

1 SB296
2 183353-1
3 By Senator Beasley
4 RFD: Education and Youth Affairs
5 First Read: 09-MAR-17

8 SYNOPSIS: Under existing law, each school system, to
9 the extent funds are available, must implement
10 policies for suicide prevention programs.

11 This bill would require the training of
12 public school educators in mental health first aid
13 and in the detection of students at risk of
14 committing suicide or with other mental or
15 emotional disorders.
16

17 A BILL
18 TO BE ENTITLED
19 AN ACT
20

21 Relating to suicide prevention; to require the
22 training of public school educators in mental health first aid
23 and in the detection of students at risk of committing suicide
24 or with other mental or emotional disorders.

25 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA:

26 Section 1. As used in this act, the following words
27 have the following meanings:

1 (1) MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID. The initial help given
2 to a person showing symptoms of mental illness or in a mental
3 health crisis, including, but not limited to, severe
4 depression, psychosis, panic attacks, or suicidal thoughts or
5 behavior, until appropriate professional or other help,
6 including peer and family support, can be engaged.

7 (2) PUBLIC SCHOOL EDUCATOR. A person who is required
8 by law to maintain a professional educator's certificate
9 issued by the State Department of Education and who is
10 employed by a city or county board of education, the Alabama
11 Institute for Deaf and Blind, or educational and correctional
12 institutions under the control of the Department of Youth
13 Services.

14 Section 2. (a) No later than the beginning of the
15 2018-2019 school year, the Department of Mental Health, in
16 consultation with the State Department of Education, shall
17 develop a mental health first aid training program for the
18 training of public school educators in the detection of mental
19 or emotional disorders in students. The training shall be
20 conducted by an employee of the Department of Mental Health,
21 or through a contract with persons approved by the Department
22 of Mental Health to train employees as mental health first aid
23 trainers, and shall provide public school educators with the
24 skills necessary to identify and assist a student experiencing
25 a mental health crisis until the student is able to obtain
26 appropriate professional care.

1 (b) The mental health first aid training program
2 shall include all of the following:

3 (1) Instruction in a five-step strategy for helping
4 an individual experiencing a mental health crisis, including
5 assessing risk, listening respectfully to and supporting the
6 student, and identifying professional help and other supports
7 for the individual.

8 (2) An introduction to the risk factors and warning
9 signs for mental illness and substance abuse problems.

10 (3) The characteristics of the most prevalent mental
11 or emotional disorders among children.

12 (4) The identification of mental or emotional
13 disorders.

14 (5) Effective intervention strategies for students
15 with mental or emotional disorders, including de-escalation
16 techniques and positive behavioral interventions and supports.

17 (6) An introduction on providing notice and referral
18 to a parent or guardian of a student with a mental or
19 emotional disorder so that the parent or guardian may take
20 appropriate action such as seeking mental health services.

21 (7) Experiential activities to increase public
22 school educators' understanding of the impact of mental
23 illness on students and families.

24 (8) A presentation of evidence-based treatment and
25 self-help strategies.

26 (c) Not later than February 1 of each year, the
27 State Department of Education shall provide the Legislature a

1 list of public school educators who have completed mental
2 health first aid training during the preceding calendar year.

3 (d) The State Department of Education shall
4 promulgate rules to require public school educators to obtain
5 up to 12 hours of mental health first aid training.

6 Section 3. The Legislature shall appropriate to the
7 State Department of Education the amount necessary for the
8 department to contract with the Department of Mental Health or
9 persons approved by the Department of Mental Health to train
10 employees of the Department of Mental Health as mental health
11 first aid trainers to implement and provide mental health
12 first aid training for public school educators.

13 Section 4. This act shall become effective on the
14 first day of the third month following its passage and
15 approval by the Governor, or its otherwise becoming law.