



School Safety and Security Committee

# Assessment Criteria

# Overview

September 29, 2018

# School Safety and Security Assessment Criteria

## Background

On September 26, 2018, pursuant to Act 44, the School Safety and Security Committee (“the Committee”) adopted the School Safety and Security Assessment Criteria (“the criteria”).

As defined by law, a **school safety and security assessment** is a strategic evaluation of a school entity’s facilities and programs used to identify potential safety and security threats.

# School Safety and Security Assessment Criteria

## The Purpose

The criteria are intended to be used to inform both school entities and assessors as to the state of a school's safety and security preparedness.

The criteria are a compilation of best practices developed by utilizing pre-existing, established school safety assessment materials, and relying on the expertise of the Committee and related Workgroups.

***The criteria are not meant to direct school entities to have all of these best practices in place, but rather to guide school officials with respect to what they may need to do to create a safer, more secure learning environment.***

# School Safety and Security Assessment Criteria

## The Content

Pursuant to Act 44, the criteria encompasses three areas of focus:

- 1. Physical Assessment Criteria** – includes best practices with respect to the safety and security of the physical plant of a building.
- 2. Student Assistance and Behavioral Health Criteria** – includes best practices with respect to Student Assistance Programs (SAP), behavioral health services and school climate.
- 3. Policy and Training Criteria** – includes best practices with respect to written policies and internal procedures and training relating to safety and security.

# School Safety and Security Assessment Criteria

## Physical Assessment Criteria

The physical assessment criteria are broken into two main sections:

- 1) a review of existing physical security documentation; and
- 2) an evaluation and assessment of the vulnerabilities of a physical school building and/or the curtilage or surrounding areas of the school.

A vulnerability is any area that should be considered for improvement that can be exploited by an aggressor.

# School Safety and Security Assessment Criteria

## Using the Physical Assessment Criteria

**School Entities** may choose to use the physical assessment criteria to self-identify certain building vulnerabilities, gain ideas or understanding for improvement, or to guide them when undergoing an assessment utilizing an outside vendor. *The criteria are not meant to direct school entities to have all of these best practices in place, but rather to provide guidance and encourage thoughtful review.*

**School Safety and Security Assessors** who meet certain qualifications relating to physical security are eligible to register with the state\*\*. In order to register assessors must agree to complete their assessments in accordance with the criteria. *It is the duty and responsibility of any assessor to undertake an assessment of a school building in light of the criteria and produce a report indicating how the school might strive to meet the best practices.*

\*\*The registration criteria are currently posted on PCCDs webpage. The registration system will be operational and prepared to accept applicants **no later than** October 31, 2018.

# School Safety and Security Assessment Criteria

## Student Assistance and Behavioral Health Assessment Criteria

The student assistance and behavioral health criteria are broken into three main sections:

- 1) Student Assistance Programs (SAP) and related training;
- 2) Behavioral Health (BH) Services; and
- 3) School Climate.

As used in this guide, the term behavioral health encompasses mental health and wellness, as well as substance use.

# School Safety and Security Assessment Criteria

## Using the SAP and BH Assessment Criteria

**School Entities** may choose to use these criteria to self-identify certain areas for improvement within the realms of SAP and BH or to guide them when undergoing an assessment utilizing an outside vendor. **The criteria are not meant to direct school entities to have all of these best practices in place, but rather to guide school entities toward improvements in school climate, safety and security.**

**School Safety and Security Assessors** who meet certain qualifications relating to behavioral health are eligible to register with the state\*\*. Necessarily, the qualifications differ greatly for those wishing to engage in behavioral health assessments. In order to register, assessors must agree to complete their assessments in accordance with the criteria. **Any school safety and security assessment should yield an analysis provided to the school or school entity based on the criteria that can be used to assist the school in prioritizing projects and decision making regarding student assistance and behavioral health support.**

\*\*The registration criteria are currently posted on PCCDs webpage. The registration system will be operational and prepared to accept applicants **no later than** October 31, 2018.



# School Safety and Security Assessment Criteria

## Policy\* and Training Assessment Criteria

The policy\* and training assessment criteria are split into four sections:

- 1) statutory policies related to school safety and security;
- 2) criteria-based policies relating to school safety and security;
- 3) statutory training; and
- 4) criteria-based training.

**\*Throughout the criteria, the term "policy" is used as a general term denoting written documentation and could include a board-approved policy, internal procedure or administrative regulation, or plan, based on requirements of law and regulations and the advice of legal counsel.**

# School Safety and Security Assessment Criteria

## Using the Policy and Training Assessment Criteria

**School Entities** need to review the statutory policy and training sections to ensure compliance with required safety and security policies and training. However, the “criteria-based” policy and training sections are meant to illustrate areas where either physical or behavioral health criteria have been implemented and may require additional policies or procedures. **\*Again, the term “policy” is used as a general term denoting written documentation and could include a board-approved policy, internal procedure or administrative regulation, or plan, based on requirements of law and regulations and the advice of legal counsel.**

**School Safety and Security Assessors** who are conducting either physical plant or behavioral health assessments are also required to undertake a review of the policies, procedures and training documentation that schools have in place relating to the like criteria. (i.e. If you are *only* qualified to assess physical safety, you must also assess the policies and documentation that accompany those physical safety and security enhancements).

# School Safety and Security Assessment Criteria

In establishing these criteria, the Committee recognizes that every school is unique. Each school entity will have its own set of priorities, resources, and building characteristics that will determine which, if any, of these options for consideration may be applicable. Each school will need to balance the choice to implement or upgrade security measures against possible disruption to the learning environment and prioritize any projects based on their own unique needs. Schools represent a range of local and regional environmental, historical, and cultural influences. A facility's particular characteristics merit the thoughtful use of these assessment criteria in tailoring the school's plan to make its facility a safer environment for children to learn.

Should you have questions or concerns relating to the School Safety and Security Assessment Criteria, please inquire at: [RA-CD-SSSC@pa.gov](mailto:RA-CD-SSSC@pa.gov)