



OLR RESEARCH REPORT

February 3, 2011

2011-R-0072

MASSACHUSETTS' REQUIRED TRAINING FOR SCHOOL STAFF ON BULLYING PREVENTION

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You asked for a summary of the provisions of a 2010 Massachusetts law requiring (1) training for school staff on school bullying prevention and intervention and (2) the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to report on cost-effective ways for schools to implement the required training. You also asked for summary of the department's report on low-cost and no-cost professional development options.

SUMMARY

In 2010, Massachusetts adopted a comprehensive state law to address school bullying and cyberbullying ([Chapter 92 of the Acts of 2010](#)). Among other things, the new law requires public and private schools to train their instructional and support staff to recognize, intervene, and prevent school bullying. It also requires the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to identify cost-effective methods for schools and school districts to provide the training, including at least one that would cost nothing.

The department's [report](#) lists several resources for staff training curricula and materials, including district attorneys' offices, the nonprofit [Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center](#), state and federal

agencies, professional organizations, and advocacy groups. The report notes that training options might have to be combined in order to fully meet the law's requirements for training content.

The department's report does not provide a specific estimate of how much the training will cost districts and schools, but acknowledges that they will incur costs for staff time and for covering staff duties while they attend training. The report estimates the department's own costs to administer the new law at \$200,000 for the first year and \$100,000 annually thereafter.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT REQUIREMENTS

The Massachusetts law requires each school district and each charter, approved private, and collaborative school to (1) develop and implement a bullying prevention and intervention plan by December 31, 2010 and (2) update it at least every two years. The plan must include ongoing professional development and training for all school staff in how to prevent, identify, and respond to bullying. The staff to be trained must include educators, administrators, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, extracurricular activity advisors, and paraprofessionals.

The training must include at least:

1. appropriate methods to prevent, as well as to immediately and effectively intervene to stop, bullying;
2. information on the interaction and power relationship between and among the bully, his or her victim, and those who witness bullying incidents;
3. research findings on bullying, including information on types of students particularly at-risk for school bullying; and
4. information on the incidence and nature of cyberbullying and related Internet safety issues.

In addition, each school and school district must train staff annually on their own school's bullying prevention and intervention plan.

STATE REPORT ON PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPTIONS

The law required the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to report to the legislature's Education Committee by August 31, 2010 on cost-effective ways to implement the law's professional development requirements. The report had to:

1. include at least one option that would be available to schools and school districts at no cost,
2. explore the feasibility of options for (a) a "train-the-trainer" model with demonstrated success and (b) online training,
3. include any other cost-effective options, and
4. include a cost estimate for the professional development.

No-Cost and Low-Cost Options

The [report](#) identified the following training options available free or for very low cost. It also notes that these programs may or may not cover all the training areas mandated by the law.

- Many Massachusetts district attorneys' offices offer free training focusing on bullying prevention and intervention and Internet safety.
- The Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center, a nonprofit educational research center located at Bridgewater State College, offers "[train-the-trainer](#)" workshops for school staff. The workshops focus on cyberbullying and bullying prevention and intervention. Once trained, school staff may use the workshop materials and skills to train other staff at no additional cost.
- Curricula on developmentally appropriate methods for effective intervention to stop bullying are available from state and federal agencies, including the Massachusetts attorney general's office and the federal departments of Education and Justice, among others.
- Social competency curricula are widely available for several hundred to \$1,000. Though these programs focus on training students, they can also be used to train staff.

- Two members of the Elementary and Secondary Education Department staff will offer training at no program cost, but only temporarily. The staff members are funded by the federal Safe and Drug Free Schools grant, which is expiring on June 30, 2011.

The department cautions that, while these training programs charge either nothing or low fees for the actual training, schools and school districts may incur related costs if, for example, collective bargaining agreements require them to pay stipends for mandatory professional development.

“Train the Trainer” and Online Options

Several of the programs listed above are structured as “train the trainer” models. The department also reports that it is developing a web-based training tool on the general responsibilities of school staff under the new law. The program will be available at no cost in the spring of 2011.

Other Cost-Effective Options

The department also found that bullying prevention training resources are available from (1) professional organizations, including those representing state’s school superintendents and school counselors, the Anti-Defamation League, and the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association, and (2) advocacy organizations focused on vulnerable populations such as students with disabilities or gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgendered students. However, the department found that none of the programs previously or currently offered addresses all of the law’s professional development requirements.

Professional Development Cost Estimate

The report includes a discussion of the cost of the law’s professional development requirements for schools and school districts. Although it notes that the exact cost will be determined on a school or school district basis according to their individual implementation plans, the requirements will mean expenses for (1) staff time to attend training, (2) designing and scheduling the training, and (3) required overage of the duties of staff attending training. The report notes that cost can be mitigated by (1) incorporating the anti-bullying training into existing professional development programs and (2) combining resources with other schools and districts.

The department will also use \$1 million in federal Safe and Drug Free Schools funding to provide grants to school districts and charter schools to help cover extra professional development costs. But the federal funding is temporary and not available after June 30, 2011.

The department estimates its own cost for implementing the new law, including the professional development requirements, will be \$200,000 for the first year and \$100,000 per year thereafter. The estimate is based on the cost of assigning 1.5 department staff members to research bullying prevention and intervention strategies; develop model plans and a system for collecting plans that districts must file with the state; create regulations, guidance, and best practices; develop curricula; and provide technical assistance.

HYPERLINKS

An Act Relative to Bullying in the Schools, Mass. Session Laws, Chapter 92 of the Acts of 2010.

<http://www.malegislature.gov/Laws/SessionLaws/Acts/2010/Chapter92>

A Report on Bullying Prevention and Intervention professional Development, Massachusetts Department of Elementary & Secondary Education, October 2010.

<http://www.doe.mass.edu/research/reports/BullyingPrevention.pdf>

Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center.

<http://webhost.bridgew.edu/marc/>

Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center, *Bullying & Cyberbullying "Train The Trainer" Professional Development*.

<http://webhost.bridgew.edu/marc/ttt.html>

JL: ek