HB 840 Original	2020 Regular Session	Freiberg

Abstract: Provides relative to the safety of students, including in-service training and instruction on suicide prevention and instruction on violence prevention and social inclusion.

Suicide prevention

Present law (R.S. 17:282.4) requires the State Bd. of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) to provide by rule for a statewide youth suicide prevention plan in public schools, including procedures for the development of youth suicide prevention programs. Provides that any such program may include classroom instruction designed to achieve any of the following objectives:

(1)   Encourage sound decisionmaking and promote ethical development.

(2)   Increase student awareness of the relationship between drug and alcohol use and youth suicide.

(3)   Teach students to recognize signs of suicidal tendencies and other facts about youth suicide.

(4)   Inform students of the available community youth suicide prevention services.

(5)   Further cooperative efforts of school personnel and community youth suicide prevention program personnel.

Proposed law adds teaching students how to identify signs and signals of depression and self-injury and informing students about the importance of seeking help for themselves and their peers to these objectives.

Present law provides that any local youth suicide prevention program may be established and implemented in a school system upon identifying and securing funds or services from other state and local agencies. Proposed law adds federal funds and grants from private foundations to funds that school systems may identify and secure for this purpose.

Present law (R.S. 17:437.1) provides the following relative to in-service training for teachers and school employees regarding suicide prevention:

(1)   Requires public and nonpublic school teachers, counselors, and administrators to participate annually in in-service training relative to suicide prevention.

(2)   Requires BESE to adopt guidelines for such training and identify suitable programs for use in such training and the state Dept. of Education to post a listing of such programs on its website.

(3)   Requires training to address certain topics, including increasing awareness of risk factors; how teachers should respond to suspicious behavior or warning signs and crisis situations in which a student is an imminent danger to himself; policies for communicating with parents; available counseling services; dissemination of information on crisis intervention, suicide prevention, and mental health services; and available community organizations and agencies for referral of students.

Proposed law adds that such training shall also address how to identify the warning signs of depression, suicide, and self-injury.

School safety

Present law provides relative to the reporting and investigations of threats of violence or terrorism at schools, including the requirements that (a) school employees report credible and imminent threats to law enforcement and school administrators and (b) public school governing authorities adopt policies for the investigation of reported threats.

Proposed law requires:

(1)   Each public school serving students in grades 6-12 to provide at least one hour or one standard class period of evidence-based instruction in violence prevention each school year and create and provide for a student-led violence prevention club.

(2)   Each public school serving students in grades K-12 to provide at least one hour or one standard class period of evidence-based instruction on social inclusion each school year.

(Amends R.S. 17:282.4(C)(1)(c) and (d) and (D)(2) and 437.1(B)(2)(b); Adds R.S. 17:410.1)