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CONNECTICUT SCHOOL SAFETY REQUIREMENTS AND GRANTS

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You asked for a summary of state public school safety requirements and any related state funding for school safety.

SUMMARY

State law requires each local or regional school board to (1) provide a safe school setting and (2) conduct crisis response drills once every three months with a drill format developed in consultation with local law enforcement. State school construction law requires any project for new construction, extension, or renovation involving a school entrance must include security infrastructure for that entrance in order to receive state approval. Lastly, the law requires schools and school districts take a number of steps to address school bullying.

In 2007 the legislature enacted a school security grant program that distributed approximately \$6.8 million to towns and regional school districts for security measures.

SECURITY AND SAFE SCHOOL REQUIREMENTS

Crisis Response Drills

State law requires local and regional boards of education (“boards”) to perform numerous duties, including provide “a safe school setting,” (CGS § [10-220\(a\)](#)).

Further, another statute requires boards to hold crisis response drills once every three months using a format that must be developed in consultation with the appropriate local law enforcement agency. The law allows a representative of the law enforcement agency to supervise and participate in the response drill (CGS § [10-231\(b\)](#)). The statute does not define crisis response drill, but the State Department of Education's (SDE) 2007 "Guidelines for a Coordinated Approach to School Health" suggests school districts should "use these opportunities to practice 'lockdown' and evacuation drills."

Security and Construction

School construction law requires any project for new construction, extension, major alteration, renovation or replacement involving a school entrance to include security infrastructure for that entrance (CGS § [10-291\(b\)\(5\)](#)). It bars SDE from approving any plans for construction projects if they do not include entrance security infrastructure. The security requirement was enacted in 2007 and started covering construction projects included on all priority lists submitted to the General Assembly for approval on or after July 1, 2008.

The law does not define "security infrastructure," but the Department of Construction Services (DCS) reviews security infrastructure provisions as part of a school construction project plan submitted by a school district. DCS officials say the school district officials decide what security elements to include in their construction plans, and DCS approves them. Regarding the security infrastructure, DCS reviews the plans only to make sure security is included.

According to DCS, the most common items are:

1. security cameras and related equipment,
2. secure keypad entry systems,
3. buzzer entry systems,
4. door and entryway hardware, and
5. wiring for alarms.

DCS administers school construction projects and state reimbursements to school districts.

Safe Schools and Bullying

State law requires schools and school districts to take a number of steps regarding (1) bullying among students in schools and (2) the overall social climate of the schools, which can contribute to a setting where bullying is more likely to occur (CGS § [10-222d](#)).

The law requires schools and school districts to adopt safe school climate plans to address bullying. The plans must (1) establish deadlines for reporting, investigating, and notifying parents and guardians about bullying incidents; (2) prohibit retaliation against those who report bullying; and (3) require school officials to notify police when they believe bullying conduct constitutes a crime.

Further, it (1) makes the school principal responsible for investigating or designating someone to investigate and address bullying whether in-school or out-of-school if it affects the school or students in the school or school district and (2) requires all school employees, not just teachers and administrators, to report bullying incidents they see or that are reported to them to the principal or his or her designee.

The law also requires schools to conduct school climate assessments, which include surveys to gauge the perceptions of students and staff. The State Department of Education (SDE) must disseminate the survey instruments and once they are completed districts send them back to SDE.

SCHOOL SECURITY GRANT PROGRAMS

Surplus Funds

[PA 07-208](#) created a competitive school security grant program using \$10 million in appropriated funds from the FY 07 budget surplus. It made \$5 million of the appropriation available for FY 08 and \$5 million for FY 09 ([PA 07-1, June Special Session, § 21](#)).

The grant reimbursed school districts for eligible expenses to develop and improve security infrastructure for school entrances, including surveillance cameras, entry door buzzers, scan cards, and panic alarms. Districts could also use a grant for (1) training school personnel to operate and maintain entrance security infrastructure and (2) buying such portable entrance security devices as metal-detector wands and screening machines and training school personnel to use them.

To receive a grant, a district had to demonstrate that it (1) had conducted a uniform security assessment of its school entrances and any security infrastructure, (2) had an emergency plan at its schools developed with applicable state and local first-responders, and (3) periodically practiced the plan. The security assessment had to be carried out under the supervision of the district's local law enforcement agency and use the National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities' Safe Schools Facilities Check List.

The grants reimbursed school districts for 20% to 80% of the eligible expenses for the security measures incurred after the law's effective date. The reimbursement percentage is based on the district's wealth as measured under the Education Cost Sharing statute.

The \$5 million for FY 09 was later reduced to \$1.8 million in a series of deficit mitigation acts ([PA 08-1, November 24 Special Session](#), [PA 09-1](#), and [PA 09-2](#)). The Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (now called the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection) administered the grant program and distributed the remaining \$6.8 million to towns and regional school districts under PA 07-208. The grant program expired and no additional appropriations were made.

Bond Funds

Also in 2007, the legislature authorized \$5 million in bonds to the SDE for grants to municipalities, regional school districts, and regional education service centers (RESCs) to allow them to purchase and install security infrastructure, including surveillance cameras, entry door buzzer systems, scan cards, and panic alarms ([PA 07-7, June Special Session, § 13 \(j\)\(6\)](#)). The authorization took effect on passage (the 2007 bond act passed at the end of October, 2007), but the bond commission did not allocate any of the money. Furthermore, the act included no grant application procedure and approval criteria.

In 2010, the General Assembly cancelled \$2 million of the authorization ([PA 10-44, § 309](#)), leaving a \$3 million unallocated balance for that purpose as of December 2012, according to OFA's list of bond funds available for allocation in FY 12. Although these funds could theoretically become available, statutory authority specifying how schools may apply for, or how the education commissioner is to distribute, the grants would need to be created.

JM:ro