



ACT 55 OF 2022

SCHOOL SAFETY AND SECURITY TRAINING STANDARDS

SCHOOL EMPLOYEES

[Section 1310-B of the PA Public School Code](#), based on Act 55 of 2022, requires all school employees to complete two hours of training annually on one or more of the following school safety and security topics: situational awareness, trauma-informed approaches, behavioral health awareness, suicide and bullying awareness, and substance use awareness. In addition, one hour of annual training is required for all school employees on the topics of emergency training drills (including fire, natural disaster, active shooter, hostage situation and bomb threat), and the identification or recognition of student behavior that may indicate a threat to the safety of the student, other students, school employees, other individuals, school facilities, or the community.

In accordance with Act 55, the School Safety and Security Committee (SSSC) has developed the standards below as a baseline for what ***must be*** included in each of the required topical trainings. Trainings undertaken to meet the directives of Act 55 must meet all standards outlined below. The standards are designed to ensure a baseline understanding of each topic and each topic includes an “activity or discussion” that requires attendees to familiarize themselves with their own school’s policies and procedures specific to that topic. The modality of the “activity” is left to the discretion of the trainer/provider (e.g., discussion, role play, etc.); however, in order to comply with these standards, attendees must be able to identify their own school entity’s policies and procedures related to each topic. Where available and appropriate, the standards include the provision of resources to assist school employees in further deepening their understanding of each topic as well as resources for trainers/providers to utilize when developing curriculum. Training may be designed to go deeper on particular aspects of the designated subjects, or provide more hands-on or scenario-based activities, but all training should align with the elements outlined in these standards.

Act 55 requires that training must be provided by school entities based on the needs of that entity. These needs may vary dependent upon the size of the entity or school district and its location. Before determining which course(s) may be appropriate in a given year, school entities should consider their employee’s level of familiarity with a particular topic, the employee’s past participation in topical trainings that duplicate or correspond with the training topics below, and the employee’s role within the school entity. While the standards focus on basic education and awareness training that all school employees can benefit from, school entities should consider whether employees are better suited for more advanced trainings that also incorporate the baseline standards below along with more specialized information and concepts.

Online training that meets the standards is available on the PA Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) [K12 School Safety and Security Training](#) webpage along with a training calendar for in-person ‘train-the-trainer’ sessions on the Emergency Training Drills requirement described below. Please see the FAQ’s on PCCD’s [School Safety and Security Training](#) page for more information or reach out to RA-CD-SSSC@pa.gov with questions.



School Safety and Security Training Standards for School Employees

As with all aspects of building a positive and inclusive school environment, it is critical that each topic below be presented with a high level of cultural competence. For example, training should ensure school employees recognize that a student's background (e.g., cultural, trauma history, disability, etc.) may impact the way a concern with a student presents, and that the employee's method for approaching a student or referring a student to particular resources should be responsive to that student's unique needs. Courses should also encourage attendees to consider how their own culture, assumptions, or biases may impact their perception of student behavior.

COURSES THAT REQUIRE TWO HOURS OF INSTRUCTION ANNUALLY

All school employees must be provided two hours of training annually on any combination of one or more of the following topics. This training may be provided in person or virtually. Below each topic is a series of standards that must be incorporated into the course for it to meet the requirements of Act 55.

SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

Situational awareness is an essential skill for all school employees to understand and practice. Course attendees should leave the course with an understanding of the following:

- Definition of situational awareness.
- Importance of the recognition of things and persons that seem out of the ordinary.
- Importance of the assessment of a situation to determine appropriate response.
- Things to consider generally to determine an appropriate response to a given situation, including how to identify and implement action steps.
- Description of how situational awareness may connect to a school entity's emergency preparedness plan,¹ incident command structure, and/or threat assessment process.
- Activity or discussion that requires the attendees to review their own school entity's policies and procedures related to situational awareness. For example:
 - Identify the process for staff to report maintenance issues that impact safety (e.g., dim lighting).
 - Identify the process for reporting policy violations (e.g., door propping, letting unidentified individuals in the building).
 - Identify specific action steps that are available to the employee that align with existing school policies and procedures and the school entity's emergency preparedness plan.

