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**File:** Behavioral Health Space  
Guideline

**For:** Eddy Jeans, Director

**Subject:** Behavioral Health Facilities

## **G U I D E L I N E**

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### **Purpose:**

This document is designed to provide guidance to school districts with an interest in providing space designated for Behavioral Health support co-located with a school. This space is intended to be functionally separate from the school facilities. The space so designated, and developed in accordance with this guideline, can be identified as exempt by the department for the purpose of calculating overall gross square footage for school construction and renovation.

### **Behavioral Health Space:**

Department of Education and Early Development regulations provide for co-location of a school with other facilities as demonstrated in the following department regulation:

4 AAC 31.060(c) "A school facility for which state aid is sought under AS 14.11.011 or 14.11.100 may be built jointly with municipal and state offices, health clinics, community libraries, and other spaces if approved by the commissioner as to compatibility and separation of funds. The commissioner has final authority to determine the proration of space and cost in a jointly built project."

Following the spirit of this regulation, the department proposes the following guideline for districts that wish to include behavioral health space in a school construction or renovation project. In order to qualify for exemption of space for the purpose of behavioral health support, a district needs to comply with the following requirements:

- Separation of behavioral health space from school space including:
  - Common entry providing independent access to the school, multi-purpose room (gym), and the behavioral health office;
  - Behavioral health office connected only to the common entry and school administration office;
  - Operational separation of behavioral health space from the school with a separate, keyed entry from the common entry and school administration office;
- Ability to maintain confidential records;
- Behavioral health space only operated by a non-profit or community health organization that is not affiliated with the school district;

- There must be a Joint-Use Agreement between the school district and entity operating the behavioral health space that includes requirements identified by the department including, but not limited to the following:
  - Clear identification of the space utilized for behavioral health services;
  - Clear identification of the percentage of responsibility of each party for utilities, custodial, major maintenance and repair, capital improvements, and property insurance.
- Behavioral health counseling is available to students at the school during normal school hours;

Maximum size of exempt behavioral health space allowable for exemption is 2,000 SF.

Space designated as exempt is still eligible for grant funding or debt reimbursement funding in accordance with AS 14.11. The reimbursement rate for debt projects will be the reimbursement rate approved for the balance of the project.

If, for some reason, the behavioral health space is no longer needed for behavioral health purposes, the district will be required to keep the space open and available for a period not less than one academic year from the time of last use. If after that time, another behavioral health partner has not been identified and the district utilizes the space for educational purposes, the space will count as educational space.