



Bill Summary: School Safety Amendments

Prepared for the School Security Task Force | November 13, 2023

The Legislature created the School Security Task Force in 2023 ([HB 61](#)) to address safety and security in Utah’s schools. Statute directs the task force to develop legislation for introduction in the 2024 General Session addressing six issues:

- Create standards for school security specialists.
- Create statewide standardized training requirements and hiring policies for school resource officers.
- Review and revise the model critical incident response training program.
- Develop training standards for active threats and emergency response in schools.
- Recommend safety and security protocols for the design, construction, and reconstruction of new and existing schools.

Key Bill Provisions

This document summarizes the key provisions of the legislation developed by the task force.

Armed School Security

Requires every public and private school to have at least one of the armed security personnel listed below on campus when school is in session (53G-8-701.5).

Three of the four allowed types of armed school security – school safety and security officers, school guardians, and contract security guards – must complete one additional training, in addition to the other requirements detailed below. Specifically, these individuals must complete training with school administrators twice a year on the safety and security infrastructure of the school where they are assigned.

School Resource Officer (53G-8-702; 53G-8-702)

- Training for school personnel and SROs: Existing law requires the Utah State Board of Education (USBE) to provide a training program for school principals, personnel, and school resource officers (SROs). This bill would require this training annually and require the state security chief to consult on the training program.
- Contracts for SRO services: States that a school district or school may not require or prohibit mandatory rotations of school resource officers.

School Safety and Security Officer (53G-8-701.7)

School safety and security officers are law enforcement officers hired by a school. They are employed as school or school district employees and not simultaneously by a law enforcement agency. Statute requires these individuals comply with multiple requirements:

- Required trainings and all standards in the Peace Officer Standards and Training Act (Title 53, Chapter 13).
- Complete required checks for law enforcement transferring from one agency to another.



School Guardian (53-22-105)

Volunteer school employee who participates in required training. Guardians may not be a principal, teacher, or other person who primarily works with students. The state security chief provides a \$500 one-time stipend. They may not act as law enforcement officers but may detain individuals in some cases. Requirements include:

- Valid concealed carry permit
- Initial training on firearms from the county security chief on firearms, de-escalation, coordinating with law enforcement, and administering basic trauma first aid, among other things (within 6 months).
- Annual, four-hour training from the county security chief on firearms.

Contract Security Guards (53G-8-704)

Security guards hired under contract with schools and school districts must meet specific requirements and may conceal or open carry a firearm on school grounds. Requirements include:

- Valid concealed carry permit
- Training from the county security chief on gun safety in a school setting, the role of armed guards, and coordinating with law enforcement during an active threat.
- Contracts must include:
 - A detailed job description.
 - Detailed information the rights of students under state and federal law regarding information privacy, searches, questioning, and arrests.

Additional School Personnel

School Safety and Security Director (53G-8-701.8)

Each local education agency and private school must designate a school safety and security director as a point of contact for the county security chief, local law enforcement, and the state security chief and do the following:

- Collaborate and maintain communications with various school and district employees and law enforcement.
- Participate in many of the trainings required for all armed school guards.
- May temporarily fill in for an SRO, school safety and security officer, school guardian, or armed security guard.
- Participate on the multidisciplinary team conducting behavior threat assessment.

School Safety and Security Specialist (53G-8-701.6)

This bill provides greater guidance for job responsibilities for the school security specialists, currently required at each public and private school. This position is responsible for coordinating safety and security activities at the school.

- Principals may not serve in this position.
- Conduct a building safety assessment annually.
- Participate on the multidisciplinary team conducting behavior threat assessment.
- Coordinate with local first responder agencies on safety and security drills.
- Coordinate required staff trainings.



