

# LB642 School Mental Health Resource Reimbursement

## How LB642 Works

LB642 creates the process for which the Nebraska Department of Education would reimburse school districts or ESUs for up to 80% of allowable mental health expenses, while appropriating \$12 million to support these reimbursements.

To qualify for reimbursement, the district or ESU must:

- Designate an employee of the school district or ESU as a community-based mental health resource liaison and provide the appropriate training and resources for that employee to assist students, families, teachers, and schools in locating the resources necessary to address the mental health needs of individual students in the district or educational service unit
- Submit allowable mental health expenditures in a manner prescribed by NDE.

Allowable mental health expenditures are:

- Directly related to meeting the mental health needs of an individual student or group of students
- Directly related to a focused strategy approved by NDE to reduce the mental health needs of students by improving the overall educational environment
- Directly related to the training or work of the community-based mental health resource liaison; and not an allowable reimbursable cost under the Special Education Act.

## Need for LB642

Nebraska has a critical shortage of school based mental health professionals. Currently, 82 percent of Nebraska students attend schools that fail to meet the nationally recommended ratios for student-to-counselors, psychologists, nurses, and social workers<sup>1</sup>.

Additionally, community-based mental health options are strained as well. 88 of 93 counties in Nebraska being designated as federal mental health professional shortage areas, and nearly every area outside of Omaha and Lincoln have a state designated shortage of psychiatry and mental health access. Worse, Seventy-eight counties have no practicing psychiatrists at all.<sup>2</sup>

1 in 3 high school students reported feeling depressed in the past year, and about 1 in 5 high school students reported they seriously considered attempting suicide in the past year<sup>3</sup>. Many of these students' mental health needs are going untreated, a 2019 study by the Journal of the American Medical Association Pediatrics showed that nearly 50% of children with mental health disorders are going untreated in Nebraska<sup>4</sup>.

LB642 gives districts and ESUs a tool to address Nebraska's shortage of school mental health professionals.

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.aclunebraska.org/en/press-releases/aclu-report-highlights-staff-shortages-over-policing-and-discriminatory-discipline>

<sup>2</sup> [https://behavioralhealthworkforce.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Y2FA2P4\\_BHECN-Policy-Brief.pdf](https://behavioralhealthworkforce.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Y2FA2P4_BHECN-Policy-Brief.pdf)

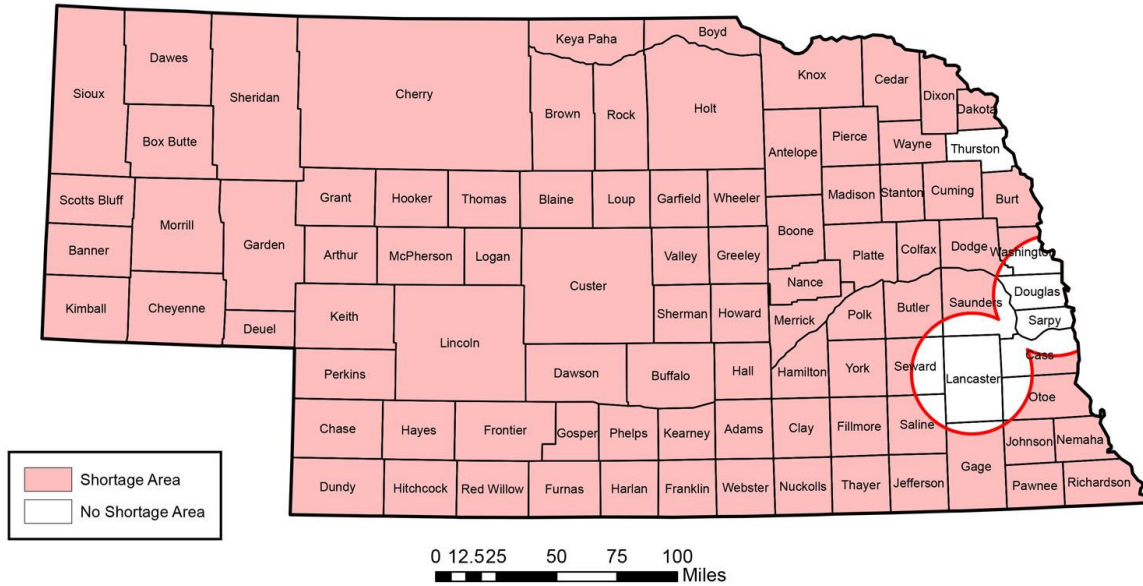
<sup>3</sup> <http://dhhs.ne.gov/Behavioral%20Health%20Documents/Needs%20Assessment%20-%202016.pdf>

