

March 2, 2018

TO THE ADMINISTRATOR ADDRESSED

**Subject: Safety Options for School Districts and Charters**

***NOTE: Information within this letter should be read and shared by superintendents and school board presidents.***

The safety of every student on every campus is a top priority for everyone in Texas. That commitment to safety throughout a district must begin at the top.

In light of recent events, I encourage all school board members to take up school safety at your next board meeting. It is important to note that school districts and charter schools have several options for obtaining security services at school facilities. Some of those options are listed below. Board members, working with campus and district leadership, must weigh all options based on district safety need, size, location and cost.

Schools should also work closely with first responders and local law enforcement in making these critical decisions. Effective security precautions should be considered in all emergency management and safety plans. I strongly recommend visiting the Texas School Safety Center website (<https://txssc.txstate.edu/>) for additional information on school safety measures and emergency operations planning.

**District and Charter Safety Options:**

**School Resource Officer (SRO):** A district may enter into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with another governmental entity to have a peace officer (who is commissioned and employed by the other entity) placed at the school on a full or part time bases. The MOU typically requires the school to cover the proportional cost of their salary, benefits, and equipment.

**School District Commissioned Police Officer:** A district can also create its own police department by commissioning school district peace officers. A peace officer commissioned under *TEC Section 37.081* must meet all minimum standards for peace officers established by the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement (TCOLE). In school districts with a student enrollment of 30,000 or more, SROs and school district commissioned peace officers must undergo training created by TCOLE. *TEC 37.0812*

**Private Security Personnel:** If a school district employs an individual as security personnel, the individual must be a commissioned peace officer in order for the district to authorize the individual to carry a weapon. *TEC 37.081 (a)*

**School Marshals:** State law (*TEC 37.0811*) allows a school district or charter school to appoint one or more specially trained and licensed employees as school marshals. The appointment must be made by the board of trustees and the marshal must have the appropriate licensing and

certification by TCOLE. The specialized training must require a psychological exam and include 80 hours of instruction. Information on the School Marshal Program can be found on the TCOLE website: (<https://www.tcole.texas.gov/content/school-marshals>).

**Guardian Plan:** A school board may adopt a local policy that authorizes the designation of specified employees who are authorized to carry firearms on school premises.

**Physical Plant:** To the extent that bond funds or other funds are available, please consider utilizing them to enhance security and safety measures at the premises (such as security cameras, strengthening doors, etc.).

Additionally, Governor Greg Abbott signed Senate Bill 788 (Kari's Law) in May 2015. Kari's Law requires all multi-line telephone systems that provide/allow outbound calling to allow for direct dialing of 9-1-1 (no initial digit, prefix, or access code to reach an outbound line is permitted).

**Mandatory compliance with the law began Sept. 1, 2016.** If you have a multi-line telephone system that cannot comply with Kari's Law, you must submit a one-year waiver request. More information about that process can be found here: <http://texas911.org/>.

As you have questions regarding school safety, please contact Candace Stoltz, Director for Emergency Management, by phone at (512) 463-9286 or by email at [Candace.stoltz@tea.texas.gov](mailto:Candace.stoltz@tea.texas.gov).

Thank you for your work in keeping the students of Texas safe.

Sincerely,

Mike Morath  
Commissioner