
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 7158 (as amended by House "A")*

AN ACT CONCERNING SAFETY PLANS AND DISCHARGE PLANS FOR MINOR PATIENTS.

SUMMARY

Starting April 1, 2026, this bill requires a health care provider that prepares a safety plan for a minor patient who received at least 12 consecutive days of inpatient behavioral health care treatment to (1) review it with the minor, if medically appropriate, and (2) ask whether the minor or the minor's parent or legally authorized representative consents to sharing the safety plan with the minor's school.

Under the bill, the provider may only send the safety plan to the school under the following conditions:

1. the provider gets written consent from the minor's parent or legally authorized representative (or the minor if they are at least age 16);
2. the provider sends the information to the minor's school or school district using a secure messaging system or in a way that complies with the federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA);
3. school districts and schools sign up for an organizational account on a secure messaging system and give at least one designated employee (e.g., school nurse, social worker, or psychologist) access to the account;
4. local or regional education boards give the State Department of Education (SDE) commissioner each school's or school district's secure messaging system address;
5. local or regional education boards annually provide professional

development to new designated employees; and

6. the statewide health information exchange (“Connie”), within available appropriations, gives each school or school district a secure messaging system organizational account that designated employees may access to receive these safety plans.

Under the bill, a “safety plan” is a written document health care providers and patients create collaboratively, outlining coping strategies, activities, and support networks the patient can access to manage a potential mental health crisis.

*House Amendment “A” replaces the original bill (File 629) and eliminates provisions requiring (1) health care providers that give inpatient behavioral health care treatment to a minor patient for more than 14 consecutive days to develop a discharge plan for the minor, (2) SDE to create a list of the state’s behavioral health providers and make it available to school nurses and nurse practitioners, and (3) these nurses to give their school contact information to health care providers on the list. It also adds provisions (1) expanding the types of school employees that may access safety plans, (2) requiring professional development for new designated school employees, (3) requiring Connie to give designated employees access to a secure messaging system organizational account, and (4) requiring education boards to give SDE secure messaging system addresses.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage, except that the provision on professional development for new designated employees takes effect July 1, 2026.

SCHOOL SAFETY PLANS

Provider Requirements

Starting April 1, 2026, the bill requires a health care provider that prepares a safety plan for a minor patient who received at least 12 consecutive days of inpatient behavioral health care treatment to (1) review it with the minor, if medically appropriate, and (2) ask whether the minor or the minor’s parent or legally authorized representative

consents to sharing the safety plan with the minor's school.

Under the bill, the provider may only send the safety plan to the school if he or she (1) gets written consent from the minor's parent or legally authorized representative (or the minor if they are at least age 16) and (2) sends the information to the minor's school or school district using a secure messaging system or in a way that complies with HIPAA.

The bill specifies that its provisions do not create a standard of medical care for minors or require a health care provider to do the following:

1. create a safety plan;
2. release information to a parent or legally authorized representative if (a) state or federal law allows a minor to withhold the information (e.g., pregnancy, abortion, contraception, HIV, or mental health treatment) or (b) the provider promised to keep it confidential; or
3. transmit a safety plan or provide any other information to someone in violation of HIPAA.

Secure Messaging Systems

The bill requires local and regional education boards, by January 1, 2026, to ensure each school district or school (1) signs up for an organizational account on a secure messaging system (e.g., one that complies with the federal Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology's Direct Project specifications, see BACKGROUND) and (2) gives at least one designated employee (see below) access to the organizational account to access these safety plans.

Correspondingly, the bill requires the statewide health information exchange, within available appropriations, to give (1) a secure messaging system organizational account to each school district or school to receive these safety plans and (2) designated employees access to the accounts (at no cost to schools, school districts, or their designated employees).

Designated Employees

Under the bill, a “designated employee” is a school nurse or nurse practitioner, school nurse supervisor, school counselor, school social worker, or school psychologist who the local or regional education board designates to access the safety plans.

The bill requires at least one designated employee to be a school nurse supervisor. Designated employees must keep the safety plans in a confidential file separate from any cumulative academic or health record, so long as safety plan information may be used for appropriate interventions under a minor’s individualized education program (IEP) or 504 plan (see BACKGROUND).

Professional Development

Starting with the 2026-2027 school year, the bill requires each local or regional education board to annually provide professional development to new designated employees. SDE must give the school boards related training materials to use. As part of this professional development, designated employees must complete training and instruction on using a secure messaging system to access minor safety plans.

SDE List of Secure Messaging System Addresses

By April 1, 2026, the bill requires each local or regional education board to give the SDE commissioner each school district’s or school’s secure messaging system address. After this date, the education boards must also give the commissioner any address changes within 30 days after receiving them.

The bill requires the SDE commissioner to create and maintain a list of these secure messaging system addresses and make the list available to the state’s health care providers to transmit the safety plans.

BACKGROUND

Direct Project Standards

The Direct Project is part of the Nationwide Health Information Network and specifies technical standards and services for health care providers to securely send authenticated, encrypted health information

directly to trusted recipients online.

IEP and 504 Plans

An IEP is a written statement detailing the student's academic achievement level, goals for future achievement, and specialized educational services needed to reach the goals. Federal law requires school boards to develop IEPs for students eligible to receive special education and related services (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1400 et seq.). Section 504 of the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 protects students with mental or physical disabilities from discrimination in public schools (29 U.S.C. § 794). Students who receive school accommodations under this law have them memorialized in a written plan, commonly known as a "504 plan."

COMMITTEE ACTION

Public Health Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 23 Nay 7 (03/27/2025)