



Washington Office of Superintendent of  
**PUBLIC INSTRUCTION**

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

# UPDATE: School Safety and Student Well-Being Advisory Committee

*2024*

**Authorizing Legislation: RCW 28A.300.635**

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

House Bill (HB) 1216 (2019) directed the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to establish and appoint members of a School Safety and Student Well-Being Advisory Committee (SS-SWAC, or the Committee).

The purpose of the Committee is to advise the State Superintendent, OSPI's School Safety Center, the Regional School Safety Centers (RSSCs) at the nine educational service districts (ESDs), school districts, and public and private schools on all matters related to comprehensive school safety and student well-being. Committee members and participants met on a quarterly schedule between 2022–24 to learn about, discuss, and make recommendations for the safety and well-being of Washington's students.

In 2022–23, the first year of the SS-SWAC biennium, the Committee worked to identify and discuss emerging issues regarding school safety and student well-being. Under Senate Bill 6620 (2016), the Committee is tasked with holding an Annual School Safety Summit focused on establishing and monitoring the progress of a statewide school safety plan. Held during the final quarterly SS-SWAC meeting, and in collaboration with legislators, the 2023 Safety Summit resulted in the formation of priority topics to inform the Committee's work for the second year of the biennium. In the 2023–24 quarterly meetings, further discussion of the selected priority topics led to the creation of the following legislative policy and funding recommendations related to school safety and student well-being during the 2024 Safety Summit:

- Increased mental health needs, suicidal ideation, and suicide prevention measures,
- Training for school staff on HIB and threat assessment,
- Address barriers to widespread implementation of restorative practices, and
- Education and interventions related to access to drugs and firearms.

## BACKGROUND

Senate Bill (SB) 6153 (2001) included a legislative budget proviso that established the Washington State School Safety Advisory Committee and School Safety Center to address the complexities of school safety. House Bill (HB) 1216 (2019) revised the School Safety Center and placed it in state law, transforming the School Safety Advisory Committee into the new School Safety and Student Well-Being Advisory Committee (SS-SWAC, or the Committee) under Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 28A.300.635.

HB 1216 (2019) required the Committee to submit a report to the legislature by November 15, 2020, and every even-numbered year thereafter, summarizing the Committee's activities during the preceding biennium. Under HB 1216 (2019), this report provides an update on the work of the SS-SWAC over the course of the 2022–2024 biennium, including prioritized recommended state policies and strategies for improving school safety and student well-being, an estimate of the cost to implement each recommendation, and the estimated cost for each recommendation.

## Members and Participants

The Legislature tasked OSPI with staffing the SS-SWAC and appointing the members of the Committee. OSPI sent requests for representative appointment to executive directors, supervisors, and other executive cabinet members of the sectors, organizations, and agencies identified in the legislation. Over the course of the biennium, the SS-SWAC has continued to add to the membership of the committee. A current list of members can be accessed on the OSPI SS-SWAC webpage.

## UPDATE STATUS

### Convening of the Committee

The Committee continues to meet quarterly in the same format as the past biennium to discuss matters of school safety and student well-being related policy and funding. Committee meeting notes for the 2022–24 biennium and the 2023 and 2024 Annual School Safety Summit Reports can be accessed on the OSPI SS-SWAC webpage.

The Committee met quarterly during the 2022–24 biennium and held Annual School Safety Summits on May 11, 2023, and May 2, 2024. This work culminated at the 2023 Annual School Safety Summit where priority topics were formulated. In 2023–24, the Committee focused on the priority topics from the 2023 Annual School Safety Summit. Meetings were themed to provide further understanding of these important areas. This work culminated in the 2024 Annual School Safety Summit where committee members and legislators created recommendations to the Legislature.

### Summary of Work for 2022–24 Biennium

The following summary describes program updates and topics of discussion throughout the biennium. This includes topics and projects that are ongoing.

#### *STATE AND REGIONAL SCHOOL SAFETY CENTERS*

In 2019, House Bill 1216 formed a statewide network of school safety and student well-being supports. Under RCW 28A.300.630 OSPI established a state safety center (SSC) which works in conjunction with the regional school safety centers (RSSC) established at all nine educational service districts (ESDs) through RCW 28A.310.510. Each RSSC is now staffed with a Behavioral Health Navigator (BHN), Comprehensive School Safety Coordinator (CSSC), and Threat Assessment Coordinator (TAC) who meet with OSPI program supervisors monthly to provide coordination of school safety efforts, including training, technical assistance, and resources in their respective region and throughout the state. SSC staff meet weekly and RSSC directors and program leads meet quarterly.

