

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1759

As Reported by House Committee On:
Education

Title: An act relating to requiring school districts and other public education entities to make information from the department of health about substance use trends, overdose symptoms and response, and the secure storage of prescription drugs, over-the-counter medications, and firearms and ammunition, available through their websites and other communication resources.

Brief Description: Requiring school districts and other public education entities to make information from the department of health about substance use trends, overdose symptoms and response, and the secure storage of prescription drugs, over-the-counter medications, and firearms and ammunition, available through their websites and other communication resources.

Sponsors: Representatives Callan, Harris, Berry, Davis, Ramos, Santos, Senn, Sullivan, Valdez, Pollet, Peterson, Goodman, Macri and Dolan.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 1/20/22, 1/27/22 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires the Department of Health (DOH) to post and periodically revise on its website information about substance use trends, overdose symptoms and response, and the secure storage of prescription drugs, over-the-counter medications, and firearms and ammunition.
- Requires school districts to post a prominent link on their homepage, and the homepage of each school within the district, to the delineated DOH information and to make the information accessible through various communication means.
- Makes comparable posting requirements for the DOH information for

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educational service districts, charter schools, and state-tribal compact schools.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Santos, Chair; Dolan, Vice Chair; Berg, Bergquist, Callan, Ortiz-Self, Rude, Steele and Stonier.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 3 members: Representatives Walsh, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; McCaslin and McEntire.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 1 member: Representative Ybarra, Ranking Minority Member.

Staff: Ethan Moreno (786-7386).

Background:

Department of Health.

The Department of Health (DOH) administers various programs and services that promote public health through disease and injury prevention, immunization, newborn screening, professional and health care facility licensing, and public education. The DOH is also involved the promotion of safe and healthy schools, including duties related to environmental health, immunization, and sexual health education.

Information about Behavioral Health Resources.

Recently enacted legislation has established new public school requirements for providing students with information about behavioral health resources. Legislation adopted in 2020 (Substitute House Bill 2589, enacted as ch. 39, Laws of 2020), requires public schools that issue student identification cards, staff identification cards, or both, to print on the cards:

- the contact information for a national suicide prevention organization; and
- the contact information for one or more campus, local, state, or national organizations specializing in suicide prevention, crisis intervention, or counseling, if available.

Legislation adopted in 2021 (Substitute House Bill 1373, enacted as ch. 167, Laws of 2021), requires public schools that maintain websites to publish on their homepage specific information about behavioral health resources, including contact information for suicide prevention organizations, and organizations specializing in depression, anxiety, or counseling for adolescents.

The 2021 legislation also directed public schools to post information on social media

websites used by school districts for the purpose of notifying students, families, and the public of the behavioral health resources published on their website homepages.

The requirements of the legislation adopted in 2020 and 2021 were directed by the Legislature to be completed by schools within existing resources.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

Department of Health.

The DOH must post and periodically revise on its website information about substance use trends, overdose symptoms and response, and the secure storage of prescription drugs, over-the-counter medications, and firearms and ammunition. The information must be provided or otherwise made accessible to school districts, charter public schools, state-tribal compact schools, and educational service districts (ESDs), and must be formatted for the needs of public school students and families.

The posted information also must be in the form of a template that can be revised as necessary and that:

- includes website addresses and telephone numbers of one or more public health agencies with applicable information;
- may include website addresses and telephone numbers of one or more private organizations with applicable information;
- can be replicated for other health and safety topics that are germane to public schools;
- can be easily and readily shared with schools and districts; and
- includes format and content options that schools and districts may use to reflect regional, demographic, and cultural differences.

Education Entities—Information from the Department of Health.

Within existing resources, each school district that maintains a website must post a prominent link on their homepage, and the homepage of each school within the district, to information from the DOH that addresses substance use trends, overdose symptoms and response, and the secure storage of prescription drugs, over-the-counter medications, and firearms and ammunition.

Each school district, for the purpose of informing students, families, and other persons about available health and safety resources, must also make the DOH information accessible through other Internet-based communications, such as social media accounts used by the district, and through other digital and nondigital communications of the district. The required information postings may be made multiple times annually and no less frequently than twice each school year.

The website and other communication requirements for school districts pertaining to the delineated information from the DOH applies also to charter schools, state-tribal compact

schools, and, with some modifications, ESDs.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The substitute bill makes the following changes to the original bill:

- specifies that school and school district postings of information from the DOH may (rather than "must") be made multiple times annually and no less frequently than twice each school year (rather than quarterly); and
- specifies that the information template of the DOH must: be easily and readily shared with schools and districts in accordance with applicable requirements; and include format and content options that schools and districts may use to reflect regional, demographic, and cultural differences.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Preliminary fiscal note available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) A recent committee work session highlighted the need for the information this bill promotes. This legislation is about making helpful information accessible to students and families during a behavioral health crisis and without overburdening schools. Suggestions for changes to the bill will be considered, but the important part is to make the information available and to reduce access to lethal means.

Public health data tell us that thousands of kids live in homes with firearms, and many more live in homes with medications. Families with children are more likely to safely store their weapons because they've received good information about doing so. This bill can be implemented without great difficulty because the needed information already exists.

A key part of supporting student well-being is preventing suicide. Suicide is a leading cause of death in Washington for young people. Youth suicide is often an impulse action and having easy access to firearms and medications is a common trait in youth deaths by suicide. School districts are trusted sources of information.

Easy access to weapons is part of the problem and was a factor in the homicide death of a parent's daughter. Washington's youth suicide rate is higher than the national average and minimizing access to weapons will help. A majority of firearms come from the home, and a study indicated that more than half of firearms owners do not secure their weapons properly.

Youth receive information from websites, and the information made available through the bill will enable students and parents to access helpful information. Schools are an integral part of a student's and parent's life and are a trusted resource for information.

According to a study, 47,000 children under the age of six received emergency medical attention for accidentally ingesting medication when they were unsupervised. People hear the statistics, and think, 'Not here, not in my town,' but the issue of secure storage is too significant for inaction.

(Opposed) None.

(Other) The bill has merit, but schools are under significant stress right now. This bill requires schools to take on a new activity and make quarterly postings, but they don't have capacity to do it. About eight new requirements were adopted for schools last year, more will be adopted this year, and the cumulative effect is difficult for schools. Please pause the policy of this bill or make its provisions optional.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Lisa Callan, prime sponsor; Karyn Brownson, King County Public Health; Gwen Loosmore, Washington State PTA; April Schentrup; Jennifer Dolan Waldman; Leanne Kennedy; and Sarnika Ali.

(Other) Ben Ferney, Eastern Washington Quality Schools Coalition.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.