your review and signature. This will authorize OSSE to disperse the one-time retention bonus payment via the method identified in your DIFS registration.

Processing and distribution of your retention bonus will take approximately eight to 10 weeks.

10. Why is OSSE asking about my professional/clinical licensure?

OSSE is requesting this information as to be eligible for the retention bonus, applicants must be an eligible school-based behavioral health clinician, defined as a school social worker, school psychologist, or counselor (school counselor or licensed counselor).

11. Why is OSSE asking about my race/ethnicity?

OSSE is requesting this information to better understand the demographics and characteristics of the DC public and public charter school behavioral health workforce. The recruitment and retention programs funded by the USED SBMH grant aim to build and maintain a workforce that is reflective of the DC public and public charter school student population.

12. Why is OSSE asking about my languages spoken?

OSSE is requesting this information to better understand the demographics and characteristics of the DC public and public charter school behavioral health workforce. The recruitment and retention programs funded by the USED SBMH grant aim to build and maintain a workforce that is reflective of the DC public and public charter school student population.

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13. Why is OSSE asking whether I lived in and/or attended school in DC as a child/youth?

OSSE is requesting this information to better understand the demographics and characteristics of the DC public and public charter school behavioral health workforce. The recruitment and retention programs funded by the USED SBMH grant aim to build and maintain a workforce that is reflective of the DC public and public charter school student population and who have lived experience as a child/youth in the District of Columbia.

14. I work for a school serving early childhood learners (pre-K 3 and pre-K 4). Am I eligible?

Yes, school-based behavioral health providers who work in a DC public or public charter school serving pre-K 3 and pre-K 4 are eligible to apply.

15. I work as a school-based behavioral health supervisor and do not carry a caseload. Am I eligible?

No. At this time, the retention bonus is only available to those who work full-time at a DC public or public charter school and provide direct services to students (e.g., counseling and treatment services, small groups, crisis response, behavioral health assessments and/or other behavioral health supportive services).

16. I was a school-based behavioral health clinician last year (2022-23 school year) and now work as a supervisor. Am I eligible?

No. To be eligible, you must currently work full-time at a DC public or public charter school and provide direct services to students (e.g., counseling and treatment services, small groups, crisis response, behavioral health assessments and/or other behavioral health supportive services).

17. I was an intern last year (2022-23 school year) and now work as a full-time school-based behavioral health clinician. Am I eligible?

No. To be eligible you must have been hired and working as an employee of a DC public or public charter school, the DBH School Behavioral Health Program, or a CBO that participates in the DBH Comprehensive School-based Behavioral Health System during the 2022-23 school year.

18. I am contractor who provides school based behavioral health services. Am I eligible?

No. To be eligible you must have been hired and working as an employee of a DC public or public charter school, the DBH School Behavioral Health Program, or a CBO that participates in the DBH Comprehensive School-based Behavioral Health System.

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19. I switched my place of work between the 2022-23 and 2023-24 school years and did not have employment over the summer. Am I still eligible?

The retention bonus is intended for providers who maintained continuous employment in the DC school-based behavioral health workforce since Oct. 31, 2022. For providers who changed employers since Oct. 31, 2022, OSSE permits no more than a 30-calendar day lapse in employment due to circumstances such as hiring/new employee onboarding delays.

OSSE recognizes that different employers hire school-based behavioral health providers for various terms (some 10 months, other 12 months). If you were without employment for 30 calendar days or more and this happened during the typical summer break for most DC public and public charter schools, eligibility will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

20. Will a retention bonus be available next year/in the future?

Funding for the retention bonuses is a one-time opportunity and will not be available next year.