

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
PENNSYLVANIA COMMISSION ON CRIME AND DELINQUENCY (PCCD)
3101 North Front Street, Harrisburg, PA

School Safety and Security Committee Meeting

August 7, 2024

MINUTES

Members/Designees:

Lt. Governor Austin A. Davis, Chairman
Ms. Janice Bart, Member
Maj. George Bivens, Designee for PSP Commissioner Paris
Senator James Brewster, Member
Dr. Benjamin Feeney, Member
Ms. Angela Fitterer, Designee for PDE Secretary Mumin
Lt. Kyle Gautsch, Member – after minutes
Mr. Mike Hurley, Member
Ms. Brittney Kline, Designee for Attorney General Henry
Senator Wayne Langerholc, Member
Mr. David "Randy" Padfield, Member
Dr. Gennaro "Jamie" Piraino, Member – after minutes
Dr. Kathleen Reeves, Member
Ms. Catherine Stetler, Designee for DHS Secretary Arkoosh
Dr. Helena Tuleya-Payne, Member
Rep. Regina Young, Member

Staff:

Matthew Conn	Elizabeth Locke
Camila Contreras	Levi Looks
Christina Cosgrove-Rooks	Betsy May
Amelia Dizo	Heidi Metzger
Jennifer Ely	Ian Murray
Christopher Epoca	Derin Myers
Alison Gantz	Michael Pennington
Heather Hewitt	Debra Sandifer
Daniel Hull	Kayleigh Siemer
Kirsten Kenyon	Camille Traczek
Rebecca Kiehl	Lindsay Vaughan
Samantha Koch	Emily White
Crystal Lauver	Teresa Wilcox
Jordan Lewis	

Guests:

Diane Acri, PA House of Representatives
Patrick Beaver, Pennsylvania State Police (PSP)
Erika Brunelle, Pennsylvania State Education Association (PSEA)
Andrew Christ, PA School Board Association (PSBA)
Gwen Dando, PA Senate
Stephen D'Ettorre, Office of the Governor
Michael Deery, PA Senate
Tobi Downing, Office of the Attorney General
Neil Hartnett, PA Office of the Lieutenant Governor
Kate Krueger, PA Association of School Business Officials (PASBO)
Scott Kuren, PA Department of Education (PDE)
Heather Masshardt, PA School Board Association (PSBA)
Michele Kelly Walsh, Office of the Attorney General
Shaun White, PA State Police – Homeland Security
Vicki Wilken, PA Senate

Call to Order of the August 7, 2024, Meeting and Adoption of Minutes

Chairman Austin Davis called the meeting to order at 2:00 PM and welcomed participants. A quorum of members was established. Moving to the agenda, Chairman Davis called for a motion to approve the April 24, 2024 meeting minutes.

Motion to approve the minutes from the April 24, 2024, meeting as submitted.

Motion: Young. **Second:** Reeves **Abstentions:** None. **Not Present for Vote:** Gautsch, Piraino
Votes: 13. **Nay Votes:** 0. **Motion Adopted**

Act 55 of 2024 Overview & Update on VIP/BOOST Program

Chairman Davis invited Ms. Kirsten Kenyon to update the Committee on the School Code and budget-related changes. Ms. Kenyon provided an overview of the school safety related updates that recently passed in partnership with the state budget.

Act 55 of 2024

This version of Act 55, or version 2.0, was adopted into law and made effective immediately on July 11. The bill, or SB 700, was an omnibus School Code bill with numerous amendments, including updates to the School Safety and Security sections of the law.

Changes to the Grant Programs

\$100 million was allocated for school safety and mental health grants for school districts, charters, area career and technical centers (CTCs), and intermediate units (IUs). The nonpublic school grant program was allocated \$20.7 million, which leaves approximately \$19.7 million for grants, and new to this year, Act 55 carved out approximately \$1 million to support PCCD's administration of the School Safety grant program.

Overall, the grants to public schools are outlined in the law as formula-based and noncompetitive – that is, each school district, charter school, IU, and CTC gets a specific allotment of funding. They can use funding on physical security enhancements, behavioral health improvements, or both. That is up to the school what they want to spend their funding on. However, the requirement that they meet Level 1 Baseline Criteria is still required prior to expending funding on all of the related eligible activities (i.e., the school must meet a basic level of service provision prior to expending funds on more advanced items or activities).

