



## PROPOSED AGENDA ITEM RATIONALE

**TO:** Matthew L. Blomstedt, Ph.D.  
Commissioner of Education

**FROM:** Dean Folkers, D.M.  
Information Systems Officer

**PROPOSED AGENDA ITEM:** Grant the Commissioner the authority to accept the AWARE grant from U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

### **RATIONALE/BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

The Nebraska Department of Education was an eligible agency to apply for a Project AWARE (Advancing Wellness and Resiliency in Education) State Education Agency Grants through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS) that is an agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The purpose of this grant program is to build or expand the capacity of State Educational Agencies, in partnership with State Mental Health Agencies (SMHAs) overseeing school-aged youth and local education agencies (LEAS), to: (1) increase awareness of mental health issues among school-aged youth; (2) provide training for school personnel and other adults who interact with school-aged youth to detect and respond to mental health issues; and (3) connect school-aged youth, who may have behavioral health issues (including serious emotional disturbance [SED] or serious mental illness [SMI]), and their families to needed services. SAMHSA expects that this program will focus on partnerships and collaboration between state and local systems to promote the healthy development of school-aged youth and prevent youth violence.

The AWARE-SEA program supports the development and implementation of a comprehensive plan of activities, services, and strategies to decrease youth violence and support the healthy development of school-aged youth. This program builds upon the successful strategies of the Safe Schools/Healthy Students (SS/HS) Initiative that have been effective in creating safe and secure schools and promoting the mental health of students in communities across the country. These strategies include facilitating a closer relationship between state and local implementation of policies and programs, and supporting the development of integrated systems that create safe and respectful environments for learning and promote the mental health of school-aged youth.

The department is partnering with the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services and three Local Education Agencies (LEAs) (Chadron, South Sioux City, Hastings) to achieve the goals of the grant.

**Amount of Grant:** \$1.8 Million/year for five years.