



School Safety Policy

References:

Utah Admin. Rules R277-400-8

Utah Code § 53-13-103

Utah Code § 53-22-105

Utah Code § 58-63-102

Utah Code § 76-2-402

Utah Code § 53G-8-213

Utah Code § 53G-8-701

Utah Code § 53G-8-702

Utah Code § 53G-8-703

Utah Code § 53G-8-704

Utah Code § 53G-8-805

PURPOSE

Merit Preparatory Academy supports and promotes the state's ongoing focus on school safety. This policy discusses and outlines procedures, personnel needs, and best practices for ensuring school safety.

DEFINITIONS

- I. **Armed Security Guard:** An individual employed by a contract security company whose primary duty is guarding personal or real property or providing protection or security to the life and well-being of humans or animals **and** who wears, carries, possesses, or has immediate access to a firearm in the performance of the individual's duties.
- II. **Contract Security Company:** a company that is engaged in business to provide security services to another person, business, or entity on a contractual basis by assignment of an armed or unarmed private security officer.
- III. **County Security Chief:** each county shall identify an individual as a County Security Chief within the sheriff's office to coordinate security responsibilities, protocols, and required training between the State Security Chief, the county sheriff's office, and the corresponding police chiefs whose jurisdiction includes an LEA within the county
- IV. **Early Warning System (EWS):** an online data reporting tool that provides information for student early interventions.
- V. **School Safety and Security Director:** the point of contact for the County Security Chief, local law enforcement, and the State Security Chief.

- VI. **School Safety and Security Specialist:** a school employee responsible for supporting school safety initiatives.
- VII. **School Safety Center:** a group of professionals from the Utah State Board of Education (USBE), the Utah Department of Public Safety (DPS), the Utah Office of Substance Use and Mental Health (OSUMH), and SafeUT at the Huntsman Mental Health Institute (HMHI). The mission of the School Safety Center is to work collaboratively to provide technical assistance, training, and resources that support Local Education Agencies' commitment to ensuring school safety. The vision of the School Safety Center is that each student learns in a safe and healthy school environment
- VIII. **School Safety Multidisciplinary Team:** includes Merit Academy's Director, the School's Safety and Security Director, the Armed School Security Guard, Merit Academy's school-based behavioral and mental health professionals, and a teacher.
- IX. **State Security Chief:** shall enforce the laws of this state relating to school safety and enforce rules related to security.
- X. **Substantial threat:** a threat made with serious intent to cause harm.

POLICY

- I. **School Safety Personnel:** Merit Academy shall appoint or designate school safety personnel as required by statute and according to the timeline established by the State Security Chief, including;

A. A School Safety and Security Director,

- 1. The School Safety and Security Director (SSSD) is Merit Academy's point of contact for the County Security Chief, local law enforcement, and the State Security Chief.
- 2. The SSSD shall collaborate and maintain effective communications with local law enforcement, the County Security Chief, Merit's School Safety and Security Specialist and Merit's school-based behavioral and mental health professionals to ensure adherence with all policies, procedures, protocols, rules, and regulations relating to school safety and security;
- 3. The SSSD shall, as applicable, coordinate security responses among School Safety and Security Specialists, and armed school security guards.
- 4. The SSSD shall have a valid concealed carry firearm permit;
 - a) If carrying a firearm, it shall be carried concealed while on school grounds unless there is an active threat.
- 5. Shall complete the annual and biannual training requirements for school guardians, for school resource officers, and for armed school security guards.
- 6. The SSSD does not have authority to act in a law enforcement capacity, however;

- a) The Director may take actions necessary to prevent or abate an active threat and may temporarily detain an individual when the Director has reasonable cause to believe the individual has committed or is about to commit a forcible felony.

