



# Model State School Safety Legislation



## **Model School Safety Legislation**

*The following model state legislation aims to combat the crisis of violence, bullying, and suicide devastating our nation's schools. In the vast majority of incidents of school violence, students display many warning signs or signals BEFORE taking harmful action. Unfortunately, the youth and adults who observe these signs or signals do not always recognize what they are seeing or do not report what they observed. We have an opportunity to prevent violence through commonsense policies that give our educators the evidence-based tools they need to save lives and empower our youth to be upstanders in their school and communities.*

### **Section I: School Threat Assessment**

*Mandated school threat assessment has been the leading recommendation from mental health and safety experts and federal and state task forces following the shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary. Developed in partnership with the FBI and Secret Service following the tragedies at Columbine and Virginia Tech, evidence-based threat assessment and intervention programs have proven effective for over a decade in urban, suburban, and rural schools at averting violence toward self and others, reducing bullying and expulsions, and connecting students to needed services and supports.*

- 1) The *Department of Education* shall, in consultation with state agencies, adopt rules to require that all public schools are certified in school threat assessment and have completed a school threat assessment plan.
- 2) The *Department of Education* shall develop and provide to each public school district a model policy to serve as a guide for school districts in accordance with this Section that addresses the following at minimum:
  - a) Identify the types of threatening behavior that may represent a physical threat to the school community;
  - b) Identify members within the school community to whom threatening behavior should be reported and steps taken thereafter;
  - c) Establish threat assessment guidelines including identification, evaluation of seriousness of threat or danger it poses to others, intervention to reduce risk of violence, and follow-up to assess intervention results.
  - d) Written guidance on coordinating with local law enforcement and existing State reporting websites and tiplines
  - e) A list of approved threat assessment trainings
- 3) Each public school district shall identify teams within each school building responsible for completing an evidence-based threat assessment training.

- a) School-based threat assessment teams should be multidisciplinary to include administrators, mental health professionals, school resource officers, and other professionals.
- 4) Within two years, each public school district shall submit to the *Department of Education* certification that each school has been trained in an approved threat assessment training and an electronic copy of the school threat assessment plan, to be resubmitted not less than once every three years, whenever a major modification to the plan takes place, and whenever information on the emergency contact information sheet changes.
- 5) Approved threat assessment trainings must be a peer-reviewed, evidence based program that teach how to identify, assess and respond to threats of violence, including:
  - a) Identifying threats, signs and behaviors leading to a violent act
  - b) Determining the seriousness of the threat
  - c) Developing intervention plans that protect the potential victims and address the underlying problem or conflict that initiated the behavior

## **Section II: School Personnel and Student Suicide Prevention Training**

*For middle and high school age youth (ages 12-18), suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death and suicide rates are rising dramatically in children as young as 10 years old. 4 out of 5 of these youth who attempt suicide will give clear warning signs or tell someone of their plans to self-harm. Suicide is preventable when we train both youth and adults to know the warning signs of suicide and how to get help for themselves or others.*

- 1) The *Department of Education* shall adopt rules to require that all school personnel serving students grades 6-12 and all students in these grades receive at least 1 hour of suicide awareness and prevention training each year.
- 2) The Department of Education shall develop a list of approved trainings and materials to fulfill the requirements of this Section.
  - a) Approved trainings for school personnel shall include how to identify appropriate mental health services both within the school and also within the larger community, and when and how to refer youth and their families to those services.
  - b) Approved student trainings shall include teaching students about mental health and depression, warning signs of suicide, and the importance of and processes for seeking help on behalf of self and peers.
  - c) Approved trainings must be peer-reviewed and evidence based

## **Section III: Student Safety and Violence Prevention Training**

*In a majority of acts of youth violence, the student displays warning signs or signals before taking any action. 80% of school shooters tell someone of their violent plans and 69% tell more than one person. Evidence-based violence prevention training can avert threats before they happen and connect students to needed services by training youth and adults who observe these signs or signals to recognize what they are seeing or report it.*

- 1) The *Department of Education* shall adopt rules to require that all public schools provide to students at least one hour of violence prevention training each school year.

- 2) The Department of Education shall develop a list of approved trainings and materials to fulfill the requirements of this Section.
  - a) Approved trainings shall include teaching students how to identify observable warning signs and signals of a potential threat, suicide, or mental health crisis before they escalate and the procedures for making a report and collaborating to help peers in need and prevent dangerous, violent or unlawful activity.
  - b) Approved trainings must be peer-reviewed and evidence based

### **Section III: Anonymous Reporting System**

*Research has shown that confidentiality and anonymous reporting are necessary tools in the difficult task of getting students to share the awareness that a student may be a danger to themselves or others. Integrating anonymous reporting into school safety planning and resources ensures that more information flows between students and schools to help prevent tragedies before they happen.*

- 1) The *Department of Education* shall, in collaboration with other agencies, implement a statewide Anonymous Reporting System Program that enables any person to report anonymously any dangerous, violent or unlawful activity which occurs or is threatened on school property or relates to an enrolled student or school personnel.
- 2) The *Department of Education* will enter into an agreement with a qualified organization to operate a hotline, multilingual crisis center, website, and mobile phone application to receive anonymous reports through the Program.
- 3) The Program must meet the following minimum requirements:
  - a) Support 24/7, anonymous reporting
  - b) Promptly forward reported information to schools, law enforcement agencies and certain other persons as determined by the Commissioner
  - c) Support coordination and crisis response by schools and law enforcement agencies
  - d) Require and certify the training of school-based teams of at least 3 staff members in each school in the State to receive notice of any report submitted to the Program concerning the school
  - e) Promote awareness and education in all public schools and communities about the Program and reporting methods
  - f) Coordinate with existing student and school training on how to identify, assess and respond to threatening behaviors before they escalate to violence and the procedures for making a report and collaborating to prevent dangerous, violent or unlawful activity to the following individuals.
  - g) Be in compliance with FERPA and relevant state laws

#### **Resources:**

For more information about this model legislation or how to implement these proven policies in your state, please contact Lauren Alfred, our National Policy Director, at [lauren.alfred@sandyhookpromise.org](mailto:lauren.alfred@sandyhookpromise.org).

To request Sandy Hook Promise's free *Know the Signs* violence prevention programs in your state or community, please contact Paula Fynboh, our National Field and Program Director at [paula.fynboh@sandyhookpromise.org](mailto:paula.fynboh@sandyhookpromise.org).