



OREGON LAW COMMISSION

245 WINTER STREET SE
SALEM, OREGON 97301

PHONE 503-370-6973
FAX 503-370-3158

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SB 1092 Work Group:

Notice to Schools

LC 2078

Prepared by
Kristy M. Nielsen
Staff Attorney
Oregon Law Commission

From
The Offices of the Executive Director
Jeffrey C. Dobbins
and
Deputy Director and General Counsel
Wendy J. Johnson

Majority Report
Approved by Oregon Law Commission
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is housed at the Willamette
University College of Law,
which also provides executive,
administrative and research
support for the Commission.*

I. Introductory Statement

This proposed bill modifies SB 1092 (2008)¹ requiring disclosure of information to schools about students involved in the justice system prior to adjudication. The new bill would continue to require notice to schools upon the filing of certain juvenile delinquency petitions or dismissal of petitions where notice was previously filed. The proposal, however, would also require notice of an admission to being within the court's jurisdiction by the youth or adjudication by a juvenile court. The proposal also contains additional provisions protecting the individual rights of students and narrows the list of alleged acts that trigger an automatic notice to schools.

II. History of the Project

SB 1092 was presented to the Legislative Assembly during the special session held in February 2008. The bill was introduced to the Senate on February 4, 2008 and passed by the Legislative Assembly just a few weeks later. Due to the speed of the short session many groups and individuals felt that both the policies contained within the bill as well as the substantive provisions warranted further review and revision. In the final days of the special February session, just prior to passage, a provision was added to the bill requiring the Oregon Law Commission to study policies requiring notice to schools of persons who are youths.² The Law Commission was also directed to report its findings in February of 2009³.

On June 27, 2008 the OLC Program Committee granted general approval to the Commission's existing Juvenile Code Revision Work Group to address SB 1092, and the Legislative Assembly's directive. The Juvenile Code Revision Work Group then formed the SB 1092 Work Group as a sub-work group of the full Juvenile Code Revision work group⁴. The Juvenile Code Revision Work Group reviewed staff's more detailed work

¹ See Appendix 1 for copy of SB 1092 (2008)

² ORS 419A.004 defines "youth" as a person under 18 years of age who is alleged to have committed an act that is a violation, or, if done by an adult would constitute a violation of law or ordinance of the U.S. or a state, county, or city.

³ See Section 16 of SB 1092 (2008).

⁴ Work Group members include the following: Commissioner Mark B. Comstock, Garrett Hemann Robertson PC, as Chair; Morgan Allen, Oregon Department of Education; Nancy Allen, Oregon Department of Human Services; Karen Andall, Oregon Youth Authority; Brian Baker, Juvenile Rights Project; Oregon State Representative Peter Buckley; Thomas Cleary, Multnomah County District Attorney's Office; The Honorable William Horner, Polk County Circuit Court Presiding Judge; Bob Joondeph, Disability Rights Oregon; Christina McMahan, Douglas County Juvenile Dept; Irvin Minten, Oregon Department of Human Services; Ginger Redlinger, Teacher with Oregon City School District; Mary Alice Russell, Superintendent of McMinnville School District; Karen Stenard, juvenile law solo practitioner and Executive Director of Lane County Juvenile Lawyers; John Van Dreal, Psychologist with the Salem-Keizer School District; Janette Williams, Oregon Department of Human Services; and Robin Wright, Gevurtz Menashe Larson & Howe PC. Note: Commissioner Julie McFarlane acted as chair for the first meeting of the work group.

Work Group Advisors include the following: Stacey Ayers, Oregon Department of Human Services; Chuck Bennett, Confederation of Oregon School Administrators; Ann Christian, Oregon Criminal Defense

proposal and recommended limiting the scope of the project to a review and revision of notice to schools regarding youth and youth offenders as they are defined in ORS 419A.004(35), (37). Thus, the project required the review of a limited list of provisions, including SB 1092, ORS 419A.015, 419A.300, 420.048, 420A.122, and 420A.255. The group did not focus attention on persons over 18 or persons charged with crimes under ORS 137.707 (Measure 11) or youths waived to adult court as statutes requiring notice have existed for these persons. The group first met on September 19, 2008 and met a total of six times between September 2008 and January 2009.

