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# FACT SHEET

## The Dignity for All Students Act

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### What is The Dignity Act?

The Dignity for All Students Act (The Dignity Act) was established with the broad legislative intent to provide a school environment free of discrimination and harassment.

#### What does New York State Education Department (NYSED) have to do?

- The Commissioner shall promulgate regulations to assist schools in implementing this legislation.
- The Commissioner shall create procedures under which material incidents of discrimination and harassment on school grounds or at a school function are reported to the department on an annual basis.
- The Commissioner shall provide direction which may include development of model policies related to preventing discrimination and harassment.

#### What does my Board of Education have to do?

- Develop policies intended to create a school environment that is free from discrimination or harassment.
- Develop guidelines for school training programs to discourage discrimination or harassment that are designed to:
  - ▶ Raise awareness and sensitivity of school employees to potential discrimination or harassment and;
  - ▶ To enable employees to prevent and respond to discrimination or harassment.
- Develop guidelines relating to the development of non-discriminatory instructional and counseling methods and require that at least one staff member be trained to handle human relations issues

#### Who is protected under this legislation?

Identified in the legislation are those who are subjected to intimidation or abuse based on actual or perceived

race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender or sex.

#### Do schools need to provide this information to the public?

A plain language copy of the board approved Code of Conduct must be made available to the public.

#### How does The Dignity Act define "Harassment?"

Harassment is defined as "creation of a hostile environment by conduct or by verbal threats, intimidation or abuse that has or would have the effect of unreasonably and substantially interfering with a student's educational performance, opportunities or benefits, or mental, emotional or physical well-being;..."

#### What training will schools have to provide?

School districts will need to develop policies intended to create an environment that is free of discrimination or harassment and to establish guidelines for school training programs.

#### Why is The Dignity Act necessary?

The Act provides a response to the large number of harassed and stigmatized students skipping school and engaging in high risk behaviors by prohibiting discrimination in public schools and establishing the basis for protective measures such as training and model policies. The Dignity Act takes a major step in creating more nurturing environments in all our schools.

#### How does The Dignity Act relate to SAVE?

NYSED with the New York State Center for School Safety (NYSCSS) is developing guidance to correlate components of SAVE as they relate to The Dignity Act.

#### When is The Dignity Act effective?

The Dignity Act becomes effective on July 1, 2012.