

2026 -- H 7116

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LC003759
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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2026

A N A C T

RELATING TO EDUCATION -- CURRICULUM

Introduced By: Representatives J. Lombardi, Hull, Sanchez, Cruz, and Stewart

Date Introduced: January 15, 2026

Referred To: House Education

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Section 16-22-4 of the General Laws in Chapter 16-22 entitled "Curriculum
2 [See Title 16 Chapter 97 — the Rhode Island Board of Education Act]" is hereby amended to read
3 as follows:

4 **16-22-4. Instruction in health and physical education.**

5 (a) All children in grades one through twelve (12) attending public schools, or any other
6 schools managed and controlled by the state, except as provided in § 16-100-3(d), shall receive in
7 those schools instruction in health and physical education under rules and regulations the
8 department of elementary and secondary education may prescribe or approve during periods that
9 shall average at least twenty (20) minutes in each school day. No private school or private
10 instruction shall be approved by any school committee for the purposes of chapter 19 of this title
11 as substantially equivalent to that required by law of a child attending a public school in the same
12 city or town unless instruction in health and physical education similar to that required in public
13 schools shall be given. Commencing September 1, 2012, the required health education curriculum
14 shall be based on the health education standards of the Rhode Island health education framework:
15 health literacy for all students as promulgated by the Rhode Island department of education and
16 consistent with the mandated health instructional outcomes therein. Commencing September 1,
17 2012, the required physical education curriculum shall be based on the physical education standards
18 of the Rhode Island physical education framework: supporting physically active lifestyles through
19 quality physical education as promulgated by the Rhode Island department of education and

1 consistent with the instructional outcomes therein.

2 (b) The department of elementary and secondary education shall incorporate, in
3 consultation with the state department of behavioral healthcare, developmental disabilities and
4 hospitals, substance abuse prevention and suicide prevention into the health education curriculum.
5 For the purpose of this section, “substance abuse prevention” means the implementation of
6 evidence-based, age-appropriate programs, practices, or curricula related to the use and abuse of
7 alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs; “suicide prevention” means the implementation of evidence-
8 based, appropriate programs, practices, or curricula related to mental health awareness and suicide
9 prevention. Further, “substance abuse prevention” and suicide prevention programs shall
10 specifically include information provided to students that mixing opioids and alcohol can cause
11 accidental death.

12 (c) The department of education shall promulgate guidelines, rules and regulations for
13 every school district, private school, mayoral academy, and charter school and make available on
14 its website, curriculum materials, and such other materials as may assist local and regional school
15 committees, and governing bodies of any private school, mayoral academy, or charter school, in
16 developing instructional material on the multiple dimensions of health, by including mental health
17 and the relation of physical and mental health, in order to enhance student understanding, attitudes
18 and behaviors, that promote health, well-being and human dignity. The curriculum material and the
19 guidelines shall be developed by the department of education, in consultation with groups and
20 individuals having an interest and expertise in the field of mental health and mental illness
21 treatment.

22 (d) Every school district shall include in its curriculum for all seventh grade students, a
23 four (4) hour unit of instruction on mental health and the relation of physical and mental health.
24 School districts may utilize materials provided by the department of education and the curriculum
25 shall be provided for the 2027-2028 school year and each school year thereafter.

26 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF
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1 This act would require the department of education to develop and make available for use
2 in all schools, a mental health curriculum. School districts would be required to provide four (4)
3 hours of mental health instruction to seventh grade students, commencing with the 2027-2028
4 school year and every school year thereafter.

5 This act would take effect upon passage.

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