



Report on the Implementation of  
Section 1001.212(17), Florida Statutes

Office of Safe Schools  
January 1, 2026

Prepared for:

The Honorable Ron DeSantis  
Governor of the State of Florida

The Honorable Ben Albritton  
President  
The Florida Senate

The Honorable Daniel Perez  
Speaker  
The Florida House of Representatives

# Florida Institute of School Safety Report on the Implementation of Section 1001.212(17), Florida Statutes

Section 1001.212(17), Florida Statutes (F.S.), requires the Office of Safe Schools (OSS) to “Convene a workgroup of stakeholders, including, but not limited to, postsecondary institutions, law enforcement, fire and EMS, emergency management, school facilities staff, school safety specialists, school administrators, superintendents, school-based mental health professionals, and threat management practitioners. The workgroup shall make recommendations for the establishment of a Florida Institute of School Safety, including programs and functions to enhance school safety. The workgroup shall submit the findings and recommendations to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives no later than January 1, 2026.”

This requirement was established in the 2025 Florida Senate Bill 1470 on School Safety.

## WORKGROUP MEMBERSHIP

Workgroup members were selected to include all stakeholder groups identified in statute:

- Dr. Bryan Alvaré, Principal - Yulee High School, Nassau County School District
- Ty Carhart, EMS Administrator - Bureau of Emergency Medical Oversight, Florida Department of Health
- Heather DeVore, District Threat Management Coordinator - Clay County District Schools
- Elijah Flowers, Senior Code Analyst - Division of State Fire Marshal
- Joseph Mabry, School Safety Specialist - Lake County Schools
- Mark McQueen, Superintendent - Bay District Schools
- Joseph Mikulski, Executive Director, School Leadership - Collier County Public Schools
- John Newman, Chief of Security - Hillsborough County Public Schools
- Kaylynn Perry, Deputy Bureau Chief, Response - Florida Division of Emergency Management
- Paul Rooney, Assistant Vice President of Campus Safety and Services - Valencia College
- Sheriff David Vincent - Citrus County Sheriff's Office
- Mark A. Weigly, Educational Facilities Construction Planning Manager - Florida Department of Education
- Dr. David Wheeler, Center Director, School Mental Health Collaborative - University of South Florida

## WORKGROUP MEETINGS

Meetings were open to the public and noticed in the Florida Administrative Register. Four total meetings were held, three virtually and one in-person:

- September 19, 2025, 1 PM to 3 PM via Microsoft Teams
- October 17, 2025, 10 AM to 2 PM at the Citrus County Emergency Operations Center
- October 30, 2025, 4 PM to 5 PM via Microsoft Teams
- November 17, 2025, 4 PM to 5 PM via Microsoft Teams

Meeting agendas and minutes are posted to the Workgroup's webpage:

<https://www.fldoe.org/safe-schools/fiss-wkgroup.shtml>.

## BACKGROUND

In 2018, Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School experienced a horrific shooting that killed 14 students and 3 staff members and injured another 17 individuals. What followed has been over 7 years of extraordinary support and leadership focused on building systems to prevent another Florida tragedy. Florida's Governor and Legislature prioritized a legal framework and generous funding that made school safety in Florida a model for the nation. The Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Commission (MSD Commission) was established in 2018 and they provided an exhaustive examination of the tragedy. Once their investigation was complete, the MSD Commission leveraged its expertise to make policy recommendations that resulted in major school safety legislation every year since. Marjory Stoneman Douglas victim parents serve on the MSD Commission and in many other capacities to keep school safety a priority in Florida. Their efforts, along with leadership from the Commissioner of Education and the State Board of Education, have sustained a robust and responsive system to keep students and staff safe in our schools.

## PROCESS

The initial Workgroup meeting included a high-level review of the functions of OSS and relevant resources, specifically existing, university-based school safety centers. Subsequent Workgroup meetings focused on enhancing school safety whether through the creation of an institute or through other means.

## Office of Safe Schools

OSS serves as a central repository for best practices, training standards and compliance oversight in all matters regarding school safety and security. The OSS's mission is to support districts in providing a safe learning environment for students and educators. The primary goals of the office are prevention, intervention and emergency preparedness planning.

OSS was created by the Florida Legislature after the February 14, 2018, school shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. School safety legislation from 2018 onward reflects the will of lawmakers, impacted families, educators and public safety professionals to never experience another school shooting in Florida.

