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SYNOPSIS
Requires school districts to establish procedures for online reporting of harassment, intimidation, and bullying.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT
As introduced.
AN ACT concerning harassment, intimidation, and bullying in public schools and amending P.L.2002, c.83.

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

1. Section 3 of P.L.2002, c.83 (C.18A:37-15) is amended to read as follows:

3. a. Each school district shall adopt a policy prohibiting harassment, intimidation or bullying on school property, at a school-sponsored function or on a school bus. The school district shall adopt the policy through a process that includes representation of parents or guardians, school employees, volunteers, students, administrators, and community representatives.

b. A school district shall have local control over the content of the policy, except that the policy shall contain, at a minimum, the following components:

(1) a statement prohibiting harassment, intimidation or bullying of a student;

(2) a definition of harassment, intimidation or bullying no less inclusive than that set forth in section 2 of P.L.2002, c.83 (C.18A:37-14);

(3) a description of the type of behavior expected from each student;

(4) consequences and appropriate remedial action for a person who commits an act of harassment, intimidation or bullying;

(5) a procedure for reporting an act of harassment, intimidation or bullying, including a provision that permits a person to report an act of harassment, intimidation or bullying anonymously; however, this shall not be construed to permit formal disciplinary action solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

Beginning on the 120th day following the effective date of P.L. , c. (pending before the Legislature as this bill), the policy shall include a procedure that permits a person to electronically report an act of harassment, intimidation or bullying using an online reporting form, which form shall be accessible through the official Internet website of the school district.

All acts of harassment, intimidation, or bullying shall be reported verbally to the school principal on the same day when the school employee or contracted service provider witnessed or received reliable information regarding any such incident. The principal shall inform the parents or guardians of all students involved in the alleged incident, and may discuss, as appropriate, the availability of counseling and other intervention services. All acts of harassment, intimidation, or bullying shall be reported in writing to the school

EXPLANATION – Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets [thus] in the above bill is not enacted and is intended to be omitted in the law.

Matter underlined thus is new matter.
principal within two school days of when the school employee or contracted service provider witnessed or received reliable information that a student had been subject to harassment, intimidation, or bullying;

(6) a procedure for prompt investigation of reports of violations and complaints, which procedure shall at a minimum provide that:

(a) the investigation shall be initiated by the principal or the principal's designee within one school day of the report of the incident and shall be conducted by a school anti-bullying specialist. The principal may appoint additional personnel who are not school anti-bullying specialists to assist in the investigation. The investigation shall be completed as soon as possible, but not later than 10 school days from the date of the written report of the incident of harassment, intimidation, or bullying. In the event that there is information relative to the investigation that is anticipated but not yet received by the end of the 10-day period, the school anti-bullying specialist may amend the original report of the results of the investigation to reflect the information;

(b) the results of the investigation shall be reported to the superintendent of schools within two school days of the completion of the investigation, and in accordance with regulations promulgated by the State Board of Education pursuant to the "Administrative Procedure Act," P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), the superintendent may decide to provide intervention services, establish training programs to reduce harassment, intimidation, or bullying and enhance school climate, impose discipline, order counseling as a result of the findings of the investigation, or take or recommend other appropriate action;

(c) the results of each investigation shall be reported to the board of education no later than the date of the board of education meeting next following the completion of the investigation, along with information on any services provided, training established, discipline imposed, or other action taken or recommended by the superintendent;

(d) parents or guardians of the students who are parties to the investigation shall be entitled to receive information about the investigation, in accordance with federal and State law and regulation, including the nature of the investigation, whether the district found evidence of harassment, intimidation, or bullying, or whether discipline was imposed or services provided to address the incident of harassment, intimidation, or bullying. This information shall be provided in writing within 5 school days after the results of the investigation are reported to the board. A parent or guardian may request a hearing before the board after receiving the information, and the hearing shall be held within 10 days of the request. The board shall meet in executive session for the hearing to protect the confidentiality of the students. At the hearing the board may hear from the school anti-bullying specialist about the
incident, recommendations for discipline or services, and any
programs instituted to reduce such incidents;

(e) at the next board of education meeting following its receipt
of the report, the board shall issue a decision, in writing, to affirm,
reject, or modify the superintendent's decision. The board's
decision may be appealed to the Commissioner of Education, in
accordance with the procedures set forth in law and regulation, no
later than 90 days after the issuance of the board's decision; and

