August 9, 2019

School Safety Task Force

It was my pleasure to attend the School Safety Task Force on August 9th 2019, ( the second meeting was September 13th, 2019) and represent the state position on school social workers for NYSSSWA. Of importance at the meeting, was reviewing the last meetings’ recommendations which clearly need to change the definition of some state education language. For example, “Forcible Touching” which needs to keep in mind developmental issues. Often in elementary school certain touching is not related to school safety and is a developmental issue which needs to be addressed on the school and administrative levels. These incidences are not necessarily reportable issues which then skew the index for “Persistently Dangerous Schools” impacting district statistics and cause districts like New York City schools to be placed on lists of “Dangerous Schools”. These statistics are included in State Education reports and after two years give the parents the right to change schools for their children.

Of importance with the 50 or so members of the committee was clamoring for the presence and involvement of more mental health services– social workers, etc. However, most of the safety committee members are state troopers, principals, superintendents, etc. who were not discriminatory about whether the provider was to be a school staff member or a private contracting agency. All they know is they want more mental health presence with their safety plans.

The administrators were also pressing for an additional Superintendent’s Day so they could work with their staff at the beginning of the school year on school safety and have their teachers and all staff be present to work on what to do if an emergency safety issue were to occur.

At the second meeting, there was a discussion on how best to use additional monies which  are available for training staff for school safety. This was a “how best to use the remaining money discussion”.

The third meeting will be in November sometime, a to be announced date as the meeting was scheduled the Friday before Veterans Day and had to be changed. I will be attending that meeting.

Thank you,

Jullie Beatrice, NYSSSWA Board Member