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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

SPONSOR: Salazar DATE TYPED: 02/19/03 HB HJM 38

SHORT TITLE: State Employees to Mentor At-Risk Youth SB _____

ANALYST: Gonzales

APPROPRIATION

Appropriation Contained		Estimated Additional Impact		Recurring or Non-Rec	Fund Affected
FY03	FY04	FY03	FY04		
			See Narrative		

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

Relates to SJM27 and SB161

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files

Responses Received From
 State Department of Education (SDE)
 State Personnel Office (SPO)
 Department of Health (DOH)

SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

House Joint Memorial 38 encourages:

- The Governor to initiate an educational enhancement leave policy that allows state employees administrative leave for educational mentoring activities; and
- The State Department of Public Education and local school boards to assist in the development and implementation of an educational enhancement program in the public schools that uses state employees as educational mentors.

Significant Issues

The memorial is intended to provide at-risk and other children guidance from those adults who have achieved through education.

According to the State Department of Education, based on studies conducted by the National Association of School Counselors, mentoring opportunities with caring adults encourages children to become more productive citizens and provides positive interactions with adults that can influence social and academic development.

If enacted, the mentoring program could provide resources to:

- Create a supportive environment that encourages regular attendance in school.
- Motivate students to learn.
- Help students to realize the value of an education.
- Help students to explore career opportunities.
- Encourage students to set goals.
- Improve self-esteem and coping skills.
- Help students successfully complete their education.
- Help students become productive New Mexico citizens.

“The mentoring of youth by adults has been identified as one of the more promising program approaches to promoting positive youth outcomes. . . . Overall, youth participating in mentoring relationships improved on some educational measures.” Susan Jekielek, Kristin Moore, and Elizabeth Hair, Mentoring Programs and Youth Development: A Synthesis, 2002.

The Department of Health indicates:

Many mentoring opportunities exist in our state; however, there is a lack of available mentors, especially for males. State employees are an excellent resource of adult mentors. DOH already provides leave for employees to mentor a child one hour per week. This opportunity could be marketed and could be used as a model personnel policy for all state employees.

The New Mexico Mentoring Partnership, a collaboration of some of the best mentoring programs in the state, has worked to create consistent mentoring standards and a network among programs. The State Department of Education would benefit from collaboration with the NM Mentoring Partnership to develop a state employee youth mentoring program.

PERFORMANCE IMPLICATIONS

The legislation supports the SDE’s performance measure for safe schools and respectful learning environments.

Additionally, House Joint Memorial 38 relates to the DOH Strategic Plan, Program Area I, Goal B: Enhance positive youth development and coordinate health services for youth. Objective 1: Increase protective factors (e.g., attachment to community and caring adults) and decrease risk behavior leading to injury, premature death and disability (e.g., substance abuse and verbalizing suicide ideas) among youth.

Proposed performance output measure for all agencies: Number of state employees participating in the youth mentoring program.

FISCAL and ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

The State Department of Education states the program will address student needs by using existing resources and creating a mechanism that provides access to mentoring resources without increasing costs.

The SDE may be required to amend its written leave policy, but the agency indicates it is able to fulfill the requirements of this legislation.

If an employee is allowed to use administrative leave to mentor at risk children, there will be no direct fiscal impact. There is an indirect fiscal impact measured in terms of lost productivity if an employee is not at work; either work does not get done or somebody else has to perform the absent employees work. According to figures provided by the State Personnel Office, if only 10% of the classified state employees participate in this program, the estimated cost per day of mentoring to tax-payers would be \$243.2, not including benefits (\$364.8 including benefits @ 50%). [19,000 classified employees * 10% participation rate * \$16.00/hour rate * 8 hours]. This equates to approximately \$128 base salary dollars per day for the average state employee.

If SPO is directed to develop a leave policy for participating in educational activities, the automated human resource management system payroll systems will have to be enhanced to track this additional category of time-off from work.

DUPLICATION, RELATIONSHIP

Senate Joint Memorial 27 requests the Governor to: (1) direct the State Personnel Office to develop a leave policy that allows state employees to participate in an educational mentoring program; and (2) direct the State Department of Education to actively promote an educational mentoring program for state employees in the communities of New Mexico.

Senate Bill 161 appropriates \$118.3 from the general fund to the Department of Labor to contract for an at-risk youth employment-training program in Bernalillo, Tarrant, Sandoval and Valencia counties. In the General Appropriation Act, the Legislature has historically appropriated \$700.0 to the Department of Labor for at-risk youth.

TECHNICAL ISSUES

For clarity purposes, the State Personnel Office proposes that page 2, lines 14 – 18, should be amended to read:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the governor be encouraged ~~to initiate an educational enhancement leave policy~~ direct the state personnel office to develop a leave policy that allows state employees administrative leave for up to eight hours per month to participate in educational mentoring activities by July 1, 2003; and

OTHER SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

Current administrative leave policies for executive classified employees is intended for a specific purpose and allows an agency to authorize employees leave with pay for up to five consecutive work days when it is in the best interest of the agency to do so. A new type of leave would have to be developed by SPO and approved by the Personnel Board.

There is no “cap” on the amount of leave that may be taken. SPO states a maximum cap of eight hours per month seems reasonable.

The employees who mentor students would need to do so on a voluntary basis subject to work demands and supervisor approval.

Local school districts may require background checks on volunteers working with students on school sites.

State agencies may need to address issues of per diem and transportation for state employees while mentoring students in the program.

The Department of Health provided the following information on the success of mentoring programs:

According to the SEARCH Institute, the involvement of a consistent, caring adult (other than the parent or teacher) in the life of a child has been proven to have a positive impact on the child's behavior, achievement in school and social development. Children in low income, single parent homes are at higher risk than others for developmental problems of all kinds. Mentoring is a cost-effective approach that usually uses specially trained community volunteers as mentors. The costs are associated with training, coordination, administration and oversight, rather than paying the mentors. There are a variety of models in use throughout New Mexico, some funded with state resources and some locally initiated and supported. According to program staff, the barriers to successful implementation include the lack of adequate funding to support site coordinator stipends, mentor screening costs (up to \$60 per screening) and ongoing technical assistance from project staff.

Mentoring programs have been proven effective to improve health and learning among youth. In an evaluation of Big Brother/Big Sisters by Tierney and Grossman (1995), findings indicated that mentored youth were: 46% less likely than the control group to initiate drug use during the 18-month study period, 27% less likely to initiate alcohol use, 33% less likely to hit someone, skipped half as many days of school, skipped fewer classes, and showed modest gains in their grade point average; the quality of relationship with their parents was better for mentored youth; and mentored youth, especially minority Little Brothers, had improved relationships with their peers.

POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

How would long-term success of the program be measured?

If an employee was injured while on approved mentoring leave, would workers compensation insurance cover any related expenses?

Would the employee be eligible for mileage and per diem reimbursement if they had to travel?

Would the mentor be allowed to use state property, such as computers or other equipment?

JMG/sb