B. A School Safety and Security Specialist.

1. This person will be selected from among the employees of Merit Academy and will;
 - a) Report directly to the Academy's Director and the School Safety and Security Director;
 - b) Complete training requirements selected by the State Security Chief and School Safety Center;
 - c) Oversee school safety and security practices to ensure a safe and secure school environment for students and staff;
 - d) Ensure adherence with all policies, procedures, protocols, rules, and regulations relating to school safety and security through collaborating and maintaining effective communications with, as applicable:
 - (1) The Academy's Director;
 - (2) The School's Safety and Security Director;
 - (3) School staff;
 - (4) The Armed School Security Guard;
 - (5) Local law enforcement;
 - (6) The County Security Chief; and
 - (7) The Academy's school-based behavioral and mental health professionals;
 - e) In collaboration with the County Security Chief or designee, the School Safety and Security Specialist (SSSS) shall;
 - (1) Conduct the school safety needs assessment at least annually; and
 - (2) Using the results of the school safety needs assessment, conduct a building safety inspection, at least annually, in order to recommend and implement improvements to school facilities, policies, procedures, protocols, rules, and regulations relating to school safety and security;
 - f) Monitor and regularly report to the director, local law enforcement, and the Academy's Board of Trustees security risks for the school resulting from either issues with school facilities or the implementation of practices, policies, procedures, and protocols relating to school safety and security;

- g) Be an active member of the school's multidisciplinary team and participate in all duties including, but not limited to:
 - (1) Conducting a behavioral threat assessment using the Comprehensive School Threat Assessment Guidelines (CSTAG), which is an evidence-based tool recommended by the State Security Chief;
- h) Coordinate with local first responder agencies to implement and monitor safety and security drills in accordance with policy and applicable procedures and protocols;
- i) Ensure that school staff and, when appropriate, students receive training on and remain current on the school's safety and security procedures and protocols;
- j) Following an event where security of the school has been significantly compromised, organize a debriefing regarding strengthening school safety and security practices, policies, procedures and protocols with (as applicable):
 - (1) The Academy's Director;
 - (2) The School's Safety and Security Director;
 - (3) School staff;
 - (4) The Armed School Security Guard;
 - (5) Local law enforcement;
 - (6) The County Security Chief;
 - (7) The Academy's school-based behavioral and mental health professionals;
 - (8) The Board of Trustees; and
 - (9) The school community
- k) Abide by Merit Academy and law enforcement policy outlining the chain of command;
- l) During an emergency, and as applicable, coordinate with the:
 - (1) Armed school security guards;
 - (2) School administrators; and
 - (3) Responding law enforcement officers.
- m) Act subordinate to any responding law enforcement officer during an active emergency at the school.
- n) Follow Merit Academy and law enforcement student privacy policies (including state and federal privacy laws);
- o) Participate in annual training selected by the State Security Chief; and
- p) Remain current on:
 - (1) CSTAG

- (2) The duties of a School Safety and Security Specialist; and
 - (3) The school's emergency response plan.
2. The SSSS will receive a stipend payment of \$3,000.

C. **Armed School Security Guard:** Merit Academy will employ at least one armed school security guard:

1. Who is physically present at the school campus while school is in session;
2. Is licensed as an armed security guard;
3. Has met the requirements of Utah Code Section 53G-8-704;
4. Has a valid concealed carry permit; and
5. Has successfully completed the "School Guardian Training" requirements, including:
 - a) The safe loading, unloading, storage, and carrying of firearms in a school setting;
 - b) The role of armed security guards in a school setting; and
 - c) Coordination with law enforcement and school officials during an active threat.
6. An armed school security guard's responsibilities and duties are as outlined in Policy and in the contract between Merit Academy and the contract security company employing the guard.
7. An armed school security guard may conceal or openly carry a firearm at the school at which the guard is employed under the contract between Merit Academy and the employing contract security company.
8. An armed school security guard who points a firearm at an individual or aims a conductive energy device at an individual and displays the electrical current shall file a report which describes:
 - a) The incident;
 - b) Identifies the individuals involved;
 - c) and includes any other information required by the State Security Chief.
 - d) The report shall be submitted within 48 hours of the incident to the school administrator, School Safety and Security Director, and the State Security Chief.

II. **Safety Needs Assessment:** Merit Academy shall ensure that a school safety needs assessment is conducted;

- A. The first assessment shall be conducted by December 31, 2024.
- B. Additional assessments shall be conducted annually by October 15th of each year.
- C. A school's assessment is conducted by the School Safety Specialist in collaboration with the County Security Chief or designee.

- D. The assessment will follow the form or process created by the State Security Chief and will determine needs and deficiencies regarding:
 - 1. Appropriate school safety personnel, including necessary supports, training, and policy creation for personnel;
 - 2. Physical building security and safety, including required upgrades to facilities and safety technology; and
 - 3. The school's current threat and emergency response protocols, including any emergency response agreements with local law enforcement.
- E. Merit Academy shall report the results of each school safety needs assessment to the State Security Chief and the School Safety Center.

