

Office of Dropout Prevent and Student Re-engagement  
**Expelled and At-Risk Student Services (EARSS)**  
**State Grant Program**



**PURPOSE AND STRUCTURE OF THE PROGRAM**

The Expelled and At-risk Student Services (EARSS) grant program was established in 1997. It is described in Colorado Revised Statute 22-33-205.

The purpose of the EARSS grant is to assist in providing educational and support services to expelled students, students at-risk of suspension and expulsion, and students at risk of habitual truancy as defined by unexcused absences.

Funds are awarded annually through a competitive grant process to fund 4-year grants. Eligible applicants include school districts, alternative schools within districts, charter schools, Boards of Cooperative Education Services (BOCES), facility schools and also non-public, non-parochial schools working through agreements to serve public school students.

**IMPORTANCE OF MEETING THE NEEDS OF AT-RISK STUDENTS**

Without necessary support and intervention, expelled students, and students at-risk of disciplinary action and/or habitual truancy frequently lack the skills, capacity and motivation to engage in school. When falling behind their peers, they may isolate themselves and stop coming to school, engage in delinquent behaviors, abuse drugs to self-medicate or become disruptive in class.

Research shows that expelled students and those that exhibit behaviors linked to disciplinary action and delinquency are at-risk of dropping out of school. The EARSS grant program directs resources to address the unique learning needs and challenges of these students.

**Beneficiaries by the Numbers**

Year Served	Grantee Information	Individuals Served
2020-2021	57 EARSS Grantees located in 27 counties	Unavailable at this time
2019-2020	58 EARSS grantees located in 28 counties	7,397 Students 4,186 Parents/Guardians
2018-2019	60 EARSS grantees located in 29 counties	8,183 Students 5,638 Parents/Guardians
2017-2018	59 EARSS grantees located in 33 counties	10,073 Students 5,472 Parents/Guardians
2016-2017	37 EARSS grantees located in 27 counties	6,796 Students 5,170 Parents/Guardians

**Student Success Stories**

**Metro-area example** – A student stole from the community store during school hours. We were able to hold a restorative mediation with the student and his mom to come up with a comprehensive plan. At the meeting, we unpacked why he made this choice, the harm that was done, and ways to repair the harm. By completing the process, he was able to feel better about himself and recognize that he has a strong support system at our school.

**Rural-area example** - One of our many success stories includes a student who was expelled for a year and recently completed the EARSS program. He accomplished complete credit recovery and participating in a work-study internship, earning a work-study credential and a post-secondary position with the company with which he interned. He accessed counseling throughout the program and ultimately met all requirements for graduation. I believe he embodies the intent of the EARSS program and is emblematic of the success the program has achieved.

**BOCES example** - A student was referred to our program because of attendance issues. Through the EARSS grant we were able to work with him on relationship building and learning a variety of skills. He was able to re-engage in school, explore postsecondary options, develop distress tolerance, and navigate not only schoolwork, but also acquired life skills. He graduated from high school with all A's and B's and is currently working in his community.

## MOST COMMON BEHAVIORS PLACING STUDENTS AT-RISK

A total of 7,347 students were served by the EARSS program in 2019-2020. Thirty grantees reported serving **221 expelled students**, or 3% of students. Fifty-five grantees reported serving **3,682 students at-risk for expulsion**, or 50% of all students. The most common reasons for receiving EARSS-funded services were **disobedient/defiant behavior (38%)**, **detrimental behavior (22%)**, and **marijuana violations (6%)**.

Forty-nine grantees reported serving **3,494 truant students or students at risk of habitual truancy**, or 47% of students.

Grantees reported that 3,318 students served were also identified as at-risk for dropping out of school; 62% of 7<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade students served by the grant.

## SERVICES PROVIDED

State statutes require schools to work with parents/guardians of expelled and at-risk students regarding the development of plans for serving their child. Therefore, grantees must also engage parents in grant objectives. Examples of common uses of the grant funds include:

- Educational services for core academics such as coursework, tutoring and credit recovery.
- Restorative practice and discipline, case management, alternatives to out-of-school suspension and expulsion, and multi-tiered behavioral support interventions.
- Essential and life skills, goal setting, fostering career and vocation-related interest, and character education.
- Support to habitually truant students to increase attendance and avoid truancy court.
- Counseling, behavioral health and substance abuse treatment services, including through contracted services and agreements with other youth-serving community agencies.

The most effective strategies reported by grantees in 2019-2020 included **restorative practices**, **mentoring/positive relationship building**, **counseling**, and **essential skills building**.

## STUDENT AND PARENT OUTCOMES

EARSS grantees reported the following outcomes:

- 80% of students served experienced positive outcomes such as school completion and continuation of education. These outcomes reflected school completion, continuation of education, completion of the expulsion term and return to school.
- Of all students served, 96% remained in school. Without program support through EARSS, it is more likely that these students may have been expelled, had unexcused absences, or dropped out of school.
- 3.8% of at-risk students dropped out of school in 2019-2020. This is lower than the last reported state dropout rate for alternative schools, which was 15.4% in 2018-19.
- Of the at-risk students served through an EARSS program, 99% were not expelled, 83% did not receive an in-school suspension, 81% did not receive an out-of-school suspension and 93% did not have a truancy petition filed in court.