



TO: Superintendents of Schools

FROM: Joette Katz, Commissioner, Department of Children and Families *Joette Katz*
Dianna R. Wentzell, Commissioner, State Department of Education *Dianna R. Wentzell*
Laura Cordes, Executive Director, Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence *La Cordes*

DATE: August 10, 2016

SUBJECT: A Statewide K-12 Sexual Assault and Abuse Prevention & Awareness Program

Section 17a-101q of the Connecticut General Statutes directs the Connecticut Department of Children and Families (DCF) in collaboration with the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) and the Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence (the Alliance) — formerly Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services, Inc. or CONNSACS — to develop a statewide sexual assault and sexual abuse awareness and prevention program to be implemented in all local and regional school districts in Connecticut by October 1, 2016.

Recognizing that the awareness and prevention of sexual abuse and sexual assault must be a joint effort among schools, communities and families, DCF, CSDE and the Alliance have collaborated to develop guidelines in implementation of policies, programs, and services to address this vital need. The guidelines in [A Statewide K-12 Sexual Assault and Abuse Prevention & Awareness Program](#) offer recommendations for meeting the requirements while addressing the diverse and unique needs of school communities. The guidelines include: an overview of sexual violence; recommendations for delivering effective professional development; identifying developmental and age-appropriate awareness and prevention educational materials for students; policy guidance; and suggested resources.

Each district must implement a program that includes:

- **Instructional Modules for Teachers**, including but not limited to: (1) training regarding the prevention and identification of, and response to, child sexual abuse and assault; and (2) resources to further student, teacher and parental awareness regarding child sexual abuse and assault and the prevention of such abuse and assault.
- **Age-appropriate Educational Materials for Students** designed for children in Grades K-12, inclusive, regarding child sexual abuse and assault awareness and prevention, including but not limited to: (1) the skills to recognize child sexual abuse and assault; boundary violations and unwanted forms of touching and contact; ways offenders groom or desensitize victims; and (2) strategies to promote disclosure, reduce self-blame and mobilize bystanders.

- **A Uniform Child Sexual Abuse and Assault Response Policy and Reporting Procedure** including but not limited to: (1) actions that child victims of sexual abuse and assault may take to obtain assistance; (2) intervention and counseling options for child victims of sexual abuse and assault; (3) access to educational resources to enable child victims of sexual abuse and assault to succeed in school; and (4) uniform procedures for reporting instances of child sexual abuse and assault to school staff members.

No student in Grades K-12, inclusive, is required to participate in the sexual abuse and assault awareness and prevention program offered within the public schools. A written notification to the local or regional board of education by the student's parent or legal guardian is sufficient to exempt the student from such program or from any portion specified by the parent or legal guardian.

If a student is exempted from the program, the local or regional board of education must provide an opportunity for other study or academic work during the time in which the student would otherwise be participating in the program.

It is important for school districts to institute policies and programs that address awareness, prevention and intervention of sexual abuse and assault and to select resources that meet the needs of each school community. Please note that the performance indicators found in the guidelines are not for each grade but rather for each grade band (Prekindergarten-Kindergarten, Grades 1-4, Grades 5-8 and Grades 9-12). This provides for programming flexibility within and among schools. In addition, it is important that school districts engage families and communities in conversations regarding sexual abuse and assault and partner with appropriate state and local organizations to obtain resources and expertise in addressing sexual abuse and assault.

Please share this information and the guidelines with the appropriate staff in your district and refer to section 5, "Recommended Resources," for state agency and state-level partner contact information to address any questions or request assistance.