

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.

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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