## University-Based School Safety Centers

The group reviewed the following larger, university-based school safety centers alongside their State Education Agency counterparts:

- [Kentucky Center for School Safety](#)
- [University of Montana Safe Schools Center](#)
- [Texas School Safety Center](#)
- [Georgia State University - Center for Research on School Climate](#)
- [University of Michigan - National Center for School Safety](#)
- [University of Colorado Boulder - Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence](#)
- [Western Connecticut State University - Center for School Safety and Crisis Preparation](#)
- [University of Virginia - Youth Violence Project](#)

## Workgroup Questions and Discussion

The most important question for the Workgroup's consideration was whether or not an institute is necessary to improve the safety of Florida's schools. After reviewing other states' models for university-based school safety centers, the Workgroup determined it is not necessary and that the creation of a separate institute would be duplicative of the OSS mission. The Florida Legislature established OSS to provide a more cohesive and integrated approach to addressing school safety within the state of Florida. Upon this determination, the Workgroup recommended the following enhancements to OSS infrastructure:

- **What would enhance the safety of Florida's schools?**  
After reviewing the statute that designates OSS as a "central repository for best practices," (s. 1001.212, F.S.) the Workgroup determined that OSS already manages most of the functions that are delegated to university-based school safety centers elsewhere; research was the only function not currently under OSS. Workgroup members determined that Florida's existing school safety infrastructure was effective due to:
  - statewide uniformity;
  - school-based compliance efforts;
  - systems that are flexible and responsive;
  - integration of mental health programs and funding;
  - regular data analysis; and
  - robust communication between districts and OSS.

The Workgroup concluded that creation of a research branch within OSS would support identification and integration of best practices; this new branch would have the authority to grant funds to research institutions. Building upon existing infrastructure was determined to be the best and most cost-effective alternative to the creation of a standalone school safety institute.

- **How will OSS's current mission be enhanced by adding a research branch?**  
By engaging subject matter experts in Florida's colleges and universities to conduct research in support of school safety, the resulting products could inform policy, budgeting and staffing. As the MSD Commission prepares to sunset in 2026, this research, under the direction of a multidisciplinary advisory group, would maintain the focus on school safety in Florida and continue the system of review and improvement established by the MSD Commission.
  
- **If created, what would the research branch look like under OSS?**  
A branch under OSS would require funds for grants to research institutions and for program staff. Research priorities would be established by a multidisciplinary advisory group (similar to the EMS Advisory Council model outlined in s. [401.245](#), F.S.) to include, but not be limited to:
  - college and university representatives;
  - district representatives (small, medium and large);
  - mental health representatives;
  - public safety representatives;
  - students/parents; and
  - education stakeholder groups.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The Workgroup reviewed the major, university-based school safety centers around the country and concluded that the robust systems established in the wake of the 2018 Marjory Stoneman Douglas tragedy were comprehensive and comparable to those university-based centers. An anticipated need for quality research on school safety led the Workgroup to recommend a new branch within OSS to oversee research efforts that could sustain improvements into the future. The Workgroup proposes the following components:

- **Research Branch within OSS** – Creation of a research branch under the leadership of OSS that could work with stakeholders to determine research needs, coordinate with Florida's colleges and universities on research projects and oversee grant funds. Expertise in research methods and program evaluation would enhance this new function.
- **Advisory group** – A multidisciplinary group would meet quarterly and possibly more often leading up to the legislative session.

- Create a small pilot group to initiate the advisory group process to include representatives from public safety, school districts and mental health.
- The advisory group would serve as an information gathering and fact-finding entity.
- The group would prepare annual briefings for the Florida House and Senate, and specifically for committees that make recommendations on school safety.
- Pursue Sunshine Law exemptions to protect sensitive advisory group discussions.
- Identify case studies; provide funds for advisory group members to travel to other states for research purposes.
- Establish a strategic plan to drive research objectives.
- **Staffing** – The research branch should include no fewer than three new Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) positions. Existing OSS data and grants staff could support the work of the research branch.
- **Funding** – In an effort to be more effective with state resources, OSS would administer grant funds to address discrete research questions that may arise from the advisory group. The Legislature should consider baseline funding for the 2026-27 fiscal year. Once the advisory group is convened, they would recommend research priorities. Funds would be needed for research grants to colleges and universities, advisory group travel and OSS program staff (no fewer than three FTE).
- **Information sharing** – Actively exchange information with other states. Take advantage of existing public safety infrastructure such as emergency management resources and training.