

STATE OF IOWA DEPARTMENT OF  
**Health** AND **Human**  
SERVICES

Board Certified Behavior Analyst and  
Board-Certified Assistant Behavior Analyst  
Grant Program Annual Report

Bureau of Rural and Community Health  
Division of Public Health

January 2024

# 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 Health and Human Services (HHS). The program functions within the Division of Public Health in the Bureau of Rural and Community Health.

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 five RFP's.

It was decided that an RFP would not be released in the fall of 2022 to allow the department to verify available funds. A final RFP was opened in the fall of 2023 (SFY 2024) with the expectation for awards to be made January 1 2024. This will exhaust the remaining available funding for this program.

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

In SFY 2022, of the 15 applications submitted, all were awarded. One applicant withdrew shortly after being awarded; no funds were dispersed for that applicant. Four awardees attended or are attending Drake University, the remaining eleven awardees all attended out of state programs online. The total amount of funds granted for the 14 that make up this cohort was \$162,435.

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. One awardee withdrew without submitting claims. The total amount of funds granted for this cohort was \$89,105.

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

To date, the total obligated funds for all five cohorts total \$444,902. The remaining unobligated funds are \$55,098 and \$24,270.50 has been returned or unexpended.

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.

### **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. Applicants have an administrative burden of filing claims and documentation after each semester to collect the reimbursement and must return funds if they are unable to complete BCBA certification or complete the two-year service obligation.

To reduce the administrative burden to applicants, 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 of applicants having to return funds to the department in cases of being unable to fulfill the program requirements. The department suggests that the program would pay \$2,500 every six months for two years of required service. This amount of \$10,000 is in line with historical student payments in the program and would assure that funds are expended only when the service is rendered. This would help avoid default and the need to recover already paid claims.

At this time, it is anticipated that additional funding will be required to continue to provide grants to BCBA students under this program. This program has not received state appropriated funding since SFY 2017 and the funding is anticipated to be fully expended during the SFY24 RFP process.

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.

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