

# Implementation Guidance for the Bullying Taskforce Recommendations



A REPORT BY THE SCHOOL MENTAL HEALTH  
ADVISORY COUNCIL



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DEC. 3, 2020



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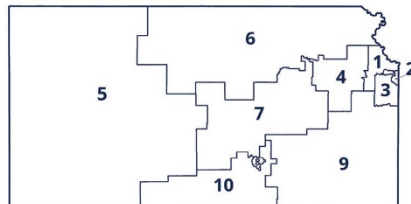


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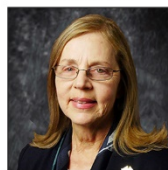
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OCT. 2020

# IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BULLYING TASKFORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

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## IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BULLYING TASKFORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

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# IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BULLYING TASKFORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

## SCHOOL MENTAL HEALTH ADVISORY COUNCIL (SMHAC)

### Executive Summary

1. **Local Boards of Education adopt strong prevention policies.** The SMHAC supports the recommendation of the Bullying Taskforce that the Board of Education of each school district shall adopt and maintain a policy as required by K.S.A. 72-6147, prohibiting bullying and cyberbullying either by any student, staff member or parent towards a student or by a student, staff member or parent towards a staff member on school property, in a school vehicle or during a school sponsored activity or event whether on or off school premises. The plan required by K.S.A. 72-6147(c), is recommended to include a bullying reporting and resolution process.
2. **Local Boards of Education assure effective district policy implementation.** Each school district provides an annual update to the local Board of Education regarding bullying, cyberbullying, the use of KSDE's Social, Emotional and Character Development standards, and data on bullying.
3. **Districts support data-informed implementation across PK-12 buildings.** Each school building collects data on bullying incidences within each building from two social emotional data sources and present these findings annually to the local board of education. (i.e. data from annual administration of the KCTC survey.) The use of KCTC survey is recommended as a high-quality climate and culture data source.
  - Districts are required to track incidences and report according to the KSDE Discipline Data Collection process. The-four types of bullying data collected are:
    - 1.Physical
    - 2.Cyber
    - 3.Verbal
    - 4.Relational
4. **Districts adopt prevention-focused evidence-based practices.** Implement a social-emotional learning curriculum that includes a family engagement component (per best practice) for anti-bullying purposes.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BULLYING TASKFORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

6. **Districts and families establish common expectations.** Provide families explanations for incidences that do not qualify as a bullying incident within the schools; such as the Kansas Association of School Boards (KASB's) letter (see Appendix C.) Ensure families know the schools' expectations for behavior.
7. **Strengthen digital citizenship competencies.** Provide students and families with information on digital citizenship to assist students in making smart choices online.
8. **KSDE makes legal requirements training module available.** As part of meeting the requirement in K.S.A. 72-6147(c), to adopt a plan that includes provisions for the training and education for staff members, students, and families, school districts will provide and require all employees to complete a training module that covers the legal requirements. The SMHAC recommends the Department create a module that may be used by districts to assist with training staff and families, and if feasible, the module be ready for the beginning of the 2021-2022 school year.
9. **PreK-12 district plans result in effective bullying prevention.** When developing the district plan it is recommended use of the Bullying Resources Toolkit. The four sections of the draft Appendix C: Bullying Prevention Plan and Resources Toolkit are:
  - Developing a plan to address bullying.
  - Building adult capacity to change climate and culture.
  - Curriculum and instructional resources.
  - Measuring social-emotional learning locally.
10. **KSDE supports align with Bullying Prevention Plan Toolkit components.** Through training and technical assistance all bullying-related policies will be implemented in keeping with Kansas Education Systems Accreditation (KESA) requirements.

## IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BULLYING TASKFORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

# Introduction

Bullying in schools has been a persistent problem for generations. In April, 2019, Kansas Commissioner of Education Randy Watson appointed a Blue-Ribbon Task Force to examine issues of bullying in the state's schools and report recommendations to the State Board of Education by December, 2019. The Task Force's final report was intended to "help school boards, administrators, teachers, students, families and communities in addressing this persistent problem," and concluded by offering seven recommendations:

- Provide better support and direction for school districts.
- Continue to develop the state's focus on social-emotional and character development education to address school bullying.
- Examine the current state law and determine if it requires reconsideration.
- Local policies and plans must focus on relationships, school climate and culture, and the mental health impact of bullying in schools.
- The state needs better data on school bullying and measures for assessing program effectiveness.
- Addressing cyberbullying.
- Training, professional development and teacher preparation.

The Kansas State Board of Education (KSBOE) accepted the recommendations and tasked the School Mental Health Advisory Council, (SMHAC) with developing guidance for implementation. The SMHAC advises the State Board of Education on issues related to school mental health. The Council formed five committees to research and consider implementation of the seven Blue Ribbon Task Force recommendations. This document includes their review of the current statutes, definitions, regulations and policies relative to bullying and offers guidance. This document also addresses the complex nature of cyberbullying, data collection considerations, and includes a *"Bullying Prevention Plan and Resource Toolkit"*. The toolkit is intended to help guide coherent implementation and assist with determining effectiveness of a local board of education's Bullying Prevention plans and policies; adopted in adherence to Kansas Statute 72-6147.

