



PA 22-116—sHB 5466

Education Committee

Appropriations Committee

AN ACT CONCERNING ASSORTED REVISIONS AND ADDITIONS TO THE EDUCATION STATUTES

SUMMARY: This act makes the following changes in the education statutes:

1. requires the Connecticut Prevention Network to report to executive branch agencies and the Education Committee about the possibility of creating recovery high schools (§ 1);
2. allows parents and guardians to access the class rank of their minor child (i.e., a student under age 18) (§ 2);
3. extends the special education services and funding task force’s report due date by two years, from January 1, 2022, to January 1, 2024 (see **BACKGROUND**) (§ 3);
4. requires the executive director of the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE), or his designee, to convene a working group to make recommendations about consolidating or eliminating obsolete or redundant professional development requirements (§ 4);
5. requires the Office of Early Childhood (OEC) commissioner to include a family income provision in state contracts with child care homes and centers for disadvantaged children (§ 5);
6. adds licensed marriage and family therapists (MFTs) to the list of professionals about whose employment the State Department of Education (SDE) must annually survey school boards, and requires the education commissioner to report the survey results and student-to-worker ratio for MFTs to the Children’s and Education committees (§ 6);
7. adds MFTs to the new grant program that SDE must create under PA 22-80, §§ 4 & 5, to hire and retain more school social workers, school psychologists, school counselors, and nurses (§§ 7 & 8);
8. requires boards of education to provide paraprofessionals with (a) adequate notice, and training when requested, before attending planning and placement team (PPT) meetings and (b) access to their students’ individualized education programs (IEPs) (§ 9);
9. adds new duties for any school counselor hired by a board using SDE’s new grant program established under PA 22-47, § 13 (§ 10); and
10. adds some qualifications for certain members of the task force created by PA 22-80, § 11, to study the Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference’s (CIAC) governance structure and internal procedures (§ 11).

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2022, except provisions on the following topics take effect upon passage: the special education funding task force (§ 3), professional development working group (§ 4), school district employment survey (§ 6), school

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counselor hiring grants (§ 10), and CIAC task force (§ 11).

§ 1 — RECOVERY HIGH SCHOOLS

The act requires the Connecticut Prevention Network to develop a report about recovery high schools, if the network is available and willing. According to the act, recovery high schools are designed specifically for students in recovery from substance use disorder or co-occurring disorders. The network's report must address at least the following topics: (1) how other states have implemented and integrated recovery high schools into their public school system and (2) recommendations for establishing and implementing these schools in Connecticut. The network may consult with regional behavioral health action organizations while developing its report.

By January 1, 2024, the network must submit its findings and recommendations to the Department of Education, Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, and the Education Committee.

§ 2 — ACCESS TO STUDENT CLASS RANK

By law, any minor student's parent or legal guardian may request access to educational, medical, or similar records maintained in the student's record, so long as the information is not privileged under state law. The act expands this access to include the student's class rank. By law and unchanged by the act, parents or guardians must submit a written request for this information to the board of education.

§ 4 — PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP

The act requires the CAFE executive director, or his designee, to convene a nine-member working group, if he is available and willing, to examine and make recommendations about consolidating or eliminating obsolete or redundant professional development requirements.

Under the act, the group must consist of the education commissioner, or her designee, along with one representative chosen from each of the following associations: CAFE, Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents, Connecticut Federation of School Administrators, Connecticut Education Association, American Federation of Teachers-Connecticut, Connecticut Association of School Administrators, Connecticut Association of Schools, and Special Education Equity for Kids of Connecticut.

The group must report to the Education Committee by January 1, 2024, on its findings and recommendations for legislation to amend the professional development and in-service training laws.

§ 5 — CHILD CARE HOMES AND CENTERS FOR DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN

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By law, the state through the OEC commissioner may enter into contracts that provide state financial assistance (i.e., grants) to municipalities, human resource development agencies, nonprofit corporations, or group or family child care homes for developing and operating child care homes or centers for disadvantaged children. Beginning July 1, 2022, the act requires any of these contracts that the OEC commissioner enters to include a provision requiring at least 60% of the enrolled children to be from families with incomes at or below 75% of the state median income.

