

CHAPTER 218

AN ACT establishing the School Safety and Security Task Force.

BE IT ENACTED *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:*

1. a. There is established the School Safety and Security Task Force. The purpose of the task force shall be to study and develop recommendations to improve school safety and security, and to ensure a safe learning environment for students and employees.

b. The task force shall consist of 17 members as follows:

(1) the Commissioner of Education, or a designee;

(2) the Director of the Office of Homeland Security, or a designee;

(3) the Chief Executive Officer of the New Jersey Schools Development Authority, or a designee;

(4) the Chief School Administrator of a nonpublic school;

(5) eight members appointed by the Governor including one each from the New Jersey Association of School Business Officials, the New Jersey Education Association, the New Jersey School Boards Association, the New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities, the New Jersey Public Charter Schools Association, the New Jersey Association of School Administrators, the New Jersey College and University Public Safety Association, and the New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association; and

(6) five members of the public, three of whom have demonstrated expertise in the development or implementation of school security standards or technology, one of whom is an active or retired law enforcement officer, and one of whom is an active or retired mental health professional. The members of the public pursuant to this subsection shall be appointed by the Governor, upon consideration of the recommendations of the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the General Assembly.

2. Appointments to the task force shall be made within 30 days of the effective date of this act. Vacancies in the membership of the task force shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointments were made. Members of the task force shall serve without compensation but shall be entitled to reimbursement for expenses actually incurred in the performance of their duties within the limits of funds made available to the task force for its purposes.

3. a. The task force shall organize within 30 days after the appointment of its members and shall select a chairperson and a vice-chairperson from among its members and a secretary who need not be a member of the task force.

b. The presence of five members appointed to the task force shall constitute a quorum to conduct official task force business. Any recommendations of the task force shall be approved by a majority of the members present.

4. Staff and related support services shall be provided to the task force by the Department of Education. The task force shall also be entitled to call to its assistance and avail itself of the service of the employees of any State, county, or municipal department, board, bureau, commission, or agency as it may require and as may be available to it for its purposes.

5. a. It shall be the duty of the task force to identify potential breaches of security in the public schools and make recommendations to improve school safety and security. The issues studied by the task force shall include, but are not limited to:

(1) placing screening systems at school entrances;

- (2) stationing school resource officers in each school building;
- (3) improving response times to emergency situations, including lockdowns, active shooter, and bomb threats;
- (4) requiring advanced student and visitor identification cards;
- (5) using biometric, retina, or other advanced recognition systems for authorized entrance into school buildings;
- (6) the effectiveness of installing panic alarms in school buildings to alert local law enforcement authorities to emergency situations, required under “Alyssa’s Law,” P.L.2019, c.33;
- (7) scheduling periodic patrols of school buildings and grounds by local law enforcement officers;
- (8) hardening the school perimeter and building entryways; and
- (9) considering strategies to ensure the needs of students with disabilities are reflected in all areas of emergency planning and response measures.

b. The task force shall review and develop recommendations on building security and assessment standards for existing school facilities and new construction, including, but not limited to, standards for:

- (1) architectural design for new construction;
- (2) assessing and abating security risks in existing school facilities;
- (3) emergency communication plans;
- (4) staff training; and
- (5) addressing elevated risk factors, including proximity to a chemical facility or nuclear power plant.

c. In developing its recommendations, the task force shall research effective strategies that have been employed in other states and refer to and incorporate existing State research, data, recommendations, and standards, including the July 2015 report and recommendations of the New Jersey School Security Task Force.

d. The task force is authorized, within the limits of funds appropriated or otherwise made available to it for its purpose, to commission professional engineering firms and certified information systems professionals in identifying, interviewing, researching, and documenting best security practices.

6. The task force shall issue a final report of its findings and recommendations, including any recommended legislation, to the Governor, to the Legislature pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1), and to the State Board of Education no later than six months after its organizational meeting.

7. This act shall take effect immediately and the task force shall expire upon the issuance of the final report.

Approved January 8, 2024.