

Act 55 of 2022 Employee School Safety Training Standards

Q&A Guidance

Updated as of May 24, 2023

1. What are the new school safety and security training requirements for school employees?

Act 44 of 2018 established that all school employees in the Commonwealth receive three hours of training on school safety and security topics delineated in School Code every five years. Act 55 of 2022 amended section 1310-B of the Public School Code of 1949 and now requires all school employees to complete two hours of training annually on any **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. Please note that training on the topic of emergency training drills **must** take place in-person; all other trainings could be conducted in-person or online. The training shall comply with the standards adopted by the School Safety and Security Committee on September 28, 2022.

2. Which employees are required to be trained under this section?

As with prior school safety training requirements, all school employees must be trained under this section. To determine who is a school employee, school entities should review training protocols for who they currently train, review board policies, examine contractual agreements with service providers, and consult with their school solicitors to meet the training requirements under this section.

3. When do the new requirements for school employees take effect?

These new requirements took effect on July 8, 2022 and are in effect in the 2022-23 school year and beyond.

4. Where can I find trainings that meet the standards?

PCCD and the School Safety and Security Committee are currently working to develop trainings that meet the standards and when complete, training will be made available at no cost to attendees.

On March 29, 2023, the SSSC approved a new School Safety and Security Training Program vendor to design and launch training programs aligned with these adopted standards for school employees and School Safety and Security Coordinators.

NOTE: No School Safety and Security training programs for school employees or School Safety and Security Coordinators have been developed by PCCD yet; more information will be made available to school entities as the training program gets up and running.

During the time period that PCCD and the SSSC work to get a system in place to develop and approve trainings that meet the standards, school entities must undertake or continue the training of employees and should use the approved standards as a baseline to ensure that training undertaken for the purposes of Act 55 includes all of the required elements. This training could be conducted internally or in partnership with an external trainer/provider, but in any delivery scenario, the content must align with these approved standards. Your administration or your solicitor should determine whether training currently being offered meets the standards approved by the committee.

5. How do we get credit under section 1205.2 (Act 48) for the trainings we take this year?

School entities should continue to follow the same processes they would normally utilize in accordance with their professional development plans. The Pennsylvania Department of Education can provide guidance if school entities have questions or need assistance regarding continuing education credits under section 1205.2 of the Public School Code of 1949.

6. How does this impact other trainings on similar topics for school employees or school administrators?

Your solicitors should determine, pursuant to law, which employees are mandated to take a particular training.

7. When will PCCD expect to provide training opportunities for school employees to meet Act 55 requirements?

PCCD released a competitive solicitation on December 1, 2022 seeking eligible applicants to design, launch, and manage a new statewide School Safety and Security Training and Technical Assistance Program. PCCD anticipates being able to provide these trainings and have a system for approving external providers/entities by the start of the 2023-24 school year. (See question #4 for additional information.)

8. Are there any exceptions to the in-person requirement for the topic of emergency training drills for school employees?

No. Under current state law, all school entities are required to utilize in-person instruction/training of school personnel for the topic of emergency training drills. 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). School entities are encouraged to consult with their solicitors on this matter.

9. Act 55 states that employees are required to have a minimum of one hour of training annually on 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. Does that mean one hour total including both topics, or one hour each?

Act 55 requires that a minimum of one hour of instruction be provided annually, in total, on these two topics. In other words, the emergency training drills module is not required to be an hour long, and the threat assessment training does not need to be an hour long, but, between the two topics combined, training must be at least one full hour or longer. Training on these two topics can be done at separate times, and using different modalities, but the emergency training drills training must always be delivered in person.