

§1001. Duties of school boards

School boards shall perform the following duties. [PL 1981, c. 693, §§5, 8 (NEW).]

1. General duties. They shall have the duties prescribed to them in this Title.
[PL 1981, c. 693, §§5, 8 (NEW).]

1-A. Adoption of policies. They shall adopt policies that govern the school administrative units.
[PL 2001, c. 588, §4 (NEW).]

2. Management of school property. They are responsible for the management of the schools and shall provide for their custody and care, including repairs and insurance on school buildings and all school property in the school administrative units.
[PL 2001, c. 588, §5 (AMD).]

3. Selection of superintendent. They shall select a superintendent in accordance with section 1051 to carry out the duties specified in section 1055.
[PL 2001, c. 588, §5 (AMD).]

4. No prohibition on use for political activity. The use of school buildings may not be denied to a person solely because use is requested for a political activity.
[PL 1981, c. 693, §§5, 8 (NEW).]

5. Insurance premiums and employee benefits. They may:

A. Pay the premiums on life, health, dental, disability, accident, hospitalization, major medical and such other types of insurance as may be provided to employees and their families from time to time; [PL 1989, c. 425, §1 (NEW).]

B. Provide direct reimbursement of the costs incurred by employees and their family members pursuant to a direct reimbursement plan for dental costs, including endodontic, periodontic and orthodontic costs, except that reimbursement of orthodontic costs is limited to 60% of the plan participant's costs.

(1) Prior to the commencement of operation of any such direct reimbursement plan or program, the school board shall adopt guidelines that embody a funding mechanism adequate to the financial needs of the plan or program and shall provide for the fixed costs of operations of the plan for the first prospective fund year. A reasonable amount sufficient to satisfy immediate claims costs must be held in a segregated account to be used solely for this purpose.

(2) The school board or other legal entity establishing a plan or program for the purpose of direct reimbursement pursuant to this paragraph, whether or not a body corporate, may with respect to the plan or program sue or be sued; make contracts; hold and dispose of real property; borrow money, contract debts and pledge assets in the name of the plan; and perform such other actions incidental to this subparagraph as necessary.

(3) The plan or program may be established as a separate legal or administrative entity.

(4) The legal entity that establishes a plan or program that provides coverage for more than one school administrative unit with respect to the benefits authorized in this paragraph shall adopt a plan of management that, at a minimum, provides the following:

(a) The means of establishing and maintaining a governing authority of the program, including the selection of a governing authority, which must be a board of directors or trustees for the plan, a majority of whom must be from the participating school administrative unit or units;

(b) That the governing authority has the responsibility with regard to fixing contributions to the plan, maintaining reserves, levying and collecting assessments for deficiencies,

disposing of surplus and administering the plan in the event of its termination, liquidation or insolvency;

(c) The identification of funds and reserves by the type of benefit provided and exposure area;

(d) The basis upon which new members may be admitted to and existing members may leave the plan;

(e) That any member of a group plan or pool established for more than one school administrative unit shall prepay to the plan administrator an initial deposit equal to 25% of the annual contribution before coverage is effective;

(f) Other provisions as necessary or desirable for the operation of the plan;

(g) A provision that if the assets set aside in any group plan for more than one school administrative unit are at any time determined to be insufficient to enable the plan to discharge its legal liabilities and other obligations and to maintain sound reserves for the provision of the employee benefits provided by the plan, the governing authority shall within 90 days satisfy the deficiency or levy a prorated assessment upon the participating school administrative unit or units for the amount needed to satisfy the deficiency. The agreement among school administrative units in the group plan must provide sanctions for failure to comply with a mandatory assessment under this subparagraph;

(5) Prior to the operation of any group or pool plan for more than one school administrative unit, the governing authority shall adopt underwriting guidelines that embody rate charges to prospective members at a level adequate to its financial needs and shall provide for the fixed costs of operations for the first prospective fund year. An amount sufficient to reasonably meet immediate claims costs must be held in a segregated account to be used solely for this purpose. Funds determined to be necessary to fund the program on an ongoing basis must also be held in a segregated account;

(6) Each group plan or pool established for more than one school administrative unit shall file with its members, by the last day of the 6th month following the end of the fiscal year, audited financial statements certified by an independent certified public accountant. The financial statement must include, but is not limited to:

(a) Appropriate reserves for known claims and expenses associated with those claims;

(b) Claims incurred but not reported and expenses associated with those claims;

(c) Unearned contributions; and

(d) Reserve for bad debts.

The audited financial statement must include information concerning the adequacy of the plan. This report must result from a charge by the directors to the plan's actuary and auditor and must address excess insurance, charges for coverage to members, service agents' costs and costs of administration of the program.

Two additional copies of the audited financial statements must be filed with the Superintendent of Insurance.

If a group plan or pool established for more than one school administrative unit fails to provide for the audited financial statements required, the Superintendent of Insurance shall perform or cause to be performed the audit. The group plan or pool shall reimburse the Superintendent of Insurance for the cost of the audit; and

(7) Any reimbursement plan or program for the provision of the employee benefits established and operated pursuant to this paragraph is not an insurance company, reciprocal insurer or

insurer under the laws of this State and the development, administration and provision of such plans and programs does not constitute doing an insurance business; [PL 2011, c. 395, §1 (AMD).]

C. Pay premiums on liability insurance for employees and school officials; and [PL 1989, c. 425, §1 (NEW).]

D. Provide such other employee benefits, directly or indirectly, to their employees as any school board determines from time to time, upon such terms and conditions and in such manner as the school board determines, subject to the requirements of all applicable laws. [PL 1989, c. 425, §1 (NEW).]

