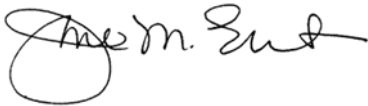





TO: P-12 Education Committee

FROM: Jhone M. Ebert 

SUBJECT: Violent and Disruptive Incident Reporting and Calculating the School Violent Index

DATE: May 9, 2016

AUTHORIZATION(S): 

SUMMARY

Issue for Discussion

This is a discussion item about the collection of Violent and Disruptive Incident Reports (VADIR) from schools and the calculation of the School Violence Index (SVI).

Reason(s) for Consideration

Discussion of policy.

Proposed Handling

This issue will come before the Regents P-12 Education Committee for discussion at the May 2016 meeting.

Background Information

In response to school-based tragedies and emergencies nationwide, New York State policy makers have enacted a series of laws specifically aimed at making schools safer, more supportive environments, and more conducive to learning.

In 1999, the New York State Task Force on School Violence was created and issued its first report, *Safer Schools for the 21st Century: A Common Sense Approach to Keep New York's Students and Schools Safe*. The work of the Task Force led to the Safe

Schools Against Violence in Education (SAVE) Act.¹ From there, the Board of Regents established the New York State Safe Schools Task Force, which produced SAVE implementation guidance in 2001 that included requiring school districts, Boards of Cooperative Educational Services and county vocational education and extension boards to:

- 1) establish district-wide and building-wide school safety teams to develop respective safety plans;
- 2) address crisis intervention, emergency response and management at the district level through comprehensive, multi-hazard school safety plans; and
- 3) adopt a Code of Conduct.

Federally, the No Child Left Behind Act² requires each state receiving federal funding to establish and implement a statewide policy requiring that states identify persistently dangerous public elementary and secondary schools, pursuant to guidelines developed by the commissioner.

The Dignity for All Students Act³ added a new Article to the Education Law to require, among other things, school districts to create policies and guidelines to be used in school training programs to discourage the development of discrimination or harassment and to enable employees to prevent and respond to discrimination or harassment. The Act was in effect July 1, 2012, and later amended to include cyberbullying, which became effective July 1, 2013. As a result, the Dignity for All Students Act (DASA) report gathers information about the number of incidents of Discrimination or Harassment and Cyberbullying.

These laws resulted in the creation of the School Safety and Educational Climate (SSEC) collection, which is comprised of two reports: the VADIR and DASA Reports. The VADIR collects aggregate counts of incidents in the twenty categories listed below. For each incident category, a glossary of terms is provided to assist school administrators in the accurate classification of incidents.

- 1) Homicide
- 2) Forcible Sex Offenses and Other Sex Offenses
- 3) Robbery
- 4) Assault with Serious Physical Injury
- 5) Arson
- 6) Kidnapping
- 7) Assault with Physical Injury
- 8) Reckless Endangerment
- 9) Minor Altercations
- 10) Intimidation, Harassment, Menacing or Bullying
- 11) Burglary
- 12) Criminal Mischief
- 13) Larceny and Other Theft Offenses

¹ Chapter 181 of the Laws of New York 2000.

² Public Law 107-110, 2001.

³ Chapter 482 of the Laws of New York 2010.

- 14) Bomb Threat
- 15) False Alarm
- 16) Riot
- 17) Weapon Possession
- 18) Use, Possession, or Sale of Drugs
- 19) Use, Possession, or Sale of Alcohol
- 20) Other Disruptive Incidents

Currently, VADIR requires schools to record and submit summary counts of violent and disruptive incidents as described above, as well as to maintain a school record of all violent or disruptive incidents, including both reportable and non-reportable incidents. VADIR categories were established in the early 1990s and mirror those found in Penal Code, i.e. Assault with Physical Injury with a Weapon.

In New York City, schools report information regarding individual student incidents electronically to New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) with a discipline infraction category. Staff from NYCDOE review each incident and categorize the incident using the Department's VADIR reporting categories and submit the required incident counts to the Department. The vast majority of incidents are school-based behavioral occurrences. In addition to the collection of VADIR data by NYCDOE, the NYC Police Department is required to report student arrests and summons data bi-annually to the New York City Council as part of the Student Safety Act.

Lois Herrera, Chief Executive Officer for the Office of Safety and Youth Development at the NYC Department of Education, will join Department staff in presenting information on collecting and reporting VADIR and DASA incidents in New York City and New York State, respectively.

