



Washington HB 1941
**How to Comply with Drill,
Reunification, and School
Safety Plan Requirements**

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Background

Many schools and safety organizations have voiced concern that active shooter drills are doing more harm than good. These drills—especially ones with realistic simulations—can trigger past trauma or scar students, staff, and other participants so significantly that new trauma is developed.

“Active shooter drills are associated with increases in depression, anxiety, and fears about death among children as young as five years old, to high schoolers, their parents, and teachers,” *stated Rep. Amy Walen*, the bill’s prime sponsor.

HB 1941 will protect individuals from these unintended side-effects by restricting how schools conduct active shooter drills.

In this document, we discuss what schools need to accomplish to comply with these drill requirements, as well as the law’s mandates around school safety and reunification plans.

Key Takeaways

- **Passed on March 17, 2022 and goes into effect on June 9, 2022.**
- **Drills with live simulations or reenactments of active shooter scenarios must be trauma-informed and developmentally appropriate.**
- **Schools are required to conduct at least one safety-related drill each month and alert students, teachers, and staff prior to each drill.**
- **Drills must teach students and staff responses for shelter-in-place, lockdown, and evacuation.**
- **Schools in lahars or tsunami zones are required to also conduct earthquake and pedestrian evacuation drills.**
- **Schools must have school safety and student-family reunification plans to be eligible for federal assistance.**

Safe School Plans

Washington legislature considers safe school plans and procedures as a matter of public safety. School districts must have plans that are consistent with federal law to be eligible for federal assistance. HB 1941 also states that public schools are “in a position to serve the community in the event of an emergency resulting from natural disasters or human-induced disasters.”

Each comprehensive school plan must:

- Address all phases of emergency management—from mitigation and preparedness to response and recovery
- Contain policies for communicating with and assisting students and staff, including those with disabilities
- Have a family-student reunification plan that includes procedures for communicating the plan to students, staff, families, and local first responders
- Use training guidance from Washington’s emergency management division
- Require the building’s principal to be certified on the incident command system (ICS)
- Consider how school facilities can be used for community assistance or shelters in natural disasters or other community-wide emergencies ([download this free guide to learn more!](#))
- Clearly outline how the school will request law enforcement, fire departments, emergency service providers, and other applicable agencies to participate in safety-related drills



Create reliable safety and reunification plans

An emergency operations plan (EOP) covers the entire timeline of different possible incidents, detailing how you will keep your school community safe whenever, however, and wherever an emergency strikes.

Learn how to develop an EOP and a student-family reunification plan in our free guide.

Learn How ▶

Collaborate better with law enforcement agencies.

Our free guide shares best practices for collaborating with public safety to improve school emergency preparation, response, and recovery.

Learn How ▶



To the extent resources are available, each year schools must:

- Collaborate with local emergency response agencies to review and update the plan
- Complete an inventory of all hazardous materials
- Update the plan to reflect any changes, including:
 - List staff who are trained on or certified in the ICS
 - Identify transportation procedures for evacuation, including bus staging areas, routes, communication systems, reunification sites, and secondary transportation agreements
 - Inform staff on how to use emergency supplies
 - Ensure staff know notification and emergency alert procedures

Stay Eligible for Federal Funding and Assistance

There are many federal grants available to Washington school districts, including the Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG) Program, the Non-Profit Security Grant, and multiple other grants through the Department of Homeland Security and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

Your application to any of these federal grants will be denied if your school safety plan doesn't meet the requirements of HB 1941. Districts are encouraged to follow the guidance from the [*Washington School Safety Center*](#) when developing their safe school plans. This can help ensure the district meets federal requirements.

School Safety Drills

HB 1941 aims to protect individuals from unintended side-effects of active shooter drills. These side-effects include increased fear, trauma, anxiety, and depression among students from 5-years-old to high school age, as well as teachers, staff, and guardians.

Each school faces unique safety challenges. School principals and administrators must assess the hazards and threats that are most likely to impact their schools. They are also responsible for ensuring their school(s) complete the drills needed to prepare for and respond to their specific safety challenges. Note that some threats may require more than one of the basic functional drills (i.e., shelter-in-place, lockdown, and evacuation).

School districts should work with emergency management agencies and first responders to complete a tabletop exercise, a functional exercise, and two full-scale exercises within a four-year period.

Notifications and Reporting Drill Activity

Schools must notify the school community prior to each drill and keep accurate drill reports by documenting (at a minimum) the date, time, and type of each drill.

