



# HOUSE BILL 605: School Threat Assessment Teams.

2023-2024 General Assembly

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<b>Committee:</b> Senate Rules and Operations of the Senate	<b>Date:</b> June 20, 2023
<b>Introduced by:</b> Reps. Torbett, Blackwell, Cotham	<b>Prepared by:</b> Samantha Yarborough
<b>Analysis of:</b> Third Edition	Staff Attorney

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**OVERVIEW:** *House Bill 605 would do the following:*

- *Require threat assessment teams in public school units.*
- *Require all public school units to participate in school safety exercises and programs.*
- *Encourage private schools to participate in school safety exercises and programs.*
- *Require local boards of education to establish peer-to-peer support programs.*

**CURRENT LAW:** There is not currently a requirement that public school units establish threat assessment teams. Charter schools, regional schools, and laboratory schools are encouraged, but not required, to participate in the school safety requirements of schools in local school administrative units. G.S. 115C-316.1 requires school counselors to spend at least 80% of their work time providing direct services to students.

**BILL ANALYSIS:**

Part I would recodify Article 8C into two parts.

Part II would require threat assessment teams to be established as follows:

- The Center for Safer Schools (Center) would develop guidance by collecting information and best practices from schools with existing threat assessment teams and consulting with the Task Force for Safer Schools, Disability Rights North Carolina, the North Carolina School Psychology Association, the State Bureau of Investigation, and any other relevant State agency.
- The guidance developed by the Center would include best practices for the assessment and intervention of individuals whose behavior poses risks to school staff, students, or themselves. If the individual is a minor, the guidance must provide for the involvement of the individual's parent or guardian throughout the threat assessment process. The guidance would also include a procedure for referrals to LME/MCOs when appropriate and compliance with federal law and State statute regarding student privacy and students with disabilities. If the individual is not a student, the guidance must provide for referral to the appropriate local law enforcement agency.
- Each governing body of a public school unit would adopt policies for threat assessment teams after consulting the Center's guidance. The policies would include any scale or classification system to be used to indicate various levels of threats and the standard response to each level of threat and would differentiate between assessment and intervention at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. The policies would be prohibited from referencing or revealing any information that is not a public record (such as school schematics and safety plans). A copy of the policies would be shared with the Center.

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- The superintendent or the superintendent's designee would establish a committee charged with coordinating and overseeing the threat assessment teams in the public school unit. The committee would be required to include individuals with expertise in human resources, education, school administration, mental health, and law enforcement.
- The superintendent would establish a threat assessment team for each school within the public school unit; however, a threat assessment team could be authorized by the superintendent to serve more than one school in the unit. Each team would be required to (i) provide training on recognizing and reporting threatening behavior, (ii) identify members of the school community to whom threats should be reported, (iii) implement the policies adopted by the governing body of the public school unit, (iv) utilize anonymous reporting applications, (v) when finding a credible threat, recommend that the individual be referred for mental health services when appropriate, notify the target of the threat and the parent of the target if the target is a minor, and notify law enforcement.
- Any information shared among members of the threat assessment team would be confidential and not a public record and could only be released in connection with an emergency.
- A threat assessment team may request training from the Center.
- Each threat assessment team would be required to submit certain data to the Center.
- No governing body of a public school unit, nor its members, employees, designees, agents, or volunteers would be liable for civil damages to any party as a result of an act or omission to participating in threat assessment teams, unless the act or omission amounts to gross negligence, wanton conduct, or intentional wrongdoing.
- The Center would be required to develop guidance for threat assessment teams by no later than December 31, 2023. Public school units would be required to establish threat assessment teams by no later than March 1, 2024.

Part III would require local boards of education to establish peer-to-peer support programs at all schools with grades 6 and higher. The job duties of school counselors would include coordinating and providing training for students in peer-to-peer support programs. Local boards would be encouraged to establish peer-to-peer support programs by the 2023-2024 school year, but would be required to establish them by the 2024-2025 school year.

Parts IV and V would require all public school units to participate in school safety exercises, school crisis kits, and information sharing with local law enforcement agencies. Part V would encourage private schools to participate in school safety exercises and programs.

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** Except as otherwise provided, House Bill 605 would become effective when it becomes law and would apply beginning with the 2024-2025 school year.