

Resolutions

RESOLUTION #14

Work Shouldn't Hurt: Workplace Safety for All

Submitted by: Delegates Dan Montgomery & Michelle Paul, Illinois Federation of Teachers Council

WHEREAS, special education teachers, paraprofessionals, bus drivers, secretaries and all school staff operate at a heightened level of vigilance to guarantee student safety; and

WHEREAS, school staff is required to intervene in situations where students and staff may be at risk of harm or injury from a student's uncontrolled behavior; and

WHEREAS, the United States Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that public school teaching assistants have a high rate of work-related injuries that result in lost work days; and

WHEREAS, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health found in a statewide Pennsylvania education study that special education paraprofessionals, assistants and teachers had the highest rate of work-related assaults and associated injuries; and

WHEREAS, a study of 8,000 school staff workers' compensation claims in Minnesota reported that special education assistants and teachers were at high risk of being injured and requiring medical care and workers' compensation; and

WHEREAS, the American Federation of Teachers reported that special education assistants were most at risk for "student-related injuries" and had the highest workers' compensation claims rate for such injuries, compared with all other school personnel; and

WHEREAS, special education staff are at risk not only for physical injuries but also for lingering and long-term post-traumatic stress disorders; and

WHEREAS, school districts, colleges, universities and state agencies across the country have failed to systematically and adequately address safe working environments for school staff; and

WHEREAS, Illinois school districts have a mixed record of providing protective equipment and adequate de-escalation and restraint training for at-risk personnel and assessing the placement needs of special education students; therefore be it

RESOLVED, the Illinois AFL-CIO will assist affiliate unions in planning and conducting campaigns to assess the prevalence of assaults and related injuries, significantly improve district, college, university and state policies and practice, and educate members on steps to protect themselves and students as well as support injured members; and be it further

RESOLVED, the Illinois AFL-CIO will assist in advocating for any necessary changes to existing law and administrative rules to fairly compensate and protect any educational or state employee injured on the job site while actively protecting students, colleagues and other bystanders; and be it further

RESOLVED, the Illinois AFL-CIO will encourage affiliate unions to bargain protections for members who are injured on-the-job; and be it finally

RESOLVED, the Illinois AFL-CIO will urge the national AFL-CIO to advocate for comprehensive Occupational Safety and Health Administrative (OSHA) coverage for public employees, mandatory OSHA reporting requirements for educational employers and expanded monitoring of the prevalence of assaults on special education personnel by the United States Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics and the United States Department of Education.