There were two changes to the list of eligible activities under the school safety grants. The first was to Activity 18 of Section 1306 to cover the broader category of school security personnel salary and training costs. The second activity that was added was to allow the use of school safety funding to purchase cell phone lockable bags. There has been a lot of recent interest in adopting these sorts of policies in schools, and it was added here as an option for schools. The only proviso in law is that any school entity applying for funding to use cell phone lockable bags must adopt a policy relating to prohibiting the use of cell phones during the school day. She noted that since cell phone bags are not a Level 1 Baseline Criteria activity currently, schools seeking funding for this activity will likely need to meet Level 1 Baseline Criteria first prior to implementing.

There were also changes to the Targeted Nonpublic School Grant program, which PCCD took over from PDE in December and issued earlier this year. New to FY 2024-25, nonpublic schools will be able to apply directly to PCCD for their school safety grants. In previous years, nonpublic schools had to apply through their intermediate units as an intermediary but Act 55 amended this process. Further, Act 55 altered the 5% set aside in administrative funding for IUs and redirected it to PCCD.

Updates to School Safety Coordinator Reports as required by Act 55

Every school entity in the Commonwealth is supposed to have an individual identified as the school's safety and security coordinator. They are tasked with coordinating all things school safety related within their schools and are also required by law to annually report to their respective school boards no later than June 30 of every year about how to improve security within their schools.

Act 55 is now requiring school coordinators to provide an additional segment to their report to their school board, in executive session, about the total number of school security personnel for their school entity, broken out by type of personnel (SRO/SPO/SSG), their building assignments, the trainings they have completed, and if they are armed. A listing of other individuals utilized for school safety-related duties within the school entity is also required to be reported. Once this information is provided to their Board, it is also to be provided to the Committee. This information is not subject to the Right to Know Law. To meet this requirement, PCCD will likely include this section of questions within the Coordinator Survey Report starting next year.

Another additional to the school security coordinator report is a minor change in the law referring to a very specific training waiver that only applies to a select group of cyber charter school employees that are not physically located in Pennsylvania and only provide remote teaching. Act 55 of 2022 requires an in-person training component for certain emergency training drills. This amendment in the law allows for an exception for this in-person training just for those educators that are completely online and aren't located in Pennsylvania. Cyber charter schools will provide an attestation to the Committee via the Coordinator Report that their employees were given a waiver or alternative training opportunity.

School Security Personnel for School Districts

This is a new requirement just for school districts, and it states that beginning with the 2024-25 school year, school districts shall have hired or contacted with at least one full-time school security personnel (i.e., SRO, SPO or SSG), that has completed their respective training to serve in that capacity, on duty during the school day unless they have been granted a waiver by the SSSC. There is additional language in the law addresses the school district's ability, at their discretion, to use school security personnel for extracurricular activities and assign other duties to them.

Act 55 of 2024 puts the responsibility on PCCD's Commission to establish the criteria for the waiver. The Committee is eventually responsible for issuing or agreeing to the waiver, but the duty is placed on the Commission to adopt the waiver criteria. The criteria is laid out in the law and says it is to include documentation that:

- The school district does not have a municipal police department or law enforcement agency that can provide an SRO.
- The school district has been unable to hire or contract with a SPO, a school security guard, or a police officer from an accredited police force.

The school district will have to provide an attestation that it acted in good faith and meets one of these criteria for waiver approval. Once that waiver is approved, it is good for one-year.

A member asked if the school district must meet all of the criteria to be eligible for a waiver; Ms. Kenyon confirmed that the law only requires selection of one of the criteria. The member continued that if a school district has multiple buildings in multiple municipalities, does each municipality have to say that they cannot provide an officer, or if one municipality says they cannot provide an officer, does that cover it? He provided an example of a school district who has schools located in five municipalities; of those, one is a PSP area, the other four do have local police departments. How would this work? Ms. Kenyon said the Committee will have time to determine how to handle these situations as waivers are collected.

