



State of New Jersey
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
PO Box 500
TRENTON, NJ 08625-0500

CHRIS CHRISTIE
Governor

KIM GUADAGNO
Lt. Governor

CHRISTOPHER D. CERF
Commissioner

October 2, 2012

TO: Education Committee of the Senate
Education Committee of the General Assembly

FROM: Christopher D. Cerf, Commissioner

SUBJECT: Violence, Vandalism and Substance Abuse in New Jersey Public Schools, 2011-2012

The *Commissioner's Report to the Education Committees of the Senate and General Assembly on Violence, Vandalism and Substance Abuse in New Jersey Public Schools*, covering the 2011-12 school year, is now available for your review at <http://www.state.nj.us/education/schools/vandv>. Two printed copies have been sent to Kathleen Fazzari, section chief of the Office of Legislative Services-Education.

The total number of incidents reported by districts increased 50.4 percent, an increase of 8,753 incidents from 17,386 in 2010-11 to 26,139 in 2011-12. This marked increase in the total number of incidents reported is directly related to the increase in the number of HIB incidents reported in 2011-12; the first full school year that the *Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act* (ABR) (P.L. 2012, c. 122) was in effect.

The following changes are noted in the number of incidents reported in the five major reporting categories over a three-year period (2009-2010 to 2011-2012): Overall, the number of violence-related incidents appears to have decreased over the past three years; however, this decrease must take into account the data collection changes. Starting in 2011-12, harassment, intimidation or bullying (HIB) was reported as a separate category, no longer included under violence. With regard to HIB, 12,024 confirmed incidents were reported for the 2011-12 school year. In addition, threat was separated out of harassment, intimidation, bullying or threat (HIBT) and was reported as a separate incident type under violence. Given these changes, a true comparison of the overall violence category to past years is not feasible. However, separate incident types in the violence category can be examined. Over the past three years:

- approximately 3.2 percent fewer assaults were reported;
- approximately 20.8 percent fewer robbery/extortion-related incidents were reported;
- approximately 9.2 percent fewer fights were reported; and
- approximately 32 percent fewer criminal threats were reported.

Over the same three-year period, vandalism-related offenses decreased approximately 14.4 percent. Reported firearms incidents (handguns and rifles) increased from five to nine. Additionally, incidents involving a weapon other than a firearm increased by approximately 5.1 percent, but have declined in comparison to the previous year. In the substance category, the number of incidents of possession has increased by approximately 15 percent.

In addition to the data analysis, the report provides a summary of the department's recommendations to reduce school violence and improve school safety through coordinated efforts that include: development and consistent application of clearly defined codes of student conduct; assessment of the immediate school surroundings and the social and emotional learning climates of the school communities; development of comprehensive school safety and security plans that incorporate clearly defined procedures and mechanisms for responding to and recovering from emergencies and crises; implementation of evidence-based prevention and

intervention programs; and development of plans for the effective use of available school and community resources. Additionally, the report summarizes actions that will continue to support students, schools and families.

The Department has taken a number of active steps to increase awareness and decrease the number of incidents this year. First, the department regularly provides information for schools and parents at the Keeping Our Kids Safe, Healthy and in School Web site: <http://www.state.nj.us/education/students/safety/>. Second, the department provided guidance, trainings and funding to districts towards supporting the implementation of the Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act. In April 2011, the department released a *Model Policy and Guidance For Prohibiting Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying*. Additionally, in late winter and early spring 2011, 30 trainings were provided in each county to orient school staff to the requirements in the ABR along with 10 state-wide trainings in September 2011. At the district level, there were a total of 11,445 trainings related to the reduction of HIB conducted during the 2011-12 school year. Additionally, districts reported that there were 8,760 programs, approaches or initiatives, other than trainings, designed to reduce the occurrence of HIB incidents during the 2011-12 school year. The vast majority of these—approximately 89.8 percent—targeted students.

We will remain vigilant in our efforts to work towards better identification and reporting from our schools and districts in order to provide you with the most accurate information.

CDC/BG

Attachment

c: Members, State Board of Education
Barbara Gantwerk
Justin Barra
Diane Shoener
Susan Martz
District Superintendents
Executive County Superintendents

ELECTRONIC VIOLENCE AND VANDALISM REPORTING SYSTEM (EVVRS)**Section A: Count of Incidents by Reporting Category**

Incident	2008/2009	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012
Violence	34	33	14	21
Vandalism	9	8	2	1
Weapons	1	1	0	0
Substance Abuse	15	6	8	11
Total	59	48	24	33

Section B: Cost of Vandalism

Incident	2008/2009	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012
Incidents involving cost to district	0	0	0	0
Total Cost to District	0	0	0	0

Section C: Actions Taken

Incident	2008/2009	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012
Police notified (no complaint)	29	15	9	4
Police notified (complaint filed)	8	4	4	4
In-School suspension*	14	10	2	3
Out-of-School suspension*	62	52	34	33
Expulsions	0	0	0	0

Section D: Offender & Victims

Incident	2008/2009	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012
Student Offenders	68	50	33	42
Student Victims	16	17	8	2
School Personnel Victims	4	6	1	0
Student Victims of Violent Criminal Offense	0	1	1	0

Section E: Program Provided Upon Disciplinary Action

Incident	2008/2009	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012
Assignments, Instruction and/or Support Services	21	43	10	0
In-School Program	n/a	8	0	n/a
In-District Program	10	8	0	0
Home Instruction	0	7	11	0
Out-of-District Program	37	37	0	0