Nothing in this subsection or subsection 14 prohibits a school board from arranging for and offering a choice of optional health or dental insurance plans to employees and their families that may vary in benefits provided and costs.

[PL 2011, c. 395, §1 (AMD).]

5-A. Public self-funded pools. They may participate in a public self-funded pool created under Title 30-A, chapter 117.

[PL 1989, c. 878, Pt. B, §17 (AMD).]

5-B. Workers' compensation self-insurance. Notwithstanding any other provision of this section, they may participate in or cause their school administrative unit to participate in a self-insurance program or plan for workers' compensation established under and operated in accordance with the Maine Workers' Compensation Act of 1992, Title 39-A, chapter 9.

[PL 1991, c. 885, Pt. E, §20 (AMD); PL 1991, c. 885, Pt. E, §47 (AFF).]

5-C. Coverage under group health insurance plan for spouse and dependents after death of teacher. If the spouse or other dependents of a teacher as defined in Title 5, section 17001, subsection 42 are covered by a policy of group health insurance provided by the school board and the teacher dies while employed by the board, the board shall provide an opportunity for the spouse or dependent to continue coverage under the group policy after the death of the teacher by making the premium payment for the cost of that coverage. In the case of underage dependent children of the teacher, coverage must be available at least until the dependent children reach 19 years of age.

[PL 2001, c. 471, Pt. D, §17 (AMD); PL 2001, c. 471, Pt. D, §18 (AFF).]

5-D. Group self-insured options. Notwithstanding any other provision of this section, they may arrange for a group self-insurance program to provide health or dental insurance for employees and their families, including a group self-insurance program established through an interlocal agreement with other school administrative units or municipalities established pursuant to Title 30-A, chapter 115. The following restrictions apply to self-insured group health or dental programs.

A. For purposes of this subsection, unless the context otherwise indicates, the following terms have the following meanings.

(1) "Program" means a group self-insurance health or dental program.

(2) "Program provider" means a school administrative unit that has arranged for a program under this subsection or collectively those school administrative units or municipalities that have entered an interlocal agreement to arrange for a program under this subsection.

(3) "Qualified actuary" means an actuary who is a member of the American Academy of Actuaries qualified as to health reserving methodologies. [PL 2011, c. 395, §2 (NEW).]

B. To the extent the program provider assumes the risk with respect to any program provided under this subsection, the program provider shall maintain a reserve at least equal to the sum of:

(1) An amount estimated to be necessary to pay claims and administrative costs for the assumed risk for 2 1/2 months; and

(2) The amount determined annually by a qualified actuary to be necessary to fund the unpaid portion of ultimate expected losses, including incurred but not reported claims, and related expenses incurred in the provision of benefits for eligible participants, less any credit, as determined by a qualified actuary, for excess or stop-loss insurance.

If the program provider self-insures for more than one program, a reserve meeting the requirements of this paragraph must be maintained for each program. [PL 2011, c. 395, §2 (NEW).]

C. The program provider may purchase excess or stop-loss insurance for any program, with attachment levels and limits as recommended by a qualified actuary. [PL 2011, c. 395, §2 (NEW).]

D. Paragraph B does not apply to a program in the first 2 years after the program is changed from a fully insured program to a fully or partially self-insured program. Before a program may begin its first year of operation:

(1) The reserve fund must contain a reserve at least equal to the amount estimated to be necessary to pay the claims and administrative costs with respect to the assumed risk for one full month; and

(2) The rate structure of the program, as certified by a qualified actuary, must be designed to enable the fund to attain the following reserve levels:

(a) By the end of the first year of the program, the reserve required by paragraph B, subparagraph (2) and an amount estimated to be necessary to pay claims and administrative costs for the assumed risk for 2 full months; and

(b) By the end of the 2nd year of the program, the reserve required by paragraph B, subparagraph (2) and an amount estimated to be necessary to pay claims and administrative costs for the assumed risk for 2 1/2 full months.

If the program provider purchases stop-loss or excess insurance with respect to the risk, the required reserve is reduced by the credit specified in paragraph B. A self-insurance program may not continue if the reserve fund with respect to that program does not contain the amounts set forth in subparagraph (2) by the time limits established. [PL 2011, c. 395, §2 (NEW).]

E. The program provider may not enter into a contract with a 3rd-party administrator that has not demonstrated compliance with all applicable state laws and that is not, at the time of entering into the contract, administering a health plan or providing health care coverage for a total number of lives equal to the number that would be covered by the program provider contract. [PL 2011, c. 395, §2 (NEW).]

F. Every applicant to provide service as a 3rd-party administrator for the program shall file a fidelity bond in favor of the program provider executed by a surety company for the benefit of the program provider or beneficiaries of the program and shall maintain the fidelity bond in force while representing the program. The bond must be continuous in form and in one of the following amounts, up to \$1,000,000:

(1) For an administrator that collects contributions and premiums for a program but does not administer or pay claims, the greater of \$50,000 and 5% of contributions and premiums projected to be received or collected for the following plan year from the program provider or from persons covered by the program;

(2) For an administrator that administers and pays claims but does not collect premiums and contributions, the greater of \$50,000 and 5% of the claims and claim expenses projected to be held for the following year to pay claims and claim expenses for persons covered by the program; or

(3) For an administrator that collects premiums and contributions and administers and pays claims, the greater of the amounts determined under subparagraphs (1) and (2).

This paragraph applies only if no other applicable state law requires bonding of 3rd-party administrators. [PL 2011, c. 395, §2 (NEW).]