Please provide the following resources/links to all attendees. The resources may be used by attendees who wish to deepen their understanding of Situational Awareness:

- [Safe2Say Something Program within the PA Office of Attorney General](#)
- [U.S. Department of Homeland Security, *If You See Something, Say Something*](#)

¹ Sometimes called "all-hazards plan" or "emergency operations plan."



TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACHES

At the most basic level, trauma-informed approaches are ways of supporting individuals that take into consideration specific needs they may have as a result of past or ongoing trauma. Course attendees should leave this course with an understanding of the following:

- Definition of trauma, types of trauma, and trauma-informed approaches (see [Section 102](#) of the PA Public School Code).
- Signs and symptoms of youth and adults who have experienced or are currently experiencing trauma, potential negative health outcomes related to trauma, and protective factors and strategies to mitigate those impacts.
- Review of what it means generally to be trauma-informed in your communications and interactions with others and description or demonstration of trauma-informed educational practices.
- Impact of trauma and secondary or vicarious trauma on school employees and strategies that may help mitigate those impacts (e.g., self-care strategies).
- Things to consider when responding to a student or employee who appears to be experiencing signs and symptoms of trauma (e.g., concrete examples of language that may be useful when responding).
- Activity or discussion that requires attendees to:
 - Review and identify school policies and procedures that should be (or have been) updated to include trauma-informed practices (e.g., student attendance policies and practices, threat assessment policies and practices, etc.). See PSBA Trauma-Informed Approach Policy Checklist below.
 - Review and identify local school and community resources for students and staff who are experiencing the adverse effects of stress, anxiety, or trauma (e.g., which school staff and/or teams are trained and in place to address concerns, how referrals are made to school and/or community resources).

Please provide the following resources/links to all attendees. The resources may be used by attendees who wish to deepen their understanding of Trauma-Informed Approaches:

- [PA Department of Education \(PDE\) Trauma Resources](#)
- [National Child Traumatic Stress Network](#)
- [SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach](#)
- [PDE Self-Care Resources for Educators](#)

The following resources should be utilized by curriculum developers in preparation for this course:

- [PCCD Model Trauma-Informed Approach Plan](#)
- [PSBA Trauma-Informed Approach Policy Checklist](#)
- [PDE Empowerment through Common Language in Pennsylvania: A Dictionary of Terms Related to Trauma-Informed Approaches in Schools](#)
- [PDE Standards Aligned System](#) (this resource includes training focused on trauma-informed approaches)
- [The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma](#), Bessel Van Der Kolk, M.D



BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AWARENESS

Behavioral and mental health awareness is an important issue for all school employees who may be the first line of intervention for their students. Course attendees should leave this course with an understanding of the following:

- Signs and symptoms of individuals displaying behavioral or mental health concerns.
- Things to consider when responding to a student or other individual who is displaying signs and symptoms of behavioral or mental health concerns (e.g., concrete examples of language that may be useful when responding).
- Strategies for self-care and improving one's own mental health and overall well-being.
- **Brief** overview/identification of laws regarding student and caregiver rights and how they may impact the employee. For example: [20 U.S.C. 1232g \(FERPA\)](#) and [34 CFR Part 99](#); [20 U.S.C. 1400 et seq. \(IDEA\)](#) and [34 CFR Part 300](#); [20 U.S.C. 1232h](#); [22 Pa. Code §12.12](#); [42 Pa. C.S. §5945](#); [42 Pa. C.S. §8337](#) and [§8337.1](#); [42 CFR Part 2](#).
- Activity or discussion that requires attendees to:
 - Identify current school processes and procedures in place to assist students (e.g., Student Assistance Program (SAP) teams, crisis response teams, multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) teams, etc.).
 - Review the referral process for students specific to their school entity, including the Child Find practices for students who may have a disability.
 - Identify school and community programs and resources that are available to support students and staff (e.g., which school staff are trained to address concerns, how referrals to community resources are made).

