



Mental Health & School Safety FAQs

What should you do if you or someone you know may need mental health services?

Remind them that you care about them, that help is available and they are not alone. Please refer students to your school counselor and adults to the resources listed below.

- [The Christi Center](#) – free information and support groups for youth and adults regarding grief and loss. Phone: 512-467-2600
- Integral Care – 24 hours support for mental health crises or by appointment. Phone: 512-472-4357
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 988
- Austin ISD Employee Assistance Program – free services available 24/7 and are 100 percent free and confidential for all Austin ISD employees. Phone: 833-515-0762
- [Austin ISD Employee Mental Health Resources](#)
- [Austin ISD 2023-24 Resource Guide for Caregivers](#)

We encourage everyone to get in the habit of checking in with our students and peers. Ask questions, listen to ideas and be responsive when the topic of mental health struggles come up.

What protocols are in place to prevent unauthorized individuals from entering our campuses?

Our schools have secure, single points of access at the front of the school. All other exterior doors are secured and locked with signage that directs all visitors to the main office. The campus and grounds are monitored by the administration, campus safety monitors, and the campus SRO.



What are the policies around locking interior doors during the school day?

Austin ISD has an administrative directive that requires all classroom doors with student instruction to be locked during the school day. Schools are audited throughout the year to reinforce compliance.

What steps do schools take to keep students safe during extracurricular activities outside school hours?

All staff are trained on Emergency Operations Plans for each school or facility. The same duties, responsibilities, and procedures are to be followed in the event of natural or man-made crises. Any time a criminal violation is suspected, the Austin ISD Campus Police should be called at 512-414-1703 or if a life-threatening situation occurs, school staff should immediately call 911, and then notify campus administration.

What happens when a student makes a threat to the school?

The district takes all threats seriously. Threats of any nature are investigated to the full extent allowed by law and district policy. Threats of any kind against a school, students or staff are not tolerated. All school threats are investigated by school officials and law enforcement.

Threats that result in implementing a Standard Response Protocol (Hold, Secure, or Lockdown) or investigations by an official or agency that responds to emergencies, will result in the application of disciplinary measures aligned with district policy and applicable laws. Any disciplinary action taken is in accordance with [TEC Chapter 37](#) and the [Student Success Guide](#).

How do Austin ISD Police officers determine if a threat is credible or not?

Through the investigation process, officers determine if the individual who made the threat had true intent to cause harm or has access to weapons to carry out the threat. In many instances when a weapon shows up on social media, we locate the item and discover that it is a replica or airsoft gun. Additionally, we may learn that a flagged comment or passage was part of a classroom assignment or project. Our



officers are trained to assess the credibility of threats and determine what actions are necessary to mitigate potential risk to the school community.

What can parents expect in terms of communications when a threat is made on campus or social media?

When staff learn of a threat made toward the school, they immediately notify Austin ISD police who begin an investigation. If officers cannot immediately identify and isolate the source of the threat, the appropriate Standard Response Protocol is put in place (Hold, Secure, or Lockdown). Any time a Standard Response Protocol is activated due to a threat, families will receive notification of the cause and duration of the incident along with the resolution. If the situation cannot be resolved quickly, families will receive updates on the status of the situation until it is resolved.

If a student is removed from the campus, how is it determined if and when they are allowed to come back?

Students are assigned to the Alternative Learning Center based on the offense that violated the Student Success Guide. A student may be assigned up to 30 days for the first offense, 60 days for a second offense, and 90 days for a 3rd offense. These time spans represent the maximum amount of time students may spend at ALC after each occurrence. We aim to help students work through their challenges so they may successfully return to their home campus and avoid future incidents. Students who present a safety concern to the campus may be assigned for a full year.

What is the intake and assessment process when a student is assigned to ALC?

ALC has a full-time Licensed Mental Health Professional (LMHP) to support students and families. LMHP are trained to use a mental health screener as needed to assess the need for additional support.



Why can't the district share information about disciplinary actions taken in response to threats made by a student?

We understand that families want to be reassured that appropriate actions have been taken to prevent anyone from doing harm. Austin ISD follows protocols outlined in the Student Success Guide; however, due to FERPA, we are limited in what we can share around disciplinary actions taken in regard to specific students.

FERPA is a federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. FERPA gives parents certain rights with respect to their children's education records and disciplinary records are considered part of a student's educational record. This means we can neither share disciplinary records nor any information that would identify a specific student, even if identifying information becomes publicly available outside our control.

How can families talk to their students about these incidents and support them with difficult emotions?

According to the National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement, the following tips are suggested to support students:

- Provide the basic information in simple and direct terms and then ask what questions they have.
- Take your cues from children in determining how much information to provide.
- Older children may wish to discuss the larger implications of the event. Provide reassurance whenever possible.
- It's a good time to turn off television, computers, and smart phones and come together as a family and community for discussion and support.
- Should children continue to be very upset for several days and are unable to recover from their fears, or if they are having trouble in school, home or with their friends, then it is a good idea to speak with someone outside the family for advice. Families are encouraged to contact our front office at 512-414-5247 to speak to a school counselor for additional support.