

# Alaska Legislature

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### *District 25*

### House Bill 44: "The Alaska Safe Children's Act" Sponsor Statement

Alaska has a crucial need for increased education and awareness of the devastating problem of domestic violence and sexual assault, especially as it affects our children. According to the Office of Children's Services in 2014, there were 2,640 allegations of child sexual abuse with 2,110 unique victims. 897 of these cases were sent to law enforcement and OCS went on to assess 1,028 allegations. Additionally, according to the Council of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, 9.1% of our students reported experiencing dating violence in 2014. This a problem that will only improve with the attention and dedication of all Alaskans, and this includes those Alaskans working in and attending our schools.

Named in honor of violence and abuse survivors and victims across the state of Alaska, this bill empowers schools to implement a program to educate and provide resources for students, staff, and parents about how to recognize the warning signs of child sexual abuse and teen dating violence. In recognizing that every community has their own unique needs, The Alaska Safe Children's Act allows Alaska public schools to create age-appropriate curricula and trainings that are the most beneficial to their population.

Curricula should include the warning signs of sexual abuse, definitions of teen dating violence, referral and resource information, counseling and educational support, methods for increasing awareness of issues regarding sexual abuse of and violence against children, a method through which a parent can excuse their child from this curricula, and actions a child may take to prevent and report sexual abuse, sexual assault and teen dating violence.

By utilizing the wisdom of our communities, the experience of experts, and strengthening individuals' knowledge and skills we can collectively work towards an end to child sexual abuse and teen dating violence.