G. Any contract entered into by the program provider must provide for coverage that meets the same level of benefits as those that would be required by state law if the coverage were provided by a health insurance plan governed by Title 24 or Title 24-A. [PL 2011, c. 395, §2 (NEW).]

H. If a group self-insurance program is established through an interlocal agreement with other school administrative units or municipalities established pursuant to Title 30-A, chapter 115, the group self-insurance program must be approved by the Superintendent of Insurance as a multiple-employer welfare arrangement pursuant to Title 24-A, chapter 81. [PL 2011, c. 395, §2 (NEW).]
[PL 2011, c. 395, §2 (NEW).]

6. Courses of study. They shall adopt the courses of study in alignment with the system of learning results as established in section 6209 and in accordance with the requirements of this Title. [PL 2001, c. 588, §6 (AMD).]

7. Tuition payment for attendance by those resident on territory ceded to United States. They shall prescribe the tuition for attendance of persons of the required age, resident in territory the jurisdiction of which has been ceded to the United States, included in or surrounded by the administrative unit. [PL 1981, c. 693, §§5, 8 (NEW).]

8. Operate public preschool programs, kindergarten and grades one to 12. They shall either operate programs in kindergarten and grades one to 12 or otherwise provide for students to participate in those grades as authorized elsewhere in this Title. To the extent the State provides adequate start-up funding, they may operate public preschool programs or provide for students to participate in such programs in accordance with the requirements of this Title. They shall determine which students attend each school, classify them and transfer them from school to school where more than one school is maintained at the same time. If a school administrative unit neither maintains a school nor contracts for school privileges pursuant to chapter 115 and a student who resides in the school administrative unit is unable to enroll in another school administrative unit, the school board shall direct the superintendent of the school administrative unit where the student resides to make a written request to the commissioner to designate a place of enrollment for the student, pursuant to section 254, subsection 19. [PL 2015, c. 448, §2 (AMD).]

8-A. Due process standards for expulsion proceedings. Following a proper investigation of a student's behavior and in accordance with the districtwide disciplinary policies adopted by the school board pursuant to subsection 15-A, a school board that intends to consider expulsion shall ensure proceedings include the following due process provisions.

A. Before a hearing on the expulsion, the superintendent shall:

- (1) Provide written notice to the parents and the student of:
 - (a) The date, time and location of the hearing;
 - (b) A description of the incident or incidents that occasioned the expulsion hearing;
 - (c) The student's and parents' right to review the school records prior to the hearing;
 - (d) A description of the hearing process;
 - (e) An explanation of the consequences of an expulsion; and

(f) A list of available free and low-cost legal services, which must be created and updated annually by the department; and

(2) Invite the parents and student to a meeting prior to the expulsion hearing to discuss the procedures of the hearing. [PL 2021, c. 295, §§1, 2 (AMD).]

B. At a hearing on the expulsion:

(1) The student has the right to present and cross-examine witnesses;

(2) The student has the right to an attorney or other representation; and

(3) Witnesses must be sworn in and the chair of the hearing has the authority to swear in witnesses. [PL 2011, c. 614, §3 (NEW).]

C. After a hearing on the expulsion, the school board shall provide written notice of its decision to the parents and the student by certified mail. The notice of the school board's written decision may include a reentry plan developed in accordance with subsection 9-C. [PL 2011, c. 614, §3 (NEW).]

[PL 2021, c. 295, §§1, 2 (AMD); PL 2021, c. 320, §1 (AMD).]

9. Students expelled or suspended. Following a proper investigation of a student's behavior and due process proceedings pursuant to subsection 8-A, if found necessary for the peace and usefulness of the school, a school board shall expel any student, except a student who is enrolled in grade 5 or below:

A. Who is deliberately disobedient or deliberately disorderly; [PL 1993, c. 157, §1 (NEW).]

B. For infractions of violence; [PL 1993, c. 157, §1 (NEW).]

C. Who possesses on school property a firearm as defined in Title 17-A, section 2, subsection 12-A or a dangerous weapon as defined in Title 17-A, section 2, subsection 9 without permission of a school official; [PL 1997, c. 298, §1 (AMD).]

D. Who, with use of any other dangerous weapon as defined in Title 17-A, section 2, subsection 9, paragraph A, intentionally or knowingly causes injury or accompanies use of a weapon with a threat to cause injury; or [PL 1993, c. 157, §1 (NEW).]

E. Who possesses, furnishes or trafficks in any scheduled drug as defined in Title 17-A, chapter 45. [PL 1993, c. 157, §1 (NEW).]

A student may be readmitted on satisfactory evidence that the behavior that was the cause of the student being expelled will not likely recur. The school board may authorize the principal to suspend students up to a maximum of 10 days for infractions of school rules, except that the school board may not authorize the principal to issue an out-of-school suspension to a student who is enrolled in grade 5 or below except as provided under subsection 9-A or unless the principal determines that there is an imminent danger of serious physical injury to the student or others and less restrictive interventions would be ineffective. An out-of-school suspension for a student who is enrolled in grade 5 or below may not exceed 3 days. The school board may authorize the superintendent or principal to modify, in writing, the requirement for expulsion of a student on a case-by-case basis. In addition to other powers and duties under this subsection, the school board may develop a policy requiring a student who is in violation of school substance use or possession rules to participate in substance use disorder services as provided in section 6606. Nothing in this subsection or subsection 9-C prevents a school board from providing educational services in an alternative setting to a student who has been expelled.

[PL 2021, c. 295, §3 (AMD); PL 2021, c. 320, §2 (AMD).]

