SENATE, No. 2718

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED JULY 22, 2020

Sponsored by:
Senator JAMES BEACH
District 6 (Burlington and Camden)
Senator M. TERESA RUIZ
District 29 (Essex)

Co-Sponsored by:
Senators A.M.Bucco, Corrado and Pou

SYNOPSIS

Establishes “Student Mental Health Task Force” to study resources available to schools and parents to address student mental health needs.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.

(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 12/21/2020)

AN ACT establishing the "Student Mental Health Task Force."

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

1. a. There is established the "Student Mental Health Task Force." The purpose of the task force shall be to study and survey the resources that are available to schools and parents to address student mental health needs.

b. The task force shall consist of 15 members, as follows:

(1) the Commissioner of Education, or a designee, who shall serve ex officio;

(2) the Commissioner of Health, or a designee, who shall serve ex officio;

(3) the Commissioner of Children and Families, or a designee, who shall serve ex officio;

(4) the Commissioner of Banking and Insurance, or a designee, who shall serve ex officio;

(5) the Director of the Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services in the Department of Human Services, or a designee, who shall serve ex officio;

(6) one public member with knowledge in issues relating to the work of the task force, appointed by the Speaker of the General Assembly;

(7) one public member with knowledge in issues relating to the work of the task force, appointed by the Senate President; and

(8) eight public members appointed by the Governor, who shall include: one representative of the New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association, one representative of the New Jersey School Boards Association, one representative of the National Alliance on Mental Illness, one representative of the New Jersey Association of Mental Health and Addiction Agencies, one representative of the New Jersey Association of Counties, one representative of the New Jersey League of Municipalities, one representative of a mental health service provider that has entered into a partnership with one or more school districts in the State, and one representative of any State institution of higher education that has entered into a mental health-related partnership with one or more school districts in the State.

c. Members to the task force shall be appointed within 60 days following the date of enactment of this act. The Commissioner of Education, or his designee, shall serve as the chairperson of the task force. The task force shall organize as soon as practicable following the appointment of its members and shall select a vice-chairperson from among its members. The chairperson shall appoint a secretary who need not be a member of the task force.

d. Vacancies in the membership of the task force shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointments were made. Members of the task force shall serve without compensation, but shall be reimbursed for necessary expenditures incurred in the performance of their duties as members of the task force, subject to available funds.

e. The Department of Education shall provide such administrative and professional assistance as is necessary for the task force to carry out its work. The task force shall be entitled to call to its assistance and avail itself of the services of the employees of any State agency as it may require and as may be available for its purposes.

2. a. It shall be the duty of the task force to study and survey all resources that are currently available to the schools and parents within each county in the State, and within the northern, central, and southern regions of the State, for helping a student or child who experiences mental health issues. The task force shall, at a minimum, survey the availability of:

(1) mental health treatment services provided within each county and region of the State including, but not limited to, those services provided through a school district, professional mental health services provider, or community mental health services organization, and any other tools or resources to address the mental health needs of students;

(2) mental health care provider networks that offer mental health treatment services within each municipality, county, and region of the State;

(3) State, county, or municipal agencies within each county and region of the State that offer funding, professional mental health treatment services, or other resources to address the mental health needs of students; and

(4) partnership opportunities with institutions of higher education within each county and region of the State to address the mental health needs of students.

b. The task force shall issue a final report to the Governor, and to the Legislature pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1), no later than one year after the organization of the task force. The report shall contain the results of the survey required pursuant to subsection a. of this section.

The task force shall forward a copy of the report to every school district in the State.

3. This act shall take effect immediately, and shall expire 30 days after the task force issues its final report.

STATEMENT

This bill establishes the "Student Mental Health Task Force" to study and survey the resources that are available to schools and parents when helping a student or child that experiences mental health issues.

Under the bill, the task force would consist of 15 members, including the Commissioner of Education, the Commissioner of Health, the Commissioner of Children and Families, the Commissioner of Banking and Insurance, the Director of the Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services in the Department of Human Services, one public member appointed by the Speaker of the General Assembly, one public member appointed by the Senate President, and eight public members appointed by the Governor.

The eight members appointed by the Governor would include one representative from each of the following organizations: (1) the New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association; (2) the New Jersey School Boards Association; (3) the National Alliance on Mental Illness; (4) the New Jersey Association of Mental Health and Addiction Agencies; (5) the New Jersey Association of Counties; (6) the New Jersey League of Municipalities; (7) any mental health service provider that has entered into a partnership with one or more school districts in the State; and (8) any institution of higher education that has entered into a partnership with one or more school districts in the State to provide mental health services.

Specifically, the bill requires the task force to study and survey all resources that are currently available to schools and parents within each county in the State, and within the northern, central, and southern regions of the State, for helping a student or child who experiences mental health issues. At a minimum, the task force would indicate the availability of:

(1) mental health treatment services provided within each county and region of the State including, but not limited to, those services provided through a school district, professional mental health services provider, or community mental health services organization, and any other tools or resources to address the mental health needs of students;

(2) mental health care provider networks that offer mental health treatment services within each county and region of the State;

(3) State, county, or municipal agencies within each county and region of the State that offer funding, professional mental health treatment services, or other resources to address the mental health needs of students; and

(4) partnership opportunities with institutions of higher education within each county and region of the State to address the mental health needs of students.

The bill requires the task force to issue a final report to the Governor and Legislature within one year of the organization of the task force. This report would be required to contain the information set forth above. The task force would also be required to forward the report to every school district in the State. The task force would expire 30 days after the issuance of this report.