

# Anti-bullying

## Efforts in the State of Illinois



Illinois  
State Board  
of Education

# Illinois Anti-Bullying Statute

- Section 27-23.7 of the school code was enacted and took effect on June 26, 2006.
- The General Assembly says bullying:
  - Creates a climate of fear among students,
  - Inhibits their ability to learn, and
  - Leads to other antisocial behavior, such as vandalism, shoplifting, skipping and dropping out of school, fighting, using drugs and alcohol, sexual harassment and sexual violence.

# Illinois Anti-Bullying Statute

- The law states: “Each school district may make suitable provisions for instruction in bullying prevention and gang resistance education and training in all grades and include such instruction in the courses of study regularly taught therein.”
- “Bullying prevention” means and includes instruction in all of the following: (1) intimidation; (2) student victimization; (3) sexual harassment; (4) sexual violence; and (5) strategies for student-centered problem solving regarding bullying.
- Notably, the term “bullying” was not defined.

# Illinois Anti-Bullying Statute

- In 2007, the General Assembly amended Section 27-23.7 to include a requirement that within 180 days of the effective date of the amendment:
  - *School districts create and maintain a policy on bullying, which must be filed with the State Board of Education.*
  - *Each school district must communicate this policy on bullying to its students and their parent or guardian on an annual basis*
  - *The policy must be updated every 2 years and filed with the State Board of Education after updated*
  - *The amendment, however, did not provide any detail as to what must be contained in this policy*
- The amendment became effective on Aug. 23, 2007, so the requirement to have a policy in place has been in effect since approximately Feb. 23, 2008. Further, the amendment requires ISBE to monitor the implementation of the policies

# Anti-bullying across the country

- Other U.S. states enacted anti-bullying statutes that were more detailed than Illinois. Florida and Delaware are two examples:
- **Florida (F.S.A. Section 1006.147) (Effective June 10, 2008):**
  - “Jeffrey Johnston Stand Up For All Students Act”: Jeffrey Johnston was a Florida student who, in 2005, at the age of 15, committed suicide as a result of the bullying by a classmate.
  - Prohibits “bullying” or “harassment” (including through the use of data or computer software that is accessed through a computer, computer system or computer network of a public K-12 educational institution) and defines each.
  - By Dec. 1, 2008, each school district must adopt a policy prohibiting bullying and harassment. The law sets out, in detail, the minimum components of the required policy.

# Anti-bullying across the country

- **Delaware (14 Del. C. 4112D) (Effective May 3, 2007)**
  - Prohibition on bullying: “Each school district...shall prohibit bullying...”
  - Each school district is required to establish a policy, and, as in Florida, the law sets out the minimum required components for that policy.
  - The Delaware Department of Education is to develop a model policy and post it on their website to assist school districts.
  - To the extent funding is available, the State Department of Education will provide for an award system for schools with the exemplary programs based on criteria promulgated by the Delaware Department of Education.

# Illinois Prevent Student Violence Act

- Public Act 96-0952, Effective June 28, 2010: A significant step forward that defines bullying:
  - Any severe or pervasive physical or verbal act or conduct, including communications made in writing or electronically, direct toward a student or students that has or can reasonably be predicted to have the effect of one or more of the following:
    - Placing the student or students in reasonable fear of harm to the student's or students' person or property;
    - Causing a substantially detrimental effect on the student's or students' physical or mental health;
    - Substantially interfering with the student's or students' academic performance; or
    - Substantially interfering with the student's or students' ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities or privileges provided by a school

# Illinois Prevent Student Violence Act

- Explicitly Prohibits Bullying
  - In all public school districts and non-public, non-sectarian elementary and secondary schools
  - On the basis of actual or perceived race, color, religion, sex, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, physical or mental disability, military status, sexual orientation, general-related identity or expression, unfavorable discharge from military service, association with a person or group with one or more of the aforementioned actually or perceived characteristics, or any other distinguishing characteristic.



# Illinois Prevent Student Violence Act

- Specifies Where/When Bullying is Prohibited:
  - During any school-sponsored education program or activity.
  - While in school, on school property, on school buses or other school vehicles, at designated school bus stops waiting for the school bus, or at school-sponsored or school sanctioned events or activities.
  - Through the transmission of information from a school computer, a school computer network or other similar electronic school equipment.
- Requires non-public, non-sectarian schools to create and maintain a policy on bullying, and update it every two years.

