

serves as an example of this problem: a female student who was sexually assaulted by a classmate off-school grounds did not disclose the incident immediately because she was struggling with depression. While she struggled to cope with the aftermath of the assault, her grades dropped. The school principal approached her to discuss her grades and see if she was experiencing any problems, but she remained silent about the assault. Eventually she told a friend about the incident, and the friend disclosed the incident to a staff member. As a result, the survivor was suspended for lying because she did not adhere to the school's honor code of honesty.

School officials should have the discretion to consider a student's status as a survivor of domestic or sexual violence or as an expectant or parenting student during a disciplinary process. When there is a substantial relationship between a student's behavior that gives rise to suspension or expulsion proceedings and the student's status as a survivor of domestic or sexual violence or as an expectant or parenting student, then the district superintendent should look to modify the suspension or expulsion requirement on a case-by-case basis. This provision would allow for flexibility by recognizing that survivors may be involved in an altercation at school for which they are not to blame if, for example, they engage in an act of self-defense or respond to an abuser's taunts and harassment.

Collaborating with External Service Providers

Testimony of domestic and sexual violence advocates across Illinois revealed strained relationships with local school officials, at a cost to the students who stand to benefit when schools and service providers cooperate. School districts should develop relationships with external service providers and community-based organizations to ensure that services provide a coordinated continuum of care for youths and their families. In fostering cooperation with other organizations, schools will engage in a cost-effective approach that reduces duplication, shares expenses, spurs new development of programs, and improves outcomes for students and their families. Increasing visibility of available community resources through referrals is crucial to ensuring that survivors have the resources they need to cope with their experiences of violence and continue their education.

Best Practices

Examples of Legislation from Other States

There is legislation in several states related to school safety and violence prevention. Many of these encompass conflict resolution and bullying and harassment. Other states directly address domestic or sexual violence, particularly between students. Rhode Island's dating-violence policy requires its department of education to develop a model dating-violence policy and assist school districts to develop and implement a policy and train all administrators, teachers, nurses, and mental health staff members.⁹⁷ Texas requires every school district to adopt and implement a dating-violence policy that includes safety planning, enforcement of protective orders, school-based alternatives to protective orders, and training for administrators and teachers.⁹⁸

Effective Practices Found in Illinois

The Task Force found that Illinois schools do not have comprehensive policies or examples of effective programs that address the needs of students who are survivors of domestic or sexual violence. In its policy manual the Chicago Public Schools has a section entitled “Domestic Violence, Dating Violence and Court Orders of Protection, Restraint or No Contact.”⁹⁹ The policy addresses all types of abusive situations experienced by children and youths, including students as witnesses of domestic violence in their homes, students as survivors of child abuse in their homes, and students as survivors of dating and sexual violence. It also addresses an important point in situations where the survivor and perpetrator attend the same school by identifying the school principal or other administrator as responsible for following investigation and incident-reporting procedures and implementing appropriate interventions and consequences regardless of whether the incident occurred on or off-school grounds. Furthermore, the Chicago Public Schools policy provides for the transferring of the perpetrator to another school when the victim’s safety is jeopardized or being disrupted by allowing the victim and perpetrator to remain in the same school. While the Chicago Public Schools policy offers an example of how to incorporate some of the recommendations of this Task Force, the policy is bare-bones, mostly serves as a legal document designed to limit liability, and is not the sort of policy that will encourage survivors to step forward, seek help, feel safe, and perform well in school. While the policy seeks to help students, it does so mostly through parental notification and getting students to counseling. School policies must do more by delineating how the school will accommodate students, ensure confidentiality, provide for survivors’ safety, and collaborate with students so that they perform well in school. Students and their parents must be able to make an informed decision about coming forward and putting their trust in school administrators and other school personnel.

Recommendations Regarding Policies Affecting Students Who Are Survivors of Domestic or Sexual Violence

Based upon our analysis, we offer the following recommendations—arranged by expected time frame for implementation—for supporting students who are survivors of domestic or sexual violence. Many of these recommendations are similar to or direct reflections of the recommendations offered for supporting students who are parents or expectant parents because of the similarities in the circumstances faced by these two student population groups.

Recommendations that Can Be Implemented Immediately

- Exempt children and youths who are survivors of domestic or sexual violence from minimum attendance requirements for absences related to domestic or sexual violence. School districts should not be permitted to consider a student who is a survivor of domestic or sexual violence a chronic or habitual truant or truant minor because of one or more absences related to the student’s status, including absences due to the student’s having received services for domestic or sexual violence such as counseling, health services, and legal advocacy, and absences needed to recover from physical and psychological injuries related to the violence.

