

ASSEMBLY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

ASSEMBLY, No. 2815

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: MARCH 16, 2023

The Assembly Education Committee reports favorably Assembly Bill No. 2815 with committee amendments.

As amended, this bill requires certain school employees to complete training in suicide prevention, awareness, and response.

Under current law, public school teaching staff members receive instruction in suicide prevention as part of their professional development requirements. As amended, this bill specifically requires other school district employees and employees of a contracted service provider, other than mental health care professionals, who have regular and direct contact with students, as determined by the board of education, to complete a one-time training program in suicide prevention, awareness, and response developed or identified by the Department of Education.

The amended bill also directs the Department of Education, in consultation with the Department of Children and Families, the Department of Human Services, the New Jersey Youth Suicide Prevention Advisory Council, suicide prevention experts, and interested stakeholders in the education community, to identify training programs on suicide prevention, awareness, and response that persons subject to the bill's training requirements may access and complete free of charge.

Under the amended bill's provisions, each school district and contracted service provider is to annually provide to its employees the guidelines on the school district's reporting and suicide prevention, awareness, and response protocols, including contact information for each school's designated staff who should be notified whenever an employee believes a student may be at risk for suicide.

The amended bill specifies that a person who is required to receive training pursuant to the provisions of the bill has a duty to warn and protect under certain circumstances and that a person who acts in good faith and takes reasonable steps to discharge a duty to warn and protect is immune from civil and criminal liability in regard to that disclosure.

As amended and reported by the committee, this bill is identical to Senate Bill No. 528 (1R), which also was amended and reported by the committee on this same date.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS:

The committee amended the bill to:

- exclude licensed mental health care professionals from the list of school employees and contracted service providers required to receive training on suicide prevention;
- the amendments specify that the Department of Education, in consultation with various other agencies, is only responsible for identifying suicide prevention training programs; as introduced, the department was also required to develop these programs;
- eliminate the provisions of the bill requiring the department to develop an educational fact sheet on suicide prevention and require that the suicide prevention training be completed not less than 12 months following the date of the identification by the department of the training programs or not less than 12 months from the date that an employee is hired;
- specify that all personnel required to complete the suicide prevention training have a duty to warn and protect when: a student has communicated to that person a clearly identifiable threat of imminent, serious physical violence against oneself and the circumstances are such that a reasonable person would believe the student intended to carry out the threat; or the circumstances are such that a reasonable person would believe the student intended to carry out an act of imminent, serious physical violence against oneself; and
- specify that a person acting in good faith who takes reasonable steps to discharge a duty to warn and protect is immune from civil and criminal liability.