Erin's Law: Frequently Asked Questions[+]

I. What is Erin's Law?

Inspired by a survivor of child sexual abuse (CSA) and created with evidence-based practices, Erin's Law is legislation seeking state governments to require schools to:

- Provide age-appropriate sexual abuse prevention education to students,
- Train school personnel on child sexual abuse detection, and
- Inform parents and guardians of child sexual abuse warning signs

Implementation of Erin's Law varies from state to state, but the overall intention is to introduce prevention education programs to help students stay safe.

II. Which states have passed Erin's Law?

Indiana, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia are among the **37 states** that have already passed Erin's Law. Ohio and Kentucky remain outliers regionally in their delay in passing this critical legislation. Curriculum mandated by Erin's Law has spread throughout the nation since first appearing in schools in **2009**.

III. Why is Erin's Law needed in Ohio?

In Ohio, no existing law requires prevention education for our vulnerable K-12 students. This gap in education is especially concerning when we consider that each year in Ohio, over **30,000** children are involved in a substantiated case of child abuse or neglect; of these, **5,000** are related to sexual abuse specifically[1]. The stark reality is that there are far more children suffering sexual abuse in Ohio; only **38%** of child victims of sexual abuse disclose (at any point in their lifetime) the sexual abuse they experience[2]. **This means that over half of child sexual abuse cases go unaddressed.** Fear, when combined with a lack of support and education, can prevent children from coming forward to seek help. However, this is a problem that we can, and must, take action to solve together.

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[1] Source: Ohio Family Violence Prevention Project

[2]London, K., Bruck, M., Ceci, S., & Shuman, D. (2003) Disclosure of child sexual abuse: What does the research tell us about the ways that children tell? Psychology, Public Policy, and Law, 11(1), 194-226.

IV. What are the key education components for K-12 students?

The design of approved prevention education curricula varies from state to state. Most states that passed Erin's Law engaged in a common practice - creating an implementation task force to recommend evidence-based prevention programs to school districts, with input from educators, preventionists, social workers, advocates, and other key stakeholders in the state from education, health, victim services, and child welfare agencies.

An analysis of the curriculums across Erin's Law states demonstrates that the following prevention education topics are frequently recommended program topics implemented in Erin's Law states, divided by age group:

Elementary School	Consent & Respect	Bodily Autonomy & Personal Body Safety	Seeking Help	Emotions, & Boundaries
Middle School	Consent	Healthy & Unhealthy Relationships	Seeking Help	Bullying & Abuse
High School	Communication & Consent	Healthy & Unhealthy Relationships	Seeking Help	Online/Technology Safety

V. How have other states implemented Erin's Law?

Task Forces[3]

Many states' versions of Erin's Law have called for the creation of task forces to study the issue of CSA in their state and make recommendations for implementation. Task forces vary in size and makeup and typically meet for a period of one to three years. During this period of time, members of the task force convene with stakeholders throughout the state, conduct research on evidence-based practices and programs, and draft a report or other form of updated written guidance for schools and lawmakers.

Certain states have chosen to create a permanent statewide, multi-disciplinary task force to continuously engage with local communities and further establish local efforts for prevention (such as Nevada, Vermont, and more). Such task forces may serve as monitoring mechanisms as well by submitting annual reports on prevention programming and implementation progress by each school district and charter school.

Program recommendations

Programs include more than one session per year, provided on an annual basis

Research and best practices in other states have identified that four sessions of prevention education per year are ideal[4]. This allows concepts learned in the program to be reinforced

[3] See Appendix A for examples of task force statutory language.

[4] Davis, M. K., & Gidycz, C. A. (2000). Child sexual abuse prevention programs: a meta-analysis. *Journal of clinical child psychology*, *29*(2), 257–265. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15374424jccp2902_

throughout the school year. These sessions should be held annually to build on instruction from the previous year.

Developmentally appropriate instruction for each grade level

Under Erin's Law, students receive age and developmentally appropriate lessons designed for each grade level. Lessons should be based on evidence-based methods that have been proven to be effective for sexual abuse prevention.

Program delivery options should remain flexible

States have typically offered flexible options for program delivery, which allows a wide range of professionals to assist schools in providing prevention education. In states with a robust prevention education system, Erin's Law task forces **recommend prevention agencies be contracted to provide and develop programs as necessary**. In states with limited resources and without prior planning, administrators, school social workers, community educators, and teachers were responsible for presenting the education modules.

