

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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S.B. 460
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Higher Education
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As Filed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

National prevalence estimates indicate that one in five children have a mental illness or addictive disorder, meaning that approximately one million Texas public school students are dealing with these issues on a daily basis. These illnesses can cause mild to significant impairment in home and school activities and can lead to school failure, disciplinary placements and juvenile justice involvement, and, in extreme cases, suicide.

In one study of disciplinary placements among Harris County school districts, special education students who were categorized as having an emotional disturbance were over four times more likely to be placed in a disciplinary alternative education program (DAEP) than the student population overall and more than two times more likely to be placed in a DAEP than the special education population overall.

Without training in how to recognize and appropriately respond to students with mental or emotional issues, teachers may inadvertently reinforce or escalate the very behavior they are trying to reduce. On the other hand, such training can help teachers better manage their classrooms and help link students and their families to needed services, either on-campus or in the community. While some school districts across Texas already require some level of training in this area for teachers and/or administrators, specific mental health training in educator preparation programs is not required.

As proposed, S.B. 460 amends current law relating to inclusion of instruction in the detection and education of students with mental or emotional disorders in the requirements for educator training programs.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Section 21.044, Education Code, by adding Subsections (c-1) and (c-2), as follows:

(c-1) Requires any minimum academic qualifications for a certificate specified under Subsection (a) that require a person to possess a bachelor's degree to also require that the person receive, as part of the curriculum for that degree, instruction in detection and education of students with mental or emotional disorders.

(c-2) Requires the instruction under Subsection (c-1) to:

(1) be developed by a panel of experts in the diagnosis and treatment of mental or emotional disorders who are appointed by the State Board for Educator Certification; and

(2) include information on:

- (A) characteristics of the most prevalent mental or emotional disorders among children;
- (B) identification of mental or emotional disorders;
- (C) effective strategies for teaching and intervening with students with mental or emotional disorders, including de-escalation techniques; and
- (D) providing, in compliance with Section 38.010 (Outside Counselors), notice and referral to a parent or guardian of a student with a mental or emotional disorder so that the parent or guardian may take appropriate action such as seeking mental health services.

SECTION 2. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2013.