

SCHOOL CHAPLAIN AMENDMENTS

2024 GENERAL SESSION

STATE OF UTAH

Chief Sponsor: Keven J. Stratton

Senate Sponsor: John D. Johnson

LONG TITLE

General Description:

This bill allows an LEA to permit a volunteer chaplain at a school.

Highlighted Provisions:

This bill:

- ▶ permits an LEA to permit a chaplain in the LEA's schools;
- ▶ requires LEAs to develop policies and requirements for school chaplains; and
- ▶ requires the State Board of Education to report to the Education Interim Committee

in relation to chaplains in LEA schools.

Money Appropriated in this Bill:

None

Other Special Clauses:

None

Utah Code Sections Affected:

ENACTS:

53G-11-601, Utah Code Annotated 1953

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the state of Utah:

Section 1. Section **53G-11-601** is enacted to read:

Part 6. School Chaplains

53G-11-601. Voluntary school chaplains.



28 (1) Beginning with the 2025-2026 school year, an LEA may allow a volunteer chaplain
29 in an LEA school if:

30 (a) the chaplain satisfies the background check requirements described in Section
31 53G-11-402;

32 (b) the chaplain satisfies the reference check requirements described in Section
33 53G-11-410;

34 (c) the chaplain completes all training required by:

35 (i) statute;

36 (ii) the State Board of Education; or

37 (iii) the LEA;

38 (d) student and employee participation in chaplain services is voluntary; and

39 (e) there is no coercion of a student or employee to participate in, or to not participate
40 in, chaplain services.

41 (2) An LEA shall develop policies, guidelines, and requirements for a volunteer school
42 chaplain, that address:

43 (a) qualifications for a chaplain, including:

44 (i) an educational requirement; and

45 (ii) an experiential requirement;

46 (b) required chaplain training;

47 (c) chaplain duties and services;

48 (d) parental consent;

49 (e) employee consent;

50 (f) student consent;

51 (g) required reporting and confidentiality;

52 (h) appropriate guidelines, restrictions, and oversight for a chaplain; and

53 (i) successful implementation of a school chaplain program.

54 (3) (a) In developing the policies, guidelines, and requirements described in Subsection
55 (2), an LEA shall consider input from:

56 (i) the State Board of Education;

57 (ii) the state superintendent;

58 (iii) the governor's office;

59 (iv) the Office of the Attorney General;

60 (v) the Utah School Superintendents Association;

61 (vi) LEA employees;

62 (vii) parents; and

63 (viii) students.

64 (b) A person described in Subsection (3)(a) is not required to, but may provide input to
65 an LEA that is developing policies, guidelines, and requirements for school chaplains.

66 (4) (a) On or before September 30, 2024, each LEA shall inform the State Board of
67 Education of the LEA's interest level in allowing school chaplains.

68 (b) The State Board of Education shall send a report to the Education Interim
69 Committee before the November 2024 committee meeting informing the committee of the data
70 regarding LEA interest in a school chaplain program.

71 (5) (a) On or before September 30, 2025, an LEA shall vote to determine whether the
72 LEA will permit volunteer school chaplains.

73 (b) An LEA shall promptly notify the State Board of Education regarding the LEA's
74 determination and established policies and requirements.

75 (6) (a) The State Board of Education shall send a report to the Education Interim
76 Committee before the November 2025 committee meeting.

77 (b) The report described in Subsection (6)(a) shall include a description of:

78 (i) the number of LEAs that intend to allow school chaplains;

79 (ii) the policies developed by LEAs to comply with Subsection (2); and

80 (iii) recommendations for minimum standards and requirements.

81 **Section 2. Effective date.**

82 This bill takes effect on May 1, 2024.