
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 7077

AN ACT CONCERNING CRISIS RESPONSE DRILLS.

SUMMARY

Beginning with the 2026-27 school year, this bill establishes new protocols for school crisis response drills that, among other things, prohibit active assailant simulations, are designed to support the physical and psychological safety of students and school personnel, and provide one week advance notice to students, school personnel, and parents and guardians before a drill is held. By law, and unchanged by the bill, each public school must conduct a quarterly crisis response drill.

The bill requires the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP), in collaboration with the Connecticut Center for School Safety and Crisis Prevention (crisis prevention center) at Western Connecticut State University, to develop (1) standard terminology and definitions and (2) guidance for crisis responses and crisis debriefing by April 1, 2026.

The bill also requires each board of education to make the parts of each school's security and safety plan that are not prohibited from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) available, upon request, to members of the school community.

Additionally, the bill requires DESPP, in collaboration with the crisis prevention center, to do a study of the impact of crisis response drills on the school community and submit a report on it to the Education Committee by July 1, 2028.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2025

§§ 2 & 3 — NEW CRISIS RESPONSE DRILL PROTOCOLS

Starting with the 2026-27 school year (the school year that begins July 1, 2026), the bill requires (1) each school district to take certain steps

before holding a crisis response drill and (2) that the drill be done following the bill's requirements.

Requirements and Steps Before Conducting a Drill

The bill requires the school security and safety committee to collaborate with the school climate committee to plan crisis response drills that prioritize the physical and psychological safety of students and school personnel. By law, each public school must have a school security and safety committee to help develop and administer the school's security and safety plan and each school's school climate committee is charged with duties related to the school's anti-bullying climate improvement plan and related activities.

Furthermore, the bill requires that:

1. drills use the definitions, terminology, and guidance developed by DESPP and the crisis response center (see § 1, below);
2. drills be trauma-informed, using an approach that considers prior traumatic experiences and is designed to prevent emotional harm to, and support the psychological safety of, students and school personnel, with mental health professionals' participation integrated throughout the crisis response drill;
3. before doing a crisis response drill, school staff educate students and train personnel to build knowledge and skills intended to reduce the potential for confusion or emotional distress, including reviewing the crisis response drill's purpose and procedures before the first drill of the year;
4. staff notify students, school personnel, and parents and guardians one week in advance before holding a crisis response drill;
5. staff communicate, in a clear way, the nature and purpose of the drills to the parents and guardians of students at the school before holding a crisis response drill (presumably, this could be part of the notification one week in advance of a drill); and

6. all communication about drills be provided in the native language of each student, school personnel, and parents and guardians.

The bill also prohibits drills done with students from including an active assailant simulation or simulated violence with highly sensorial elements (such as fake assailants, firearms, gunfire sounds, blood, or injuries). A drill may include an active assailant simulation or simulated violence if it is held outside of the regular school day and exclusively for school personnel, first responders, and other school volunteers.

Drill Day Requirements

At the start of a crisis response drill, the bill requires school staff to inform students and other school personnel that they are participating in a crisis response drill to avoid confusion when an actual emergency situation occurs. Also, the school must accommodate students with cognitive, physical, or sensory disabilities, to the extent practicable, during the drill to ensure their safety and participation.

Evaluation

The bill requires school staff to evaluate each crisis response drill using the evaluation template the bill requires to be developed (see § 1).

§ 1 — DRILL DEFINITIONS, TERMINOLOGY, AND GUIDANCE

Under the bill, DESPP and the center must by April 1, 2026, develop:

1. a school crisis response drill definition,
2. standardized terminology for conducting and reviewing crisis response drills,
3. guidance on standardized (a) crisis responses and (b) debriefing protocols following a crisis, and
4. an evaluation template that allows school districts to use drill participant feedback to (a) assess drill efficacy and (b) adjust future drills to improve preparedness while preventing emotional harm and supporting psychological safety.

The bill requires DESPP to submit a report to the Education Committee on the required items described above with any recommendations by April 1, 2026.

§ 4 — SCHOOL SECURITY AND SAFETY PLAN AVAILABLE TO SCHOOL COMMUNITY

By law, each local and regional board of education must annually submit the school security and safety plan for each school under its jurisdiction to DESPP. The bill also requires each board to make any part of the plan that is not prohibited from disclosure under FOIA (CGS §§ 1-200 to -243) available to members of the school community upon request. (Presumably, this would only apply to an informal, non-FOIA request for plan information; a member of the public could still seek the information through the formal FOIA process.)

While FOIA generally requires government documents and records to be made available to the public, there are exceptions. Existing exceptions include when there are reasonable grounds to believe disclosure of records could result in a safety risk, including emergency plans and emergency preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation plans (CGS § 1-210(b)(19)).

School security and safety plans, by law, must be based on DESPP standards that include, among other things, (1) an all-hazards approach to emergencies at public schools, (2) crisis management procedures, (3) fire drill and crisis response drill evaluation by local law enforcement and other local public safety officials, and (4) procedures for managing various types of emergencies.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Education Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 44 Nay 0 (03/21/2025)