III. Statement of the Problem

School violence seems to be increasing and people are looking for ways to prevent such violence and protect students and school staff. One identified problem is that educators reported that they do not have enough information about their students. Educators stated that past notification practices prevented school employees from receiving information about students that may have helped them ensure student safety and provide support for students who are part of the juvenile justice system. In fact, though some statutes were in place requiring notice to schools regarding students involved in the justice system, these notices often were not being sent to schools. Some organizations and individuals believe that educators and school employees need to know more about students' criminal history, including notice of juvenile court petitions (i.e. charged but not adjudicated) as early as possible to ensure safety. However, other organizations and individuals, such as the Juvenile Rights Project, ACLU of Oregon, and Disability Rights Oregon, among others, are concerned about the potential injustice that may result from sharing petition information before the juvenile is adjudicated ("adjudicated" in juvenile court is equivalent to "convicted" in adult court), because no finding of guilt has been made. Additional concerns were expressed about the potential ramifications of such notice, including a labeling effect and disruption of the juvenile's education plan and placement. Additional concern with pre-adjudication notices revolved around the potential for a youth's right against self-incrimination to be compromised. In short, striking the correct balance between public safety on the one hand and protecting the juvenile's rights on the other is a challenge.

Prior to the passage of SB 1092, which went into effect on January 1, 2009, Oregon schools were supposed to be already receiving notice of students who were found within the juvenile court's jurisdiction and who fell within one or more of the following categories⁵: (1) They are on juvenile court probation;⁶ (2) they have been placed on

Lawyers Association; Nancy Cozine, Oregon Judicial Department; Kimberly Dailey, Oregon Judicial Department; Linda Felber, Salem-Keizer School District; Tim Loewen, Director of Yamhill County Juvenile Department; Andrea Meyer, American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon; George Okulitch, The Tressider Company; Jollee Patterson, General Counsel for Portland Public Schools; Lori Sattenspiel, Oregon School Boards Association; Mickey Serice, Oregon Department of Human Services; Tricia Smith, Oregon School Employees Association; Timothy Travis, Timothy Travis Consulting Co.; Laurie Wimmer, Oregon Education Association; and Steve Woodcock, Oregon Department of Education.

⁵ See Appendix 2: School notification statutes summary after SB 1092

⁶ ORS 419A.015

conditional release from DHS custody;⁷ (3) they are under the legal custody of OYA and the student is going to transfer school districts;⁸ or (5) they are about to be released from a youth correctional facility.⁹ These notices were all post-adjudication, meaning that the youth had been formally charged and found by a juvenile court to have committed the alleged act.¹⁰ SB 1092 added a new notice that requires district attorneys or juvenile departments to send pre-adjudication notices to schools within 15 days of a youth making a first appearance before the juvenile court on a petition alleging the commission of certain acts specified within the bill.¹¹

In addition to the potential problems that these notices pose to juveniles' rights, requiring notices could create fiscal and practical problems in Oregon. Sometimes it is difficult to determine which school(s) a student may attend or already attends (e.g. there may be various charter school, private school, and public school options within and outside the school district where the juvenile resides). School districts vary in size and number of schools within a district, and thus ensuring distribution of a notice to the correct school can also be a challenge. District attorneys are charged with determining when notices are required and distributing these notices; this will be one more thing for them to take into consideration when charging juveniles and the requirement may create an administrative burden. Furthermore, follow through with these notices can be a problem as it is up to a school administrator when and to whom to pass on information. If notices are given out too easily, they may overwhelm school administrators and they may not be taken as seriously.

A second identified problem is that transfer students may present a special danger to schools, and schools are not receiving adequate information regarding the violence history of these students. Testimony before legislative committees during the February session included anecdotal information regarding a practice known as "greyhound treatment" whereby students in other states were informed that charges pending in juvenile court would be dropped if they left the school district or the state. The expressed concern was that these kids are ending up in Oregon schools and posing safety threats to students and staff. As a result, SB 1092 included a provision requiring schools to inquire of the previous schools information about transfer students' disciplinary history. Some groups and individuals felt that the provisions as contained within SB 1092 were not written clearly enough to achieve its stated purpose of obtaining information about transfer students and warranted some technical revisions from Legislative Counsel.¹²

⁷ ORS 419A.300

⁸ ORS 420.048

⁹ ORS 420A.122.