**INTRODUCTION**

## IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BULLYING TASKFORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

The School Mental Health Advisory Council respectfully submits this document to the State Board of Education to help inform their response to the Commissioners Blue Ribbon Taskforce recommendations. When implemented as part of an overall systemic, prevention-focused, responsive approach to social-emotional learning, Bullying Prevention becomes essential to having the equitable conditions necessary for healthy and safe school climates, rigorous student achievement and thriving Kansas communities.



## IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BULLYING TASKFORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

# Blue Ribbon Task Force Recommendation: Examine State Laws

The KSBOE's SMHAC Bullying Definition Committee was tasked with reviewing existing statutory definitions related to bullying and developing recommendations as to whether these definitions require reconsideration.

The policy analysis conducted by the Bullying Definition Committee concluded that the statutory definition of bullying is broad enough to provide flexibility to principals to address a wide range of behaviors. However, the statutory language also requires "intentional behavior" which means there needs to be some facts or evidence showing the behavior was purposeful or planned. This language also addresses behavior that is "sufficiently severe, persistent or pervasive" which suggests repetition, the behavior happened more than once, and it was more than an "isolated" incident of a mean or unkind word spoken to another student. The Kansas statutory definition was considered sufficiently broad to encompass definitions commonly used in research and does not appear to be in conflict with those definitions.

The current definition also provides administrators with flexibility to address one-time behaviors if the behavior "creates an intimidating, threatening or abusive educational environment." This broad definition supports a school district's focus on education while also having the ability to use progressive discipline to address bullying behaviors and impose discipline consequences to prevent any reoccurrence.

The Bullying Definition Committee determined that the Kansas statutory definition of bullying does not create obstacles or barriers for school districts to address or stop bullying behaviors. The issue that was brought up frequently during the Task Force hearings is that society and parents often use the term "bullying" to describe *every* mean behavior, harsh word, or unkind act by another student toward their child that may occur in the school environment and administrators struggle with how to stop these behaviors particularly when both students may have been involved to some degree in the words exchanged.

The SMHAC Bullying Definition Committee has made specific recommendations as to how definitional concerns expressed by the Blue-Ribbon Task Force may be addressed without a change to the statutory definitions. The research definition of bullying addresses behavior that is sufficiently severe, persistent and pervasive and includes an imbalance of power. Bullying is more than an isolated incident.

## Kansas Statute 72-6147

72-6147. Bullying, school district policies.

a. As used in this section:

1. "Bullying" means:

A. Any intentional gesture or any intentional written, verbal, electronic or physical act or threat either by any student, staff member or parent towards a student or by any student, staff member or parent towards a staff member that is sufficiently severe, persistent or pervasive that such gesture, act or threat creates an intimidating, threatening or abusive educational environment that a reasonable person, under the circumstances, knows or should know will have the effect of:

- i. Harming a student or staff member, whether physically or mentally;
- ii. damaging a student's or staff member's property;
- iii. placing a student or staff member in reasonable fear of harm to the student or staff member; or
- iv. placing a student or staff member in reasonable fear of damage to the student's or staff member's property;

B. cyberbullying; or

C. any other form of intimidation or harassment prohibited by the board of education of the school district in policies concerning bullying adopted pursuant to this section or subsection (e) of K.S.A. 72-1138, and amendments thereto.

2. "Cyberbullying" means bullying by use of any electronic communication device through means including, but not limited to, e-mail, instant messaging, text messages, blogs, mobile phones, pagers, online games and websites.

3. "Parent" includes a guardian, custodian or other person with authority to act on behalf of the child.

4. "School district" or "district" means any unified school district organized and operating under the laws of this state.

5. "School vehicle" means any school bus, school van, other school vehicle and private vehicle used to transport students or staff members to and from school or any school-sponsored activity or event.

**BLUE RIBBON TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATION: EXAMINE STATE LAWS**  
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BULLYING TASKFORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

6. "Staff member" means any person employed by a school district.
  - b. The board of education of each school district shall adopt a policy to prohibit bullying either by any student, staff member or parent towards a student or by a student, staff member or parent towards a staff member on or while utilizing school property, in a school vehicle or at a school-sponsored activity or event.
  - c. The board of education of each school district shall adopt and implement a plan to address bullying either by any student, staff member or parent towards a student or by a student, staff member or parent towards a staff member on school property, in a school vehicle or at a school-sponsored activity or event. Such plan shall include provisions for the training and education for staff members and students.
  - d. The board of education of each school district may adopt additional policies relating to bullying pursuant to subsection (e) of K.S.A. 72-1138, and amendments thereto.
  - e. Nothing in this section shall be construed to limit or supersede or in any manner affect or diminish the requirements of compliance by a staff member with the provisions of K.S.A. 2018 Supp. 38-2223 or 38-2226, and amendments thereto.

