

## **PA ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE RELEASES REPORT ON COMBATTING BULLYING**

HARRISBURG — This National Bullying Prevention Month, the Office of Attorney General is releasing the TeenTALK Report—a resource guide for students, parents, and educators with recommendations for preventing and intervening in bullying. The report summarizes the feedback gathered during the TeenTALK sessions hosted by the Office around the Commonwealth during the 2018-19 school year.

“Bullying is a pervasive issue affecting students across the Commonwealth—one-fifth of Pennsylvania students aged 12-18 are bullied on school property each year, and bullying disproportionately targets students of color, students with disabilities, and members of the LGBTQ community,” said Attorney General Josh Shapiro. “While this is not a new problem, bullying has taken on a new shape and a new intensity since I was in school due to the rise of the internet and social media. It is critical that we listen to the students about what they are experiencing and what support they need, and that we act to ensure everyone feels safe at school.”

The students who participated in the TeenTALKs outlined three focus areas where improvement is needed regarding bullying prevention and mental health services in schools: student mental health services staffing, data reporting gaps, and funding to support bullying prevention, mental health programs and other positive climate initiatives.

Some of the recommendations include expanding mechanisms for students to report school climate and safety concerns, implementing training for staff to learn prevention and intervention techniques, and establishing a consistent policy for investigating reports of bullying, cyberbullying, and harassment.

In January 2019, the Office of Attorney General began operating the Safe2Say Something anonymous reporting system after the Pennsylvania General Assembly established the program in coordination with Sandy Hook Promise. Safe2Say Something empowers students, teachers, school administrators, and others to anonymously report potentially unsafe activities in schools by submitting tips over the phone, online, or through the Safe2Say Something mobile app.

Students who participated in the TeenTALKs praised the program as an excellent asset that allows them to safely and anonymously report concerns. Students reported that they felt that utilizing Safe2Say Something was an appropriate way to bring concerns to adults who could intervene.

The Office of Attorney General held four TeenTALK events with students and administrators from 13 districts representing four counties, including Allegheny, Chester, Dauphin, and Lehigh. Student and faculty representatives also provided input for the TeenTALK Report.

“I’d like to thank the many students and administrators who actively participated in our TeenTALK sessions and in the development of this report,” said General Shapiro. “They gave

voice to the concerns that our students face every day in school, all too often in secret. The recommendations outlined in our TeenTALK Report will help students, parents, and teachers address these concerns and create safer school climates for all students.”

The full report can be read [here](#).

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