

Act 44 of 2025 – Frequently Asked Questions

Charleroi Area School District

Overview

Act 44 of 2025 is a Pennsylvania law that takes effect on **January 6, 2026**. The law requires school districts to notify parents/guardians and staff **within 24 hours** whenever a **weapon-related incident** involving students or staff occurs:

- On school property
- At a school-sponsored event, or
- On district-provided transportation during travel to or from school or a school-sponsored event

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Who will receive notifications?

When a weapon-related incident occurs in a school building, notification will be shared with:

- Parents/guardians of students assigned to that building
- Employees assigned to that building

When appropriate, the Charleroi Area School District may also issue **districtwide notifications** to ensure clarity and consistency.

If an incident occurs at a school-sponsored activity or during transportation, notifications will be shared with all **appropriate staff, parents, and guardians**.

To comply with Act 44 while providing clear and meaningful communication, the District will use a **tiered notification system** that aligns the level of communication with the level of risk involved.

Tier 1 – Minimal Impact Incident

Incidents involving items that technically meet the definition of a weapon but were not brought with harmful intent, were not displayed or used, and posed minimal risk.

Examples include:

- A small pocketknife accidentally left in a backpack
- A plastic or foam replica item (toy or costume prop)

Tier 2 – Elevated Concern

Incidents involving items capable of causing harm that were accessible, visible, or used irresponsibly, but not to threaten or injure others.

Examples include:

- A box cutter or razor blade was shown to another student
- A realistic-looking replica weapon

Tier 3 – Major Incident

Serious incidents involving firearms or high-risk weapons, or any item used, displayed, or referenced in a threatening manner.

Examples include:

- Firearms, including BB guns or airsoft guns
- Weapons used to threaten or intimidate others

3. When will notifications be sent?

All notifications will be issued **within 24 hours of the incident**, as required by the Pennsylvania School Code.

4. What information will notifications include?

Each notification will include:

- Date and location of the incident
- A general description of the incident
- Whether an active threat exists, as determined by the District in collaboration with law enforcement

5. Why are notifications brief?

State and federal privacy laws, including the **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)**, limit the information that can be shared.

Notifications will **not include**:

- Names or identifying information
- Specific disciplinary details

The District will continue to report incidents to law enforcement and the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) as required by law.

6. What is considered a weapon-related incident?

Under CASD School Board Policy 218.1 and the Pennsylvania School Code, a weapon includes:

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.

Some incidents occur without intent to cause harm (e.g., a pocketknife after camping or a butter knife in a lunch). Even when there is no threat, **Act 44 requires notification**.

7. Does a notification mean there is danger?

Not necessarily. Many weapon-related incidents do **not** pose a threat to the school community. If law enforcement determines there is no ongoing threat, that information will be clearly stated.

If an active threat exists, the District will communicate updates as information becomes available.

8. What actions does the District take after an incident?

Depending on the circumstances, the District may:

- Notify law enforcement immediately
- Conduct interviews and document the incident
- Complete a threat assessment
- Provide support for students and staff
- Apply discipline in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct and Board policy

- Pursue criminal charges when warranted

9. How will notifications be delivered?

Notifications will be sent using the District's communication system.

Families should ensure that their contact information is current in our student information system, **Sapphire**. Updates can be made by contacting the school office.

10. Will there be follow-up communication?

Additional communication will be provided only if there is an ongoing or developing threat, as permitted by law.

11. How can families support students?

- Reassure students that safety procedures are in place
- Encourage communication with a trusted adult
- Contact the school counselor if additional support is needed

12. Why are notifications sent for non-active threats?

The District's expectations regarding weapons have not changed. Act 44 requires notification even when there is **no active threat** to students or staff.

13. Who should I contact with questions?

Please contact your child's school principal or the Charleroi Area School District Superintendent for additional information.