

FY2026 Strengthening Mental Health Supports (MHEAC) Grant FAQ

A complete copy of the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) and this FAQ can be found on the ICCB website: <https://www.iccb.org/grant-opportunities>

The Act can be found:

<https://www.ilga.gov/Legislation/ILCS/Articles?ActID=4013&ChapterID=18>

1. Q: How much funding is available?

A: Total funding is \$5.8 million. Awards will range from \$50,000 – \$180,000 per college, with up to 45 awards anticipated.

2. Q: Do indirect costs count within the \$180K?

A: Yes. The \$180,000 maximum award is inclusive of both direct and indirect costs. Your total project budget (direct + indirect) may not exceed \$180K.

3. Q: Who is eligible to apply?

A: All Illinois community colleges are eligible. Only one application per college is permitted.

4. Q: What is the grant period?

A: July 1, 2025 – December 30, 2026.

5. Q: Can funds be used for items such as journals, fidget spinners, stress balls, pop-its, or stress monitoring cards?

*A: Yes. Funded items or activities must connect directly to mental health purposes, not serve as standalone giveaways. **For example:** printing something like the suicide hotline or counseling center contact information, it then creates awareness for the student and any other student who sees the items.*

6. Q: Can we pay for TimelyCare or other similar platforms extending beyond the grant term?

A: Yes. Such platforms may be pre-paid for out of grant funds for the length of the contract.

7. Q: What if six pages isn't enough for the project narrative?

A: Applicants must focus on essential information. Remove unnecessary content and stick to details and critical takeaways.

8. Q: What are the objectives of this grant?

A: Colleges must choose at least one (may choose more):

- Raise Awareness (outreach, campaigns, stigma reduction)*
- Mental Health Training (faculty/staff recognition and response)*
- Peer Support Programs (structured, supervised peer services)*

- Local Partnerships (provider expansion, referral systems)
- Evaluation (measure effectiveness and impact)

9. Q: What types of activities are allowed?

A:

- Awareness: Events, orientation integration
- Training: MHFA certification, diverse & trauma-informed training
- Peer Programs: Stipends, online peer support subscriptions
- Partnerships: Provider contracts, telehealth, referral processes
- Evaluation: Surveys, logic models, independent evaluation

10. Q: What are the key application requirements?

A: Applications must include:

- Cover Page (with institutional approval)
- Abstract (≤ 1 page)
- Project Narrative (≤ 6 pages)
- Work Plan with measurable outcomes
- Letters of Commitment (partners)
- Uniform Budget (indirect costs capped at 15%)

11. Q: What are the deliverables if funded?

A: Grantees must:

- Carry out activities for selected objectives
- Submit quarterly reports on program, performance, and spending
- Participate in technical assistance/professional development
- Submit a final close-out report within 60 days of grant end

12. Q: How will applications be scored?

A:

- Cover Page & Abstract – 10 pts
- Project Info, Need, Fiscal Need – 10 pts
- Goals & Indicators – 25 pts
- Work Plan, Partnerships, Impact – 35 pts
- Capacity, Scalability, Contingency – 15 pts
- Budget – 5 pts

13. Q: Can we provide stipends?

A: Yes. Stipends may be provided:

- To students in structured peer support roles (e.g., peer mentors)
- To students attending certified professional development (e.g., Mental Health First Aid) where training has a campus-wide benefit
- To faculty/administrators completing mental health training or workshops directly tied to the Act

Note: Stipends would not be appropriate for wellness events that are purely individual benefit without broader campus impact.

14. Q: Can funds be used for student supports, such as food and transportation?

A: Yes, if supports are directly tied to mental health care. Example: If a student in counseling requires food or transportation to continue services or classes, MH funds may be used.

15. Q: Would colleges be able to use MH funds to stock their food pantries?

A: No. Food pantries serve all students broadly and are not directly tied to mental health supports.

16. Q: Can MH funds be used to provide Plan B?

A: Plan B must be available at nominal cost under separate legislation. Colleges may use MH funds to cover costs for students unable to pay. However, MH funds may not be used to stock Plan B vending machines since these serve all students, not only those seeking mental health support.