

SENATE BILL No. 269

DIGEST OF INTRODUCED BILL

Citations Affected: IC 20-26-22.

Synopsis: Youth peer support program. Permits a school corporation to establish a youth peer support program (program). Requires a program to: (1) be developed in consultation with one or more local mental health organizations serving the school's geographic area; (2) utilize evidence based training models approved by the department of education; (3) include written referral protocols to school based and community based mental health services; (4) provide ongoing supervision by a school counselor, school social worker, licensed mental health professional, or qualified community partner; and (5) include safeguards to protect student confidentiality and well-being. Provides that a program may not: (1) provide clinical diagnosis or treatment; (2) be established to replace school counselors or mental health professionals; or (3) require participation by a student. Requires a school corporation to provide certain students voluntary, online mental health screenings. Establishes parameters for certain partnerships between school corporations and local mental health organizations participating in the school corporation's program. Creates the youth peer support advisory committee.

Effective: July 1, 2026.

Alting

January 8, 2026, read first time and referred to Committee on Health and Provider Services.



Second Regular Session of the 124th General Assembly (2026)

PRINTING CODE. Amendments: Whenever an existing statute (or a section of the Indiana Constitution) is being amended, the text of the existing provision will appear in this style type, additions will appear in **this style type**, and deletions will appear in ~~this style type~~.

Additions: Whenever a new statutory provision is being enacted (or a new constitutional provision adopted), the text of the new provision will appear in **this style type**. Also, the word **NEW** will appear in that style type in the introductory clause of each SECTION that adds a new provision to the Indiana Code or the Indiana Constitution.

Conflict reconciliation: Text in a statute in *this style type* or ~~this style type~~ reconciles conflicts between statutes enacted by the 2025 Regular Session of the General Assembly.

SENATE BILL No. 269

A BILL FOR AN ACT to amend the Indiana Code concerning education.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Indiana:

1 SECTION 1. IC 20-26-22 IS ADDED TO THE INDIANA CODE
2 AS A **NEW** CHAPTER TO READ AS FOLLOWS [EFFECTIVE
3 JULY 1, 2026]:

4 **Chapter 22. Youth Peer Support Program**

5 **Sec. 1. The following definitions apply throughout this chapter:**

6 (1) "Approved postsecondary educational institution" has the
7 meaning set forth in IC 21-7-13-6(a).

8 (2) "Local mental health organization" means a nonprofit
9 entity that:

10 (A) provides mental health education, prevention,
11 navigation, or peer support services;

12 (B) serves the geographic region of the participating
13 school; and

14 (C) maintains a physical or operational presence within the
15 school's service area.

16 (3) "Online mental health screening" means a validated,
17 confidential, web based mental health screening tool that



provides individualized feedback and referral guidance.

(4) "Youth peer support program" means non-clinical, peer to peer support provided by trained students with lived experiences concerning mental health and substance abuse, operating within a clearly defined scope of practice and under appropriate supervision.

Sec. 2. (a) A school corporation may establish a youth peer support program for students in grade 6 through grade 12.

(b) A youth peer support program established under subsection (a) must:

(1) be developed in consultation with one (1) or more local mental health organizations serving the school's geographic area;

(2) utilize evidence based training models approved by the department;

(3) include written referral protocols to school based and community based mental health services;

(4) provide ongoing supervision by a school counselor, school social worker, licensed mental health professional, or qualified community partner; and

(5) include safeguards to protect student confidentiality and well-being.

(c) A youth peer support program established under subsection (a) may not:

(1) provide clinical diagnosis or treatment;

(2) be established to replace school counselors or mental health professionals; or

(3) require participation by a student.

(d) Youth peer supporters participating in a youth peer support program established under subsection (a) must receive training delivered or endorsed by an approved postsecondary educational institution or offered in partnership with an approved postsecondary educational institution.

Sec. 3. (a) A school corporation shall provide students in grade 7, grade 9, and grade 11 with access to voluntary, confidential, online mental health screenings at least once per school year.

(b) The parent of a student enrolled in a school corporation shall receive an annual notification of:

(1) the availability and purpose; and

(2) the relevant data privacy protections;

associated with the screening described in subsection (a).

(c) The result of a screening described in subsection (a):



(1) is confidential;

(2) may not be placed in a student's cumulative educational record;

(3) may only be used to offer voluntary referrals to local mental health organizations; and

(4) is not considered an educational record within the meaning of the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (20 U.S.C. 1232).

(d) A school corporation shall develop and implement a policy to assist students.

Sec. 4. (a) A school corporation that establishes a youth peer support program under section 2 of this chapter shall do the following:

(1) Prioritize non-exclusive partnerships with local or regional organizations.

(2) Submit an annual report to the department that aggregates non-identifying data concerning the:

(A) number of screenings described under section 3(a) of this chapter that have been completed;

(B) number of referrals described under section 3(c)(3) of this chapter that have been provided; and

(C) youth peer support participation rates.

(b) The department shall compile and publish an annual report concerning the information submitted to the department under subsection (a), and submit the report to the general assembly, in an electronic format under IC 5-14-6, not later than December 1 of each year.

Sec. 5. (a) The commission on youth peer advisory support is established.

(b) The commission has the following fourteen (14) members:

(1) The designee of the secretary of education, who serves at the pleasure of the secretary of education.

(2) Four (4) representatives of Mental Health America, each representing a different geographic region of Indiana, chosen by the organization, who serve two (2) year terms.

(3) Two (2) students currently enrolled in a school corporation, chosen by the secretary of education, who serve two (2) year terms.

(4) Two (2) mental health professionals employed by a school corporation, chosen by the secretary of education, who serve two (2) year terms.

(5) Two (2) parents of students currently enrolled in a school



corporation, chosen by the secretary of education, who serve two (2) year terms.

(6) Two (2) representatives of local crisis response or prevention organizations, chosen by the secretary of education, who serve two (2) year terms.

(7) One (1) representative from an approved postsecondary educational institution, chosen by the secretary of education, who serves a two (2) year term.

(c) Each member of the commission who is not a state employee is entitled to the minimum salary per diem provided by IC 4-10-11-2.1(b). A member who is not a state employee is also entitled to reimbursement for traveling expenses and other expenses actually incurred in connection with the member's duties, as provided in the state travel policies and procedures established by the Indiana department of administration and approved by the budget agency.

(d) The designee of the secretary of education under subsection (b)(1) serves as the chairperson of the commission.

(e) The commission shall meet at least biannually on the call of the chairperson, and may meet as often as is necessary. The chairperson shall provide not less than fourteen (14) days notice of a meeting to the members of the commission and to the public.

(f) The affirmative votes of at least seven (7) members of the commission are necessary for the commission to take action. The votes of the commission must be recorded.

(g) All commission meetings shall be open to the public, and each meeting must include opportunities for public comment.

(h) The commission shall provide recommendations to the general assembly regarding youth peer support programs, youth peer support certification recommendations, and best practices.

(i) The department shall provide staff support for the commission.

