



GUIDANCE ON DIVISIONWIDE SAFETY AUDIT COMMITTEE FORMATION AND RESPONSIBILITIES

In 2013, the then Governor of Virginia convened the School and Campus Safety Taskforce, which focused on improving safety in public schools, and on college and university campuses throughout the Commonwealth. As a result of this taskforce, the 2013 Virginia General Assembly passed [HB 2346](http://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?ses=131&typ=bil&val=hb2346) (<http://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?ses=131&typ=bil&val=hb2346>) which amended § 22.1-279.8 of the *Code of Virginia*.

Code of Virginia Requirements

In summary, this amended legislation mandates that effective July 1, 2013:

- *every public school shall conduct at least two lock-down drills every school year, in order that students may be thoroughly practiced in such drills. One lock-down drill shall be completed in September of each school year and one lock-down drill shall be completed in January of each school year. Lock-down plans and drills shall be in compliance with the Statewide Fire Prevention Code (§ 27-94 et seq.).*
- *the Virginia Center for School Safety, in consultation with the Department of Education, shall develop a list of items to be reviewed and evaluated in the school safety audits required by this section. Such items shall include those incidents reported to school authorities pursuant to [§ 22.1-279.3:1](#) and shall include a school inspection walk-through using a standardized checklist provided by the Virginia Center for School Safety, which shall incorporate crime prevention through environmental design principles.*
- *the results of such school safety audits shall be made public within 90 days of completion. The local school board shall retain authority to withhold or limit the release of any security plans, walk-through checklists, and specific vulnerability assessment components as provided in subdivision 7 of [§ 2.2-3705.2](#). The completed walk-through checklist shall be made available upon request to the chief law-enforcement officer of the locality or his designee.*
- *each school shall submit a copy of all elements of the School Safety Audit Process as appropriate to the relevant school division superintendent. The division superintendent shall collate and submit all such materials, in the prescribed format and manner of submission, to the Virginia Center for School Safety and shall make available upon request to the chief law-enforcement officer of the locality the results of such audits.*
- ***the division superintendent shall establish a school safety audit committee to include, if available, representatives of parents, teachers, local law-enforcement, emergency services agencies, local community services boards, and judicial and public safety personnel. The school safety audit committee shall review the completed school safety audits and submit any plans, as needed, for improving school safety to the division superintendent for submission to the local school board.***
- *each school board shall ensure that every school that it supervises shall develop a written school crisis, emergency management, and medical emergency response plan, consistent with the definition provided in this section, and shall provide copies of such plans to the chief law-enforcement officer, the fire chief, the chief emergency medical services official, and the emergency management official of the locality.*
- *each school division shall designate an emergency manager.*

Please note, separate guidance has been developed, and is available at www.dcjs.virginia.gov, regarding the [School Safety Inspection Checklists](#) and [Emergency Manager Designee](#). This guidance document will focus on the required safety audit committees, their formation, and responsibilities (see **bolded** bullet above).

Divisionwide Safety Committee Formation and Responsibilities

The term “safety audit” includes all five (5) aspects of the [Virginia School Safety Audit Program](#) as administered by the Virginia Center for School Safety within the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services:

1. Virginia School Safety Survey (annually)
2. The Division Level Survey (administered every three years)
3. Virginia School Crisis Management Plan Review and Certification (annually)
4. Virginia Secondary School Climate Survey (administered in the Spring for the next three years)
5. The School Safety Inspection Checklist (due August 2014, then every three years thereafter)

As is appropriate for each locality, divisionwide Safety Audit committee(s) should incorporate a process of annual/tri-annual review of the results of items one through five (1-5) listed above for each school and/or the school division. It is recommended that, whenever possible, the committee should include, at a minimum:

- Parent(s)
- Teachers
- Local law-enforcement
- Emergency services agencies
- Local community services board(s)
- Judicial and public safety personnel

Incorporating these practitioners into the process of reviewing findings (not conducting each of the five aspects, but reviewing the outcomes of each aspect) helps to ensure a broad scale as well as a detailed review of all aspects of safety within a division, and thus provide a more encompassing system of continued improvement.

