
HOUSE BILL 1759

State of Washington

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2022 Regular Session

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

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1 AN ACT Relating to requiring school districts and other public
2 education entities to make information from the department of health
3 about substance use trends, overdose symptoms and response, and the
4 secure storage of prescription drugs, over-the-counter medications,
5 and firearms and ammunition, available through their websites and
6 other communication resources; adding a new section to chapter
7 28A.320 RCW; adding a new section to chapter 28A.310 RCW; adding a
8 new section to chapter 70.54 RCW; and creating a new section.

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

10 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) The legislature recognizes that access
11 to information regarding drug overdoses and the secure storage of
12 medication and firearms can help decrease the risks of related
13 injuries and deaths by aiding parents and students in their efforts
14 to keep children and each other safe. The legislature also recognizes
15 that significant increases in ongoing student behavioral health
16 crises, including increased suicide ideation and completion, requires
17 policymakers to promptly and thoughtfully consider reasonable ways of
18 limiting children's access to lethal means.

19 (2) The legislature finds data involving the unintentional
20 ingestion of medications by children highly concerning. Nationally,
21 in 2017 and 2018 there was an average of 47,500 emergency room visits

1 annually for children under the age of six who had accidentally, and
2 without supervision, ingested medicine. This number equates to
3 approximately 130 emergency room visits per day or more than five per
4 hour. During this same two-year period, 23 children under age six
5 were hospitalized each day for an accidental unsupervised ingestion
6 of medicine. Furthermore, the data for 2017 indicates that 84 percent
7 of children receiving emergency treatment for an accidental
8 unsupervised ingestion of medicine were between one and three years
9 old.

10 (3) Although the unintentional ingestion of medications can be
11 fatal for children, regrettably, that threat is only one of many
12 drug-related concerns plaguing families and children. The decades-
13 long opioid crisis, for example, has had profound impacts in our
14 state. According to data from the department of health, in 2018
15 opioids were involved in two-thirds of the drug overdoses in
16 Washington state and in the nation. Also, the 2018 Washington healthy
17 youth survey indicated that about 2,500 12th grade students had tried
18 heroin at least once, and about 3,500 12th grade students had used
19 pain killers to get high in any given month.

20 (4) The legislature also finds that the need for safe secure
21 storage information is evidenced by sobering data. For example,
22 researchers at the University of Washington found in 2018 that 63
23 percent of Washington firearm owners did not practice secure firearm
24 storage; and nationally, about 50,000 children each year are brought
25 to emergency rooms after unintentionally ingesting a medicine when a
26 caregiver was not watching.

27 (5) Researchers estimate that one in three American families with
28 children have at least one firearm in the home. About 75 percent of
29 children aged five through 14 with firearm-owning parents know where
30 the firearms are stored, and more than 20 percent of the children
31 have handled a firearm in the home without their parents' knowledge.

32 (6) The legislature recognizes that the impacts of firearms on
33 the health and safety of children is profound. For example, an
34 analysis of school related gun violence found that more than 85
35 percent of school shooters obtained the firearm at their home or from
36 a friend or relative. Researchers have also found that more than 75
37 percent of firearms used in youth suicide attempts and unintentional
38 injuries were stored in the residence of the victim, a relative, or a
39 friend. Additionally, the two age groups most likely to be both
40 shooters and victims were youth aged 14 to 17, and preschoolers aged

1 five and younger. Furthermore, firearms are the leading cause of
2 death in suicides and homicides by youth and young adults in
3 Washington state.

4 (7) The legislature finds that the challenges of the ongoing
5 COVID-19 pandemic have exacerbated troubling trends with children and
6 firearms. For example, the number of unintentional shooting deaths by
7 children in the United States from the beginning of the COVID-19
8 pandemic, March of 2020 through December of 2020, was 31 percent
9 higher than the same period one year earlier. Nationally during this
10 same period, there were 314 incidents of unintentional shootings by
11 children resulting in 128 gun deaths and 199 nonfatal injuries.

12 (8) The legislature, therefore, in recognition of the critical
13 and ongoing need for life-saving information for items that can
14 accidentally or intentionally inflict great harm on children and
15 families, intends to require that school districts and other public
16 education entities use their websites and other communication
17 resources to provide accurate and easily accessed information about
18 substance use trends, overdose symptoms and response, and the secure
19 storage of prescription drugs, over-the-counter medications, and
20 firearms and ammunition.

21 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 28A.320
22 RCW to read as follows:

23 (1) Within existing resources, each school district that
24 maintains a website must post a prominent link on their homepage, and
25 the homepage for each school within the district, to information from
26 the department of health provided in accordance with section 4 of
27 this act that addresses substance use trends, overdose symptoms and
28 response, and the secure storage of prescription drugs, over-the-
29 counter medications, and firearms and ammunition.

30 (2) Each school district, for the purpose of informing students,
31 families, and other interested persons about available health and
32 safety resources, must also make the information from the department
33 of health accessible through other internet-based communications,
34 such as social media accounts used by the district and through other
35 digital and nondigital communications of the district. Postings
36 required by this subsection must be made multiple times annually and
37 no less frequently than quarterly.

38 (3) This section governs school operation and management under
39 RCW 28A.710.040 and 28A.715.020, and applies to charter schools

1 established under chapter 28A.710 RCW and state-tribal compact
2 schools established under chapter 28A.715 RCW.

3 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** A new section is added to chapter 28A.310
4 RCW to read as follows:

5 (1) Within existing resources, each educational service district
6 that maintains a website must post a prominent link on their homepage
7 to information from the department of health provided in accordance
8 with section 4 of this act that addresses substance use trends,
9 overdose symptoms and response, and the secure storage of
10 prescription drugs, over-the-counter medications, and firearms and
11 ammunition.

12 (2) Each educational service district, for the purpose of
13 informing students, families, and other interested persons about
14 available health and safety resources, must also make the information
15 from the department of health accessible through other internet-based
16 communications, such as social media accounts used by the educational
17 service district and through other digital and nondigital
18 communications of the educational service district. Postings required
19 by this subsection must be made multiple times annually and no less
20 frequently than quarterly.

21 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** A new section is added to chapter 70.54
22 RCW to read as follows:

23 The department of health shall post and periodically revise on
24 its website information about substance use trends, overdose symptoms
25 and response, and the secure storage of prescription drugs, over-the-
26 counter medications, and firearms and ammunition. The information
27 must be provided or otherwise made accessible to school districts,
28 charter public schools, state-tribal compact schools, and educational
29 service districts, and must be formatted for the needs of public
30 school students and families as provided in sections 2 and 3 of this
31 act. The information also must be in the form of a template that can
32 be revised as necessary and that:

33 (1) Includes website addresses and telephone numbers of one or
34 more public health agencies with applicable information;

35 (2) May include website addresses and telephone numbers of one or
36 more private organizations with applicable information; and

1 (3) Can be replicated for other health and safety topics that are
2 germane to public schools.

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