

# Act 44 of 2025: Frequently Asked Questions

## 1. What is Act 44 of 2025?

Act 44 is a Pennsylvania state law that took effect on **January 6, 2026**. It mandates that school districts notify parents, guardians, and staff within **24 hours** of any weapon-related incident involving students or staff. This applies to incidents occurring:

- On school property.
- At school-sponsored events.
- On district-provided transportation.

## 2. Who will receive these notifications?

- **Building-Level Incidents:** Notifications will be sent to all parents/guardians and employees assigned to the specific building where the incident occurred.
- **Major Incidents:** The District may issue district-wide notifications for "major incidents" that pose a broader threat to the safety and well-being of the community.
- **Off-Site Incidents:** For incidents occurring during transportation or at school-sponsored activities, notifications will be shared with all relevant staff and families.

## 3. Why is the District sending communications on non-active threats?

The District's expectations and procedures regarding weapons on school property have not changed. What has changed is the requirement under Act 44 to notify families and staff about weapon-related incidents, even when there is no active threat to schools, students or staff.

## 4. The Tiered Classification System

To ensure communications are clear and reflect the actual level of risk, Pleasant Valley School District utilizes a three-tiered system:

Tier	Classification	Description	Examples	Parent/Guardian/Staff Notification
Tier 1	<b>Minimal Impact</b>	Items that meet the legal definition of a weapon but were possessed without harmful intent and posed no risk.	A pocketknife left in a backpack after a weekend trip; a plastic costume prop.	<b>Building Specific</b>
Tier 2	<b>Elevated Concern</b>	Items capable of causing harm that were visible or used irresponsibly, though not used to threaten or injure others.	A box cutter shown to another student; a realistic-looking replica weapon.	<b>Building Specific</b>
Tier 3	<b>Major Incident</b>	Serious incidents involving firearms, high-risk weapons, or any item used in a threatening manner.	Firearms (including BB or airsoft guns); weapons used to intimidate others.	<b>Districtwide</b>

## 5. What information will be included?

In compliance with the Pennsylvania School Code, each notification will provide:

- The **date and location** of the incident.
- A **brief description** of the incident.
- Whether the District in collaboration with law enforcement, has determined that there is an active threat.

## 6. If I receive a notification, does that mean that our schools are less safe?

No. Our district's priority has always been the safety of our students and staff. Over the past four years, we have taken proactive measures including increasing our police and security throughout the district, adding weapon detection systems, utilizing Safe2Say and maintaining positive relationships with students, staff and parents to ensure "community policing" where everyone in our community is responsible for the safety of each other. Pleasant Valley School District has always responded immediately to safety concerns and notified families when there was a serious risk. *The change is about communication requirements, not an increase in incidents.*

## 7. Why are the notifications brief?

Due to state and federal privacy laws—specifically the **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)**—the District cannot share:

- Specific names or identifying information of those involved.
- Granular details regarding the disciplinary actions taken.

## 8. How are weapons defined?

According to School Board Policy 218.1 and the Pennsylvania School Code, a "weapon" includes, but is not limited to:

*"Any knife, cutting instrument, cutting tool, nunchaku, firearm, shotgun, rifle, replica of a weapon, or any other tool, instrument, or implement capable of inflicting serious bodily injury."*

**Note:** The law requires notification even for non-threatening items, such as a butter knife packed in a lunchbox.

## 9. Does a notification mean my child is in danger?

Not necessarily. Many incidents do not pose a functional threat to the school community. If law enforcement determines there is no ongoing danger, the notification will explicitly state this. If an active threat exists, the District will provide immediate instructions and regular updates.

Please keep in mind, the increase in notifications is a result of **new legal requirements**, not a decrease in school safety. The District continues to utilize weapon detection systems, school police, and the *Safe2Say* program to maintain a secure environment.

## 10. How will notifications be delivered?

All alerts will be sent through the district's communication system, **PowerSchool's SchoolMessenger**. Please ensure your contact information is up to date in the PowerSchool portal.

## 11. Who can I contact with additional questions?

Please contact your school's principal or the District Office at 570-402-1000. We are here to help you navigate these changes and keep our community informed.