

ASSEMBLY, No. 4197

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED JUNE 1, 2020

Sponsored by:

Assemblywoman AURA K. DUNN

District 25 (Morris and Somerset)

Assemblywoman VALERIE VAINIERI HUTTLE

District 37 (Bergen)

SYNOPSIS

Requires school psychologists and school counselors to complete mental health first aid training.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 6/4/2020)

1 **AN ACT** concerning mental health first aid training for certain
2 school personnel and supplementing chapter 6 of Title 18A of
3 the New Jersey Statutes.

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

7
8 1. a. (1) A school psychologist shall complete the mental
9 health first aid training course established or approved by the
10 Department of Education, pursuant to section 2 of this act, during
11 the person's first year of employment as a school psychologist. If a
12 person is employed as a school psychologist on the effective date of
13 this act, then the person shall complete the mental health first aid
14 training course during the first year following the effective date.

15 (2) The State Board of Education shall, as part of the
16 professional development requirements established for school
17 psychologists, require each school psychologist to complete the
18 mental health first aid training course not less than once every three
19 years.

20 b. (1) A school counselor shall complete the mental health first
21 aid training course established or approved by the Department of
22 Education, pursuant to section 2 of this act, during the person's first
23 year of employment as a school counselor. If a person is employed
24 as a school counselor on the effective date of this act, then the
25 person shall complete the mental health first aid training course
26 during the first year following the effective date.

27 (2) The State Board of Education shall, as part of the
28 professional development requirements established for school
29 counselors, require each school counselor to complete the mental
30 health first aid training course not less than once every three years.

31
32 2. a. The Department of Education, in consultation with the
33 Department of Human Services, shall establish or approve, as
34 necessary, a mental health first aid training course to instruct school
35 personnel on how to recognize and address the signs of mental
36 illness in children and adolescents. The training course shall
37 consist of no less than eight hours and include information on topics
38 including, but not limited to:

39 (1) the methods of identifying, understanding, and responding to
40 signs of mental health illnesses and substance use disorders;

41 (2) the risk factors and warning signs for mental health illnesses
42 and substance use disorders;

43 (3) the interventions and strategies that may be used to assist an
44 individual in both crisis and non-crisis situations; and

45 (4) an overview of mental health illnesses that may present in
46 children and adolescents, including depression and mood disorders,
47 anxiety disorders, trauma, psychosis, and substance use disorders.

1 b. The Department of Education, in consultation with the
2 Department of Human Services, shall review and update, as
3 necessary, the mental health first aid training course established or
4 approved pursuant to this section, not less than once every three
5 years, to ensure that the contents of the course reflect the current
6 understanding of mental health issues, and continue to comply with
7 the requirements of subsection a. of this section.

8
9 3. This act shall take effect on the first day of the sixth month
10 next following the date of enactment.

11
12
13 STATEMENT

14
15 This bill requires school psychologists and school counselors to
16 complete a mental health first aid training course established or
17 approved by the Department of Education.

18 Under the bill, every school psychologist and school counselor
19 would be required to complete a mental health first aid training
20 course established or approved by the Department of Education
21 during the person's first year of employment. If a person is
22 employed as a school psychologist or school counselor on the
23 effective date of the bill, then the person would be required to
24 complete the mental health first aid training course during the first
25 year following the bill's effective date. The bill also requires every
26 school psychologist and school counselor to complete the mental
27 health first aid training course at least once every three years as a
28 part of the professional development requirements established by
29 the State Board of Education.

30 Additionally, the bill requires the Department of Education, in
31 consultation with the Department of Human Services, to establish or
32 approve, as necessary, a mental health first aid training course to
33 instruct school personnel on how to recognize and address the signs
34 of mental illness in children and adolescents. This training course
35 would be required to consist of no less than eight hours and, at a
36 minimum, include information on the following topics:

37 (1) the methods of identifying, understanding, and responding to
38 signs of mental health illnesses and substance use disorders;

39 (2) the risk factors and warning signs for mental health illnesses
40 and substance use disorders;

41 (3) the interventions and strategies that may be used to assist an
42 individual in both crisis and non-crisis situations; and

43 (4) an overview of mental health illnesses that may present in
44 children and adolescents, including depression and mood disorders,
45 anxiety disorders, trauma, psychosis, and substance use disorders

46 The bill also requires the training course to be reviewed and
47 updated, as necessary, not less than once every three years, to

A4197 DUNN, VAINIERI HUTTLE

4

- 1 ensure that the contents of the course reflect the current
- 2 understanding of mental health issues, and continues to comply
- 3 with the requirements of the bill.