
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE BILL

No. 540 Session of
2021

INTRODUCED BY BOBACK, HILL-EVANS, SANCHEZ, JAMES, HOWARD,
NEILSON, WEBSTER AND SCHWEYER, FEBRUARY 16, 2021

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, FEBRUARY 16, 2021

AN ACT

1 Amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), entitled "An
2 act relating to the public school system, including certain
3 provisions applicable as well to private and parochial
4 schools; amending, revising, consolidating and changing the
5 laws relating thereto," in terms and courses of study,
6 further providing for youth suicide awareness and prevention
7 and providing for violence prevention and social inclusion.

8 This act may be referred to as the Safety and Violence
9 Education for Students (SAVE Students) Act.

10 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
11 hereby enacts as follows:

12 Section 1. Section 1526 of the act of March 10, 1949
13 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the Public School Code of 1949, is
14 amended by adding a subsection to read:

15 Section 1526. Youth Suicide Awareness and Prevention.--* * *

16 (c.1) The following shall apply to school personnel and
17 student suicide awareness and prevention training:

18 (1) The department shall require a school entity serving
19 students in grades six through twelve to provide students at
20 least one (1) hour, or one (1) standard class period, of

1 evidence-based suicide awareness and prevention training each
2 school year. The following shall apply:

3 (i) The training may be delivered in-person or digitally.

4 (ii) The training shall begin within two (2) years of the
5 development of the list required under paragraph (2).

6 (iii) Training programs that combine the training
7 requirements under this subsection and section 1526.1(a) may be
8 used to fulfill the requirements of this subsection.

9 (2) Within one (1) year of the effective date of this
10 paragraph, the department shall develop a list of evidence-based
11 trainings and materials, including no-cost programming, if any,
12 to fulfill the requirements of this subsection. At a minimum,
13 the trainings shall:

14 (i) Teach school personnel how to identify the signs and
15 signals of depression, suicide and self-injury in students and
16 when and how to refer youth and their families to appropriate
17 mental health services for assessment within the school entity
18 and the community.

19 (ii) Teach students how to identify the signs and signals of
20 depression, suicide and self-injury in themselves and their
21 peers, the importance of seeking help for themselves and their
22 peers and the process for seeking help.

23 (3) The department shall make the list under paragraph (2)
24 available on the department's publicly accessible Internet
25 website.

26 (4) For purposes of this subsection, "evidence-based" is
27 defined as in section 1526.1(e).

28 * * *

29 Section 2. The act is amended by adding a section to read:

30 Section 1526.1. Violence Prevention and Social Inclusion.--

1 (a) The following shall apply to student safety and violence
2 prevention training:

3 (1) The department shall require a school entity serving
4 students in grades six through twelve to provide students at
5 least one (1) hour, or one (1) standard class period, of
6 evidence-based youth violence prevention training each school
7 year. The following shall apply:

8 (i) The training may be delivered in-person or digitally.

9 (ii) The training shall begin within two (2) years of the
10 development of the list required under paragraph (2).

11 (iii) Training programs that combine the training
12 requirements under this subsection and section 1526(c.1) may be
13 used to fulfill the training requirements of this subsection.

14 (2) Within one (1) year of the effective date of this
15 paragraph, the department shall develop a list of evidence-based
16 trainings and materials, including no-cost programming, if any,
17 to fulfill the requirements of this subsection. At a minimum,
18 the trainings shall teach students the following:

19 (i) How to identify observable warning signs and signals of
20 an individual who may be a threat to the individual or others.

21 (ii) The importance of taking threats seriously and seeking
22 help.

23 (iii) The steps that can be taken to report dangerous,
24 violent, threatening, harmful or potentially harmful activity.

25 (3) The department shall make the list under paragraph (2)
26 available on the department's publicly accessible Internet
27 website.

28 (b) The following shall apply to student social inclusion
29 training:

30 (1) The department shall require a school entity serving

1 students in kindergarten through grade twelve to provide
2 students at least one (1) hour, or one (1) standard class
3 period, of evidence-based social inclusion training each school
4 year. The following shall apply:

5 (i) The training may be delivered in-person or digitally.

6 (ii) The training shall begin within two (2) years of the
7 development of the list required under paragraph (2).

8 (2) Within one (1) year of the effective date of this
9 paragraph, the department shall develop a list of evidence-based
10 trainings and materials, including no-cost programming, if any,
11 to fulfill the requirements of this subsection. At a minimum,
12 the trainings shall teach students the following:

13 (i) What social isolation is and how to identify social
14 isolation in others.

15 (ii) The importance of taking social isolation seriously and
16 seeking help for peers.

17 (iii) How to utilize strategies to be more socially
18 inclusive in the classroom and community and to establish
19 connections with peers.

20 (3) The department shall make the list under paragraph (2)
21 available on the department's publicly accessible Internet
22 website.

23 (c) The following shall apply to student-led violence
24 prevention clubs:

25 (1) Within one (1) year of the effective date of this
26 paragraph, the department shall require a school entity serving
27 students in kindergarten through grade twelve to designate a
28 student-led violence prevention club that:

29 (i) is open to all members of the student body of the school
30 entity; and

1 (ii) has at least one (1) identified adult advisor of the
2 club.

3 (2) At a minimum, a student-led violence prevention club
4 shall do the following:

5 (i) Sustain awareness activities related to suicide
6 prevention, violence prevention and social inclusion trainings.

7 (ii) Foster opportunities for student leadership
8 development.

9 (d) To offset any costs associated with the implementation
10 of the requirements of subsections (a), (b) and (c), the
11 department shall, to the extent practicable, apply for any
12 Federal or State funding made available to the department for
13 the purposes of improving school safety.

14 (e) As used in this section, the following words and phrases
15 shall have the meanings given to them in this subsection unless
16 the context clearly indicates otherwise:

17 "Department." The Department of Education of the
18 Commonwealth.

19 "Evidence-based." A program or practice that demonstrates
20 any of the following:

21 (1) A statistically significant effect on relevant outcomes
22 based on any of the following:

23 (i) Strong evidence from not fewer than one (1) well-
24 designed and well-implemented experimental study.

25 (ii) Moderate evidence from not fewer than one (1) well-
26 designed and well-implemented quasi-experimental study.

27 (iii) Promising evidence from not fewer than one (1) well-
28 designed and well-implemented correlational study with
29 statistical controls for selection bias.

30 (2) A rationale based on high-quality research findings or

1 positive evaluation that the program or practice is likely to
2 improve relevant outcomes, which shall also include the ongoing
3 efforts to examine the effects of the program or practice.

4 "School entity." A school district, joint school district,
5 charter school, regional charter school, cyber charter school,
6 intermediate unit or area career and technical school.

7 Section 3. This act shall take effect immediately.