Act 55 of 2022: Threat Assessment & Safe2Say
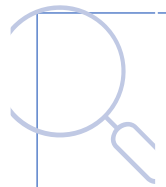
Webinar Session

January 2023

Today's Presenters

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- **Samantha Koch**, PCCD
- **Heather Masshardt**, PSBA

Welcome!

Today's webinar session will review some recent changes made to Pennsylvania's Public School Code related to school safety (including threat assessment) via Act 55 of 2022. We'll dive into the updated requirements for education/awareness for students, parents/families, and community members regarding Threat Assessment Teams as well as annual training for Team members.

In Focus: Act 55 + Threat Assessment

Why Focus on Awareness for Students, Staff + Community?

What's Changed? What Hasn't?

How Can Schools Meet the Letter + Spirit of the Law?

Where Can Schools Seek Assistance + Support?

Act 55 of 2022: PA School Code Amendments

- [HB 1642](#) was signed into law by the Governor as part of the FY 2022-23 budget on July 8, 2022, becoming Act 55 of 2022.
- 137-page legislation enacts numerous amendments to the PA School Code of 1949, including new school safety and security provisions.
  - Amends [Article XIII-B (School Safety and Security)](#) and [Article XIII-E (Threat Assessment)](#).

What Does Act 55 Cover?

- Survey of school mental health services;
- New, formula-based grant programs for School Safety and Security and School Mental Health;
- New School-based Mental Health Internship Grant Program within the PA Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA);
- New requirements for School Safety and Security Coordinators;
- Training and professional development requirements for current and future school personnel; and
- Threat assessment training, education, and awareness requirements.

In Focus: Act 55 + Threat Assessment

Act 55 of 2022 amended Article XIII-E (Threat Assessment) to establish new training, education, and awareness requirements:
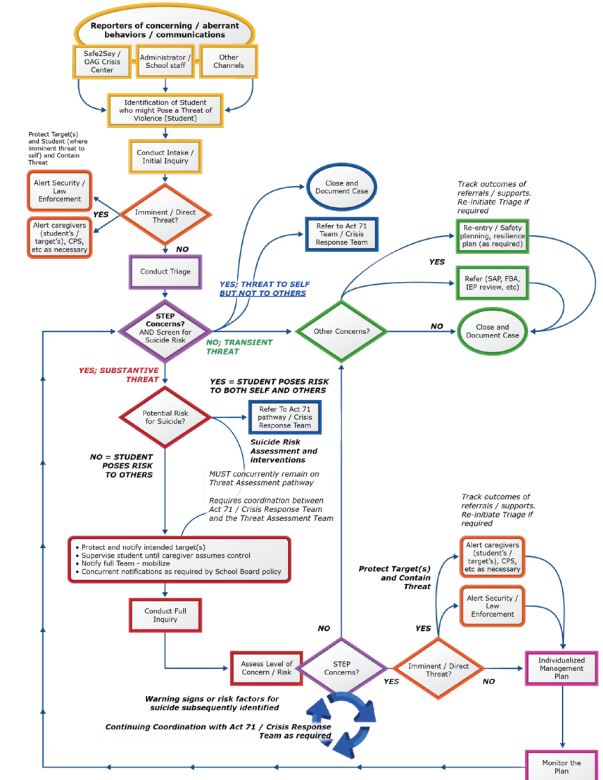
- All school entities must <u>annually</u> facilitate opportunities for members of threat assessment team to complete group or individualized training.

- School entities must also <u>annually</u> ensure that students, school employees, and parents/guardians are informed of the existence and purpose of the school entity's threat assessment team(s).

- School entities must provide threat assessment training per year to school employees (online or in-person).

Why Focus on Awareness for Students, Staff + Community?

Under Article XIII-E, school entities must annually ensure that students, school employees, and parents/guardians are informed of the existence and purpose of the school entity's Threat Assessment Team(s). Information must also be posted on the school entity's website.