Ms. Kenyon continued that because this personnel requirement and waiver are completely new, PCCD is in the process of developing a guidance, in consultation with the PA Department of Education (PDE), about this new requirement and will be releasing it shortly to provide direction to

school districts. A short survey section would also be included within the school safety funding announcement to lay the groundwork for educating school districts about this new requirement and to ascertain the need for waivers during the school year.

The guidance will be issued shortly to the field about the school security personnel requirement jointly with PDE. At the next SSSC meeting, the plan is to present an action item on what the waiver will look like and how it is to be filed. Following that meeting, the action item will be presented to the September 11 Commission meeting for its formal adoption. After all has been adopted, PCCD will build a formal waiver process on the website and communicate out to the field as to how they are to apply, if needed.

Ms. Kenyon noted that Act 55 set up funding opportunities that are both currently available and potentially available in the future to offset the cost of meeting this personnel requirement in case the district does not currently have full time personnel.

First, school districts can use their school safety grant funding to meet this new school security personnel requirement. Act 55 also set up a new School Security Personnel Restricted Account to reimburse school districts for the costs associated with the employment of one school security personnel. Eventually, this Committee is tasked with setting up this reimbursement process, which shall not exceed \$50,000 per school. Any school that claims reimbursement will be posted online.

She noted that this reimbursement process is subject to the availability of funding in FY25-26 and will not begin until July 1, 2025, which involves another budget cycle. PCCD will have more on this reimbursement process as it develops in the future, and if it gets funded.

A member asked if existing school security personnel, that are already employed by a district, will be eligible to apply for reimbursement? Ms. Kenyon noted that was possible. He also asked if funding was guaranteed in the FY 2025-26 budget for reimbursement; Ms. Kenyon indicated that funding was contingent upon allocation of funding.

Another member provided an example of a potential waiver request. Ms. Kenyon stated that she'll be interested to see how many school districts will need to apply for a waiver. The member clarified that if a district does not have one, the Committee should consider educating that district so that they may have the opportunity to become in a partnership with another municipality or police department.

A member asked clarification that the personnel requirement was district-specific and not building-specific. Ms. Kenyon confirmed that the law states that the one full-time personnel is just for the district and not each building.

She noted that the focus now is in driving out the approximately \$120 million in grant funding to school entities. The application process will open sooner rather than later to give them time to develop their applications.

In the meantime, staff will convene the Violence Intervention and Prevention (VIP) Workgroup to help work on a competitive solicitation for VIP, which received \$56.5 million in funding this year.

New to this year is an \$11.5 million carve-out in VIP funding for Building Opportunity Out of School Time, or BOOST programming. This program is set aside to support grants to support afterschool programming for school districts, CTCs, libraries, statewide youth-serving nonprofits, or community-based nonprofits. PCCD staff will work with the VIP Workgroup to develop a funding framework to address these solicitations and will have something for consideration at the next meeting.

Throughout September and October, the School Safety grants will be either reviewed (if a formula-based grant) or scored (if a competitive nonpublic grant), with the hope that a set of recommended

nonpublic school safety grants will be ready for consideration in November, and VIP and BOOST grants for consideration in December.

A copy of this presentation will be posted on the private meeting materials section of the website for member reference, as well as on PCCD's School Safety webpage as a resource for school entities to refer to.

FY24-25 School Safety Funding Framework

Ms. Kenyon shared a proposed School Safety and Security Grant Program Framework for consideration, which had been developed in conjunction with the School Safety Framework group, which reviewed the framework to ensure that the guidance herein seemed sound.

There were two allocations of state funding to support grants. The first was \$100 million set aside to support a noncompetitive, formula-based solicitation for school districts, charter schools, IUs, and Career and Tech centers. School entities are eligible to come in for physical security enhancements, behavioral health improvements, or both. It is at their discretion. The only caveat is that schools must still meet Level 1 Baseline Criteria, or the most basic level of services, prior to expending funding on more advanced needs.

Ms. Kenyon noted the addition of a survey section within the application for school districts to ask about the new school security personnel requirement and ascertain the level of need for waivers.

The plan would be to open this solicitation up as soon as possible and approve grant awards on a rolling basis (that is, as they come in and meet all program and fiscal approvals, PCCD would award the school their allocation). The application period would close on September 26 (7 weeks), but PCCD would work with any stragglers after that period.

