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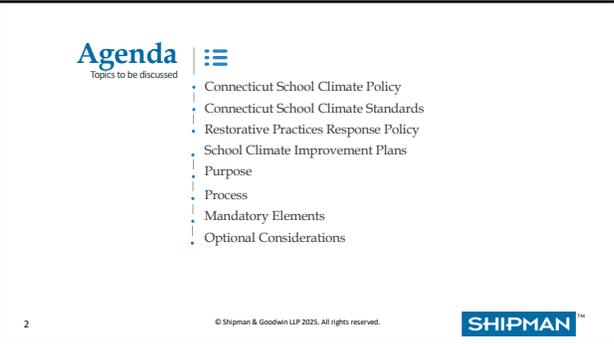
## School Climate Legal and Policy Update: From Statute to Support

Presented by:  
Jessica Ritter and Dori Page Antonetti

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Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence Virtual Conference:  
Improving School Climate with Emotional Intelligence

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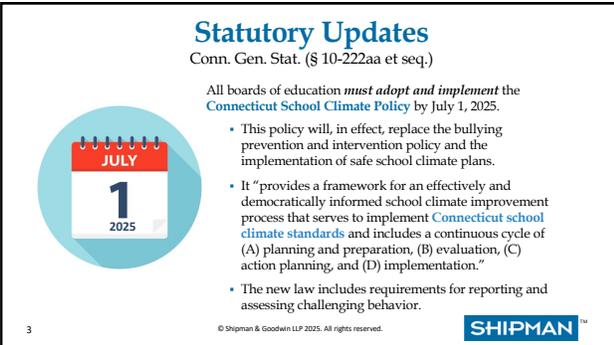
## Agenda

Topics to be discussed

- Connecticut School Climate Policy
- Connecticut School Climate Standards
- Restorative Practices Response Policy
- School Climate Improvement Plans
- Purpose
- Process
- Mandatory Elements
- Optional Considerations

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## Statutory Updates

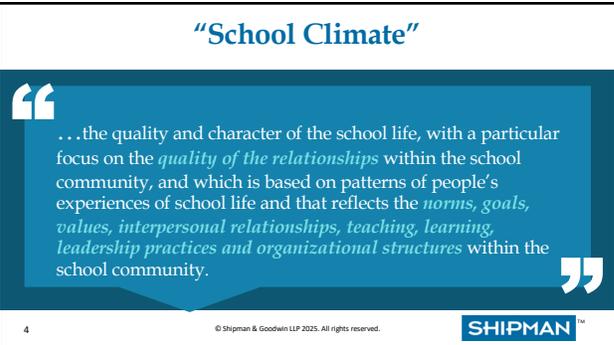
Conn. Gen. Stat. (§ 10-222aa et seq.)

All boards of education **must adopt and implement the Connecticut School Climate Policy** by July 1, 2025.

- This policy will, in effect, replace the bullying prevention and intervention policy and the implementation of safe school climate plans.
- It “provides a framework for an effectively and democratically informed school climate improvement process that serves to implement **Connecticut school climate standards** and includes a continuous cycle of (A) planning and preparation, (B) evaluation, (C) action planning, and (D) implementation.”
- The new law includes requirements for reporting and assessing challenging behavior.

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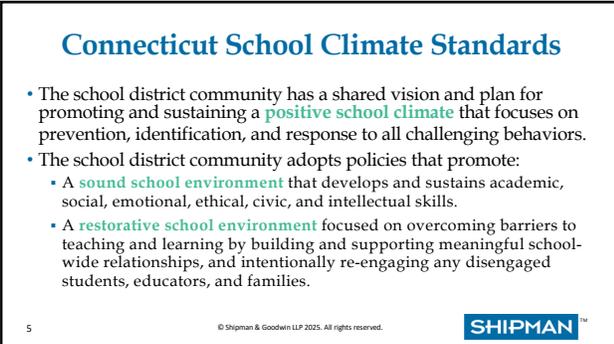


## “School Climate”

“... the quality and character of the school life, with a particular focus on the *quality of the relationships* within the school community, and which is based on patterns of people’s experiences of school life and that reflects the *norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching, learning, leadership practices and organizational structures* within the school community.”

