

VIRGINIA ACTS OF ASSEMBLY -- 2001 SESSION

CHAPTER 440

An Act to amend and reenact §§ 9-173.21 and 22.1-278.1 of the Code of Virginia, relating to school safety audits.

[H 1587]

Approved March 20, 2001

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That §§ 9-173.21 and 22.1-278.1 of the Code of Virginia are amended and reenacted as follows:

§ 9-173.21. Virginia Center for School Safety created; duties.

A. From such funds as may be appropriated, the Virginia Center for School Safety is hereby established within the Department of Criminal Justice Services and shall be referred to in this section as the Center. The Center shall:

1. Provide training for Virginia public school personnel in school safety and the effective identification of students who may be at risk for violent behavior and in need of special services or assistance;

2. Serve as a resource and referral center for Virginia school divisions by conducting research, sponsoring workshops, and providing information regarding current school safety concerns, such as conflict management and peer mediation, school facility design and technology, current state and federal statutory and regulatory school safety requirements, and legal and constitutional issues regarding school safety and individual rights;

3. Maintain and disseminate information to local school divisions on effective school safety initiatives in Virginia and across the nation;

4. Collect, analyze, and disseminate various Virginia school safety data, including school safety audit information *submitted to it pursuant to § 22.1-278.1*, collected by the Department;

5. Encourage the development of partnerships between the public and private sectors to promote school safety in Virginia;

6. Provide technical assistance to Virginia school divisions in the *development and* implementation of initiatives promoting school safety; and

7. Develop a memorandum of understanding between the Commissioner of the Department of Criminal Justice Services and the Superintendent of Public Instruction to ensure collaboration and coordination of roles and responsibilities in areas of mutual concern, such as school safety audits and crime prevention.

B. All agencies of the Commonwealth shall cooperate with the Center and, upon request, assist the Center in the performance of its duties and responsibilities.

§ 22.1-278.1. School safety audits and school crisis and emergency management plans required.

A. For the purposes of this section, unless the context requires otherwise:

"School crisis and emergency management plan" means the essential procedures, operations, and assignments required to prevent, manage, and respond to a critical event or emergency, including natural disasters involving fire, flood, or severe weather; loss or disruption of power, water, communications or shelter; bus or other accidents; medical emergencies; student or staff member deaths; explosions; bomb threats; gun, knife or other weapons threats; spills or exposures to hazardous substances; the presence of unauthorized persons or trespassers; the loss, disappearance or kidnapping of a student; hostage situations; violence on school property or at school activities; and other incidents posing a serious threat of harm to students, personnel, or facilities.

"School safety audit" means a written assessment of the safety conditions in each public school to (i) identify and, if necessary, develop solutions for physical safety concerns, including building security issues and (ii) identify and evaluate any patterns of student safety concerns occurring on school property or at school-sponsored events. Solutions and responses may include recommendations for structural adjustments, changes in school safety procedures, and revisions to the school board's standards for student conduct.

B. The Superintendent of Public Instruction shall develop a list of items to be reviewed and evaluated in the school safety audits required by this section. Each local school board shall require all schools under its supervisory control to conduct school safety audits as defined in this section and consistent with such list.

Each school shall submit a copy of its school safety audit to the relevant school division superintendent. The division superintendent shall collate and submit all such school safety audits to the Virginia Center for School Safety.

Each school shall maintain a copy of the school safety audit within the office of the school principal and shall make a copy of such report available for review upon written request.

C. The school board may establish a school safety audit committee to consist of representatives of parents, teachers, local law-enforcement agencies, judicial and public safety personnel, and the community-at-large. The school safety audit committee shall evaluate, in accordance with the directions of the local school board, the safety of each school and submit a plan for improving school safety at a public meeting of the local school board.

D. Each school board shall ensure that every school that it supervises shall develop a written school crisis and emergency management plan, consistent with the definition provided in this section. The Department of Education *and the Virginia Center for School Safety* shall provide technical assistance to the school divisions of the Commonwealth in the development of the school crisis and emergency management plans.

Upon consultation with local school boards and division superintendents, the Board of Education shall develop, and may revise as it deems necessary, a model school crisis and emergency management plan for the purpose of assisting the public schools in Virginia in developing viable, effective crisis and emergency management plans.