



To the Administrator Addressed

Commissioner Mike Morath

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DATE:	April 1, 2021
SUBJECT:	Safe and Supportive Schools Program (SSSP) Updates
CATEGORY:	Information
NEXT STEPS:	Share with appropriate school safety staff

Summary:

- [TEA withdraws proposed rule for the Safe and Supportive Schools Program \(SSSP\) and Trauma Informed Care Policy and training and provides further guidance on interim SSSP implementation](#)
- [In November of 2021, TEA will be collecting an increased amount of data related to the SSSP teams as required by Senate Bill 11-86R \(SB11\)](#)

SSSP Proposed Rule Withdrawal and SSSP Interim Implementation Guidance

Given the impact and additional challenges of COVID-19 on local education agency (LEA) capacity, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) has decided to delay the finalization of the SSSP and Trauma-Informed Care Policy and Training rule. TEA recognizes that this is an important policy framework to implement. However, TEA also recognizes that it does not want to add additional requirements to and burdens on LEAs, beyond what is required in statute, during this especially challenging time. This delay will also allow TEA to ensure additional stakeholder engagement in the rulemaking process and ensure that the rule aligns with other district and school improvement frameworks, such as the [Effective Schools Framework](#).

In the meantime, LEAs are still required to comply with the provisions of statute in Senate Bill (SB) 11 from the 86th Legislative Session. As a reminder, SB 11 contains six SSSP components that are codified in Texas Education Code (TEC), §37.115, §38.036, and §38.254. Below are the six components that seek to holistically build safe and supportive school environments:

- (1) promotion of a positive school climateⁱ
- (2) building of a multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) that address school climate, the social and emotional domain, mental and behavioral health to support wellness, learning and safetyⁱⁱ
- (3) conducting behavioral threat assessmentsⁱⁱⁱ
- (4) promotion of awareness, guidance, and training resources for school staff, students, parents, or guardians on preventing, recognizing, and responding to harmful, threatening, or violent behavior that may pose a threat to the community, school, or to an individual person^{iv}

- (5) Collection of SSSP data to continuously improve the program^v
- (6) Support of facility safety and security, including planning and implementation of the multi-hazard emergency operations plan^{vi}

Please also refer to the below [resources table](#) on page 3 of this letter for additional information and support in implementing each of the six components of the SSSP.

LEA administrators are further reminded that TEC, §37.115(f)(1) and (2) require each SSSP team to conduct a threat assessment that includes assessing and reporting individuals who make threats of violence or exhibit harmful, threatening, or violent behavior in accordance with the policies and procedures adopted by each LEA. Moreover, those procedures must be consistent with the [model policies and procedures](#) developed by the TxSSC and TEA. LEAs must also continue to gather and analyze data to determine the level of risk and appropriate interventions for each threat assessed. (See further data collection information below.)

Finally, TEC, §37.108, requires LEAs to adopt and implement a multihazard emergency operations plan for use in the LEA's facilities. The plan must address prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery as defined by the Texas School Safety Center in conjunction with TEA and other entities as applicable. The plan must also provide for strategies that ensure professional development training for suicide prevention and grief-informed and trauma-informed care is provided to appropriate school personnel; that provisions are made in alignment with best-practice based programs and research-based practices recommended under TEC, §38.351, formerly Section 161.325 of the Health and Safety Code; and address other provisions to align related policies, procedures, and strategies into the plan.

SSSP Data Collection

TEA understands the continuing challenges and hardships all LEAs are enduring during the current 2020-2021 school year. Therefore, in order to ease the burden on LEAs, TEA will continue to phase in the SB 11 mandatory data reporting requirement for the SSSP teams. In November 2021, TEA will again issue a survey via Qualtrics to all school districts and open-enrollment charter schools to collect data regarding LEA behavioral threat assessments conducted by SSSP teams, team training received, and some information on interventions provided. Completion of the survey will be a mandatory reporting requirement for threats assessed during the time period of September 1, 2020 through August 31, 2021.