9-A. Students expelled or suspended under the requirements of the federal Gun-Free Schools Act. The school boards shall adopt a policy for expelling a student who is determined to have brought a firearm, as defined in 18 United States Code, Section 921, to school or to have possessed a firearm at school and for referring the matter to the appropriate local law enforcement agency.

A. A student who is determined to have brought a firearm to school or to have possessed a firearm at school under this subsection must be expelled from school for a period of not less than one year, except that the school board may authorize the superintendent to modify in writing the requirement for expulsion of a student on a case-by-case basis. A decision to change the placement of a student with a disability must be made in accordance with the federal Individuals With Disabilities Education Act, 20 United States Code, Section 1400 et seq. [PL 2021, c. 320, §3 (AMD).]

B. Nothing in this subsection prevents a school board from:

(1) Offering instructional activities related to firearms or from allowing a firearm to be brought to school for instructional activities sanctioned by the school board and for which the school board has adopted appropriate safeguards to ensure student safety; or

(2) Providing educational services in an alternative setting to a student who has been expelled. [PL 2009, c. 614, §1 (AMD).]

C. In accordance with the proper investigation and due process provisions required in subsection 9, a principal may suspend immediately for good cause a student who is determined to have brought a firearm to school or to have possessed a firearm at school under this subsection. [PL 2009, c. 614, §1 (AMD).]

[PL 2021, c. 320, §3 (AMD).]

9-B. Disciplinary sanctions for children with disabilities. They retain the authority to sanction a child with a disability as defined in section 7001, subsection 1-A for misconduct that violates school rules. Notwithstanding the duties of school administrative units as described in section 7202, the school board may authorize the superintendent, principal or assistant principal to enforce this subsection by allowing the superintendent, principal or assistant principal to suspend a child with a disability up to a maximum of 10 days individually or cumulatively for infractions of school rules. When a child with a disability is suspended for 10 days or less individually or cumulatively within a school year for a violation of school rules, the school board is not required to provide a tutor, transportation or any other aspect of the student's special education program. Discipline of children with disabilities must be consistent with the requirements of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 20 United States Code, Section 1415(k).

[PL 2005, c. 662, Pt. A, §6 (AMD).]

9-C. Reentry for students after expulsion. Upon making a decision to expel a student in accordance with procedures set forth in subsections 8-A and 9, a school board may exercise one of the following options in expelling a student:

A. The school board may expel the student for a specific period of time not to exceed the total number of instructional days approved by the school board for the current school year; or [PL 2011, c. 614, §5 (NEW).]

B. The school board may expel the student for an unspecified period of time and authorize the superintendent to provide the expelled student with a reentry plan that specifies the conditions that must be met in order for the student to be readmitted to school after the expulsion. If a school board authorizes the superintendent to provide the expelled student with a reentry plan, the school board shall ensure that the student who has been expelled is provided with a reentry plan in accordance with this paragraph.

(1) The reentry plan must be developed by the superintendent or the superintendent's designee in consultation with the student and the student's parents to provide guidance that helps the student understand what the student must do to establish satisfactory evidence that the behavior that resulted in the expulsion will not likely recur.

- (2) The superintendent or the superintendent's designee shall send a certified letter, return receipt requested, or hand deliver a letter to the parents of the expelled student giving notice of the date, time and location of a meeting to develop a reentry plan for the student.
 - (3) If the student and the student's parents do not attend the meeting under subparagraph (2), the reentry plan must be developed by school staff.
 - (4) The reentry plan must be provided to the parents and the student in writing.
 - (5) The superintendent shall designate a school employee to review the student's progress with the reentry plan at intervals of one month, 3 months and 6 months after the meeting and at other times as determined necessary by the designated school employee.
 - (6) The reentry plan may require the student to take reasonable measures determined by the superintendent to be helpful to establish the student's readiness to return to school. Professional services determined to be necessary by the superintendent must be provided at the expense of the student and the student's parents.
 - (7) The superintendent may, as appropriate, notify an individualized education program team for a child with a disability who has been expelled by a school board.
 - (8) The superintendent shall annually report data on the number of students who are expelled from school and the number of students who are readmitted to school after expulsion to the commissioner's consultant on truancy, dropouts and alternative education under section 5151. [PL 2011, c. 614, §5 (NEW).]
- [PL 2011, c. 614, §5 (NEW).]

9-D. Professional services after expulsion for a child with a disability. Nothing in subsection 9-C may be interpreted to require payment from the parents of an expelled student for professional services determined by the superintendent to be necessary to establish the student's readiness to return to school if:

- A. The student is a child with a disability who has been determined to be eligible for a free, appropriate public education in accordance with 34 Code of Federal Regulations, Section 300.530, Paragraph (d); or [PL 2011, c. 614, §6 (NEW).]
 - B. The school administrative unit did not have knowledge that the student was a child with a disability prior to taking disciplinary measures against the student and, based on a subsequent evaluation, the student is determined to be a child with a disability who is eligible for a free, appropriate public education in accordance with 34 Code of Federal Regulations, Section 300.534, Paragraph (d). [PL 2011, c. 614, §6 (NEW).]
- [PL 2011, c. 614, §6 (NEW).]

10. Physiology and hygiene.
[PL 1983, c. 859, Pt. C, §§2, 7 (RP).]

10-A. Educational materials. They shall adopt a policy governing the selection of educational materials and may approve educational materials.
[PL 2001, c. 588, §7 (AMD).]

11. Persons not immunized excluded.
[PL 1983, c. 862, §52 (RP).]

11-A. Exposure to communicable disease. They shall adopt a policy for enforcement by the superintendent to safeguard the health of any student or employee who has contracted or been exposed to a communicable disease, in accordance with sections 6301, 6351-A and 6551, and Title 22, chapter 251.
[PL 1983, c. 661, §2 (NEW).]

