

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1264

As Reported by House Committee On:
Education

Title: An act relating to secondary traumatic stress in public school staff.

Brief Description: Concerning secondary traumatic stress in public school staff.

Sponsors: Representatives Ortiz-Self, Orwall, Bergquist, Santos, Dolan, Lovick, Peterson, Reeves, Sells, Stanford, Appleton, Callan, Wylie and Pollet.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 2/5/19, 2/7/19 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to develop online training modules to support teachers affected by secondary traumatic stress.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 19 members: Representatives Santos, Chair; Dolan, Vice Chair; Paul, Vice Chair; Steele, Ranking Minority Member; McCaslin, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Volz, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bergquist, Caldier, Callan, Corry, Harris, Kilduff, Kraft, Ortiz-Self, Rude, Stonier, Thai, Valdez and Ybarra.

Staff: Megan Wargacki (786-7194).

Background:

Secondary Traumatic Stress.

The United States Department of Health and Human Services defines secondary traumatic stress disorder, or compassion fatigue, as a natural, but disruptive by-product of working with people who have been traumatized. Evidence of secondary traumatic stress can be difficult to recognize in oneself or even in others. Symptoms often include a combination of cognitive, behavioral, emotional, spiritual, and physical features, such as feelings of

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isolation, anxiety, dissociation, physical ailments, and sleep disturbances. Secondary traumatic stress is preventable and treatable, however, if unaddressed, the symptoms can result in problems with mental and physical health, strained personal relationships, and poor work performance.

Professional Learning.

Washington defines professional learning as a comprehensive, sustained, job-embedded, and collaborative approach to improving teachers' and principals' effectiveness in raising student achievement. Professional learning must incorporate differentiated, coherent, sustained, and evidence-based strategies that improve educator effectiveness and student achievement. It should include the work of established collaborative teams of staff members, who commit to working together on an ongoing basis to accomplish common goals and who are engaged in a continuous cycle of professional improvement. Professional learning should be facilitated by well-prepared leaders who incorporate knowledge, skills, and dispositions for leading professional learning of adults.

State funding for professional learning days for teachers and other certificated instructional staff must be provided to school districts as follows:

- one professional learning day in the 2018-19 school year;
- two professional learning days in the 2019-20 school year; and
- three professional learning days in the 2020-21 school year.

Summary of Bill:

Secondary Traumatic Stress Modules.

The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) must identify or develop online training modules to support teachers affected by secondary traumatic stress, and make the modules available on its website. At a minimum, the modules must:

- describe the signs and symptoms of secondary traumatic stress and how it is different from other trauma or stress disorders;
- outline the reasons why teachers and other school staff might be at risk for secondary traumatic stress;
- include a self-assessment for secondary traumatic stress;
- describe the impact of secondary stress on various life domains, such as: the cognitive, professional, emotional, spiritual, environmental, and financial domains;
- teach how to craft a self-care plan with attainable objectives, and explain the barriers to self-care and how to overcome these barriers; and
- include an appendix of resources on secondary traumatic stress and self-care.

Professional Learning Topics.

Beginning in fiscal year 2021, if the number of state-allocated professional learning days for either certificated instructional staff or classified staff is increased beyond the number allocated in fiscal year 2020, the OSPI must include the secondary traumatic stress training modules on the menu of professional learning topics that may be implemented on the additional professional learning days.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Many school district have experienced lots of trauma, with the most extreme being shootings at schools and in surrounding neighborhoods. Teachers live through this trauma every day. This bill does not mandate that districts do anything other than offer an online module on secondary traumatic stress. The module will help teachers learn information about secondary traumatic stress, provide an assessment that helps teachers determine if they are affected, and provide resources about what to do if teachers are affected. The module will be just one of many professional learning topics that school districts can offer. Educators often ignore the signs of secondary traumatic stress so that they can be there for everyone else.

Attending to the secondary traumatic stress of kindergarten through twelfth grade educators are critical to increase the overall professional performance and reduce the potential for compassion fatigue, which can result in decreased levels of professional wellness and, in some cases, burnout. This bill has a clear and succinct focus on the development and implementation of training modules that will increase educator understanding and access to the skills necessary to successfully navigate the inherent stress of the workplace and positively enhance the school climate overall.

School districts are a microcosm of our society, though educators have unique needs due to where they work. All educators work with traumatized students daily. There is increasingly an emphasis on trauma informed instruction; this bill addresses what staff's need. After school shootings, some school districts offer staff access to post-traumatic stress disorder counselors. The other types of traumas that teachers see in their students are suicidal ideation, bullying, abuse, parent divorce, and the death of a parent. All of these things can cause secondary trauma in teachers. This will be a well-researched and evidence-based program. Teachers could use this program as individuals or in groups, or districts could use it for district-wide professional development.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Ortiz-Self, prime sponsor; Mona Johnson, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction; and Lucinda Young, Washington Education Association.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.