



TSHAC Bullying Prevention Toolkit

Rationale:

In response to national and state concern about the impact of bullying on students, recent Texas legislation has addressed the need for districts to develop anti-bullying policies and interventions. Further, the Texas legislature directed the Department of State Health Services (DSHS), in collaboration with the Texas Education Agency (TEA), to provide and annually update a list of best practice-based early mental health intervention and suicide prevention programs for implementation in general education settings.

The Bullying Prevention Toolkit was compiled and approved by the Texas School Health Advisory Committee (TSHAC) at their May 14, 2012 committee meeting. For more information about the TSHAC, go to www.dshs.state.tx.us/schoolhealth/shadvise.shtm.

Texas Education Code 37.0832

Beginning with the 2012-2013 school year, the Texas Education Code establishes a comprehensive definition of bullying, including bullying by electronic means (i.e., cyber-bullying), and requires school districts to adopt a local anti-bullying policy. The new law allows school districts to transfer the bully to another classroom or campus (where prior law has authorized only the transfer of the victim) and provides for timely notice of bullying incidents to parents of both the bully and target student, requires districts to provide information concerning counseling options available for students involved in bullying incidents, and has a provision to protect individuals from retaliation who provide information concerning bullying incidents.

Texas Health and Safety Code 161.325

The Texas Health and Safety Code directs the Texas Dept of State Health Services (DSHS), in coordination with TEA, to provide an annually updated list of best practice-based early mental health intervention and suicide prevention programs for implementation in public elementary, junior high, middle, and high schools within the general education setting. Each school district may select from the list a program or programs appropriate for implementation in the district. The bill also permits, but does not require, a school board to adopt a policy concerning early mental health intervention and suicide prevention that establishes procedures for providing notice to a parent or guardian about observed early warning signs or suicidal risk, setting out available counseling alternatives for a parent or guardian to consider, prohibiting the use of a medical screening of the student without prior consent of the parent or guardian, as part of the process of identifying whether the student is in need of mental health intervention or suicide prevention, and specifying that the policy be included in the Student/Parent Handbook and the District Improvement Plan.

Texas Education Code 37.218

A significant component of the revised section of the Texas Education Code at Chapter 37.218 requires the Texas School Safety Center, in consultation with the Texas Attorney General's

office, to develop educational programs that school districts can use to address the consequences of “sexting”. According to the Office of the Texas Attorney General, sexting

includes “any possession and/or electronic transmission by a minor (age 17 and under) of visual material capturing a minor engaged in sexual conduct – which includes still photographs...” Programs are required to address, among other things, the connection between bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, and sexting by minors, and school districts are required to provide notice to parents annually of the availability of these programs.

Summary of Toolkit Components

In order to assist local education agencies with the requirements of the anti-bullying and suicide prevention and intervention legislation, the TSHAC has compiled the following resources and tools:

1. **“Resolution Against Bullying in Texas Public Schools”**: a model resolution for local School Health Advisory Councils (SHACs) to consider recommending for adoption by local school boards;
2. **“Bullying Prevention Websites and Resources - Digest”**: a list of websites and resources that offer curricula, videos, handouts, connection to expert speakers, and other resources that can be used to address bullying and suicidal behavior - many of which are free; and
3. **“Bullying Prevention Websites and Resources”**: an annotated list describing the content and tools that can be found at each site.