

ASSEMBLY, No. 5220

STATE OF NEW JERSEY 220th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED FEBRUARY 23, 2023

Sponsored by:

Assemblywoman AURA K. DUNN

District 25 (Morris and Somerset)

SYNOPSIS

Requires boards of education to adopt suicide prevention policies and DOE to establish model suicide prevention policy.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



1 AN ACT concerning student suicide prevention and supplementing
2 chapter 6 of Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes.

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4 **BE IT ENACTED** by the Senate and General Assembly of the State
5 of New Jersey:

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7 1. As used in this act:

8 “Intervention” means specific actions implemented by a school
9 in response to student suicidal behavior, including: student
10 supervision; notification of parents or guardians; crisis-response
11 protocols; processes for immediate mental health assessment or
12 emergency services; and school re-entry procedures following a
13 student mental health crisis.

14 “Postvention” means planned support and interventions a school
15 implements after a suicide attempt or suicide of a student or any
16 employee of a school district that are designed to: reduce the risk of
17 suicide contagion; provide support for affected students and any
18 employees of a school district; address the social stigma associated
19 with suicide; and disseminate factual information about suicide.

20 “Prevention” means specific actions a school implements to
21 recognize and reduce suicidal behavior, including: identifying risk
22 and protective factors for suicide and suicide warning signs;
23 establishing a process by which students are referred to a behavioral
24 health provider for help; making available school-based and
25 community-based mental health supports; providing the location of
26 available online and community suicide prevention resources,
27 including local crisis centers and hotlines; and adopting policies and
28 protocols regarding school safety, and crisis response.

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30 2. a. A board of education of a school district shall adopt a
31 policy on student suicide prevention. When developing the policy,
32 a board of education shall review the model policy established by
33 the Commissioner of Education pursuant to subsection b. of this
34 section and consult with school and community stakeholders,
35 school-employed mental health professionals, and suicide
36 prevention experts. A board of education shall have local control
37 over the content of the policy, except that the policy shall, at a
38 minimum:

39 (1) address procedures relating to suicide prevention,
40 intervention, and postvention; and

41 (2) recognize the needs of high-risk groups.

42 b. To assist boards of education in developing policies for
43 student suicide prevention, the commissioner shall develop a model
44 policy, applicable to grades kindergarten through 12. The model
45 policy shall be updated as the commissioner deems necessary.

46 c. A board of education shall:

47 (1) post the policy on the board’s Internet website; and

1 (2) notify students, parents, and guardians that the policy is
2 available on the board's Internet website.

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4 3. This act shall take effect immediately and shall first apply in
5 the first full school year following the date of enactment.

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STATEMENT

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10 This bill requires each public board of education of a school
11 district to adopt a policy on suicide prevention, intervention, and
12 postvention. The bill requires the Commissioner of Education to
13 develop a model policy in order to help boards of education in
14 establishing their own policies. Each board of education's policy is
15 required to be developed in consultation with school and
16 community stakeholders, school-employed mental health
17 professionals, and suicide prevention experts.

18 The policy is required to address procedures relating to suicide
19 prevention, intervention, and postvention, and recognize the needs
20 of high-risk groups. The bill defines "prevention" to mean specific
21 actions a school implements to recognize and reduce suicidal
22 behavior. "Intervention" is defined as specific actions a school
23 implements in response to student suicidal behavior. The bill
24 further defines "postvention" as planned support and interventions a
25 school implements after a suicide attempt or suicide of a student or
26 any employee of a school district.

27 Finally, the bill requires each board of education to post the
28 policy on its Internet website and notify students, parents, and
29 guardians that the policy has been posted to the board's website.