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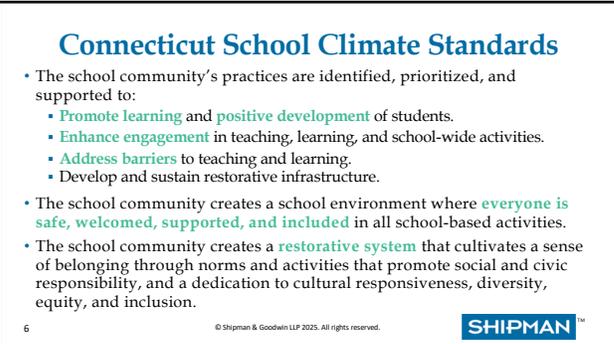


## Connecticut School Climate Standards

- The school district community has a shared vision and plan for promoting and sustaining a **positive school climate** that focuses on prevention, identification, and response to all challenging behaviors.
- The school district community adopts policies that promote:
  - A **sound school environment** that develops and sustains academic, social, emotional, ethical, civic, and intellectual skills.
  - A **restorative school environment** focused on overcoming barriers to teaching and learning by building and supporting meaningful school-wide relationships, and intentionally re-engaging any disengaged students, educators, and families.

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## Connecticut School Climate Standards

- The school community’s practices are identified, prioritized, and supported to:
  - Promote learning** and **positive development** of students.
  - Enhance engagement** in teaching, learning, and school-wide activities.
  - Address barriers** to teaching and learning.
  - Develop and sustain restorative infrastructure.
- The school community creates a school environment where **everyone is safe, welcomed, supported, and included** in all school-based activities.
- The school community creates a **restorative system** that cultivates a sense of belonging through norms and activities that promote social and civic responsibility, and a dedication to cultural responsiveness, diversity, equity, and inclusion.

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### Statutory Updates

Conn. Gen. Stat. (§ 10-222aa et seq.)



All boards of education must adopt a Restorative Practices Response Policy by July 1, 2025.

- The policy is to be implemented by school employees for incidents of challenging behavior or student conflict that is nonviolent and does not constitute a crime.

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### “Challenging Behavior”

“...behavior that negatively impacts school climate or interferes, or is at risk of interfering, with the learning or safety of a student or the safety of a school employee.”

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### “Bullying”

“...unwanted and aggressive behavior among children in grades kindergarten to twelve, inclusive, that involves a real or perceived power imbalance.”

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### “Restorative Practices”

“...evidence and research-based system-level practices that focus on (A) building high-quality, constructive relationships among the school community, (B) holding each student accountable for any challenging behavior, and (C) ensuring each such student has a role in repairing relationships and reintegrating into the school community.”

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### School Climate Improvement Plan



- Requirements are laid out in Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-222hh.
- PURPOSE:** Must be used in the prevention, identification, and response to challenging behavior.

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### School Climate Improvement Plan: Timeline

- Annually**
  - On or before December 31, the Plan must be updated and submitted to the School Climate Coordinator for review and approval.
- Upon Approval**
  - Plan must be made available to members of the school community in written or electronic form.
- Twice Per School Year**
  - School Climate Committee must hold meetings to engage the school community in the implementation of the Plan.

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### School Climate Improvement Plan

#### Who develops it?

- Each school based on the unique needs of that building.
- Must be developed by each school climate specialist, in collaboration with the district's school climate coordinator.

#### What must be taken into consideration?

- Results of the school climate survey,
- Recommendations from the school climate committee, and
- Any other data deemed relevant by the climate specialist and climate coordinator.

#### What does it have to include?

- Must be aligned with Connecticut School Climate Standards, and
- Must include protocols and supports to enhance classroom safety and address challenging behavior.

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### School Climate Improvement Plan – Required Protocols and Supports



- Plan must include **protocols and supports** to enhance classroom safety and address challenging behavior.
- Plan must **specify**, at a minimum:
  - The contact information of designated administrators for notification of incidents
  - Processes for assessing the facts, severity, and intentionality of reported incidents

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### School Climate Improvement Plan – Required Protocols and Supports



- Plan must include **designated locations** for temporarily removed students, and
- The **supports students may receive** at those locations, including but not limited to:
  - Intervention from a trained school employee,
  - Therapeutic resources,
  - Available mental health supports,
  - Instructional materials and technology, or
  - Other resources to address students' temporary needs.

