

Jack Reid Bill: Protect All Students Act

Signed and Enacted

What the law is:

- The law adds a new Article 2-A to the New York Education Law, titled the “Jack Reid Law: Protect All Students Act.” ([New York State Assembly](#))
- Its stated legislative intent is to ensure that “students in nonpublic schools” are afforded an environment free of bullying and harassment, recognizing that such misconduct undermines a school’s mission and a student’s learning. ([New York State Assembly](#))
- The law was passed as Senate Bill S4544 / Assembly Bill A5403A and signed into law (Chapter 480) on October 23, 2025. ([New York State Senate](#))

Key Requirements for Nonpublic Schools

Definitions & Applicability

- “School property” is defined broadly: buildings, playgrounds, parking lots, buses... and any land within the real-property boundary. ([New York State Assembly](#))
- “School function” means nonpublic-school–sponsored extra-curricular events/activities. ([LegiScan](#))
- “Bullying” and “harassment” (including “cyber-bullying”) are defined in the statute to include conduct that creates a hostile environment, interferes with a student’s educational performance or well-being, causes fear for safety, or risks substantial disruption — including off-property behavior if it foreseeably reaches school property. ([New York State Assembly](#))
- The law states that nothing in it is intended to infringe on the rights of free expression or free exercise of religion. ([New York State Assembly](#))

Effective Date

- The law states “This act shall take effect immediately.” ([LegiScan](#))
- That means nonpublic schools are required to comply from the time the law takes effect (which is right after signing). Schools should treat these duties as current and ongoing.

Policy & Publication

- Every school must adopt a written, plain-language, age-appropriate anti-bullying and harassment policy. ([New York State Assembly](#))
- That policy must be published on the school website or internal parent/student portal AND shared annually with employees, parents, and students. ([New York State Assembly](#))

- The policy must include at minimum: definitions of bullying/harassment, how incidents will be reported, investigated, documented; and an age-appropriate process for notifying the victim about the final outcome of the investigation. ([LegiScan](#))

Reporting & Investigation

- School employees who witness bullying/harassment or receive an oral/written report must orally notify the principal/head of school (or designee) no later than one school day after the report/knowledge; then file a written report with that designee no later than two school days after the oral report. ([New York State Assembly](#))
- Upon a report, the principal/head (or designee) must investigate promptly, communicate findings to the victim, and take immediate and appropriate follow-up action reasonably calculated to ensure the conduct has stopped and the student is safe (including protection against retaliation). ([LegiScan](#))

Grant Program / Compliance Support

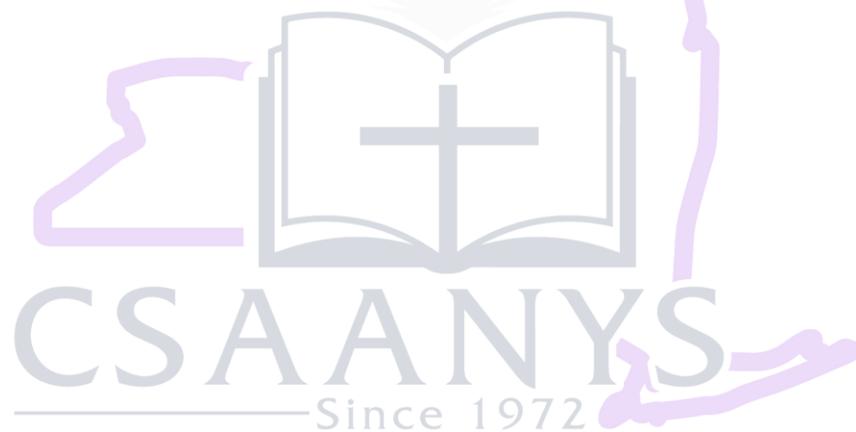
- The law directs the state education department to establish a “Jack Reid Law Compliance Grant Program” to assist nonpublic schools with meeting these new obligations. ([LegiScan](#))
- Under the grant program: eligible schools can apply for up to \$50,000 (one-time) to help with compliance costs (staff training; consultants; student-focused anti-bullying programs such as social-emotional-learning curricula; climate surveys; etc.). ([LegiScan](#))

Implications for Catholic and other Nonpublic Schools

As a Catholic school leader, you’ll want to consider the following implications:

