

Dr. Lawrence S. Feldman, Board Member

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**SUBJECT: TRAUMA INFORMED INVESTIGATIONS AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

**COMMITTEE: PERSONNEL, STUDENT, SCHOOL & COMMUNITY SUPPORT**

**LINK TO STRATEGIC**

**BLUEPRINT: SAFE, HEALTHY AND SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT**

Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) stands committed to students' physical, emotional and mental welfare and recognizes a safe, healthy and supportive learning environment as a pillar upon which their achievement and development hinges. To that end, revisions to investigative procedures, particularly as they relate to allegations that are sexual in nature, have been initiated. These administrative directives, aimed at strengthening protocols and safeguards, are outlined in Memorandum 820, *Enhancements to Employee Training, Investigative Protocols, and Measures to Enhance Student Safety*, issued to the Board on February 18, 2019. This item seeks to initiate rulemaking procedures to codify the current practice, outlined in the memorandum, of assigning sexual battery allegation investigations to an outside agency's sexual battery unit. It also seeks to ensure that all investigations involving allegations of a sexual nature that result in a finding of no probable cause have been reviewed, prior to finalization, by the Miami-Dade County Public Schools Chief of Police.

While the District and School Board Attorney explore additional policy amendments, as noted in the memorandum, an opportunity exists to explore training and professional development available to Schools Police and employees in trauma informed practices. Trauma informed practices and training can provide our law enforcement professionals with strategies to conduct effective investigations that are victim-centered and responsive. When charged with interviewing young victims, officers and investigators would be well served in having received training based on trauma and its effect on neurobiology, victim behavior, and interview techniques which can yield more thorough results, while being sensitive to victims. Trauma-informed care is defined as practices that promote a culture of safety, empowerment, and healing; entities tasked with Title IX investigations have been encouraged to adopt this approach.

**Revised  
H-15**

The U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Violence Against Women, recognizing the prevalence of trauma, has offered grants to organizations dedicated to sensitizing agencies throughout the country and has granted organizations and non-profits, such as the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACPA), with funding to provide free-of-cost training to police agencies. Thus far, 30 departments and 1,800 participants have received the training from the IACPA agency.

This past September, the U.S. Attorney's Office provided law enforcement officers and victim service providers with a professional development on trauma informed policing at St. Petersburg College in Clearwater, FL. Across the country, organizations and non-profits are available to assist in this endeavor. With increasing incidences of domestic and community violence and child abuse, student service personnel, counselors and psychologists, who serve our students daily, would also be well-served in receiving trauma informed practices as part of their training and professional development.

This agenda item has been reviewed and approved by the School Board Attorney's Office as to form and legal sufficiency.

**ACTION PROPOSED**

**BY DR. LAWRENCE S. FELDMAN:**

That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, authorize the Superintendent to:

1. Initiate rulemaking to codify the current practice that all allegations of sexual battery as defined by Florida Statute § 794.011, will be investigated by Miami-Dade County's, the local jurisdiction's or the municipality's Sexual Battery Unit;
2. Ensure that all investigations involving allegations of a sexual nature that result in a finding of no probable cause indicate that they have been reviewed prior to finalization by the Miami-Dade County Public Schools Chief of Police; and
3. Prior to the commencement of the 2019-20 school year, explore and determine professional development opportunities for:
  - a) Miami-Dade Schools Police personnel to receive trauma informed practices training, particularly in the area of sexual abuse victim interview techniques, and
  - b) student service personnel, counselors, and psychologists to receive training on trauma informed practices;
4. Provide the Board with a status update prior to the Board meeting of August 14, 2019.