

Center for Children's Advocacy

University of Connecticut School of Law, 65 Elizabeth Street, Hartford, CT 06105

TESTIMONY OF THE CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY IN SUPPORT OF RAISED BILL NO. 169 AN ACT REQUIRING BEHAVIORAL HEALTH ASSESSMENTS FOR CHILDREN, WITH PROPOSED AMENDMENTS REGARDING THE IMPACT OF TRAUMATIC STRESS ON STUDENTS' BEHAVIOR AND ABILITY TO LEARN.

This testimony is submitted on behalf of the Center for Children's Advocacy, a private, non-profit legal organization affiliated with the University of Connecticut School of Law. The Center provides holistic legal services for poor children in Connecticut's communities through individual representation and systemic advocacy.

The Center for Children's Advocacy supports amending Chapter 169 of the Connecticut General Statutes to require behavioral assessments of school children. In addition, the Center urges this committee to address the impact of traumatic stress on students' behavior and their ability to learn.

Schools are the central community for most children and can play a crucial role in identifying areas of need and linking children to help when they need it. Traumatic stress resulting from the exposure to gun violence, domestic violence or child abuse can have a significant impact on a student's behavior and his/her ability to learn. Schools have a unique opportunity to link students with services that can help them heal from trauma.

In order to effectively address the impact of traumatic stress on behavior and learning, students and school professionals need an embedded system of support that recognizes the signs of traumatic stress and how to best support students in their healing process. Far too often we have represented clients who have experienced some form of trauma and the response from school professionals has been that they did not think of this as a problem impacting learning or if they did, they were not aware of what services are available to support these students at school and in the community.



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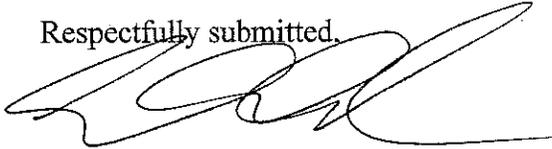
I. ASSESSMENTS PURSUANT TO CONN. GEN. STAT. SECTION 10-206 SHOULD REQUIRE THAT THE HEALTH CARE PROVIDER PERFORMING THE CHILD'S ASSESSMENT EVALUATE THE IMPACT OF TRAUMATIC STRESS ON THE CHILD'S BEHAVIOR AND ABILITY TO LEARN.

- School districts should ensure that the team of school personnel charged with evaluating the child's behavior is well versed on trauma informed theory, interventions and practice.
- Primary care providers who complete the assessment form pursuant to § 10-206 should screen children for exposure to an acute event or a chronic history of trauma as part of their annual well-child examination and evaluation.
- The assessment should describe how the history of trauma impacts the child's behavior and his/her ability to make academic progress including but not limited to whether the child's behavior makes her/him unavailable for learning.

- For those children whose ability to learn is significantly impaired by trauma, the health provider shall inform the child's parent and the school administration of the possibility that the child may need to be referred for special education evaluations pursuant to Conn. Gen. Stat. Section 10-76(d) and/or availability of reasonable accommodations pursuant to § 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

We strongly urge you to consider the proposed amendments in order to ensure that students impacted by traumatic stress receive timely and adequate screenings and services.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Edwin Colon', written over a horizontal line.

Edwin Colon, J.D., LCSW
Staff Attorney