



## [NJDOE News](#)

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**For Release: December 2, 2002**

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### **Education Department Launches Initiative to Address School Violence and Disruption**

▶ [Resource Manual for Intervention and Referral Services \(I & RS\)](#)

The Department of Education has launched a broad-based, statewide initiative to address the problem of violence and disruption in New Jersey's public schools.

The initiative, which includes a variety of programs and materials, including a CD-ROM, video, and training manuals, is geared toward assisting local school district officials and parents deal with a range of issues, such as bullying and drugs.

"The Division of Student Services has designed a comprehensive set of excellent programs to provide information and support to school officials, teachers, parents and local officials to enable communities across New Jersey to deal with all aspects of the many problems that schools confront today," said Education Commissioner William L. Librera.

"The goal is to ensure that all schools are safe and that students can succeed in an environment that is free from violence and disruption," said Dr. Librera.

"We've put together a menu of many different programs that can be tailored to a school district's and a school's individual character to address the different ways that violence and disruption affect our school communities," said Isaac Bryant, assistant commissioner for Student Services. "We urge communities at large to examine these programs and institute them in their schools as needed."

The department is holding a training session for the Principals and Parents Promoting Youth Development and Discipline project on Thursday, December 5, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the offices of the New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association in Monroe Township.

The goal of this project is to assist schools through a collaborate effort between the Department of Education and The College of New Jersey in effectively engaging parents and families in promoting positive youth development, with particular attention given to discipline issues. The project includes the development of a manual and a CD-ROM, which will be provided to each school principal, designed to provide them with relevant research, strategies and materials to be used with parents in promoting positive youth development. Principals will also be provided with training to support use of the materials. A videotape on the information from the trainings will be disseminated to chief school administrators.

The following is a summary of the department's most recent efforts to strengthen the assistance offered to school districts to increase school safety and reduce school violence:

[A Guide for the Development of a Districtwide School Safety Plan](#)

In November 2001 the DOE, in support of the Strategic Plan for Systemic Improvement of Education in New Jersey established by the State Board of Education, developed and disseminated the publication titled *A Guide for the Development of a Districtwide School Safety Plan*. The purpose of the Guide is to provide New Jersey schools with background information for addressing school safety in a comprehensive manner.

The Guide is intended to provide schools with a general framework for planning and an inventory of supportive resources for the development of comprehensive school safety plans and programs designed to effect positive behavior in schools in order to ensure a safe school climate. It describes a continuum of strategies and activities that are key to establishing safe and secure educational environments, ranging from the physical makeup of school buildings, to prevention and intervention programs and services, to community involvement, to responding to the aftermath of a crisis. The publication was distributed to all county superintendents and is also posted on DOE's website.

### Safe Schools and Communities Violence Prevention and Response Pilot Plan Initiative

DOE has awarded a grant to The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey to implement an 18-month pilot program in the 2001-2002 and 2002-2003 school years in which grant program staff is collaborating with three school districts, as well as community-based organizations and stakeholders, to develop effective violence prevention, intervention and post-intervention plans. One outcome of the pilot program will be a report prepared for dissemination to all school districts. The report will provide guidance on the processes and strategies developed under the pilot program, and current information on effective school responses to violence and the management of crises.

Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act Program - Under this grant from the United States Department of Education, NJDOE makes available approximately \$8 million in formula funds to all local educational agencies to supplement their substance abuse and violence prevention and intervention programs, services and activities.

### Project SERV

Under emergency response funds from the United States Department of Education, the DOE provided \$1.5 million in grants to 35 New Jersey school districts for the provision of supportive grief and trauma counseling and other services for students and educators affected by the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon on September 11, 2001. The funds were made available to meet the immediate and long-term crisis response needs of members of the grantees' educational communities.

### Administrative Code

The State Board of Education approved a new Chapter of administrative code titled [Programs to Support Student Development \(N.J.A.C. 6A:16\)](#) in April 2001. The new Chapter includes new subchapters that address school safety issues, including:

- Codes of student conduct;
- Emergency and crisis management plans;
- Incident reporting;
- Access to juvenile information;
- Firearms, weapons and assaults offenses; and
- Law enforcement operations for substances, weapons and safety.

The regulations also contain subchapters on comprehensive substance abuse programs, substance abuse intervention, reporting allegations of child abuse and neglect, intervention and referral services, alternative education, home or out-of-school instruction for general education pupils and school health services.

