

Florida HB 1421

**How to Comply with Updated
Drill, Reunification, and Other
School Safety Requirements**



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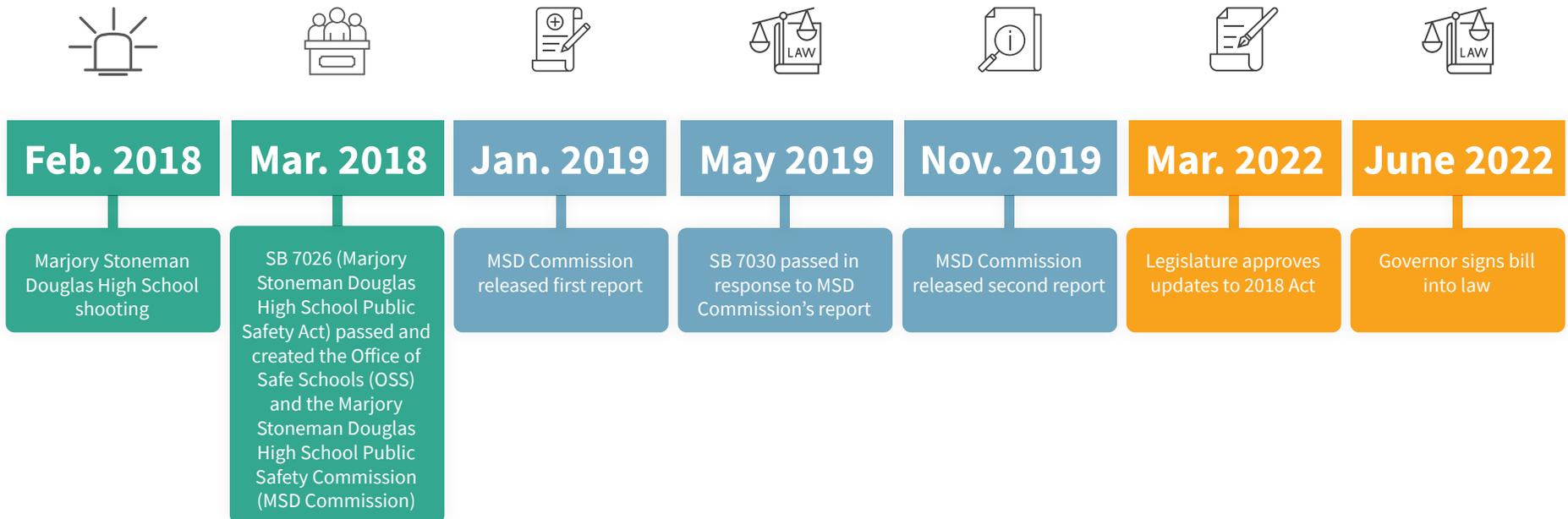
Background

Seventeen people died and another 17 were injured in the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting on February 14, 2018. The Florida Legislature passed [SB 7026](#), more commonly known as the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act (Act), in response to this tragedy. The Act created the [Office of Safe Schools \(OSS\)](#) and the [Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Commission \(MSD Commission\)](#).

To provide recommendations to improve school safety, the MSD Commission investigated system failures in the 2018 shooting and prior mass violence incidents.

The MSD Commission released its [initial report](#) on January 2, 2019, which the Florida Legislature addressed in [SB 7030 \(2019\)](#). On November 1, 2019, the MSD Commission published its [second report](#), which focused on safe-school officers, threat assessments, and mental health, among other topics.

In March 2022, the legislature [approved updates to the 2018 Act](#) to further improve school safety. Governor Ron DeSantis signed the bill into law in early June 2022.



Updates on Emergency Drills

Previously, the school board's emergency policies and procedures defined how the school conducted emergency drills. Emergency drills include things like fires, active shooters, bomb threats, severe weather, and more.

With the updated law, the State Board of Education (SBE) will now be responsible for setting the timing and frequency of these drills. The SBE must adopt rules governing emergency drills by **August 1, 2023**. The rules must be based on MSD Commission recommendations and be developed in collaboration with state and local constituencies. The rules must:

- ➔ Require that emergency drills be conducted at least once per year
- ➔ Define “emergency drill,” “active threat,” and “after-action report”
- ➔ Provide requirements for drill policies and procedures by incident type, school level and type, and student and school characteristics, including: timing, frequency, participation, training, notification, accommodations, and response to threat situations

Law enforcement that will respond to an actual emergency on your campus must be directly involved in the active assailant drills, as determined necessary by the sheriff and district school safety specialist. Districts must give notice to participating officers at least 24 hours prior to the drill. Active shooter training must include the school safety specialist, threat assessment team members, faculty, staff, and students.

