

INTERIM STUDY PROPOSAL 2021-041

1  
2 State of Arkansas  
3 93rd General Assembly  
4 Regular Session, 2021

**A Bill**

SENATE BILL 656

5  
6 By: Senator L. Chesterfield

7 Filed with: Senate Committee on Education  
8 pursuant to A.C.A. §10-3-217.

9 **For An Act To Be Entitled**

10 AN ACT TO AMEND THE PUBLIC SCHOOL PERSONNEL  
11 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT REQUIREMENT CONCERNING TEEN  
12 SUICIDE AWARENESS AND PREVENTION; TO REQUIRE PUBLIC  
13 SCHOOL DISTRICTS AND OPEN-ENROLLMENT PUBLIC CHARTER  
14 SCHOOLS TO DEVELOP PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES  
15 CONCERNING MENTAL HEALTH PROMOTION AND INTERVENTION,  
16 SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION, AND  
17 SUICIDE PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION; AND FOR OTHER  
18 PURPOSES.

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21 **Subtitle**

22 TO AMEND THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT  
23 REQUIREMENT CONCERNING TEEN SUICIDE  
24 AWARENESS AND PREVENTION; AND TO REQUIRE  
25 PUBLIC SCHOOLS TO DEVELOP PROCEDURES  
26 CONCERNING MENTAL HEALTH, SUBSTANCE  
27 ABUSE, AND SUICIDE PREVENTION.

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30 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:

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32 SECTION 1. Arkansas Code § 6-17-708(a), concerning teen suicide  
33 awareness and prevention professional development, is amended to read as  
34 follows:

35 (a)(1) The Division of Elementary and Secondary Education shall  
36 require two (2) hours of professional development, or professional learning

1 credits as determined by the division, in teen suicide awareness and  
2 prevention for licensed public school personnel according to the professional  
3 development schedule under § 6-17-709.

4 (2) The professional development under this section ~~may be~~  
5 ~~accomplished through self review of suitable suicide prevention materials~~  
6 ~~approved by the division shall include components approved by the division~~  
7 that provide training for public school counselors, teachers, nurses,  
8 administrators, school resource officers, social workers, and other public  
9 school employees, as applicable, to:

10 (A) Recognize public school students who are at risk of  
11 attempting suicide, including without limitation public school students who  
12 are or may be the victims of or who engage in bullying;

13 (B) Recognize public school students who display early  
14 warning signs of substance abuse and a possible need for early mental health  
15 intervention or substance abuse intervention as described under § 6-18-113;

16 (C) Effectively intervene with public school students  
17 described under subdivisions (a)(2)(A) and (a)(2)(B) of this section by  
18 providing notice to the parent, legal guardian, or person standing in loco  
19 parentis of the public school student so that appropriate action, including  
20 without limitation seeking mental health services or substance abuse  
21 services, may be taken by the parent, legal guardian, or person standing in  
22 loco parentis of the public school student; and

23 (D) Assist public school students in returning to public  
24 school following treatment of a mental health concern or a suicide attempt.

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26 SECTION 2. Arkansas Code Title 6, Chapter 18, Subchapter 1, is amended  
27 to add an additional section to read as follows:

28 6-18-113. Mental health promotion and intervention – Substance abuse  
29 prevention and intervention – Suicide prevention – Development of practices  
30 and procedures.

31 (a) Each public school district and open-enrollment public charter  
32 school shall develop practices and procedures concerning:

33 (1) Mental health promotion and intervention;

34 (2) Substance abuse prevention and intervention; and

35 (3) Suicide prevention and intervention.

1       (b) The practices and procedures required under subsection (a) of this  
2 section shall:

3           (1) Include a procedure for providing notice of a recommendation  
4 for early mental health intervention or substance abuse intervention for a  
5 public school student to the public school student’s parent, legal guardian,  
6 or person standing in loco parentis within a reasonable amount of time after  
7 the identification of early warning signs, which may include without  
8 limitation:

9                   (A) Declining academic performance;

10                   (B) Depression;

11                   (C) Anxiety;

12                   (D) Isolation;

13                   (E) Unexplained changes in sleeping or eating habits; and

14                   (F) The public school student exhibiting destructive  
15 behavior towards himself or herself or towards others;

16           (2) Include a procedure for providing notice of a public school  
17 student identified as at risk of attempting suicide to the parent, legal  
18 guardian, or person standing in loco parentis of the public school student  
19 within a reasonable amount of time after the identification of early warning  
20 signs described under subdivision (b)(1) of this section;

21           (3) Establish available counseling alternatives for a public  
22 school student’s parent, legal guardian, or person standing in loco parentis  
23 to consider when their child is identified as possibly being in need of early  
24 mental health intervention, substance abuse intervention, or suicide  
25 prevention; and

26           (4) Include procedures to support the return of a public school  
27 student following his or her hospitalization or residential treatment for a  
28 mental health condition, substance abuse, or suicide attempt.

29       (c) The practices and procedures required under subsection (b) of this  
30 section:

31           (1) May address multiple areas described under subsection (a) of  
32 this section together;

33           (2) Shall prohibit the use without the prior consent of a public  
34 school student’s parent, legal guardian, or person standing in loco parentis  
35 of a medical screening of a public school student as part of the process of  
36 identifying whether the public school student is possibly in need of early

1 mental health intervention, substance abuse intervention, or suicide  
2 prevention; and

3 (3) Shall be included in the student handbook.

4 (d) A public school district or open-enrollment public charter school  
5 may develop a reporting mechanism and designate at least one (1) public  
6 school employee to serve as a liaison officer for the purposes of identifying  
7 public school students in need of early mental health intervention, substance  
8 abuse intervention, or suicide prevention.

9 (e) The Division of Elementary and Secondary Education may promulgate  
10 rules to implement this section.

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13 Referred requested by the Arkansas Senate

14 Prepared by: MBM/KFW

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