**History:** L. 2007, ch. 185, § 4; L. 2008, ch. 77, § 1; L. 2013, ch. 121, § 15; July 1.

**Source or Prior Law:** 72-8256.

## IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BULLYING TASKFORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

### SMHAC Response

- The SMHAC supports the recommendation of the Bullying Taskforce that the Board of Education of each school district shall adopt and maintain a policy as required by K.S.A. 72-6147, prohibiting bullying and cyberbullying either by any student, staff member or parent towards a student or by a student, staff member or parent towards a staff member on school property, in a school vehicle or during a school sponsored activity or event whether on or off school premises. The plan required by K.S.A. 72-6147(c), is recommended to include a bullying reporting and resolution process.
- Collect data on bullying incidences within each building from two social emotional data sources and present these findings to the local board of education annually, for example, data from annual administration of the KCTC survey.
- Implement a social-emotional learning curriculum that includes a family engagement component (per best practice) for anti-bullying purposes.
- Provide families explanations for incidences that do not qualify as a bullying incident within the schools; such as the Kansas Association of School Boards (KASB's) letter (see Appendix C) Ensure parents know what schools' expectations for behavior include.
- Provide students and families with information on digital citizenship to assist students in making smart choices online.
  - As part of meeting the requirement in K.S.A. 72-6147(c), to adopt a plan that includes provisions for the training and education for staff members, students, and parents, provide and require all employees to watch a training module that covers the legal requirements. The SMHAC recommends the Department create a module that may be used by districts to assist with training staff, and if feasible, the module be ready for the beginning of the 2021-2022 school year.
  - Through training and technical assistance all bullying-related policies will be implemented in keeping with Kansas Education Systems Accreditation (KESA) requirements.

## IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BULLYING TASKFORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

# Cyberbullying Considerations

Definition of cyberbullying: K.S.A. 72-6147(b) defines cyberbullying as, *“bullying by the use of any electronic communications device through means including, but not limited to, e-mail, instant messaging, text messages, blogs, mobile phones, pagers, online games and websites.”*

### **District Policy Legal Considerations:**

- Statutory and case law limits the authority of school administrators to discipline students for behaviors that only happen “at school, on school property or at school-sponsored events” unless the off campus “cyberbullying” results in a “substantial disruption to the learning environment at school.”
- If a parent challenges the school’s discipline of their student for cyberbullying, the administrator has the burden of proving that any off-campus cyberbullying behavior “substantially disrupted the school learning environment”.
- Administrators should consider expected consequences including:
  - Restorative practices
  - Due process rights
  - Progressive discipline
- If a cyberbullying incident has occurred off campus and has not “substantially disrupted the learning environment at school” administrators can consider providing parents with the cyberbullying letter from KASB regarding off campus events and a copy of. (Appendix C – KASB Form)
- This letter will refer parents to law enforcement to address their concern regarding cyberbullying off campus.

## **CYBERBULLYING CONSIDERATIONS**

### **IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BULLYING TASKFORCE RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Districts/Schools best practice considerations:**

- Provide an annual status update to the local Board of Education regarding bullying, cyberbullying and the use of KSDE's Social, Emotional and Character Development standards.
- Provide students with information and resources annually on bullying and cyberbullying, including the definitions.
- Provide families/caregivers with information, resources and trainings annually on bullying and cyberbullying including the definitions. -
- Provide students education on digital citizenship to prepare them to take ownership of their digital lives.
- Create a positive school culture that fosters a sense of safety.

Resources and trainings on Cyberbullying are included in Appendix C.

## IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BULLYING TASKFORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

# Data Collection Considerations

**K.S.A. 72-6147(a)(1)** defines bullying as any intentional gesture or any intentional written, verbal, electronic, or physical act or threat that is sufficiently severe, persistent, or pervasive that it creates an intimidating, threatening or abusive educational environment for a student or staff member that a reasonable person, under the circumstances, knows or should know will have the effect of:

- Harming a student or staff member whether physically or mentally;
- Damaging a student's or staff member's property;
- Placing a student or staff member in reasonable fear of harm to the student or staff member;
- Placing a student or staff member in reasonable fear of damage to the student's or staff member's property;
- cyberbullying; or,
- any other form of intimidation or harassment prohibited by the board of education of the school district.

The SMHAC implementation considerations include districts reporting to local board at least annually using at least two points of data. The Kansas Communities That Care Survey items and administration platform were retooled in 2019-2020 by the Kansas Department on Aging and Disability Services and partners. As such, the KCTC survey should be considered a robust, relevant and priority data source.

### **Working definition from Families Together to assist in collecting local data:**

*Bullying is aggressive behavior that is intentional and that involves an imbalance of power or strength. It is often repeated over time. It can take many forms, such as: hitting or punching; teasing or name calling; intimidation using gestures or social exclusion; and, sending insulting messages electronically.*<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Families Together: <https://famielstogetherinc.org/understanding-bullying/>

## DATA COLLECTION CONSIDERATIONS

### IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BULLYING TASKFORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Working definition from Stopbullying.gov:

*Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behavior among school aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Both kids who are bullied and who bully others may have serious, lasting problems.*

In order to be considered bullying, the behavior must be aggressive and include:

- An Imbalance of Power: Kids who bully use their power—such as physical strength, access to embarrassing information, or popularity—to control or harm others. Power imbalances can change over time and in different situations, even if they involve the same people.
- Repetition: Bullying behaviors happen more than once or have the potential to happen more than once.
- Bullying includes actions such as making threats, spreading rumors, attacking someone physically or verbally, and excluding someone from a group on purpose.
- Districts are required to track incidences and report according to the KSDE Discipline Data Collection process. There are four types of bullying data collected:
  1. Physical
  2. Cyber
  3. Verbal
  4. Relational