### Student Discipline

An internal working group was established by the Division of Student Services to review student discipline in response to issues that were raised during the public comments on N.J.A.C. 6A:16, *Programs to Support Student Development*. A major activity of the working group was the administration of nine policy forums in the fall of 2001 that were designed to engage representatives from statewide education associations and constituency groups in identifying a broad range of student discipline concerns and possible remedies for department consideration.

The report on the outcomes of the policy forums titled "*Final Report and Recommendations on Student Discipline for Consideration by the New Jersey Department of Education*" is available on the DOE website. The department intends to implement the recommendations from the student discipline policy forums, which include the following activities:

- Development of a regulatory framework for student discipline;
- Development or revision of guidance documents and publications;
- Provision of training and technical assistance;
- Increased interagency and intra-agency collaboration; and
- Convening an advisory panel to explore consistent uses of alternative education policies and programs for general education students who are suspended or expelled from school.

### Youth Gang Prevention and Intervention Project

The DOE has provided funds to the [Juvenile Justice Commission \(JJC\)](#) to address gang activities and issues in New Jersey. The following services are being provided through December 2002: gang prevention education to youth who have been committed to JJC and are at high-risk for involvement in gang activity; information about gang

activities to community members and organizations statewide; and professional development programs on gang issues for JJC staff, county Youth Services Commission staff and members, county juvenile detention center personnel, public and nonpublic school teachers and administrators, public officials and leaders of community-based organizations, including faith-based institutions and private businesses.

#### Juvenile Offender Reentry Project

The DOE has granted funds to the New Jersey State Parole Board to provide alternative education program placements and supportive programs and services for juvenile offenders in Camden and Essex Counties in the 2002-2003 school year. These programs and services are being provided specifically for juvenile offenders who have been incarcerated for serious and violent crimes in support of their transitions from adjudicated placements to their home communities.

#### Anti-Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying Policy

Under a new law (N.J.S.A. 18A:37-13 et seq.), which was approved on September 6, 2002, school districts are required, in part, to adopt a policy on harassment, intimidation and bullying and transmit a copy to the appropriate county superintendent of schools by September 1, 2003 [N.J.S.A. 18A:37-15(3)(c)]. To assist school districts, the DOE is required to develop a model policy applicable to grades kindergarten through twelve and issue the sample policy to districts and charter schools [N.J.S.A. 18A:37-15(3)(d)]. The DOE's model policy can be found at [www.nj.gov/nided/parents/bully.htm](http://www.nj.gov/nided/parents/bully.htm)

#### Intervention and Referral Services

The Intervention and Referral Services (I&RS) Initiative supports implementation of the new I&RS regulations (N.J.A.C. 6A:16-7) by providing technical assistance to districts for the establishment of building-based multidisciplinary problem solving teams (grades K-12) that are designed to assist students who are experiencing learning, behavior or health difficulties and to assist staff who have difficulties in addressing students' learning, behavior or health needs. The technical assistance provided by DOE includes a four-part videotape series and accompanying companion guide and flyer; a comprehensive *Resource Manual for Intervention and Referral Services*; and the provision of training to prepare building administrators and building-based teams to implement the I&RS regulations. The tapes were disseminated to all school districts in June 1999 and the *Resource Manual* was distributed to districts in February 2000. The *Resource Manual* has been updated to reflect the provisions of the new regulations and will be forwarded to schools in December 2002, as well as posted on DOE's web site. Approximately 180 building-based teams have been trained since April 2000. In addition to providing team training on an annual basis, supplemental training programs will be offered that are specifically designed to address the ongoing professional development needs identified by members of trained teams.

#### Alternative Education Programs

Regulations for alternative education programs have been adopted by the State Board of Education as a subchapter (N.J.A.C. 6A:16-8) in the new Chapter of administrative code titled *Programs to Support Student Development (N.J.A.C. 6A:16)*. The provisions of the new subchapter regulate the application process and approval criteria for the operations of alternative education programs. DOE staff provided technical assistance on the establishment of alternative education programs at the annual conference of the Alternative Education Association of New Jersey in May 2001. The department's current guidance documents titled *A Guide and Application for the Operation and Approval of Middle School Alternative Education Programs* and *A Guide and Application for the Operation and Approval of High School Alternative Education Programs* will be revised in 2003, in accordance with the provisions of the new administrative code. Special assistance will be provided to the Abbott school districts, which are required to have alternative education programs in middle and high schools.

