
SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 5365

State of Washington

63rd Legislature

2013 Regular Session

By Senate Early Learning & K-12 Education (originally sponsored by Senators Rolfes, Cleveland, Frockt, Kohl-Welles, and Kline)

READ FIRST TIME 02/11/13.

1 AN ACT Relating to increasing the capacity of school districts to
2 recognize and respond to troubled youth; amending RCW 28A.410.035;
3 adding a new section to chapter 28A.410 RCW; adding new sections to
4 chapter 28A.320 RCW; adding a new section to chapter 28A.310 RCW; and
5 creating new sections.

6 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

7 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) The legislature finds that:

8 (a) According to the state department of health, suicide is the
9 second leading cause of death for Washington youth between the ages of
10 ten and twenty-four. Suicide rates among Washington youth remain
11 higher than that national average;

12 (b) An increasing body of research shows an association between
13 adverse childhood experiences such as trauma, violence, or abuse, and
14 school performance. Children and teens spend a significant amount of
15 time in school. Teachers and other school staff who interact with them
16 daily are in a prime position to recognize the signs of emotional or
17 behavioral distress and make appropriate referrals. School personnel
18 need effective training to help them build the skills and confidence to
19 assist youth in seeking help;

1 (c) Educators are not necessarily trained to address significant
2 social, emotional, or behavioral issues exhibited by youth. Rather,
3 best practices guidelines suggest that school districts should form
4 partnerships with qualified health, mental health, and social services
5 agencies to provide support; and

6 (d) Current safe school plans prepared by school districts tend to
7 focus more on natural disasters and external threats and less on how to
8 recognize and respond to potential crises among the students inside the
9 school.

10 (2) Therefore, the legislature intends to increase the capacity for
11 school districts to recognize and respond to youth in need through
12 additional training, more comprehensive planning, and emphasis on
13 partnerships between schools and communities.

14 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 28A.410
15 RCW to read as follows:

16 (1) As provided under subsections (2) and (3) of this section,
17 individuals certified by the professional educator standards board as
18 a school nurse, school social worker, school psychologist, or school
19 counselor must complete a training program on youth suicide screening
20 and referral as a condition of certification. The training program
21 must be at least three hours in length. The professional educator
22 standards board must adopt standards for the minimum content of the
23 training in consultation with the office of the superintendent of
24 public instruction and the department of health. In developing the
25 standards, the board must consider training programs listed on the best
26 practices registry of the American foundation for suicide prevention
27 and the suicide prevention resource center.

28 (2) This section applies to the following certificates if the
29 certificate is first issued or is renewed on or after July 1, 2015:

30 (a) Continuing certificates for school nurses;

31 (b) Continuing certificates for school social workers;

32 (c) Continuing and professional certificates for school
33 psychologists; and

34 (d) Continuing and professional certificates for school counselors.

35 (3) A school counselor who holds or submits a school counseling
36 certificate from the national board for professional teaching standards
37 or a school psychologist who holds or submits a school psychologist

1 certificate from the national association of school psychologists in
2 lieu of a professional certificate must complete the training program
3 under subsection (1) of this section by July 1, 2015, or within the
4 five-year period before the certificate is first submitted to the
5 professional educator standards board, whichever is later, and at least
6 once every five years thereafter in order to be considered certified by
7 the professional educator standards board.

8 (4) The professional educator standards board shall consider the
9 training program under subsection (1) of this section as approved
10 continuing education under RCW 28A.415.020 and shall count the training
11 program toward meeting continuing education requirements for
12 certification as a school nurse, school social worker, school
13 psychologist, or school counselor.

14 **Sec. 3.** RCW 28A.410.035 and 1990 c 90 s 1 are each amended to read
15 as follows:

16 (1) To receive initial certification as a teacher in this state
17 after August 31, 1991, an applicant shall have successfully completed
18 a course on issues of abuse. The content of the course shall discuss
19 the identification of physical, emotional, sexual, and substance abuse,
20 information on the impact of abuse on the behavior and learning
21 abilities of students, discussion of the responsibilities of a teacher
22 to report abuse or provide assistance to students who are the victims
23 of abuse, and methods for teaching students about abuse of all types
24 and their prevention.