## DATA COLLECTION CONSIDERATIONS

### IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BULLYING TASKFORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

## 2019-2020 KSDE Discipline Data Collection Definitions<sup>2</sup>:

### **Physical Bullying:**

Involves hurting a person's body or possessions. Physical bullying occurs when a person uses overt bodily acts to gain power over peers. Physical bullying includes:

- Hitting
- Kicking
- Pinching
- Spitting
- Tripping
- Pushing
- Shoving
- Taking or breaking someone's personal property.
- Making mean or rude hand gestures.
- Hazing

### **Cyberbullying:**

Bullying by use of any electronic communication device through means, including, but not limited to:

- Email
- Instant messaging
- Text messages
- Blogs
- Mobile phones
- Pagers
- Online games
- Websites

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<sup>2</sup> KSDE Discipline Data Collection: <https://www.ksde.org/Portals/0/ECSETS/Discipline/DisciplineDataCollection-Definitions.pdf>

## **DATA COLLECTION CONSIDERATIONS**

### **IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BULLYING TASKFORCE RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Verbal Bullying:**

Involves saying or writing mean things. Verbal bullying occurs when someone uses language to gain power over his or her peers. Verbal bullying includes:

- Teasing
- Name-calling
- Inappropriate sexual comments.
- Taunting
- Threatening to cause harm
- Critical criticism
- Belittling
- Personal defamation
- Racist slurs
- Sexually suggestive and/or abusive remarks
- Extortion

#### **Relational Bullying:**

Relational Bullying is the systematic diminishment of a targeted child's sense of self through the following that could lead to rejection and/or alienation. The behavior describes an individual, or a group of individuals, who try to hurt a peer, or sacrifice another's standing within their peer group. Examples include:

- Ignoring
- Isolating
- Excluding
- Shunning
- Gossiping

If a bullying incident falls under two or more categories, districts are to use the following hierarchy to report the incident as the more severe type of bullying.

1. Physical bullying
2. Cyberbullying
3. Verbal bullying
4. Relational bullying

## IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BULLYING TASKFORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

# Prevention and Resources Considerations

The 2008 Kansas State Legislature amended the anti-bullying statute. Effective July 1, 2008, Kansas school districts are required to:

1. Adopt and implement a plan to address cyberbullying,
2. Adopt policies prohibiting bullying on school property, in school vehicles, or at school-sponsored activities,
3. Adopt and implement a plan to address bullying, which must include provisions for training and education of staff and students. (*SMHAC recommends involving parents as well*); and
4. Upon request of a school district, the state board shall assist in the development of a grade appropriate curriculum for character development programs.

Bullying in Kansas schools has been a persistent problem for generations. Many efforts have been made to reduce bullying in schools, but the results, while positive, have been minimal. The Kansas Blue Ribbon Task Force on Bullying clearly identified prevention as a key to remedying this problem. Simply focusing on disciplinary responses to bullying has proven to be ineffective in reducing incidents. It is the belief of the task force and the SMHAC that a systemic change in school culture and climate is needed in order to truly prevent bullying incidents from occurring.

Change in school culture and climate will not happen without first focusing on building the capacity of adults and use of local data to inform decision-making. It is critical that educators obtain the knowledge and skills to prevent bullying and to respond to the needs of the school community. This would include, but is not limited to, trauma-responsive practices, social-emotional character development competencies, school mental health supports, and equity practices for student groups that are disproportionately victimized. Professional development regarding these topics addresses the KSBOE goal for Social Emotional Growth, and also positively impacts other key aspects of school culture and climate such as; school attendance, dropout rate, discipline, and academic achievement.

While adult capacity building is critical, it is just as important that districts have a PK - 12 bullying education plan that is aligned and articulated. Concepts taught to students should be embedded throughout the school day, continually reinforced, and locally monitored and measured.

## **PREVENTION AND RESOURCES CONSIDERATIONS**

### IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BULLYING TASKFORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

The KSBOE recognizes the uniqueness of each school community, and in doing so has asked that each district measure Social Emotional Growth locally. KSDE does not require specific measures for social-emotional learning, that is left to the local school district. However, included in this document are resources, guidance, and measurement tools that you may find helpful in determining how to measure growth locally.

In response to the need for increased comprehensive and aligned approaches to bullying prevention expressed by the Task Force, the SMHAC recommends the Department convene select state-level providers and examine how components of the draft Appendix C: Bullying Prevention Plan and Resources Toolkit may be addressed/supported by KSDE-sponsored professional development systems. As a result, opportunities for dissemination and quality implementation can be increased.

The four sections of the draft Appendix C: Bullying Prevention Plan and Resources Toolkit are:

1. Developing a plan to address bullying.
2. Building adult capacity to change climate and culture.
3. Curriculum and instructional resources.
4. Measuring social-emotional learning locally.

## Bullying and Diverse Populations Considerations

The Kansas Blue Ribbon on Task Force on Bullying Report (2020) highlights the need for greater cultural awareness and understanding, and that certain demographic groups are disproportionally bullied at a higher rate than their peers. Demographic groups enumerated in this report include:

- Biological sex
- Gender identity and expression
- Race/ethnicity (including migrant populations)
- Students with disabilities
- Socio-economic status
- Religious beliefs.