12. Salaries of persons absent. They may adjust the salaries of teachers, principals and other persons legally employed by them who are compelled to be absent from their school duties. No reduction in pay may be made if absence is caused by the bona fide observance of designated holidays in the church of their faith. This subsection and section 13604 shall apply only in cases of persons who are employed on yearly contracts or on tenure of service and who hold the legal qualifications necessary for the positions.

[PL 1981, c. 693, §§5, 8 (NEW).]

13. Nondiscriminatory hiring. They shall develop a nondiscriminatory hiring practice for positions requiring administrator certification. That hiring practice must include:

A. Creation or reassessment of job descriptions; [PL 1989, c. 889, §6 (NEW).]

B. Clearly stated criteria for positions; and [PL 1989, c. 889, §6 (NEW).]

C. An interview format that includes questions based on job descriptions and stated criteria. [PL 1989, c. 889, §6 (NEW).]

[PL 1989, c. 889, §6 (NEW).]

14. Insurance purchase by competitive bidding. Except as otherwise provided by waiver, a school board shall oversee the purchasing of insurance by competitive bidding. On each insurance policy, a competitive bid must be sought at least once every 5 years. To take advantage of commercial package policies in the marketplace, a school board shall group qualifying lines of insurance into a single competitive bid process. Each policy secured by competitive bidding must be issued with a 3-year policy term or, if this is not possible, a commitment for 3 one-year policy terms must be secured with an option for 2 additional one-year policy terms, subject to annual review and adjustment.

A. The requirement of competitive bidding may be waived by a school board when:

(1) In the opinion of the school board, an emergency exists that requires the immediate procurement of insurance. The emergency may include the premature cancellation of an existing policy or acquisition of a risk that can not be added to an existing policy, including the signing of a lease. However, at the next renewal of the policy, procurement of insurance is subject to competitive bidding;

(2) After reasonable investigation by the school board, it appears that the required insurance is procurable from only one source;

(3) It appears to be in the best interest of the school board to negotiate for the procurement of an excess insurance line;

(4) The line of insurance is workers' compensation or an employee benefit such as life, disability or health insurance in accordance with subsection 5; or

(5) The school board is in a municipal school unit and school insurance and municipal insurance are purchased as a package through competitive bidding by the municipal government. [PL 1993, c. 423, §1 (NEW).]

B. A registry of bidders must be maintained by the school board. Invitations to bid or proposals must be sent to a registry of bidders on file with the school board. Insurance agents or brokers licensed by the Bureau of Insurance and risk pools authorized under Title 24-A or Title 30-A, chapter 117 desiring to have their names entered on a registry of bidders shall submit to the school board in writing a request for such action. The name of a bidder entered in a registry who fails to submit a bid on 3 consecutive proposals or invitations to bid may be removed from the registry at the discretion of the school board. [PL 1993, c. 423, §1 (NEW).]

C. "Competitive bidding" means the following multistep process.

(1) At least 4 months before the expiration date of the policy for which bids are being solicited, a prequalification questionnaire, referred to in this paragraph as the "questionnaire," must be developed by the school board for the purpose of prequalifying bidders. The questionnaire must contain at a minimum:

(a) Questions on the bidder's insurance knowledge, educational background, licensing, errors and omissions insurance, experience with public entities, experience with school systems and number of years in business. The questionnaire must state that qualified bidders must be insurance agents or brokers licensed by the Bureau of Insurance or duly authorized risk pools under Title 24-A or Title 30-A, chapter 117;

(b) The evaluation criteria and relative scoring weights to be applied in the prequalification evaluation process;

(c) A statement that bidders are subject to prescreening and may not approach an insurer or reinsurer until given permission by the school board to do so since markets are allocated by the school board. The questionnaire must state that failure to comply with this restriction automatically disqualifies the bidder. The questionnaire must state that the school board reserves the option to require a personal interview at any time in the process; and

(d) The address and contact person to which the questionnaire must be submitted and the opening date and time, which may not be less than 3 1/2 months from the expiration date of the policy or policies being sought. The questionnaire must state that: all proposals are publicly opened at the date, time and place noted; a questionnaire received after the date and time specified is rejected, but retained and not evaluated or considered further; and proposals are not available for inspection until after the bid is awarded. The questionnaire must state that the school board reserves the right to reject a questionnaire and does not accept responsibility for costs incurred by a bidder in the preparation of a questionnaire. The questionnaire must state that bidders are notified of the outcome in writing no later than 10 days after the closing date.

(2) In the same time frame, the school board shall approve a request for proposal, referred to in this paragraph as the "proposal." The proposal must contain at a minimum:

(a) The line or lines of insurance for which bids are being solicited and a clear definition of minimum coverage required, minimum limits required, deductibles, policy forms and endorsements required and policy term required. If coverage identical to the expiring coverage is being sought, a copy of the expiring policy or policies and all endorsements may be enclosed to meet this requirement;

(b) Basic underwriting information, such as named insured, mailing address, nature of risk, actual locations, schedules of buildings, business personal property, vehicles or any other property for which insurance is being sought, if applicable;

(c) At least a 3-year and preferably a 5-year company-generated loss run;

(d) A clear definition of the services, if any, required of both the bidder and the insurer;

(e) The minimum A.M. Best rating and financial size category acceptable to the school board;

(f) The evaluation criteria and relative scoring weights to be applied to the proposal. Cost of the insurance coverage must be included in the evaluation criteria and must be given a minimum of 50% of the total weight of all criteria;