- **Why students?** Decades of research tell us students are the most valuable tool we have in preventing targeted violence and addressing a range of other concerning behaviors.

- **Why school employees?** School personnel and other members of the school community also play a key role in identifying potential concerns and flagging them for intervention and supports.

- **Why parents/guardians?** Parents/families can be significant allies if you empower them to be involved and report rather than react. Don't underestimate what they see at bus stops or overhear at home.

What's Changed? What Hasn't?

Act 55 Requirement	Prescribed Length of Time?	Prescribed Content?
School Safety and Security training (employees) *"(vii) Identification or recognition of student behavior that may indicate a threat to the safety of the student, other students, school employees, school facilities, the community or others."*	YES. School entities must provide annual training on this topic plus training on emergency drills that must be at least 1 hour in duration COMBINED.	YES. SSSC responsible for developing/publishing training standards. Additional trainings and approval standards are forthcoming... See FAQ guidance on PCCD's [School Safety & Security webpage](#) for more info. Note: This training may be completed virtually or in-person.

What's Changed? What Hasn't?

Act 55 Requirement	Prescribed Length of Time?	Prescribed Content?
Annual notification, education, awareness for students, school employees, parents and guardians re: Threat Assessment Teams. *In addition to the requirements covered earlier, school entities must also provide age-appropriate informational materials available to students and staff regarding recognition of threatening or at-risk behavior that may present a threat to the student, other students, school employees, school facilities, the community or others and how to report their concerns, including through the Safe2Say Program; and ensuring that school employees are aware of the staff members who are appointed to the team and how to report threatening or at-risk behavior, including through the Safe2Say program (responsibilities of threat assessment team under 1302-E(b)(1)(iv))*	NO. While frequency is prescribed (annual), length of time for activities is not articulated in statute.	NO. School entities have fairly broad latitude in meeting this requirement. They must post information on their school entity's website.

What's Changed? What Hasn't?

Act 55 Requirement	Prescribed Length of Time?	Prescribed Content?
Training for Threat Assessment Team members *"Annually facilitate opportunities for members of the team to complete group or individual training consistent with nationally recognized best practices during paid working hours or as in-service training."*	NO. While frequency is prescribed (annual), length of time for group or individual training for Team members is not articulated in statute.	NO. School entities have fairly broad latitude in meeting this requirement. PCCD's Threat Assessment Training & TA Network has resources aligned with national best practice + Pennsylvania statutory requirements, but other trainings/resources can also be utilized by school entities depending on their unique needs.

How Can Schools Meet the Letter and Spirit of the Law?

There are great examples of resources, trainings, and practices school entities can use to meet the letter <u>and</u> spirit of the law...
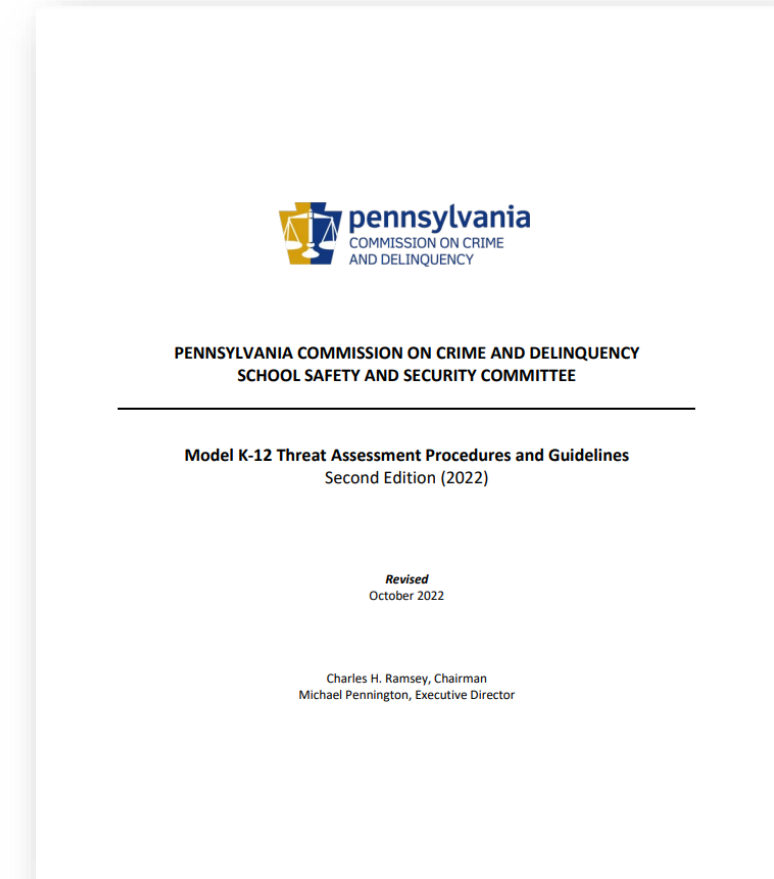
- **School-created trainings + activities that meet training standards** and use local resources (ex: Google forms).

