

2022 -- H 6667 SUBSTITUTE A

LC003488/SUB A/2

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2022

A N A C T

RELATING TO EDUCATION -- HEALTH AND SAFETY OF PUPILS -- TRAUMA
INFORMED SCHOOLS ACT

Introduced By: Representatives Ranglin-Vassell, Kislak, Barros, Biah, and Henries

Date Introduced: January 06, 2022

Referred To: House Education

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Chapter 16-21 of the General Laws entitled "Health and Safety of Pupils" is
2 hereby amended by adding thereto the following sections:

3 **16-21-40. Trauma informed schools act.**

4 (a) Schools play a critical role in addressing and mitigating the effects of child trauma by
5 recognizing the impact of adversity and trauma on students, parents, and staff, and embedding
6 policies and practices that foster well-being and resilience.

7 (b) Through alignment and integration with a multi-tiered system of support frameworks
8 designed to support the academic, behavioral, social and emotional needs of all students, the
9 commissioner of elementary and secondary education shall:

10 (1) Establish and implement trauma informed practices within all elementary and
11 secondary education schools throughout the state, that:

12 (i) Promote a shared understanding among teachers, teacher's assistants, school leaders,
13 paraprofessionals, specialized instructional support personnel, and other staff that:

14 (A) Traumatic experiences are common among students;

15 (B) Trauma can impact student learning, behavior, and relationships in school;

16 (C) Traumatic experiences do not inherently undermine the capabilities of students to reach
17 high expectations in academics and life;

18 (D) School-wide learning environments, where all students and adults feel safe, welcomed,

1 and supported, can enable students to succeed despite traumatic experiences; and
2 (E) Services, supports, and programs provided to meet individual student needs should be
3 trauma informed, where appropriate, and increase student connection to the school-wide learning
4 environment.
5 (ii) Adopt disciplinary procedures and practices that:
6 (A) Accompany disciplinary actions with holistic assessments and positive behavioral
7 interventions and supports to address the underlying causes of student behavior, including trauma;
8 (B) Avoid harsh, punitive, or exclusionary disciplinary practices;
9 (C) Utilize evidence-based restorative practices with a focus on behavior modifications and
10 building community, and less punitive or exclusionary practices that erode a culture of trust;
11 (D) Implement procedures to call skilled mental health personnel when there is mental
12 health breakdown, and resort to law enforcement only in extreme cases and/or when a student or
13 students are at risk for bodily harm; and
14 (E) Do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including sexual
15 orientation or gender identity), disability, English proficiency status, migrant status, or age.
16 (iii) Implement activities that engage teachers, teacher's assistants, school leaders,
17 paraprofessionals, specialized instructional support personnel, and other staff, in a process of
18 school-based planning to:
19 (A) Promote a school-wide culture of acceptance;
20 (B) Help all students feel safe and connected to the school community;
21 (C) Support all students to form positive relationships with adults and peers, understand
22 and manage emotions, achieve success academically and in extracurricular areas, and experience
23 physical and psychological health and well-being;
24 (D) Promote teamwork and effective communication among all staff and shared
25 responsibility for every student;
26 (E) Integrate evidence-based practices that build social-emotional skills into rigorous
27 academic instruction;
28 (F) Support trauma-sensitive and informed approaches to multi-tiered system of supports
29 ("MTSS") function of team-based leadership, tiered delivery system, selection and implementation
30 of instruction and intervention, comprehensive screening and assessment system and continuous
31 data-based decision-making; and
32 (G) Recognize and prevent adult implicit bias.

33 **16-21-41. Trauma informed schools act commission.**

34 (a) There is hereby established a trauma informed schools act commission (hereinafter the

1 "commission"). The commission shall meet at least quarterly or approximately four (4) times in a
2 calendar year.

3 (b) The purpose of the commission shall be to assist the department of elementary and
4 secondary education with the implementation of the trauma informed schools act, as set forth in §
5 16-21-40 and this section.

6 (c) In furtherance of its purpose, the commission shall undertake such actions as it
7 determines appropriate, which shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

8 (1) Conducting a review and assessment of existing trauma informed school and
9 community-based initiatives and initiatives across the state;

10 (2) Developing a trauma informed school act implementation plan;

11 (3) Researching, identifying, and cataloging state, federal, and philanthropic funding
12 sources that align with the provisions of this section and § 16-21-40; and

13 (4) Annually providing a report with findings and recommendations to the speaker of the
14 house, the senate president, and the governor, with the first report to be provided on or before
15 January 31, 2024, and on or before January 31 annually thereafter.

16 (d) The membership of the commission shall be as follows:

17 (1) The state commissioner of elementary and secondary education, or designee;

18 (2) The executive director of Young Voices, RI, or designee;

19 (3) The executive director of Rhode Island Kids Count, or designee;

20 (4) The president of Adoption Rhode Island, or designee;

21 (5) The president of the National Education Association Rhode Island, or designee;

22 (6) The president of the Rhode Island Federation of Teaching and Health Professionals, or
23 designee;

24 (7) The president of the Rhode Island Association of School Principals, or designee;

25 (8) The director of the Alan Shawn Feinstein College of Education and Professional Studies
26 at the University of Rhode Island, or designee;

27 (9) The dean of the Rhode Island College School of Social Work, or designee;

28 (10) The president of Bradley Hospital, or designee;

29 (11) A co-director of the Initiative on Stress, Trauma, and Resilience (STAR) at Brown
30 University, or designee;

31 (12) The director of the Rhode Island College Social Policy Hub for Equity Research
32 Education, or designee;

33 (13) The director of the department of children, youth, and families, or designee;

34 (14) The state child advocate, or designee;

1 (15) The director of the department of health, or designee; and

2 (16) Four (4) members of the community as appointed by the governor.

3 (e) Each of the governor's appointments shall serve a term of three (3) years, and may be
4 reappointed. All other members shall serve as long as they hold their position or until the
5 designating authority makes a new appointment.

6 (f) The commission shall meet at the call of the commissioner of elementary and secondary
7 education and shall elect a chairperson from its membership. A quorum of the commission at any
8 meeting shall consist of at least ten (10) members.

9 (g) All departments, boards and agencies of the state shall cooperate with the commission
10 and forthwith furnish any advice and information, documentary and otherwise, as may be necessary
11 or desirable to facilitate the purposes of this chapter.

12 (h) The department of administration is authorized and directed to provide suitable quarters
13 for the commission.

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

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF

A N A C T

RELATING TO EDUCATION -- HEALTH AND SAFETY OF PUPILS -- TRAUMA
INFORMED SCHOOLS ACT

1 This act would establish the implementation of trauma informed practices in schools
2 throughout the state. It would promote teamwork and effective communication among all staff and
3 establish shared responsibility for every student. The act would also authorize the creation of a
4 commission to provide both support for and recommendations as to how to most effectively
5 implement trauma informed practices in schools.

6 This act would take effect upon passage.

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