

LESC bill analyses are available on the New Mexico Legislature website ([www.nmlegis.gov](http://www.nmlegis.gov)). Bill analyses are prepared by LESC staff for standing education committees of the New Mexico Legislature. LESC does not assume any responsibility for the accuracy of these reports if they are used for other purposes.

**LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE**  
**BILL ANALYSIS**  
**53rd Legislature, 2nd Session, 2018**

<b>Bill Number</b>	<u>SB172</u>	<b>Sponsor</b>	<u>Ortiz y Pino</u>
<b>Tracking Number</b>	<u>.209279.1</u>	<b>Committee Referrals</b>	<u>SEC/SFC</u>
<b>Short Title</b>	<u>School Suicide Awareness &amp; Prevention</u>		
<b>Analyst</b>	<u>Force</u>	<b>Original Date</b>	<u>2/1/18</u>
		<b>Last Updated</b>	<u></u>

---

---

**BILL SUMMARY**

Synopsis of Bill

Senate Bill 172 (SB172) directs the Public Education Department (PED) to promulgate rules by January 2019 requiring public and private school personnel to undergo suicide awareness and prevention training. Personnel includes, but is not limited to, teachers, principals, nurses, coaches, and guidance counselors. Elementary school personnel would be required to undergo one hour of such training annually, while middle and high school personnel would require two hours each year.

The bill also directs PED to consult with the Department of Health (DOH), a statewide suicide prevention coalition, and other suicide stakeholders and experts, to develop a list of approved training courses and materials. These materials are to include training for identification of appropriate mental health services and how to refer youth and families to them. The course materials may include online programs, programs approved by the Federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration or the Suicide Prevention Resource Center's best practices registry, or other evidence-based gatekeeper programs approved by PED.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

SB172 does not contain an appropriation. PED indicates fiscal impact would result from the required collaboration with DOH and other suicide experts in order to identify approved training courses and materials. The required annual training will lead to indeterminate costs for the department, due to the need to review and update training materials with best practices, and from costs arising from oversight of school districts' and charter schools' administration of training requirements.

Under SB172, school districts, state-chartered charter schools, and private schools will have to ensure in-service training time is provided to personnel annually and verify completion of the training, leading to further indeterminate costs.

## SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

Both PED and DOH make note of New Mexico's rate of youth suicide, referring to statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that indicate for nearly 20 years, the state has ranked consistently among the top 10 states for youth suicide, at 5.3 deaths per 100 thousand persons, which is 29 percent higher than the national average, at 4.1 suicides per 100 thousand persons. The 2015 New Mexico Youth Risk and Resiliency Survey (YRRS) looks more deeply at these figures, indicating: 16.5 percent of surveyed high school students seriously considered suicide in the year prior to the survey; 14.6 percent made a suicide plan; 9.4 percent attempted suicide; and 2.5 percent made a suicide attempt that resulted in an injury.

Suicidal ideation and self-harm can affect minority groups at greater rates than non-minorities. DOH reports a higher prevalence of suicide attempts among Native American youth, at 13.9 percent, than either Hispanic or white students, at 8.6 percent. Among sexual minorities, the 2013 YRRS indicates that 33.8 percent of lesbian, gay, or bisexual youth and 26.9 percent of uncertain youth attempted suicide in the year prior, as compared with only 8.1 percent of straight students. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and uncertain students represented only 13.9 percent of the population in the year of the survey.

The 2013 YRRS figures for suicidal ideation among middle school students (sixth to eighth grade) are sobering: 20.9 percent of surveyed children reported seriously considering suicide in the year prior to the survey. The rate of suicidal ideation relates closely to resiliency factors included in the survey. For example, students who reported they have a parent who knows where they are when not at home had a suicidal ideation rate of 20.3 percent, compared with 36.7 percent for those who did not. The rate for those who reported having an adult in their community who cared about them was 20.4 percent, compared with 28.2 percent for those who did not. The suicidal ideation rate was 20.1 percent for students reporting an adult in their home who took an interest in their school work, while it was 36.7 percent for those who lack such a person.

According to the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP), the training of school personnel and adoption of comprehensive school policies is a crucial step in reducing the rate of youth suicide. The organization has mandated suicide prevention training for key gatekeepers such as school personnel (though the term "gatekeeper" can refer to anyone strategically positioned to recognize suicide risk), and many states have adopted laws to this effect, requiring up to two hours of training annually for school personnel.

The National Suicide Prevention Resource Center (NSPRC) recommends a three-step strategy for gatekeepers to address suicide among youth: first, *question* the person's intent to commit suicide; second, *persuade* the person to seek help; and third, *refer* them to appropriate resources (QPR). The QPR training is a 1- to 2-hour program for teachers and laypersons to teach potential gatekeepers how to spot the warning signs of suicide, and how best to respond, which can be delivered online or in person. The foundation QPR training is the same for all potential audiences, but specialized modules are available for specific audiences. The program has been recognized as having evidence of effectiveness by the National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices.

It should be noted that the nonprofit organization, Sky Center New Mexico Suicide Intervention Project, whose mission is to reduce the risk of youth suicide in Santa Fe County and northern New Mexico, has been recognized as employing best practices in suicide prevention by the CDC

and DOH. Services include free family counselling, life skill coaching, graduate and advanced studies training, and suicide awareness and gatekeeping training.

### **ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS**

PED indicates some difficulty with the timeline of the bill's requirements. SB172 directs PED to promulgate rules by January 1, 2019, after consultation with DOH and other stakeholders to identify, review, and approve training materials before adopting rules. Generally, the normal rulemaking process in New Mexico requires a minimum of 60 days, including the notice, proposal, public comment, rule hearing, review of public comment, and final adoption and publication of the rule. Effectively, therefore, PED must complete all consultation with stakeholders, as well as review and approval of potential training materials, by the beginning of November 2018 in order to comply with the bill's deadline.

### **TECHNICAL ISSUES**

PED notes that it lacks jurisdiction in this arena over private schools. The sponsor may wish to consider amending the bill to remove the requirement that the rules PED are to adopt include private schools. The department also indicates that, with coaches included in the bill's list of personnel required to undergo the training, it would have to collaborate with the New Mexico Activities Association, as that is the entity responsible for training coaches.

### **POSSIBLE QUESTIONS**

HB136, Childhood Poverty Awareness Training Act, requires school districts and charter schools that serve at-risk students to undergo initial and annual training. Could the training required by SB172 be folded into poverty awareness training action plans?

### **RELATED BILLS**

HB130, Public School Capital Outlay for Security, which reserves a portion of the public school capital outlay fund for school security system repairs.

HB136, Childhood Poverty Awareness Training Act, which requires school districts and charter schools that receive at-risk units to train school personnel in poverty awareness.

SB124, Public School Security Measures, which appropriates \$60 million to PED to fund security measures in public schools.

SJM1, Veteran Suicide Prevention Work Groups, which requests the Veterans' Services Department to convene a task force to conduct listening sessions throughout the state to help prevent veteran suicide.

SM8, Study School Suicides & Gun Violence, which requests PED and LESC to study potential solutions to decrease the rate of gun violence and suicide in schools.

**SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

- LESC Files
- Public Education Department
- Department of Health
- Legislative Finance Committee

**RKF/rab**