



WomanView

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Ensuring Success in School Act and Safe Homes Act Amendments Are Now Illinois Law

The Ensuring Success in School Act (ESSA) (House Bill 1330) and amendments to the Safe Homes Act (SHA) (Senate Bill 534) were signed by Gov. Rod Blagojevich and are now Illinois law.

Ensuring Success in School Act

The focus of ESSA is to ensure that children and youths who are parents, expectant parents, or victims of domestic or sexual violence stay in school, stay safe while in school, and complete their education.

The law has two main provisions. The first creates the Ensuring Success in School Task Force to develop policies, procedures, and protocols to be implemented by school districts. The task force will accomplish the following:

- Conduct a thorough examination of the barriers to school attendance, safety, and completion of school.
- Conduct discovery involving relevant research, best practices, and policy, including expert testimony, in Illinois and elsewhere.
- Conduct meetings and hearings around the state to ensure maximum participation by local schools and advocates as well as students and their parents.
- Report to the Illinois General Assembly on findings, recommendations, and an implementation plan.

The second provision requires a biannual in-service training for school personnel on the needs of students who are expectant or parenting youths or victims of domestic or sexual violence.

The ESSA Task Force will afford us a critical opportunity to collect data, narratives, and model policies and determine the policies, procedures, and protocols to be implemented in Illinois elementary and secondary schools and to inform future legislation. The Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law's Women's Law and Policy Project (WLPP) is leading a statewide coalition to help the ESSA Task Force update obsolete school policies, create new benchmarks for progress, and ultimately ensure success in school. If you would like to join the Illinois ESSA Coalition so that you may contribute to and keep informed of the progress of the ESSA Task Force, contact Wendy Pollack, director of the WLPP, at wendypollack@povertylaw.org.

Amendments to the Safe Homes Act

The amendments to the SHA expand the coverage provided to domestic and sexual violence victims who live in rental housing. Effective beginning last January, the initial version of the SHA gave victims and their household members a legal basis to end their lease early or obtain an emergency lock change. With the amendments set forth in the new law, domestic and sexual violence victims who have an oral lease may now use the lock-change provision as long as they have a court order granting them exclusive possession of the premises. The amendments also require of both landlords and tenants a good-faith effort to furnish a new set of keys to the other party within 48 hours of a lock change.

If you are interested in distributing materials to your clients or partner organizations, or if you would like to receive training on the Safe Homes Act in Illinois, please contact Alexis Hamilton at 312-263-3830 ext. 274 or alexishamilton@povertylaw.org.

For more information contact Wendy Pollack, director of the Women's Law & Policy Project at the Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law, at 312-263-3830 ext. 238 or wendypollack@povertylaw.org.

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