

WSPTA believes that to achieve our vision that every child’s potential become a reality, safe and supportive settings and climates for children and youth are essential. As children and youth spend a large part of their time in school, it is critical that every school is prepared to serve all students in the event of crisis or disaster.

Background

After the events of September 11, 2001, the Washington state legislature took steps to protect our schools. In SSB 5543 (2002), “The legislature recognizes that comprehensive safe school plans for each public school are of paramount importance and will help to assure students, parents, guardians, school employees, and school administrators that our schools provide the safest possible learning environment.”¹

Each school is mandated to implement an individual, comprehensive safe school plan, review and update the plan each year, and record and report the plan with law enforcement agencies.² However, the state provides no clear guidance on plan development, no regular funding allocation, no accountability system is in place to document that plans have been completed, nor is there a process for assessment or feedback on plans.³

The School Safety Advisory Committee and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) are required to conduct an annual School Safety Summit to focus on the progress of a statewide plan for school safety that meet local needs.⁴ Draft recommendations from the 3rd Annual Safety Summit are published on the OSPI website.⁵ Comprehensive school safety plans should address responses to a variety of hazards:⁵

Natural Hazards	Technological Hazards	Biological Hazards	Human-caused Threats
Earthquakes Tornadoes Lightning Severe wind Hurricanes Floods Drought Wildfires Extreme temperatures Landslides or mudslides Tsunamis Volcanos/Lahar Winter precipitation	Release of toxins from industrial plants Release of hazardous materials from within the school, such as gas leaks or laboratory spills Hazardous materials releases from major highways or railroads Radiological releases from nuclear power stations Dam failure Power failure Water failure	Infectious diseases, such as pandemic influenza, drug-resistant tuberculosis, <i>Staphylococcus aureus</i> , and meningitis Contaminated food outbreaks, including Salmonella, botulism, and <i>E. coli</i> Toxic materials present in school laboratories/ HVAC	Fire Active shooters Criminal threats or actions Gang violence Bomb threats Domestic violence and abuse Trafficking / CSEC Cyber attacks Suicide Harassment, Intimidation, or Bullying Threats based on gender identity Terrorism

Proposed Solutions

The Washington State PTA shall support legislation or policies that support emergency preparedness planning in schools through:

- Development of clear and specific guidelines and standards for safe school plans;
- Funding to support schools in developing safe school plans;
- Funding to ensure that every school is able to implement a safe school plan that will serve all students equitably.

For More Information

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For more information on the WSPTA advocacy program, please visit our website (www.wastatepta.org)

Citations

1. SSB 5543 (Chapter 205, Laws of 2002).
<http://lawfilesexternal.wa.gov/biennium/2001-02/Pdf/Bills/Session%20Laws/Senate/5543-S.SL.pdf>
2. Legislation mandating safe school plans at every school: RCW 28A.320.125 -
<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=28a.320.125>
3. School Safety Advisory Committee Meeting Notes, April 5, 2018. Retrieved from
<http://www.k12.wa.us/SafetyCenter/pubdocs/2018AprilAdvMtnng/SSAC-MTG-NOTES-4-05-18.pdf>
4. RCW 28A.300.273 Annual School Safety Summits
<https://app.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=28A.300.273>
5. School Safety Advisory Committee. See “Summary Report” in October 4, 2018 meeting documents.
<http://www.k12.wa.us/SafetyCenter/AdvisoryMeetings.aspx>