- **Policy Review & Alignment:** Even if your school already has an anti-bullying/harassment policy, you need to check that it meets all the statutory minimums: plain language, age-appropriate, published/shared annually, includes the defined elements for reporting/investigation, etc. If not, the policy should be revised promptly.
- **Training & Monitoring:** Staff awareness is critical. Teachers and other employees must understand their reporting obligations (oral within 1 day; written within 2 days) and the principal/designee’s obligation to investigate promptly and follow up. Consider staff professional development on these new responsibilities.
- **Documentation & Investigation Process:** Establish clear internal workflows for receiving reports, documenting, investigating, notifying victims, taking corrective action, and safeguarding against retaliation. Ensure the chain of action is traceable.
- **Communication with Families / Students:** Because the policy must be shared with parents/guardians and students annually, plan how you will disseminate it (e.g., via website portal, parent newsletter, school handbook, student assembly). Make sure the language is accessible for younger students too.

- **Budget & Resources:** The compliance grant program offers support, but you'll need to evaluate potential cost impacts (training, programs, climate surveys, consultant help). Early engagement with the grant opportunity will be wise.
- **Mission & Religious Identity:** As some religious-school organizations flagged, there may be concerns about preserving religious identity while complying with the law. The statute includes a safeguard that it is not meant to intrude on free religious exercise. ([New York State Assembly](#)) You may want to review how your policy and procedures reflect your Catholic mission while meeting legal requirements.
- **Ongoing Monitoring & Leadership Oversight:** Because the law places clear responsibility on the principal/head of school (or designee) to act, leadership must ensure that the school's culture, practices, monitoring, and climate surveys align with the intent of creating a safe environment free of harassment and bullying.
- **Public-Relations & Risk Management:** Noncompliance risks legal exposure or reputational harm. By proactively aligning your school's practices with this law, you strengthen your risk-management posture and demonstrate commitment to student safety and wellness—which aligns well with Catholic educational values.



Checklist for Compliance: The Jack Reid Law

1. Policy Adoption & Publication

- ✓ Written policy in plain, age-appropriate language
 - ✓ Defines bullying, harassment, and cyberbullying as described in the law
 - ✓ Posted on the school website and/or parent/student portal
 - ✓ Distributed annually to staff, students, and parents
 - ✓ Includes statement affirming protection of free expression and religious mission
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2. Definitions (Required by Law)

- ✓ “Bullying” — conduct that creates a hostile environment, causes fear for safety, or interferes with learning
 - ✓ “Harassment” — verbal, physical, or electronic behavior that substantially disrupts a student’s education
 - ✓ “Cyberbullying” — bullying through electronic communication that foreseeably reaches school property or activities
 - ✓ “School property” — any school building, grounds, or vehicle
 - ✓ “School function” — any school-sponsored extracurricular, event, or activity
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3. Reporting Procedures

- ✓ Employees who witness or receive a report must notify the principal (or designee) **orally within 1 school day**
 - ✓ A **written report** must be filed **within 2 school days** of the oral report
 - ✓ Anonymous reporting option available for students/families (with limitations)
 - ✓ Process to ensure **no retaliation** for those reporting incidents
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4. Investigation & Follow-Up

- ✓ Principal or designee must investigate **promptly**
- ✓ Steps for fact-gathering and interviewing included
- ✓ Victim and parents notified of investigation outcome
- ✓ Appropriate corrective action taken and documented
- ✓ Ongoing monitoring to ensure harassment stops and safety is restored

5. Training & Prevention

- ✓ Annual staff training on recognizing, reporting, and responding to bullying
 - ✓ Age-appropriate student education on respect, kindness, and digital citizenship
 - ✓ Integration with Catholic Social Teaching and Gospel values
 - ✓ Encourage restorative practices and peer empathy initiatives
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6. Recordkeeping

- ✓ Maintain written records of reports, investigations, and outcomes
 - ✓ Documentation system (digital or paper) that ensures confidentiality
 - ✓ Annual review by school leadership team or designated compliance officer
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7. Funding & Support

- ✓ Apply for the **Jack Reid Law Compliance Grant Program** (up to \$50,000)
- ✓ Allocate funds for training, SEL programs, and policy development
- ✓ Use climate surveys to monitor student well-being

