THINK BEFORE YOU SPEAK, TEXT, OR POST

Alabama's New Student Terrorist Threat Law: What Students and Parents Need to Know

Act No. 2026-367 • Effective July 1, 2026

School threats have surged in recent years, especially on social media. Whether those threats were real or "just joking," every single one forces schools and police to respond as if it were real. Each false alarm drains emergency resources, disrupts learning, and frightens students, families, and staff. **In response, Alabama has rewritten its laws to treat threats against schools and their students as serious crimes with serious, automatic consequences, even when the person making the threat never intended to carry it out.**

What is a Terrorist Threat?

1. **A credible threat** - a statement or action that a *reasonable person* would believe is a real threat to harm someone
2. **To commit a "violent" act** (i.e. to cause serious harm)
3. **Against a person or school property**
4. **Using a bomb, explosive, weapon of mass destruction, firearm, deadly weapon, or other dangerous instrument**

If all four are found, the student will be charged.

A "JOKE" CAN BE A CRIME

Under this law, it does not matter whether a student actually planned to do anything. What matters is how a reasonable person would understand the words or actions.

"Joking" is not a valid excuse: law enforcement looks at the circumstances, not what the student says they meant afterward.

Screenshots travel: a post deleted in seconds can be saved, shared, and reported.

Potential Consequences for a Terrorist Threat

If **ACCUSED:** (regardless of whether criminal charges are initiated)

- Principal is required to immediately notify law enforcement
- Immediate suspension
- Subject to readmission pending outcome of disciplinary hearing before board of education

If **CHARGED:** (before any court decides guilt)

- Barred from campus until:
  - Criminal charges are resolved;
  - Board requirements are satisfied; AND
  - Court-ordered requirements are satisfied

If **CONVICTED:** (student found guilty)

- Mandatory expulsion
- Court-ordered penalties
- Parents may be ordered by Court to pay for losses caused by disruption

Because criminal cases can take months, a student who is later found innocent could miss a semester or more of school before their case is decided

Criminal Charges for a Terrorist Threat

Did the threat disrupt (or was it intended to disrupt) school?

YES → First-Degree Terrorist Threat
- **Class B Felony**
- Most school threats will fall under this category.

NO → Second-Degree Terrorist Threat
- **Class A Misdemeanor**
- If the student is a repeat offender, the charge will likely become a Class D Felony.

A NOTE FOR FAMILIES OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Any disciplinary action mandated by these rules shall be subject to the student's existing rights and procedural safeguards under the IDEA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. Federal protection under IDEA and Section 504 override the state law's timelines when they conflict.

	Scenario 1: Jordan Convicted	**Scenario 2: Maya** Charged	**Scenario 3: Liam** Accused
THE FACTS	After being cut from the team, Jordan, a sophomore, posts on Snapchat: "Don't come to school Monday, i'm bringing my dad's AR. nobody's safe." Jordan deleted the post minutes after posting it, but a student already took a screenshot and reported it to the Principal. Jordan insisted he was just kidding.	After a falling-out with a former friend, Maya, a junior, texts her friend over the weekend, "It's on sight" with gun emojis. The friend shows her parents, who call the police.	Liam, an 8th grader, is playing an online game after school. In voice chat he shouts, "Nobody is safe tomorrow! I'm bringing bombs to wipe everyone out!" Another player clips the audio and posts it, and a parent who sees the clip reports it. The principal immediately notified law enforcement, as required.
SCHOOL RESPONSE	Jordan is immediately suspended from school. He is not allowed to return to school while his charges are pending.	The school is notified that Maya is charged for her comment. Maya is immediately suspended from school.	Liam is immediately suspended and at his disciplinary hearing found in violation of the code of conduct.
COURT DECISION	**Convicted with a first-degree threat**. Jordan knowingly threatened gun violence, a reasonable person would be afraid, and the school was disrupted.	**Charged and Dismissed.** Maya made a credible threat of gun violence against a person. After two months, the court dismissed the charges.	**No Charges.** After quick investigation, law enforcement determined the threat was not credible and did not enter any charges.
THE CONSEQUENCE	Once adjudicated, the school must expel him.	Once dismissed, Maya cannot return to campus until she satisfies the Board's requirements for re-entry. Maya may be required to serve a disciplinary consequence resulting from a code of conduct violation even though the court dismissed the charge.	Liam was still suspended, interviewed by the police and kept out of class until law enforcement determined no charges would be filed. Liam had to serve disciplinary consequences for the code of conduct violation.

See something? Say something. If you see or hear a potential threat, report it to a teacher, administrator, school resource officer, or parent immediately. Reporting can save student and faculty lives. It also protects the person making the threat because early intervention can prevent a major school disruption or a police response.

Report accurately. You don't have to be certain, but honest reports are always the right call, even if it turns out there was no real threat. However, you should report only what you actually saw or heard, without exaggerating. A charge alone carries major consequences, even for a student who is later found not guilty, and police will rely heavily on the reporter's word. Knowingly making a false accusation is its own crime and can leave your family paying for emergency responses.

Angry, upset, or need to talk? Everyone gets frustrated, and everyone says things they don't mean. But under this law, some words can't be taken back. If you're angry, hurting, or overwhelmed, don't put it in a text or a post. Talk to a school counselor, a teacher, a coach, a parent, or any adult you trust.

THE BOTTOM LINE

There is no such thing as a harmless school threat. One post, one text, one "joke" can mean a felony charge, months out of school, and mandatory expulsion. If you see a threat, report it. If you're angry or struggling, talk to a trusted adult. Don't type something you can never take back.