Please provide the following resources/links to all attendees. The resources may be used by attendees who wish to deepen their understanding of Behavioral Health Awareness:

- [Pennsylvania Network for Student Assistance Services \(PNSAS\)](#)
- [PDE Mental Health Resources for Schools](#)
- [PDE Self-Care Resources for Educators](#)
- [PDE Basic Education Circular \(BEC\) that provides for Student Assistance, 24 P.S. §15-1547](#)

Crisis Resources

- 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline: **Call 988** or visit [988 Lifeline](#)
- Crisis Text Line: **TEXT HOME to 741-741** or visit [Crisis Text Line for Mental Health Support](#)
- [The Trevor Project Lifeline](#) for LGBTQ+ Youth: call **1-866-488-7386** or text **678-678**

The following resources should be utilized by curriculum developers in preparation for this course:

- [National Center for School Mental Health](#)
- [Child Mind Institute](#)
- [National Alliance on Mental Illness \(NAMI\)](#)



SUICIDE AND BULLYING AWARENESS

While suicide awareness and bullying awareness are two unique topics, research has found that bullying is a significant risk factor for suicide. While these two topics are associated in this training module, it is important to underscore that suicide is a complex behavior that is rarely attributed to one cause. All course attendees should leave this course with an understanding of the following:

Part A – Bullying Awareness

- Definition of bullying (see PA Public School Code Section [1303.1-A](#)).
- Description of the differences between cyber bullying and physical/in-person bullying.
- Warning signs of a student who is engaged in bullying.
- Warning signs of a student who is being bullied.
- Discussion regarding how bullying ties into the threat assessment process and when bullying may implicate nondiscrimination/harassment or anti-hazing requirements.
- Overview of bullying and its impact on student mental health and school-related outcomes (see PA Youth Survey linked below).
- **Brief** overview/identification of laws and policies related to bullying that may impact the employee. For example: PA Public School Code Section [1303.1-A](#) (see also Policy 249 for most school entities)²; [20 U.S.C. §7118](#); policies prohibiting discrimination and harassment under [Title IX](#) (103, 104 for most school entities).
- Activity or discussion that requires attendees to:
 - Identify their school bullying policy.
 - Identify their protocols for reporting bullying.
 - Identify their protocols for referring students who are being bullied and students who are engaging in bullying.
 - Identify local school resources to assist students who are being bullied and students who are engaging in bullying.

Part B – Suicide Awareness

- Overview addressing myths, misperceptions, and stigma related to suicide.
- How to identify students at risk of suicide, including information on suicide risk factors, protective factors, and warning signs.
- Things to consider when responding to a student who may be at risk of suicide.
- How to appropriately refer a student who may be at risk of suicide.
- Discussion regarding how suicide and/or risk of suicide ties into the threat assessment process.
- **Brief** overview/identification of laws and policies related to suicide awareness that may impact the employee. For example: [PA Public School Code Section 1526](#); [22 Pa. Code §12.12](#). (See also Policy 819 for many school entities.)

² The policy numbers listed in this document are based on the Pennsylvania School Boards Association policy numbering system. This numbering system is commonly used by school entities throughout the Commonwealth in their publicly accessible policy manuals. For more information or explanation of a policy reference, contact policyprograms@psba.org.



School Safety and Security Training Standards for School Employees

- Activity or discussion that requires attendees to:
 - Identify their school policies and procedures related to suicide awareness, prevention, intervention, and postvention.
 - Identify and understand the referral process for a student at risk of suicide.
 - Identify local school resources to assist students who may be at risk of suicide.
 - Identify national, state, and local crisis resources (see below).

