



Washington Office of Superintendent of  
**PUBLIC INSTRUCTION**

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

# UPDATE: Weapons in Schools

2022

Authorizing Legislation: [RCW 28A.320.130](#)

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 28A.320.130 requires the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to annually report to the Legislature the number of incidents in violation of RCW 9.41.280, which involves the possession of weapons on school premises, transportation systems, or in areas of facilities while being used exclusively by public or private schools. The data included in this report reflects public and private school weapons incidents and interventions for the 2021–22 and the 2020–21 school years.

Please note that data from 2020–21 are much lower than data from 2021–22 because most schools in Washington did not participate in full-time in-person learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to this, OSPI cannot extrapolate conclusive safety trends from these data.

# INTRODUCTION

The Gun-Free Schools Act (GFSA) was originally enacted on March 31, 1994, as part of the Goals 2000: Educate America Act (Public Law 103-227). The GFSA was reauthorized on October 20, 1994, as part of the Improving America’s Schools Act of 1994 (Public Law 103-382), and again reauthorized as part of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (Public Law 107-110). The GFSA requires each state receiving federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act funds to have in effect a state law requiring school districts to expel from school for a period of not less than one year a student who was determined to have brought a weapon to school. The GFSA also requires that the state’s law allow the chief administering officer of the student’s school district to modify the expulsion requirement on a case-by-case-basis.

Washington state enacted the Weapons in Schools legislation in 1994 in response to the federal GFSA requirement. The Weapons In Schools legislation was modified in 1997 to include “look-alike firearms,” allowing a school district to suspend or expel a student for up to one year if the student acts with malice as defined under RCW 9A.04.110 and displays an instrument that appears to be a firearm on public school premises, public school-provided transportation, or in areas of facilities that are being used exclusively by public schools.

## UPDATE STATUS 2021–22

**Table 1: Weapons in Schools, 2021–22**

Incidents	Handgun	Rifle or Shotgun	Multiple Firearms	Other Firearms	Knife/Dagger	Other Weapon	Firearm & Other Weapon
Public K–12 Schools	69	6	2	77	1180	878	82
Private K–12 Schools	0	0	0	1	2	5	0
School Interventions							
Suspensions	23	4	2	66	1108	823	8
Expulsions	41	2	0	9	15	9	72

**Source:** Data are collected annually at the district level and reported to OSPI through the Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS). Data are collected annually for private schools through the Education Data System (EDS).

See Table 2 for a summary of data from the 2020–21 school year. The figures are significantly lower than 2021–22 due to the increase of virtual learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Table 2: Weapons in Schools, 2020–21**

Incidents	Handgun	Rifle or Shotgun	Multiple Firearms	Other Firearms	Knife/Dagger	Other Weapon	Firearm & Other Weapon
Public K–12 Schools	3	4	1	3	136	69	15
Private K–12 Schools	0	0	0	0	4	0	0
School Interventions							
Suspensions	2	3	1	3	125	57	13
Expulsions	1	0	0	0	2	2	2

**Source:** Data are collected annually at the district level and reported to OSPI through CEDARS. Data are collected annually for private schools through EDS.

## CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

OSPI will continue to report yearly data to the Legislature. As pandemic recovery continues, OSPI will be able to better extrapolate conclusive safety trends.

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