In the 2023–24 school year, OSPI’s SSC expanded statewide technical assistance efforts by offering virtual office hours twice a month in collaboration with RSSC staff. Open to all district staff, attendees can seek guidance on all safety-related topics, including relevant data requirements and student discipline.

## **COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL SAFETY**

RCW 28A.320.125 and RCW 28A.310.510 authorized the CSSC position, which was not funded by the legislature until the 2021 legislative session. Each ESD’s CSSC provides regional supports including technical assistance for districts and schools on the development of required comprehensive school safety plans, best practices for implementing required drills, training for school safety and security staff, and other school safety-related topics such as weapons on school grounds, gangs in school, and harassment, intimidation, and bullying (HIB). CSSCs and their respective SSC program supervisor meet monthly with optional drop-in office hours held weekly.

### **School-Based Threat Assessment**

RCW 28A.320.123 and RCW 28A.310.510 authorized the TAC position and required School Based Threat Assessment Programs be created and implemented at the district- and school-level beginning in the 2020–21 school year. Statute directs each RSSC and OSPI to provide training, technical assistance, and support for districts to implement best practices for school-based threat assessment programs in collaboration with community partners working in compliance with state law. Level II Threat Assessment is available to school districts from ESD’s on a fee for service basis. TACs and their respective SSC program supervisor meet monthly with optional drop-in office hours held weekly.

### **Suicide Prevention and Behavioral Health**

In 2020, the legislature funded the BHN component of RCW 28A.310.510 at each ESD’s RSSC to help school districts develop and implement comprehensive suicide prevention and behavioral health supports for students including accessing Medicaid. BHNs continually inventory the current behavioral health services, including community organizations and service providers, students can access and emerging or ongoing areas of need in their region, and share these findings with districts to create protocols, training opportunities, and technical assistance to better recognize and respond to student signs of emotional or behavioral distress as a statewide group. Suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention are included in this work. BHNs and their respective SSC program supervisor meet twice monthly.

### *SCHOOL SAFETY AND SECURITY PERSONNEL*

RCW 28A.320.124 modified and updated previous legislation which had established a School Resource Officer (SRO) program in Washington to include all school safety and security personnel: SROs, school-based safety and security personnel, and any contracted security services. The bill also added new training requirements for safety and security staff personnel. The CSSCs at the nine ESDs are delivering the new training requirements, while OSPI is carrying out the new data collection requirements. Training materials have been developed and trainings are delivered in

person and virtually. OSPI has also completed an initial data collection to measure staffing levels, which is available on the OSPI website.

## **HARASSMENT, INTIMIDATION, AND BULLYING**

RCW 28A.600.477 modified and added requirements related to HIB. Among the changes was the requirement for district HIB contacts, referred to as HIB Compliance Officers, to participate in annual training. The addition of information on hazing as well as information on transgender/gender inclusive schools also impacted the training. District transgender/gender inclusive contacts are also required to participate in the HIB Compliance Officer training. Multiple HIB Compliance Officer trainings were offered each year of the 2022–24 biennium in both virtual and in-person formats.

### **Gangs in Schools Task Force**

RCW 28A.300.490 established the Gangs in Schools Task Force to examine adult and youth gang activities that affect school safety under the guidance of the SSC, SS-SWAC, and Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs. The task force met regularly from 2008–2013, culminating in final recommendations that the legislature provide funding for future task force work and dedicated apportionment for adjudicated youth transition and re-entry programs, and identified the SS-SWAC as poised to address future issues and provide recommendations in line with comprehensive school safety planning. These recommendations can be viewed in the Gangs in Schools Task Force legislative report.

In 2023–24, SSC staff re-established preliminary meetings of the Gangs in Schools Task Force as a subcommittee of the SS-SWAC to identify statewide trends and emerging issues related to gang activity in schools, highlighting effective programs and practices that have positively impacted school safety, identifying persistent challenges and barriers impacting the work, and exploring potential solutions to strengthen current strategies and initiatives. The work of the Gangs in Schools Task Force is ongoing, with bi-monthly meetings scheduled for the 2024–25 school year.