Please provide the following resources/links to all attendees. The resources may be used by attendees who wish to deepen their understanding of Bullying and Suicide Awareness:

Bullying Awareness Resources for Attendees

- [Safe2Say Something Program within the PA Office of Attorney General](#)
- [A Multi-Tiered Approach to Bullying Prevention](#)
- [StopBullying.gov](#)

Suicide Awareness Resources for Attendees

National Resources:

- [Youth Suicide Warning Signs](#)

Crisis Resources:

- 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline: **Call 988** or visit [988 Lifeline](#)
- Crisis Text Line: **TEXT HOME to 741-741** or visit [Crisis Text Line for Mental Health Support](#)
- [The Trevor Project Lifeline](#) for LGBTQ+ Youth: call **1-866-488-7386** or text **678-678**

Pennsylvania Resources:

- [Prevent Suicide PA](#)
- [Services for Teens at Risk \(STAR-Center\)](#)

The following resources should be utilized by curriculum developers in preparation for this course:

Suicide Awareness Resources for Curriculum Developers

National Organizations/Resources:

- [American Association of Suicidology \(AAS\)](#)
- [American Foundation for Suicide Prevention \(AFSP\)](#)
- [Suicide Prevention Resource Center \(SPRC\)](#)
- [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration \(SAMHSA\) Preventing Suicide: A Toolkit for High Schools](#)

Pennsylvania Organizations/Resources:

- [Prevent Suicide PA](#)
- [Jana Marie Foundation](#)
- [Aevidum](#)
- [Services for Teens at Risk \(STAR-Center\)](#)
- [Pennsylvania Department of Education](#)



School Safety and Security Training Standards for School Employees

- [County Task Force Resources](#): By county, available contact information is provided for crisis, the Suicide Prevention Task Force, local chapter of AFSP, and other local mental health/suicide prevention resources
- [PCCD Pennsylvania Youth Survey \(PAYS\) - State Report](#) (See “Bullying and Depression/Suicide”)
- [PA Department of Human Services: Suicide Prevention](#)
- [PA Statewide Suicide Prevention Plan](#)
- [List of County CASSP and Children’s Behavioral Health Contact Persons](#)
- [Suicide Prevention Training Priority Topics Guidelines](#)

SUBSTANCE USE AWARENESS

Alcohol and other drug-related problems are serious health issues affecting almost every Pennsylvania community and family in some way, and the effect on adolescents can be particularly serious. All course attendees should leave this course with an understanding of the following:

- Current substance use trends in Pennsylvania.
- Signs and symptoms of students under the influence of alcohol or other drugs.
- Things to take into consideration when responding to a student dealing with substance use concerns.
- Things to take into consideration when referring a student with substance use concerns.
- **Brief** overview/identification of student and caregiver rights related to substance use that may impact the employee. For example: [42 Pa. C.S. §8337](#) and [§8337.1](#); PA Public School Code Sections [1306.2-B](#), [1319-B](#), and [1547](#); [35 P.S. §807.1 et seq.](#); 22 Pa. Code [§10.21](#), [§10.22](#), [§10.23](#), [§10.25](#), [§12.16](#), and [§12.42](#); [20 U.S.C. §7114](#); [20 U.S.C. §7118](#).
- Activity or discussion that requires attendees to:
 - Identify their school policies and procedures regarding alcohol and drug use.
 - Identify and understand the specific referral process for students with substance use concerns.
 - Identify and review their school’s Student Assistance Program/Team and school and community resources to assist students with substance use concerns (e.g., which school staff are trained to address concerns, how referrals to community resources are made).

Please provide the following resources/links to all attendees. The resources may be used by attendees who wish to deepen their understanding of Substance Use Awareness:

- [Pennsylvania Network for Student Assistance Services \(PNSAS\)](#)
- [PDE Resources on Alcohol and Other Drugs](#)
- [Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs](#)

The following resources should be utilized by curriculum developers in preparation for this course:

- [PCCD Pennsylvania Youth Survey \(PAYS\) information](#)



COURSES THAT REQUIRE ONE HOUR OF INSTRUCTION ANNUALLY

All school employees must be provided a minimum of one hour of training annually that includes the following topics. Below each topic is a series of standards that must be incorporated into the course for it to meet the requirements of Act 55.