- Students who miss class work, including lessons, assignments, quizzes and tests, because of absences related to domestic or sexual violence as described above should be allowed to make it up. Giving the opportunity to make up missed class work is the classroom teacher's responsibility. Costs associated with these activities should be waived by school districts for any students whose parents or guardians are unable to afford them.
- For students who are survivors of domestic or sexual violence, provide necessary accommodations in school, including, but not limited to, sufficiently private settings and time-off for meetings with counselors or other service providers, transfer of the student survivor or student perpetrator to a different classroom, change of locker assignment, change of seating assignment, early dismissal from classes to allow safe passage in the hallways, implementation of an individualized in-school safety plan, and any other accommodation that may facilitate the student's participation in school.
- Honor any orders of protection or no-contact orders granted.
- Require schools to treat school disciplinary procedures separately from findings in the criminal justice system. Recognize the obligation to keep schools and students safe by taking appropriate action against perpetrators of domestic violence and sexual violence offenses even when criminal charges are not filed.
- In situations where a survivor and perpetrator of domestic or sexual violence attend the same school, require schools to place the burden of making changes to meet the accommodation needs of the survivor (e.g., schedule and locker changes) on the perpetrator so as to avoid revictimizing the survivor.
- Prohibit school administrators and staff members from pressuring or requiring survivors of domestic or sexual violence to request or accept any accommodations, and ensure that survivors of domestic or sexual violence have the opportunity to decide voluntarily about which academic programs they would like to pursue.

Recommendations that Should Be Implemented Within Two Years

- Amend the School Code to recognize absences related to the student's status as a survivor of domestic or sexual violence, including absences due to the student's having received services such as counseling, health services, and legal advocacy, and absences needed to recover from physical and psychological injuries related to the violence, as valid causes for absence.
- Amend homebound instruction provisions to include students' right to homebound instruction due to circumstances related to domestic or sexual violence, and allow student homebound instruction for as long as needed to treat physical or mental health complications due to domestic or sexual violence when a health care provider or sexual or domestic violence service provider indicates in writing that such care is needed. Home instruction services should be equivalent to the regular education program, in accordance with Title IX, and students receiving home instruction should not be penalized in grading, course completion, grade-level advancement, or graduation, providing that the students comply with home instruction requirements.
- Amend the School Code to allow a student who is a survivor of domestic or sexual violence, regardless of whether the survivor has obtained a protective order, regardless of whether the perpetrator has been criminally charged or convicted, and

regardless of whether the incident occurred on school grounds during regular school hours or during a school-sponsored event, to transfer to another school immediately and as needed, including to another school district without the payment of out-of-district tuition if the student's continued attendance at a particular school poses risk to the student's safety or well-being. In accordance with the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act of 2001 or the Illinois Education for Homeless Children Act, school transfers should also be allowed for youths who become homeless as a result of domestic or sexual violence.

- Amend the School Code to allow a school district to require the transfer of a student who is the perpetrator of domestic or sexual violence, including to another school district, when the victim's safety or well-being is jeopardized or being disrupted by allowing the victim and perpetrator to remain in the same school.
- Amend the Illinois School Student Records Act to maintain confidentiality of student records and ensure that any documentation regarding a student's status as a survivor of domestic or sexual violence be kept confidential and separate from the student's permanent record, and not be released, transferred, disclosed, or otherwise disseminated without the student's consent.

Section 4: Related Issues and Special Considerations

In considering the changes that must occur in school policy and procedure to ensure that students who are parents, expectant parents, or survivors of domestic or sexual violence are safe in school and receive the accommodations they need, schools and policymakers must maintain an inclusive perspective that takes into account the situations of all students.

Implementing Comprehensive Antibullying Policies and Procedures

Bullying and harassment create an unsafe environment where distractions force students to divert their attention from their academic development to find ways to cope with these negative experiences. A 2006 study reveals that more than half (52 percent) of Illinois students report having been verbally harassed and nearly a quarter (23 percent) of students report having been physically harassed or assaulted in school.¹⁰⁰ In light of this, schools need comprehensive policies and procedures for dealing with bullying and harassment and well-trained school personnel and students who can intervene in incidents of mistreatment:

- School teachers should be required to receive training in antibullying measures and cultural diversity as part of their accreditation and professional development.
- Policies must be oriented around the goal of empowering students to resolve conflict positively and prevent the escalation of conflict.
- Comprehensive whole-school bullying programs are necessary to increase awareness of the problem and encourage staff members and students to intervene when witnessing bullying.
- Policies must explicitly address the specific dynamics resulting from harassment based on an individual's gender, sexual orientation, race or ethnicity, disability, or status as a parent, expectant parent, or survivor of domestic or sexual violence. Less than half (45 percent) of Illinois students in a 2006 report said that they were protected by school antiharassment policy that specifically mentioned sexual orientation or gender/identity expression.¹⁰¹
- Prevention is key to eliminating youth violence. In order to create safer schools in Illinois, students need a social and emotional learning curriculum that emphasizes diversity and promotes cultural acceptance. Only half (52 percent) of Illinois students report feeling very safe in their schools, and over a third (37 percent) say that at least one personal characteristic makes them feel unsafe, including physical appearance (17 percent), race or ethnicity (9 percent), gender expression (7 percent), and actual or perceived sexual orientation (5 percent).¹⁰²