¹⁰ Note: Notices are also required under ORS 339.317 when a person under 18 is **charged** with a "measure 11" crime under ORS 137.707 or waived to adult court under ORS 419C.349, 419C.352 or 419C.364. These are the only example of pre-disposition notices being sent to schools prior to SB 1092. Because these individuals do not fit within the definition of "youth" under the Oregon statutes, the Juvenile Code Revision Work Group determined that these notices were outside the Legislature's charge to the Law Commission and thus were not dealt with in substance by the SB 1092 sub-work group.

¹¹ See Section 2(4) of the bill for the complete list of alleged acts triggering notice to schools.

¹² See section 3(3) of SB 1092.

IV. Objective of the Proposal (Section Analysis)

The objective of the proposal is to amend SB 1092 in an attempt to increase school safety while also protecting the rights of juveniles as much as possible. Another objective is to make notices more helpful to schools. Finally, the objective is to make this area of law consistent and clear.

Section 1:

Section 1(1) of the draft contains the definitions of “principal” and “school administrator” as used in the bill. In SB 1092 these definitions were located near the back of the bill; this change was designed to improve clarity for the reader.

Section 1(2) of the bill requires notice to be sent in three situations. The first is when a youth makes a first appearance before the juvenile court on a petition alleging that the youth is within the jurisdiction of the juvenile court under 419C.005.¹³ This is the pre-adjudication notice already required under SB 1092. Notice is also required to the schools when a youth admits to being within the jurisdiction of the juvenile court (similar to pleading guilty in adult court) or is adjudicated by the court (similar to being found guilty in adult court). Throughout the course of the meetings, the work group discovered that existing law had a rather large gap. The law did not require notices to be sent when a youth was actually adjudicated; rather notices were only sent when a youth was put on probation or released from custody. Members of the work group agreed that notices of a finding of adjudication seemed to be the most important to school safety concerns of all the potential notices. Also, in some counties, youths enter into what are called “diversion agreements” or “formal accountability agreements” whereby a youth admits to the offense charged in the petition and then, if the youth complies with various conditions and stays out of trouble for a stated period of time, the case can eventually be dismissed. Members of the group felt that it would be important for schools to receive information relating to such agreements so that school officials were aware of any conditions the youth should be complying with such as no contact orders. Finally, another notice is required if a court finds that the youth is not within the jurisdiction of the court or the petition is dismissed. This is unchanged from the provision in SB 1092. The work group felt that, if pre-adjudication notices were to be required, it was important to retain this provision so that a school has accurate information as the case progresses, and to limit any potential harm that might come from an erroneous notice.

Several work group members expressed concerns about what would be done with the notices once they were sent to the schools and where in the students’ files they would end up. Confidentiality of these notices was something that many were worried about. After some discussion, the work group decided that it was not necessary to establish a rigid protocol that school administrators should be required to follow once the school provided notice. The work group felt that school administrators have experience dealing with sensitive and confidential information and the various school districts or individual

¹³ Note: acts triggering notice can be found in section (7) of the bill.

schools could be trusted to handle these notices appropriately. The general consensus of the group was that the purpose of providing these notices was to empower school administrators to seek additional information from district attorneys or juvenile departments if they feel it is necessary. While some information that the department or district attorney has will likely be confidential, there is no law preventing communication between these entities and the work group felt it important that school administrators be encouraged to communicate with agencies who may know more about the situation whenever they feel appropriate. In addition, under the federal Family Educational and Privacy Rights Act (FERPA),¹⁴ as well as Oregon Administrative Rules¹⁵ these notices qualify as educational records. State and federal regulations mandate some protocol for handling these records. Also, FERPA mandates that students and their parents/guardians have unqualified access to these records, allowing students and parents to monitor the student's educational records and request removal of inaccurate information if necessary.¹⁶

Section 1(3) states who is required to provide the pre-adjudication notices to the school. SB 1092 stated that the district attorney or other person filing the petition under ORS 419C.005 is responsible for giving notice. The draft expands upon this provision to allow for all possible scenarios. The district attorney remains the default provider; however if someone else filed the petition or is prosecuting the case, that person is responsible for sending notice. In addition, if a juvenile department agrees to provide these notices, they are responsible for providing them, regardless of who files or prosecutes the case. This allows for flexibility amongst the counties as juvenile departments and district attorney's offices vary by county.