EMERGENCY TRAINING DRILLS (INCLUDING FIRE, NATURAL DISASTER, ACTIVE SHOOTER, HOSTAGE SITUATION AND BOMB THREAT)

This Act 55 training requirement is ***in addition to*** other training or drilling required by law and this course ***must*** be offered ***in person***.³ Nothing in these standards precludes a school entity from offering this course on the same date as other scheduled drilling requirements and school entities may find it beneficial to conduct the course adjacent to school security drills. All course attendees should leave this course with an understanding of the following:

- Brief overview of the components and sections of an emergency preparedness plan⁴ and how it impacts employees.
- Brief overview of the communications component of an emergency preparedness plan and how it impacts employees.
- Brief overview of the components of incident command structure and how it impacts employees.
- Table-top exercise demonstration.
- **Brief** overview of law and policy related to Emergency Training Drills, as they relate to drilling requirements for school employees. For example: [35 Pa. C.S. §7701](#); [22 Pa. Code §10.24](#); [PA Public School Code Sections 1517, 1518](#), and [1310-B](#); [75 Pa. C.S. §4552](#); [20 U.S.C. §7118](#). (See Policy 805 for most school entities.)
- Activity or discussion that requires attendees to:
 - Identify the individuals responsible for their school emergency preparedness plan and the elements of the plan that impact their role.
 - Identify and review their communications plan and how it impacts their role.
 - Identify the individuals responsible (primaries and backups) for their school's incident command structure and the elements that impact their role.
 - Identify and review their role and responsibilities during drills, including role of employees in assisting substitute teachers, short-term staff, and other volunteers.
 - Review considerations for how students with disabilities are addressed in their school plans.

Please provide the following resources/links to all attendees. The resources may be used by attendees who wish to deepen their understanding of Emergency Training Drills:

- [PEMA School and Child Care Safety](#)
- FEMA: [Incident Command Structure for Schools](#)

³ Act 55 of 2024 amended [Section 1310-B](#) of the PA Public School Code to allow a cyber charter school to waive or provide an alternative training opportunity to address the in-person training required for this Emergency Training Drills section for any employee who is not physically located in this Commonwealth and exclusively provides instruction remotely. The cyber charter school must report this information in the annual School Safety and Security Coordinator report.

⁴ Sometimes called an all-hazards plan or an emergency operations plan.



School Safety and Security Training Standards for School Employees

- FEMA Course: [IS-100](#) – Introduction to the Incident Command System
- FEMA Course: [IS-700.B](#) – Introduction to the National Incident Management System
- [Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools – Technical Assistance Center](#)
- [Best Practice Considerations for Armed Assailant Drills in Schools \(NASP and NASRO\)](#)
- [STOP THE BLEED – Save a Life | Stop The Bleed](#)

The following resources should be utilized by curriculum developers in preparation for this course:

- FEMA: [Guide for Developing High-Quality School Emergency Operations Plans](#)
- FEMA Course: [IS-362A Multi-Hazard Emergency Planning for Schools – Independent Study Course](#)

IDENTIFICATION OR RECOGNITION OF STUDENT BEHAVIOR THAT MAY INDICATE A THREAT TO THE SAFETY OF THE STUDENT, OTHER STUDENTS, SCHOOL EMPLOYEES, OTHER INDIVIDUALS, SCHOOL FACILITIES, OR THE COMMUNITY (THREAT ASSESSMENT)

Pursuant to the PA Public School Code,⁵ all public school entities in the Commonwealth must establish threat assessment teams⁶ and related procedures, including ensuring awareness of these practices among students, staff, and parents/guardians. Behavioral threat assessment is a fact-based process for the assessment of and intervention with students whose behaviors may indicate a threat to the safety of the student, other students, school employees, other individuals, school facilities, or the community. This course may be offered in person or online. All course attendees should leave this course with an understanding of the following:

