

The BIG Act

Behavioral Intervention Guidelines Act ([H.R. 3539](#) in 115th Congress)

Sponsor: Rep. Drew Ferguson, IV (R-GA)

Summary: Requires the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to develop best practices for schools to establish behavioral intervention teams (i.e., experts who are responsible for identifying individuals of concern and addressing associated behavioral health issues to prevent harm to the individual or others). In addition, SAMHSA must also develop a list of providers with threat-assessment training to help school personnel implement the best practices.

Why is the BIG Act Needed?

- Our students are struggling, and our schools are not the safe and supportive environments they should be.
- A 2019 Pennsylvania State University study noted that demand for campus mental health services spiked by 30-40% during a period that saw only a 5% increase in enrollment.¹
- The BIG Act will help schools across the nation implement life-saving programs to ensure our students stay safe, healthy and successful.²
- The BIG Act helps connect experts who develop and implement behavioral intervention programs with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and other federal agencies, which in return helps spread the best behavioral intervention practices throughout the country.
- The BIG Act is critical legislation for student support and safety as it will provide best practices for schools to establish Behavioral Intervention Teams (BITs), mandate that schools receive training in BIT best practices, and require technical assistance be provided to higher education and K-12 schools to assist them in implementing the best practices.
- The BIG Act would provide the launching pad for implementing a solution in schools that helps administrators provide safety and support to students without a significant impact to their limited budgets.
- The BIG Act creates (BITs) within schools, which are small groups of appointed school officials who meet regularly to collect and review concerning information about at-risk community members and develop intervention plans to assist them.
- The National Threat Assessment Center research demonstrates that 80% of incidents of targeted violence were preceded by concerning behaviors such as bullying, isolation, or concerning statements.³

¹ [The Top Mental Health Challenges Facing Students](#)

² <https://ferguson.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=3146>

³ Safe School Initiative Final Report, U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Department of Education