

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

A Bill

SENATE BILL 656

5 By: Senator L. Chesterfield
6

For An Act To Be Entitled

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

19 TO AMEND THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
20 REQUIREMENT CONCERNING TEEN SUICIDE
21 AWARENESS AND PREVENTION; AND TO REQUIRE
22 PUBLIC SCHOOLS TO DEVELOP PROCEDURES
23 CONCERNING MENTAL HEALTH, SUBSTANCE
24 ABUSE, AND SUICIDE PREVENTION.
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28 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:
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30 SECTION 1. Arkansas Code § 6-17-708(a), concerning teen suicide
31 awareness and prevention professional development, is amended to read as
32 follows:

33 (a)(1) The Division of Elementary and Secondary Education shall
34 require two (2) hours of professional development, or professional learning
35 credits as determined by the division, in teen suicide awareness and
36 prevention for licensed public school personnel according to the professional



1 development schedule under § 6-17-709.

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

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

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

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

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

23
 24 SECTION 2. Arkansas Code Title 6, Chapter 18, Subchapter 1, is amended
 25 to add an additional section to read as follows:

26 6-18-113. Mental health promotion and intervention – Substance abuse
 27 prevention and intervention – Suicide prevention – Development of practices
 28 and procedures.

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

31 (1) Mental health promotion and intervention;

32 (2) Substance abuse prevention and intervention; and

33 (3) Suicide prevention and intervention.

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

36 (1) Include a procedure for providing notice of a recommendation

1 for early mental health intervention or substance abuse intervention for a
2 public school student to the public school student's parent, legal guardian,
3 or person standing in loco parentis within a reasonable amount of time after
4 the identification of early warning signs, which may include without
5 limitation:

6 (A) Declining academic performance;

7 (B) Depression;

8 (C) Anxiety;

9 (D) Isolation;

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

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

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

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

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

26 (c) The practices and procedures required under subsection (b) of this
27 section:

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

30 (2) Shall prohibit the use without the prior consent of a public
31 school student's parent, legal guardian, or person standing in loco parentis
32 of a medical screening of a public school student as part of the process of
33 identifying whether the public school student is possibly in need of early
34 mental health intervention, substance abuse intervention, or suicide
35 prevention; and

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

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

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

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