

Liberty STEAM Charter
Student Safety Policy: Erin's Law and Gavin's Law

At Liberty STEAM Charter, we prioritize the safety and well-being of our students in accordance with the laws of South Carolina.

In the year of 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 the law is to ensure all students, pre-kindergarten through high school, receive this prevention instruction during the academic school year. The intent of Erin’s Law is to give students skills in knowing how to stay safe from sexual assault and how to report any incidents of sexual assault.

The South Carolina Department of Education created Erin’s Law instructional units in support of the 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 the year of 2023, the State of South Carolina passed Act 54 of 2023 known as “Gavin’s Law.” The legislation states the crimes are for “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 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 or guardians, the public, and school personnel of the change in 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, we have 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 curricula: 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. Currently, all scholars attend a two week “culture camp” to begin the school year that

emphasizes these topics in age-appropriate ways (good touch vs. bad touch, inappropriate physical contact) with strategies on how to properly report any violations.

- Awareness campaigns: We will regularly conduct awareness campaigns to educate students, parents, and staff about the signs, risks, and prevention of child sexual abuse, bullying, and extortion. These campaigns will aim to foster a culture of openness, trust, and mutual support within our school community. Currently, scholars at LSC receive extensive education regarding the school's Harassment, Intimidation, & Bullying policy as part of Culture Camp in addition to ongoing counseling sessions in small groups & whole classes throughout the school year. Additionally, LSC annually promotes an anti-bullying campaign that coincides with National Unity Day in October and a kindness campaign which aligns with World Kindness Day in November.

2. Reporting Mechanisms:

- Safe reporting channels: We will establish multiple safe and confidential reporting channels, such as trusted staff members, anonymous hotlines, or online platforms, to encourage students to report any incidents of abuse, bullying, harassment, or extortion without fear of reprisal. Currently, at LSC, all parents receive a monthly parent engagement satisfaction survey that allows an open channel to share concerns which is reviewed by the leadership team within three days of the closure and analysis of survey results. Additionally, our website hosts a link for parents & scholars to report any incidents of harassment, intimidation, bullying, & sexual abuse that, when completed, automatically notifies academic counselors at both academies.
- Prompt response: Upon receiving any 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. Currently, when a report of such a nature is received, an academic counselor is required under the board approved Code of Conduct to conduct an immediate investigation that brings resolution to the matter within a time frame of no more than 48 hours. If the incident is verified, the necessary action is taken against all parties involved as appropriate in alignment with our Code of Conduct. If an incident is unverified, then an "on notice" document is completed with all parties, including the parents of involved scholars (victim & aggressor) are notified.

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. Currently, LSC staff members are required to annually complete a series of SAFE SCHOOLS training videos that include harassment, intimidation, & bullying as

well as sexual abuse & prevention as well as in-person training from the academic counselors during beginning of year professional development.

- 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. Currently, LSC has weekly Community Culture Celebrations to promote a supportive environment as well as a variety of interventions that include community mentoring, check-in/check-out, and small group counseling that covers a variety of social-emotional learning issues.

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. Currently, LSC is proud to host a full-time School Resource Officer (SRO) at each academy that can respond accordingly to any incidents that this policy addresses. Additionally, LSC partners with a local behavioral therapy organization to provide two days of on campus behavior therapy to qualifying scholars.
- Parental involvement: We will actively engage parents and guardians through regular communication, workshops, and resources, to create a united effort in promoting student safety and well-being. LSC provides an abundance of engagement opportunities for parents to remain connected to the school, both virtually and in person. Annual events include our Welcome to Liberty mandatory new parent orientation, events to promote informal sharing of concerns with school leaders (Cookies with the Counselor, Donuts with the Directors, etc.), Open House events, a robust Parent Teacher Organization, as well as the required 10 hours of parent volunteer service hours, and annual focus groups to more thoroughly address concerns.

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

Adopted by LSC's Board of Directors on October 23, 2023.