

School Safety and Security Committee Guidelines and Frequently Asked Questions

Texas Education Code 37.109

Purpose:

The School Safety and Security Committee is a working group of diverse individuals that serves the members of its school district or open-enrollment charter school by helping create and maintain a safe and secure school climate and culture for staff and students.

Members:

For this committee to have a significant impact upon the school's climate and culture, there is a need for representation from various perspectives on school safety and security. As a result, and to the greatest extent practicable, the committee must consist of at least the following individuals whose names are recorded in the district's multi-hazard emergency operations plan (EOP) [Texas Education Code (TEC) 37.108(f)(8) and TEC 37.109(a-1)]. Charter networks may need to set these up by geographical regions to ensure appropriate representation from local responders and members.

1. The city or county's office of emergency management – at least one representative.
2. The local police department or sheriff's office – at least one representative.
3. From the board of trustees – the president and at least one other representative of the board.
4. The district superintendent.
5. Two or more designees of the district superintendent, one of whom must be a district classroom teacher and one of whom must now be an administrator of special education in the district.
6. Parents or guardians of currently enrolled students – at least two.
7. If the district has an instructional partnership with an open-enrollment charter school – a member of the charter school's governing body, or their designee.
8. If the district has its own police department – at least one representative.

Mandates and Guidance

The committee has the following mandated responsibilities to fulfill their purpose:

1. **Participate** in the development and implementation of the district's emergency plans by ensuring they are consistent with the district's EOP. [TEC 37.109(b)(1)]
 - The committee monitors that the district EOP is updated at least annually and incorporates all legislative additions.
 - The committee commits to holding after-action reviews after incidents occur and modifying the district's EOP, if needed, based on the lessons learned after an incident.
 - The committee evaluates if drills are done at every facility, and that substitutes, as they are hired, are trained in drills and for emergency situations.
 - The committee designates district personnel to be trained in FEMA's Incident Command System (ICS) and National Incident Management System (NIMS).
 - ◆ The committee should review [the NIMS Implementation Activities for Schools and Higher Education Institutions document](#) and identify which key personnel need to be trained as listed on page 18 of the document.
 - ◆ The committee ensures that all personnel responsible for writing and developing the district's EOP has taken [ICS-362.A](#) (Multi-hazard Emergency Planning for Schools).
 - ◆ The committee maintains a working list of current staff trained in ICS and NIMS.
 - ◆ The committee updates the list annually.
2. **Provide**, periodically to the board of trustees and district administration, recommendations to update the district's EOP according to the best practices identified by the Texas Education Agency, the Texas School Safety Center (TxSSC), or an individual in the TxSSC's Registry. [TEC 37.109(b)(2) and TEC 37.2091]
 - The committee commits to report to the school board at least annually on their work, what changes have been made to the district's EOP, and why those changes were made.
 - The committee works to update district administration after each meeting on the progress of the committee.
3. **Provide**, as necessary, recommendations based on communications with campus administrators per Commissioner Rules for updating the district EOP required to include recommended accommodations for a student with an IEP or 504 plan. The committee shall meet in executive session when discussing information regarding a student's IEP or 504 plan and may otherwise meet in executive session as provided by Chapter 551, Government Code. [TEC 37.109(c) and (d)]
 - The committee follows Commissioner Rules guidelines on required communications with campus administrators.

4. **Ensure** the district EOP reflects specific campus, facility, or support services needs, including recommended accommodations for a student with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or a plan created under Section 504, Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (504 plan). [TEC 37.109(b)(1)]

- The committee monitors that the district EOP is updated and that individual facilities (campuses, and non-instructional facilities) are consistent with the district plan and reflect planning around specific hazards related to the individual facilities.
- The committee reviews the Commissioner Rules for recommendations and guidelines for school drill accommodations and district EOP provisions with individuals with an IEP or 504 and ensure they are followed and provided to all campus administrators to follow.

5. **Supply** any campus, facility, or support services information required to the district for the completion of their safety and security audit, safety and security audit report, or any other report required to be submitted to the TxSSC. [TEC 37.109(b)(3)]

- The committee informs district administrators that they can assist in providing information for the reports.
- The committee is notified of any data or information needed to fulfill a report required to be submitted and ensure that the information is provided.
- The committee creates an inventory of personal protective equipment (PPE) and related safety equipment needed for the district.
 - ◆ The committee has a working list of all PPE needed for the district, an inventory of what is provided and used at each facility, and develops and monitors the replacement schedule of the PPE.
 - ◆ If PPE is the responsibility of another team or department, then the committee may validate the existing inventory and replacement schedule.