The second allocation of funding was for \$20.7 million to support the Targeted School Safety Grant Program for Nonpublic Schools, of which \$19.7 million is set aside for grants. This is a competitive grant program. Nonpublic schools, including approved private schools and private residential rehabilitative institutions, can apply for up to \$75,000 for an up-to-18-month project period for the same activities that public schools can. For this year, municipalities, law enforcement agencies, and approved vendors will also be allowed to apply under this framework to support security personnel services in either public or nonpublic schools as it is the only competitive funding opportunity available.

Priority consideration during the review will be the same as in January's funding framework, when priority was given to applicants that are persistently dangerous schools; applicants seeking Level 1 Baseline Criteria improvements; and requests to satisfy professionally completed assessments.

The initial request process for the Targeted Nonpublic Grants will open in SurveyMonkey as soon as possible and close it on Thursday, September 26 (or in 7 weeks' time). This will give approximately a month and a half to develop recommendations for funding to bring to the SSSC's consideration in November 2024. At that time, awarded applicants will be directed to work with PCCD staff on getting their applications into PCCD's Egrants system to finalize their award. As a reminder, Act 55 of 2024 removed the requirement that a nonpublic school has to apply through their IU, so PCCD expects to be working with the nonpublic schools and other award recipients directly. To that end, PCCD also intends to supply materials and put on some webinars to educate everyone on these two solicitations.

Motion to approve the FY24-25 School Safety Funding Framework as presented.

Motion: Hurley. **Second:** Bivens. **Abstentions:** None. **Not Present for Vote:** None **Votes:** 15. **Nay Votes:** 0. **Motion Adopted**

Executive Committee Report

Ms. Michele Walsh shared an update on the Executive Committee, which met on May 16 and July 18. During both meetings, members provided reports and updates as to what the respective agencies are doing and seeing in terms of school safety.

The Attorney General's Office is currently in the process of compiling the annual statistics related to the Safe2Say program and will release that report shortly. She indicated that the AG intends to do some additional analysis of the data for this report – including some trend analysis on bullying through social media – that will be of interest to members of this Committee. Once that report is released, she will share it to the Committee for their consideration.

The Department of Education also provided an update to the Executive Committee on mental health supports that will be made available to schools in the upcoming school year. That information is also included in the meeting packet if there is interest in learning more.

The next meeting will be held on September 19.

At this point, due to Chairman Davis' departure, Executive Director Michael Pennington assumed chairing the meeting.

Coordinator Survey Results

Ms. Jennifer Ely provided an overview of the Coordinator Survey results. She reminded the members that the School Code requires safety and security coordinators to make a report to their respective school boards no later than June 30 every year about their school's current school safety practices and make recommendations about improvement. The coordinator also must supply that information to the SSSC, which is collected annually via this survey.

Overall, the general response rate was excellent this year, as it is the highest response rate received since the start of collecting this report information. This year, 714 out of a total of 839 school entities submitting surveys. School Districts and IUs continue to have the highest response rates.

Ms. Ely noted that the report includes information related to the general response rate, threat assessment teams, Act 55 school employee training requirements, school reporting requirements, school police officer information, and information on diversionary practices. The report will be included on the meeting materials webpage for member review following this meeting.

Some key highlights she mentioned:

- During the 2022-23 school year, schools reported 4,044 threats and risks. This year, school entities reported 15,427 threats and risks.
- Schools are taking the coordinator and employee training seriously, as approximately two-thirds of school safety and security coordinators have taken their mandatory training, which is due by February 2, 2025. Additionally, 94% of school entities reported that they are providing training opportunities to employees under Act 55.

Lastly, Ms. Ely pointed out the plethora of qualitative responses from schools related to general feedback, training and technical assistance, and funding, all included in the report.

General Updates

Ms. Kenyon provided members with an update of the status of the FY 2023-24 School Safety Grants that were awarded earlier this year. Most of the meritorious and mental health grants have been awarded and about two-thirds of the competitive grants have been awarded. All 29 of the Targeted School Safety Grants for Nonpublic School grants have been awarded to their respective IUs. PCCD continues to process these grants to get schools access to their funding.