Crucial to facilitating a positive school climate free of violence and harassment are professional school personnel and staff members who set examples of how to act respectfully and treat others with regard. In Illinois 81 percent of students reported hearing sexist comments at school, 74 percent had heard homophobic slurs, 19 percent had heard staff members make sexist remarks, 12 percent had heard staff members make racist comments, and 11 percent had heard staff members make homophobic comments.¹⁰³ When school staff members engage in such behavior or fail to intervene in situations of harassment or bullying, students are less likely to trust school

personnel and consequently not report incidents of harassment or bullying. With a majority (59 percent) of students in Illinois who have experienced verbal or physical harassment or assault not reporting the incidents to school staff members, schools are not fully aware of this problem.¹⁰⁴ Furthermore, in hearing their school authorities use biased language, students may believe that such language is permissible. Effective school policies and training for school personnel are imperative to prevent bullying and harassment in Illinois schools.

Homelessness Services and Prevention

Homelessness is a pervasive problem for students who are parents, expectant parents, or survivors of domestic or sexual violence. Oftentimes the only point of stability in homeless children's and youths' lives is the school environment. Each school in Illinois needs programs and policies in place—in accordance with the federal McKinney-Vento Education for Homeless Children and Youth Act provisions, the Illinois Education for Homeless Children Act provisions, and the Illinois State Board of Education policy on homeless education—that accommodate the situations of homeless students by ensuring equal access to education, upholding the dignity of these children and youths, and preventing them from feeling isolated or stigmatized due to their being homeless.¹⁰⁵ Schools must also be mindful that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning children and youths are especially vulnerable to homelessness. Since homeless students are forced to move locations frequently, school stability and continuity in school enrollment are essential to these students' academic success.

In meeting the requirements of the federal McKinney-Vento Education for Homeless Children and Youth program, states must provide transportation to and from the homeless student's school of origin (i.e., the school that the student attended when permanently housed or the school where last enrolled) and provide for immediate school enrollment to the school in which enrollment is sought by the student's parent or guardian even if the student is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment. Illinois law further stipulates that the choice of whether a student remains at the student's school of origin belongs to the student's parent or guardian.¹⁰⁶ States are prohibited from segregating homeless children or youths.¹⁰⁷ Federal law also provides in every school district for a homeless liaison who must, among other duties, ensure that homeless children and youths receive educational services for which they are eligible as well as referrals to health, mental health, dental, and other appropriate services.¹⁰⁸ School districts must also coordinate with housing assistance providers to ensure that eligible students have access and reasonable proximity to available educational and related support services. Schools are required to give special attention to homeless students not currently attending school. In meeting homeless children's and youths' educational needs, school districts' main priorities should be to remove barriers to enrollment, attendance, and success. State and local educational agencies should review and revise any policies or practices that act as barriers (i.e., if a student is pregnant or parenting and homeless, schools have a duty to review relevant policies and make necessary accommodations based on the student's unique circumstances).¹⁰⁹ Reenrolling homeless students is key to addressing Illinois's dropout crisis—if a student has dropped out, the school should work to reach out to the student and reenroll the student whenever possible. Public testimony heard by the Task Force reveals that homelessness is a concern common to all areas of Illinois and that our state's school districts should do more to meet better the needs of these children and youths and ensure that they receive the same education and services offered to other students:

- Advocates from Quincy discussed the problems that homeless youth under 18 encounter in accessing subsidized housing.
- A homeless youth advocate from Kane County testified at the Elgin hearing that schools needed assistance in implementing the McKinney-Vento federal provisions regarding homeless students and must better train staff to recognize signs of homelessness and assist homeless students.
- Several advocates from Elgin, Carbondale, and Chicago noted the lack of homeless shelters specifically covering the needs of youths who are parents or expectant parents.
- A school nurse from Carbondale related the importance of counseling students who are parents or expectant parents about planning for their housing needs; she testified about one of her students whose mother refused to provide housing for the student unless she gave her baby up for adoption.
- A parenting high school student from Chicago explained her experiences of homelessness when she left her parents' home after her father abused her child. The student noted that tracking down the contact information about her school's homeless liaison was very difficult for her and advised that schools should better publicize the resources available to homeless students. She also wished that her school had the resources to help her find day care since she had had to disrupt her schooling by having to move her daughter around to different child care arrangements.
- An advocate from Elgin told a story about how little changes in school policies and provision of services can be an immense aid and relief to homeless students—a group of school bus drivers in Elgin agreed to make it their policy to pick up homeless children from the shelter where they were staying before the rest of the students and drop them off last so as to avoid putting these homeless students in an uncomfortable situation.