The SMHAC concurs and encourages culturally responsive district implementation.... Reducing bullying incidents among these enumerated groups begins with education. Awareness and training are needed that includes specific information regarding the risk of varying demographic factors. Increasing student voice and cultural expression is essential for empowering these marginalized groups to resist bullying, and to bring about a cultural change in schools. The following are resources to assist districts in addressing cultural awareness:

### Teaching Tolerance :

- Bullying Basics: <https://www.tolerance.org/professional-development/bullying-basics>
- Anti-Bullying Resources: <https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/antibullying-resources>
- Teaching About Race, Racism, and Police Violence: <https://www.tolerance.org/moment/racism-and-police-violence>
- Trevor Project: <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/>

### Stopbullying.gov<sup>3</sup>:

- Diversity, Race and Religion: <https://www.stopbullying.gov/bullying/groups>
- Bullying and Youth with Disabilities and Special Health Needs: <https://www.stopbullying.gov/bullying/special-needs>

### PACER.org<sup>4</sup>:

- Bullying and Harassment of Students with Disabilities: <https://www.pacer.org/bullying/resources/students-with-disabilities/>

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.stopbullying.gov/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.pacer.org/>

## Bullying and Suicidal Concern

Kansas had the 5<sup>th</sup> largest increase of suicide deaths in the United States from 1999 – 2016 (CDC Vital Signs Report 2018). 2020 Data from the Kansas Communities That Care Survey conveys similarly concerning data amongst Kansas youth. Over 78,000-Kansas students in grades 6, 8, 10, and 12 participated in this survey which addresses many factors related to school climate. This includes questions regarding suicidal ideation, plans and attempts. Responses to these survey questions indicated the following:

- 17.92% expressed having suicidal ideation in the last year or in the last 30 days
- 11.59% expressed having a plan for how they would kill themselves in the last year or in the last 30 days
- 5.08% expressed having attempted suicide in the last year or in the last 30 days

There are many factors that contribute to these alarming statistics, which includes bullying. Bullying is a traumatizing experience that impacts the victim's mental health and emotional wellbeing. Overtime, this can create a sense of hopelessness that can lead to suicidal thoughts and actions. Researchers have found that students who are bullied are 2.2 times more likely to experience suicidal ideation, and 2.6 times more likely to attempt suicide than their peers. (Psychologytoday.com). Research published by Stopbullying.gov found the following:

- Children and youth who are involved in bullying are more likely than those who aren't involved in bullying to be depressed, have high levels of suicidal thoughts, and have attempted suicide.
- Children who bully and who also are bullied by their peers (often referred to as "bully-victims") are at the greatest risk for suicidal thoughts and behavior.
- Most studies have looked at the correlation between bullying and suicide at only one point in time. Very few have followed children and youth over time. So, although involvement in bullying is related to a greater likelihood of suicidal thoughts and behavior, it is wrong to conclude from these studies that experiences with bullying *causes* suicidal thoughts and behavior.
- A number of researchers note that there are other risk factors, such as mental health problems, that appear to play a much larger role than bullying in predicting suicidal thoughts and behavior.

## PREVENTION AND RESOURCES CONSIDERATIONS

### IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BULLYING TASKFORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

Local Boards and districts have a responsibility to ensure caregivers and educators understand the potential consequences that can result from bullying, including suicidal ideation and action. The following are resources to assist districts in addressing suicidal concerns.

- **Kansas Suicide Prevention, Response and Postvention Toolkit:**  
<https://www.ksde.org/Agency/Division-of-Learning-Services/Student-Staff-Training/Prevention-and-Responsive-Culture/Suicide-Awareness-and-Prevention/Kansas-Suicide-Prevention-Response-and-Postvention-Toolkit>
- **Kansas Suicide Prevention Resource Center:**  
<https://www.kansassuicideprevention.org/>
- **Suicide Prevention Resource Center:** [www.SPRC.org](http://www.SPRC.org)
- **Jason Foundation:** <https://jasonfoundation.com/>
- **Kansas Youth Suicide Awareness:** <https://www.ksdetasn.org/resources/2495>

**PREVENTION AND RESOURCES CONSIDERATIONS**  
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BULLYING TASKFORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

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# Appendices

## Appendix A: Bullying Task Force Summary of Recommendations

December 10, 2019

**1. Better support and direction for school districts.**

Kansas law requires school districts to adopt bullying policies and plans and make provisions for training. More direction and support are needed for these efforts. Clear guidelines for strong policies and effective plans need be shared. A statewide unit should be established or appointed to offer guidance and support school districts as they implement policies, plans and training. A bank of promising practices needs to be collected and available for school districts.

**2. Continue and develop the state's focus on social-emotional and character development education to address school bullying.**

The research is clear about those youth behaviors that lead to school bullying. Preparation in social-emotional and character development skills are directly related to these bullying and victimization behaviors. Social-emotional growth is one of five measured outcomes in the Kansans Can initiative. Resources and supports available related to these initiatives in Kansas need to be shared through better communication efforts.

**3. Examine the current state law and determine if it requires reconsideration.**

The Kansas law on bullying is broad and is somewhat inconsistent with research identifying bullying as repetitive over time and involving a power imbalance. The same inconsistency is evident in the state definition of cyberbullying. It is recommended that the State Board of Education examine the current state law and provide appropriate guidance.

