



SCHOOL BOARD SAFETY CHECKLIST

The Ohio School Boards Association recognizes the responsibility of school boards to provide a safe and healthy meeting setting that permits positive interactions with school staff, students and visitors. In keeping with this responsibility, a best practices checklist has been created for board members.



Designate a school board law enforcement liaison

This person should:

- have access to the School Resource Officer or local law enforcement in their jurisdiction to communicate concerns and create plans of action;
- help ensure board members are properly trained in Run-Hide-Fight, ALICE and de-escalation techniques as well as in first aid, CPR and Stop the Bleed
- attend joint meetings with law enforcement to become aware of general practices of school boards and responses from law enforcement;
- develop or implement a comprehensive plan of action (EOP) as part of the district's emergency management plan.



Involve law enforcement when necessary

- Have law enforcement provide exterior patrol when conflict is anticipated.
- Ask law enforcement to patrol unsecured areas of the interior.



Create a safe and appropriate meeting space

- The meeting agenda should be understood and agreed upon by all board members.
- Board members should set a standard for behavior among each other, as heated discussions can resonate to the guests and create a hostile environment.
- The meeting room should have one entrance for guests to allow attention to a single entry.
- Meeting rooms should have multiple exits at the front and rear of the room. Board members should practice exiting and know the area they are exiting into. Ensure there are multiple escape routes.
- The meeting room should be set up to be comfortable for guests but also allow for quick egress from the room.
- Use a sign-in sheet for guests, electronically if possible, for board members to view.
- Meeting space should be much larger than the number of attendees expected.
- Board members should have quick access to a phone or cellphone for emergencies.
- The meeting room should have emergency equipment such as an AED and first-aid kit.
- Video surveillance is recommended for all meeting spaces, possibly streamed to the school resource officer for observation without a law enforcement presence in the room.

To learn more, visit the Ohio School Safety Center website, www.ohioschoolsafetycenter.ohio.gov.



SUGGESTIONS FOR SCHOOL BOARD MEETINGS

At the end of November 2021, the Ohio School Safety Center (OSSC) took a look at school board meetings during the past several months. OSSC reviewed open source reports and spoke to educators and law enforcement to develop suggestions to ensure a safe environment for all participants.

1

Develop an agenda and conduct monthly board business first. In the event of a disruption (usually during the public comment portion) that forces the end of the meeting, the required business will have been completed.

2

Develop talking points on issues known to be controversial.

3

Use the capacity of the room as designated by the local fire code and try to ensure the room is larger than the number of attendees expected.

4

Consider a larger venue to demonstrate a willingness to allow more of the public to attend.

5

All school boards should work with local law enforcement to plan for the meeting. Since large crowds have been attending, think of an all-hazards-type approach. Consider:

- Secured parking for board members.
- Designated board-only routes into the meeting space. Will a law enforcement escort be needed?
- A nearby designated board-only safe room that can be used for executive session.
- A plan for emergencies. How will you protect the board and the public during such an event?
- Your plan should look at activities before, during, and after the meeting.

6

With a large event, law enforcement presence is recommended. They know their communities best. Some tips include:

- A large presence of law enforcement supporting the board can be misconstrued into a perception of supporting the board's policies, so a large law enforcement presence is not recommended. Number of officers present should be appropriate.
- Law enforcement may consider a small group of officers in the meeting and a secondary group available to assist, if needed; consider using plainclothes officers.
- Law enforcement should avoid physically removing or arresting a member of the audience except as a last resort.

7

Follow these guidelines for the public comment portion of the meeting.

- The board may need to consider increasing the individual public comment time.
- The board may need to consider extending the duration of the meeting to hear more public comment. However, set a definite close of meeting time.

8

Start the meeting by reviewing the agenda, rules, conduct and procedures for conducting the meeting. This will show transparency and help manage expectations.

9

Create a designated email account to address the concerns of members of the public that were unable to speak or attend the meeting.