

# TRAUMA IMPACT RULE

FORMERLY HB855

FOR GEORGIA  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## About the Trauma Impact Rule

FORMERLY HB855

In 2020, the Georgia General Assembly passed a law which requires local schools to identify any student in foster care and evaluate potential impacts of trauma. Specifically, schools are required to immediately and deliberately examine whether trauma adversely impacts that student's educational outcomes, including both academic performance and classroom behavior.

In this context, trauma is defined as the exposure of a foster care student, as a witness or direct participant, to one or more traumatic events or situations.

Importantly, the law does not require (or advise) schools to perform a trauma assessment on the student; rather, schools may utilize existing information to comply with the law. The school administrator should establish a policy that outlines the responsibilities of applicable school personnel pursuant to the law. Ultimately, the Local Education Agencies ("LEAs") are responsible for initiating and implementing the process required by the law.

### Rule Summary

- Law passed as Georgia House Bill 855 in 2020.
- Requires local schools to identify students in foster care and evaluate potential impacts of trauma.
- Schools may utilize existing information to comply with the law and are not required to perform an assessment.
- Schools are responsible for initiating and implementing the process.

# Steps for Schools

## Steps Overview:

- 1 Implement and maintain a system to identify enrolled students in foster care.
- 2 Collaborate with student case management
- 3 Conduct an education impact screening of the student
- 4 Based on the impact screening, develop a plan of support with the local education agency.

## Step 1:

### Maintain a System to Identify Enrolled Students in Care

- Regularly monitor the State Longitudinal Data System (“SLDS”) Operation Tab – Foster Report to identify enrolled students.
- When learning of a student in foster care who is not listed in the SLDS, schools should flag the student in the system to alert relevant Local Education Agencies (“LEAs”).
- Develop contacts and communicate regularly with LEAs like the Georgia Department of Education (“GaDOE”) and the Georgia Division of Family & Children Services (“DFCS”).

## Step 2:

### Collaborate with Student Case Management

- Collaborate with LEAs who may have existing information relevant to the student. Collaboration with LEAs lessens duplication of efforts and facilitates more accurate screening results. For example, contact the last school where the student was previously enrolled for school records and documentation. Examples of helpful documents that schools may seek from LEAs include:
  - Previously conducted educational impact screener
  - Trauma-Informed Education Support (“TIES”) plan
  - Current psychological or other evaluations
  - Student academic, attendance, and disciplinary records.
- Collaborate with the student’s DFCS foster care case manager and the DFCS Regional Educational Support Monitor. In preparation for the screening, schools may also consider collaborating with other LEA staff members, like the student’s previous or current teachers.



## Step 3:

### Conduct a Screening of the Student

- An education impact *screening* is a component of an overall trauma *assessment*. Formal trauma assessments may traumatize or retraumatize the student and therefore should be conducted by trained medical providers, not LEA personnel.
- Screening should be done as soon as practicable, but no later than one month following the student's enrollment in the school. An immediate screening reduces the risk of the child displaying behavioral and disciplinary problems, as potential issues will have already been addressed during the initial screening.
- This screening should be holistic and consist of an evaluation of all of the previously gathered information about the student from several different sources, including the student's past school district, and representatives from DFCS and the GaDOE.
- If a school chooses to conduct an educational impact screening, rather than a screening for trauma, then consent from DFCS is required.
- An example of questions to include in an impact screener is to the right.

### Example of Questions to Include in an Impact Screener:

1. Student's name
2. Student's current grade level
3. Student's current teacher
4. Please describe the student's learning style and needs.
5. Please describe the student's mental and emotional needs / wellbeing.
6. Please describe the characteristics the student needs in a teacher.
7. Has the enrolling adult been changed?
8. Is transportation needed? If so, has a transportation request been submitted?
9. List the student's strengths / current support (in school and outside of school).
10. What are the concerns of exposure to trauma impacting the student's learning and behaviors?
11. What academic supports are currently in place?
12. Please provide any additional information you would like to provide regarding the child.
13. List of preexisting records.
14. Current diagnoses.
15. Known or suspected impacts of trauma on academic or behavioral performance.

*\*Pursuant to OCGA § 20-2-152.2, school systems should consider developing a similar screener. Schools should circulate the screener and request that appropriate school officials, collaborating agencies, and other appropriate stakeholders complete the screener and disclose relevant information about the student needed for the assessment.*

## Step 4:

### Develop LEA Plan of Support Based on Impact Screening

- Schools should convene a team to review the results of the screener. Schools should consult existing support systems and representatives from an existing Individual Education Program (“IEP”), 504 Plan, or Behavioral Intervention Plan (“BIP”) as applicable.
- In addition to the impact screener, schools should review available TIES plans, psychological evaluations, and other available reports from other school systems, DFCS or the GaDOE.
- If the team suspects the student is experiencing the adverse effects of trauma, the team should identify resources available to help the student.
- If no trauma is identified, schools should use existing systems to monitor the student for delayed trauma. If the team identifies a disability, then it should refer the student for an evaluation for special education services.
- Schools should share the results of the student’s assessment and subsequent plans of support on an as needed basis and be mindful of HIPAA, FERPA, and other privacy considerations.

### Consider Developing TIES Plan with DFCS to Provide Additional and Ongoing Support

- As a best practice, a school system may consider collaborating with DFCS to develop a Trauma-Informed Education Support (TIES) plan. LEAs that work with DFCS to create a TIES plan create an enhanced support system for the student and help ensure a consistent plan of care.

- The TIES plan contemplates several data points that could be helpful in assessing and supporting students who are currently in care even after the initial assessment. Examples of these data points include those outlined above.

### How Concerned Adults Can Advocate for Kids in Care

Adults who feel that a school has not properly complied with its requirements under OCGA § 20-2-152.2 should first reach out directly to the school with any complaints or questions. If the school is not responsive to concerns raised, contact the district school superintendent for assistance. If concerns remain unaddressed, consider reaching out to individual members of the district's local school board directly. As a last resort, contact the GaDOE.

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