



## Wisconsin State Legislature

FOR MORE INFORMATION  
CONTACT: LUTHER OLSEN (800) 991-5541

February 12, 2020

### **Wisconsin School Safety Plan Audit Released**

In 2018, the Wisconsin Legislature passed a new law that provided \$100 million to improve school safety. Under this new law, school districts and private schools were required to update their school safety plans and submit them to the Department of Justice (DOJ). The law included a provision requiring the Legislative Audit Bureau (LAB) to conduct an audit of how the money was spent and if the school safety plans met expectations. The LAB released the results of this audit in December.

The audit findings were very positive. The audit notes that DOJ awarded \$94.5 million in 1,325 school safety grants to school districts, private schools, independent charter schools, and tribal schools. They reviewed a sample of 70 grants representing 18.6 percent of the total amount of all grants and found that DOJ appropriately administered and oversaw these grants. By mid-July 2019, grant recipients had received \$35.8 million, as schools are reimbursed for money spent.

The law enacted in 2018 requires school districts and private schools to develop school safety plans that include procedures and guidelines on school violence and attacks, fires, weather-related emergencies, bomb threats, intruders, threats to non-classroom events, and parent-student reunification. The LAB reports that most of the 779 school safety plans contained information about at least six of these seven types of school safety issues. One weak spot that the LAB noted was that some of the plans did not include information about parent-student reunification or threats to non-classroom events. 71.2 percent of the reports by school districts contained information on non-classroom events, but only 43.8 percent of the plans submitted by private schools contained this information. Similarly, 64.6 percent of the public school reports included

procedures for parent-student reunification, but only 48 percent of private school reports had this information. The LAB's audit of the school safety plans found many examples of best practices for emergency prevention and mitigation, emergency preparedness, emergency response, emergency recovery, school safety assessments, school safety drills, and school building blueprints.

As part of the audit, the LAB also surveyed 1,210 school administrators about school safety issues. Most administrators told the LAB that they were satisfied with the cooperation received from external entities, like CESAs or local law enforcement agencies, that they consulted to create their school safety plans and with the school safety grants and training provided by DOJ. They also talked to 521 local law enforcement agencies about school safety issues. The LAB notes that local law enforcement agencies indicated that they were more satisfied with various aspects of school safety at school districts than at private schools. Fewer private schools than public schools submitted school blueprints and school safety plans to their local law enforcement agencies which may account for the difference in satisfaction levels.

The LAB recommended a few statutory changes that they believe will maintain and improve school safety for all students. In response, legislation has been proposed to require independent charter schools to develop school safety plans and submit the plans and school blueprints to DOJ, as these schools were not included in the original law. Additional legislation would require that school safety plans be submitted DOJ every three years and when they are modified and require DOJ to annually review a sampling of school safety plans and provide guidance to schools and school districts on improving their plans.

*If you have any questions about any of the information I have included or if you have suggestions on other topics or issues you would like to learn more about, you may call my office toll-free at (800) 991-5541; write me at P.O. Box 7882, Madison, WI 53707; or e-mail me at:*

*[Sen.Olsen@legis.state.wi.us](mailto:Sen.Olsen@legis.state.wi.us). You can also sign up for our newsletter on our website:*

*<http://www.legis.state.wi.us/senate/sen14/news/index.htm>.*