



Arkansas House Newsletter

June 10, 2022

School Safety Update



SCHOOL SAFETY UPDATE

This week, officials from Arkansas Center for School Safety (ACSS) provided members of the House and Senate Education Committees with an update on school safety measures taken in recent years. In 2018, the Governor created the Safe Schools Commission to assess the state of school security in Arkansas.

That commission gave the General Assembly a list of 30 recommendations. The General Assembly has passed several pieces of legislation in recent years based on those recommendations.

One of the recommendations stated that all school districts should provide access to training in Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA) for all personnel who interact with students.

In 2021, we passed [Act 620](#) and [648](#). These identical acts require all school counselors to complete YMHFA training every four years. In addition, we passed [Act 551](#) and [622](#). These acts require all school resource officers to complete YMHFA training every 4 years.

To date, ACSS staff has trained 611 SROs and school counselors.

Another recommendation by the commission stated that the Arkansas Department of Education should

review roles and responsibilities of school counselors to provide increased time with students for the provision of counseling and social-emotional learning.

In 2019, the General Assembly acted on that recommendation by passing [Act 190](#). This act requires school counselors to spend 90% of their time with students.

The commission also recommended that the Arkansas's Commission on Law Enforcement Standards and Training should study the feasibility of school districts being allowed to establish their own law enforcement agencies. As a result, the General Assembly passed [Act 629](#) in 2019. This allowed school districts to form their own law enforcement agency. To date 16 school districts have been approved to form an institutional law enforcement agency.

Dr. Cheryl May with the Criminal Justice Institute serves as the chair for the School Safety Commission. She told members this week that there is more work to be done including improving our anonymous reporting system and strengthening physical security at access points on school campuses.

We will be reviewing the recommendations and will update you on developments.

You watch all Education Committee meeting at www.arkansashouse.org.