

October 24, 2023

Greetings SCVCS Families,

This past Spring, the South Carolina legislature formalized Gavin's law, Act 54 of 2023. This requires schools to implement a policy to educate and notify students of the health education provisions of Gavin's Law. In alignment with the recommendations of the South Carolina Department of Education and our charter authorizer, the Charter Institute at Erskine, this communication will serve as notice on these additions to our health education requirements.

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 the law is to ensure that all students, prekindergarten through high school, receive annual, age-appropriate instruction in knowing how to stay safe from sexual assault and how to report any incidents of sexual harassment or sexual assault.

Building upon this, Gavin's Law supports educating students on how to identify sexual extortion. This law makes sexual extortion, the act of blackmailing someone using sexually explicit images or videos, a felony offense, and an aggravated felony if the victim is a minor, vulnerable adult, or if the victim suffers bodily injury or death directly related to the crime. Convictions can be punished by up to 20 years in prison if the victim was a child or vulnerable adult, and up to five years for the first conviction if the victim is an adult.

In line with our commitment to the safety and well-being of our students, we have implemented the following procedures 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:

- Age-appropriate curricula: SCVCS will incorporate age-appropriate prevention education programs into our curriculum that address child sexual abuse, assault, exploitation, and extortion. These programs will be tailored at each grade level to ensure students receive the information in an age-sensitive manner.
- Safe reporting channels: SCVCS will establish multiple safe and confidential reporting channels to encourage students to report any incidents of abuse, bullying, harassment, or extortion without fear of reprisal. 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.
- Staff training and support: 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. Staff members will be trained to listen, believe, and respond empathetically to students who disclose abuse, bullying, harassment, and/or extortion. We will collaborate with local law enforcement agencies, community organizations, and mental health professionals to ensure a coordinated response to any reported incidents.

If you are interested in learning more about the instructional resources or the reporting procedures utilized at SCVCS, please contact Kristen Stolpa at kstolpa@scvcs.org.