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Act No. 29 (S. 138). An act relating to school safety

Subjects: Education; school safety; harassment, hazing, and bullying

Secs. 1–5 of this act add several requirements to 16 V.S.A. chapter 33 (Fire and Emergency Preparedness Drills and Safety Patrols) regarding emergency preparedness and operations plans and drills, visitor policies, and behavioral threat assessment teams.

- Sec. 1 of this act amends 16 V.S.A. § 1481, requiring all school districts that operate a school and all independent schools to adopt and maintain a policy mandating each school site to conduct options-based response drills twice a school year, relying on guidance issued by the Vermont School Safety Center and Vermont School Crisis Planning Team.
- Sec. 2 of this act requires each supervisory union or district and each independent school to adopt and maintain an all-hazards emergency operations plan for each school site that is at least as comprehensive as the template maintained by the Vermont School Safety Center.
- Sec. 3 of this act requires each supervisory union board, supervisory district board, school district board, and independent school to adopt an access control and visitor management policy.
- Sec. 4 of this act requires the Secretary of Education, in consultation with stakeholder groups, to develop a model behavioral threat assessment team policy and procedures. The Vermont School Safety Center is required to issue guidance on best practices of behavioral threat assessment teams. Each school district and each independent school is then required to develop, adopt, and ensure implementation of a behavioral threat assessment policy and procedures at least as comprehensive as the model policy and procedures published by the Secretary by July 1, 2025, subject to the implementation requirements in Sec. 5. Behavioral threat assessment teams are required to receive training at least annually and data related to the teams is required to be reported to the Agency of Education annually.
- Sec. 5 of this act provides target dates for implementing behavioral threat assessment teams, including the development of the model policy, establishment and training of behavioral threat assessment teams, and data reporting. This section also requires status reports on the implementation of behavioral threat assessment teams and a report with any recommended legislative changes resulting from policy development work.

Sec. 5a of this act creates the Working Group on Student Protections from Harassment and Discrimination in Schools to study and give recommendations for how to address harassment and discrimination experienced by students in schools. The Working Group is required to issue a report with its findings and recommendations on or before December 1, 2023.

Effective Date: Multiple effective dates, beginning on July 1, 2023