

Ryan Neese

Public Policy Memo

Washington House Bill 1216 “Requires school districts to establish a School-Based Threat Assessment Program, by the beginning of the 2020-21 school year.” Defined in the bill: “School-based threat assessment is the formal process of evaluating the threatening, or potentially threatening, behavior of a student, and the circumstances surrounding the threat, to uncover any facts or evidence that the threat is likely to be carried out.” The law also requires the establishment of Regional School Safety Centers at Educational Services Districts to provide training and support for school districts in establishing threat assessment programs. Washington House Bill 1216 does not provide any additional funding to school districts. In the spring of 2022, 65 of Washington’s 295 school districts were surveyed by the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction about their programs. Two years after threat assessment programs were required to be established, only 66% of school districts surveyed reported having a Threat Assessment Program. Small, rural school districts made up the majority that reported they did not have a Threat Assessment Program. These districts often have less funding, staff, and access to resources. This policy is intended to reduce school violence, however, small and rural districts are disproportionately at greater risk of school violence without additional funding for dedicated safety and security staff to establish and implement a threat assessment program to fidelity.