



FAQs for Schools as New Weapon Notification Law Enacted in Pennsylvania

Insights

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Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro recently signed into law a bill that will soon require private schools to notify parents, guardians, and school employees of an incident involving the possession of a weapon on any school property that constitutes a violation of the law or the school's policies. Senate Bill 246, now Act 44, passed the Senate 48-2 and the House 202-1 before Gov. Shapiro signed it on November 6. It won't take effect until January 6, 2026, giving you some time to understand the finer points before your compliance obligations kick in. Here are the answers to your biggest questions about Pennsylvania's new weapon notification law.

What does the new law require, in a nutshell?

It requires schools to notify parents, guardians, and school employees if a weapon is discovered on school property, at a school-sponsored event, or on school transportation.

Who does the law apply to?

The law applies to all public, nonpublic, and private schools across the state.

What are "weapons" under the law?

Although the term "weapon" is not specifically defined, Act 44 references provisions of other laws that define weapons to include, but not be limited to, "any knife, cutting instrument, cutting tool, nun-chuck stick, firearm, shotgun, rifle and any other tool, instrument or implement capable of inflicting serious bodily injury."

How is "school property" defined?

"School property" is broadly defined to include the school grounds, any transportation used by the school, as well as any "location where a school-sponsored activity is conducted."

What must the notification include?

The law does not offer further details other than requiring schools to provide notification. You should work with your FP legal counsel to craft a specifically tailored statement that meets the

requirements of the law without creating additional legal exposure.

What should the notification NOT include?

The notification to parents, guardians, and school employees should not contain personally identifiable information about the student involved. However, the school must notify the school employee to whom the student was assigned of the student's identity and the portion of the student's records relating to the incident.

How must the notification be made?

The notification must be made using a method of communication likely to reach parents, guardians, and school employees.

When must the notification be made?

Within 24 hours of the incident.

Does this new notification law supersede other requirements?

No, this new law does not eliminate a school's responsibility to report the incident to government authorities. Schools should still consider whether reporting to ChildLine or the police is mandated or recommended based on the circumstances.

What exceptions exist?

There are exceptions that allow schools to only provide the notification to employees and parents in the building where the incident occurred. But this exception will likely not apply in most instances because if the building shares a campus with other school buildings, then the notification must be provided to all parents, guardians, and employees of any building situated on the shared campus. There is also some leeway in that the Act says it must be followed unless "circumstances of the incident necessitate otherwise," but schools should not rely on this exception unless the circumstances are truly exigent.

Are there situations where the law doesn't apply?

A notification is not required if the incident is not directly related to the school-sponsored activity or the students or staff involved in the activity. However, the legislature has not provided guidance on this exception, so stay tuned for more details.

When does the law take effect?

The provisions of Act 44 will take effect on January 6, 2026, 60 days after it was signed into law by the governor.

Conclusion

We will continue to monitor developments in this area, so make sure you are subscribed to [Fisher Phillips' Insight System](#) to get the most up-to-date information. If you have questions regarding Act 44 and its application to your institution, please contact your Fisher Phillips attorney, the author of this Insight, or any attorney in any of [our Pennsylvania offices](#) or on [our Education team](#).

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