
DIGEST

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Norton

HB No. 758

Abstract: Creates the La. Bullying Awareness and Treatment Task Force within the Dept. of Health and Hospitals.

Proposed law shall be known and may be cited as the "La. Bullying Awareness and Treatment Act".

The purpose of proposed law is to create the La. Bullying Awareness and Treatment Task Force (task force), to develop a comprehensive, coordinated plan to address the mental health needs of youths who are victims of bullying as well as youths who are involved in bullying, and to provide needed guidance to carry out the goals the task force shall recommend.

Proposed law provides that the task force shall consist of the following members:

- (1) The secretary of the Dept. of Health and Hospitals (DHH) or his designee.
- (2) The secretary of the Dept. of Children and Family Services (DCFS) or his designee.
- (3) The executive director of the La. chapter of the National Association of Social Workers or his designee.
- (4) The president of the La. Counseling Association or his designee.
- (5) The president of the La. Association for Behavioral Health or his designee.
- (6) The president of the La. School Counselor Association or his designee.
- (7) An education practitioner who has experience addressing the issue of bullying, designated by the state superintendent of education.
- (8) Four parents or other members of the public who have demonstrated a commitment to addressing the issue of bullying.
- (9) Two elected members of the La. House of Representatives appointed by the speaker of the House of Representatives.
- (10) Two elected members of the La. Senate appointed by the president of the Senate.

Proposed law provides that each of the four elected members of the legislature serving on the task force shall designate one of the parents or other members of the public provided for in proposed law.

Proposed law provides that the secretary of DHH or his designee, shall serve as chairman of the committee.

Proposed law provides that members of the task force shall serve three-year terms and shall hold office until the appointment and qualification of a successor. Proposed law further provides that, whenever a vacancy occurs in a position, the vacancy shall be filled in the same manner and under the same terms and conditions as required for the original appointment.

Proposed law requires the task force to convene for its first meeting no later than Oct. 1, 2014. Proposed law further requires the members of the task force, at the first meeting, to elect a vice chairman and other officers as they may deem appropriate.

Proposed law authorizes legislative members of the commission to receive the same per diem and travel allowance for attending meetings of the task force or any meeting thereof as is normally provided for members of the legislature.

Proposed law provides that nonlegislative members of the task force shall receive no compensation for their services and shall serve at no expense to the state.

Proposed law provides that the task force shall be domiciled in Baton Rouge but may hold public meetings elsewhere in the state.

Proposed law requires the task force to meet every 60 days at such times and at places as it may designate. The task force may also hold additional meetings upon the call of the chairman or at the request of at least three members of the task force.

Proposed law requires a majority of the task force to constitute a quorum for the transaction of business. Proposed law further requires all official actions of the task force to require the affirmative vote of a majority of the members.

Proposed law requires the task force to make a thorough study of the feasibility and practicality of providing counseling and other treatment services to youths who are victims of bullying as well as youths who are involved in bullying. Proposed law authorizes the task force to render objective, fiscally feasible recommendations to the legislature for the implementation of policies that could be adopted by the state.

Proposed law requires the task force to consider mental health treatment solutions for youths who bully which will accomplish but shall not be limited to the following:

- (1) Help the youth who bullies fully acknowledge the behavior.

- (2) Emphasize that the youth had other options, no matter what the provocation, and that the youth is fully responsible for the decision made.
- (3) Confront excuses by the youth that minimize the behavior or externalize the cause of the bullying behavior.
- (4) Support parents and educators in holding these youths fully accountable for their actions and not suggesting or allowing rationalizations.
- (5) Once the youth is able to recognize problems with the bullying behavior, help the youth set and work toward goals for change, including focusing on helping to discover the specific positive goals that the aggression is directed toward and finding other pathways to reach those goals, track progress toward new behaviors, and feel pride about those changes.
- (6) Help adults in the youth's family and environment recognize and affirm the gradual progress the youth makes toward new, nonaggressive behaviors.

Proposed law requires the task force to consider mental health treatment solutions for youths who are victims of bullying to address issues, including but not limited to all of the following:

- (1) Social isolation.
- (2) Decreased academic performance.
- (3) Anxiety.
- (4) Depression.
- (5) Low self-esteem or lack of self-confidence.
- (6) Suicidal thoughts.

Proposed law authorizes the task force to receive and expend funds appropriated or otherwise made available by the legislature or from any other source, including donations or gifts of money or services from public or private organizations or from any other sources, to be utilized for the purposes of proposed law.

Proposed law requires the task force to submit a report of its findings and recommendations, including proposed legislation if necessary, on an annual basis to the legislature not later than 60 days prior to the commencement of the regular legislative session.

Proposed law requires all departments, commissions, boards, agencies, officers, and institutions of the state and all subdivisions thereof to cooperate with the task force in carrying out the powers and purposes of proposed law.

Proposed law requires DHH and the DCFS to assist the task force in determining the availability of funding sources to carry out the purposes of proposed law.

Proposed law places the La. Bullying Awareness and Treatment Task Force within DHH and authorizes the task force to exercise and perform its powers, duties, functions, and responsibilities in the manner provided for agencies transferred in accordance with the provisions of proposed law.

(Adds R.S. 28:801-806 and R.S. 36:259(A))