(f) a parent, student, guardian, or organization may file a
complaint with the Division on Civil Rights within 180 days of the
occurrence of any incident of harassment, intimidation, or bullying
based on membership in a protected group as enumerated in the
"Law Against Discrimination," P.L.1945, c.169 (C.10:5-1 et seq.);

(7) the range of ways in which a school will respond once an
incident of harassment, intimidation or bullying is identified, which
shall be defined by the principal in conjunction with the school anti-
bullying specialist, but shall include an appropriate combination of
services that are available within the district such as counseling,
support services, intervention services, and other programs, as
defined by the commissioner. In the event that the necessary
programs and services are not available within the district, the
district may apply to the Department of Education for a grant from
the "Bullying Prevention Fund" established pursuant to section 25
of P.L.2010, c.122 (C.18A:37-28) to support the provision of out-
district programs and services;

(8) a statement that prohibits reprisal or retaliation against any
person who reports an act of harassment, intimidation or bullying
and the consequence and appropriate remedial action for a person
who engages in reprisal or retaliation;

(9) consequences and appropriate remedial action for a person
found to have falsely accused another as a means of retaliation or as
a means of harassment, intimidation or bullying;

(10) a statement of how the policy is to be publicized, including
notice that the policy applies to participation in school-sponsored
functions;

(11) a requirement that a link to the policy and the online
reporting form be prominently posted on the home page of the
school district's website and distributed annually to parents and
guardians who have children enrolled in a school in the school
district; and

(12) a requirement that the name, school phone number, school
address and school email address of the district anti-bullying
coordinator be listed on the home page of the school district's
website and that on the home page of each school's website the
name, school phone number, school address and school email
address of the school anti-bullying specialist and the district anti-
bullying coordinator be listed. The information concerning the
district anti-bullying coordinator and the school anti-bullying specialists shall also be maintained on the department's website.

c. A school district shall adopt a policy and transmit a copy of its policy to the appropriate executive county superintendent of schools by September 1, 2003. A school district shall annually conduct a re-evaluation, reassessment, and review of its policy, making any necessary revisions and additions. The board shall include input from the school anti-bullying specialists in conducting its re-evaluation, reassessment, and review. The district shall transmit a copy of the revised policy to the appropriate executive county superintendent of schools within 30 school days of the revision. The first revised policy following the effective date of P.L.2010, c.122 (C.18A:37-13.1 et al.) shall be transmitted to the executive county superintendent of schools by September 1, 2011.

d. (1) To assist school districts in developing policies for the prevention of harassment, intimidation, or bullying, the Commissioner of Education shall develop a model policy applicable to grades kindergarten through 12. This model policy shall be issued no later than December 1, 2002.

(2) The commissioner shall adopt amendments to the model policy which reflect the provisions of P.L.2010, c.122 (C.18A:37-13.1 et al.) no later than 90 days after the effective date of that act and shall subsequently update the model policy as the commissioner deems necessary.

(3) Within 90 days following the effective date of P.L. , c. (pending before the Legislature as this bill), the commissioner shall adopt amendments to the model policy to establish procedures that permit a person to electronically report an act of harassment, intimidation or bullying using an online reporting form.

e. Notice of the school district's policy shall appear in any publication of the school district that sets forth the comprehensive rules, procedures and standards of conduct for schools within the school district, and in any student handbook.

f. Nothing in this section shall prohibit a school district from adopting a policy that includes components that are more stringent than the components set forth in this section.

(cf: P.L.2012, c.1, s.1)

2. This act shall take effect immediately.

STATEMENT

This bill requires school districts to establish procedures for the online reporting of acts of harassment, intimidation, or bullying.

policy prohibiting harassment, intimidation, or bullying. Current law requires this policy to contain a procedure for the reporting of acts of harassment, intimidation, or bullying, including a provision that permits a person to anonymously report these acts.

This bill amends the “Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act” to provide that beginning on the 120th day following the enactment of the bill, each school district’s policy would also be required to include a procedure that permits a person to electronically report an act of harassment, intimidation, or bullying using an online reporting form, which would be accessible through the official Internet website of the school district. In addition, the bill requires a link to the online reporting form to be prominently posted on the home page of the school district's website and distributed annually to parents and guardians who have children enrolled in the district.

Under current law, the Commissioner of Education is required to develop a model policy to assist school districts in developing policies for the prevention of harassment, intimidation, or bullying. This bill also requires the commissioner to adopt amendments to the model policy to establish procedures for the electronic reporting of harassment, intimidation, or bullying using online reporting forms.