

FLORIDA

HB 669 - School Safety "Jeffrey Johnston Stand Up for All Students Act"

A bill to be entitled

An act relating to school safety; creating s. 1006.147, F.S.; providing a short title; prohibiting bullying and harassment of any student or employee of a public K-12 educational institution; providing definitions; requiring each school district to adopt a policy prohibiting such bullying and harassment; providing minimum requirements for the contents of the policy; requiring the Department of Education to develop a model policy; providing immunity; providing restrictions with respect to defense of an action and application of the section; requiring department approval of a school district's policy and school district compliance with reporting procedures as prerequisites to receipt of safe schools funds; requiring a report on implementation; providing for construction; providing for severability; providing an effective date.

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

Section 1. Section 1006.147, Florida Statutes, is created to read: 1006.147 **Bullying and harassment prohibited.**

(1) This section may be cited as the "Jeffrey Johnston Stand Up for All Students Act."

(2) Bullying or harassment of any student or school employee of a public K-12 educational institution is prohibited:

(a) During any education program or activity conducted by a public K-12 educational institution;

(b) During any school-related or school-sponsored program or activity or on a school bus of a public K-12 educational institution; or

(c) **Through the use of data or computer software that is accessed through a computer, computer system, or computer network of a public K-12 educational institution.**

(3) For purposes of this section:

(a) "Bullying" means systematically and chronically inflicting physical hurt or psychological distress on one or more students and may involve:

1. Teasing;
2. Social exclusion;
3. Threat;
4. Intimidation;
5. Stalking;
6. Physical violence;
7. Theft;
8. Sexual or racial harassment;
9. Public humiliation; or

10. Destruction of property.

(b) "Harassment" means any threatening, insulting, or dehumanizing gesture, use of data or computer software, or written, verbal, or physical conduct directed against a student or school employee that:

1. Places a student or school employee in reasonable fear of harm to his or her person or damage to his or her property;
2. Has the effect of substantially interfering with a student's educational performance, opportunities, or benefits; or
3. Has the effect of substantially disrupting the orderly operation of a school.

(c) Definitions in s. 815.03 and the definition in s. 784.048(1) (d) relating to stalking are applicable to this section.

(d) The definitions of "bullying" and "harassment" include:

1. Retaliation against a student or school employee by another student or school employee for asserting or alleging an act of bullying or harassment. Reporting an act of bullying or harassment that is not made in good faith is considered retaliation.
2. Perpetuation of conduct listed in paragraph (a) or paragraph (b) by an individual or group with intent to demean, dehumanize, embarrass, or cause physical harm to a student or school employee, by:

a. Incitement or coercion;

b. Accessing or knowingly causing or providing access to data or computer software through a computer, computer system, or computer network within the scope of the district school system; or

c. Acting in a manner that has an effect substantially similar to the effect of bullying or harassment.

(4) By December 1, 2008, each school district shall adopt a policy prohibiting bullying and harassment of any student or employee of a public K-12 educational institution. Each school district's policy shall be in substantial conformity with the Department of Education's model policy mandated in subsection (5). **The school district bullying and harassment policy shall afford all students the same protection regardless of their status under law.** The school district may establish separate discrimination policies that include categories of students. The school district shall involve students, parents, teachers, administrators, school staff, school volunteers, community representatives, and local law enforcement agencies in the process of adopting the policy. The school district policy must be implemented in a manner that is ongoing throughout the school year and integrated with a school's curriculum, a school's discipline policies, and other violence prevention efforts. The school district policy must contain, at a minimum, the following components:

(a) A statement prohibiting bullying and harassment.

(b) A definition of bullying and a definition of harassment that include the definitions listed in this section.

(c) A description of the type of behavior expected from each student and school employee of a public K-12 educational institution.

(d) The consequences for a student or employee of a public K-12 educational institution who commits an act of bullying or harassment.

(e) The consequences for a student or employee of a public K-12 educational institution who is found to have wrongfully and intentionally accused another of an act of bullying

or harassment.

(f) A procedure for reporting an act of bullying or harassment, including provisions that permit a person to anonymously report such an act. However, this paragraph does not permit formal disciplinary action to be based solely on an anonymous report.

(g) A procedure for the prompt investigation of a report of bullying or harassment and the persons responsible for the investigation. The investigation of a reported act of bullying or harassment is deemed to be a school-related activity and begins with a report of such an act. Incidents that require a prompt investigation when reported to appropriate school authorities shall include alleged incidents of bullying or harassment allegedly committed against a child while the child is en route to school or waiting for transportation to school at a designated school bus stop.

(h) A process to investigate whether a reported act of bullying or harassment is within the scope of the district school system and, if not, a process for referral of such an act to the appropriate jurisdiction.

(i) A procedure for providing immediate notification to the parents of a victim of bullying or harassment and the parents of the perpetrator of an act of bullying or harassment, as well as notification to all local agencies where criminal charges may be pursued against the perpetrator.

(j) **A procedure to refer victims and perpetrators of bullying or harassment for counseling.**

(k) A procedure for including incidents of bullying or harassment in the school's report of safety and discipline data required under s. 1006.09(6). The report must include each incident of bullying and harassment and the resulting consequences, including discipline and referrals. The report must include in a separate section each reported incident of bullying or harassment that does not meet the criteria of a prohibited act under this section with recommendations regarding such incidents. The Department of Education shall aggregate information contained in the reports.

(l) A procedure for providing instruction to students, parents, teachers, school administrators, counseling staff, and school volunteers on identifying, preventing, and responding to bullying or harassment.

(m) **A procedure for regularly reporting to a victim's parents** the actions taken to protect the victim.

(n) A procedure for publicizing the policy which must include its publication in the code of student conduct required under s. 1006.07(2) and in all employee handbooks.

(5) To assist school districts in developing policies prohibiting bullying and harassment, the Department of Education shall develop a model policy that shall be provided to school districts no later than October 1, 2008.

(6) A school employee, school volunteer, student, or parent who promptly reports in good faith an act of bullying or harassment to the appropriate school official designated in the school district's policy and who makes this report in compliance with the procedures set forth in the policy is **immune from a cause of action for damages arising out of the reporting itself** or any failure to remedy the reported incident.

(7)(a) The physical location or time of access of a computer-related incident cannot be raised as a defense in any disciplinary action or prosecution initiated under this section.

(b) This section does not apply to any person who uses data or computer software that is accessed through a computer, computer system, or computer network when acting within

the scope of his or her lawful employment or investigating a violation of this section in accordance with school district policy.

(8) Distribution of safe schools funds to a school district provided in the 2009-2010 General Appropriations Act is contingent upon and payable to the school district upon the Department of Education approval of the school district's bullying and harassment policy. The department's approval of each school district's bullying and harassment policy shall be granted upon certification by the department that the school district's policy has been submitted to the department and is in substantial conformity with the department's model bullying and harassment policy as mandated in subsection (5). Distribution of safe schools funds provided to a school district in fiscal year 2010-2011 and thereafter shall be contingent upon and payable to the school district upon the school district compliance with all reporting procedures contained in this section.

(9) On or before January 1 of each year, the Commissioner of Education **shall report** to the Governor, the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives on the implementation of this section. The report shall include pertinent data collected pursuant to paragraph (4) (k).

(10) Nothing in this section shall be construed to abridge the rights of students or school employees that are protected by the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States.

Section 2. If any provision of this act or the application thereof to any person or circumstance is held invalid, the invalidity shall not affect other provisions or applications of the act which can be given effect without the invalid provision or application, and to this end the provisions of this act are declared severable.

Section 3. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law.