

AN ACT concerning education.

**Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois,
represented in the General Assembly:**

Section 5. The School Code is amended by changing Section 27-23.7 as follows:

(105 ILCS 5/27-23.7)

Sec. 27-23.7. Bullying prevention.

(a) The General Assembly finds that a safe and civil school environment is necessary for students to learn and achieve and that bullying causes physical, psychological, and emotional harm to students and interferes with students' ability to learn and participate in school activities. The General Assembly further finds that bullying has been linked to other forms of antisocial behavior, such as vandalism, shoplifting, skipping and dropping out of school, fighting, using drugs and alcohol, sexual harassment, and sexual violence. Because of the negative outcomes associated with bullying in schools, the General Assembly finds that school districts, charter schools, and non-public, non-sectarian elementary and secondary schools should educate students, parents, and school district, charter school, or non-public, non-sectarian elementary or secondary school personnel about what behaviors constitute prohibited bullying.

Bullying on the basis of actual or perceived race, color, religion, sex, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, physical or mental disability, military status, sexual orientation, gender-related identity or expression, unfavorable discharge from military service, association with a person or group with one or more of the aforementioned actual or perceived characteristics, or any other distinguishing characteristic is prohibited in all school districts, charter schools, and non-public, non-sectarian elementary and secondary schools. No student shall be subjected to bullying:

(1) during any school-sponsored education program or activity;

(2) while in school, on school property, on school buses or other school vehicles, at designated school bus stops waiting for the school bus, or at school-sponsored or school-sanctioned events or activities;

(3) through the transmission of information from a school computer, a school computer network, or other similar electronic school equipment; or

(4) through the transmission of information from a computer that is accessed at a nonschool-related location, activity, function, or program or from the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased, or used by a school district or school if the bullying causes a substantial disruption to the educational process or orderly operation of a school. This

item (4) applies only in cases in which a school administrator or teacher receives a report that bullying through this means has occurred and does not require a district or school to staff or monitor any nonschool-related activity, function, or program.

(a-5) Nothing in this Section is intended to infringe upon any right to exercise free expression or the free exercise of religion or religiously based views protected under the First Amendment to the United States Constitution or under Section 3 of Article I of the Illinois Constitution.

(b) In this Section:

"Bullying" includes "cyber-bullying" and means any severe or pervasive physical or verbal act or conduct, including communications made in writing or electronically, directed toward a student or students that has or can be reasonably predicted to have the effect of one or more of the following:

(1) placing the student or students in reasonable fear of harm to the student's or students' person or property;

(2) causing a substantially detrimental effect on the student's or students' physical or mental health;

(3) substantially interfering with the student's or students' academic performance; or

(4) substantially interfering with the student's or students' ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by a school.

Bullying, as defined in this subsection (b), may take

various forms, including without limitation one or more of the following: harassment, threats, intimidation, stalking, physical violence, sexual harassment, sexual violence, theft, public humiliation, destruction of property, or retaliation for asserting or alleging an act of bullying. This list is meant to be illustrative and non-exhaustive.

"Cyber-bullying" means bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, including without limitation any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data, or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by a wire, radio, electromagnetic system, photoelectronic system, or photooptical system, including without limitation electronic mail, Internet communications, instant messages, or facsimile communications.

"Cyber-bullying" includes the creation of a webpage or weblog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person or the knowing impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages if the creation or impersonation creates any of the effects enumerated in the definition of bullying in this Section. "Cyber-bullying" also includes the distribution by electronic means of a communication to more than one person or the posting of material on an electronic medium that may be accessed by one or more persons if the distribution or posting creates any of the effects enumerated in the definition of bullying in this Section.

"Policy on bullying" means a bullying prevention policy

that meets the following criteria:

(1) Includes the bullying definition provided in this Section.

(2) Includes a statement that bullying is contrary to State law and the policy of the school district, charter school, or non-public, non-sectarian elementary or secondary school and is consistent with subsection (a-5) of this Section.

(3) Includes procedures for promptly reporting bullying, including, but not limited to, identifying and providing the school e-mail address (if applicable) and school telephone number for the staff person or persons responsible for receiving such reports and a procedure for anonymous reporting; however, this shall not be construed to permit formal disciplinary action solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

(4) Consistent with federal and State laws and rules governing student privacy rights, includes procedures for promptly informing parents or guardians of all students involved in the alleged incident of bullying and discussing, as appropriate, the availability of social work services, counseling, school psychological services, other interventions, and restorative measures.

