

# **Guidance for Teacher and Educational Leader Professional Development on Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying**

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**New Jersey Department of Education**

The New Jersey Legislature recognized that bullying in school settings is a growing concern and, therefore, passed the Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act (*P.L.2010, c.122*) in January 2011. The intent of the Act is to strengthen standards and procedures for preventing, reporting investigating and responding to incidents of harassment, intimidation and bullying (HIB) in New Jersey's public schools. To meet the requirements of the Act, teachers, educational services professionals, and educational leaders must receive training on harassment, intimidation and bullying (HIB) in school settings beginning with the 2011-2012 school year. N.J.S.A. 18A:37-22(d) requires that instruction on HIB be provided within the professional development cycle, and, additionally, N.J.S.A. 18A:6-112 requires that a component on HIB be incorporated into the existing required suicide prevention training. Documentation on educators' completion of these requirements will follow the existing State procedures.

## **Teacher Professional Development**

This guidance outlines the minimal professional development components to ensure that teachers and educational services professionals possess the knowledge and skills needed to support HIB efforts in schools. The new legislation requires that professional development be provided through two strands:

- (1) Teachers and educational services professionals must have two hours of training within the five-year professional development cycle. It is particularly important that programs emphasize the critical role of prevention in mitigating the incidence and harmful effects of HIB, as well as the potential impact of HIB on suicide. School personnel need to be equipped to work with colleagues and administrators in developing and implementing preventive measures that contribute to a positive school climate in which all students can experience a safe environment for learning.
- (2) Existing suicide prevention training for teachers must have an anti-bullying component which includes:
  1. Information on the relationship between the risk of suicide and incidents of harassment, intimidation, and bullying, and
  2. Information on reducing the risk of suicide in students who are members of communities identified as having members at high risk of suicide.

School districts should make an effort to coordinate professional development programs on suicide prevention and training on HIB to ensure that staff members understand the connections inherent in these risks to students' safety.

## **Required Components for Two-hour Professional Development in the Five-year Cycle:**

The following topics must be incorporated within the five-year cycle in professional development programs for teachers and educational services personnel:

- Legal definition of “harassment, intimidation or bullying;”
- Behavior patterns and other variables in school environments that can trigger or contribute to increased incidence of HIB, including knowledge of the appropriate vocabulary and the roles of bully, victim, and bystander;
- Best practices in HIB prevention and intervention, including differentiated interventions, clinical programs, social-emotional learning and service learning in the curriculum, and other practices that foster a positive school climate and culture;
- Identification of and response to cyber-bullying, including:
  - Knowledge of changing technology tools with potential HIB abuse
  - Differences and similarities between cyber-bullying and in-school bullying in terms of the roles of bully, victim, and bystander
  - Impact on student learning and school climate
  - Legal definitions of cyber-bullying offenses
  - Reporting protocols
  - Nuances surrounding peer interactions that may lead to an offense
  - Preventive methodologies (e.g., school climate and culture improvement, service-learning, social-emotional learning, personalization); and
- Access to resources, such as online tutorials, state guidance materials, and curriculum materials related to HIB prevention.

## **Required Anti-Bullying Components of Professional Development in Suicide Prevention:**

The following topics must be incorporated within the required suicide prevention training programs for teachers and educational services personnel:

- Research on contributing factors and prevention strategies related to HIB and suicide;
- Warning signs of students at-risk of suicide, especially increased risk due to bullying;
- Reporting obligations related to incidents of HIB that may impact students at-risk of suicide;
- Access to reporting structures, including the school anti-bullying specialist, district anti-bullying coordinator and school safety team; and
- Best practices in suicide and HIB prevention and effective interventions.

## Educational Leader Professional Development

N.J.S.A. 18A:26-8.237-22(d) requires that all persons holding superintendent, principal, or supervisor certification shall complete training on issues of school ethics, law, and governance as part of the professional development for school leaders pursuant to State Board of Education regulations (*N.J.A.C.* 6A:9-16.7). The new law requires that information on the prevention of harassment, intimidation and bullying must also be included in the training. To incorporate the required HIB content, an additional twelve hours of training is recommended.

The following topics must be covered in the HIB training component:

- The statutory definition of “harassment, intimidation or bullying,” including legal parameters for addressing alleged HIB off school grounds;
- The requirements of school district anti-bullying policies and procedures;
- Roles and responsibilities of the school anti-bullying specialist and the district anti-bullying coordinator;
- The makeup and role of the new School Safety Team required in every school;
- Procedures for reporting, investigating and responding to alleged bullying incidents;
- Consequences for school employees who fail to comply with legal requirements;
- The due process rights of parents and students;
- How to apply key legal principles in real-world situations;
- The new system for grading schools on how they address bullying and harassment;
- Responsibility for training all personnel in the new law;
- Resources in the district and community that support implementation of the law (e.g., mental health services, law enforcement);
- The pivotal role of the principal in setting the vision for a positive school climate and supporting staff and stakeholders in ensuring students’ safety and well being;
- The importance of sharing best practices across schools within the district and across districts; and
- Access to resources, such as evidence-based programs, online tutorials, state guidance materials, and curriculum materials related to HIB prevention.

Resources on harassment, intimidation and bullying are available on the department’s website at <http://www.state.nj.us/education/students/safety/behavior/hib/#si>. By fall 2011, this website will also include a Power Point presentation explaining the school and district responsibilities under the law and best practices for HIB prevention and intervention (<http://www.state.nj.us/education/students/safety/behavior/hib/overview.shtml>), and a comprehensive guidance document in support of the Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act.