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### School Climate Improvement Plan – Required Protocols and Supports



- Plan must include ways to:
  - Address challenging behavior,
  - Enhance resiliency,
  - Increase the use of de-escalation techniques, and
  - Improve social and emotional skills.
- These may include
  - Use of training,
  - Therapeutic mental health supports,
  - Restorative practices, and
  - Trauma-informed instructional strategies.

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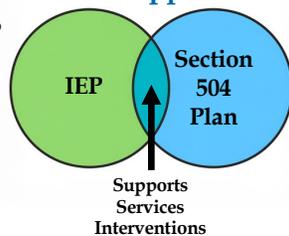
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### School Climate Improvement Plan – Required Protocols and Supports

- Plan must include safeguards to ensure that any supports, services, or interventions provided to any student who receives special education or accommodation for a disability **comply with such student's IEP or Section 504 plan.**



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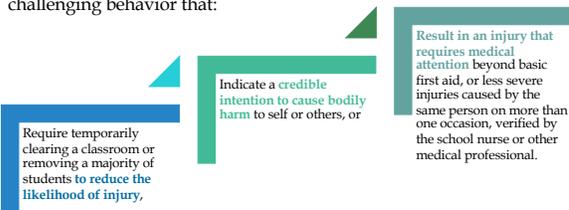
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### School Climate Improvement Plan – Required Protocols and Supports

Tiered responses, based on level of impact or frequency, to incidents of challenging behavior that:



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### Tiered Responses

Tiered responses must include the following:

- ✓ For a **single incident**, the school principal must notify the parents or guardians of each student involved in a manner that complies with FERPA.
- ✓ For a **subsequent incident**, the school principal must invite the parents or guardians of each student involved in such incident to a meeting, to discuss the specific supports or interventions for their student, including, but not limited to, restorative practices.
- ✓ For **multiple subsequent incidents or a single incident that causes severe harm**, the school principal must provide notice to the parents or guardians of each student involved in such incident of other resources for supports and interventions, including the 2-1-1 Infoline program, services or programs available through the Behavioral Health Partnership, or other resources for professional services, support or crisis intervention.

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### Tiered Responses

**Meeting**

Within 2 days, a meeting must occur between an administrator and the school employee who witnessed the incident.

**Purpose**

The meeting's purpose is to **discuss supports and interventions** to address the needs of students and school employees.

**Student Considerations**

If the student receives **special education** or is eligible for a 504 plan, the supports and interventions will be determined by the PPT or Section 504 team, which will be notified no later than two days of the incident.

**Teacher Considerations**

The process by which a teacher may request a behavior intervention meeting.

Plan must prohibit discrimination or retaliation against any person who reports or assists in the investigation of an incident requiring tiered response.

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### School Climate Improvement Plan - Required Protocols and Supports

- Requirement that the Superintendent must submit a report, at least annually, to the Board regarding:
  - The **number of incidents** of challenging behavior that require tiered responses.
  - The **grade level** of each student involved in such incidents.
  - The **supports, services or interventions** provided in response to such incidents to address the needs of students and school employees.
- Such report shall be produced in a manner that complies with FERPA and the Connecticut State Department of Education's data suppression guidelines.

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### School Climate Improvement Plan

- *May* incorporate the **school climate improvement plan template** developed by the Social and Emotional Learning and School Climate Advisory Collaborative
- Includes a **School Climate Rubric** for the School Climate Committee to assess the quality of school climate as related to Connecticut School Climate Standards.
- Once that assessment is made, the **School Climate Template** can be used to review and record, as to each standard:
  - Current school status (informed by data)
  - Areas needing improvement
  - Identified strategies to realize improvement
  - Measurement and documentation options for determining improvement
  - Timeline for reaching improvement goals

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## Questions?

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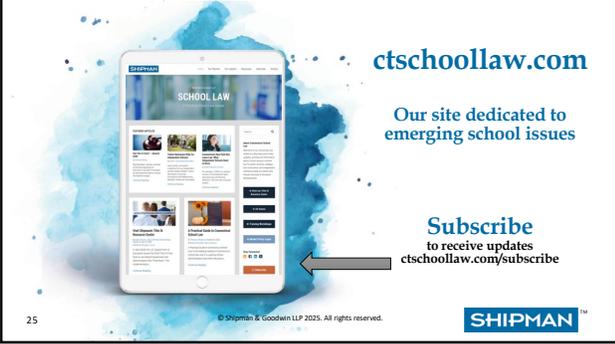
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