

Your Question:

You asked for information on trauma-informed schools and whether any states have addressed this topic from the state level.

Our Response:

Research suggests that childhood trauma and chronic stress, often a result of [adverse childhood experiences](#) (ACEs), negatively affects students' ability to learn and focus in school. Among children aged birth to 17 years, [approximately 46%](#) have experienced at least one adverse childhood experience. Research indicates that a [greater number of ACEs](#) are related to poorer well-being. In recent years, education leaders have started to focus on how to mitigate the negative effects of childhood trauma by implementing requirements around trauma-informed schools. While many of the efforts to develop trauma-informed schools have taken place at the local level, there has been some movement at the state policy level in recent years. Below, we have compiled summaries of state policies related to trauma-informed schools and further resources for your review.

State Policy Examples

State policy approaches to implementing trauma-informed schools generally include provisions on developing statewide plans, requiring training for school personnel, and/or providing funding. Education Commission of the States tracks and summarizes education-related legislation in the [state policy database](#). Please visit this [page](#) for further information on student health related topics. The following are examples from states that have legislated trauma-informed approaches into their education systems.

- [Massachusetts' 'Safe and Supportive Schools' law](#), developed out of the passage of [HB 3528](#), required all schools to **develop action plans** for creating safe and supportive environments using a prescribed assessment tool and framework. The bill also established a commission to assist in implementation, established a grant program to fund model schools and provided for technical assistance to schools and districts. Trauma-sensitivity within schools is a key aspect of the framework.
- [Vermont H 23](#) (2017) Requires the Secretary of Education to **develop a plan for creating a trauma-informed school system** throughout Vermont in consultation with representatives from the state's Principal's Association, Superintendents Association, School Boards Association and National Education Association. The plan is required to link school nurses with primary care providers in the community and must include mechanisms for coordinating trauma-informed resources through the system and measuring results. The plan is due for submission on or before January 15, 2018. Additionally, this bill mandates the **creation and dissemination of training materials** for prekindergarten teachers regarding the identification of students exposed to ACEs. The training materials are required to include information on how prekindergarten teachers may refer families with students exposed to ACEs to a community health team.
- [Oregon HB 4002](#) (2017) requires the **development of a statewide education plan** to address chronic absences of students in public schools. As part of that plan, the bill outlines that the Chief Education Office shall **distribute funds** to applicants based on their proposal to design and implement a pilot program to decrease rates of school absenteeism by using trauma-informed approaches to education, health services and intervention strategies that are based in schools and take advantage of community resources. These

proposals must require **professional development and support for staff** to create a trauma-informed school culture and must also provide for one trauma specialist who oversees implementation and uses evidence-based approaches. Additionally, [House Concurrent Resolution 33](#) encourages state employees whose responsibilities impact children and adults, including the State Board of Education, to become informed regarding the impacts of adverse childhood experiences, toxic stress, and structural violence on children, adults and communities. Employees are also encouraged to become aware of evidence-based, trauma-informed care practices, tools and interventions that promote healing and resiliency.

- [Pennsylvania House Resolution 191](#) (2013) declared youth violence as a public health epidemic and supported the establishment of statewide trauma-informed education.

Further Resources on Trauma-Informed Schools

The Massachusetts [Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative](#) is a collaboration between Massachusetts Advocates for Children and Harvard Law School. The mission of the initiative is to ensure that children who have experienced trauma are able to succeed in school. The initiative advocates for trauma-sensitive schools and helps in the implementation process. The initiative has published [several documents](#) outlining best practices for implementation of trauma-informed education.

This brief from the Education Law Center, entitled "[Unlocking the Door to Learning: Trauma-Informed Classrooms & Transformational Schools](#)" provides an overview of childhood trauma and how it affects students' ability to learn as well as examples and methods of implementation.

This [study](#) describes a school-university collaboration to develop a trauma-informed, culturally-responsive school model. The findings explore school personnel's perceptions about race, trauma, and the stressors their students face in the context of the model.

The Treatment and Services Adaptation Center outlines the components of a trauma-informed school on this [resource page](#).

This [NPR article](#) profiles trauma-informed schools in New Orleans Public Schools and incorporates a discussion of school discipline reform efforts.