Drill policies are created with public safety agencies, and the drills must be conducted with age and developmentally appropriate methods.

Talking about worst-case scenarios, active shooters, and other violent school threats is *one of the hardest conversations to have with students, but it's an important one. Students and staff must know how to keep themselves safe, and in worst-case scenarios, survive and remain calm. How can schools do this without increasing their anxiety or trauma?*

To find out, listen to this School Safety Today podcast episode with Adam Coughran, co-founder of Safe Kids Inc.

[Listen Now ▶](#)

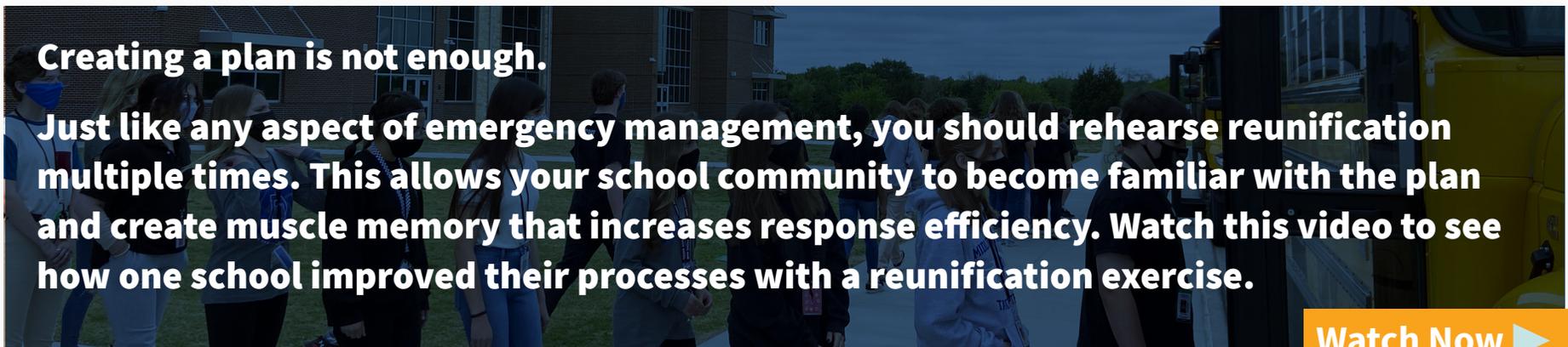
Updates to Reunification Policies and Procedures

When the MSD Commission assessed the 2018 school shooting, it concluded that the lack of a family reunification plan greatly increased the trauma following the tragedy. The commission's report recommended that every district needs a plan that minimally: identifies reunification sites; includes employee training; determines how the school will communicate with staff and students' families; and defines how the school will help law enforcement identifying students and staff.

The updated law now requires the Office of Safe Schools (OSS) to become involved. Working with the Division of Emergency Management, federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies, first responder agencies, and other stakeholders, the OSS must create a model family reunification plan for childcare facilities, K-12 schools, and postsecondary institutions. The OSS will also, as part of the annual Florida Safe Schools Assessment, confirm that each district has adopted a plan for their schools.

School districts and chartering boards can use the model reunification plan as a guide to create one for their specific district and schools. This reunification plan—as well as the school's ability to respond to other school crises—will be part of the annual assessment to make sure schools have the appropriate safety controls. Each district's reunification plan must:

- ➔ Leverage information systems, such as student rosters and the day's attendance record, that can help streamline the entire reunification process
- ➔ Be developed in coordination with local law enforcement agencies and local governments
- ➔ Be reviewed annually and revised as needed



Creating a plan is not enough.
Just like any aspect of emergency management, you should rehearse reunification multiple times. This allows your school community to become familiar with the plan and create muscle memory that increases response efficiency. Watch this video to see how one school improved their processes with a reunification exercise.