An evaluation component with measurable outcomes

All programs should incorporate evaluation methods into their efforts to prevent child sexual abuse. Different evaluation strategies are best suited to measure an individual program's intended outcomes, and should be informed by the children, families, and communities served. A competent evaluation strategy will measure the effectiveness of different programs to help schools and agencies continuously improve education for students.

Training component for school personnel

All school personnel are recommended to complete annual training modules to develop skills, knowledge, and capabilities related to CSA prevention education. These modules should focus on recognizing and responding to suspected abuse and neglect. Additionally, forming a multi-disciplinary response team to best respond to student disclosures has been highlighted as a best practice.

Services for child abuse victims

Competent mental health services for children who disclose sexual abuse are a crucial need. After implementing Erin's Law, an increase in student sexual abuse disclosures is expected and normal. School districts must be proactive in developing trauma informed reporting procedures, if they do not already exist.

Funding to prevention education

In current Erin's Law states, task forces and school districts have noted that successful implementation goes hand in hand with funding to support prevention efforts. A lack of funding, resources, and commitment hindered progress in Illinois in the three years after the Task Force issued its recommendations to schools[5]. Prevention funding for the State Rape Crisis Fund can contribute to successful implementation, as this will create more capacity for community rape crisis center preventionists to engage with local school districts in lieu of placing the burden solely on teachers and other school personnel.

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[5] Source: 2020 SAFE Task Force Report, Illinois

VI. How will teachers and school personnel be impacted?

Continuing education will be a requirement for school employees, including but not limited to educators, administrators, and service personnel. Adults working with children should have a thorough knowledge of child sexual abuse and be prepared to respond appropriately to disclosures of child sexual abuse.

A comprehensive effort in schools and communities will increase the efficacy of prevention programming. When all adults are familiar and knowledgeable with child safety topics, it helps to better protect children and professionals supporting children and families.

VII. What should parents expect?

Parents, caregivers, and families play a fundamental role in preventing violence and abuse. Erin's Law encourages parent participation to increase awareness of the skills taught in school so that they can reinforce the concepts at home. This helps both parents and children learn important concepts and prepares parents with how they talk to their children about preventing sexual abuse. Parents and guardians can also expect resources to recognize warning signs of child sexual abuse and needed assistance and referrals to support sexually abused children and their families.

Appendix A
State & Territory Statutory Implementation Language

State	Code Provision	Year & Category	Language
Connecticut	Conn. Gen. Stat. Ann. § 17a-101q	2015 Government Agencies and Statewide Sexual Assault Coalition	(a)Not later than July 1, 2015, the Department of Children and Families, in collaboration with the Department of Education and Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services, Inc., or a similar entity, shall identify or develop a state-wide sexual abuse and assault awareness and prevention program for use by local and regional boards of education. Such program shall be implemented in each local and regional school district and shall include: (1) For teachers, instructional modules that may include, but not be limited to, (A) training regarding the prevention and identification of, and response to, child sexual abuse and assault, and (B) resources to further student, teacher and parental awareness regarding child sexual abuse and assault and the prevention of such abuse and assault; …
Guam	Guam P.A. 31-97	2011 Multi-Disciplinary Working Group	Creates a task force on prevention of sexual abuse of children. The task force is to include representatives from the courts, the departments of public health and social services, mental health and substance abuse, education, and law enforcement, the attorney general's office and others. The task force is to gather information about child sexual abuse throughout Guam, make recommendations and create goals for local policy to prevent child sexual abuse, and submit a report on its recommendations to the legislature. The recommendations may include proposals for specific statutory changes and methods to foster cooperation among government of Guam agencies, community-based organizations, and other public and private organizations. The task force may recommend policies such as providing an age-appropriate curriculum for students in prekindergarten through fifth grade, offering training for school personnel on child sexual abuse, providing educational information for parents or guardians on the warning signs of child abuse and providing any needed assistance or referral, counseling and resources to students affected by sexual abuse and educational and emotional support to child victims of abuse to allow them to be successful in school.
Maine	Chapter 162	2012	Whereas, the Task Force on the Prevention of Sexual Abuse of Children is established to create and adopt a policy addressing sexual abuse of children; and