- **Safe2Say student training materials** (posters, information on websites) – can piggyback with information about the Threat Assessment Team.

- **Embrace creativity!** Consider approaches like:

  - *Student announcements in the morning*
  - *Social media campaigns*
  - *Poster/video contests for students*
  - *Integration with health curriculum*
  - *Discussions following school safety drills*
  - *Notification about Safe2Say or other reporting hotlines in parent/family newsletters or with school climate survey communications.*
  - *Demonstration of reporting mechanisms at PTO meetings*
  - *'Low hanging fruit'*

How Can Schools Meet the Letter and Spirit of the Law? (cont.)

- **Don't reinvent the wheel!**

  - Review PCCD's *Model K-12 Threat Assessment Procedures & Guidelines (2nd Edition)*.

  - Explore resources, materials, and templates available on PCCD's *Threat Assessment* webpage and the PA K12 Threat Assessment Network website.

  - Connect with/learn from other school entities in your region or community (e.g., IU Safe Schools Leads, county safety councils, etc.).

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PENNSYLVANIA COMMISSION ON CRIME AND DELINQUENCY
SCHOOL SAFETY AND SECURITY COMMITTEE

Model K-12 Threat Assessment Procedures and Guidelines
Second Edition (2022)

Revised
October 2022

Charles H. Ramsey, Chairman
Michael Pennington, Executive Director

How Can Schools Meet the Letter and Spirit of the Law? (cont.)

- **Collaborate with others + be proactive.**

  - Remember that threat assessment is a proactive tool for school safety and security.

    - *Just as we all have worked to address suicide awareness and bullying prevention, we need to discuss threat assessment and remove the stigma of going through a threat assessment process to focus on the support and help it provides to a student who could be in crisis, rather than focusing on panic or disciplinary consequences.*

  - Foster + build relationships with others outside of your school entity who will be important to threat assessment/management/response (e.g., local law enforcement, EMS, behavioral health, juvenile justice, etc.).

  - You're not alone! Reach out for help and support when you need it.

    - *PCCD offers free technical assistance for Teams as part of the K12 Threat Assessment Training & TA Network initiative.*

Where Can Schools Seek Assistance + Support?

- OAG Safe2Say Something

- PCCD / K12 Threat Assessment Training & TA Network

- PDE Safe Schools

- PEMA School and Child Care Safety

- PSBA

- Other local, statewide, and federal resources
  - U.S. Dept. of Homeland Security: If You See Something, Say Something
  - U.S. Secret Service, National Threat Assessment Center
  - SchoolSafety.gov (Threat Assessment and Reporting)
  - Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (REMS) TA Center

Questions?

Please email **RA-CD-SSSC@pa.gov** for assistance.

Thank you!