Calculating the School Violence Index

School incident counts for certain incident categories are included in the calculation of a School Violence Index (SVI) that is used to identify Persistently Dangerous schools each year. The SVI is a ratio of violent incidents to school enrollment and is determined by the number of incidents, the seriousness of the incidents, and the school's enrollment. The seriousness of the incident type is measured by the weight assigned in the calculation of SVI. The most serious offenses range from 60 – 100, while Minor Altercations without a weapon, a less serious offense, has a weight of 0. A school may be designated as persistently dangerous if they meet the following criteria:

If for two consecutive school years, a school has either:

- a) an SVI of 1.5 or greater, or
- b) an SVI of 0.5 or greater AND a total of 60 or more violent incidents.

The table below shows the incident weight used in the calculation of SVI for each incident category that is included in the VADIR collection. To calculate the SVI for each school, the incident counts for each type of incident are multiplied by the weight for that type of incident and those products are added together to obtain an overall weighted incident total. This total is then divided by the enrollment, which results in the SVI score. For example, a school with an enrollment of 100 students that reported 2 incidents of assault with physical injury (incident weight = 40) and 10 incidents of minor altercations (incident weight = 0) would have an SVI score of .8 (Total Incident Weight = 80 divided by enrollment of 100 = .8).

Incident Category	Incident Weight
Homicide	100
Forcible Sex Offenses	60
Other Sex Offenses	45
Robbery	40
Assault with Serious Physical Injury	40
Arson	30
Kidnapping	30
Assault with Physical Injury	30
Reckless Endangerment	25
Minor Altercations; Intimidation; Harassment; Menacing or Bullying; Burglary; Criminal Mischief; Larceny and other Theft Offenses involving the use of a weapon ; or False Alarm	25
Minor Altercations; Intimidation, Harassment, Menacing or Bullying; Burglary; Criminal Mischief; Larceny and other Theft Offenses without the use of a weapon ; Bomb Threat; False Alarm	0

One of the 36 recommendations of the New York State Safe Schools Task Force specifically states that the Department should revise the VADIR process as follows:

“The Department, in conjunction with the NYS Safe Schools Task Force, should develop a new process and criteria for the Persistently Dangerous designation and a new set of definitions of incident categories for reporting using a School Climate Index. The reporting process for Dignity for All Students Act (DASA) and Violent and Disruptive Incident Reporting (VADIR) should be combined and renamed into one system that is not punitive and is reflective of the school climate and can be used for prevention and intervention purposes; also, that it includes positive measures and incorporates most improved schools.”

Together, with Department staff, members of the New York State Safe Schools Task Force developed a revised structure for collecting incident data that incorporates both VADIR and DASA into one reporting structure. The proposed VADIR categories would change from 20 to the following 9 categories:

- 1) Homicide
- 2) Sexual Offenses
- 3) Physical Injury
- 4) Weapons Possession
- 5) Material Incidents of Discrimination, Harassment, and Bullying with no physical injury
- 6) Bomb Threat
- 7) False Alarm
- 8) Use, Possession or Sale of Drugs
- 9) Use Possession or Sale of Alcohol

In addition, it is important to note that the New York State Safe Schools Task Force recommended that the Department focus on promoting positive school climates rather than focusing solely on measuring school violence. As such, in April 2015, Department staff presented information on a proposed School Climate Index (SCI) which would include three components: 1) school climate surveys to students, parents and staff; 2) revised VADIR/ DASA data collection process; and 3) chronic absenteeism rates. And, in October 2015, the Department provided an update on the planning and implementation of the SCI. In the 2016-17 school year, the Department plans to pilot the SCI in approximately 12 school districts across the State. Measuring school climate will help administrators make improvements in schools that foster safe and supportive environments that are conducive to learning for all students.

Next Steps

The Department will:

- 1) Amend the Commissioner's Regulations to revise the current twenty categories in accordance with the New York State Safe Schools Task Force recommendations;
- 2) Revise the electronic application used to collect VADIR and DASA data from schools to reflect the amended regulations;
- 3) Work with the New York State Center for School Safety to expand the availability of technical assistance and professional development to support this work, and conduct monitoring and site visits to ensure accuracy of reporting;
- 4) Pilot the school climate index in approximately 12 districts in 2016-17 and make changes and improvements, as necessary.