



September 5, 2023

Dear colleague,

As we begin the 2023-2024 school year, the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) and Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) want to provide important information and updates regarding state-required school safety and security training to chief school administrators.

Act 55 of 2022 mandated school safety-related training for all Pennsylvania public school employees. Section 1310-B of the PA Public School Code requires that all school entities provide employees with a minimum of **two hours** of mandatory training on any combination of one or more of the following topics, based on the needs of the school entity and aligned with training standards adopted by the School Safety and Security Committee (SSSC)<sup>1</sup>:

- (i) Situational awareness.*
- (ii) Trauma-informed approaches.*
- (iii) Behavioral health awareness.*
- (iv) Suicide and bullying awareness.*
- (v) Substance use awareness.*

In addition, school entities must provide employees with a minimum of **one hour** total of annual training that addresses both emergency training drills (including fire, natural disaster, active shooter, hostage situation and bomb threat) **AND** 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 (Behaviors of Concern).<sup>2</sup>

NOTE: All training may be provided through virtual/distance/online learning methods except for those on emergency training drills, which must be conducted in-person.

### **1. PCCD is Developing Resources to Assist School Entities in Providing School Safety Training to Employees**

School entities can meet these mandated school safety and security training requirements by either conducting their own [standards-aligned](#) training, utilizing a PCCD-recognized Act 55 training provider, or participating in training developed by PCCD and our training partners at Risk and Strategic Management (RSM) Corporation. PCCD and RSM are currently working to develop trainings that meet the SSSC-adopted standards and will be provided free of charge.

PCCD and RSM are planning to launch an initial round of online training courses aligned with the SSSC-adopted standards in mid-September 2023. While modules won't be available for every topic in September, every topic will be available for employees no later than December 2023. The

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<sup>1</sup> A copy of these standards is available on PCCD's School Safety and Security website [here](#).

<sup>2</sup> **Note: This requirement is for one-hour total for both of these topics combined, not one hour for each topic. For more information, please see the [Act 55 FAQ Guidance](#) issued by PDE and PCCD.**

first three modules that will become available online in mid to late-September are **Behavioral Health Awareness, Behaviors of Concern and Substance Use Awareness.**

In addition, a process for approving external Act 55 training providers is in place, and hopeful providers are able to self-certify that their training meets the standards on our [K-12 School Safety and Security Training](#) webpage. PCCD will begin posting a list of recognized providers to this website for school entities to reference as soon as possible.

## **2. School Entities Must Provide Annual Training on Emergency Training Drills to All School Employees In-Person**

In recent months, PCCD and PDE have received inquiries from school entities regarding the in-person training requirements related to emergency training drills. Current statutory requirements do not provide for any exceptions to the in-person requirement for the topic of emergency training drills for school employees. PCCD and PDE recognize that the structure of some school entities may make in-person delivery of training on this topic challenging (e.g., cyber charter schools, intermediate units, etc.). **Please note:** While state law mandates that training on emergency drills must occur in-person, school entities have flexibility in other aspects of training delivery related to this topic. For example, nothing in statute requires a school entity to train all school employees simultaneously (i.e., school entities could fulfill this requirement by hosting separate, building-specific trainings). A school entity also has the entire school year to complete these requirements. School entities are encouraged to consult with their solicitors on this matter, as well as consider collaborating with other school entities to identify ways they are structuring this required training.

An option for school entities to consider as they take steps to meet this requirement, PCCD will host regional ‘train-the-trainer’ sessions in collaboration with Intermediate Units, where School Safety and Security Coordinators and other school administrators can learn how to deliver the in-person emergency training drills that meet the Act 55 standards for school employees.

We anticipate that the in-person ‘train the trainer’ sessions will be offered in each IU region in November and December, with additional ‘train the trainer’ sessions becoming available in each IU region in March and April of 2024. This approach will allow for localized training resources to be available throughout the state. More information about these training sessions will be posted to PCCD’s website as available.

We encourage school entities to consider the training strategies and approaches that address these statutory requirements *and* best meet the needs of their employees and school communities. If you have any questions or would like additional information about Act 55’s school safety and security training requirements, please contact PCCD staff at [RA-CD-SSSC@pa.gov](mailto:RA-CD-SSSC@pa.gov).