

## **What is “Erin’s Law”?**

“Erin’s Law” is named after childhood sexual assault survivor, author, speaker, and activist Erin Merryn. Merryn is the founder and President of Erin’s Law, which is registered with the State of Illinois and the IRS as a 501 (c)(4) non-profit social welfare organization.

The legislation was introduced in Merryn’s home state of Illinois, and caught on nationwide. It was passed in Maryland in 2016, with a mandate that schools implement it beginning in Fall 2017.

“Erin’s Law” requires that all public schools in each state implement a prevention-oriented child sexual abuse program which teaches:

- **Students** in grades prekindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade age-appropriate techniques to recognize child sexual abuse and tell a trusted adult.
- **School personnel** about child sexual abuse.
- **Parents and guardians** the warning signs of child sexual abuse, needed assistance, and referral or resource information to support sexually abused children and their families.

## **Why is it important that children receive this instruction in school?**

Schools provide a safe place where children can learn what to do in unfamiliar or uncomfortable situations. Trusted adults will provide students with an opportunity to practice handling these situations so that the first time a young person is faced with an unsafe situation, he or she will know what to do and have had practiced doing it. Students will identify trusted adults, both inside and outside of the school, where they can go for help.

### **How will “Erin’s Law” be implemented in AACPS?**

Secondary students will receive instruction through the AACPS Health Education curriculum. Health standards will be taught to middle school students in grades 6 through 8 through the Health curriculum. High school students will be taught the health standards through the mandatory Health class, a high school graduation requirement.

In elementary school, the standards will be addressed through the school counseling curriculum for all students in grades K to 5, using modified lessons from the Barbara Sinatra Foundation. Parents will be sent a letter prior to the lessons being taught to inform them about when the lessons will be delivered by the school counselor. Parents will have an opportunity, if they so desire, to review the materials. Parents can opt out of having their child(ren) participate in the lessons and an alternative activity will be provided. Follow up activities to the lessons will be sent home.

### **Are there resources parents can access to help them recognize warning signs and talk with their child(ren) about how to keep themselves safe?**

Yes. The [Erin’s Law](#) website has tips for parents about recognizing warning signs and what a parent should do if he/ or she learns/suspects that a child has been/is being sexually abused. Similarly, the [Barbara Sinatra Foundation](#) has many resources for parents on the topic of child sexual abuse. The [National Sexual Violence Resource Center](#) has a number of good resources for parents.

*If you have specific questions or concerns regarding secondary Erin’s Law lessons, feel free to contact your child’s health educator. If you have specific concerns regarding the elementary lessons, please contact your child’s school counselor.*