Health and Safety Instruction: Erin's Law and Gavin's Law

At GREEN Charter Schools, we prioritize the safety and well-being of our students in concert with the laws of South Carolina. In 2014, the State of South Carolina passed Act 293, known as "Erin's Law," as part of health and safety education for its public schools. The purpose of Erin's Law is to ensure all students receive preventive instruction during the academic school year, so they know how to stay safe from and how to report any incidents of sexual assault.

The South Carolina Department of Education created instructional units based on Erin's Law in support of new legislation that amended the Comprehensive Health Education Act. South Carolina Code of Laws Section 59-32-20 (B) was amended to read that the State Board of Education through the South Carolina Department of Education "shall select or develop instructional units in sexual abuse and assault awareness and prevention, with separate units appropriate for each age level from four-year-old kindergarten through twelfth grade."

In 2023, the State of South Carolina passed Act 54 of 2023 known as "Gavin's Law." The legislation addresses acts that involve "threaten(ing) to release, exhibit, or distribute a private image of another in order to compel or attempt to compel the victim to do any act or refrain from doing any act against" that person's will. Convictions can be punished by up to 20 years in prison if the victim was a child or a vulnerable adult, and up to five (5) years for the first conviction if the victim is an adult.

Gavin's Law also requires that schools collaborate with the State Department of Education, the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division, and the Attorney General's office to implement a policy to educate and notify students of the law, which includes adequate notice to students, parents/legal guardians, the public, and school personnel of the law and the dangers of sexual extortion. The Department of Education recommends Gavin's Law be taught as part of the Erin's Law curriculum with age-appropriate instruction on the dangers and consequences of sexual extortion.

In line with our commitment to the safety and well-being of our students, GREEN Charter Schools has implemented the following policies, as required by Erin's Law, S.C. Code Section 59-32-20 and 59-32-30(G), and Gavin's Law, S.C. Code Section 16-15-430, to create a safe and supportive learning environment for all students:

1. Prevention Education:

    - Age-Appropriate Curriculum: We will incorporate age-appropriate prevention education programs into our curriculum that address child sexual abuse, assault, exploitation, and extortion. These programs will be tailored to different grade levels to ensure students receive the information in an age-sensitive manner.
    - Awareness Campaigns: We will regularly conduct awareness campaigns to educate students, parents/legal guardians, and staff about the signs, risks, and prevention of child sexual abuse, bullying, and extortion. These

campaigns will seek to foster a culture of openness, trust, and mutual support within our School community.

2. Reporting Mechanisms:

    - Safe Reporting Channels: We will establish multiple safe and confidential reporting channels, such as trusted staff members, anonymous hotlines, and/or online platforms, to encourage students to report any incidents of abuse, bullying, harassment, or extortion without fear of reprisal.

    - Prompt Response: Upon receiving any such reports, we will ensure a prompt and thorough investigation, adhering to all legal requirements and protecting the privacy of all parties involved to the extent legally possible.

3. Staff Training and Support:

    - Professional Development: All School staff, including teachers, administrators, and support personnel, will receive regular training on recognizing and responding to signs of child sexual abuse, bullying, harassment, and extortion. This training will equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge to support students effectively.
    - Supportive Environment: We will foster a supportive environment where students feel comfortable reaching out to trusted adults. Staff members will be trained to listen, believe, and respond empathetically to students who disclose abuse, bullying, harassment, and/or extortion.

4. Community Collaboration:

    - Partnerships: We will collaborate with local law enforcement agencies, community organizations, and mental health professionals to ensure a coordinated response to incidents of child abuse, bullying, harassment, and extortion. Together, we will work towards preventing such incidents and supporting affected students

    - Parental Involvement: We will actively engage parents and legal guardians through regular communication, workshops, and resources, to create a united effort in promoting student safety and well-being.

By implementing this policy, GREEN strives to ensure the safety, well-being, and success of all students. Together, we can create a nurturing environment where every student feels protected, valued, and empowered to thrive.
Legal References:

Erin's Law, S.C. Code of Laws, § 59-32-20 and 59-32-30(G).

Gavin's Law, S.C. Code of Laws, § 16-15-430.