**4. Local policies and plans must focus on relationships, school climate and culture, and the mental health impact of bullying in schools.**

Bullying is a complex and multidimensional social issue. Bullying can occur in physical locations such as at the school, on a school bus, but can also take place virtually through online platforms such as social media and gaming. Different strategies are needed to address bullying based on the level of schooling, age of children and different school contexts. Changing school climate and culture takes time and persistence. Changing culture is especially difficult. To positively impact bullying behavior, schools need to focus on peer and adult-student relationships. A caring and safe environment is necessary. Any bullying plan must address the differing needs of students and staff identified by research regarding but not limited to biological sex, gender identity and expression, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, religious faith, and socio-economic status. The whole school community needs to be involved in policies and plans addressing bullying, including students, staff, teachers, leaders, families and those in the larger community context. A trusted means for reporting bullying behavior needs to be developed and shared. Mental health and counseling support for schools need to be strengthened and new funding sources considered.

**5. The state needs better data on school bullying and measures for assessing program effectiveness.**

The KCTC survey is an ambitious effort to gather information from students across multiple dimensions. The survey currently contains seven questions regarding bullying. At the same time, no collectively accepted measures for assessing bullying exist in Kansas. Given there are disparities in bullying experiences for identifiable characteristics measures that enumerate those experiences by demographics should be available. It is recommended that the KCTC survey continue to be administered but improved in ways outlined in the report. In addition, the need for school climate and other teacher surveys should be considered. Districts need guidance in determining which bullying programs are truly evidenced-based. In addition, agreed upon variables and measures for assessing the effectiveness of bullying programs need to be identified. Any surveys conducted should include a common definition of bullying.

**6. Addressing cyberbullying.**

As technology and social media continue to proliferate across our society, it is expected that the incidences of cyberbullying will increase. Cyberbullying can be exceedingly pernicious as it can increase the number of witnesses and audience, while also being anonymous. Districts need to consider specific plans regarding cyberbullying, and work with teachers, students, families, caregivers and technology/social media experts in finding effective means for addressing this behavior. Information campaigns by districts with input from students are recommended.

## **7. Training, professional development and teacher preparation**

Educators have a wide array of responsibilities. Teaching and learning are complex matters that require a lot of skills. Academic achievement is important, as is the training of the other skills identified in the Kansans Can agenda. This includes growth on socio-emotional learning. But in order for schools to implement any program effectively, time, resources, and effective training are key. Training for in-service teachers and pre-service teachers on issues related to bullying and youth suicide prevention is recommended. The most promising practices to impact bullying behavior are those that are school-wide, universal and involve parents and families. This is the goal of social-emotional learning programs, and effective approaches should be shared and considered.

## Appendix B: Draft Parent Letter Sample KASB

Dear Parent (student):

As Spring approaches, this letter is to alert you to the school district's student behavior policies and Kansas law as to statements, comments and other inappropriate behavior by student towards other students at \_\_\_\_ school.

Our \_\_\_\_ School Handbook and board policies require school administrators to investigate any complaints about student behaviors that may be threatening, harassing or bullying towards others. Such behaviors are not acceptable at school, on school property or at school sponsored events.

Students who exhibit these behaviors will be disciplined up to and including short- and long-term suspensions from school. Please be advised that students and parents should also be cautious about their use of cellphones, iPhones and any other telecommunication devices. There is no expectation of privacy if a student uses any computer or electronic device to harass, threaten or bully another student at school. Discipline may also be imposed on a student for behavior outside of school if a student's comments, postings etc. after school ends up disrupting the learning environment at school.

Finally, the Kansas legislature passed a law in 2011, K.S.A. 21-6206, that makes harassing, threatening and bullying behaviors a crime. Parents and students who complain that another student is using their computers and phones after school to harass, bully and threaten other students are being given a copy of this statute and being advised they can contact local police and file a criminal complaint under K.S.A. 21-6206.

Please review this criminal law with your student(s) to make sure they understand that using a cell phone or any other electronic media to any harass, threaten or bully another student may be a crime. I have enclosed a copy of this law for your student's review. Please encourage your student to be cautious in their tweets, texts, postings and other conversations about other students.

As a parent, please advise your student(s) that any inappropriate comments, statements, etc. about any other student in any text message, email, call etc. may become public and may result in school discipline and/or a concerned parent filing a criminal complaint against them with law enforcement.

Prevention is the best approach and hopefully the knowledge of this new law will help your son/daughter understand that what they put out there in social media may be used against them if the comments are threatening, intimidating, bullying or harassing towards others.

Please call if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

## Appendix C: Bullying Prevention Plan and Resources Toolkit

The 2008 Kansas State Legislature amended the anti-bullying statute. Effective July 1, 2008, Kansas school districts are required to:

1. Adopt and implement a plan to address cyberbullying, and
2. Adopt policies prohibiting bullying on school property, in school vehicles, or at school-sponsored activities, and
3. Adopt and implement a plan to address bullying, which must include provisions for training and education of staff and students.
4. Upon request of a school district, the state board shall assist in the development of a grade appropriate curriculum for character development programs.

