



GOVERNOR GREG ABBOTT

June 1, 2022

Kathy Martinez-Prather, Ph.D.
Director
Texas School Safety Center
Texas State University
415 North Guadalupe Street #164
San Marcos, Texas 78666-5719

Dear Dr. Martinez-Prather:

The work and trainings provided by the Texas School Safety Center (TxSSC) has reached thousands of schools and instructors and has benefited millions of Texas schoolchildren. The school law enforcement training and behavioral threat assessments are tools which are critical in striving to prevent tragedies in the future. However, the tragedy at Robb Elementary School last week requires us all to do more.

Though much has been done, there is a clear, convincing, and urgent need to continue and expand upon the work the TxSSC and school districts across the state are doing. The State must work beyond writing words on paper and ensuring that the laws are being followed; it must also ensure that a culture of constant vigilance is engrained in every campus and in every school district employee across the state. To begin that process I request you do the following:

Under state law, school districts are required to create School Safety and Security Committees. These groups are required to meet three times a year, and generally one meeting occurs during the summer. Please contact every ISD immediately to communicate the expectation that all districts will ensure the District Safety and Security Committee will meet this summer and that before the start of the 2022-2023 school year, each district will:

1. Ensure their [School Safety and Security Committee](#) meets to review their Emergency Operations Plan and address any campus safety needs. This includes reviewing their [Active Threat](#) plan.
2. Ensure the [School Behavioral Threat Assessment Team](#) is trained and has reviewed procedures for each campus.
3. Ensure that all staff and substitutes are trained on their specific district and campus safety procedures and that all [drills](#) are scheduled *before* the start of the next school year.
4. Conduct an assessment of their access control procedures, such as single access points, locked instruction room doors, visitor check-in procedures, exterior door locks, etc.
5. Complete these efforts by September 1, 2022, and certify this data to the TxSSC by September 9, 2022.

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The TxSSC will provide a progress report of these findings to the Office of the Governor and the Legislature by October 1, 2022. I will work with TxSSC, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and the Texas Legislature to hold accountable any districts that do not meet these requirements.

Additionally, I am charging the TxSSC, in coordination with TEA, to develop and implement a plan to conduct random inspections to assess access control measures of Texas school districts. Among other reviews, your team should begin conducting in-person, unannounced, random intruder detection audits on school districts. Staff should approach campuses to find weak points and how quickly they can penetrate buildings without being stopped. This will help determine if schools are prepared to implement and follow the EOPs they have already submitted to the state. This will improve accountability and ensure school districts are following the plans they create.

Also, the TxSSC should immediately begin working with my office and the Legislature on recommendations to improve current security systems and determine the funding necessary to continue the work of hardening our schools against outside threats. This issue will no doubt be at the forefront of the next Legislative Session. You have my full support to make recommendations for consideration by the Legislature. To the extent you need additional resources to accomplish the tasks outlined in this letter, I will work with leaders in the Texas Senate and House and state agencies to ensure you have those resources.

Finally, Senate Bill 11, passed in the 2019 Legislative Session, gave the TxSSC significant additional authority to audit School Safety Emergency Operations Plans (EOPs). If a school district fails to satisfactorily submit an EOP, they are required by state law to hold a meeting to notify the public of their noncompliance. If they fail to do that, the TEA can take over school leadership and ensure the district takes these responsibilities seriously. I will work with TEA to hold accountable any ISD that is not in compliance with these standards.

Again, I want to thank you for your work. Though we have all made significant progress, even one failure is unacceptable. Texans have never shirked away from a challenge, and I know with the support of state leadership, we can continue the work of improving each student's experience in our schools.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Greg Abbott", written in a cursive style.

Greg Abbott
Governor

GA:shd

cc: The Honorable Mike H. Morath, Commissioner
Texas Education Agency