



State of Connecticut
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Commission on Children



2008 School Bullying Law Emphasizes Prevention, Model Policies

On June 12, 2008 Governor Rell signed into law a measure that will strengthen state and local efforts to prevent school bullying. The law, *An Act Concerning School Learning Environment* (Public Act 08-160), requires—among other things—that every school board implement a bullying prevention strategy, that the state Department of Education to develop model policies, and that bullying prevention become an in-service training topic for school personnel.

Here's an in-depth explanation of what the law does:

- **Requires every school board to develop and implement a *prevention and intervention strategy* to address bullying.** This strategy can include:
 - implementation of a positive behavioral interventions and supports process or another evidence-based model approach for safe school climate or bullying prevention;
 - a school survey to determine the prevalence of bullying;
 - a coordinating committee—with broad representation—to review the survey results and implement the strategy;
 - school rules that prohibit bullying, harassment, and intimidation and that establish appropriate consequences for those who engage in such acts;
 - adequate adult supervision of outdoor areas, hallways, lunchrooms, and other specific areas where bullying is likely to occur;
 - inclusion of grade-appropriate bullying prevention curricula in kindergarten through high school;
 - individual interventions with the bully, the bully's parents, and school staff as well as interventions with the bullied child, the child's parents; and school staff;
 - school-wide training on creating a safe school climate; and

- promotion of parent involvement in bullying prevention through individual or team participation in meetings, trainings, and individual interventions.
- **Clarifies that school boards must follow the bullying policies they adopt.** School boards have been required since 2003 to adopt anti-bullying policies; this legislation significantly expands the policy requirements.
- **Requires schools to investigate written reports of suspected bullying, regardless of who submits the report or whether the reporter is known or anonymous.** Previous law required only that reports by parents be investigated. (No disciplinary action may be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous report.)
- **Requires schools to identify the appropriate school personnel responsible for receiving and investigating bullying reports.**
- **Specifies that each school must invite all parents of students who commit bullying acts and all parents of bullied students to attend at least one meeting.**
- **Requires each school board to submit its bullying policy to the State Department of Education by February 1, 2009.**
- **Mandates inclusion of each school board's bullying policy in the school district's publication of the rules, procedures and standards of conduct for schools and in all student handbooks by July 1, 2009.**
- **Requires each school annually to report the number of verified acts of bullying to the State Department of Education, within available appropriations.**
- **Directs the state Department of Education to take specific actions to assist schools in reducing the incidence of bullying,** effective July 1, 2009 and within available appropriations. (Through the bill's fiscal note, the State Department of Education has indicated that it can meet the requirements contained within the bill with existing resources.)

The state Department of Education shall:

- review and analyze the bullying policies of each school district in the state;
- examine the relationship between bullying, school climate, and student outcomes;

- document school districts' articulated needs for technical assistance and training related to safe learning and bullying;
 - collect information on the prevention and intervention strategies used by schools to reduce the incidence of bullying, improve school climate and improve reporting outcomes;
 - develop model policies for grades kindergarten to twelve, inclusive, for the prevention of bullying; and
 - submit a report on (1) the status of these bullying prevention efforts and (2) the department's recommendations regarding additional activities and funding to prevent bullying and improve school climate. This report shall be submitted to the Education and Children's committees of the General Assembly by February 1, 2010.
- **Revises the definition of 'bullying' in state law.** Under the legislation, "bullying" means "any overt acts by a student or a group of students directed against another student with the intent to ridicule, harass, humiliate or intimidate the other student while on school grounds, at a school-sponsored activity or on a school bus, which acts are *committed more than once against any student during the school year.*" Current law replaces the last phrase with "repeated against the same student over time."
 - **Makes bullying prevention a required in-service training topic for teachers, administrators, and pupil personnel,** effective July 1, 2009. School boards that implement an evidence-based model for preventing bullying are exempt.
 - **Requires that anyone in a teacher-preparation course leading to certification be encouraged to complete a school bullying and suicide prevention component,** effective July 1, 2009.

For more information, visit the Bullying section of the Commission on Children website, at www.cga.ct.gov/coc/bullying.htm, or contact:

Thomas R. Brooks
 Director of Policy and Research Analysis
 Connecticut Commission on Children
 18-20 Trinity Street
 Hartford, CT 06106
 (860) 240.0290
thomas.brooks@cga.ct.gov

6/18/08