(5) Contains procedures for promptly investigating and addressing reports of bullying, including the following:

(A) Making all reasonable efforts to complete the

investigation within 10 school days after the date the report of the incident of bullying was received and taking into consideration additional relevant information received during the course of the investigation about the reported incident of bullying.

(B) Involving appropriate school support personnel and other staff persons with knowledge, experience, and training on bullying prevention, as deemed appropriate, in the investigation process.

(C) Notifying the principal or school administrator or his or her designee of the report of the incident of bullying as soon as possible after the report is received.

(D) Consistent with federal and State laws and rules governing student privacy rights, providing parents and guardians of the students who are parties to the investigation information about the investigation and an opportunity to meet with the principal or school administrator or his or her designee to discuss the investigation, the findings of the investigation, and the actions taken to address the reported incident of bullying.

(6) Includes the interventions that can be taken to address bullying, which may include, but are not limited to, school social work services, restorative measures, social-emotional skill building, counseling, school

psychological services, and community-based services.

(7) Includes a statement prohibiting reprisal or retaliation against any person who reports an act of bullying and the consequences and appropriate remedial actions for a person who engages in reprisal or retaliation.

(8) Includes consequences and appropriate remedial actions for a person found to have falsely accused another of bullying as a means of retaliation or as a means of bullying.

(9) Is based on the engagement of a range of school stakeholders, including students and parents or guardians.

(10) Is posted on the school district's, charter school's, or non-public, non-sectarian elementary or secondary school's existing Internet website, ~~and~~ is included in the student handbook, and, where applicable, posted where other policies, rules, and standards of conduct are currently posted in the school and provided periodically throughout the school year to students and faculty, and is distributed annually to parents, guardians, students, and school personnel, including new employees when hired.

(11) As part of the process of reviewing and re-evaluating the policy under subsection (d) of this Section, contains a policy evaluation process to assess the outcomes and effectiveness of the policy that includes, but

is not limited to, factors such as the frequency of victimization; student, staff, and family observations of safety at a school; identification of areas of a school where bullying occurs; the types of bullying utilized; and bystander intervention or participation. The school district, charter school, or non-public, non-sectarian elementary or secondary school may use relevant data and information it already collects for other purposes in the policy evaluation. The information developed as a result of the policy evaluation must be made available on the Internet website of the school district, charter school, or non-public, non-sectarian elementary or secondary school. If an Internet website is not available, the information must be provided to school administrators, school board members, school personnel, parents, guardians, and students.

(12) Is consistent with the policies of the school board, charter school, or non-public, non-sectarian elementary or secondary school.

"Restorative measures" means a continuum of school-based alternatives to exclusionary discipline, such as suspensions and expulsions, that: (i) are adapted to the particular needs of the school and community, (ii) contribute to maintaining school safety, (iii) protect the integrity of a positive and productive learning climate, (iv) teach students the personal and interpersonal skills they will need to be successful in

school and society, (v) serve to build and restore relationships among students, families, schools, and communities, and (vi) reduce the likelihood of future disruption by balancing accountability with an understanding of students' behavioral health needs in order to keep students in school.

"School personnel" means persons employed by, on contract with, or who volunteer in a school district, charter school, or non-public, non-sectarian elementary or secondary school, including without limitation school and school district administrators, teachers, school guidance counselors, school social workers, school counselors, school psychologists, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, school resource officers, and security guards.

(c) (Blank).

(d) Each school district, charter school, and non-public, non-sectarian elementary or secondary school shall create, maintain, and implement a policy on bullying, which policy must be filed with the State Board of Education. The policy or implementing procedure shall include a process to investigate whether a reported act of bullying is within the permissible scope of the district's or school's jurisdiction and shall require that the district or school provide the victim with information regarding services that are available within the district and community, such as counseling, support services, and other programs. School personnel available for help with a

bully or to make a report about bullying shall be made known to parents or legal guardians, students, and school personnel.

Every 2 years, each school district, charter school, and non-public, non-sectarian elementary or secondary school shall conduct a review and re-evaluation of its policy and make any necessary and appropriate revisions. The policy must be filed with the State Board of Education after being updated. The State Board of Education shall monitor and provide technical support for the implementation of policies created under this subsection (d).

(e) This Section shall not be interpreted to prevent a victim from seeking redress under any other available civil or criminal law.

(Source: P.A. 98-669, eff. 6-26-14; 98-801, eff. 1-1-15; 99-78, eff. 7-20-15.)

Section 99. Effective date. This Act takes effect upon becoming law.