

# Trauma-Sensitive Schools



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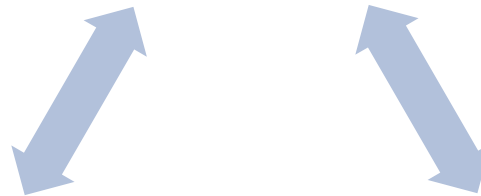
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**HARVARD  
LAW SCHOOL**

Ensure that children traumatized by exposure to violence and other adverse childhood experiences succeed in school.

Policy



Families



Schools

[www.traumasensitiveschools.org](http://www.traumasensitiveschools.org)

## Helping Traumatized Children Learn

*supportive school environments  
for children traumatized by family violence*

A Report and Policy Agenda



**Massachusetts Advocates for Children:** Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative

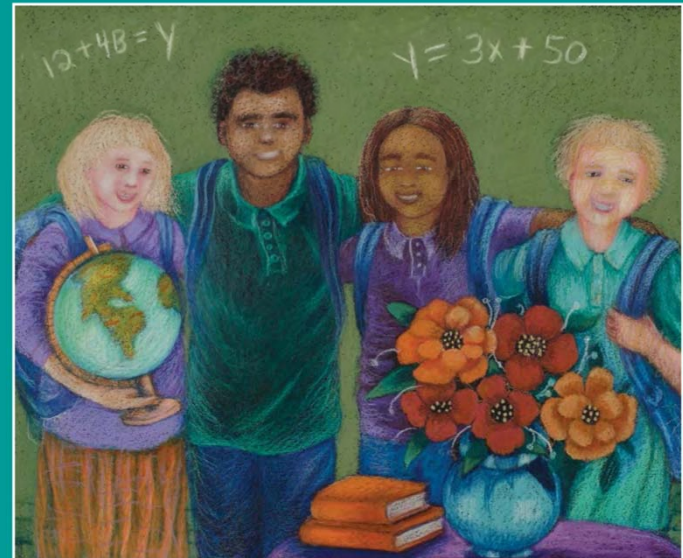
*In collaboration with The Hale and Dorr Legal Services Center of Harvard Law School  
and The Task Force on Children Affected by Domestic Violence*

## Helping Traumatized Children Learn

2

*safe, supportive learning environments that benefit all children*

Creating and Advocating for  
Trauma-Sensitive Schools



**Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative:**

a partnership of Massachusetts Advocates for Children and Harvard Law School

# 5 Core Ideas

The Problem

The Solution

1

Many students have had traumatic experiences.

2

Trauma can impact learning, behavior and relationships at school.

3

Trauma-sensitive schools help children feel safe so they can learn.

4

5

**3** Trauma-sensitive schools help children feel safe so they can learn.

## Definition

A trauma-sensitive school is one in which all students feel safe, welcomed, and supported and where addressing trauma's impact on learning on a school-wide basis is at the center of its educational mission.

Leadership and staff  
**share an understanding**  
of trauma's impact on  
learning and the need for  
a whole-school approach

The school  
**supports all students to feel safe**  
physically, socially,  
emotionally and  
academically

The school addresses  
students' needs in  
**holistic ways,**  
including their  
relationships, self-  
regulation, academic  
competence, and  
physical and emotional  
well-being

The school explicitly  
**connects students to the school community**  
and provides multiple  
opportunities to practice  
skills

The school  
**embraces teamwork**  
and staff share  
responsibility for all  
students

Leadership and staff  
**anticipate and adapt**  
to the ever-changing  
needs of students

# 5 Core Ideas

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The Solution

How We Get There

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Trauma-sensitive schools help children feel safe so they can learn.

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Trauma sensitivity requires a whole-school effort.

