

Safe Schools Against Violence in Education Act (Project SAVE)

The purpose of this bulletin is to serve as a reminder that local leaders should be aware of and involved in specific school district plans regarding Project SAVE. Some of these plans must be reviewed and revised, if necessary, on an annual basis.

To address issues of school safety and violence prevention, the Safe Schools Against Violence in Education Act (Project SAVE) was passed by the New York State Legislature and signed into law on July 24, 2000. Project SAVE provides teachers and other school personnel opportunities to be involved in the development of school district policies and procedures relating to safe schools.

Each Board of Education, Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) and County Vocational Education and Extension Board and the Chancellor of the New York City School District must have a District-wide School Safety Plan, a Building-level Emergency Response Plan for each building in the District, and formal codes of conduct for all members of the school community, including students, teachers, school personnel and visitors.

District-wide School Safety Plans – Developed by the Board of Education of every school district to:

- Set forth policies and procedures for dealing with violence and threats of violence;
- Define procedures for contacting law enforcement in the event of a violent incident;
- Define procedures for contacting parents in the event of a violent incident;
- Provide programs to help prevent violence within schools;
- Designate an emergency response team within each school building;
- Provide annual safety training to staff and students;
- Provide students with an anonymous way to report threats of violence and harassment; and
- Describe the duties of hall monitors and other school safety personnel.

Building-level Emergency Response Plans – Team members include teachers, administrators, parent organizations, school safety personnel, community members, law enforcement and other emergency response agencies. This plan must include:

- Evacuation policies and procedures in the event of an emergency;
- Procedures to review evacuation plans through various means, including drills;
- Implementation of incident command system (ICS);
- Designation of an emergency response team;
- Access to floor plans, blueprints, schematics of school interior, grounds and road maps of surrounding areas;
- Coordination with Statewide Disaster Mental Health Plan.

Codes of Conduct – The Board of Education must develop and annually review and update, as necessary, its code in consultation with students, teachers, parent organizations, school safety and other personnel. Elements of the plan include:

- Appropriate dress and language;
- Disciplinary procedures for violators allowing teachers and principals to remove violent or disruptive students from classrooms and define removal procedures;

- Provisions to ensure compliance with state and federal laws relating to students with disabilities;
- A committee to review actions relating to the code;
- Procedures regarding PINS petitions and juvenile delinquency provisions;
- Procedures for referral to human services agencies; and
- Minimum suspension periods for students who are repeatedly substantially disruptive and for acts that qualify a student as violent.

Project SAVE also provides for other safety measures including uniform reporting of violent incidents in schools, fingerprinting and criminal history background checks of school district job applicants prior to hiring, whistleblower protection for employees, and child abuse reporting requirements. Districts are required to provide instruction in civility, citizenship and character education, and to review health curriculum requirements.

Reminder to Local Leaders

- Local leaders should continue their right and responsibility to make collective bargaining unit member appointments to the district and building school safety teams.
- The required annual review of district and building school safety plans should be completed by **July 1** of each year.
- Codes of Conduct should be reviewed and updated annually. Advances in technology, such as the camera phone, may necessitate revisions of the Code.
- Local leaders and/or school personnel appointed by the collective bargaining unit should be involved in the review of the code of conduct.
- The school district must:
 - provide copies of a summary of the code of conduct to all students at a general assembly at the beginning of the year;
 - provide a bill of rights and responsibilities of students which focuses on positive student behavior and explained to all students annually; and
 - provide each teacher with a copy of the code of conduct and a copy of any amendments to the code as soon as practical.
- Local leaders should review their district's procedures for collecting information on violent or disruptive incidents.
- School violence and prevention training is required to be in your school district's Professional Development Plan (PDP). The Professional Development Committee should be comprised of a majority of teachers appointed by the collective bargaining unit.
- School districts are required to provide school violence and prevention intervention training during superintendent's conference days at least once a year. Teacher certification candidates are required to complete two hours of course work or training in school violence and prevention.

Resources

- For more information, refer to the **NYSUT Information Bulletin 200102**, Safe Schools Against Violence in Education Act, which is available on the NYSUT website.
<http://nysut.org/research/bulletins/20010116safeschools.html>
- The **NYSUT Education and Learning Trust (ELT)** has a variety of workshops and courses designed specifically to help prevent difficult situations from escalating to violence. Contact ELT at 1-800-528-6208.
<http://www.nysut.org/cps/rde/xchg/nysut/hs.xsl/elt.htm>
- **New York State Center for School Safety:** <http://nyscenterforschoolsafety.org>. This State Education Department funded site provides technical assistance and resources for schools, as well as training opportunities.
- **NYSUT publication #104/05 Parent Brochure – *Teaming Up on School Discipline*.** To order brochures, call (800) 342-9810 and ask for the Publications Dept.

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