

From the EDIC Work Plan

HJ 53: a study of school Safety

Legislative Council assigned HJ 53, a joint resolution requesting a study of school safety, to EDIC at the Council's June 10, 2025, meeting. HJ 53 was ranked 10th of 36 study resolutions in the post-session legislator poll.

This study resolution was sponsored by Rep. Barker and co-sponsored by Rep. Keogh. The Montana Safe Schools Center, a specialty unit of the Phyllis J. Washington College of Education at the University of Montana, was a strong proponent and contributed to the drafting of HJ 53. The Center organized a panel presentation for a joint meeting of the 2023-24 EDIC and the Education Interim Budget Committee on September 17, 2024, and has indicated a desire to work with EDIC on the study. HJ 53 focuses on examining the current adoption of "Ten Essential Actions to Improve School Safety" (recommended to the Attorney General of the United States by the School Safety Working Group of the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services in 2020) in Montana school districts and ways to increase and maximize the positive benefits of broader adoption and more coordinated efforts to improve school safety.

Based on committee discussion in July 2025, the committee will enlist the support of the Center in a manner that leverages the Center's expertise and reduces the workload on committee staff. The committee plans to devote a portion of each of its meetings to the HJ 53 study as follows:

September 2025 meeting:

- familiarization with the Ten Essential Actions and how these recommendations align with existing Montana statutes and funding mechanisms related to school safety followed by a panel discussion with some of the stakeholders listed in the resolution on ways Montana might improve the adoption of the Ten Essential Actions

November 2025 meeting:

- the contemplated committee meeting in Missoula would allow the committee to visit the Montana Safe Schools Center on the UM campus and/or visit a school in the Missoula area that has emphasized the Ten Essential Actions to learn about the effort involved and the impacts; the Center will provide results of a survey of current implementation of the Ten Essential Actions in Montana schools (if completed)

March 2026 meeting:

- the Center will provide a review of best practices for implementing the "Ten Essential Actions" and improving cross-agency collaboration and coordination in supporting school safety, including examples from other states; the Center could provide draft recommendations for the committee's consideration
- committee staff will work with the Center to orchestrate a panel discussion regarding human trafficking, MMIP, and efforts to address [this was done at a January Zoom-only EDIC meeting]

June 2026 meeting:

- based on committee direction in March, staff will work with the Center on potential legislation for the committee's review and/or other draft recommendations to be included in the committee's HJ 53 final report

September 2026 meeting:

- based on committee direction in June, staff will work with the Center to revise recommendations and prepare the committee's HJ 53 final report for the committee's review, modification, and approval



Recommendations for the 10 Essential Actions in School Safety

1-10	Statewide Clearinghouse/Center for model policies, training and technical policies.
1.	Legislation requiring schools to conduct site assessment
2.	Legislation requiring schools to use FEMA template for EOPs & funding to improve campus, building, and classroom security
3.	Legislation to Include language on trainings with the interdisciplinary (first responder) team
4.	Legislation that requires schools to adopt SRP/SRM
5.	Assist in improving overall school climate yearly pre/post collection of school climate data
6.	Adopt Legislation/funding for implementation of a statewide tip line
7.	Amend 20-1-401 to name a threat assessment tool to be used, required training in conducting threat assessment and have OPI collect policies.
8.	Behavioral Health Services, qualified staff, ratio for school counselors
9.	Legislation required to have a MOU in place and required training
10.	Legislation to regulate this through student privacy statutes, cyberbullying statutes, and ed-tech vendor regulations