### Developing a Plan to Address Bullying

REQUIRED DISTRICT/BUILDING PLAN COMPONENTS	NOT STARTED	IN-PROCESS	PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE	TIMELINE	COMPLETE	ACTIONS NEEDED TO COMPLETE THE PLAN
District/building plan addresses cyberbullying						
Plan prohibits bullying on district property, in district vehicles, and at school-sponsored events						
District/building plan includes an articulated PK-12 staff development plan						
District/building plan includes an articulated PK-12 education plan for students						
District/building plans are accessible to the public via websites, handbooks, etc.						

### Suggested Resources:

Kansas Association of School Boards (KASB)

- Model Bullying Plan: <https://www.ksde.org/Agency/Division-of-Learning-Services/Special-Education-and-Title-Services/Early-Childhood/Blue-Ribbon-Taskforce-on-Bullying>

ASCA, NAESP, NASP, NASRO, NASSP, and SSWAA

- A Framework for Safe and Successful Schools

Teaching Tolerance:

- Bullying Basics: <https://www.tolerance.org/professional-development/bullying-basics>
- Building a Plan: <https://www.tolerance.org/learning-plan/using-the-learning-plan-builder>

National School Climate Center:

- State Policies on Climate and Bullying Prevention Efforts:

[https://www.schoolclimate.org/themes/schoolclimate/assets/pdf/policy/policy\\_brief.pdf](https://www.schoolclimate.org/themes/schoolclimate/assets/pdf/policy/policy_brief.pdf)

Social Media:

- Facebook Prevention Hub: <https://www.facebook.com/safety/bullying>
- Twitter Safety and Security: <https://help.twitter.com/en/safety-and-security#abuse>

## Building Adult Capacity to Change Climate and Culture

*“To promote students’ social and emotional competence, it’s important for schools to simultaneously foster a supportive staff environment that cultivates the social and emotional competence and capacity of the adults in the building.” -Collaborative for Academic and Social-Emotional Learning (CASEL)*

SUGGESTED DISTRICT/BUILDING PLAN COMPONENTS	NOT STARTED	IN- PROCESS	PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE	TIMELINE	COMPLETE	ACTIONS NEEDED TO COMPLETE THE PLAN
Bullying professional development includes a strand on adult SEL.						
Staff demonstrate an understanding of trauma informed practices.						
Disciplinary practices include opportunities for students to mend/restore relationships.						
Adults and students demonstrate understanding and acceptance of enumerated groups.						
Adults and students demonstrate understanding and acceptance of enumerated groups.						
A school mental health team is in place supports and monitors anti-bullying efforts. *						

### Suggested Resources:

#### CASEL

- Strengthening Adult SEL (brief): <https://casel.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/SEL-Trends-7-11182019.pdf>
- Strengthening Adult SEL: <https://schoolguide.casel.org/focus-area-2/overview/>
- The Heart of Learning and Teaching: <https://www.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/public/compassionateschools/pubdocs/theheartoflearningandteaching.pdf>
  - Book Study Guide: <https://ksdetasn.org/resources/1503>

#### Trevor Project

- National Survey on LGBTQ Youth and Mental Health (2019): <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/The-Trevor-Project-National-Survey-Results-2019.pdf>

\* [Establishing School Counselors as Leaders in Bullying Curriculum Delivery: https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/2156759X18778781?journalCode=pcxa](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/2156759X18778781?journalCode=pcxa)

## Curriculum and Instructional Resources

*“Competencies cannot be absorbed through the normal school structure without purposeful instruction.” – Kansans Can Competency Framework*

SUGGESTED DISTRICT/BUILDING PLAN COMPONENTS	NOT STARTED	IN-PROCESS	PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE	TIMELINE	COMPLETE	ACTIONS NEEDED TO COMPLETE THE PLAN
Grade level SECD standards have been reviewed and are embedded across the curriculum						
An evidence-based social-emotional learning curriculum has been selected and implemented						
Bullying prevention practices and interventions are evidenced within a 3-tiered system of supports						
Bullying awareness and prevention resources have been made available to families and community						