- Overview of the history and principles of behavioral threat assessment in school-based settings.
- Definition of Threat (See: [PCCD Model Threat Assessment Procedures and Guidelines](#) for Definitions and Key Terms).
- How to identify/recognize observable behaviors that may indicate that a student poses a threat, such as:
 - Physical violence toward a person or property.
 - Direct or indirect threats of violence.
 - Bullying that continues after interventions to stop the behavior.
 - Possession of weapons on school grounds or at school events.
 - Any statements or behaviors indicating suicidal thoughts or behaviors.
 - Any behaviors or communications that suggest the individual has engaged in research/planning related to carrying out a targeted attack; efforts to acquire means to engage in an attack; and/or end-of-life planning.
 - Any act, gesture, or statement that would be interpreted by a reasonable person as threatening or intimidating (e.g., overt physical/verbal intimidation, throwing objects, making contextually inappropriate statements about harming others).

⁵ PA Public School Code, [Article XIII-E](#). Threat Assessment.

⁶ While both PA Public School Code, Article XIII-E and PCCD’s guidance use the terms “threat assessment team” and “threat assessment” when discussing this topic, some experts recommend use of the terms “Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management Teams” and “Behavioral Threat Assessment” as more precise when describing the work of these teams. Your school entity may choose to use more comprehensive terminology when describing your threat assessment team and threat assessments.



School Safety and Security Training Standards for School Employees

- Unusual or bizarre behavior that would cause a reasonable person to fear injury or harm due to its nature and severity (e.g., stalking, erratic/bizarre behavior suggestive of mental health concerns or substance use, fixation with mass murder/weapons/violence, fixation with hate groups, terrorists, extremist material). This should include providing attendees with specific examples of behaviors, communications, phrases, or engagement with online platforms (e.g., social media) that an employee may observe or hear about a student using, which indicate that a concern should be reported.
- Role of the threat assessment team(s) and how it relates to school employees.
 - Ensure school employees are aware of who is appointed to their school entity's threat assessment team(s).
 - How to report threatening or at-risk behavior, including through the Safe2Say Program, and other school-based reporting systems.
- **Brief** overview of law and policy relating to threat assessment and how they relate to the employee, including a brief overview of state and federal laws related to confidentiality and information sharing (e.g., Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), etc.), and requirements for mandated reporting of situations that indicate a student is a victim of child abuse, in accordance with law (e.g., [23 Pa. C.S §6301 et seq.](#) and Policy 806 for most schools). Additional relevant laws include: PA Public School Code [Article XIII-E \(Threat Assessment\)](#); see Policy 236.1 for most school entities and Safe2Say Something Procedures, as well as related policies that may prompt a report: 103 (nondiscrimination/ harassment), 218 (student discipline), 218.1 (weapons), 218.2 (terroristic threats), 247 (hazing), 249 (bullying), 252 (dating violence); and [PA Public School Code Section 1310-B](#).
- Activity or discussion that requires attendees to:
 - Identify policies and procedures related to their threat assessment team(s).
 - Identify the process for engaging/reporting concerns to the threat assessment team(s).

Please provide the following resources/links to all attendees. The resources should be used by attendees who wish to deepen their understanding of Threat Assessment:

- [Safe2Say Something Program within the PA Office of Attorney General](#)
- [PCCD Threat Assessment Information and Resources](#)
- [United States Secret Service: National Threat Assessment Center](#)
- [Up End Hate: Warning Signs](#)

The following resources should be utilized by curriculum developers in preparation for this course:

- [PCCD Threat Assessment Information and Resources](#)
- [PCCD Model Threat Assessment Procedures and Guidelines](#)
- [PCCD Guidance on Communication and Information on Confidentiality](#)
- [Cyberbullying Research Center: Most Popular Social Media Apps](#) – examples of online platforms
- [StopBullying.gov: Social Media, Apps, and Sites Commonly Used by Children and Teens](#) – examples of online platforms
- [FBI - Making Prevention a Reality: Identifying, Assessing, and Managing the Threat of Targeted Attacks](#)
- [National Threat Assessment Center – Enhancing School Safety Using a Threat Assessment Model](#)