(g) The address and contact person to which a bid must be submitted and the bid opening date and time. The proposal must state that: all proposals are publicly opened at the date,

time and place noted; bids received after the date and time specified are rejected, but retained and not evaluated or considered further; and proposals are not available for inspection until after the bid is awarded. The proposal must state that the school board reserves the right to reject a bid and does not accept responsibility for costs incurred by a bidder in the preparation of a proposal. The proposal must state that all bidders are notified of the outcome in writing no later than 20 days after the bid closing date;

(h) The name, address and optionally a facsimile number of a school board contact person to whom written questions may be addressed. The proposal must state that the school board will reply to questions submitted in writing before a specified deadline with copies of the questions and answers to be provided in writing to all bidders; and

(i) A statement that the successful bidder must present an insurance binder to the school board within 5 days of the award and no later than the expiration date of the existing policy. Failure to do so disqualifies the award and the award is then made to the next highest-rated bidder who was in compliance with the proposal. The proposal must state that all decisions regarding the award are final.

(3) Each bidder on the registry of bidders must be provided with a questionnaire and proposal 4 months before the expiration of the policy or policies being sought. Each bidder must complete and return the questionnaire before the stated date and time as specified in the questionnaire. In addition, a bidder must state in the order of preference the insurers they prefer to solicit on the school board's behalf. The school board shall then have 3 persons independently review a questionnaire on the basis of the established criteria. The reviewers shall document the scoring and select all qualified bidders, but no more than the 5 highest-rated, to participate further in the process.

(4) The school board shall allocate to each selected bidder at least one insurer from which to solicit a bid. This market allocation must be made on the basis of awarding the bidder's first choice to the bidder. If there is a conflict, an incumbent broker is given preference over the school board's incumbent insurer. Allocation is then made on the basis of highest-qualifying score. Once market allocation is complete, a new bid closing date must be set for 30 days before the policy expiration date for submission of insurer bids.

(5) The school board shall have 3 persons independently review each submitted bid on the basis of the established criteria. The reviewers shall document the scoring and substantive information that supports the scoring and make the award decision. Interviews may be considered within the review. Award must be made to the highest-rated proposal that conforms to the proposal. Tie scores must be resolved on the basis of factors considered by the school board to serve the best interests of the school system. Minor negotiations not affecting the bid price more than 5% after notice of award are allowed and, if agreement can not be reached, the proposal may be rejected and the award made to the next highest-rated bidder who is in compliance with the proposal. Written records must be kept by each person reviewing or ranking proposals. The award of the bid must then be announced publicly. All bidders must be notified in writing no later than 5 days after the award is made. The successful bidder shall submit, in accordance with the proposal, a written binder of insurance within 5 days of the award and no later than the expiration date of the expiring policy. All decisions regarding awards are final. [PL 2001, c. 588, §9 (AMD).]

D. In order to facilitate the competitive bidding process in procuring health insurance for a school administrative unit's employees under this subsection, the administrator for an individual school plan or for a group plan for a multiple-school group shall seek and obtain competitive bids through a request for proposal process from qualified insurers at least once every 5 years commencing July 1, 2012. The administrator for any such group plan shall make the request for proposal responses

available to requesting school administrative units, excluding any portions of the request for proposal responses considered to be confidential proprietary information by the submitting insurers. If any such individual school plan or group plan is subsequently self-insured, in whole or in part, the school board shall compare the overall cost of such a self-insured plan, including projected claims, all administrative expenses and reinsurance expenses, to the cost of insured products at least once every 5 years commencing July 1, 2012. [PL 2011, c. 249, §1 (NEW).]

REVISOR'S NOTE: (Paragraph D as enacted by PL 2011, c. 395, §3 is REALLOCATED TO TITLE 20-A, SECTION 1001, SUBSECTION 14, PARAGRAPH E)

E. (REALLOCATED FROM T. 20-A, §1001, sub-§14, ¶D) In order to facilitate the competitive bidding process in procuring health insurance for a school administrative unit's employees under this subsection, a school administrative unit may request from the insurer providing health insurance coverage to its employees and retirees loss information concerning all of that school administrative unit's employees and retirees and their dependents covered under the school administrative unit's policy or contract pursuant to Title 24-A, section 2803-A. The school boards of the alternative organizational structure's member school administrative units may authorize the governing body of the alternative organizational structure to contract for a single health insurance policy that is offered to all eligible employees and retirees of the alternative organizational structure and its member school administrative units and their dependents in one or more employment classifications. If an alternative organizational structure contracts for a single health insurance policy that is offered to all eligible employees and retirees of the alternative organizational structure and its member school administrative units and their dependents in one or more employment classifications, the governing body of the alternative organizational structure shall provide notice to the insurer of the alternative organizational structure's election to contract for a single health insurance policy at least 6 months before the effective date of the policy. The alternative organizational structure may not revoke a single health insurance policy under this paragraph for a period of 5 years after the effective date of the policy and shall provide notice of revocation at least 6 months before the effective date of the revocation. [PL 2015, c. 420, §1 (AMD).]

[PL 2015, c. 420, §1 (AMD).]