Section 1(4) describes the content of the notice. The draft retains the contents required by SB 1092 and adds a few additional provisions. The proposal now adds the name and contact information of the attorney for the youth. Also, the draft would require the person providing notice to include any conditions of release or terms of probation and any other conditions imposed by the court. The work group felt that this information would be helpful to schools in conducting safety planning.

Section 1(5) is a new provision. Several members of the work group expressed concerns regarding the youth's constitutional right against self-incrimination and the potential that these notices might trigger discussion between school faculty and the accused student that could elicit incriminating statements. The individuals did not believe that school employees would be interrogating the students; however they felt that students might feel pressured to talk about the incident even in the desire to seem cooperative with the school. One idea proposed was to make any statements made by a student to school faculty while the case was pending inadmissible evidence in court. This proposal was met with significant opposition, and section 1(5) represents a compromise

¹⁴ 20 USC §1232 (2002).

¹⁵ See OAR 581-021-0220 et seq.

¹⁶ Upon review of the draft, the Juvenile Code Revision work group (of which the SB 1092 work group is a sub-work group), requested that a sentence be included in the proposal clearly stating that the notices are to go in the student's educational record to provide for additional clarity.

formed by the work group. A majority of the work group felt that asking school personnel not to discuss the allegation with the student does not prevent adequate safety planning while a case is pending, because the school is still permitted to discuss various conditions that the student may have placed upon him or her as a result of receiving the notice (e.g. telling the student he/she is permitted access to only one approved restroom for the time being, etc.), but school personnel may not discuss the specific charges or incident giving rise to the notice. This section contains three separate messages that should be inserted into the notice based upon the type of notice that is being provided.

The warning in section 1(5)(a) should be provided in the notice when the notice is sent after a petition is filed but no disposition has been entered into on the case. This statement alerts school personnel that the student is innocent until proven guilty, states that the allegation should not be discussed with the student, and informs the recipient that further notice will be given when disposition is entered. The warning in section 1(5)(b) is to be given where a disposition has been ordered by the court. It warns that further proceedings may take place and that the matter should not be discussed with the student. The final statement contained in section 1(5)(c) is given in the notice provided upon dismissal or a finding that the youth is not within the jurisdiction of the court (i.e. he or she is not guilty of committing the offense). This warning states that the notice and any related documents or information in the student's education records should be removed and destroyed. The work group asked that this directive be included to ensure that these notices not follow a student throughout his or her time in school if the student is found to have not committed the alleged act.

Section 1(6) retains the requirement that notices be sent within 15 days of a triggering event (e.g. first appearance or dismissal) and adds states that notice must also be given within 15 days following admission and adjudication.

Section 1(7)¹⁷ describes the acts that, if alleged in the petition, trigger notice to schools. SB 1092 used the phrase "harm or threatened harm."¹⁸ Legislative Counsel suggested changing this to "physical injury or threatened physical injury" to link this language to terminology used in the criminal code. Additionally, the work group agreed that only cases involving serious physical injury should trigger notice, as they pose a more significant risk to school safety and requiring notice to be sent for each and every property crime or assault IV (a misdemeanor with varying degrees of actual harm to the victim) would make these notices too numerous. The work group also agreed to limit automatic notices to felony sex offenses under ORS 181.594(4) and exempt both rape in the third degree (statutory rape) and incest under 163.525 from the automatic notice requirement. Several work group members expressed concern that incest was not a crime that necessarily posed a risk to school safety and felt that its sensitive nature warranted exemption, especially considering the high likelihood that the victim also attended school with the accused. Misdemeanor sex offenses were removed because many members of the work group did not feel that, in general, they posed safety risks to schools and many

¹⁷ Note: the changes made in this section represent a majority, but not consensus, decision by the work group.

¹⁸ See SB 1092 (2008) Section 2(4)(a)

of them encompass consensual sexual contact between minors (e.g. sex between two 15 year-olds).

