

CREATING TRAUMA- INFORMED SCHOOLS

TESTIMONY TO HOUSE EDUCATION COMMITTEE ON H.580 – FEB 14, 2018

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IMPACT OF TRAUMA ON CABOT SCHOOL

- A rapid increase in caseload for trauma-affected students in FY17-18 resulted in budget overruns approaching \$200,000 (pre-reimbursement figures) each year.
- Eleven special education students account for \$600K in additional costs at Cabot School in FY18 (projected).
- Notwithstanding the availability of State-Placed reimbursement (100%) and Special Education reimbursement under the current formula (54%-90%), Cabot School is still responsible for some unreimbursed expenses for addressing the needs of these students.
- The increased numbers of trauma-impacted students has affected the school climate and challenged our most seasoned teachers to meet the needs of *all* students.

H.580 – YOUTH RISK SURVEY

- This a federally-prescribed survey – can Vermont even change it?
- Even if you change the survey, most trauma-impacted students can't recall their own trauma history.
- For those that can recall, recounting their history might actually retrigger a trauma response.
- I don't think you will get actionable data from this – better to look for data collection improvements elsewhere.

H.580 – TRAUMA INFORMED SCHOOLS

- A model plan is a good idea, and all schools (thru their SU's) should participate.
- That plan should comprehensively address educating *all* adults who work in the school and have contact with these students, not just teachers.
- We have to broaden our thinking – this is not just a Special Education problem.
- The comprehensive model should be built within the framework of the Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS).
- If you make this part of the MTSS framework, there is already a reporting system in place.

H.580 – SUCCESS FOR ALL STUDENTS

- The proposed language deletion in Section 290I provides guidance for Alternative School placement – the criteria is important to state.
- Schools do not arbitrarily place students in alternative school settings:
 - Alternative Placement is a Special Education practice under the direction of a student's IEP team;
 - If this is not working for a particular student, the parent/guardian has recourse through an existing appeal process.
- Well-thought-out Alternative Placements are usually a boon for the student.

H.580 – REINTEGRATION FROM ALTERNATIVE PROGRAMS

- Reintegration is supposed to be a goal in ANY Alternative School Placement decision by an IEP Team.
- Every one of these I have been involved in has started with a presumption that the student will not stay for an indeterminate period of time.
- Transition time back to the child's home school is variable, but it falls under the oversight responsibilities of the IEP team.
- If there are problems inherent in some systems, addressing them through the Special Education monitoring process is probably easier than trying to “train” the alternative schools to do something that is the responsibility of the home school to ensure.

H.580 – LOOKING AT ACT 264 PROCESSES

- Coordinated Service Planning (CSP) is problematic mostly when it comes time for someone to spend money.
- When the school initiates the CSP process, it is because there are perceived needs that are beyond the scope and mission of the school.
- The Mental Health Agencies are sympathetic, but often claim to lack the funding to support new or additional respite services and/or Family Counseling services.
- Many times, the discussion devolves into a question of, “What else is the school going to do?” when we are the ones asking for help.

H.580 – TRAUMA-INFORMED TRAINING FOR EDUCATORS

- I've already said this should encompass all adults.
- Including an evidentiary requirement in the licensing process only affects teachers.
 - It won't happen quickly enough if this is all that is mandated.
- The only real path to creating a trauma-informed school environment is to treat this as a school-wide and community-wide issue. Mental Health needs to be a partner in this.
- Achieving the goal will cost money up-front but will save money later as we improve our ability to meet the needs of this most-delicate segment of our student population.

QUESTIONS?

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