

Committee on Children, Families, And Elder Affairs

CS/SB 590 — School Safety

by Appropriations Committee and Senator Harrell

The bill modifies numerous provisions related to school safety. Specifically, the bill:

- Requires public and charter schools to make a reasonable attempt to notify the parents of a minor student before the student is removed from school, school transportation, or a school-sponsored activity for an involuntary mental health examination.
- Defines “a reasonable attempt to notify” as “the exercise of reasonable diligence and care by the principal or the principal’s designee to make contact with the student’s parent, guardian, or other known emergency contact whom the student’s parent or guardian has authorized to receive notification of an involuntary examination.”
- Requires the principal or their designee to, at a minimum, use available methods of communication to notify a parent, guardian, or other known emergency contact following the decision to Baker Act a student. The methods of communication should include, but are not limited to, telephone calls; text messages; e-mails; and voicemails.
- Requires a principal or their designee to document the method and number of attempts made to contact the student’s parent, guardian, or other known emergency contact, and the outcome of each attempt, allowing a delay of notification if it is necessary to avoid jeopardizing the health and safety of the student.
- Mandates the collection of data by school districts and the Department of Children and Families (DCF) relating to the number and frequency of involuntary examinations of minors initiated by schools at specified school locations or events.
- Provides that parents of public and charter school students have the right to timely notification of threats, unlawful acts, and significant emergencies, as well as access to school safety and discipline incidents as reported in the school environmental safety incident report.
- Adds requirements to required student codes of conduct to include criteria for:
 - Recommending to law enforcement that a student who commits a criminal offense be allowed to participate in a civil citation or similar prearrest diversion program as an alternative to expulsion or arrest; and
 - Assigning a student who commits a petty act of misconduct to a school-based intervention program. If a student’s assignment is based on a noncriminal offense, the student’s participation in a school-based intervention program may not be entered into the Department of Juvenile Justice Information System Prevention Web.
- Allows district school board policies to provide accommodations for drills conducted by exceptional education centers, and requires district school boards to establish certain emergency response and emergency preparedness policies and procedures.
- Requires timely notice to parents of specified unlawful acts and significant emergency situations on school grounds, school transportation, or school-sponsored activities.

- Requires each district school board to adopt a policy mandating that the school superintendent annually report to the DCF the number of involuntary examinations initiated at a school, on school transportation, or at a school-sponsored activity.
- Requires all school safety officers to undergo crisis intervention training.
- Requires any ID card issued by a public school for students in grades 6-12 to include the telephone numbers for national or statewide crisis and suicide hotlines and text lines.
- Requires school districts to adopt procedures mandating attempts at de-escalation be made prior to initiating a Baker Act.
- Requires schools to contact a health care practitioner capable of initiating a Baker Act in person or via telehealth prior to a Baker Act being initiated. The mental health professional may be available to a school district either by contracts or interagency agreements with a local community behavioral health providers, a managing entity, or a local mobile response team. Alternatively, the mental health professionals may be a direct or contracted employee of the school district.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect July 1, 2021.

Vote: Senate 40-0; House 116-0