



## Ensuring Success in School Initiative

The Ensuring Success in School Initiative promotes successful school completion among children and youth who are parents, expectant parents, or survivors of domestic or sexual violence.

### The Problem

With a growing drop-out/push-out crisis in Illinois, the Initiative focuses on contributing factors to this crisis that receive insufficient attention and that disproportionately, although by no means exclusively, impact girls and young women.

### The History

In 2003, the Shriver Center brought together advocates, educators, social workers and others to discuss, research and strategize around this problem. The decision was made that this statewide problem needed a statewide solution. As a result, the Ensuring Success in School Act (ESSA) was introduced in the Illinois General Assembly in 2005. The bill addressed issues such as confidentiality, accommodations (e.g., for student safety), suspension and expulsion proceedings, home instruction, school transfers, excused absences, and the need for specially trained personnel to act as the “go to” person for both students and school personnel. Although it did not pass that year, the introduction of the bill led to greater awareness of the issues and fruitful conversations with state legislators, representatives of school districts, school administrators, school social workers, and teachers unions.

Another ESSA bill was introduced in 2007. The bill that passed that year has two provisions. First, it created the Ensuring Success in School Task Force. Task Force duties include an examination of the barriers to school attendance, safety and completion, and the identification of effective policies, protocols and programs. The Task Force held public hearings in Quincy, Elgin, Springfield, Mt. Vernon and Chicago. Those who presented oral and written testimony included students, their parents, advocates, and educators. A report to the Illinois General Assembly of the findings and recommendations is currently in the drafting stage. Second, the bill mandates training for teachers and other school personnel. At minimum, school personnel must be trained to understand, provide information and referrals, and address issues pertaining to students who are parents, expectant parents, or survivors of domestic or sexual violence.

### Next Steps

The next phase of the Initiative is to develop a strategic action plan based on the findings and recommendations in the Task Force’s report, and the development of a curriculum for the required training. If you are interested in participating in this effort, please contact Wendy Pollack, director of the Women’s Law and Policy Project of the Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law, at 312-368-3303 or [wendypollack@povertylaw.org](mailto:wendypollack@povertylaw.org).

The goal of the Ensuring Success in School Initiative is that elementary and secondary students, including out-of-school youth, who are parents, expectant parents, or survivors of domestic or sexual violence stay in school, stay safe while in school, and successfully complete their education.