Provisions from the Superintendent of Public Instruction

The superintendent of public instruction is responsible for adopting rules to implement provisions of these requirements. These rules can include provisions for lockdowns, evacuations, and other components of the school safety plan.

Build a multi-hazard approach to emergency management

“When you think about a multi-hazard plan, you must plan through each event that is very specific to your district, your area, and even down to your particular schools,” says Dr. Leigh Wall, former Santa Fe Texas ISD Superintendent.

Dr. Wall has led her district through multiple emergencies, including Hurricane Harvey and a school mass shooting in 2018.

Learn more best practices directly from Dr. Wall and other K-12 safety experts in this Raptor webinar.

[Watch Now ▶](#)

Required safety drills

Schools must conduct at least one safety-related drill each month, including during summer school. These drills must teach students the three basic responses listed to the right.

These drills must include pedestrian evacuation drills for schools within lahar or tsunami hazard zones, as well as an earthquake drill using the “drop, cover, and hold” technique.



Shelter-in-Place

Students and staff shelter in their current location (indoors)



Lockdown

Students and staff isolate from threat(s)



Evacuation

Students and staff move out and away from the threat(s)

Teach Students How to Survive Violence Without Increasing Fear

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.

“Following the empowerment theory essentially means that we can empower kids against [the violence],” Adam said. When students know how to keep themselves safe, it helps build their confidence and reduce their worry and anxiety around attending school.

Listen Now ▶

Trauma-Informed Active Shooter & Lockdown Drills

The bill states, “Lockdown drills may not include live simulations of or reenactments of active shooter scenarios that are not trauma-informed and age and developmentally appropriate.”

Examples of simulations or reenactments that schools have used include: firing blank rounds of ammunition or shooting participants with air-soft guns; having strangers in masks trying to enter locked classrooms; using special effects like smoke or fog to cloud the hallways; covering students with fake blood; and having police in full tactical gear with weapons storm the rooms. These simulation-style drills can have unexpected consequences on participants.

“This bill encourages those in the field to teach children how to lockdown in [active shooter] situations without getting too traumatized,” stated Rep. Laurie Dolan at the February House Education Committee meeting.

Research suggests active shooter drills increase:

depression
by
39%

stress and
anxiety by
42%

physiological health
problems by
23%

concerns over
death by
22%

Research from [Everytown Research & Policy and the Georgia Institute of Technology](#) concluded that active shooter drills impact students, staff, and parents’ mental health and wellbeing.

Best Practices Around Active Shooter Drills

While school shootings may be rare, it's still important to train your school community so they can keep themselves safe. Family-student reunification is also imperative to practice. Reunification may be necessary after violent incidents, weather events, bomb threats, or even things like plumbing or HVAC issues. Follow these practices to train participants in the appropriate response:



Ensure the Curriculum is Appropriate for Every Student

Training should include evidence-based, age- and developmentally-appropriate curriculum that gives teachers and students the confidence to respond to any kind of situation. It's critical to have [lesson plans for students with disabilities](#).



Practice the Curriculum with Thoroughly Planned Drills

Drills should be [part of your emergency operations plan \(EOP\)](#) and developed in partnership with first responders, mental health professionals, and safety team members. Schools should communicate drills ahead of time and have an announcement when the drill begins (e.g., "This is a drill, not an actual emergency") to decrease the likelihood of someone thinking there's a real threat.



Focus on Building Confidence and Empowering Participants

When students and staff know how to keep themselves safe, it helps build their confidence and reduce their worry and anxiety around attending school. Following age and developmentally appropriate training, especially when it's [built on the empowerment theory](#), can empower kids to protect themselves against threats of violence.

Increase Safety with Effective Training and Advanced School Safety Technology

Raptor has partnered with Safe Kids to provide Raptor customers with a no-cost, 1-school year subscription to the Safe Kids Inc.® H.E.R.O. Program curriculum. Schools can practice drills with help from [Raptor® Drill Manager](#), which enables schools to:

- Schedule drills and track compliance
- Quickly verify each building's drill activity
- Notify staff before drills
- Analyze reports for insights on where they need to improve

To streamline the entire reunification process and ensure students are reunited with authorized guardians, schools can leverage [Raptor® Reunification](#).

Get started on your [free training subscription and learn more here](#).



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.

Learn more about the Raptor Drill Manager and Raptor Reunification at raptortech.com/EM

Learn More Online →

Request a demo and see why Raptor is the leading provider in integrated school safety software solutions, or visit: raptortech.com/request

Schedule a Demo →

To speak with a school safety specialist, please give us a call.

(877) 772-7867