

REPORT TO THE HOUSE EDUCATION COMMITTEE OF THE LOUISIANA LEGISLATURE



**Response to House Resolution 218
of the 2022 Regular Session**

FROM THE LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OVERVIEW OF THE RESOLUTION

[House Resolution 218](#) of the Regular Session of the 2022 Louisiana Legislature urges and requests the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) to study school safety issues and submit a written report of findings and conclusions, including any recommendations for related legislation, to the House Committee on Education not later than sixty days prior to the beginning of the 2023 Regular Session of the Legislature. LDOE shall consult with the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (GOHSEP) when conducting this study and preparing the report.

Reasons for the request, as stated in the Resolution, follow:

- The Louisiana House of Representatives recognizes and acknowledges that school safety is of the highest importance.
- [R.S. 17:416.16](#), requires school crisis management and response plans, including requirements relative to their preparation, content, review, revision, and rehearsal.
- [R.S. 17:416.19](#), requires a public school system that has entered into an agreement with a local law enforcement agency to provide for school resource officers to annually report to the state Department of Education the total number of school resource officers provided to the system.
- In light of recent incidents of school violence, it is important that the Louisiana House of Representatives be informed as to the measures being taken at the local level relative to school safety and as to compliance with laws relative to school safety.

BACKGROUND

The Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) and school systems are responsible for the safety and care of students and educators during emergency situations such as natural disasters or other potential hazards.

The [Emergency Preparedness and Recovery webpage](#) provides resources for schools as well as an Emergency Preparedness and Recovery Dashboard to collect information that will enable LDOE to support school systems with emergency management in Louisiana schools.

All school systems are encouraged to designate an Emergency Preparedness and Recovery Point of Contact. This contact serves as the person responsible for entering and maintaining emergency preparedness and recovery information for each school system.

School Safety and Emergency Operation Plans

Louisiana law ([RS 17:416.16](#)) mandates that all elementary and secondary public schools prepare, maintain, and exercise a crisis management and response plan to help ensure every student, teacher, and school employee is in a safe and secure facility and prepared to respond in the event of an emergency or disaster incident.

These plans should be developed collaboratively with local law enforcement, fire, public safety, and emergency preparedness officials. The plan should be reviewed annually and revised as needed. The plan should be submitted by the school administrator to the local school superintendent for approval annually. The local school superintendent makes an annual report to the local governing authority on the status of each plan of the school system. Each school administrator should conduct a safety drill to rehearse components of the plan within the first thirty days of school.

Grant to Schools for Emergency Management (GSEM)

The U.S. Department of Education has awarded Grants to States for the School Emergency Management ([GSEM](#)) program funds to the LDOE in partnership with LSU's National Center for Biomedical Research and Training/Academy of Counter-Terrorist Education (LSU NCBRT/ACE). The goal of the program is to provide training and technical assistance to school systems for the development and implementation of high-quality school Emergency Operations Plans (EOPs).

For new schools and schools that haven't yet established their EOPs, the program will offer EOP development workshops to help prepare and provide resources and best practices to develop their EOPs. For school systems that already have EOPs, the program will provide expert review and feedback to schools on their EOPs. The review process will identify strengths and recommend areas of improvement in the EOP. Additionally, the review will ensure adequate assistance from community partners or response agencies identified in the EOP.

After EOPs are reviewed, the program will provide technical assistance workshops that will walk schools/school systems through developing training and exercise plans in support of their EOPs to ensure that all stakeholders are prepared to respond when an emergency happens.

Louisiana Center for Safe Schools

GOHSEP has established the [Louisiana Center for Safe Schools](#) website, a virtual resource library to connect local stakeholders for emergency preparedness planning, training, execution, recovery, and reporting. The Louisiana Center for Safe Schools provides school communities and their school safety partners with quality information and resources by identifying and promoting strategies, practices, and programs that support safe schools for all as part of the total academic mission. The intent is for the Louisiana Center for Safe Schools to serve as the State School Safety Center while receiving acknowledgement from the Department of Homeland Security and the US Department of Education. With its inception, The Louisiana Center for Safe Schools also granted GOHSEP participation in the National School Safety Alliance, which has provided access to applied best practices from all participating school safety centers across the country. GOHSEP seeks to expand the Louisiana Center for Safe Schools beyond a virtual repository and into a physical reality able to provide research, guidance, and solutions to the school safety concerns of Louisiana.

School Safety Collaborative

GOHSEP has established a monthly call to identify and coordinate applicable programs and services falling within the scope of work for more safe and secure learning environments. GOHSEP and its partners discuss policies, laws, capabilities, funding, and training that build resiliency and address Louisiana school's safety and security issues. These monthly collaborative calls have been a jumpstart to strategic school safety conversations in Louisiana. LDOE staff are members of this collaborative.

School Safety Task Force

GOHSEP has created the School Safety Task Force in response to the heightened concerns following the Uvalde, Texas tragedy. It is a working group of primary stakeholders best suited to enhance and improve the state of: planning, preparing, reporting, preventing, protecting, responding, and recovering from all hazards affecting K-12 campuses in Louisiana. The multidisciplinary group is collaborating to identify recommendations for: organizational structures, planning/assessment, legislation, behavioral/mental health, technology, and funding. The School Safety Task Force will provide recommendations regarding school safety to Governor John Bel Edwards. LDOE staff are members of this task force.