Further, the group agreed to remove animal crimes (animal abuse in any degree and sexual assault of an animal) from the list. A majority of the work group felt that these crimes, though they may be indicative of psychological conditions, did not directly relate to the physical safety of school staff and students, but rather identified “problem children.” The work group also voted to remove crimes involving the delivery or manufacture of alcohol or drugs from the mandatory notice list. A member of the work group representing school administration stated that the biggest concern with this type of behavior would be if the student was conducting this on school property, which the school would already know about without receiving notice from the district attorney or juvenile department.¹⁹

Despite significantly limiting the list of acts triggering notice, the work group also felt that not all situations could be accounted for on a presumptive list and that circumstances in other cases could also warrant notice being given to schools. Because of this, the work group voted to include a catchall provision (section 1(7)(b)) to allow the judge to require notice to schools if the judge feels providing notice would be necessary to safeguard the safety of the school. This would allow for notice to be given in any case, regardless of the alleged offense, if the judge felt that the school should be notified.

Section 2:

Sections 2(1) and (2) slightly modify the definitions section found in Section 3 of SB 1092. “School subcontractor” is now called “school personnel.” Legislative Counsel made this change for clarity and the work group had no objection to this change. The removal of the term “youth” from this section also fixes a legal problem contained within SB 1092 regarding transfer students. “Youth” is also a legal term of art to be avoided in the education chapters as well.

SB 1092 seems to require school administrators to take action whenever a student transfers to a school within Oregon from out of state. While this is not an act requiring “notice” to schools, this is a significant part of the new law’s requirements. The problem of teachers having little or no information about out of state transfers was brought up repeatedly during testimony for this bill. Section 3 of the original bill required school administrators to contact the youth’s former school and request information regarding the youth’s history of engaging in activity likely to place the safety of the school’s students or staff at risk, and anything requiring the arrangement of appropriate counseling or education for the youth. Early on, the work group identified an issue with the use of the term “youth” in Section 3 of SB 1092. Under Oregon law, “youth” is a legal term, defined as a person under 18 years of age who is alleged to have committed an act that is a violation, or, if done by an adult would constitute a violation of law or ordinance of the

¹⁹ Some members of the work group representing educators felt that the list of crimes from SB 1092 should not be changed. A majority of the work group felt that the opt-in provision was adequate to ensure that particularly concerning allegations would be noticed to schools if the circumstances warranted such notice.

U.S. or a state, county, or city. By using the term “youth” in this context, there will hardly ever be a situation where an administrator will be required to seek information on an out of state transfer, since the administrator must first know whether the student is a “youth” before he or she may ask for the information. In order to know whether the student is a “youth,” the administrator must have information regarding prior alleged “criminal” acts committed by the student, which he or she would not have without first receiving the background information on the student. Work Group members who were involved in passing the bill stated that this was not the intention of the bill’s proponents; rather the intent was that information would be sought in the case of all out of state transfers of children generally. The work group identified this section as one requiring some modification and Legislative Counsel proposed changing all references to “youth” to “student” or “person who is the subject of the notice.”

Section 2(3) preserves the requirement that school administrators make inquiries into the disciplinary histories of students transferring into Oregon schools from out of state. The only change is that this inquiry must now be made in concurrence with the request for education records as currently required by ORS 326.575. The work group felt that this would be the logical time to make the inquiry and would help to streamline the process. As stated before, these notices qualify as part of the student’s education record under state and federal law.

Section 2(3) also purports to slightly modify language found in SB 1092. Sections 3(2) and 3(3) of SB 1092 each contained provisions requiring the school administrator to pass along information to necessary school personnel. Section 3(2) stated that the information should be given to “school employees...who the school administrator determines needs the information” while section 3(3) states “school employees...who needs the information.” The work group was confused why a separate standard would be used in the two scenarios and suggested that it be amended so identical standards applied to both the sharing of information contained within the notices as well as information obtained regarding transfer students. The language from section 3(2) was chosen because it authorizes the school administrator to make the determination as to who needs the information.

Sections 2(4)-(5) include no substantive changes from SB 1092; rather all changes are tied to the new definitions mentioned above.