§§ 6-8 — LICENSED MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPISTS

School District Employment Survey (§ 6)

PA 22-80, § 3, requires SDE to develop and distribute a survey by July 1, 2023, within available appropriations that school districts must annually complete about the number of school social workers, psychologists, counselors, and nurses they employ. The act adds licensed MFTs' employment to the survey. Specifically, the survey must also include information on (1) the number of MFTs employed and assigned to each school in a district; (2) whether any are assigned to more than one school, and if so, the geographic area they cover; and (3) an annual estimate of how many students received direct services from MFTs during the five-year period before the survey is completed.

After receiving a district's completed survey, the act requires the education commissioner to annually calculate the student-to-worker ratio for the MFTs in each school and each district. Beginning by January 1, 2024, the commissioner must annually submit a report on the survey's results and the student-to-worker ratios to the Children's and Education committees.

Grant Program for MFT Hiring and Retention (§ 7)

The act adds MFTs to the new grant program that SDE must create under PA 22-80, §§ 4 & 5, for FYs 23 to 25 to hire and retain more school social workers, school psychologists, school counselors, and nurses.

Applications. PA 22-80 requires grant applications to be filed with the education commissioner when and how she decides. As part of the application, an applicant must submit a (1) grant expenditure plan and (2) copy of the completed survey school board employment survey. The act adds the following information to the plan requirements for grant applications for MFTs:

1. the number of additional licensed MFTs to be hired;
2. the number of licensed MFTs being retained who were previously hired with the assistance of these grant funds; and
3. whether the licensed MFTs will conduct student assessments or provide services to students based on assessment results, and the type of those services.

Grant Awards. The act requires the commissioner to prioritize school districts with large student-to-worker ratios for licensed MFTs when determining whether

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to award a grant to an applicant.

Conforming Changes (§ 8)

The act also makes conforming changes to specify that the grant program administrator that SDE must hire under PA 22-80, § 5, must also oversee grant applications for school boards' employment of licensed MFTs.

§ 9 — PARAPROFESSIONALS AND PPT MEETINGS

Under the act, local and regional boards of education must provide adequate advance notice of a PPT meeting to any paraprofessional assigned to a student receiving special education services (1) if the parent, guardian, student, or surrogate parent has requested his or her attendance and (2) so that he or she may adequately prepare. Additionally, if the paraprofessional requests it, a board must provide training on his or her role at the meeting. Specifically, these requirements apply to PPT meetings where a student's individualized educational program (IEP) is developed, reviewed, or revised.

The act also requires that the board allow the paraprofessional attending the PPT meeting, or any other paraprofessional serving the student, to view the IEP that results from the meeting to be able to provide the student with special education or related services.

§ 10 — NEW REQUIREMENTS FOR SCHOOL COUNSELOR HIRING GRANTS

PA 22-47, § 13, requires SDE to administer a grant program for FYs 23-25 to provide funding to boards of education to hire school mental health specialists, including school counselors, among others. The act adds a new duty for any school counselor hired by a board that receives this grant. Under the act, the counselor must provide one-on-one consultations with each student in grades 11 and 12 about the completion of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), which students must submit to higher education institutions to be eligible for federal, state, or institutional aid.

Additionally under the act, if the employing board can prove to the education commissioner that the school district's FAFSA completion rate has increased by at least 5%, then the board will receive a 10% bonus on top of the grant received in the fiscal year when the board demonstrated the completion rate increase.

PA 22-47 also requires boards to submit a plan for grant fund spending when they apply for a grant. In addition to the information required under PA 22-47, the act requires the plan to describe how the board will implement the FAFSA counseling requirements and completion rate demonstration.

The act also makes conforming and technical changes.

§ 11 — CIAC TASK FORCE MEMBERSHIP

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The act adds some qualifications for certain members of the task force created by PA 22-80, § 11, to study CIAC's governance structure and internal procedures. The act specifies that the (1) House speaker's appointee must be a coach for a public school district that is a member of CIAC; (2) House majority leader's appointee must be an expert in diversity in sports that is a member of CIAC and (3) Senate majority leader's appointee must be an athletic director for a public school district, rather than any school district, that is a CIAC member.

BACKGROUND

Special Education Services and Funding Task Force

Existing law requires this task force to study, among other things, (1) the cost of providing special education and related services per school district, along with its annual percentage increase or decrease; (2) state reimbursement levels to districts for these costs; and (3) whether boards of education are providing services directly or partnering with regional education service centers, private providers, or as part of cooperative arrangements with other districts (PA 21-95, § 3).