



February 12, 2019

**SAFE2SAY SOMETHING:
PENNSYLVANIA'S ANONYMOUS REPORTING SYSTEM FOR SCHOOL SAFETY**

On June 22, 2018, Governor Wolf approved Act 44 establishing the Safe2Say Something program (S2SS). The Safe2Say Something provisions establish a system through which people may make anonymous reports of behaviors that present concerns in public and nonpublic schools. The centerpiece of the Safe2Say program is a school safety tool for students, staff, parents, and communities to anonymously report unsafe, potentially harmful, dangerous, violent or criminal activities in a school entity or the threat of such activities in a school entity.

THE PROCESS

Upon receipt of a report, analysts in the crisis center gather as much information as possible to triage the tips, which are categorized by immediacy and severity as either "Life Safety" or "Non-Life Safety." The analyst forwards the report via text, email, and/or phone to a school entity's crisis team, law enforcement dispatch, and other organizations where appropriate. Those tips categorized as Life Safety are delivered to school entities immediately regardless of time or day of week, whereas Non-Life Safety tips are delivered between 6:00 AM and 6:00 PM daily.

Once the report is received, the school entity and local law enforcement are charged with assessing, intervening, and taking protective action as appropriate. They are also responsible for reporting back to the Safe2Say crisis center regarding the disposition of the tip.

SCHOOL ACTIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

School districts, intermediate units, vocational-technical schools, charter and cyber charter schools, and private and nonpublic schools in Pennsylvania are all subject to Act 44. In addition to the S2SS program, schools are encouraged to continue to follow the policies and procedures already in place in their districts in regard to responding to threats and other information received.

However, each school entity must have procedures for assessing and responding to reports received from the S2SS crisis center. Also, by law, each school entity and 911 dispatch must identify a S2SS lead to be the administrative point of contact for the program. The Office of the Attorney General (OAG) suggests that school entities identify a "District Lead," charged with serving as the main point of contact with the S2SS program, training coordinator, and primary point of contact with local law enforcement agencies.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF SCHOOL EMPLOYEES

The OAG encouraged districts to establish crisis teams of three to five members to ensure that someone is always available to receive reports through the Safe2Say program. School entities may request that school employees participate on the Safe2Say crisis team. Since any person informed of a report is responsible for appropriately processing or responding to the tip, ***a PSEA member who receives a request to serve on the S2SS crisis team should immediately contact his or her UniServ Representative.***

Utilization of this system is not a substitute for complying with the statutory requirement that school employees, as designated mandatory reporters, must immediately file a report with ChildLine if they have reasonable cause to believe that a child may be a victim of child abuse. Similarly, Safe2Say anonymous reporting is not a substitute for reporting requirements under the Educator Discipline Act which establishes that certified school employees must file a report with PDE, their supervisor, and the Chief School Administrator when they know that an educator may be involved in sexual abuse, exploitation, or sexual misconduct.

TRAINING

Training for district crisis team members started in December and included webinars and in-person trainings. S2SS has provided informational guides, best practice models, and informational kits for student and staff training to all S2SS team leads. OAG will offer additional training for all school personnel, students, and parents as the program is rolled out. To date, the program's staff trained over 300,000 students in how to use the reporting system. While not required by law, these trainings for students and staff cover how to recognize warning signs/signals and how to submit tips.

PROTECTIONS IN THE LAW

The law requires that individuals making reports to the Safe2Say crisis center remain anonymous, unless the individual voluntarily discloses his or her identity and is willing to be identified. A record created or obtained through Safe2Say will be confidential and may not be disclosed except: 1) to notify the appropriate law enforcement agency, school entity, and organization; or 2) upon order of court. A record of any report is not subject to the Right-to-Know Law and does not create a criminal history record. Knowingly or intentionally making a false report to the program is a third-degree misdemeanor. Reports determined to be false will not become part of the record of the person who is the subject of the report.

Safe2Say implementation differs in school entities across the Commonwealth. ***Local association leaders should work with their PSEA UniServs and Region Attorneys to review the details of their employer's approach and assess the impact upon bargaining unit members' terms and conditions of employment as a result of Safe2Say duties.*** Whenever a PSEA member has a question about how this program intersects with their employment or working conditions, they should also reach out to their Uniserv Representative.

CONCLUSION

The OAG has yet to issue formal guidance and hence many implementation details of the program have yet to be determined. In the meantime, PSEA members should raise issues as they come up with their school entities as appropriate, and only after consultation with their UniServ Representative.

Anonymous tip hotlines have been successfully utilized in other states and PSEA supports the Safe2Say program as one component of a larger, more comprehensive system to keep our students, schools, and staff safe.

RESOURCES

PSEA School Safety

- [Homepage](#)
- [Safe Havens for Learning: PSEA policy recommendations to enhance safety in PA schools](#)
- [PSEA Testimony to the House Education Committee on School Safety](#)

Safe2Say Something Website

- [Homepage](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [School Resources](#)
- [Student Training PowerPoint](#)

Sandy Hook Foundation

- [Homepage](#)
- [Information on Accessing Youth Violence Prevention On-line Training Course](#)
- [Get the Facts](#)

FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information about the contents of this Advisory, contact Bradley Hull (bhull@psea.org), PSEA Director of Education Services. For questions or concerns about the implementation of the Safe 2 Say Something Program in your school or district, please contact your UniServ Representative.