25 (2) The professional educator standards board shall incorporate
26 into the content required for the course under this section, knowledge
27 and skill standards pertaining to recognition, initial screening, and
28 response to emotional or behavioral distress in students, including but
29 not limited to indicators of possible substance abuse, violence, and
30 youth suicide. To receive initial certification after August 31, 2014,
31 an applicant must have successfully completed a course that includes
32 the content of this subsection. The board shall consult with the
33 office of the superintendent of public instruction and the department
34 of health in developing the standards.

35 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** A new section is added to chapter 28A.320
36 RCW to read as follows:

1 (1) Beginning in the 2014-15 school year, each school district must
2 adopt a plan for recognition, initial screening, and response to
3 emotional or behavioral distress in students, including but not limited
4 to indicators of possible substance abuse, violence, and youth suicide.
5 The school district must annually provide the plan to all district
6 staff.

7 (2) At a minimum the plan must address:

8 (a) Identification of training opportunities in recognition,
9 screening, and referral that may be available for staff;

10 (b) How to use the expertise of district staff who have been
11 trained in recognition, screening, and referral;

12 (c) How staff should respond to suspicions, concerns, or warning
13 signs of emotional or behavioral distress in students;

14 (d) Identification and development of partnerships with community
15 organizations and agencies for referral of students to health, mental
16 health, substance abuse, and social support services, including
17 development of at least one memorandum of understanding between the
18 district and such an entity in the community or region;

19 (e) Protocols and procedures for communication with parents;

20 (f) How staff should respond to a crisis situation where a student
21 is in imminent danger to himself or herself or others; and

22 (g) How the district will provide support to students and staff
23 after an incident of violence or youth suicide.

24 (3) The plan under this section may be a separate plan or a
25 component of another district plan or policy, such as the harassment,
26 intimidation, and bullying prevention policy under RCW 28A.300.2851 or
27 the comprehensive safe school plan required under RCW 28A.320.125.

28 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** A new section is added to chapter 28A.320
29 RCW to read as follows:

30 The office of the superintendent of public instruction and the
31 school safety advisory committee shall develop a model school district
32 plan for recognition, initial screening, and response to emotional or
33 behavioral distress in students, including but not limited to
34 indicators of possible substance abuse, violence, and youth suicide.
35 The model plan must incorporate research-based best practices,
36 including practices and protocols used in schools and school districts
37 in other states. The model plan must be posted by February 1, 2014, on

1 the school safety center web site, along with relevant resources and
2 information to support school districts in developing and implementing
3 the plan required under section 4 of this act.

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 6.** A new section is added to chapter 28A.310
5 RCW to read as follows:

6 Each educational service district shall develop and maintain the
7 capacity to offer training for educators and other school district
8 staff on youth suicide screening and referral, and on recognition,
9 initial screening, and response to emotional or behavioral distress in
10 students, including but not limited to indicators of possible substance
11 abuse, violence, and youth suicide. An educational service district
12 may demonstrate capacity by employing staff with sufficient expertise
13 to offer the training or by contracting with individuals or
14 organizations to offer the training. Training may be offered on a fee-
15 for-service basis, or at no cost to school districts or educators if
16 funds are appropriated specifically for this purpose or made available
17 through grants or other sources.

18 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 7.** The office of the superintendent of public
19 instruction shall convene a temporary task force to identify best
20 practices, model programs, and successful strategies for school
21 districts to form partnerships with qualified health, mental health,
22 and social services agencies in the community to coordinate and improve
23 support for youth in need. The task force shall identify and develop
24 resource documents to be posted on the school safety center web site,
25 and submit a report with recommendations to the education committees of
26 the legislature by December 1, 2013. The task force shall also explore
27 the potential use of advance online youth emotional health and crisis
28 response systems that have been developed for use in other countries.
29 The task force must include the results of the review in its December
30 1st report.

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