



**COLORADO**  
Department of Education

# Menstrual Hygiene Products Accessibility Grant Program: 2021 – 2022 Academic Year

Submitted to:

Colorado Senate Education Committee  
Colorado House Education Committee

By:

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## Executive Summary

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This report provides information about the Menstrual Hygiene Products Accessibility Grant Program, created by S.B. 21-255, including descriptions of the challenge addressed by the program, intervention, and outcomes.

### Description of the Challenge

Period poverty and barriers to menstrual equity affect Colorado students, and some students miss class time or are absent from school because they do not have access to period products. School is an important access point for period products.

### Description of the Intervention

During the 2021 – 2022 academic year, the Menstrual Hygiene Products Accessibility Grant Program provided 40 local educational providers that each serve 50% or more students who qualify for free or reduced-price lunch with \$2,500 each to increase access to free menstrual hygiene products in gender-neutral spaces in schools. The Colorado Department of Education administered the grant program.

### Program Outcomes

The total amount of money spent on the acquisition and distribution of menstrual hygiene products in 2021-22 was \$66,688.36, and the total amount of money spent on the installation and maintenance of a dispensing machine or disposal receptacles for menstrual hygiene products was \$19,439.06. Over the short- and mid-term, the program is expected to result in increased access to period products and disposal in gender-neutral spaces along with a reduction in missed class time and absenteeism due to lack of period products. Over the long-term, academic performance may improve, and feelings of belonging and safety for all students, especially those who are trans and non-gender conforming may increase.

### Conclusion

The Menstrual Hygiene Products Accessibility Grant Program has been successful in increasing access to menstrual hygiene products in safe spaces throughout Colorado schools, with participants reporting minimal program challenges.



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## Introduction

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This report provides information about the Menstrual Hygiene Products Accessibility Grant Program, created by Colorado Senate Bill 21-255, “Free Menstrual Hygiene Products to Students” signed into law on July 6, 2021. The report includes descriptions of the challenge addressed by the program, intervention, and program outcomes.

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## Description of the Problem

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The Menstrual Hygiene Products Accessibility Grant Program works to address period poverty and other barriers to menstrual equity experienced by students in Colorado. During the pandemic, students across the country indicated that they believed they would have greater access to period products when they returned to school, highlighting that school is an important access point for these products.<sup>i</sup>

### Period Poverty

*Period poverty* is “the inadequate access to menstrual hygiene tools and education, including but not limited to sanitary products, washing facilities, and waste management.”<sup>ii</sup> One key issue is the ability to purchase menstrual hygiene products. More than 1 in 5 teens have struggled to afford period products or were not able to purchase them.<sup>iii</sup> Generally, groups more likely to experience period poverty include students, people who are unsheltered, and people of color.<sup>iv v</sup>

Period poverty is associated with missed class time and absenteeism in school. One in 4 teens have missed class because of lack of access to period products, and more than 4 in 5 teens have either missed class time or know someone who missed class time because they did not have access to period products.<sup>vi</sup> About one-third of the teens surveyed in a 2021 study missed school at least one day per month due to not having adequate period products.<sup>vii</sup> In addition, lack of access to menstrual hygiene products is associated with menstrual hygiene management practices that lead to infection, especially among people experiencing homelessness.

### Menstrual Equity

*Menstrual equity* refers to equitable access to menstrual hygiene education, products, and disposal. People who are trans and non-gender conforming experience fewer barriers to accessing menstrual products and disposing of waste when period products and disposal receptacles are available in gender-neutral spaces.<sup>viii</sup>

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## Description of the Intervention

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The Menstrual Hygiene Products Accessibility Grant Program was created by S.B. 21-255, “Free Menstrual Hygiene Products to Students,” and signed into law on July 6, 2021. During the 2021 – 2022 academic year, the program provided 40 local educational providers that each serve 50% or more students who qualify for free or reduced-price lunch with \$2,500 each to increase access to free menstrual hygiene products in gender-neutral spaces in schools.

### Grant Recipients

Per S.B. 21-255, an eligible local education provider is a school district, a charter school authorized by a school district, a charter school authorized by the Charter School Institute (CSI), or a Board of Cooperative Services (BOCES). The Colorado School for the Deaf and the Blind and facility schools are also eligible for this grant program. Table 1 shows the number of each type of entity that received the grant.



Table 1: Number of each type of entity that received the grant

Entity	Number of each type of entity that received the grant
School district	22
Charter school authorized by district	8
Charter school authorized by the Charter School Institute	7
Facility school	3

The Menstrual Hygiene Products Accessibility grant program reached all regions of Colorado with the Metro region having the highest number of funding recipients. Table 2 shows the number of funding recipients per region.

Table 2: Number of funding recipients by Colorado region

Region	Number of funding recipients by region
Metro	17
Pikes Peak	5
Southeast	5
Northeast	4
Southwest	3
North Central	2
West Central	2
All regions	1
Northwest	1

### Grant Administration

Members of the Colorado Department of Education School Health Services Office, Grants Administration, and School Finance Division worked together to administer the program and provide support to program participants. The program application period occurred from October to November 2021, and successful applicants were notified in December 2021. The 40 successful applicants had through June 2022, approximately six months, to purchase menstrual hygiene products and purchase and install product dispensing machines and



product disposal receptacles and receptacle liners. Program updates were provided as needed, and an optional program survey was administered in March 2022 to gain program feedback. The School Health Services Office also created a program webpage and fact sheet with important program information

## Program Outcomes

S.B. 21-255 requires reporting the total amount of money spent on the acquisition and distribution of menstrual hygiene products and the total amount of money spent on the installation and maintenance of dispensing machines or disposal receptacles for menstrual hygiene products. This information is provided in Table 3.