School Safety Summit

The Louisiana Department of Education, in coordination with the Louisiana State Police, hosted the inaugural Louisiana [School Safety Summit](#) on Thursday, August 4, 2022, in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. This free event was designed to bring school system leaders, local and state law enforcement, governmental agencies, and mental health providers together for an opportunity to share and learn best practices around school safety and emergency preparedness. The Department intends to host the second annual School Safety Summit in the summer of 2023.

DATA ANALYSIS

In November 2022, the LDOE conducted an on-line survey of Local Education Agencies (LEAs), Public Charter Schools, and Non-public Schools. Sixty eight LEAs, the Special School District (SSD), and ten Charter Schools responded to the survey; there were no responses from Non-public schools.

The responses from LEAs, SSD, and Charter schools represent 1257 schools; there are a total of 1,729 schools statewide.

There are 839 School Resource Officers employed by schools in the following grade bands:

Grade Level	Number of School Resource Officers
Elementary Schools (K-5 or K-6)	160
Middle Schools (6-8)	119.5
High Schools (9-12)	173.5
K-8	50
K-12	269
6-12	46
Other	21

Schools collaborated with local agencies to prepare school crisis management and response plans as follows:

Agency	Number of Schools
Local Law Enforcement	1,010
Fire	881
Public Safety	685
Emergency Preparedness Officials	747

Schools identified contents of crisis management and response plans as follows:

Crisis Management and Response plans:	Number of Schools that include this item
Include preventing the loss of life and the injury of students and teachers and other school employees.	1112
Detail the roles and responsibilities of each school employee.	1067
Detail the relevant coordination agreements, services, and security measures of a school.	991
Provide for parental notification in the event of a shooting or other violent incident or emergency situation.	1072

- 1,111 school principals have reviewed and revised the plan at least annually.
- 1,066 principals have submitted the plan in writing to the local superintendent or governing authority for approval at least annually, including upon revision.
- 50 superintendents have made an annual report to the public schools governing authority on the status of the plan of each school under the governing authority's jurisdiction.
- 1,211 principals have conducted a safety drill within the first thirty days of the school year.
- 992 principals have submitted a written report summarizing the details of the drill to the local superintendent or governing authority.
- 76 of the 79 respondents reported that the principal notifies all teachers and other school employees when revisions are made to the plan.
- 1,019 plans include the provision that classroom doors with locks that are in compliance with all fire safety standards remain locked during instructional time and that a locked door shall not obstruct egress.
- 61 of the 79 respondents reported that the school resource officer (SRO) participated in preparing and reviewing the plan.
- 1,100 principals have provided in-service training for all teachers and school employees pertaining to the plan.
- 1,102 principals have a copy of the approved plan in his/her office.

Principals shared a copy of the plan with others as follows:

Board/Agency	Number of Schools
President of the School Board or Governing Authority	667
Chief of Police or Sheriff	894
Fire Chief	670
Local Emergency Preparedness Office	610

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Louisiana Center for Safe Schools should be recognized as the formal framework to support schools in providing a safe, healthy, and supportive learning environment for all students and staff. Consideration should also be given to the establishment of an Advisory Board for the Louisiana Center for Safe Schools.

The School Safety Task Force has developed the following recommendations for potential legislation and/or policy enhancements:

- Amend [RS 17:416.16](#) to require public charter schools and parochial schools to develop crisis management and response plans.
- Whole community planning at the school system level to develop and/or update the Emergency Operations Plan (EOPs).
 - Review of school EOPs by Parish OHSEP.
 - Require all plans be stored at the school system level.
 - Require local schools to submit a copy of the plan to the school system, local law enforcement, and with the LA Center for Safe Schools.
 - Reporting of EOP compliance to the LA Center for Safe Schools by the school system.
- Require mandatory training and practice drills on the school EOP and require LEAs to report training and drills to the LA Center for Safe Schools.
- Require approved Active Shooter Training for all Louisiana Law Enforcement, K-12 Teachers, and Administrators to be completed annually.
- Through the LA Center for Safe Schools, set minimum site assessment standards or provide approved models (University of Virginia Model or others) that each school must follow.
- Require all schools, including charter schools and parochial schools, to have a physical site security assessment that is reviewed at least once annually. The assessments and reviews should be completed as a collaborative effort between the local school systems and local first responders.
- Require a School Resource Officer (SRO) on duty at every K-12 campus on all school days.
- Require Memorandum of Agreements (MOA) with a local law enforcement agency and schools to outline expectations for school resource officers. The agreed upon MOA shall be recorded by the principal and superintendent along with the governing law enforcement agencies' administration.
- Require advanced Crisis Intervention training for SROs approved by the Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) council.

- Require Crisis Intervention training to students, teachers, and administrators provided by POST qualified SRO.
- Require all K-12 school websites to prominently display the LA Center for Safe Schools website: <http://lasafeschools.la.org>
- Establish School Threat Reporting and Behavioral Health requirements for schools.