### Suggested Resources:

- KSDE
- Kansas Social, Emotional and Character Development Model Standards: [https://www.ksde.org/Portals/0/CSAS/Content Area \(M-Z\)/School Counseling/Soc Emot Char Dev/Kansas SECD Model Standards Revised July 2018.pdf?ver=2018-07-12-114624-670](https://www.ksde.org/Portals/0/CSAS/Content%20Area%20(M-Z)/School%20Counseling/Soc%20Emot%20Char%20Dev/Kansas%20SECD%20Model%20Standards%20Revised%20July%202018.pdf?ver=2018-07-12-114624-670)
  - School Counseling Standards: [https://www.ksde.org/Portals/0/CSAS/Content%20Area%20\(M-Z\)/School%20Counseling/Soc Emot Char Dev/Kansas%20SECD%20Model%20Standards%20Revised%20July%202018.pdf?ver=2018-07-12-114624-670](https://www.ksde.org/Portals/0/CSAS/Content%20Area%20(M-Z)/School%20Counseling/Soc%20Emot%20Char%20Dev/Kansas%20SECD%20Model%20Standards%20Revised%20July%202018.pdf?ver=2018-07-12-114624-670)
- CASEL
- Guide to Effective Social and Emotional Learning Programs: <https://casel.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/2013-casel-guide.pdf>
  - Three Signature SEL Practices for the Classroom: <https://schoolguide.casel.org/uploads/2019/01/tool-three-signature-sel-practices-for-the-classroom-1.pdf>
- Kansans Can Competency Framework
- Teaching the Skills that Matter at Home – Self-Regulation: <http://researchcollaboration.org/uploads/AssertivenessResourcesForHomeLearning.pdf>
  - Teaching the Skills that Matter at Home – Self-Efficacy: <https://schoolguide.casel.org/uploads/2019/01/tool-three-signature-sel-practices-for-the-classroom-1.pdf>
  - Teaching the Skills that Matter at Home – Assertiveness
  - Teaching the Skills that Matter at Home – Conflict Management
- TASN
- Menu of Supports: <https://www.ksdetasn.org/competency/menu-of-supports>
- Social and Emotional Learning and Bullying Prevention:
- Trauma, Toxic Stress and Caregiver Wellbeing: <https://www.ksdetasn.org/resources/2690>
  - Facilitation guide: <https://www.ksdetasn.org/resources/2689>
- Kansas Parent Information Resource Center (KPIRC)
- Bullying What Families Need to Know: <https://ksdetasn.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/resource/upload/397/bullying.pdf>
- Families Together
- ACES's and Resiliency: <https://www.ksdetasn.org/resources/215>
  - Stress and Childhood: <https://www.ksdetasn.org/resources/2117>
- MTSS
- Resources: <https://www.ksdetasn.org/mtss/kansas-multi-tier-system-of-supports-and-alignment>

## Measuring Social -Emotional Learning Locally

*“Kansas school districts’ missions reflect the Kansas State Board of Education’s (KSDE) vision of preparing successful high school graduates. These districts locally measure progress toward achievement of the State Board of Education’s social-emotional outcome and goal of each student developing the social, emotional and character competencies that promote learning and success in life.” – Kansans Can Star Recognition System*

SUGGESTED DISTRICT/BUILDING PLAN COMPONENTS	NOT STARTED	IN- PROCESS	PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE	TIMELINE	COMPLETE	ACTIONS NEEDED TO COMPLETE THE PLAN
A school climate measure has been adopted/developed.						
Multiple stakeholder groups participate in climate surveys (students, parents, staff, community).						
A variety of data sources are used to measure systemic anti-bullying programs.						
A process is in place for building leadership teams to analyze data and make data informed adjustments to building plans.						

### Suggested Resources:

Kansas State Department of Education

- Measuring Social, Emotional, Character Growth Toolkit

American Institutes for Research:

- Making SEL Work: Ten Practitioner Beliefs: <https://www.air.org/resource/making-sel-assessment-work-ten-practitioner-beliefs>

National Association of School Psychologists:

- Guidance for Gathering and Using School Climate Data: <https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/systems-level-prevention/guidance-for-measuring-and-using-school-climate-data>

Kansans Can Competency Framework

- Student Competency Assessment Resources: <http://www.researchcollaborationsurveys.org/>

Kansas Communities That Care Survey

- Conflictual Environment Data Tool:
- Bullying in schools: the state of knowledge and effective interventions:



## Appendix D: School Mental Health Advisory Council Members

### COUNCIL MEMBER

Kathy Busch (Chair)  
Dr. Jane Groff, (Vice-Chair)

Cherie Blanchat  
Shelby Bruckerhoff  
Jose Cornejo  
Melody Martin  
Misti Czarnowski  
Kristen Garner  
Bobby Eklofe  
Diane Gjerstad  
Jessica Griffin  
Dr. John Heim  
Gary Henault  
Leia Holley

Dr. Ken Hughey

Representative Russ Jennings  
Kimber Kasitz  
Deana Novack  
Kathy Kersenbrock-Ostmeyer  
Monica Kurz  
Ronny Lieurance  
Dr. John McKinney

Kathy Mosher

Council Member  
Monica Murnan  
Judi Rodman  
Shirley Scott  
Rachelle Soden  
Senator Dinah Sykes  
Senator Mary Jo Taylor  
Mark Torkelson  
Kelsee Torrez  
Juliane Walker  
Pam Weigand  
Holly Yager

### REPRESENTING

Kansas State Board of Education  
Parent or representative from an organization that could represent families or speak to family engagement  
TASN - School Mental Health Initiative  
Parent  
Bullying Task Force  
Health care providers  
School Counselor  
Social Workers  
Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facilities  
Mental Health Pilot  
Elementary Administrators  
Kansas Association of School Boards staff member  
KDADS  
Parent or representative from an organization that could represent families or speak to family engagement  
Kansas institution of higher education (responsible for teaching in or leading programs on school social work, school psychology, or school counseling)  
House Majority Member  
School nurse  
Elementary Principal  
Special Education Directors  
Agency doing work related to the council's focus  
School Law Enforcement  
Parent or representative from an organization that could represent families or speak to family engagement.  
Representative from Association of Community Mental Health Centers of Kansas  
Representing  
House Minority Member  
School district/community partnership  
School counselor  
Statewide not-for-profit agency that works to prevent child abuse  
Senate Minority Member  
Senate Majority Member  
Member of a local board of education (small, rural district)  
Early childhood school mental health professional  
Child advocacy center  
Provider of juvenile intake, services, or detention  
School Psychologist



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For more information, contact:

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