

# MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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**Date:** December 4, 2019

**Source of Report:** LD 1168 – Resolve, to Improve Maine’s Response to Childhood Trauma

**Topic:** Guidance to school administrators for training and responses to childhood trauma

## **Context**

The Maine Department of Education convened a Trauma Informed Practices Task Force consisting of a broad coalition of educators, administrators, mental health agencies, clinical practitioners, parents, and students in response to LD 1168. The goal of the task force was to develop recommendations to the Legislature that identified key areas of need relating to trauma informed practices. Information in this report was also developed with input from the Children’s Cabinet, The Opiate Prevention Task Force, and The Bullying Prevention Work Group. Over the course of three meetings, task force members – who are listed below - identified and addressed various needs, drew conclusions, and made recommendations.

## **Actions**

Commissioner Makin convened the Task Force and provided direction and inspiration for the work the Task Force completed. Page Nichols, Chief Innovations Officer and William, “Bear” Shea, Mental Health and School Counseling Specialist, facilitated the work sessions of the Task Force and prepared the report.

## **Task Force Members**

Barrett Wilkinson	Portland Equity Specialist
Brittany Ray	Cobscook Community Learning Center
Catherine Seigel	School Counselor
Dan Allen	Maine Education Association
Eileen King	Maine School Management Association
Elissa Wynne	Maine Department of Health & Human Services
Emily Denbow	Maine Student
Holly Couturier	Maine Principals’ Association
Laurie Lemieux	MADSEC
Liz Blackwell More	Birch Lane Strategies
Lucas Johnson	Bowdoin College Student
Mary Herman	Office of Innovations, MDOE
Paula Voelker	Maine Education Association
Pender Makin	Maine Department of Education
Sarah Woog	Washington County Consortium

Steve Bailey  
Susan Burns-Chong  
Bear Shea

Allegra Hirsh  
Lyn Stanley  
Korah Soll  
Kini Ana Tinkham  
Emanuel Pariser  
Page Nichols  
Tina Meserve

Maine School Management Association  
Brunswick School Department  
Maine Department of Education Mental Health  
Specialist  
Children's Trauma through Maine Med  
Maine Social Work and Counselor chapters  
Rural Aspirations  
Maine Resilience Building Network  
Maine Academy of Natural Sciences  
Maine Department of Education  
Superintendent

### **Recommendations**

- That a glossary of terms related to Trauma Informed Practices is developed by the Department so that discussions and solutions concerning childhood trauma are framed using the same language across the State.
- That training and professional development in Trauma Informed Practices be developed and provided by the Department to include a fundamental understanding of:
  - Foundational information on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) study and the relationship of ACE to neurobiological development and mental health;
  - Relationship between impact of mental health and trauma on the learning brain;
  - Behavioral responses associated with trauma and mental health;
  - Positive impact of an overall trauma-informed school culture in supporting students at all levels i.e. support staff, teachers, administrators and school boards;
  - Relationship between Trauma Informed Practices, Social Emotional Learning and Restorative Discipline; and
  - Advanced trauma training for school mental health providers in direct student support and staff development.
- That schools continue to use a multi-tiered system (MTI), or response to intervention system (RTI), to address the social, emotional, and behaviors needs of students. Within the MTI, or RTI, system:
  - Districts use self-assessments to evaluate their use of trauma informed practices;
  - Use trauma informed and appropriate screening processes at each level to determine student need and support response; and
  - Create systems of communication to facilitate identification of student needs and support across all staff levels.
- That schools have designated mental health support staff in an appropriate number related to their student body size and need; in determining appropriate number ratios, the following should be considered:
  - Use national standard of staff-to-student ratios:
    - 1) School Counselor; 1:250 (ASCA, 2016)

