

## **Proposed legislative changes to define training expectations for employees of school entities and pre-service teachers**

### **Why is this change in legislation necessary?**

While safety in our public schools has always been paramount to creating an environment conducive to learning, over the past decade, school safety issues have risen to the point whereby our teachers, staff, and administrators must develop and implement a comprehensive disaster response and emergency preparedness plan but must also be routinely updated and trained on that plan.

In addition, to better prepare our pre-service teachers to meet the rising demands asked of them once employed in our public schools, it is critical that our teacher education programs include instruction on comprehensive disaster preparedness and responsiveness. By linking pre-service training with in school preparedness during student teaching, pre-service teachers will be better able to meet the rising demands asked of them relevant to school safety.

### **What is the proposed legislation?**

Two parts of the Pennsylvania School Code will be amended through this legislation.

#### **Chapter 10. Safe Schools**

10.24. Emergency and nonemergency response and preparedness.

(a) Each school district, in cooperation with the local emergency management agency and the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency, shall develop and implement a comprehensive disaster response and emergency preparedness plan as required under 35 Pa. C.S. 7701 (g)(relating to duties concerning disaster prevention). The plan shall be reviewed annually and modified as necessary.

**(b) Each school entity shall inform all employees of the protocols and procedures outlined in the disaster response and emergency preparedness plan within 15 days of hire and annual updates thereafter with continued employment.**

**i. In addition, each school entity shall provide three (3) hours of training on the comprehensive disaster response and emergency preparedness plan within ninety (90) days of the date of hire and three (3) hours of training every two (2) years thereafter with continued employment to the following types of employees:**

**a. all full-time and part-time school entity employees (W-2) who work throughout the school year and during the school day**

**b. all full-time and part-time contracted employees responsible for the direct education, care or supervision of children during the school day**

## **Chapter 354 Preparation of Professional Educators**

### **354.25 Preparation Program Curriculum**

(c) The preparation program shall be designed to ensure that candidates become competent professional educators. The evidence that this standard is met includes the following:

(1) Programs for the continuing preparation of professional educators build upon and extend prior knowledge and experiences of candidates including core studies of learning and practices that support learning.

(2) Professional educator program specific guidelines, the learning principles defined in § 354.33 and Chapter 4 are used in developing programs in each certificate area.

(3) Programs are designed to ensure candidates research information, use research methods, and acquire knowledge about issues and trends in public education.

**(4) Professional education programs shall provide disaster response and emergency preparedness training to pre-service teachers.**

### FAQs related to Chapter 10. Safe Schools

#### **1. How would implementation be managed for employees hired after the start of the school year?**

This is a local decision based on the number of the professional development days built into the district calendar, use of Act 80 days, types of days allowed in collective bargaining agreements, on-line training modules, etc.

#### **2. Will ten month employees hired during the school year with less than 90 contractual days from date of hire have their timeline frozen and restarted for completion of training?**

Yes, but the timeline does not start over. If a 10 month employee is hired with 45 days remaining the employee must receive the protocols and procedures outlined in the district's comprehensive disaster response and emergency preparedness plan within 15 days and must receive training within 45 days of the first day the employee is scheduled to return to work.

**3. Does this mean my district must organize a simulated disaster response drill?**

The district may choose to organize a simulated disaster response drill but it is not required under the law. Training is a locally designated decision and should be based on the school district's comprehensive disaster response and emergency preparedness plan and developed in cooperation with the local emergency management agency.

**4. How does my district choose which scenario to review in the three (3) hour training?**

The three hour training should be based on the school district's comprehensive disaster response and emergency preparedness plan and developed in cooperation with the local emergency management agency.

**5. Do the three (3) hours of training need to be continuous?**

Yes, if the district wants to award Act 48 credit.

**6. How will this requirement impact food service employees, custodial employees, bus drivers, etc. employed directly with the school district?**

Regardless if these employees are district employees or contracted employees if they are full time or part time and working with students during the school day they are required to receive training in addition to the annual updates.

FAQs related to Chapter 354. Preparation of Professional Educators

**1. At what point in the teacher education program would this competency need to be incorporated?**

This requirement would need to be incorporated after candidacy and prior to completing student teaching. If appropriate it could be incorporated within any course dealing with school safety, administration of programs, or even within the student teaching experience itself.

**2. How should this requirement be assessed?**

If this requirement is incorporated within a course it should be assessed along with all other competencies within that course. The assessment could take the form of a group or individual project, traditional assessment, self-reflection prior to entering the field, etc.

**3. What topics must be covered by professional education programs?**

Schools of education must ensure that all pre-service teachers have adequate knowledge of current disaster response, school safety, and emergency preparedness best practices and strategies. Schools where pre-service teachers are placed should be made particularly relevant.