Best practices found from discussions with advocates at the Task Force hearings included helping ensure that homeless children do not feel stigmatized by

- providing school supplies, including backpacks and/or uniforms to each child;
- coordinating efforts of district transportation and external resources to take students to and from school as needed;
- making all school activities, including before- and after-school programs accessible to each child;
- providing accessibility to tutoring and counseling;
- helping parents and students complete enrollment forms and assisting in obtaining school records, immunization records, birth certificates, and other records as needed
- coordinating efforts with local community agencies to provide basic needs and services, including medical, vision, and dental care, for homeless students and families;
- creating awareness of, and promoting sensitivity toward, the educational and legal rights of homeless children and youths among school personnel.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Questioning Students

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQQ) children and youths face significant barriers to success in school due to their lack of safety both in school and at home. A 2005 survey of Chicago students conducted by the Chicago Public Schools and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that lesbian, gay, and bisexual students had a heightened risk of violence exposure: LGB student responses indicate that, compared to their heterosexual peers, they are two times more likely to be threatened at school, two to four times more likely to be treated for injuries resulting from a fight, two to four times more likely to report being victims of sexual assault, and three to four times more likely to have attempted suicide in the past year.¹¹⁰ A national study of LGBT students of color in middle school and high school found that these students were especially vulnerable to victimization. Across all minority racial or ethnic groups surveyed, more than four out of five students reported verbal harassment in school because of sexual orientation and about two-thirds because of gender expression. At least a third of each group reported physical violence in school because of sexual orientation.¹¹¹ Less than half of the minority LGBT students who reported being harassed or assaulted in school in the past year said that they reported the incidents to school staff members. More than half of those who did report an incident believed that the school's responses to the incident were ineffective.¹¹²

An LGBTQQ advocate and counselor from Chicago testified about how many of the young people with whom she worked frequently shared stories about how faculty and staff members did not intervene when they witnessed bullying of LGBTQQ students and even made derogatory remarks about a student's sexual orientation or gender expression. She discussed how parents and guardians who disapproved of or were hostile to their children's sexual orientation or gender expression used tactics of power and control to abuse their children and deny them basic survival needs, including food, financial support, and housing. Once LGBTQQ children and youths are homeless, violence becomes a common occurrence in their everyday struggle to survive.

The problem of LGBTQQ youth homelessness and victimization is widespread: one national study found that half of gay teens experienced a negative reaction from their parents when they came out, and 26 percent were kicked out of their homes.¹¹³ Another study found that more than one-third of youths who were homeless or in the care of social services experienced a violent physical assault when they came out, consequently leading these youths to leave a homeless shelter or foster home because they actually felt safer on the streets.¹¹⁴ For LGBTQQ children and youths, a lack of safe housing can lead to a multitude of difficulties including mental health issues, substance abuse, and risky sexual behavior.

Based on the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute's research findings that between 20 percent and 40 percent of all homeless youths identify as LGBT, between five thousand and ten thousand of the estimated twenty-five thousand youths in Illinois who experience homelessness in the course of a year are LGBT.¹¹⁵ Given that school is often the only environment that provides some basis of consistency and normalcy for LGBTQQ children and youths, Illinois must take action to ensure that schools are safe spaces for these students.

Illinois should mandate that all school administration and personnel participate in LGBTQQ awareness training and demonstrate cultural competency as part of their professional licensing process. Health education curricula should be inclusive of LGBTQQ students—information about healthy relationships and health issues should be accessible to students of all sexualities. Lack of inclusion and visibility in curricula can stigmatize LGBTQQ students, lead to their increased isolation, and prevent them from recognizing and avoiding abuse in their own relationships.

Recommended actions that schools should take to eliminate the harassment of LGBTQQ students and prevent homelessness among these students include

- facilitating student clubs that take up LGBTQQ issues, such as Gay-Straight Alliance;
- training faculty and staff members to be sensitive to the issues faced by LGBTQQ children and youths and be supportive of these students;
- ensuring that students have access to LGBTQQ-inclusive curricular resources and LGBTQQ-related resources in the school library; and
- establishing a comprehensive policy to address in-school harassment and assault and provide specific protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity and gender expression.

Children and Youths with Disabilities

Children and youths with disabilities are especially in need of educational support services that meet their unique needs. Schools would greatly benefit from enhanced coordination with community-based organizations and government agencies to improve delivery of services for this population of students.

In situations where a student who is a parent, expectant parent, or survivor of domestic or sexual violence has had an individualized education program (IEP) to meet the student's special education needs, but has dropped out of school and is seeking reenrollment, school districts should reenroll the student in the type of school listed on the student's most recent IEP even if the IEP is no longer valid. In the IEP schools should also incorporate services relevant to the student's status as a parent, expectant parent, or survivor.