She noted that there has been interest from the Pennsylvania Behavioral Health Council, which is an initiative run through the Governor's Office and established by an Executive Order to better coordinate mental and behavioral health services throughout the Commonwealth. They requested a

short, quick presentation on the FY 2023-24 school mental health grants roll out. She asked if there would there be any concerns with her making that presentation to help inform the Council how mental health funding is being used, generally, by schools, to which there were no objections.

Finally, Ms. Kenyon noted that PCCD was still working with the Legislative Budget & Finance Committee (LB&FC) regarding school safety grants and other school safety related topics pursuant to SR 178, which requires them to study what PCCD has accomplished to date school-safety wise and how it compares nationally. They are still on track to having a report ready by November.

A member asked if there was a vision for any grants for teen youth diversionary programs or further materials derived from the surveys? Ms. Kenyon responded that the coordinator survey report had that section of questions in it. She noted that diversionary practices and programs are an ineligible activity within the list of eligible activities. The JJDPC is also contemplating a funding announcement in relation to diversionary practices, which is under development. The member also asked if the eligible expenses will be under the noncompetitive solicitation, which Ms. Kenyon confirmed in the affirmative.

Status of Act 55 School Safety and Security Criteria and Training

Ms. Lindsay Vaughan gave an update on the School Safety and Security training implemented as a result of Act 55 of 2022. The Act mandated that employees have three hours of training annually and SSSCs have seven hours of mandated training on 11 topics.

PCCD has been working with the selected vendor, Risk and Strategic Management Corporation (RSM) since April 2023, and launched the first online employee training module in October 2023. There are six online modules available for employees and since October. Just under 98,000 people have been trained in one or more of those required school safety topics. Survey results remain positive – 86% indicate trainings are either very helpful or helpful. Less than 5% indicate that they are not helpful at all.

For the one session required to be taught in person – emergency training drills – ‘Train- the-Trainer’ sessions were offered so that folks can get trained so they can help their own employees. 36 trainings have been held and 786 people have been trained to deliver the in-person drill trainings. In addition, beginning in July of 2024, RSM began developing “advanced” trainings on these topics for school entities whose employees have already taken “baseline” training on a topic.

The SSSC trainings were launched on February 2, 2024, meaning that all SSSCs appointed prior to that date must take the 7-hour training by February 2, 2025. 733 individuals have taken the coordinator training in one of 28 sessions offered, and again, over 85% indicate increased knowledge in these topics after the training. Additional 6-8 trainings will be offered as in-person trainings this year, with four already scheduled on the training calendar. An online version of this 7-hour training will be launching this Fall.

For those who may not wish to utilize the training developed by PCCD/RSM, 91 folks have been placed on a PCCD recognized training provider list. These folks have certified that they offer trainings that meet the training criteria for school employees.

Supporting Youth Success Subcommittee

Mr. Pennington invited Ms. Samantha Koch to update the Committee on the status of the Supporting Youth Success Subcommittee. An interest form was disseminated earlier this summer, which yielded more than 160 interested responses. Staff are currently reviewing applications and are gearing up for the initial meeting in September. As a reminder, this subcommittee will report to the JJDPC and the SSSC. There was a strong response from schools and the education sector. As a reminder, this subcommittee will help oversee the federal grant from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention to assist with planning and assessment activities.

Member Updates

Mr. Pennington noted that the Pennsylvania State Police provided their annual Risk and Vulnerability Assessment Team report to the Committee, which is included in the meeting materials for review. PDE also provided materials on their \$5 million initiatives on supporting mental health.

Public Comment

Mr. Pennington invited any public comment. There was no member comment.

Adjournment

Mr. Pennington thanked the PCCD staff and appreciates the commitment of the Committee members. He stated that the next meeting dates will be held from 1:00 -2:00 PM on September 4, November 13, and December 11. He noted that he anticipated voting on a funding framework for the VIP and BOOST grant programs at the meeting in September; considering applications for an award for the competitive Targeted Nonpublic School Grant Program in November; and finally, in December, anticipate considering recommendations for award for the competitive VIP and BOOST grant solicitations.

Following the vote, the meeting adjourned at 2:57 PM.

Motion to adjourn.

Motion: Brewer. **Seconded:** Padfield. **Abstentions:** None. **Not Present for Vote:** Kelly, Langerholc, Piraino, & Robison. **Aye Votes:** 10. **Nay Votes:** 0. **Motion Adopted**