

# SCHOOL SAFETY LEGISLATION AND RESOURCES IN PENNSYLVANIA

## SAFE TO SAY HOTLINE

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

This program is run 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.

It allows anyone to submit an anonymous tip, a crisis center then reviews, assesses, and processes all tips. Then it is sent to school administration/law enforcement for intervention.

## SCHOOL SAFETY AND SECURITY COMMITTEE

The Pennsylvania Public School Code (June 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 grants. Recent amendments by **Act 18 of 2019**, **Act 67 of 2019**, and **Act 30 of 2020** included the **development of a model trauma-informed approach plan; model trainings for threat assessment teams; set training requirements for school resource officers (SROs), school police officers (SPOs) and school security guards; and created a grant program for school entities to address COVID-19.**

## SCHOOL SAFETY AND SECURITY GRANT PROGRAM

Established in 2018, 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. It 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.

## SAFE SCHOOL 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.



## SCHOOL SAFETY THREAT ASSESSMENT TEAMS

Act 18 of 2019, established school safety threat assessment teams in all school entities. These teams consist of school administration, teachers, school counselors, people with expertise in mental health, people with expertise in special education, school security, law enforcement, the school designee for the Safe2Say program, and a behavior health professional.

It also tasked the School Safety and Security Committee (SSSC) to research, develop and provide free threat assessment guidelines, training and informational materials, as well as model procedures and guidelines for school entities.



## SRO PROGRAM

Every police officer in a school must successfully complete the basic School Resource Officer Course of Instruction. Many schools across the state have SRO's in their buildings in partnership with their local police and municipalities.

# WHAT WE'RE CURRENTLY WORKING ON

## STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH FOCUSED GRANTS (HB2468)

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 (HB2022)

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.

