ASSEMBLY, No. 3331

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

220th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED MARCH 7, 2022

Sponsored by:
Assemblywoman GABRIELA M. MOSQUERA
District 4 (Camden and Gloucester)

Co-Sponsored by:
Assemblywoman McKnight

SYNOPSIS

Establishes “Student Mental Health Task Force.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.

(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 3/7/2022)

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 examine issues related to the mental health of students, including depression, anxiety, stress, or other psychological or emotional tension, trauma, or disorder; study and survey the resources that are available to schools and parents to address student mental health needs; and develop recommendations to ensure that students have access to mental health care programs and services in order to allow students to meet their educational goals.

b. The task force shall consist of 17 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 appointed by the Speaker of the General Assembly and one public member appointed by the Minority Leader of the General Assembly, both of whom shall have demonstrated expertise in issues related to the work of the task force;

(7) one public member appointed by the Senate President and one public member appointed by the Minority Leader of the Senate, both of whom shall have demonstrated expertise in issues related to the work of the task force; 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 member representing school district leaders, and one school mental health professional who holds a valid educational services certificate issued by the State Board of Examiners that may include, but is not limited to, a school counselor, a school social worker, or a school psychologist.

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 examine issues related to the mental health of students, including depression, anxiety, stress, or other psychological or emotional tension, trauma, or disorder; 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; and develop recommendations to ensure that students have access to mental health care programs and services in order to allow students to meet their educational goals.

b. 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.

c. The task force shall also study and make recommendations regarding the following:

(1) the identification of public school students who experience depression, anxiety, stress, or other psychological or emotional tension, trauma, or disorder;

(2) the evaluation and expansion of counseling programs and services available to students experiencing mental health difficulties, and other programs designed to address issues related to student mental health;

(3) the relationship of student mental health to school safety and security;

(4) the amount of funding that may be necessary for public schools to employ the appropriate staff and to establish new programs or expand existing programs necessary to address student mental health;

(5) an examination of other states that have implemented programs that have successfully addressed depression, anxiety, stress, or other psychological or emotional tension, trauma, or disorder among public school students and reduced the number of students experiencing such difficulties; and

(6) any other proposals that the task force determines would provide for increased access to high-quality mental health programs.

d. The task force shall consult with parents of general education students, parents of students who receive special education and related services, and teaching staff members when performing the duties required pursuant to the provisions of this section.

e. 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 and recommendations developed pursuant to 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," the purpose of which is to examine issues related to the mental health of students, including depression, anxiety, stress, or other psychological or emotional tension, trauma, or disorder; study and survey the resources that are available to schools and parents to address student mental health needs; and develop recommendations to ensure that students have access to mental health care programs and services in order to allow students to meet their educational goals.

The task force will consist of the following 17 members: the Commissioner of Education, or a designee, ex officio; the Commissioner of Health, or a designee, ex officio; the Commissioner of Children and Families, or a designee, ex officio; the Commissioner of Banking and Insurance, or a designee, ex

officio; the Director of the Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services in the Department of Human Services, or a designee, ex officio; one public member appointed by the Senate President, one public member appointed by the Minority Leader of the Senate, one public member appointed by the Speaker of the General Assembly, and one public member appointed by the Minority Leader of the General Assembly, all four of whom shall have demonstrated expertise in issues relating to the work of the task force; and the following eight public members appointed by the Governor: 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 member representing school district leaders, and one school mental health professional who holds a valid educational services certificate issued by the State Board of Examiners that may include, but is not limited to, a school counselor, a school social worker, or a school psychologist.

The task force is responsible for examining issues related to the mental health of students, including depression, anxiety, stress, or other psychological or emotional tension, trauma, or disorder; 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; and develop recommendations to ensure that students have access to mental health care programs and services in order to allow students to meet their educational goals.

The task force is required to survey the availability of certain mental health treatment services, mental health care provider networks that offer mental health treatment, government agencies that offer funding and mental health treatment services, and partnership opportunities with institutions of higher education to address mental health needs of students.

The task force is also required to study and make recommendations regarding the identification of public school students who experience mental health difficulties, the evaluation and expansion of counseling programs and services available to students experiencing mental health difficulties, the relationship of student mental health to school safety and security, the amount of funding that may be necessary for public schools to employ the appropriate staff and to establish new programs or expand existing programs necessary to address student mental health, an examination of mental health programs successfully implemented by other states, and any other proposals the task force determines

would provide for increased access to high-quality mental health programs.

The task force, in performing the above duties, is required to consult with parents of general education students, parents of students who receive special education and related services, and teaching staff members.

The task force will issue a final report to the Governor and Legislature no later than one year after the organization of the task force that contains the results of the above survey and recommendations. The task force is required to forward a copy of the report to every school district in the State. The task force will expire 30 days after issuing its final report.