



## *Child Abuse & Child Sexual Abuse Prevention in Schools*

The Indiana General Assembly strengthened protections and supports in schools for children regarding child abuse prevention and reporting programming and policies in the 2017 session. Their efforts served three purposes – to clarify background check procedures in hiring, to ensure that suspected abuse is appropriately reported to law enforcement or the Department of Child Services, and that programs were put into place to help children understand the warning signs of abuse, how to protect themselves, how to identify if it might be happening to them, and how to access help.

### **HEA1079 School Employment and Teacher Licensure (Thompson J)**

- School corporations, charter schools and nonpublic schools must have policies requiring:
  - Expanded criminal history checks for each applicant who will have direct, ongoing contact with children in their job within 30 days of starting their employment
  - Expanded child protection index checks for those applicants within 60 days of starting their employment
  - Expanded criminal history checks and expanded child protection index checks must be completed every 5 years
  - Prohibiting schools from hiring a person who has been convicted of a crime requiring license revocation, unless the revocation has been reversed, vacated, or set aside on appeal
  - Requiring employment reference checks, including the most recent employer prior to hiring the applicant
- Applicants for these positions will be responsible for all costs associated with the initial checks unless the school agrees to pay the costs
  - Current school employees are not required to pay the costs associated with the child protection index check
- School employees may not be required to obtain the checks more than one time every five years unless the school believes that the person is the subject of a substantiated report of child abuse or neglect or has been charged with or convicted of a crime
- Adds the crime of human trafficking to the list of felonies for license revocation
- Defines procedures for notification of the Department of Education when a person is convicted of a felony

### **SEA355 Child Abuse Education and Policies (Messmer M)**

- Requires the Department of Education to provide plans and policies to schools for child abuse and child sexual abuse prevention, including model educational, response, and reporting procedures for implementation in grades kindergarten through 12
  - Schools may not establish policies that restrict or delay reporting suspected child abuse by employees
- Requires schools to provide age-appropriate, evidence-based instruction on child abuse and child sexual abuse to students in grades K-12 not later than December 15, 2018 and every subsequent December 15.
  - Training may be provided by a school safety specialist, school counselor, or any other person with expertise in child abuse prevention

### **HEA447 Child Services (Merritt J)**

- School corporations, charter schools and accredited nonpublic schools must require training at least every 2 years for all employees who have direct, ongoing contact with children on child abuse and neglect on the topics of duty to report suspected child abuse or neglect and recognizing the signs of possible child abuse or neglect
  - The training may be in-person, on-line, or through individual study
- Persons required to make child abuse reports as a member of staff of a school should immediately make the report to the Department of Child Services or law enforcement and then shall notify the school that the report was made
  - Reports may be oral or written
  - Schools may not adopt policies that restrict or delays the employee from making a report