15. Adoption of student code of conduct. With input from educators, administrators, parents, students and community members, they shall adopt a districtwide student code of conduct consistent with the statewide standards for student behavior developed under section 254, subsection 11. The student code of conduct must:

- A. Define unacceptable student behavior; [PL 1999, c. 351, §2 (NEW).]
- B. Establish standards of student responsibility for behavior; [PL 1999, c. 351, §2 (NEW).]
- C. Prescribe consequences for violation of the student code of conduct, including first-time violations, when appropriate; [PL 1999, c. 351, §2 (NEW).]
- D. Describe appropriate procedures for referring students in need of special services to those services; [PL 1999, c. 351, §2 (NEW).]
- E. Establish criteria to determine when further assessment of a current individual education plan is necessary, based on removal of the student from class; [PL 1999, c. 351, §2 (NEW).]
- F. Establish policies and procedures concerning the removal of disruptive or violent students or students threatening death or bodily harm to others from a classroom or a school bus, as well as student disciplinary and placement decisions, when appropriate; [PL 2005, c. 307, §1 (AMD).]
- G. Establish guidelines and criteria concerning the appropriate circumstances when the superintendent or the superintendent's designee may provide information to the local police or other appropriate law enforcement authorities regarding an offense that involves violence committed by any person on school grounds or other school property; [PL 2021, c. 295, §4 (AMD).]

H. Establish policies and procedures to address bullying, harassment and sexual harassment as set forth in section 6554; [PL 2021, c. 295, §4 (AMD).]

I. Provide that recess may not be withheld as a consequence of a violation of the student code of conduct by any student enrolled in grade 5 or below, except that when there is no alternative time available, recess time may be used for restorative interventions as defined in section 1001, subsection 15-A, paragraph B related to the student's behavior; [PL 2021, c. 295, §4 (NEW).]

J. Establish that an out-of-school suspension or expulsion may not be issued to a student in grade 5 or below except as provided under subsection 9 or 9-A or unless the principal determines that there is an imminent danger of serious physical injury to the student or others and less restrictive interventions would be ineffective; and [PL 2021, c. 295, §4 (NEW).]

K. Establish that an out-of-school suspension for a student in grade 5 or below may not exceed 3 days. [PL 2021, c. 295, §4 (NEW).]

The school board is responsible for ensuring that school officials inform students, parents and community members of the student code of conduct.

[PL 2021, c. 295, §4 (AMD).]

15-A. School disciplinary policies. When revising the prescribed consequences for violation of the student code of conduct pursuant to subsection 15, paragraph C, a school board shall consider districtwide disciplinary policies that:

A. Focus on positive interventions and expectations and avoid focusing exclusively on unacceptable student behavior. For the purpose of this subsection, "positive interventions" means instructional and environmental supports that are designed to teach students prosocial alternatives to problem behaviors with high rates of positive feedback; [PL 2011, c. 614, §7 (NEW).]

B. Focus on positive and restorative interventions that are consistent with evidence-based practices rather than set punishments for specific behavior and avoid so-called zero-tolerance practices unless specifically required by federal or state laws, rules or regulations. For the purpose of this paragraph, "restorative interventions" means school practices that are designed to strengthen relationships, improve the connection to school and promote a strong sense of accountability and that help students learn from their mistakes, understand the impact of their actions on others and find opportunities to repair the harm they have caused through their misbehavior; [PL 2011, c. 614, §7 (NEW).]

C. Allow administrators to use their discretion to fashion appropriate discipline that examines the circumstances pertinent to the case at hand; and [PL 2011, c. 614, §7 (NEW).]

D. Provide written notice to the parents of a student when a student is suspended from school, regardless of whether the suspension is an in-school or out-of-school suspension. [PL 2011, c. 614, §7 (NEW).]

The school board shall ensure that administrators inform students, parents and school personnel of the districtwide school disciplinary policies.

[PL 2011, c. 614, §7 (NEW).]

16. Comprehensive health and safety and emergency management plan. Each school board shall annually approve a comprehensive health and safety and emergency management plan that meets nationally recognized practices and is developed by the school unit administration working collaboratively with appropriate stakeholders. The approval of a comprehensive health and safety and emergency management plan under this subsection is public information. At the request of any school board member or full-time school employee, the school board shall form a steering committee composed of school employees, including a school employee designated by that employee's school as having oversight regarding school safety, school board members, parents and others. A majority of the

school employees must be chosen by the local representatives of the applicable bargaining unit if the school employees are covered by a collective bargaining agreement. The steering committee shall regularly review and refine the comprehensive health and safety and emergency management plan. The following information pertaining to a comprehensive health and safety and emergency management plan is public information:

- A. A description of the scope and purpose of the comprehensive health and safety and emergency management plan and the process used for developing and updating the plan; [PL 2021, c. 464, §1 (AMD).]
- B. General information on auditing for safety and preparedness; [PL 2007, c. 408, §1 (NEW).]
- C. Roles and responsibilities of school administrators, teachers and staff and the designated chain of command during an emergency; and [PL 2007, c. 408, §1 (NEW).]
- D. Strategies for conveying information to parents and the general public during an emergency. [PL 2007, c. 408, §1 (NEW).]

Except as provided in paragraphs A to D, release of the contents of a comprehensive health and safety and emergency management plan approved under this subsection is subject to the limitations set forth in Title 1, section 402, subsection 3, paragraph L.
[PL 2023, c. 254, §1 (AMD).]

17. School bomb threat response policies. Beginning with the 2002-2003 school year, each school board in the State must have adopted a school bomb threat policy that is consistent with the prototypical policies developed by the commissioner under section 263.
[PL 2001, c. 67, §2 (NEW).]

18. Bomb threat information in student handbooks. Beginning with the 2002-2003 school year, each school board shall include in its student handbook a section that addresses in detail the school's bomb threat policies and protocols. The section of the handbook must contain an explanation of the portions of the policies and protocols relevant to students and their families and explain to the students the educational and legal consequences of making a bomb threat to a school.
[PL 2001, c. 67, §2 (NEW).]