Section 2(6) contains a statement that any placement procedures or decisions under this bill regarding a person with disabilities must comply with the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act. Since the information contained in these notices may be used for arranging counseling and educational placement of students, some work group members expressed concerns about how this might affect a student with disabilities who has an Individual Education Plan (IEP). Many felt that this statement would be necessary to remind school staff to check with any existing IEPs when making placement decisions.

Sections 3-8:

These sections do not contain any substantive modifications to SB 1092. Any additions or deletions are a result of previously-mentioned changes to definitions or other amendments.

Section 9:

Section 9 is the emergency clause section which will allow the new bill to go into effect upon passage. (Note: SB 1092 became effective January 1, 2009). Due to the identified problems with SB 1092, it is important to retain an emergency clause rather than wait until January 2010 as an effective date.

V. Suggestions Not Included in the Draft

When examining the broader issue of school safety, many work group members questioned whether notices would be the proper means for preventing school incidents, planning for safety, and generally facilitating communication between law enforcement agencies, juvenile departments, district attorneys, mental health specialists, and school districts. John Van Dreal, school psychologist with the Salem-Keizer School District and member of the Oregon Law Commission SB 1092 work group gave a presentation to the work group on a student threat assessment program that the Salem-Keizer School District pioneered and has been using since 1998, called the Mid-Valley Student Threat Assessment Team. This model utilizes threat assessment teams composed of representatives from the school district, law enforcement, mental health agencies, juvenile justice, Oregon Youth Authority, Willamette Education Service District, and others. The goal of these teams is to assess threats of potentially harmful or lethal behavior and determine the level of concern and action required to effectively deal with these threats in schools. Mr. Van Dreal explained that the system is based on situations, rather than individuals, which helps improve safety and helps prevent stigmatizing students as “dangerous.”

Mr. Van Dreal stated that one key to the success of these threat assessment teams is the open communication between all agencies involved. He explained that there is a constant sharing of information between law enforcement and the schools. When information on a possible threat comes in (which might be in the form of a paper notice such as those required under SB 1092), the administrator and counselor or law enforcement representative in the school then determine if that situation necessitates a Level 1 screening. After the initial Level 1 screening, if the reviewers determine that additional screening is warranted, the case moves to a Level 2 screening, which is more formal in nature.

The Mid-Valley Student Threat Assessment Team (STAT) system has served as a model for many other school districts around the state and elsewhere. Mr. Van Dreal reported that the system may be modified to fit individual districts’ needs and budgets, and that STAT principles are currently being utilized by the Willamette Education

Service District in the rural school districts of Marion County as well as throughout Polk and Yamhill counties. The system has also been established in the cities of Albany and Corvallis and is currently being implemented by Beaverton School District, the Northwest Education Service District and others throughout the state. Several Washington school districts have also adopted the system or are in the process of doing so. Unfortunately, using such a system is not completely without cost to the various agencies involved and the school districts, especially insofar as it requires representatives from all agencies to set aside man hours to devote to keeping the system going. Mr. Van Dreal stated, however, that the system can be adopted in ways that make it less expensive to implement (i.e. it can be tailored to meet the individual needs and resources available to the school district). It was noted that much of the cost is not on schools, but on the other involved agencies, and the actual cost of such a program is difficult, if not impossible, to assess.

The work group, mindful of the current economic climate in which the state finds itself, ultimately determined that it would not be prudent to mandate that all school districts adopt a student threat assessment program at this time. A majority of the work group would, however, suggest that the Legislative Assembly look further into the model and consider adopting some of its principles if it ever chooses to examine the issue of school safety in a broader context.²⁰ While the Salem-Keizer model may not be perfect, its primary goal is facilitating cross-agency communication regarding potential threats to schools and everyone on the work group agreed that this was important.

VI. Conclusion

The proposed bill should be adopted in order to clarify and improve upon the framework established in SB 1092 requiring disclosure of information to schools of students involved in the justice system. Upon close analysis of the bill as passed in February 2008, it became clear that the version as passed contained several provisions that were unworkable, that posed many concerns for the individual rights of children, and did not actually achieve all of the stated objectives. The opinion of the work group is that the proposed bill represents a practical compromise to improve school notices and hopefully safety while protecting the constitutional rights of students, all while having as minimal fiscal impact as possible.

²⁰ One work group member opposed this suggestion.