Foster Children and Youths

Children and youths in the foster care system have unique stressors in their lives that may negatively affect their personal development and limit their abilities to succeed in school. Frequent placement moves and lack of coordination among agencies prevent young people in foster care from completing their education. Studies indicate that fewer than half of foster youths leave care with a high school education or employment.¹¹⁶ Foster youths are also more likely than their peers to be held back in school, suspended, or expelled.¹¹⁷

Young people living in foster care are at greater risk of early pregnancy and childbearing than their peers. In fact, teen girls in foster care are 2.5 times more likely than their peers not in foster care to experience a pregnancy by age 19.¹¹⁸ Young adults who lived in foster care at some point are 1.9 times more likely to have ever experienced forced sex than their peers, with young women who ever lived in foster care being nearly 3 times more likely than young men who ever lived in foster care to have experienced forced sex.¹¹⁹ One study of Illinois youths living in foster care found that 72 percent of the young women had ever been pregnant, and repeat pregnancies were more the rule than the exception among those who had ever been pregnant. Of these young women who had ever been pregnant, 30 percent had wanted to become pregnant, and only 25 percent were using birth control around the time that they conceived.¹²⁰ Half of Illinois's young men in foster care from this same study reported that they had ever gotten a female pregnant, compared with 19 percent of their peers not in foster care.¹²¹

Children and youths in foster care who have experienced abuse may especially have difficulties in school due to their special needs. Behavioral and emotional problems, learning disabilities, and medical or health problems often prevent these children and youths from succeeding in the classroom. In working to improve the educational outcomes of children and youths in foster care, school districts must work to enhance the provision of educational and related services to foster children and youths who do not qualify for special education programs.

California has taken steps to support educational opportunities for children and youths in foster care by

requiring that placement decision makers take the child's educational needs into consideration, permitting foster children to remain in their school of origin for the remainder of the school year even if they are placed out of the district, mandating prompt transfer of education records and immediate enrollment if the child must change schools, and requiring school districts to appoint an educational liaison for foster children to facilitate placement, enrollment, and efficient transfer of records.¹²²

Young people in foster care in California have also benefited from the state's law that grants these youths who are over 16 the right to information about available postsecondary educational options, including information about course work necessary for vocational and postsecondary programs and financial aid.¹²³ The law requires state universities and community colleges to work with child welfare agencies to promote foster youth enrollment by providing technical assistance in admissions and financial aid applications.¹²⁴ Illinois youths in foster care would benefit from similar provisions.

Section 5: General Recommendations

The following recommendations—including recommendations specifically related to the implementation of these policies—address overarching themes regarding school support of children and youths who are parents or expectant parents, and children and youths who are survivors of domestic or sexual violence:

- Establish that children and youths who are expectant parents, parents, or survivors of domestic or sexual violence have the right to attend school, receive the same or equivalent educational instruction as other children and youths in accordance with the goals of the Constitution of the State of Illinois to promote “the educational development of all persons to the limits of their capacities,” and complete their education successfully and in a safe, secure, and encouraging learning environment. Upon establishing this right in the School Code, school districts should be required to implement specific and continuing steps to notify all current students, former students under 21, applicants, and the parents of students about this right.
- Enhance interpretations and enforcement of antidiscrimination and education laws in order to
 - protect students who are expectant or parenting or are survivors of domestic or sexual violence from discrimination;
 - ensure that girls and young women are encouraged and able to enroll in and complete career and technical education courses that are nontraditional for their gender;
 - protect students fully from sexual harassment, bullying, and other forms of violence in school;
 - ensure that schools appoint, and broadly publicize information about, a Title IX coordinator and adopt antidiscrimination policies and grievance procedures to address any sex discrimination complaints; and
 - Adopt and implement amendments to the state Title IX regulations that clarify and refine current language. These amendments were unanimously approved and recommended for adoption by the Illinois State Board of Education’s Gender Equity Advisory Committee.
- Adjust the attendance formula so that there are no fiscal disincentives for schools to alter attendance policies better to accommodate students who are parents, expectant parents, or survivors of domestic or sexual violence.
- Require each school to designate a liaison on staff trained to address in a confidential and sensitive manner the needs of children and youths who are expectant parents, parents, and survivors of domestic or sexual violence.
- Comply with current law that requires in-service training sessions for all school personnel who work with pupils; such personnel include, but are not limited to, school and school district administrators, teachers, school guidance counselors, school social workers, school counselors, school psychologists, and school nurses, and such training should be conducted by persons with expertise in domestic and sexual violence and the needs of expectant and parenting youths.¹²⁵
- Require school or school district employees who become aware of or suspect a student’s status as an expectant parent, parent, or survivor of domestic or sexual violence to inform

the student about available school and community resources and refer the student to the school's designated liaison or specially trained personnel.