State Security Chief

53-22-102

The State Security Chief was created by HB 61 (2023). This individual is responsible for state-level oversight of school safety and security issues. This bill would update the responsibilities of the position to include, among others, the following new provisions:

- Establish minimum building safety and security standards for public and private schools, in coordination with USBE.
- Consult with USBE to develop or establish the model critical incident response that all schools and law enforcement must use during a threat.
- For armed security personnel in schools:
 - Oversee the school guardian program and approve required training.
 - Decide on the mental health crisis intervention training required of school safety and security officers.
 - Review and approve USBE’s SRO training program.
 - Ensure schools with guardians, school safety and security officers, and contract security guards make information about those individuals readily available to law enforcement.
 - Create a method for law enforcement to quickly identify security personnel.
 - Select training for school safety and security specialists and directors.

County Security Chief

53-22-103

Current law requires each county sheriff to identify an individual in the sheriff’s office to coordinate school safety issues. This bill renames that individual the “county security chief” and outlines their responsibilities:

- Assist in creating a building threat assessment.
- Collaborate and maintain communications with each school safety and security specialist and director in the county.
- Administer trainings on firearms required for school guardians and school safety and security officers.
- Administer the school guardian program.
- Ensure school construction projects comply with minimum safety standards before occupancy.

Minimum Safety and Security Standards for School Facilities

53-22-102(3)(b) and (c); 53-22-103; 53E-3-702; 53E-3-706; 53G-8-805

This will would require all new school construction and reconstruction projects must meet minimum safety and security standards established by the State Security Chief before occupancy, like fire code requirements. These include, among others:

- Two-way intercom systems and panic buttons in each classroom.
- Video surveillance.
- Limited secure entries.
- Ballistic glass or security film on all interior and ground-floor exterior windows.
- Periodically assess facilities and develop plans for needed improvements



Bill Summary: School Safety Amendments

Prepared for the School Security Task Force | November 13, 2023

Standardized Critical Incident Response

53-22-102(3)(k); 53G-8-802; 53G-8-803

Require every school, public and private, and first responder agency to implement the critical incident response protocol selected by the State Security Chief, in consultation with USBE. The response plans must include:

- Reunification plan protocols, including a location that can be easily changed and communicated depending on the emergency type and location.
- Required components of communications plans.
- Protocols for planning and safety drills.
- Standardized response protocol terminology.
- Protocols for conducting a building threat assessment during an incident.
- Establishing incident command.
- Recommendations for safety equipment in schools, including first aid supplies.
- Using panic alert devices.

School Safety Data

53-10-302(7) and (8); 53B-17-1202; 53E-3-518(3)(a)

School and district officials, state and local leaders, students, parents, and other community members should have access to information about safety issues in their local schools. The bill would do the following:

- The parent portal must include school-level safety data and the public safety portal (see 53E-3-516; 63A-16-1002).
- USBE’s school information management system must interface with the Department of Public Safety’s statewide information and analysis center (SIAC), when appropriate, and the public safety portal.
- State security chief will determine the SafeUT data that will be reported to the state bureau of investigation’s systems.

Mandatory Reporting for Threats of Violence Involving Schools

53-22-106

Individuals in a position of special trust who work with children – such as teachers, school employees, and therapists – will be **mandatory reporters for threats of violence** made against a school, school employee, or student attending a school. These individuals must report to law enforcement, the local education agency that would be impacted, or the state security chief. The LEA and a local law enforcement agency should coordinate on an investigation.

Early Warning Systems

53F-4-207

Each local education agency must use a digital early warning system, which helps schools and districts identify students in need of academic assistance and other potential academic and behavioral issues within a school and district. This bill requires those systems to **include school safety violations** and allows LEAs to use a system selected by USBE or use a system that meets criteria outlined in statute.



Public Safety Answering Points

53-10-302(7) and (8); 63H-7a-103; 63H-7a-208

Directs the public safety answering points (PSAP) advisory committee to work with the Department of Public Safety and determine **what PSAP data will be shared with the SIAC.**

Fire Code Exemptions for Communications Equipment

15A-5-203;15A-5-205.5

Currently, fire code allows new and existing schools to be exempted from the requirement to have specific communications equipment. This bill would remove that exemption, thus **requiring all new and existing schools to have specific types of communications equipment**, including bidirectional antennas.