		Multi-Disciplinary Task Force	Whereas, the study must be initiated before the 90-day period expires in order that the study may be completed and a report submitted in time for submission to the next legislative session; and Sec. 6. Duties. Resolved: That the task force shall make recommendations for preventing child sexual abuse. In making those recommendations, the task force shall: 1. Gather information concerning child sexual abuse throughout the State; 2. Receive reports and testimony from individuals, state and local agencies, community-based organizations and other public and private organizations; and 3. Recommend policies to prevent and address sexual abuse of children, including age-appropriate curricula for students in prekindergarten to grade 5; methods for increasing teacher, student and parent awareness of issues regarding sexual abuse of children, including warning signs indicating that a child may be a victim of sexual abuse; actions that a child who is a victim of sexual abuse may take to obtain assistance and intervention; and available counseling options for children affected by sexual abuse; and be it further …
Michigan	Mich. Comp. Laws Ann. § 380.1505	2012 Delegated to pre-existing child sexual abuse task force	"… the policy shall be substantially consistent with the recommendations and guidelines set by the task force on the prevention of sexual abuse of children created under section 12b of the child protection law, 1975 PA 238, MCL 722.632b …" 722.632b Task force on prevention of sexual abuse of children; creation; appointment; qualifications; officer; meetings; recommendations; consultation; compensation; abolishment; child excused from participating in information-gathering efforts. Sec. 12b. (1) The task force on the prevention of sexual abuse of children is created within the department. (2) The governor shall appoint members to the task force in consultation with the department. The appointment of members must reflect the geographic diversity of this state. Members of the task force must include the following:

			(a) Individuals who have experience and expertise in the fields of intervention and prevention of child abuse and neglect, education, or child welfare. (b) A representative from the Michigan coalition to end domestic and sexual violence. (c) A representative from the Michigan domestic and sexual violence prevention and treatment board. (d) A representative from the Michigan chapter of the national children's alliance. (e) An administrator or staff member of a child assessment center. (f) A licensed therapist trained to counsel or treat child sexual abuse victims. (g) A circuit court judge or his or her designee. (h) A school district board member, intermediate school district board member, or public school academy board member. (3) The department director or his or her designee shall serve as the task force's presiding officer. The task force shall meet at the call of the presiding officer. The task force shall make recommendations for reducing child sexual abuse in this state. The task force shall also make recommendations for school policies that address the sexual abuse of children.
Mississippi	2013 SB 2133	2013 Study Committee	SECTION 1. (1) There is created the Erin's Law Study Committee for the purpose of studying the possibility of creating and implementing a curriculum for the prevention of sexual abuse of children in the State of Mississippi. (6) The study committee shall submit a written report setting forth its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature before January 1, 2014, at which time the study committee will be dissolved.
Missouri	MO 160.2100	2011 Multi-Disciplinary Committee	2. The "Task Force on the Prevention of Sexual Abuse of Children" is hereby created to study the issue of sexual abuse of children. The task force shall consist of all of the following members: (1) One member of the general assembly appointed by the president pro tem of the senate; (2) One member of the general assembly appointed by the minority floor leader of the senate; (3) One member of the general assembly appointed by the speaker of the house of representatives; (4) One member of the general assembly appointed by the minority leader of the house of representatives; (5) The director of the department of social services or his or her designee; (6) The commissioner of education or his or her designee;

			(7) The director of the department of health and senior services or his or her designee; (8) The director of the office of prosecution services or his or her designee; (9) A representative representing law enforcement appointed by the governor; (10) Three active teachers employed in Missouri appointed by the governor; (11) A representative of an organization involved in forensic investigation relating to child abuse in this state appointed by the governor; (12) A school superintendent appointed by the governor; (13) A representative of the state domestic violence coalition appointed by the governor; (14) A representative from the juvenile and family court appointed by the governor; (15) A representative from Missouri Network of Child Advocacy Centers appointed by the governor; (16) An at-large member appointed by the governor.
Nevada	Nev. Rev. Stat. § 432B.700 et.seq.	2013 Task Force	Creates the Task Force on the Prevention of Sexual Abuse of Children; authorizes the Task Force to recommend a policy that includes educating persons who are associated with children about the sexual abuse of children, and providing support services to children in this State who may be affected by sexual abuse.
New Hampshire	Statute repealed after conclusion of task force work.	2013 Commission	I. There is established a commission to study sexual abuse prevention education in elementary and secondary schools. III. The commission shall: …