<sup>4</sup><https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapediatrics/fullarticle/2724377?guestAccessKey=f689aa19-31f1-481d-878a-6bf83844536a>

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## State-Designated Shortage Area Psychiatry & Mental Health

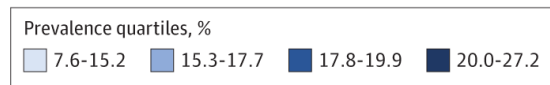
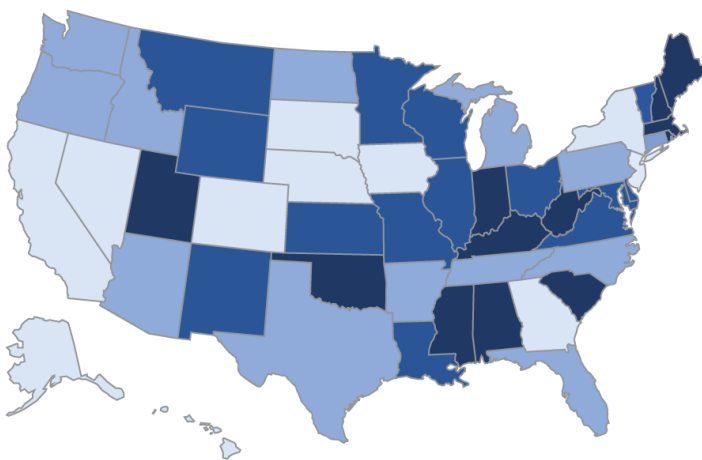
### Nebraska



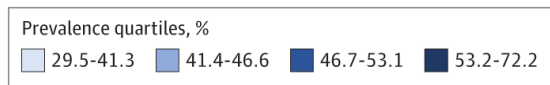
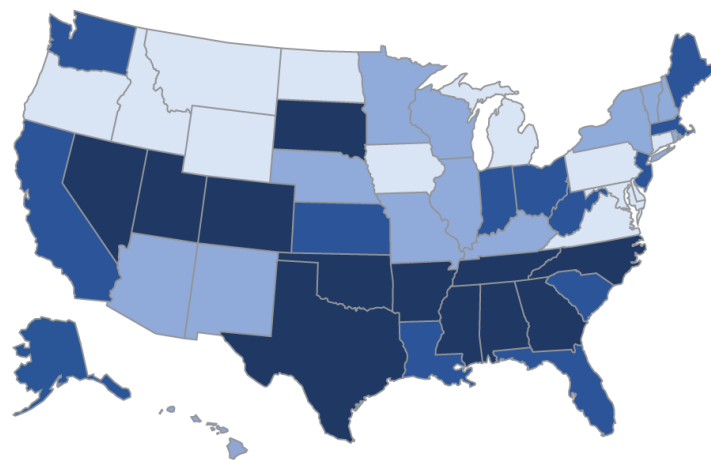
Source: Rural Health Advisory Commission  
 DHHS - Nebraska Office of Rural Health  
 Statewide Review: 2016  
 Last Updated: March 2017  
 Location: K: RURAL\_HEALTH > Rural Health Intern > State Shortage Areas

Cartography: Maggie Harthoorn | Community & Regional Planning Intern | DHHS  
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**A** Prevalence of mental health disorders in children



**B** Prevalence of not receiving care in children with mental health disorders



Although Nebraska has a lower than average prevalence of child mental health incidence, nearly half of these cases go without receiving care. (Journal of the American Medical Association, <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapediatrics/fullarticle/2724377?guestAccessKey=f689aa19-31f1-481d-878a-6bf83844536a>)