### **School Safety and Student Well-Being Data Collection**

RCW 28A.300.645 requires OSPI to collect data to monitor district implementation of three mandated plans related to student safety and well-being:

- School-based threat assessment programs, required under RCW 28A.320.123,
- Comprehensive district and school safety planning, required under RCW 28A.320.125, and
- Plans for identifying emotional or behavioral distress in students, required under RCW 28A.320.127.

OSPI survey data assessed how many districts had established and implemented each plan, and how compliant plans were with mandated requirements under the law. OSPI collected the first

round of data through online surveys submitted between March 2022 and February 2023, spanning the 2021–22 and 2022–23 school years. Each district submitted a separate survey for each plan, resulting in all 321 school districts responding to all three surveys. Survey data showed that at the time of submission between March 2022 and February 2023:

- 81% of districts reported having a threat assessment program in place,
- 78% of districts reported having a comprehensive safety plan in place, and
- 54% of districts reported having an emotional or behavioral distress plan in place.

OSPI shared this data collection with the respective programmatic RSSC staff at each ESD to inform ongoing work with districts within their region. Over the 2023–24 school year, CSSCs, TACs, and BHNs have provided ongoing support to identify and overcome barriers to plan development and implementation efforts within districts who reported not having one or more of the plans in place. OSPI is in the initial stages of planning for a second round of data collection under RCW 28A.300.645, which requires OSPI to monitor these programs no less than once every five years.

### *ANNUAL SCHOOL SAFETY SUMMITS*

RCW 28A.300.273 requires OSPI and the SS-SWAC to hold an Annual School Safety Summit to establish and monitor the progress of statewide school safety planning and funding initiatives that focus on meeting local needs. This includes the implementation of school safety efforts such as training safety professionals and integrating mental health and security measures. The Annual School Safety Summits provide a forum to identify and prioritize recommendations from The Committee and included attendees from the state legislature, Committee members and participants, and OSPI representatives.

## **2023 SAFETY SUMMIT PRIORITY TOPICS**

The following six priority topics were identified during the 8th Annual School Safety Summit, held on May 11, 2023. These were created based on the utilization and review of the 2022–23 SS-SWAC presentations, 2023 legislative session, and 2023 School Safety Summit breakout sessions and discussions. The full report on these priority topics can be viewed in the 2023 Annual School Safety Summit Report available on the OSPI website.

1. Responding to mental health needs, suicidal ideation, and suicide prevention measures
2. Education/intervention related to access to drugs and firearms
3. Barriers to widespread implementation of restorative practices
4. School staff to receive training in HIB and threat assessment
5. Inclusion for students with disabilities
6. LGBTQIA+ Safety Supports

# RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE LEGISLATURE

RCW 28A.300.635 tasks The Committee with making recommendations regarding policies and strategies for improving school safety and student well-being. The Committee used the priority topics identified during the 2023 Annual School Safety Summit to guide the 2023–24 SS-SWAC quarterly meetings. This work culminated in the 9th Annual School Safety Summit, held on May 2, 2024, where attendees developed four recommendations, presented in order of highest identified priority.

## **Recommendation #1: Expanded Data Collection and Inclusive School Staff Training for Threat Assessment and HIB**

### *Goals*

- Increase district staff training in harassment, intimidation, and bullying and threat assessment policies and practices, including identification and response plans.
- Establish consistent state-wide threat assessment requirements for student-level data collection and student record storage and communication.

### *Elimination of Opportunity Gaps and Disproportionate Effects*

- Student-level data collection is not required for students who have had a level 1 or 2 threat assessment completed. Lack of disaggregated student data collection impacts district, TAC, and SSC staff ability to assess data for needs, trends, and disproportionate effects such as percentage of incidents involving students with disabilities or other protected classes.
- Without guidance on how districts can and must store threat assessment documents, records are not being consistently tracked in student information systems or communicated and shared with receiving districts if a student transfers schools or enrolls in a community or technical college running start or high school completion program.
- To reduce bias and expand staff knowledge and support capacity, increase training for all school staff regarding what processes must be followed during HIB investigations and threat assessments, what information may be shared with staff and/or families, and what is protected student information under FERPA.
- Classified staff and paraeducators who often interact with students in unstructured spaces outside of the classroom are infrequently required to be trained in HIB and threat identification and intervention policies and practices, leading to large gaps in systemic support processes.
- Require that threat assessment and HIB investigation teams incorporate implicit-bias awareness training into current processes and once collected, review disaggregated data to assess, identify, and address disproportionate applications towards students of color and students with disabilities, similar to discipline data review requirements.