Table 3: Amount spent by category

Category	Amount spent
Menstrual hygiene products (includes cost of menstrual pads, pantliners, and tampons)	\$66,688.36
Installation/maintenance of dispensing machines and disposal receptacles (includes cost of machines, machine installation, receptacles, and liners)	\$19,439.06
<b>Total amount spent</b>	<b>\$86,127.42*</b>

\*Of the \$100,000, a total of \$86,127.42 was spent. One district and two schools were unable to spend the funds, and each returned \$2,500. One district did not submit financial data prior to this report, and their data is not included in Table 3.

## Expected Program Outcomes

Based on the requirements of the bill and the current research literature, the following short- and mid-term program outcomes may be expected: 1) increased number of gender-neutral spaces where students can access free menstrual hygiene products; 2) increased number of gender-neutral spaces where students can dispose of menstrual hygiene products; and 3) decreased amount of missed class time and absenteeism due to lack of access to menstrual hygiene products. CDE will begin collecting data on the increased number of gender-neutral spaces where students can access free menstrual hygiene products and the increased number of gender-neutral spaces where students can dispose of menstrual hygiene products in the 2022-2023 academic year. Based on the short- and mid-term outcomes, improved academic performance through reduction of missed class time and absenteeism may be a long-term program outcome. In addition, in the long-term, increased access to menstruation management could increase feelings of belonging and safety for all students, especially those who are trans and non-gender conforming.

## Program Survey Results

In March 2022, an optional survey was administered to program participants. Of 40 program participants, 32 participants responded, and 81% of respondents indicated that they would apply for funding for future menstrual hygiene products; while the other 19% wanted to see how the current products were used before deciding if they would reapply for future funds. Most respondents expressed no challenges with the grant. Those who experienced challenges described supply chain issues like ordering and shipping challenges. Additionally, respondents provided the following information regarding the program:



“Students are feeling supported knowing they have a place to get these important products!”

“We serve a[n] immigrant refugee population and other low-income students. This helps with our students that may be struggling just to buy feminine products. If we can support them in [any way] this would be one way to support our population of girl students.”

“We see students daily asking for menstrual supplies. I like that we can provide this service for them.”

“Our sites are very excited to be receiving the products. Girls are always asking. Also great for female homeless students. We're able to supply nighttime products to them that schools usually don't have on hand.”

## Conclusion

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Menstrual equity and period poverty are challenges for Colorado students that impact their time in class. In the 2021 – 2022 academic year, the Menstrual Hygiene Products Accessibility Grant Program provided a total of \$100,000 to 40 eligible educational providers, of which 86,127.42 was spent. The program has been successful in increasing access to menstrual hygiene products in safe spaces throughout Colorado schools. Participating educational providers report that students are accessing free products and that there are minimal challenges with the grant.

## Endnotes

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<sup>i</sup> State of the Period: The widespread impact of period poverty on US students. (2021).

<https://period.org/uploads/State-of-the-Period-2021.pdf>

<sup>ii</sup> Alvarez, A. (2019). Period Poverty. American Medical Women’s Association. <https://www.amwa-doc.org/period-poverty/>

<sup>iii</sup> State of the Period: The widespread impact of period poverty on US students. (2021).

<https://period.org/uploads/State-of-the-Period-2021.pdf>

<sup>iv</sup> Ibid

<sup>v</sup> Alvarez, A. (2019). Period Poverty. American Medical Women’s Association. <https://www.amwa-doc.org/period-poverty/>

<sup>vi</sup> State of the Period: The widespread impact of period poverty on US students. (2019).

[https://thepolicyproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/State-of-the-Period-white-paper\\_Thinx\\_PERIOD.pdf](https://thepolicyproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/State-of-the-Period-white-paper_Thinx_PERIOD.pdf)

<sup>vii</sup> Kuhlmann, A.S, Teni, M.T., Key, R., and Billingsley, C. (2022). Period product insecurity, school absenteeism, and use of school resources to obtain period products among high school students in St. Louis, Missouri. *The Journal of School Nursing*. doi:10.1177/10598405211069601

<sup>viii</sup> Lane, B. et al. (2022) Improving menstrual equity in the USA: Perspectives from trans and non-binary people assigned female at birth and health care providers. *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, 24(10), 1408-1422, doi: 10.1080/13691058.2021.1957151



**Appendix: Logic Model for Menstrual Hygiene Product Accessibility Grant Program**

Description of the problem	Description of the intervention	Short-term and mid-term outcomes	Long-term outcomes
<p>Menstrual equity and period poverty are challenges for Colorado students that impact their time in class. Groups more likely to experience period poverty include students, people who are unsheltered, and people of color.</p>	<p>During the 2021 – 2022 academic year, the Menstrual Hygiene Products Accessibility Grant Program provided 39 Colorado educational providers that serve 50% or more students who qualify for free or reduced lunch with \$2,500 each to increase access to free menstrual hygiene products in gender-neutral spaces in schools.</p> <p>The Colorado Department of Education administered the grant program.</p>	<p>1) Increased number of gender-neutral spaces where students can access free menstrual hygiene products;            2) Increased number of gender-neutral spaces where students can dispose of menstrual hygiene products; and            3) Decreased amount of missed class time and absenteeism due to lack of access to menstrual hygiene products.</p>	<p>Improved academic performance through reduction of missed class time and absenteeism</p> <p>Increased feelings of belonging and safety for all students, especially those who are trans and non-gender conforming</p>