

This page is a sample from The Council of State Governments Justice Center report on Collaborative Approaches to Public Safety. The research and compilation of state statutes was completed by the National Conference of State Legislatures, including background discussions with state legislative staff. It only includes an examination of education statutes and any cross-referenced statutes. It does not otherwise include reviews of statutes found in the criminal code. Special thanks to Lauren Heintz who conducted this review. © CSG Justice Center, New York, 2014

School Safety Plans: A Snapshot of Legislative Action

One common way schools and school districts address school safety is through the development and adoption of school safety and emergency plans, which may be required under state statute. These plans outline how schools and school districts will prevent and address situations that threaten school safety, such as incidents of violence, natural disasters, and medical emergencies. Plans may also address additional factors that contribute to school safety such as student codes of conduct, disciplinary procedures, and school learning environments. Depending on how prescriptive the statute is, some states include the roles that school administrators and community partners may play in the event of an emergency.

Additional trends in required school safety plans include the following:

- Requirements for various safety drills including fire drills, tornado drills, and active shooter drills
- Procedures for distribution of school safety plans and/or confidentiality of such plans
- The role for community and family involvement in the creation of plans
- Involvement of state departments of education and specific school safety entities in the development and implementation of the plans
- General school building and infrastructure requirements for school safety
- Grants and other funding opportunities available to support school safety planning
- Systems for anonymously reporting dangerous/violent activity or the threat of activity on school property or school grounds

At least 35 states have statutes that specifically require every school or school district to have a comprehensive school safety or emergency plan (AK, AL, AR, AZ, CA, CO, CT, DE, FL, GA, IL, KY, LA, MD, ME, MI, MN, MS, MT, NC, NH, NV, NY, OH, OK, RI, SC, TN, TX, UT, VA, VT, WA, WI, and WV).

School districts may choose to implement additional requirements for schools regarding their safety plans, including measures that address school safety needs specific to the area. States that lack statutory language regarding school safety plans may address the concerns in state regulations.

Since 2000, at least 17 states have passed legislation establishing school safety councils, committees, and/or studies. Membership of these councils or committees most often include representatives from the department of education, government officials, local law enforcement agencies, emergency agencies including first responders, juvenile justice organizations, school administrators, community members, and parents of students. Common focuses of such committees and councils include school safety assessments, general violence prevention, mental and behavioral health supports, and the creation of safety, security, and emergency preparedness standards. These committees or councils are either created to be permanently housed in a state department or they are structured to be operational for a specific period of time that culminates in a report that is submitted to a state governmental power such as the legislature or the governor's office.

Since 2000, the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) has become aware of the following states' school safety committees, councils, and studies that were created through state legislation: AR, AZ, CO, CT, ID, IL, IN, MD, ME, MI, NJ, OK, PA, TN, TX, VA, and WA.