II. School Building Standards:

- A. Merit Academy will have emergency external communication systems.
 - 1. A staff person in each classroom shall be provided with a wearable panic alert device that communicates directly with Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP).
 - a) Before the beginning of each school year, all school building personnel shall receive training on the protocol and appropriate use of the panic alert device.
- B. Merit Academy shall ensure that all security cameras within the school building are accessible by a PSAP.

III. School Building Requirements:

- A. Limited entry points, including, if applicable, secured entry points for specific groups;
- B. Internal video surveillance of entrances when school is in session;
- C. Ground-level windows protected by security film or ballistic windows;
- D. Internal classroom door locks;
- E. Multiple bleed kits and first aid kits; and
- F. Exterior cameras on entrances, parking areas, and campus grounds.

IV. Training, Education, Prevention and Intervention:

- A. Merit Academy shall provide staff with training and resources regarding comprehensive violence prevention and intervention strategies.
- B. Merit Academy will also provide age-appropriate instruction on firearm safety, including appropriate steps to take if a student sees a firearm or facsimile firearm at school.
- C. The school will use an EWS in order to more easily identify students who may need interventions or additional support.
 - 1. Data collected will include;

- a) Discipline;
 - b) School safety violations;
 - c) Attendance;
 - d) Behavior; and
 - e) Course failures
- (1) If failing a class puts the student at risk of not fulfilling graduation requirements, it will be noted in the record.
- 2. If Merit Academy chooses to implement a survey associated with the EWS, it will be done with transparency and prior parental notification.
 - a) At least two notices to parents will be provided and include the following:
 - (1) Access to the survey before it is administered;
 - (2) That the survey may request information from students that is non-academic in nature;
 - (3) The opportunity to opt a student out of participating in a survey; and
 - (4) Provide annual notice to parents/guardians on how Merit uses student data gathered on the survey within the EWS to provide instruction and interventions to students.
- 3. School personnel will inform parents of concerns and communicate updates as needed.
- D. Merit Academy will designate at least one individual at school for bullying incident responses who:
 - a) Provides training to school employees;
 - b) Oversees the implementation of an action plan;
 - c) For each incident, monitors implementation of Merit's policy regarding a communication process with a parent described in Utah Code Section 53G-9-605;
 - d) Acts as Merit's liaison to the state board regarding incidents; and
 - e) Assists staff with case-specific needs when the staff is addressing an incident.

V. Emergency and Evacuation Drills

- A. Merit Academy shall conduct an emergency evacuation drill created by the State Fire Marshal, in collaboration with the School Safety Center, at least every two months, to a total of four emergency evacuation drills during the nine-month school year;
 - 1. The first drill shall be conducted within 10 school days after the beginning of classes.

2. The third drill, weather permitting, shall be conducted 10 school days after the beginning of the next calendar year.
 - a) If inclement weather causes Merit Academy to miss the 10- day deadline for the third drill, Merit shall perform the third drill as soon as practicable after the missed deadline.
3. The second and fourth drills may be substituted by a security or safety drill to include shelter in place, earthquake drill, or lockdown for violence.

VI. Emergency Drills with the Special Education Department:

- A. Drills will cause as little disruption as possible;
- B. Students with disabilities are expected to participate in evacuation drills to the extent they are able, given the nature of their disabilities;
 1. Merit will develop a modified drill for students whose disabilities preclude them from fully participating in the drill.
 2. A safety plan will be in place.
 3. If necessary, Merit will go through the approval process through the State Fire Marshal's office to modify auditory and visual alarms to appropriately accommodate the needs of special education students.

VII. Reporting:

- A. State employees or persons in a position of special trust must report substantial threats against a school to the appropriate authorities:
 1. if they have reason to believe a substantial threat is made against a school, school employee, or student attending a school; or
 2. are aware of circumstances that would reasonably result in a substantial threat against a school, school employee, or student attending a school.
- B. Reports must be made immediately to:
 1. to the nearest peace officer or law enforcement agency;
 2. the school the substantial threat would impact; or
 3. The State Security Chief.

Board reviewed and approved: 02/13/2025