#### Peer-to-Peer Transitions Project

This project is designed to reduce factors that place students at risk for substance abuse and other negative behaviors as they transition from middle school to high school. Under an interagency agreement, the DOE has provided a third year of funding, effective October 1, 2002, to the [New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services \(DHSS\)](#) to expand the Peer-to-Peer Transitions Project. The project utilizes the existing network of peer leadership programs in New Jersey that has been established under the New Jersey Middle School Peer-to-Peer Program, a collaborative effort among DOE, DHSS, the Governor's Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse and the Department of Law and Public Safety.

#### Memorandum of Agreement

The Attorney General and the Commissioner in 1999 issued a revised *Uniform State Memorandum of Agreement between Education and Law Enforcement Officials*. Sections on weapons offenses, bias crimes and sexual harassment have been included in the revised memorandum. The memorandum, which is reviewed and signed annually by local education and law enforcement officials, forms the basis for sharing information between education and law enforcement representatives and sets parameters for law enforcement investigations. Presentations to chief school administrators have been made at county roundtable meetings, emphasizing the importance of the expanded agreement, and the Commissioner forwarded a memo to all chief school administrators in January 2002 reminding them of their obligations regarding the memorandum.

#### Collaboration with Mental Health Agencies and Student Support Personnel

One of the conclusions to be drawn from the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2002 and a recommendation made by the former United States Secretary of Education in response to the Littleton, Colorado school tragedy is that schools should examine how they collaborate with local mental health agencies. The effective use of student support personnel and the development of relationships between them and mental health providers are important components of schools' responses to violence. Therefore, DOE continues to forge effective links between New Jersey schools and mental health providers.

Specifically, DOE staff continues to have discussions with the leadership of the [New Jersey Association of School Psychologists \(NJASP\)](#) and the [Association of Student Assistance Professionals of New Jersey \(ASAPNJ\)](#) to establish effective working relationships, identify areas of concern and consider strategies for improving the delivery of student support services. NJASP, ASAPNJ and the [New Jersey Association of Mental Health Agencies \(NJAMHA\)](#) have all assigned representatives to serve on an advisory board to help guide a DOE grant program, the Student Support Services Planning and Development Initiative, which began in June 2001. In addition, DOE staff provided an orientation on the new regulations under N.J.A.C. 6A:16, *Programs to Support Student Development*, at the annual NJASP conference in December 2001 and plans to support the ASAPNJ conference in January 2003.

#### Student Support Services Planning and Development Initiative

This program is designed to provide support to thirteen districts who have applied to refine or reform their student support services programs. A consultant contractor is working with participating districts to evaluate existing student support services, assess the support needs of students and design and implement the optimum configuration and systems for delivering and sustaining student support services for their school populations. The two-year effort will offer each participating district a small incentive grant of \$5,000 per year to help support district participation; provide substantial technical assistance from a consultant contractor; and engage schools in a collegial process for evaluation, review and revision of how students are organized, staffed and delivered. Exemplary work products resulting from the initiative will be showcased statewide.

#### Drug Abuse Education Fund Project

Per the provisions of C:2C:43-3.5 and C.54A:9-25.12 et. seq, a Drug Abuse Education Fund (DAEF) has been established comprised of portions of taxpayer-designated refunds and penalties assessed against individuals adjudicated or convicted of certain crimes. The resources accumulated in the fund are appropriated annually to DOE for distribution to non-governmental entities for the utilization of law enforcement personnel in providing drug abuse education on a statewide basis. DOE has received the first appropriation under these statutory provisions and plans to issue a contract for the first year of services in November 2002.

#### Community Service Learning for Adjudicated Youth Grant Program

This collaborative program with the Administrative Office of the Court, which began in 1997 and ended in 2002, encourages drug- and violence-free lifestyles in school-age adjudicated youth by combining community service learning opportunities with cognitive and behavioral learning.

#### V-Free Initiative

Since September 2000, DOE has collaborated with the Center for Youth Policy and Programs of the Department of State, which provides mini-grants to schools and community-based organizations to support student-initiated local efforts to prevent violence, vandalism and victimization.