- Adopt a common definition of “dropouts” for all data collection and reporting requirements, and require that data be fully cross-tabulated to allow analysis of subgroups of students.
- Ensure that all students have access to quality health services and information by establishing comprehensive school health centers in every school.
- Establish coordinated efforts with community-based organizations and an effective referral system to ensure that students receive a comprehensive continuum of health and social services.
- Require that all materials for students and parents pertaining to rights and policies for student parents or expectant parents and student survivors of domestic or sexual violence be presented in a culturally competent manner. This includes supplying materials in other languages when necessary and appropriate.
- Prioritize confidentiality for students by requiring schools to accommodate on-campus counseling services with private rooms for counseling work.
- Require school districts to establish a policy and protocol to preserve the confidentiality and privacy of students who disclose their status as an expectant parent, parent, or survivor of domestic or sexual violence or who seek assistance, services, or accommodations due to their status.
- Require school districts to develop and implement policies to enable parents and guardians of children or youths who are expectant parents, parents, or survivors of domestic or sexual violence to be informed of actions taken with regard to the status of the children or youths. In cases where students indicate that their health or safety would be threatened if they were to reveal their status to a parent or guardian, school staff members should not be permitted to inform the students' parents or guardians. In such cases, school staff members should refer the child or youth to community-based organizations that provide appropriate services. School district employees are not precluded from disclosing information about a student who is an expectant parent, parent, or survivor of domestic or sexual violence when reporting to the Department of Children and Family Services is required under the Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act, when a parent who is not barred from accessing their child's school records seeks access under the Illinois School Student Record Act and the school record contains information about the child's or youth's status, or when communication with the child or youth reveals the intended commission of a harmful act and disclosure is necessary to protect public safety.
- Require school officials to assist each child or adolescent who is a parent, expectant parent, or survivor of domestic or sexual violence to develop a student success plan based on an assessment of the youth's educational and social functioning and skills. The student success plan should establish goals and objectives for satisfactory performance with the assistance of support services and should specify how the school will assist the student in making up missed work. A student's decision not to develop a student success plan or failure to comply with components of the student success plan should not be the basis of any subsequent disciplinary action or punitive academic measures against the student.
- Require school districts to enroll or reenroll immediately a youth under 21 who is an expectant parent, parent, or survivor of domestic or sexual violence even if the youth is

unable to produce records normally required for enrollment. The enrolling school should immediately contact the school last attended by the student to obtain relevant records. School districts should be required to assist such youths in obtaining immunizations and health examinations, if necessary. No youth may be denied enrollment or reenrollment for absences or tardiness accrued due to circumstances related to the youth's status as a parent, expectant parent, or survivor of domestic or sexual violence.

- Require school districts to reenroll youths who are expectant parents, parents, or survivors of domestic or sexual violence and who were previously enrolled in a special education program in the type of school listed on their most recent individualized education program (IEP), even if the IEP is no longer valid. Require schools to include in the IEP services relevant to the student's status as a parent, expectant parent, or survivor of domestic or sexual violence.
- Pay special attention to ensuring the enrollment and attendance of children and youths who are expectant parents, parents, or survivors of domestic or sexual violence and are not attending school. If a school or school district is aware or suspects that a former student is an expectant parent, parent, or survivor of domestic or sexual violence, school district personnel should inform the former student of the student's right to reenrollment and work to remove barriers to enrollment and school attendance. Schools should coordinate efforts with organizations and agencies where children or youths who are parents, expectant parents, or survivors of violence typically receive services in the community.
- In situations where a student who is a parent, expectant parent, or survivor of domestic or sexual violence is at risk of academic failure or displays poor academic performance, school districts should be required to provide education and support services directly or by collaborating with public or private state, local, or community-based organizations. Schools should be required to inform students of their right to receive these accommodations. Educational and support services needed to meet Illinois learning standards and help students complete their education in a safe and encouraging learning environment include
 - case management services;
 - mentoring;
 - safety and well-being accommodations;
 - individualized psychological and other mental health services;
 - individual, peer, group, and family counseling;
 - individualized and flexible instruction and scheduling;
 - alternative learning environments and strategies, such as home-based learning and independent study;
 - home and hospital instruction;
 - career, family, and child development classes; and
 - other social, health, or supplemental services.
- In situations where a student who is a parent, expectant parent, or survivor of domestic or sexual violence has missed a substantial amount of school or schoolwork because of the student's status as such, alternative educational opportunities should be made available, including
 - instruction before and after school;
 - evening and weekend classes;

- summer courses or extended-year programs;
- home or hospital instruction;
- community college credit toward graduation;
- Internet or other correspondence courses;
- tutoring;
- independent study or home-based learning;
- individual completion of lesson plans; and
- other appropriate alternative learning programs.

Alternative education programs should be equivalent to the regular education program, in accordance with Title IX, and students pursuing alternative programs should not be penalized in grading, course completion, grade-level advancement, or graduation, providing that they comply with the alternative program requirements.

- Establish the provision that whenever there is evidence that a student’s status as an expectant parent, parent, or survivor of domestic or sexual violence may be the cause for expulsion or suspension, an advocate of the student’s choice must be permitted to consult with the school administration and board. Require that students who are parents, expectant parents, or survivors of domestic or sexual violence receive special consideration in reviews during the disciplinary period. Require that if there is a substantial relationship between a student’s behavior that prompts a suspension or expulsion proceeding and the student’s status as an expectant parent, parent, or survivor of domestic or sexual violence, the district superintendent may modify the suspension or expulsion requirement on a case-by-case basis.
- Fund research on the dropout crisis that examines risk factors for dropping out, particularly as they relate to youth who are parents, expectant parents, or survivors of domestic or sexual violence, as well as effective interventions for dropout prevention.
- Regularly evaluate programs and interventions in order to promote effective practices and improve schools’ responses to the needs of students who are parents, expectant parents, or survivors of domestic or sexual violence.
- Ensure that school districts are accountable for proper implementation of all federal and state laws, regulations, and policies, such as federal and state laws governing homeless children and youths, to counter inconsistent or nonexistent application.
- Require that school districts adopt and implement the model policies and procedures as found by this Task Force, or require that they form a local working group comprising representatives of the school district, educators, social workers, counselors, psychologists, representatives of the local nonprofit domestic violence and sexual violence community, and students and parents of students who are parents, expectant parents, or survivors of domestic or sexual violence to develop and implement their own policies and protocol to address the issues set forth in this report.