The information collected will be used by TEA and the Texas School Safety Center to help improve and support SSSP teams and programs throughout Texas. The information collected by this survey is subject to open records requests to the extent they are not protected by FERPA or subject to other student educational data access restrictions. The November 2021 survey will be the second step of the SB 11 data collection phase-in process. Therefore, it is anticipated that the survey will capture not only the same type of data initially collected in November 2020, but additional data as required by SB 11. For example, TEA may request further details on the types of threats (such as harm to self or harm to others), aggregate student demographics and

subpopulations, aggregate assessment and outcome data, grief- and trauma-informed care and suicide prevention training, and other mental health-related trainings received by LEA personnel. Pursuant to SB 11, LEAs should already be collecting this data. For a preview of the proposed November 2021 data collection survey questions follow this [link](#).

SSSP Resources Table

SSSP Component / Requirement	Resource(s)
(1) Promote a positive school climate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TEA provides guidance for building positive school climates and culture at the following links: TEA Safe, Supportive, and Positive School Climates. • TEA ESF Lever 3 Positive School Cultures • The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), U.S. Department of Education (ED), U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS): SchoolSafety.gov • The National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments (NCSSLE) offers information and technical assistance to States, districts, schools, institutions of higher learning, and communities focused on improving school climate and conditions for learning: National Center for Safe and Supportive Learning Environments
(2) Build multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) that address school climate, the social and emotional domain, mental and behavioral health to support wellness, learning and safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TEA’s MTSS Fact Sheet • TEA’s Mental Health and Behavioral Health webpage: https://tea.texas.gov/about-tea/other-services/mental-health/mental-health-and-behavioral-health • National Association of School Psychologists webpage • TEA’s Texas School Mental Health and Behavioral Health Website: • TEA has launched Project Restore and this trauma-informed training video series: https://www.texasprojectrestore.org/
(3) Conduct behavioral threat assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TxSSC School Safety Tool-kit and Model Policies and Procedures for SSSP threat assessment teams: https://txssc.txstate.edu/tools/tam-toolkit/

<p>(4) Promote awareness, guidance, and training resources for students and school employees on preventing, recognizing, and responding to harmful, threatening, or violent behavior</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TEA’s restorative practices link • National Center for School Safety: https://www.nc2s.org/ • Multiple School Safety trainings available on the TxSSC website: https://txssc.txstate.edu/tools/
<p>(5) Collect SSSP data to continuously improve the program</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposed November 2021 data collection survey questions for SSSP activity during the time period of September 1, 2020 through August 31, 2021:
<p>(6) Support facility safety and security, including planning and implementation of the multi-hazard emergency operations plan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TEA provides a number of resources for school districts affected by extreme weather, natural disasters, or man-made disasters on its Weather and Disaster webpage. • The TxSSC has updated the Drill and Exercise Toolkit and the Drill Guidance Document. The current version of the Drill Guidance • The TxSSC recommends that a vital part of a comprehensive emergency operations plan (EOP) is a Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP), which is a guidance document on how to continue operations under adverse conditions: https://txssc.txstate.edu/tools/weather-toolkit/coop-prep

ⁱ TEC, §38.254(a)(4)(a), addresses promoting a positive school climate.

ⁱⁱ TEC, §37.115(b)(3), requires the establishment of an MTSS that addresses school climate, the social and emotional domain, and behavioral and mental health, and TEC, §38.036, requires integration of trauma-informed care practices in each school environment.

ⁱⁱⁱ TEC, §37.115(f)(1), requires LEAs to conduct behavioral threat assessments.

^{iv} TEC, §37.108(f)(6), §21.054(d) and (d-2), §21.451(d)(3) and (d-1),(d-2), §37.115(f)(2)(6), and §37.115(k)(5) address staff training and/or guidance.

^v This data must be reported to the TEA in accordance with guidelines developed by the agency pursuant to TEC, §37.115(C)(3) and §37.115(k).

^{vi} TEC, §37.108, requires each school district or public junior college district to adopt and implement a multihazard emergency operations plan for use in the district's facilities.