

Governor Phil Murphy

photo: view of NJ Trenton DOM

Governor Murphy Signs Legislation Requiring NJ Public Schools to Develop Threat Assessment Teams

08/1/2022

This law will take effect immediately for the 2023-2024 school year.

TRENTON – Governor Phil Murphy today signed A4075/3229 ([https://urldefense.com/v3/_https://t.e2ma.net/click/fxwhsh/7ys5259b/n71yry_!!J30X0ZrnC1oQtba!OWgXy05uCwjKZR...T8v-n2LJXS77N_ORNPmjV_Fsock30141vMOhVr1jfbFclrpXO5pqZ7093NMYhzhhanBzqUX\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/_https://t.e2ma.net/click/fxwhsh/7ys5259b/n71yry_!!J30X0ZrnC1oQtba!OWgXy05uCwjKZR...T8v-n2LJXS77N_ORNPmjV_Fsock30141vMOhVr1jfbFclrpXO5pqZ7093NMYhzhhanBzqUX$)) into law, requiring the board of education in each school district and board of trustees in each charter school or renaissance school in the state to develop and adopt a policy for the establishment of a threat assessment team at their respective schools.

Threat assessment teams provide school teachers, administrators, and other staff with assistance in identifying students of concern, assessing those students' risk for engaging in violence or other harmful activities, and delivering intervention strategies to manage the risk of harm for students who pose a potential safety risk to targeted violence in the school and ensuring a safe and secure school environment that enhances the learning experience for all members of the school community.

"Keeping public spaces safe from any form of violence or harmful activities, especially in our schools, is of the utmost importance to me and this administration," **said Governor Murphy**. "It is my hope that these threat assessment teams will help students and school employees feel safe and out of harm's way when they are at school, and for students who are considered to be a threat to receive the much-needed help they need at such a crucial time in their lives."

Guidelines for threat assessment teams in each school district, charter school, and renaissance school will be developed by the New Jersey Department of Education in consultation with state law enforcement agencies and the New Jersey Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness.

"No one better understands the vulnerabilities of New Jersey's school communities than those who work there every day, including our teachers, administrators, school counselors, school safety specialists, and resource officers," **said Dr. Angelica Allen-McMillan, Acting Commissioner of Education**. "Creating comprehensive threat assessment teams, comprised of these individuals, ensures increased awareness of at-risk behaviors and informs strategic intervention for those behaviors that may pose a safety risk. The establishment of threat assessment teams will result in safer school environments."

"We are not only first responders, we are first preventers," **said Director Laurie Doran of New Jersey Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness**. "The establishment of threat assessment teams in public schools will equip these communities with the resources they need to prevent violence and help ensure the safety of students and educators. NJOHSP continues to prioritize school security efforts with our law enforcement partners and the New Jersey Department of Education."

The threat assessment team, which is to be established by a board of education or board of trustees in each district, shall be multidisciplinary in membership, including:

- A school psychologist, school counselor, school social worker, or other school employee with expertise in student counseling;
- A teaching staff member;
- A school principal or other senior school administrator;
- A safe schools resource officer or school employee who serves as a school liaison to law enforcement; and
- The designated school safety specialist.

"In recent history, we have seen far too many tragic events, resulting in the loss of innocent lives," **said Senate Majority Leader M. Teresa Ruiz**. "Equipping adults with the tools necessary to identify students as a potential threat can enhance the ability of our districts and schools to help identify any risks before an act of violence occurs. I would like to thank the Governor for signing this critical piece of legislation into law. We must take all necessary measures, including the provision of mental health supports, services, and resources, to prevent these tragedies from happening."

"Tragically, we have seen all too many times that our students are sometimes exposed to potential dangers from fellow students. This legislation will help our schools identify students who may be considered a threat to themselves and to others before it is too late," **said Senator James Beach, sponsor of S-2765**. "Unfortunately, this is the reality of our often-violent world. As we head into a new school year in a few weeks, we want to give our schools' administrators, counselors and security teams all the tools we can to keep our students safe."

"I really, truly believe that if we focus on students that are in crisis before they cause harm to themselves or others, we can be the most impactful," **said State Assembly Education Committee Chair Pamela Lampitt**. "The new law will help us determine the right people around the table to have a conversation on how to diffuse school threats when they arise."

"One of the goals of the threat assessment teams is to avert dangerous incidents that may come from potential school threats," **said Assemblyman William F. Moen, Jr.** "With this kind of program in place, we could address not only the larger issues facing schools but some of the smaller issues as well before they build into something more."

"Creating a threat assessment team in each school district prepares educators and administrators to handle any concerns now and in the future," **said Assemblywoman Gabriela Mosquera**. "A team of school psychologists, social workers, counselors, principals, safety specialists, and police liaisons will be able to pool their resources to identify students who are considered to be a threat to themselves or others. Their efforts will lend to stronger and safer school communities throughout the State."

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