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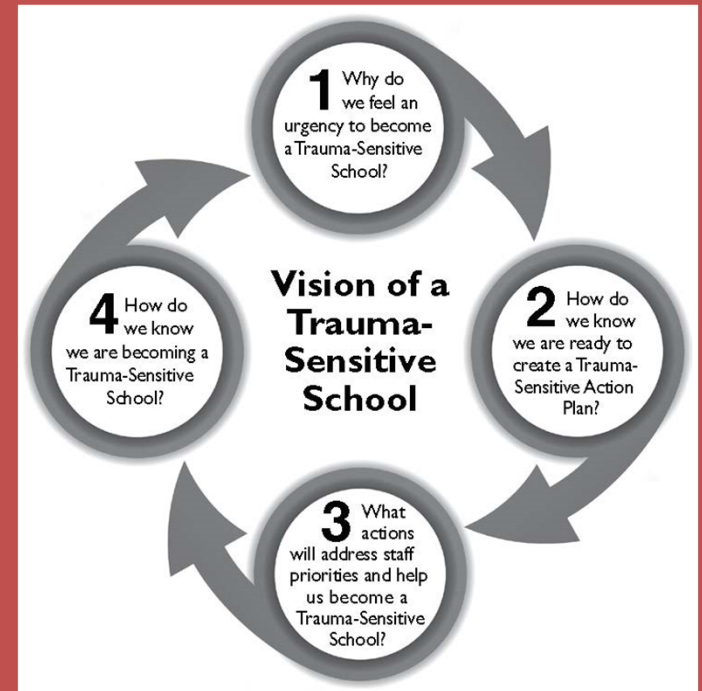
## Definition

A trauma-sensitive school is one in which all students feel safe, welcomed, and supported and where addressing trauma's impact on learning on a school-wide basis is at the center of its educational mission.



Educators need a **Process** to help them integrate trauma sensitivity into the educational mission of their school.

Inquiry-based process to address educators' concerns and design locally tailored solutions.



Educators need a **Framework** to help them weave trauma sensitivity throughout all the **operations** of the school.

I

Leadership

II

Professional development

III

Access to resources and services

IV

Academic and nonacademic strategies

V

Policies, procedures, and protocols

VI

Collaboration with families

# 5 Core Ideas

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Helping traumatized children learn should be a major focus of education reform.

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Helping traumatized children learn should be a major focus of education reform.

What role can law  
and policy play in  
**setting the conditions**  
that allow for  
good holistic practice?

School operations drive  
policy

Locally-tailored solutions

Multiple remedies

## Guiding Principles

Start with “the choir”

Align multiple  
mandates/initiatives

Involve all stakeholders

# The Safe and Supportive Schools Framework Statute



August 13, 2014

**MGL c. 69, § 1P**

# What does the law do?

## Defines a safe and supportive school

“Safe and supportive schools” shall mean schools that foster a safe, positive, healthy and inclusive whole-school learning environment that

(i) enables students to develop positive relationships with adults and peers, regulate their emotions and behavior, achieve academic and non-academic success in school and maintain physical and psychological health and well-being; and

(ii) integrates services and aligns initiatives that promote students’ behavioral health, including social and emotional learning, bullying prevention, trauma sensitivity, dropout prevention, truancy reduction, children’s mental health, foster care and homeless youth education, inclusion of students with disabilities, positive behavioral approaches that reduce suspensions and expulsions and other similar initiatives.

# What does the law do?

**Provides tools and a process to help schools create safe and supportive whole-school environments**

- Safe and Supportive Schools Framework and online Self-Assessment Tool
- School committees can vote to require their schools to create and implement action plans using the Framework and Self-Assessment Tool, and schools shall incorporate these action plans into their legally required School Improvement Plans.
- Inclusive process – School Councils or an alternative group approved by the Superintendent and representing a cross-section of the community



# What does the law do?

**Provides a statewide infrastructure to support schools**

- Technical assistance to schools on using the Self-Assessment Tool and developing action plans, and to districts on coordinating with community service providers and developing strategies to facilitate district-wide implementation
- State and regional conferences to develop and spread a community of practice across the Commonwealth
- Establish a grant program through which grantees shall pilot and share an effective process for developing and implementing action plans.
- Maintain a website that includes the Framework, the Self-Assessment Tool, best practices, model protocols and other information related to the implementation.

# What does the law do?

## **Establishes a statewide Safe and Supportive Schools Commission**

- (i) Investigate and make recommendations on updating, improving and refining the Framework and the Self-Assessment Tool.
- (ii) Identify strategies for increasing schools' capacity to carry out the administrative functions necessary for implementation.
- (iii) Propose steps for improving schools' access to clinically, culturally and linguistically appropriate services.
- (iv) Identify and recommend evidence-based training programs and professional development.
- (v) Identify federal funding sources that can be leveraged to support statewide implementation.
- (vi) Develop recommendations on best practices for collaboration with families.
- (vii) Examine and recommend model approaches for integrating school action plans with school improvement plans.

# Join the Movement!



[traumasensitiveschools.org](http://traumasensitiveschools.org)



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Trauma Sensitive Schools



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#traumasensitiveschools