

2022 -- S 2556 SUBSTITUTE A

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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: Senators Cano, Bell, Seveney, DiMario, Lawson, DiPalma, Quezada,
Acosta, Kallman, and Burke

Date Introduced: March 04, 2022

Referred To: Senate Judiciary

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 develop a trauma-informed schools
10 implementation plan, as well as necessary administrative guidance, professional development
11 materials, and other resources to enable all elementary and secondary schools to:

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

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

16 (A) Traumatic experiences are common among students;

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

18 (C) Traumatic experiences do not inherently undermine the capabilities of students to reach

1 high expectations in academics and life;

2 (D) School-wide learning environments, where all students and adults feel safe, welcomed,
3 and supported, can enable students to succeed despite traumatic experiences; and

4 (E) Services, supports, and programs provided to meet individual student needs should be
5 trauma-informed, where appropriate, and increase student connection to the school-wide learning
6 environment.

7 (ii) Adopt disciplinary procedures and practices that:

8 (A) Accompany disciplinary actions with holistic assessments and positive behavioral
9 interventions and supports to address the underlying causes of student behavior, including trauma;

10 (B) Avoid harsh, punitive, or exclusionary disciplinary practices;

11 (C) Utilize evidence-based restorative practices with a focus on behavior modifications and
12 building community, and less punitive or exclusionary practices that erode a culture of trust;

13 (D) Implement procedures to call skilled mental health personnel when there is a mental
14 health breakdown, and resort to law enforcement only in extreme cases and/or when a student or
15 students are at risk of bodily harm; and

16 (E) Do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including sexual
17 orientation or gender identity), disability, English proficiency status, migrant status, or age.

18 (iii) Implement activities that engage teachers, teacher's assistants, school leaders,
19 paraprofessionals, specialized instructional support personnel, and other staff, in a process of
20 school-based planning to:

21 (A) Promote a school-wide culture of acceptance;

22 (B) Help all students feel safe and connected to the school community;

23 (C) Support all students to form positive relationships with adults and peers, understand
24 and manage emotions, achieve success academically and in extracurricular areas, and experience
25 physical and psychological health and well-being;

26 (D) Promote teamwork and effective communication among all staff and shared
27 responsibility for every student;

28 (E) Integrate evidence-based practices that build social-emotional skills into rigorous
29 academic instruction;

30 (F) Support trauma-sensitive and informed approaches to multi-tiered system of supports
31 ("MTSS") function of team-based leadership, tiered delivery system, selection and implementation
32 of instruction and intervention, comprehensive screening and assessment system and continuous
33 data-based decision-making; and

34 (G) Recognize and prevent adult implicit bias.

1 **16-21-41. Trauma-informed schools act commission.**

2 (a) There is hereby established a trauma-informed schools commission (hereinafter the
3 "commission"). The commission shall meet at least quarterly or approximately four (4) times per
4 year in fiscal years 2023 and 2024. It shall expire on June 30, 2024. Members of the commission
5 shall serve without compensation.

6 (b) The commission shall be appointed by the council on elementary and secondary
7 education no later than September 30, 2022, and shall be comprised of twelve (12) members: one
8 of whom shall be the commissioner of elementary and secondary education, or designee; one of
9 whom shall be a representative of the RI school superintendents association; one of whom shall be
10 appointed from among the leadership of the state's teachers' unions; one of whom shall be the child
11 advocate; one of whom shall be a representative of a Rhode Island-based institution of higher
12 education with expertise in child development, child mental and behavioral health, trauma-
13 informed educational practices, or a related field; two (2) of whom shall be representatives of youth-
14 serving community-based organizations that provide direct services to youth who have, or are at
15 high risk of experiencing trauma; one of whom shall be a licensed clinical social worker, who
16 primarily works with youth and/or families; one of whom shall be a representative of the Rhode
17 Island Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics; one of whom shall be the executive director
18 of RI Kids Count, or designee; one of whom shall be the president of Adoption RI, or designee;
19 and one of whom shall be a representative of an organization that engages and/or supports parents
20 of school-aged children, with priority given to representation from a parent-led organization.

21 (c) The department of elementary and secondary education shall provide necessary staff
22 and material support to the commission in the furtherance of its purpose.

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

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

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

30 (2) Informing the development of a trauma-informed school implementation plan and
31 supporting materials, that shall be submitted to council on elementary and secondary education for
32 approval no later than April 1, 2024;

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

1 (4) No later than March 1, 2023, submitting an interim report to the speaker of the house,
2 the president of the senate, and the governor, that provides an update on the commission's initial
3 findings, work plan and any preliminary recommendations for regulatory or legislative action to
4 promote the implementation oil trauma-informed practices in schools; and

5 (5) No later than June 30, 2024, submitting a final report to the speaker of the house, the
6 president of the senate, and the governor, that details the commission's findings and
7 recommendations for implementing trauma-informed practices in every elementary and secondary
8 school in Rhode Island.

9 (f) The commission shall elect a chairperson from its membership. A quorum of the
10 commission at any meeting shall consist of at least seven (7) members.

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

14 (h) The department of education is authorized and directed to provide suitable quarters for
15 commission meetings.

16 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 and would create the trauma-informed schools commission comprised of
3 twelve (12) members who would serve without compensation.

4 This act would take effect upon passage.

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