

# SCHOOL SAFETY LEGISLATION AND RESOURCES IN PENNSYLVANIA

## SAFE TO SAY HOTLINE

1-844-723-2729 or through a smartphone app or online.

The program is administered by the PA Attorney General's Office. It teaches youth and adults to recognize the warning signs and signals, especially with social media, from individuals who might be a threat to others or themselves and to say something before it's too late.

### How it works:

- Submit an [anonymous tip](#) report through the Safe2SaySomething system
- Crisis center reviews, assesses and processes all submissions
- Crisis center sends all submissions to school administration and/or law enforcement for intervention
- If needed, crisis center may contact tipster anonymously through the app

## SCHOOL SAFETY AND SECURITY COMMITTEE

The Pennsylvania Public School Code (**Act 44 of 2018**) created the School Safety and Security Committee (SSSC) within the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD). The SSSC was tasked with developing the criteria school entities are to use in performing school safety and security assessments, issuing a survey to school entities to measure school safety and security preparedness, and administering school safety and security grants. Recent amendments by Act 18 of 2019, Act 67 of 2019, and Act 30 of 2020 included:

- **development of a model trauma-informed approach plan;**
- **model trainings for threat assessment teams; and**
- **set training requirements for school resource officers (SROs), school police officers (SPOs) and school security guards.**

## SCHOOL SAFETY AND SECURITY GRANT PROGRAM

Established in 2018, and administer by the PCCD, the General Assembly approved \$60 million in grants to schools across the state. Since its inception, the state has awarded nearly \$200 million for safety initiatives, including:

- school safety assessments,
- security equipment,
- training, and
- hiring school resource officers.

The School Code also allows for a portion of the school safety and security funding to be set-aside annually to support **community violence prevention/reduction grants**. Eligible entities that can apply for this funding are municipalities (including counties), institutions of higher education, and community organizations.

PCCD **interactive grant map** shows the location of all the grants awarded by the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) within the past five years to present.

The Filter function on the right-hand side of the screen can be used to select grants by the fiscal year they were awarded, county, program/committee area (ex: school safety and security committee), funding stream (ex: school safety and security) and local school district. Please note that in order to use the Filter you must turn that feature on using the toggle button at the top of the Filter box.

## SCHOOL SAFETY THREAT ASSESSMENT TEAMS

Act 18 of 2019, requires at least one school safety threat assessment team in all school entities. Threat assessment teams are responsible for “the assessment of and intervention with students whose behavior may indicate a threat to the safety of the student, other students, school employees, school facilities, the community or others.” School entities may satisfy these requirements by assigning threat assessment responsibilities to an existing team, including Student Assistance Program (SAP) teams, Crisis Response Teams, or Safe2Say Something Teams. A Threat Assessment Team may also serve one or more schools within the school entity.

## SCHOOL SECURITY PERSONNEL TRAINING

The Public School Code requires that all school resource officers, school police officers, and school security guards successfully complete the Basic School Resource Officer Course offered by the National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO) or an equivalent School Security Personnel course of instruction approved by the Commission. All school security personnel intending to work in a school setting are required to receive this instruction prior to employment.

## TRAUMA-INFORMED EDUCATION

The School Code requires trauma-informed approach training. The mandatory training includes:

- A minimum of one hour of training on trauma-informed approaches for both newly elected and reelected school board directors. Similar requirements apply to charter school trustees.
- A minimum of one hour of professional development training on trauma-informed approaches.
- The Pennsylvania Department of Education's PA Leadership Standards must include information on trauma-informed approaches.

## YOUTH SUICIDE AWARENESS EDUCATION

Act 71 of 2014 requires school entities to:

- adopt a youth suicide awareness and prevention policy; and
- provide ongoing professional development in youth suicide awareness and prevention for professional educators in building serving students in grades 6-12.

Additionally, school entities may incorporate curriculum on this topic into their instructional programs pursuant to their youth suicide awareness and prevention policies.



## BULLYING PREVENTION AND AWARENESS

Act 44 mandates training related to Bullying Awareness for employees of school entities to occur every five years. Comprehensive bullying prevention includes the following 10 best practices (HRSA, Human Resources and Services Administration) including:

1. Focus on the social environment of the school;
2. Assess bullying at your school;
3. Garner staff and parent support for bullying prevention;
4. Form a group to coordinate the school's bullying prevention activities;
5. Train your staff in bullying prevention;
6. Establish and enforce school rules and policies related to bullying;
7. Increase adult supervision in hot spots where bullying occurs;
8. Intervene consistently and appropriately in bullying situations;
9. Focus some class time on bullying prevention;
10. Continue these efforts over time.



## SAFE SCHOOLS TARGETED GRANTS

The Pennsylvania Department of Education's (PDE) Office for Safe Schools offers four types of targeted safety grants: equipment grants of up to \$25,000; program grants of up to \$20,000; School Police Officer (SPO) grants of up to \$40,000; and School Resource Officer (SRO) grants of up to \$60,000. Each of the grants aims to assist schools in:

- reducing unnecessary student disciplinary actions and promoting an environment of greater productivity, safety, and learning; and
- enhancing anti-violence efforts between schools and parents, local governments, law enforcement and community organizations.

# WHAT WE'RE CURRENTLY WORKING ON

## STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH FOCUSED GRANTS (HB 2468)

Under this legislation each public-school entity in which a student is enrolled full-time will receive a minimum grant of \$40,000 and an additional amount based on the average daily membership of the public-school entity. Importantly, this proposal also maintains flexibility at the community level for the grants to be used for a variety of purposes specifically relating to student mental health needs.

## SCHOOL-BASED MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES PILOT GRANT (HB 2022)

Under this legislation grants will be awarded to school entities for the purpose of providing supplemental mental health services to their students that are "in addition to" services provided by current school employees. 35 grants shall be awarded across the state.

## MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS EDUCATION (HB 2023)

Beginning with the 2023-24 school year, a school entity may develop and incorporate an age-appropriate mental health education program into their existing curriculum for students in grades K-12. Additionally, PDE, in consultation with at least one organization that addresses mental health issues, shall develop or identify a model mental health curriculum. The model curriculum shall be made available to all school entities and non-public schools.

## MENTAL HEALTH INSTRUCTION STUDY (HB 2024)

The State Board of Education will conduct a study of the way mental health instruction is offered by school entities and submit a report with its findings to the Governor, Secretary of Education, Secretary of Human Services, and the Majority and Minority Chairs of the House and Senate Education Committees.