6. **Review** each report the district submits to the TxSSC to ensure it contains accurate and complete information regarding each campus, facility, or support service, and follows the criteria established by the TxSSC. [TEC 37.109(b)(4)]

- The committee reviews the audit findings and recommendations that are to be presented to the school board.
- The committee reviews the overall audit findings, gives feedback on the recommendations, and documents the process in their agenda minutes.
- The committee is informed by the district when the TxSSC has asked for any submissions and is informed of what the reports contain to ensure that they are current and correct.
- Committee members take the TxSSC's EOP trainings and review the School Safety Audit Toolkit to ensure they understand reporting criteria.

7. **Consult** with local law enforcement agencies on how to increase their presence near district campuses. [TEC 37.109(b)(5)]
- The committee should include this as an agenda item to ensure these discussions are being held.
 - The committee communicates with all law enforcement agencies that are responsible for responding to all district facilities (instructional and non-instructional) and invites them to be a part of the discussion.

8. **Select** where bleeding control stations are to be placed in schools, ensuring they are in easily accessible areas. [TEC 38.030(a), (b)(2), and (c)]
- The committee has a working document that lists where all bleeding control stations are placed.
 - The committee reviews these stations and placements at least annually to ensure that the placement of the stations is still optimal. The bleeding control stations, meaning more than one per campus, must be stored in easily accessible areas of the campus. One possible storage option might be where automated external defibrillators are stored.
 - The committee may verify that expiration dates have been checked, a replacement schedule exists for items, and a restock process of items is used.
 - The committee should evaluate if items, in addition to those mandated by legislation, are necessary for bleeding control kits. An example is appropriately sized tourniquets for smaller children on elementary campuses.
 - The committee reviews, and makes available, the District Traumatic Injury Response Protocol.

9. **Meet** together publicly, following Government Code, Chapter 551, at least once each academic semester and during the summer. Notice of a committee meeting must be posted in the same manner as notice of a meeting of the district's board of trustees. If the district operates on a year-round system, then the committee must meet at least three times per calendar year with at least two months between meetings. Meeting dates are to be included in the district's EOP. [TEC 37.109(c) and (d), TEC 37.108(f)(8), and Government Code, Chapter 551]
- The committee ensures that the meeting dates from the previous year, as required, are in the district's EOP.
 - The committee sets their meetings for the year and posts them, as required.
 - The committee works to address the responsibilities of the committee as individual agenda items throughout the year during the set meeting dates. For example: Review and update the district's EOP and monitor implementation.
 - The committee participates in the online open meetings [training](#) from the Attorney General. The committee should take this training annually and before the first regularly scheduled committee meeting.

10. **Take** training on Psychological First Aid. [TEC 37.108(f)(6)(C)(i)]
- The committee takes training from the [approved list](#) established by TEA and the TxSSC.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Will the district be penalized for committee members not attending meetings, particularly external committee members?

There is no penalty assessed to the district for members that do not attend; however, not being able to establish a quorum would preclude the committee from being able to conduct business. While there are no legal penalties for committee members not attending, it is recommended that districts and charter schools establish a local policy or bylaws with a threshold of how many meetings a member is allowed to miss before they are replaced. This would allow for districts and charter schools to address the situation of a member not being able to consistently attend meetings so that a new member can fill that role.

2. Is a quorum (as defined under the Open Meetings Act (OMA)) required for School Safety and Security Committee meetings in order for the committee to lawfully take action, vote on items, or adjourn to closed session?

The short answer is yes. The OMA does state that in order to conduct business and vote on agenda items, you should have a voting quorum present.

In addition, TASB has released guidance on this topic:

<https://www.tasb.org/services/legal-services/tasb-school-law-resource/business/documents/school-safety-and-security-committees.aspx>.

Under normal circumstances, the OMA allows for members to participate remotely in a meeting by means of a videoconference call if the video and audio feed of the member's participation is broadcast live at the meeting. This means the meeting is still scheduled at a location and at least one member is at that location conducting the meeting. Any virtual members must be visible and audible to the public. There are many nuances to this provision and the TxSSC advises reading the Open Meetings Act Handbook put out by the Attorney General if considering this option: https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/sites/default/files/files/divisions/open-government/openmeetings_hb.pdf.