



STATE OF DELAWARE
STATE COUNCIL FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES
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The Honorable John Carney,
Governor

John McNeal, Director
SCPD

MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 30, 2023

TO: All Members of the Delaware State Senate
and House of Representatives

FROM: Mr. Benjamin Shrader, Chairperson 
State Council for Persons with Disabilities

RE: HB 4 (Proposed Amendment to § 3581, Title 14 of the Delaware Code
Relating to Mental Health Services for School Trauma)

The State Council for Persons with Disabilities (SCPD) has reviewed HB 4 which seeks to amend § 3581 of Title 14 of the Delaware Code, adding language to detail mental health services for school-connected traumatic events.

SCPD has the following observations:

- The amendment defines “school-connected traumatic event” as the “death of any student, educator, administrator, or other building employee of a public school.” By January 1, 2024, the amendment provides that the “Department of Education, in consultation with NAMI Delaware, the Delaware Association of School Psychologists, the School Social Workers Association of Delaware, the Delaware School Counselors Association, the Delaware School-Based Health Alliance, at least one licensed clinical pediatric psychologist, and other community stakeholders and mental health specialists, shall develop all of the following:

- 1) Guidance and best practices for public schools dealing with a school-connected traumatic event including recommendations on counseling availability during school.
 - 2) Written materials that public schools may distribute to students and families after a school-connected traumatic event setting forth additional public and private options for mental health care available in the State.
 - 3) Written materials that public schools may distribute to a student's parent or caregiver to encourage them to seek counseling if impacted by the school-connected traumatic event.”
- Furthermore, the amendment states that the Department of Education will cover the cost of grief counseling for up to 30 days after a school-connected traumatic event.
 - Additionally, the amendment requires every public school to create a crisis response policy that includes:
 - 1) The establishment of a district crisis response team, its composition, and roles of each crisis response team in a school-connected traumatic event.
 - 2) Procedures for the verification of the school-connected traumatic event and the determination of the response level necessary.
 - 3) Procedures for the assessment of school-connected traumatic event's impact on students and educators, the identification and referral of students that are most impacted by the event, and the coordination of required grief counseling and crisis response services.
 - 4) Evaluations for further continued support after the expiration of thirty days of grief counseling.
 - 5) Procedures for determining the appropriate amount of information to release about the event and how to disseminate this information to students, faculty, and staff.

- 6) Policy providing behavioral health supports for crisis response team members involved in the response to a school-connected traumatic event.
- The American Psychological Association notes that “left unaddressed, the negative impacts of stress and trauma can disrupt a student’s behavior and emotional wellbeing, academic success and health. [Those effected by traumatic events] might also demonstrate more fear-based behaviors (e.g., not wanting a door closed; being disturbed by a normal occurrence, like a bell ringing.”

SCPD endorses this bill as it aims to provide the necessary support should students and staff alike experience school-connected trauma. This will help Delaware schools to become more trauma-informed and prepared for school-connected traumatic events; effected students and staff will have more resources in place.

Thank you for your consideration and please contact SCPD if you have any questions or comments regarding our position or observations on the proposed legislation.

cc: Ms. Laura Waterland, Esq.
Governor’s Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens
Developmental Disabilities Council

HB 4 Amend to Title 14-Mental Health Services 5-30-23