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## *TECHNICAL ASPECTS*

- Student-level data collection of level 1 and 2 threat assessments, including demographic and behavior related to threat assessment, would require a tracking mechanism within student information systems and updated CEDARS guidance, neither of which currently exist.
- Requires funding and time for expanded staff training in preventative behavior support interventions, including education of common cognitive and behavioral disabilities, to reduce bias and increase staff capacity for implementing culturally and inclusive practices.
- Requires system to overcome social media reporting process barriers. School staff addressing HIB or threat-related incidents involving social media posts are unable to have harmful posts removed. Company reporting processes do not provide timely or thorough response options and there are no current outlets for district or agency staff to make direct reports to social media support teams for safety-related concerns.

## *Legislative Alignment and/or Funding*

- Data collection amendments would require district funding for training and implement new data collection requirements within student information systems.
- RCW 28A.320.123 tasks districts with establishing a school-based threat assessment program but does not require a student data collection element.
- RCW 28A.300.645 tasks OSPI with monitoring the implementation of threat assessment programs but does not require OSPI to collect student-level data on completed threat assessments.
- RCW 28A.300.042 requires the collection and submittal of student-level discipline data. While discipline can overlap with threat assessment process, exclusionary discipline cannot be assigned solely for the completion of a threat assessment.

# RECOMMENDATION #2: INCREASE SUPPORTS FOR MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS, SUICIDAL IDEATION, AND SUICIDE PREVENTION MEASURES

## *Goals*

- Provide districts funding to increase school capacity for implementation of plans for identifying emotional or behavioral distress, including prevention, early identification, and intervention work.
- Increase state and regional funding to ensure regional partnerships are in place that enable schools and districts to connect students with direct resources for mental health needs before they get to a point of suicidal ideation.
- Provide funding and capacity for districts to increase staff education and training on prevention, early identification, and intervention in behavioral and mental health needs.

## *Elimination of Opportunity Gaps and Disproportionate Effects*

- While adult prevention and identification training has expanded through proviso and Title IV funding, there continues to be inadequate student-level access to intervention supports for behavioral health services in rural communities and small districts.
- Districts facing funding cuts have lost staffing to provide critical mental and behavioral health supports. Ensuring dedicated funding is essential for districts to consistently provide equitable resources with fidelity.
- Scarcity of healthcare providers in small and rural communities are impacting district's abilities to provide essential school-based resources and supports.
- Schools with high turnover rates require additional time and resources to train new staff on prevention and intervention strategies, expanding opportunity gaps within these communities for students to be consistently supported by school staff.
- Cultural and family stigma prevents students from accessing help. There is a need for more positive messaging around identifying the signs in yourself and others.
- High turnover with community-based mental health providers impacting district abilities to provide supports. Providers who are district employees increases dependability and retention.
- Expand capacity for schools to establish school-based health centers or mental health specialist model as an effective way to offer private, affirming supports for students on school campus.

## *Technical Aspects*

- Districts must identify and address barriers and challenges to the development and implementation of emotional or behavioral distress plans, including funding and staffing shortages.
- Increased staff training and adult education on suicide prevention and behavioral health supports to address associated stigmas, bias awareness, and best practices for navigating culturally informed conversations with reluctant families and communities.
- Expanded staff education increases capacity for establishing and training student-led support groups focused on peer prevention and early connection with resources.
- Provide funding for two additional days of staff professional development within the school calendar year dedicated to staff training and education regarding mental health needs, suicidal ideation, and suicide prevention measures.

## *Legislative Alignment and/or Funding*

- RCW 28A.320.127 tasked districts with the creation of an emotional or behavioral distress plan, but full implementation may require funding for consistent planning, training, and staffing.
- HB 1664 (2022): Included significant state investments to increase the prototypical school funding formula for Physical, Social, & Emotional Support (PSES) staff including school counselors, psychologists, nurses, and social workers.
- RCW 28A.300.825 acknowledges the impact of secondary traumatic stress, or compassion fatigue, when staff are frequent caretakers for students in emotional distress. Increased funding in this work may benefit staff capacity to provide increased student supports.

## **Recommendation #3: Reduce Barriers to Widespread Implementation of Restorative Practices**

### *Goals*

- Establish dedicated state and district funding for the implementation of best practice positive behavior intervention systems (PBIS) such as restorative practices.
- Increase funding and staff training for ongoing professional development to build adult understanding and capacity for implementation of restorative practices at all grade levels within tiered systems of support.

