

Stricken language would be deleted from and underlined language would be added to present law.

State of Arkansas
93rd General Assembly
Regular Session, 2021

A Bill

SENATE BILL 656

By: Senator L. Chesterfield

For An Act To Be Entitled

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

Subtitle

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

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

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

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



development schedule under § 6-17-709.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(1) Mental health promotion and intervention;

(2) Substance abuse prevention and intervention; and

(3) Suicide prevention and intervention.

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

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

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

- (A) Declining academic performance;
- (B) Depression;
- (C) Anxiety;
- (D) Isolation;
- (E) Unexplained changes in sleeping or eating habits; and
- (F) The public school student exhibiting destructive

behavior towards himself or herself or towards others;

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

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

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

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

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

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

(3) Shall be included in the student handbook.

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

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