Issues Needing Further Research and Discussion

- Whether and how to track the graduation rate of students who are survivors of domestic or sexual violence.

- Addressing risk factors for teen dating violence and examining how both community and family violence contributes to teen dating violence.
- How effectively to connect community-based service providers with schools.
- How better to ensure school district compliance with federal and state laws, regulations, and policies.
- The extent to which students who are survivors of domestic or sexual violence in Illinois are pushed into involuntary homeschooling as a result of unmet needs related to their safety and well-being.
- Using restorative justice techniques to address dating and sexual violence, harassment, and bullying in schools.

Endnotes

¹105 ILL. COMP. STAT. 5/2-3.147 (2009).

²See *Davis v. Monroe County Board of Education*, 526 U.S. 629, 650 (1999) (Title XI “funding recipients are properly held liable in damages only where they are deliberately indifferent to sexual harassment, of which they have actual knowledge, that is so severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive that it can be said to deprive the victims of access to the educational opportunities or benefits provided by the school”).

³ILL. CONST. art. 10, § 1; *id.* art. 1, § 18.

⁴105 ILL. COMP. STAT. 5/27-1 (2009).

⁵ILL. ADMIN. CODE tit. 23, § 200.50(e)–(f) (2009).

⁶Illinois State Board of Education, *Mission, Goals*, http://www.isbe.net/board/pdf/mission_statement.pdf.

⁷The Ensuring Success in School Task Force did not address or recommend changes regarding the Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act, 325 ILL. COMP. STAT. 5/1 *et seq.* (2009). When the perpetrator of domestic or sexual violence is a person whose actions are covered under the Act (a parent, an immediate family member, a person responsible for the child’s welfare, an individual residing in the same house as the child, a paramour of the child’s parent, or anyone who came to know the child through an official capacity or position of trust (*id.* § 3)), mandated reporters, including school personnel, should comply with that law.

⁸Illinois State Board of Education, *2009 Illinois State Report Card 3*, http://webprod.isbe.net/ereportcard/publicsite/getReport.aspx?year=2009&code=2009StateReport_E.pdf. Note that the data used to calculate a graduation rate or a dropout rate vary greatly, thus the variations in the numbers and percentages in reports cited here and elsewhere and the lack of correspondence between graduation rates and dropout rates.

⁹Editorial Projects in Education, *Diplomas Count 2008—School to College: Can State P–16 Councils Ease the Transition?*, 26(40) EDUCATION WEEK (2008).

¹⁰Illinois School Board of Education, *2009 Expulsion by Gender, Grade Cluster, and Race/Ethnicity* (2010), http://www.isbe.state.il.us/research/pdfs/eoy_ex_0809.pdf; *id.*, *2007–2008 Number of Expulsions, by Gender, Grade Cluster, and Race/Ethnicity* (2008), http://www.isbe.state.il.us/research/pdfs/eoy_ex_0708.pdf; *id.*, *2006–2007 Number of Expulsions by Gender, Grade Cluster, and Race/Ethnicity* (2008), http://www.isbe.state.il.us/research/pdfs/eoy_ex_0607.pdf.

¹¹The National Center for Education Statistics records the 2008 high school dropout rate for U.S. youths 16 to 24 at 8 percent (National Center for Education Statistics, *Digest of Education Statistics: Table 108—Percentage of High School Dropouts Among Persons 16 Through 24 Years Old (Status Dropout Rate), by Sex and Race/Ethnicity: Selected Years, 1960 Through 2008* (2009), http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d09/tables/dt09_108.asp). The Illinois State Board of Education reports on the number of dropouts every year: 3.37 percent of students in 2009 were reported to have dropped out of high school (2.93 percent for females and 3.80 percent for males) (Illinois State Board of Education, *2009 High School Dropout Rate by Grade Level, Gender, and Race/Ethnicity* (2010), http://www.isbe.state.il.us/research/pdfs/eoy_dropouts_glgr0809.pdf). A 2009 study conducted by Northeastern University and the Alternative Schools Network in Chicago found that 13.2 percent of Illinoisans 16–24 dropped out of high school in the 2006–2007 school year (Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern University & Alternative Schools Network, *Left Behind in America: The Nation’s Dropout Crisis* 3 (2009), http://www.clms.neu.edu/publication/documents/CLMS_2009_Dropout_Report.pdf). The U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey data show that 17.7 percent of Illinois men 18–24 have not completed high school, and 13.7 percent of Illinois women 18–24 have not completed high school (U.S. Census Bureau, *2006–2008 American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates: Table B15001—Sex by Age by Educational Attainment for the Population 18 Years and Over*).