Watch Now ▶

Updates to Incident Reporting, Officers, and Mental Health Services

Incident Reporting

The Florida Department of Education (DOE) manages multiple methods to track and report school safety incidents. One of the methods is school environmental safety incident reporting (SESIR). The district superintendent is responsible for reporting incidents—such as weapon-use, toxic chemical spills, weather emergencies, and so on—to the DOE. The updates to the bill require that the DOE publish the most recently available SESIR, accountability, and performance data in a format that can be easily understood

Florida public and private schools also have free access to FortifyFL, a mobile and computer application that allows the community to anonymously report concerning behavior to school officials and law enforcement. The updated bill mandates that the school warn individuals that the IP address of the reporter’s device will be shared with law enforcement if the tip is determined to be false. Anyone who knowingly submits a false tip may face charges.

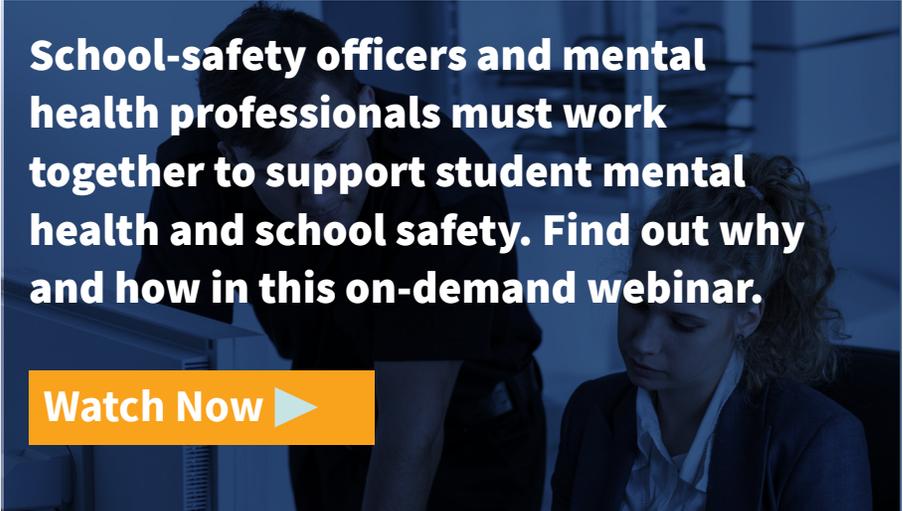
Mental Health

The DOE develops and maintains evidence-based mental health training programs that are designed to help school staff identify and understand signs of mental health issues in youth. The DOE partners with a national organization to provide training to school personnel. The updated bill requires that school districts annually certify, beginning July 1, 2023, that at least 80% of school staff received the training.

Considering increased youth suicides, Florida created the [Florida Suicide Prevention Interagency Action Plan](#) that focuses on reducing suicide rates. To improve communication and coordination, the updated bill requires that districts and local mobile response teams use the Department of Education’s suicide screening tool.

Safe-School Officers

Each school facility, including charter schools, must have at least one assigned safe-school officer. This safe-school officer can be a sworn school resource officer (SRO), a certified law enforcement officer (SSO), an individual from the [Coach Aaron Feis Guardian Program](#), or a contractor from a local security agency. The updates to the bill require that all safe-school officers must complete mental health crisis intervention training, not just the SROs.



School-safety officers and mental health professionals must work together to support student mental health and school safety. Find out why and how in this on-demand webinar.

Watch Now ▶

Comply with Help from Technology

Coordinating student status, location, and reunification with authorized guardians can be complicated. That's just one reason why Florida has required schools to integrate technology into their school reunification plans. *Raptor® Reunification* pulls data directly from your student information system (SIS) to put critical student and staff data at your fingertips. The MSD Commission described Seminole County Public Schools as *a model district for other Florida schools to emulate*—partially due to their use of Raptor Reunification in their reunification plan.

Raptor® Drill Manager enables schools to schedule drills and track compliance, quickly verify each building's drill activity, and analyze reports to see what is working and where they need to improve performance.



About the Author

Raptor is driven by our mission to protect every child, every school, every day.

Founded in 2002, Raptor provides **integrated school safety software** enabling schools to safeguard students and staff, screen visitors, track volunteers, report on drills, respond to emergencies, and reunite families.

Raptor is **trusted by over 50,000 schools worldwide** to keep staff and children safe.

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