



2021 Annual Report

**Board Certified Behavior Analyst and Board Certified Assistant Behavior Analyst
Grant Program**

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Iowa Department of Public Health

Protecting and Improving the Health of Iowans



Board Certified Behavior Analyst and Board Certified Assistant Behavior Analyst Grant Program

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List of Acronyms

IDPH	Iowa Department of Public Health
BCBA	Board Certified Behavior Analyst
BCaBA	Board Certified Assistant Behavior Analyst
RFP	Request for Proposal

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Executive Summary

This report is prepared annually in response to Iowa Code section 135.181(4).

Background

Chapter 135.181 establishes board-certified behavior analyst and board-certified assistant behavior analyst grant program under the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH). The program functions within the Deputy Director's Office in the Bureau of Policy and Workforce Services.

The board-certified behavior analyst and board-certified assistant behavior analyst grant program, or Behavior Analyst Grant Program, provides grants to Iowa resident and nonresident applicants who have been accepted for admission or are attending a Board of Regents university, community college or an accredited private institution; are enrolled in a program to be eligible for board certification as a behavior analyst or assistant behavior analyst; and demonstrate financial need. The goal of this program is to expand the number of board-certified behavior analysts (BCBA) and board-certified assistant behavior analysts (BCaBA) to provide applied behavior analysis and treatment to Iowans.

Report to the Legislature

A fund separate from the general fund was created under the control of the department and received a total appropriation of \$500,000; \$250,000 from fiscal year (SFY) 2016 and \$250,000 from SFY 2017. The department released its first request for proposal (RFP) in October 3rd, 2016 and has since released four RFP's.

On September 1, 2021 an RFP was released with funds expected to be distributed in SFY 2022. IDPH will select qualified applicants to receive an education and training grant for tuition and fees associated with obtaining certification as a behavior analyst or assistant behavior analyst.

The number of applications received for the immediately preceding fiscal year:

The Department received 12 applications in SFY 2021, resulting in 9 awards.

The number of applications approved and the total amount of grant funding awarded in the immediately preceding fiscal year:

In SFY 2021, of the 12 applications submitted, 9 awards were made. Seven awardees attended or are attending Drake University, one awardee attended or is attending Ball State University, and one awardee attended or is attending Arizona State University. The total amount of funds granted for this cohort was \$97,250.

In SFY 2019, 22 applications were submitted in the IowaGrants.gov management system. Thirteen applicants were approved for funding through the competitive grants process. Three withdrew from the program before contracts were signed. Ten applicants received contracts. At contract issuance, nine awardees were Iowa residents and one a non-resident. The total amount of funds awarded in SFY 2019 \$114,993.

In SFY 2017 and 2018, 17 awardees were awarded \$95,155. Two awardees did not fulfill their service obligation and \$5,703 was successfully recovered. One contract was terminated, resulting in a reversion

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of \$7,300 to unobligated funds. The total amount that remains obligated from SFY 2017 and 2018 is \$82,152.

In SFY 2020, one contractor has left the state of Iowa upon graduation with plans to return to Iowa in the next year. Seven awarded applicants are either attending or attended Drake University in Iowa. Three awardees are attending or attended Ball State University. The total amount of funds granted for this round of applicants was \$114,993.

To date, the total obligated funds for all four cohorts total \$307,398.00. The remaining funds are broken down as follows: \$170,873.00 unobligated, \$21,156.93 returned or unexpended, and \$26,192.83 in approximate interest. Technical assistance to individual contractors is provided for a maximum period of six years from individual contract award date.

Post education and certification, applicants have a two-year service obligation to work as a behavior analyst in Iowa if employed full-time or a four-year service obligation if employed part-time.

The cost of administering the program in the immediately preceding fiscal year:

While no funds were appropriated by the Iowa Legislature for the administration of this program about 0.25 FTE is designated to administering the program.

Recommendations for any changes to the program:

The BCBA program requires considerable administrative time to create the RFP, negotiate out contracts and provide technical assistance for up to six years for each awardee. There is no annual funding source for the multiple staff members required to administer this program. As a result, administrative costs have been drawn from outside programs, primarily funding designated for rural health, which diverts funds designated to serve the health care needs for rural Iowa.

To reduce the administrative cost and burden the department recommends an amendment to the Iowa Code to change the program to a set stipend amount awarded for every six months of service. This would be paid after graduation and certification removing some of the administrative burden. The program would pay \$2,500 every six months for two years of required service. This would add up to \$10,000, an amount in line with historical student payments in the program and would assure that funds are expended only when the service is rendered. This may help avoid default and subsequent attempts to recover paid claims.

At this time, it is anticipated that additional funding will be required to continue to provide this program. This program has not received funding since SFY 2017. We anticipate in January of 2022 that approximately 100% of the total appropriation will be awarded and the department will not have funding for future RFPs.

Over the course of the program, the average award amount given to each awardee has increased. This is a result of allowing awardees to receive funds retroactively for schooling they have completed within the previous year and the addition of new university BCBA programs that have higher tuition rates than the previous programs. The BCBA program legislation does not limit the funds allowed for tuition. If additional appropriations are considered for this program the department would conduct a program tuition audit to verify the average cost of completion to indicate how much would be needed to serve the same number of awardees.

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Program evaluation will continue and recommended changes may include a review of the administrative rules and program procedures. Some changes that are recommended:

- Wording in legislation to align with the process of obtaining BCBA/BCaBA certification
- Clarification to what academic programs are acceptable
- Adjustments to how funds would be awarded to reduce administrative costs