¹²See Signe-Mary McKernan & Caroline Ratcliffe, The Urban Institute, *Events that Trigger Poverty Entries and Exits* (2002), http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/410636_PovertyEntries.pdf.

¹³National Women’s Law Center, *When Girls Don’t Graduate We All Fail: A Call to Improve High School Graduation Rates for Girls* 6 (2007), <http://www.nwlc.org/pdf/DropoutReport.pdf>.

¹⁴*Id.*

¹⁵U.S. Census Bureau, *supra* note 11. From that same data set, 13.84 percent of adult men 18–64 and 11.18 percent of adult women do not have high school degrees.

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- ¹⁶Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern University & Alternative Schools Network, *supra* note 11, at 3. The study finds that the combined lifetime fiscal benefits of high school graduates—including the payment of payroll, federal, and state income taxes—could amount to more than \$250,000 per graduated student.
- ¹⁷Henry Levin et al., Columbia University, *The Costs and Benefits of an Excellent Education for All of America's Children* 1 (2007), http://www.cbcse.org/media/download_gallery/Leeds_Report_Final_Jan2007.pdf.
- ¹⁸Illinois Task Force on Re-enrolling Students who Dropped out of School: Final Report 9 (2008), http://www.isbe.state.il.us/reports/reenrolled_students08.pdf.
- ¹⁹Andrew Sum et al., Chicago Alternative Schools Network, *An Assessment of the Labor Market, Income, Health, Social, and Fiscal Consequences of Dropping Out of High School: Findings for Illinois Adults in the 21st Century* 12 (2007), http://www.clms.neu.edu/publication/documents/An_Assessment_of_the_Consequences_of_Dropping_Out_of_High_School_in_Illinois.pdf.
- ²⁰*Id.* at 19.
- ²¹*Id.* at 16.
- ²²National Women's Law Center, *supra* note 13, at 8.
- ²³Sum et al., *supra* note 19, at 52.
- ²⁴*Id.* at 53. The report also found that high school graduates with no college education accounted for 24.5 percent of the adult female population (age 18 to 44) in the state but represented over 52 percent of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients, making them overrepresented in the TANF ranks by 2 to 1. By contrast, adult women (age 18 to 44) with one or more years of postsecondary schooling accounted for only 1.7 percent of TANF recipients, even though they represented nearly 65 percent of the adult female population in that age group in 2005.
- ²⁵*Id.* at 33.
- ²⁶*Id.* at 32.
- ²⁷Illinois Department of Public Health, *Illinois Teen Births by County 2006–2007*, <http://www.idph.state.il.us/health/teen/teen0607.htm>.
- ²⁸Guttmacher Institute, *U.S. Teenage Pregnancies, Births and Abortions: National and State Trends and Trends by Race and Ethnicity* (2010), <http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/USTPtrends.pdf>.
- ²⁹Joyce A. Martin et al., *Births: Final Data for 2006*, 57(7) NATIONAL VITAL STATISTICS REPORT Jan. 7, 2009, http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr57/nvsr57_07.pdf.
- ³⁰Center for Law and Social Policy, *Leave No Youth Behind: Opportunities for Congress to Reach Disconnected Youth* 8 (Jodie Levin-Epstein & Mark H. Greenberg eds., 2003), <http://www.clasp.org/admin/site/publications/files/0135.pdf>.
- ³¹Kate Perper et al., *Diploma Attainment Among Teen Mothers*, CHILD TRENDS FACT SHEET, Jan. 2010, http://www.childtrends.org/Files/Child_Trends-2010_01_22_FS_DiplomaAttainment.pdf. Diploma and General Educational Development (GED) attainment was the lowest for Hispanic teen mothers (46 percent) followed by white teen mothers (55 percent) and black teen mothers (67 percent). The report also showed that younger teen mothers were less likely to attain their diplomas or complete their GED than older teens: 57 percent of those who had given birth before age 18 received a diploma or GED, where 73 percent of those who gave birth at 18 or 19 did.
- ³²Illinois Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS), cited in Mariame Kaba et al., Women & Girls Collective Action Network, *Status of Girls in Illinois* (2009), http://www.girlsinthegame.org/uploads/files/SOG_Report2009.pdf.
- ³³Kaba et al., *supra* note 32.
- ³⁴JM Bridgeland et al., *The Silent Epidemic: Perspectives of High School Dropouts* 6 (2006).
- ³⁵*Id.* at 14.
- ³⁶See 105 ILL. COMP. STAT. § 5/26-2a, 10-22.6a (2009).
- ³⁷D.R. Polit et al., New York: Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, *The Challenge of Serving Teenage Mothers: Lessons from Project Redirection* (1988).
- ³⁸Helene M. Marcy, Center for Impact Research, *Prepped for Success? Supporting Pregnant and Parenting Teens in Chicago Schools* 10 (July 2003), <http://www.impactresearch.org/documents/prepped.pdf>.

