

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR
ASSEMBLY, No. 970

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
219th LEGISLATURE

ADOPTED JUNE 23, 2020

Sponsored by:

Assemblyman HERB CONAWAY, JR.

District 7 (Burlington)

Assemblywoman PAMELA R. LAMPITT

District 6 (Burlington and Camden)

Assemblywoman CAROL A. MURPHY

District 7 (Burlington)

Co-Sponsored by:

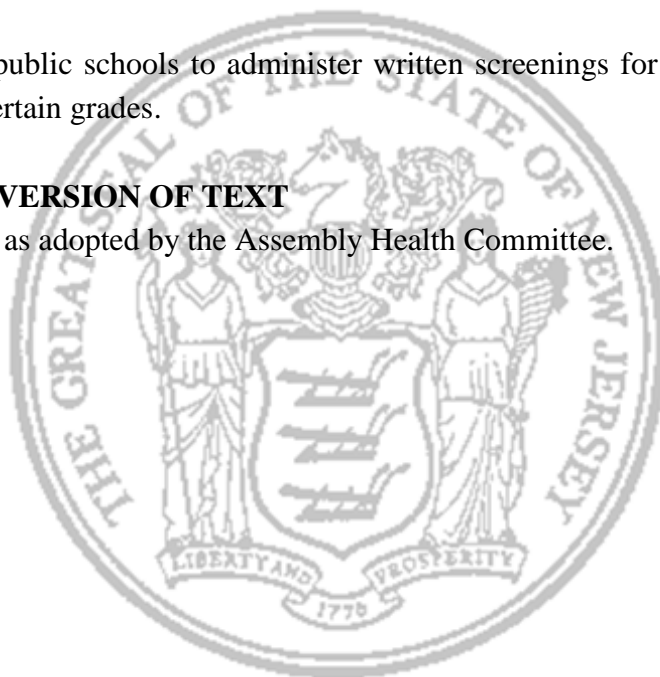
Assemblyman Benson, Assemblywoman Vainieri Huttie, Assemblyman Verrelli, Assemblywoman McKnight, Assemblymen Armato, Daniels, Assemblywomen Sumter, Jimenez, Timberlake, Reynolds-Jackson, Mosquera, Lopez, Speight, Jasey and Downey

SYNOPSIS

Requires public schools to administer written screenings for depression for students in certain grades.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

Substitute as adopted by the Assembly Health Committee.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 7/30/2020)

1 AN ACT concerning student mental health and supplementing
2 chapter 40 of Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes.

3

4 **BE IT ENACTED** by the Senate and General Assembly of the State
5 of New Jersey:

6

7 1. The Legislature finds and declares that:

8 a. Depression is the most common mental health disorder
9 among American teens and adults, with over 2.8 million young
10 people between the ages of 12 and 17 experiencing at least one
11 major depressive episode each year, approximately 10 to 15 percent
12 of teenagers exhibiting at least one symptom of depression at any
13 time, and roughly five percent of teenagers suffering from major
14 depression at any time. Teenage depression is two to three times
15 more common in females than in males.

16 b. Various biological, psychological, and environmental risk
17 factors may contribute to teenage depression, which can lead to
18 substance and alcohol abuse, social isolation, poor academic and
19 workplace performance, unnecessary risk taking, early pregnancy,
20 and suicide, which is the third leading cause of death among
21 teenagers. Approximately 20 percent of teens with depression
22 seriously consider suicide and one in 12 attempt suicide. Untreated
23 teenage depression can also result in adverse consequences
24 throughout adulthood.

25 c. Most teens who experience depression suffer from more than
26 one episode. It is estimated that, although teenage depression is
27 highly treatable through combinations of therapy, individual and
28 group counseling, and certain medications, fewer than one-third of
29 teenagers experiencing depression seek help or treatment.

30 d. The proper detection and diagnosis of depression is a key
31 element in reducing the risk of teenage suicide and improving
32 physical and mental health outcomes for young people. It is
33 therefore fitting and appropriate to establish school-based
34 depression screenings to help identify the symptoms of depression
35 and facilitate access to appropriate treatment.

36

37 2. a. A board of education shall ensure that each student in
38 grades seven through 12 annually receives a health screening for
39 depression. The screening shall be proctored and conducted
40 electronically via a computer and shall utilize a screening tool that
41 has been validated to screen depression in adolescents, as
42 determined by the Commissioners of Education and Children and
43 Families. The Commissioner of Children and Families shall select
44 one electronic screening tool to be utilized by all school districts.
45 The screenings shall be conducted in a manner that accommodates
46 students with developmental disabilities, intellectual disabilities, or
47 low reading proficiency, and that ensures the privacy of the student
48 during the screening process and the confidentiality of the results
49 consistent with State and federal laws applicable to the

1 confidentiality of student records. The screenings shall be
2 conducted in a manner that permits real time evaluation of the
3 screening results and same day intervention by a licensed mental
4 health professional as indicated by such screening. The Department
5 of Education and the Department of Children and Families shall
6 jointly establish standards on the procedures to be implemented to
7 conduct the screenings for depression and may provide for other
8 screening tools, including, but not limited to, screening tools for
9 anxiety, substance use disorder, and suicidal ideation and behavior,
10 as determined by the Commissioners of Education and Children and
11 Families. The Commissioners of Education and Children and
12 Families shall make recommendations for conducting screenings in
13 a manner that accommodates students with developmental
14 disabilities, intellectual disabilities, or low reading proficiency.

15 b. A superintendent, or the superintendent's designee, shall
16 notify the parent or guardian of a student whose screening for
17 depression detects an abnormality and advise the parent or guardian
18 to seek the care of a health care professional in order to obtain
19 further evaluation and diagnosis.

20 c. As determined by the Department of Education and the
21 Department of Children and Families, boards of education shall
22 forward data collected from screenings administered pursuant to
23 this section to the Department of Education and the Department of
24 Children and Families, provided that any data forwarded shall be
25 aggregated and shall not contain any identifying or confidential
26 information with regard to any individual. Data collected by the
27 departments pursuant to this subsection shall be used by the
28 departments to identify trends concerning teenage depression and to
29 develop school and community based initiatives to address teenage
30 depression. The Department of Education and the Department of
31 Children and Families shall annually publish on their Internet
32 websites findings and recommendations that are based on collected
33 data as to additional resources that may be necessary to screen
34 adolescents for depression and further evaluate adolescents who
35 have exhibited abnormalities in depression screenings.

36 d. Prior to screening a student for depression pursuant to this
37 section, a school district shall obtain written consent from the
38 student's parent or guardian upon enrollment and at the start of each
39 successive school year.

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41 3. The State Board of Education, in consultation with the
42 Commissioner of Children and Families, shall promulgate
43 regulations pursuant to the "Administrative Procedure Act,"
44 P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), necessary to effectuate the
45 provisions of this act.

46

47 4. This act shall take effect in the first full school year
48 following the date of enactment.