As previously stated, a process should be established as is feasible for each locality within the confines of the legislation, and there is no singular “right way” to form or conduct the work of committees, however, a sample of the process and timeline for how the divisionwide safety audit committees might conduct their work is below:

Month	Task/Activity
<p>May–August <i>(actual timeline set by individual localities)</i></p>	<p>Division School Safety Audit Committee Members are selected/notified for upcoming school year.</p> <p>Crisis plans may be reviewed and school safety inspection checklists may be conducted as is feasible within each locality, however, there will be online certification that both the annual crisis plan review and the tri-annual school safety inspection checklist have been completed by August 31 of the year.</p> <p>Please note: Although not a requirement, it is considered a best practice for a school based <i>team</i> to conduct the walk-through <i>school safety inspection checklist</i> (item 5). This differs from the Divisionwide School Safety Audit Committee in that this committee is designed to look at school and division results, and subsequently make recommendations for improvements to schools, as well as prioritizing and budgeting for such improvements.</p>

	Those who complete the <i>School Safety Inspection Checklist</i> (item 5 above) are looking to identify physical safety vulnerabilities and areas of improvement at the school building level . Because of their unique perspectives, a building administrator, division representative, first responder partner, parent, student, custodian and maintenance team member will each be able to identify different areas of vulnerability in the various target areas. Any combination of individuals in these roles is recommended for completion of the <i>School Safety Inspection Checklist</i> .
August 31 <i>(annually)</i>	Virginia School Crisis Management Plan Review and Certification This is the deadline for all School Superintendents to certify online to the VCSS that all of the crisis management plans have been reviewed by your local school board. (Item number 3 above)
August 31 <i>(triannually beginning in 2014)</i>	School Safety Inspection Checklist This is the deadline for all school superintendents to certify online to the VCSS that all schools have completed their school safety inspection walk-throughs. These checklists will not be submitted to the VCSS, but the Superintendent will verify that all schools have completed them within that timeframe. (Item number 5 above)
August–September <i>(set by VA Code)</i>	This is the timeframe when the School Safety Survey is underway. This is when items 1 and 2 (when applicable) are reported via the online survey. Please note: the survey questions relate to the prior school year. For example, August 2014 surveys will reflect plans and processes in place during the 2013-2014 school year.
Spring <i>(Annually)</i>	This is when the Virginia Secondary School Climate Survey (item 4 above) is conducted. Results are available to localities after the survey process is completed.
May through August <i>(actual timeline set by individual localities)</i>	As is appropriate for each locality, Divisionwide School Safety Audit Committee Members meet to review documents and make/prioritize improvements. Any reports resulting from the work of the committee, findings, recommendations etc., as well as inspection checklists, crisis plans, etc. are retained at the school/division level and are not required to be submitted to the state . There may however, be questions on the online safety audit (school and division) related to committee formation and findings, etc. Also, as per legislation, and as indicated above: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • each school shall submit a copy of all elements of the School Safety Audit Process as appropriate to the relevant school division superintendent. The division superintendent shall collate and submit all such materials, in the prescribed format and manner of submission, to the Virginia Center for School Safety and shall make available upon request to the chief law-enforcement officer of the locality the results of such audits. • each school board shall ensure that every school that it supervises shall develop a written school crisis, emergency management, and medical emergency response plan, consistent with the definition provided in this section, and shall provide copies of such plans to the chief law-enforcement officer, the fire chief, the chief emergency medical services official, and the emergency management official of the locality.

CONTACTS

For more information on Divisionwide ***School Safety Audit Committee Formation and Responsibilities***, please contact any of the following staff:

Donna Michaelis, *Manager, Virginia Center for School Safety*
donna.michaelis@dcjs.virginia.gov
(804) 371-6506

Shellie MacKenzie, *School and Campus Safety Program and Training Coordinator*
shellie.mackenzie@dcjs.virginia.gov
(804) 225-1863

Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services
1100 Bank Street, Richmond, VA 23219
www.dcjs.virginia.gov