- 2) School Social Worker; 1:250 general ed. or 1:50 intensive need (NASW, 2012)
    - Understand that ratios are not only based on size but also level of need. (A 1:50 ratio is recommended for a population of students already identified as high need.)
    - Acknowledge that more than a third of students in Maine have experienced trauma that impacts their education. (MIYHS 2017)
- That the Department recognizes the preventative resources of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) on reducing the impacts of trauma on learning by:
  - Establishing best practice resources that are highly effective; and
  - Identify or developing SEL curriculum that is accessible for schools.
- That through training, the impact of trauma and mental health on student attendance and discipline is recognized in the following ways:
  - Excessive student absences are treated as symptoms with underlying causes that need to be addressed; and
  - Restorative discipline practices promote resilience and are in line with trauma informed practices.
- That Considerations be given to changes in the salary matrices in the Essential Program and Services (EPS) formula to support mental health professionals within the SAUs to address mental health needs. MEPRI is reviewing the salary matrices in the 2021 workplan.
- That the Department will deploy Office of School and Student Support (OSSS) to provide technical assistance, guidance, and training to educational settings across the state. The OSSS has been recently developed to include specialists in the areas of: Social Emotional Learning, Mental Health and School Counseling, Family and Community/Cultural Competence.
- Beginning in January 2020, the Department will be providing trainings to district teams in assessing existing trauma informed assets and developing needed supports and strategies for appropriate intervention.
- The Department is reworking the OSS website to develop and include supports for trauma informed practices and interventions.
- The Department is drafting a resolution and will be proposing adjustments to the funding formula and funding levels that are reflective of the recommendations above.

## References

American School Counselors Association. *National Model* 2018

Center for Disease Control and Prevention. *Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey* 2017

National Association of Social Workers. *Standards for School Social Work Services* 2012

## Contacts:

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APPROVED	CHAPTER
JUNE 10, 2019	63
BY GOVERNOR	RESOLVES

STATE OF MAINE

IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD  
TWO THOUSAND NINETEEN

H.P. 851 - L.D. 1168

**Resolve, To Improve Maine's Response to Childhood Trauma**

**Emergency preamble.** Whereas, acts and resolves of the Legislature do not become effective until 90 days after adjournment unless enacted as emergencies; and

Whereas, the task force on childhood trauma response guidance, established by this resolve, is convened to develop guidance for kindergarten to grade 12 administrators on appropriate training and responses to childhood trauma; and

Whereas, the study must be initiated before the 90-day period expires in order that the study may be completed and a report submitted in time for submission to the next legislative session; and

Whereas, in the judgment of the Legislature, these facts create an emergency within the meaning of the Constitution of Maine and require the following legislation as immediately necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health and safety; now, therefore, be it

**Sec. 1. Task force on childhood trauma response guidance. Resolved:** That the Commissioner of Education shall convene a task force, inviting the participation of experts and interested parties, to develop guidance for kindergarten to grade 12 administrators on appropriate training and responses to childhood trauma. In developing the guidance, the task force shall consult with any other task force or work group convened by the Department of Education whose work may inform the work of this task force and consider the following topics:

1. Training for preschool and kindergarten to grade 12 teachers, administrators and other faculty on adverse childhood experiences and trauma, including the establishment of state certification rules regarding training hours in trauma and the effect of trauma on learning and behavior;
2. A response-to-intervention process that includes behavioral health and social and emotional screening and referral to support procedures;

3. A policy that sets a standard ratio for students to support staff to ensure adequate staffing to meet the behavioral and emotional needs of students;
4. A social and emotional learning curriculum for kindergarten to grade 8;
5. An attendance policy and discipline policy that is established with a trauma-informed perspective; and
6. A policy that ensures publicly funded schools and preschools have the resources and funds necessary to develop school and school administrative unit action plans for addressing the needs of traumatized children and creating trauma-informed school environments.

**Sec. 2. Report. Resolved:** That the Commissioner of Education shall submit a report on the work of the task force under section 1 to the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs by December 4, 2019. The committee is authorized to submit legislation related to the report to the Second Regular Session of the 129th Legislature.

**Emergency clause.** In view of the emergency cited in the preamble, this legislation takes effect when approved.