# Illinois Prevent Student Violence Act

- Established the School Bullying Prevention Task Force, which was charged with:
  1. Exploring the causes and consequences of bullying in Illinois schools
  2. Identifying promising practices that reduce incidences of bullying
  3. Highlighting training and technical assistance opportunities for schools to effectively address bullying
  4. Evaluating the effectiveness of schools' current anti-bullying policies and other bullying prevention programs
  5. Other related issues
- The Task Force shall submitted a report to the Governor and General Assembly by March 2011 on recommendations for preventing and addressing bullying in Illinois schools and a proposed timeline for meeting the Task Force's charges.

# School Bullying Prevention Task Force

- Membership requirements were set out in statute:
  - Broad state agency representation: ISBE, IDHR, DHS, IVPA
  - Advocacy groups: Safe Schools Alliance; Anti-Defamation League; African American Coalition; Health and Disability Advocates
  - School District Representation: Both teachers and administrators
  - Two researchers/scholars
  - Two high school students

# School Bullying Prevention Task Force

- **Conducted five meetings**
  - All meetings were open to the public
  - Materials available at <http://www.isbe.net/SBPTF/default.htm>.
  - Presentations on a range of issues
- **Broke out into subcommittees:**
  - Legislation and school district policies
  - Youth programming and professional development
  - Data

# Task Force Recommendations

- **Overview**

- **Modify Section 27-23.7 of the Illinois School Code (105 ILCS 5/27-23.7) to, among other things, (a) require district anti-bullying policies to: contain a procedure for reporting incidences of bullying, including a way to make reports anonymously; require school employees to report bullying; and require procedures for investigating incidences of bullying, including identification of a person responsible for such investigations; and (b) require school districts would be required to collect and maintain data regarding allegations and incidences of bullying at their schools, including a record of each complaint and the action taken in regard to the complaint. Districts would be required to submit such data to ISBE in a format determined by the agency.**
- **ISBE is to develop a model policy and a demonstration project, which would include training of school personnel, student programming, and evaluation of the project's efficacy.**

# Task Force Recommendations

- Analyze the lessons learned from schools engaged in school transformation, including lessons from successful implementation of Positive Behavioral Interventions Support, in order to both identify and implement effective strategies and identify any further areas where pilot projects are needed in order to collect data.
- Invest in pilot projects in schools and communities that are diverse in terms of geography, size, and student population characteristics in order to further define and understand the contextual factors that affect school transformation.

# Task Force Recommendations

- ISBE requires each school district to collect and report annually on between 2-4 bullying and school violence indicators that are directly tied to the three-part definition of bullying set out in the PSVA and that reporting include a disaggregation of bias- or identity-based violence and bullying (e.g., based on race or sexual orientation) from other types of violence.
- ISBE includes a school safety indicator/measure on the Illinois Interactive Report Card (IIRC).
- ISBE establishes an ongoing administrator's academy for all administrators on the topic of establishing and maintaining a positive school climate and culture, which results in outcomes of inclusive, safe, orderly and pro-social learning environments for all students. The curriculum should be revised regularly to stay current with the latest issues and strategies for schools and be delivered statewide by the Regional Offices of Education and the Intermediate Service Centers.

# Task Force Recommendations

- State funded prevention and intervention programs/grants to districts or schools related to school safety and/or violence/bullying reduction include as a part of its requirements an evaluation and monitoring plan.
- ISBE develops an SEL self-assessment tool and makes it available to all schools.
- A number of data collection strategies, measures and supports are made available to districts and schools to assist them at all stages of the school transformation process.
- ISBE updates website to include an area dedicated to violence and bullying prevention. Included on the website should be valid and reliable measures that schools could utilize in their school transformation process as well as other supports regarding data collection, monitoring and evaluation.



# Task Force Recommendations

- The Illinois Department of Human Services adapts the Illinois Youth Survey to add new questions to the survey's core questions and develops modules with more in-depth information about various aspects of bullying and schools prevention that schools could opt to include as part or all of their additional voluntary allotment of 15 items.
- The Prevent School Violence Illinois (PSVI) coalition (a broad-based group of organizations from across the state) continues working in coordination with state agencies, such as the Illinois Violence Prevention Authority, the Department of Human Services, and the Illinois State Board of Education, to develop and/or identify additional recommendations associated with this report and, as necessary, report back to the Governor and General Assembly.