

CHAPTER 2013-87

Committee Substitute for Committee Substitute for House Bill No. 609

An act relating to bullying in the public school system; amending s. 1006.147, F.S.; revising provisions prohibiting bullying or harassment of a student or school employee through the use of computer-related activities; prohibiting bullying or harassment through the use of data or computer software that is accessed at a nonschool-related location or activity if certain conditions are met; providing that bullying includes cyberbullying; defining the terms “cyberbullying” and “within the scope of a public K-12 educational institution”; requiring the use of computers without web-filtering software or computers with web-filtering software that is disabled when investigating complaints of cyberbullying; requiring that each school district include in its districtwide policy instruction on recognizing behaviors that lead to bullying and harassment and taking appropriate preventive action; providing an effective date.

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

Section 1. Subsections (2) and (3) and paragraphs (h) and (l) of subsection (4) of section 1006.147, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

1006.147 Bullying and harassment prohibited.—

(2) Bullying or harassment of any student or 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 within the scope of a public K-12 educational institution; or

(d) Through the use of data or computer software that is accessed at a nonschool-related location, activity, function, or program or through the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased, or used by a school district or school, if the bullying substantially interferes with or limits the victim’s ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or opportunities offered by a school or substantially disrupts the education process or orderly operation of a school. This paragraph does not require a school to staff or monitor any nonschool-related activity, function, or program.

(3) For purposes of this section:

(a) “Bullying” includes cyberbullying and 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, religious, or racial harassment;
9. Public or private humiliation; or
10. Destruction of property.

(b) “Cyberbullying” means bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, which includes, but is not limited to, any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data, or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by a wire, radio, electromagnetic system, photoelectronic system, or photooptical system, including, but not limited to, electronic mail, Internet communications, instant messages, or facsimile communications. Cyberbullying includes the creation of a webpage or weblog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person, or the knowing impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages, if the creation or impersonation creates any of the conditions enumerated in the definition of bullying. Cyberbullying also includes the distribution by electronic means of a communication to more than one person or the posting of material on an electronic medium that may be accessed by one or more persons, if the distribution or posting creates any of the conditions enumerated in the definition of bullying.

(c)(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.

(d) “Within the scope of a public K-12 educational institution” means, regardless of ownership, any computer, computer system, or computer network that is physically located on school property or at a school-related or school-sponsored program or activity.

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

~~(f)~~(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), or paragraph (c) 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 the 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:

(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. Computers without web-filtering software or computers with web-filtering software that is disabled shall be used when complaints of cyberbullying are investigated.

(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, including instruction on recognizing behaviors that lead to bullying and harassment and taking appropriate preventive action based on those observations.

Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2013.

Approved by the Governor May 30, 2013.

Filed in Office Secretary of State May 30, 2013.