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*Enhancing the mental health and
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LEGISLATIVE ALERT: Act Now! Help Restore Funding For School Mental Health Programs! Call or send an email to your US Senators asking for their support restoring funding for school mental health related programs in the FY 2010 Federal Budget.

Date: July 28, 2009

Action Requested: NASP needs you to call or email your US Senators to ask for their support restoring funding for school-mental health related programs.

The FY 2010 budget that was approved last Friday by the House of Representatives eliminated key programs that fund school mental health related programs and services, including the Mental Health Integration Grant Program (\$6.9 million) and the Safe and Drug-Free School (SDFS) State Grants Program (\$294.76 million). Additionally, this budget reduced the President's total request for funding for the Safe and Drug-Free Schools National Programs by \$55.8 million. These cuts and reductions result in an overall reduction in school mental health spending of \$357.5 million!

The President initially proposed in his budget request the complete elimination of the SDFS State Grants Program. The funding received from this program is allocated to local schools for the promotion of school safety programs, prevention of school violence, and the prevention of drug, alcohol, and substance use. The rationale given for terminating this program was that the program was "ineffective" and that the grants provided to schools were too small to have any impact. However, the studies cited are considerably outdated and often do not measure the intended results of the programs, such as the prevention of school violence and the promotion of positive school climates. The majority of local schools have used their small but significant funds to leverage other resources in order to support and maintain adequate school mental health and prevention programs that are working to keep children safe and help them learn. Additionally, in 2007, a report published by the U.S. Department of Education both acknowledged the accomplishments of the SDFS State Grants Program, as well as delineated ways to improve it. However, rather than respond to the report recommendations, the President and House of Representatives decided to simply eliminate the program.

The President also initially proposed in his budget an increase to the Mental Health Integration Grant Program from \$5 million to \$6.9 million. This program provides grants to states to build the capacity for collaboration between local

school districts and community agencies. A small, relatively new, and effective program, this program has been supporting the collaboration of schools and communities in both rural and urban environments. However, the House rejected this request and completely eliminated this program funding.

The President also proposed \$10 million in his budget for a new SFDS national program called "Promise Neighborhoods" that is based upon the Harlem Children's Zone Project. We support the creation of this new program as it has been shown to be effective in building comprehensive supports (health, mental health, academic, and family supports) for children living in low-income urban environments. Although we are happy about the addition of this program, we are concerned that this program only targets support for urban communities and that with the cuts to the SDFS grants and the Mental Health Integration grants, the pervasive needs of rural schools will go unmet.

With the economic hardships that our nation is facing, this reduction in funding for school mental health programs is especially excruciating because these programs are often the first to be cut, while the need for mental health services increases. In order for every child to have a chance at success, we must keep children safe, as well as remember the priority of teaching and reaching the "whole child" in order to help them achieve.

Here's what we need you to do to help:

1. **CALL your US Senators TODAY. Call the Capitol Switchboard at 202-224-3121. If you don't know who your elected officials are, go to the NASP Advocacy Action Center Website at: <http://capwiz.com/naspweb/directory/congdir.tt>. Enter your zip code and names of your elected officials will come up.** Once you are connected with your elected official's office, you will likely get a voicemail system or a receptionist where you should say, "Hi, my name is (your name) from (your city and state). As your constituent, I am calling to ask that you help preserve funding for the Safe and Drug Free State and National Grants Programs and the Mental Health Integration Grant Program. These programs help prevent school violence and drug and alcohol use by students, promote school safety, and encourage schools and communities to work together to provide comprehensive mental health supports for students. Without adequate funding for these school mental health related programs, Congress is failing to acknowledge the important connections between safe and supportive schools and student achievement. If you need to reach me for any reason, you can contact me at (your phone number) or (your e-mail address)."

AND/OR

2. **Send a letter to your elected officials through the NASP Advocacy Action Center.** Click on the following link and you will be guided through a simple **1-minute process** for sending an email to your elected official. You only need your name and address to submit this correspondence. Click here (or type this link into your web browser):
<http://capwiz.com/naspweb/issues/alert/?alertid=13785706&type=CO>.
3. **Forward this email to any colleagues, friends, or family members that you think might be interested in participating in this effort.** They do not have to be NASP members to participate.

If you would like to review the complete list of program terminations and reductions approved by the House of Representatives, please click here:
http://appropriations.house.gov/pdf/LHHS_Reductions_FC_-07.17.09.pdf.

Thank you for your advocacy efforts and being part of the 1-minute solution! If you have any questions or comments about this alert, please feel free to contact NASP Public Policy Director, Stacy Skalski, at sskalski@naspweb.org or 301-657-0270.

“I never worry about action, but only inaction.”
--Winston Churchill