### *Elimination of Opportunity Gaps and Disproportionate Effects*

- Districts facing funding cuts have lost staffing or do not have FTE to provide critical tier 1 and 2 preventative and responsive behavior supports within tiered intervention frameworks. Ensuring dedicated funding is essential for districts to consistently provide equitable resources and tiered supports with fidelity.
- Increased staff training on effective and culturally responsive behavior prevention and intervention techniques will increase staff effectiveness in preventing and responding to other safety related incidents such as HIB, and for increasing bias-awareness in an effort to address disproportionate discipline for students of color and students with disabilities.
- Current discipline laws require staff to implement alternative corrective action under RCW 28A.600.020, however classroom management and brain-aligned training and experiential learning is inconsistently implemented across teacher and administrator preparation programs to develop required skillsets. Systemic training and integrated implementation of tiered best practice positive behavior supports are effective prevention strategies for reducing disproportionate exclusionary discipline and align with the goals of HB 1541 (2016) to close the educational opportunity gap.
- Continued and integrated staff education for the ongoing academic embedding of SEL and CCDEI elements are essential for ensuring effective implementation processes. Research shows that restorative practices are ineffective if students do not feel a sense of community and belonging. Annual Healthy Youth Survey data shows students who identify within protected racial, gender-identity, and sexual orientation groups feel disproportionately more unsafe and unsupported in schools across multiple question topics.

### *Technical Aspects*

- Increase required learning standards for staff training on the continuum of preventative and responsive restorative practices, including brain-development aligned understanding of behavior, classroom and school-wide practices, conflict resolution techniques, and restorative conferences.
- Ensure staff training is ongoing, and implementation plans account for onboarding needs due to staffing turnover.

### *Legislative Alignment and/or Funding*

- Required statewide data collections of student-level discipline under RCW 28A.300.042 continue to show a disproportionate number of students of color and students with disabilities being assigned exclusionary discipline.
- RCW 28A.400.110 requires school principals to determine and annually review building disciplinary standards and establish criteria for when certificated employees must complete classes to improve classroom management skills but does not include necessary funding or guidance for provision or access to referenced classes.

## **Recommendation #4: Expand Education, Prevention, and Intervention Efforts Regarding Student Access to Firearms and Controlled Substances**

### *Goals*

- Expand community and parent education partnerships and practices as part of public health curriculum around safe home storage for firearms and controlled substances.
- Expand funded parent education opportunities for substance use prevention and intervention techniques and training on identifying and responding to correlating mental and behavioral health needs and supports.
- Increase Student Assistance Professional (SAP) funding at ESDs.

### *Elimination of Opportunity Gaps and Disproportionate Effects*

- This recommendation correlates with Recommendation #2: Increase Supports for Mental Health Needs, Suicidal Ideation, and Suicide Prevention Measures.
- Unrestricted or unmonitored access to weapons and substances are a common acquisition opportunity for students, increasing the risk for restricted items to impact schools. Increasing home safety practices increases school safety and student well-being initiatives.
- Increased funding and capacity for SAPs will increase regional supports for districts and schools, especially in regions with limited access to community-based service providers.

### *Technical Aspects*

- Implementation of strategic and tiered partnerships with local community organizations, including safety and health agencies, to coordinate preventative and responsive community education and programming.
- Conduct community and family needs assessment to identify trends, gaps, and barriers regarding parent and community education and training opportunities.

### *Legislative Alignment and/or Funding*

- Alignment with RCW 28A.320.123, RCW 28A.320.125, and RCW 28A.320.127 requiring district implementation of school safety and student well-being plans.

- OSPI's report on Opioid-Related Overdose Policy Guidelines and Training in The School Setting and RCW 69.41.095 provide guidance regarding access to and school-based education for overdose reversal medications such as Naloxone.

## **CONCLUSION & NEXT STEPS**

The Committee has met the legislative requirements set forth under HB 1216 (2019) during 2022–24 biennium. The Committee met quarterly, discussed and researched matters related to school safety and student well-being, and provided recommendations for funding and policy.

The work of the Committee is ongoing. The 2024–25 year will be focused on learning and discussing topics and issues of importance related to school safety and well-being. The 2025 Annual School Safety Summit will be utilized to create priority topics for the committee to focus on during the 2025–26 year. The 2026 Safety Summit will utilize the work done over the previous biennium to create recommendations for the 2026 School Safety and Student Well-Being Advisory Committee Legislative Report Update.

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