19. Adoption of policy to manage concussive and other head injuries. Beginning January 1, 2013, the school board of each public school and the governing body of each private school enrolling more than 60% of its students at public expense in this State shall adopt and implement a policy on the management of concussive and other head injuries in school activities and athletics that is consistent with the model policy developed by the commissioner in accordance with section 254, subsection 17.
[PL 2011, c. 688, §2 (NEW).]

20. School board meeting public comment period. A school board shall provide the opportunity for the public to comment on school and education matters at a school board meeting. Nothing in this subsection restricts the school board from establishing reasonable standards for the public comment period, including time limits and conduct standards. For purposes of this subsection, "school board meeting" means a full meeting of the school board and does not include meetings of subcommittees.
[PL 2019, c. 293, §1 (NEW).]

21. Communication with school employees and the public. A school board shall regularly communicate with school employees in the school board's school administrative unit and members of the public who reside within the boundaries of the school administrative unit.
[PL 2021, c. 281, §1 (NEW).]

REVISOR'S NOTE: (Subsection 21 as enacted by PL 2021, c. 471, §1 is REALLOCATED TO TITLE 20-A, SECTION 1001, SUBSECTION 22)

22. (REALLOCATED FROM T. 20-A, §1001, sub-21) Workplace bullying. A school board shall adopt and implement a policy to address the negative effects of bullying of school employees by administrators, school employees, parents, students or any other individuals associated with the public school and to ensure the safety of employees and an inclusive environment for all employees and students in the public school. The policy must include, but is not limited to:

- A. A provision identifying the responsibility of all school employees to comply with the policy; [PL 2021, c. 471, §1 (NEW); RR 2021, c. 1, Pt. A, §15 (RAL).]
- B. A clear statement that bullying, harassment and retaliation for reporting such behavior are prohibited; [PL 2021, c. 471, §1 (NEW); RR 2021, c. 1, Pt. A, §15 (RAL).]
- C. A provision outlining the responsibility of a superintendent to implement and enforce the policy; [PL 2021, c. 471, §1 (NEW); RR 2021, c. 1, Pt. A, §15 (RAL).]
- D. A procedure for school employees to report incidents of bullying; [PL 2021, c. 471, §1 (NEW); RR 2021, c. 1, Pt. A, §15 (RAL).]
- E. A procedure for promptly investigating and responding to incidents of bullying, including written documentation of reported incidents; and [PL 2021, c. 471, §1 (NEW); RR 2021, c. 1, Pt. A, §15 (RAL).]
- F. A statement that any rights under the policy do not exclude access to or limit any other right or remedy under the law. [PL 2021, c. 471, §1 (NEW); RR 2021, c. 1, Pt. A, §15 (RAL).]

If an affected school employee is covered by a collective bargaining agreement, the policy under this subsection is subject to the dispute resolution process of the collective bargaining agreement.

For the purposes of this subsection, "bullying" includes cyberbullying as defined in section 6554, subsection 2, paragraph C.

[PL 2021, c. 471, §1 (NEW); RR 2021, c. 1, Pt. A, §15 (RAL).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 1981, c. 693, §§5,8 (NEW). PL 1983, c. 661, §§1,2 (AMD). PL 1983, c. 806, §10 (AMD). PL 1983, c. 859, §§C1-C3,C7 (AMD). PL 1983, c. 859, §§K3,K7 (AMD). PL 1983, c. 862, §52 (AMD). PL 1985, c. 713, §3 (AMD). PL 1989, c. 425, §§1,2 (AMD). PL 1989, c. 708, §1 (AMD). PL 1989, c. 878, §B17 (AMD). PL 1989, c. 889, §6 (AMD). PL 1991, c. 885, §E20 (AMD). PL 1991, c. 885, §E47 (AFF). PL 1993, c. 157, §1 (AMD). PL 1993, c. 423, §1 (AMD). PL 1995, c. 322, §5 (AMD). PL 1997, c. 298, §1 (AMD). PL 1997, c. 594, §1 (AMD). PL 1999, c. 351, §2 (AMD). PL 1999, c. 424, §A1 (AMD). PL 2001, c. 67, §2 (AMD). PL 2001, c. 341, §2 (AMD). PL 2001, c. 454, §7 (AMD). PL 2001, c. 471, §D17 (AMD). PL 2001, c. 471, §D18 (AFF). PL 2001, c. 588, §§4-10 (AMD). PL 2001, c. 644, §1 (AMD). PL 2005, c. 307, §§1-3 (AMD). PL 2005, c. 662, §A6 (AMD). PL 2007, c. 408, §1 (AMD). PL 2009, c. 614, §1 (AMD). RR 2011, c. 1, §25 (COR). PL 2011, c. 249, §1 (AMD). PL 2011, c. 395, §§1-3 (AMD). PL 2011, c. 614, §§3-7 (AMD). PL 2011, c. 659, §2 (AMD). PL 2011, c. 688, §2 (AMD). PL 2013, c. 581, §2 (AMD). PL 2015, c. 420, §1 (AMD). PL 2015, c. 448, §2 (AMD). PL 2017, c. 407, Pt. A, §57 (AMD). PL 2019, c. 293, §1 (AMD). PL 2021, c. 281, §1 (AMD). PL 2021, c. 295, §§1-4 (AMD). PL 2021, c. 320, §§1-3 (AMD). PL 2021, c. 464, §1 (AMD). PL 2021, c. 471, §1 (AMD). RR 2021, c. 1, Pt. A, §15 (COR). PL 2023, c. 254, §1 (AMD).

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