

**Georgia Department of Education
Procedures for Unsafe School Choice Option (USCO) Notification**

Introduction

Rule 160-4-8-.16 UNSAFE SCHOOL CHOICE OPTION (USCO) was developed by the Georgia Department of Education with the input of a variety of stakeholders and adopted by the State Board of Education to be in compliance with the Federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. In developing a process that requires three years before a school can be declared as unsafe, it is the Department's goal to work cooperatively with local education agencies that appear to have schools that are potentially unsafe to develop interventions that will improve student safety.

Definition of a Persistently Dangerous School

Georgia has defined a public school to be persistently dangerous if for each of three consecutive years on the property of the public school, or at an event within the jurisdiction of a public school, or at a school sponsored event at least one student enrolled in that school is found by *official action* to have committed an offense in violation of a school rule that involved one or more of the following violent criminal offenses: aggravated battery (O.C.G.A. § 16-5-24); aggravated child molestation (O.C.G.A. § 16-6-4); aggravated sexual battery (O.C.G.A. § 16-6-22.2); aggravated sodomy (O.C.G.A. § 16-6-2); armed robbery (O.C.G.A. § 16-8-41); arson – first degree (O.C.G.A. § 16-7-60); kidnapping (O.C.G.A. § 16-5-40); murder (O.C.G.A. § 16-5-1); rape (O.C.G.A. § 16-6-1); or voluntary manslaughter (O.C.G.A. § 16-5-2);

or

two percent or more of the student population or ten students, whichever is greater, are found by *official action* to have committed an offense in violation of a school rule that involved one or more of the following offenses: non-felony drugs (O.C.G.A. § 16-13-2); felony drugs (O.C.G.A. § 16-13-30; 16-13-31; 16-13-32.4); felony weapons (O.C.G.A. § 16-11-127.1); or terroristic threats (O.C.G.A. § 16-11-37). Numbers from each category shall not be combined to reach the two percent or minimum of ten, whichever is greater, but should be looked at individually for each category;

or

any combination during the three years of either of the above.

Record Keeping and Data Transmission

Local education agencies (LEAs) shall keep records on an annual basis of the number of students found to be in violation of school rules related to the criminal offenses identified in this rule. These records will be submitted electronically to the Georgia Department of Education through the Student Record Data Collection System by June 1 of each year. After reviewing the records for accuracy, the Department will send a confirmation report to local school superintendents

requesting sign-off. Upon verification and superintendent sign-off, the Department will analyze the data to identify schools that meet the Persistently Dangerous Schools criteria (three consecutive years of USCO violations); schools on the USCO “Watch List” (two consecutive years of USCO violations); and schools with one year of USCO violations. All schools identified shall analyze their student record data reporting procedures and submit a mid-year USCO report to the Department. Furthermore, all LEAs/schools identified on the USCO “Watch List” and all LEAs/schools identified as persistently dangerous shall participate in Title IV, Part A, Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities on-site monitoring visits scheduled for the spring after identification.

Eliminate Persistent Danger In All Schools

To lead the nation in improving student achievement, the Georgia Department of Education believes that LEAs must ensure that all of its schools provide safe, nurturing environments where students can learn and are valued and respected. Therefore it has set as one of its strategic goals ‘to eliminate persistent danger in all schools.’ (Strategic Goal # 18)

The Department plans to work proactively to identify schools at risk of being labeled persistently dangerous and provide them with the professional development and technical assistance needed to improve. To accomplish this task, the Department has established a three-tiered strategy to identify schools with one year, two consecutive years, or three consecutive years of USCO violations.

Status One: Technical Assistance

Schools that are identified as having one year of USCO violations are placed on Technical Assistance Status. Random Title IV, Part A, Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities on-site monitoring visits will be conducted for LEAs with Status One schools. In addition, the Department shall contact each LEA in Status One and offer technical assistance to include the following:

- Record Keeping and Data Transmission Training
- School Safety Self-Assessment Tool
- School Climate Survey
- LEA shall provide mid-year USCO report

Status Two: USCO “Watch List”

Schools that are identified as having two consecutive years of USCO violations are placed on the USCO “Watch List.” The “Watch List” was created to intervene and provide assistance before the LEA/school is placed on Georgia’s Persistently Dangerous Schools List. LEAs/Schools on the USCO “Watch List” will be required to participate in the following Department supported activities.

- Participate in a School Safety Audit administered by the Georgia Department of Education and a School Safety Coordinator with the Georgia Emergency Management Agency (GEMA).
- Develop a Corrective Action Plan to address the issues that resulted in their placement on the “Watch List.”
- Participate in Title IV, Part A, Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities on-site monitoring visits.
- Submit mid-year USCO report

Status Three: Persistently Dangerous Schools

LEAs/Schools identified as “persistently dangerous” with three consecutive years of USCO violations will be offered technical assistance and professional development opportunities from the Department. In addition, LEAs/schools identified will be required to do the following:

- Allow students to transfer to a safe public school in accordance with State Board Rule 160-4-8-.16.
- Participate in a School Safety Audit administered by the Georgia Department of Education and a School Safety Coordinator with the Georgia Emergency Management Agency (GEMA).
- Develop a Corrective Action Plan to address the issues that resulted in their identification.
- Participate in Title IV, Part A, Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities on-site monitoring visits.
- Submit mid-year USCO report

Recommended Notification Timeline

1. Status One and Status Two Schools

July 1 – July 15	GaDOE will contact LEAs with Status One schools by telephone and email to offer technical assistance and explain GaDOE requirements.
July 15	GaDOE will send notification letters to LEAs with Status Two schools to offer technical assistance and explain GaDOE requirements.
August 1 - August 30	GaDOE makes technical assistance visit to Status Two schools to determine needs and to schedule GaDOE required activities.
September 15	Deadline for Status Two schools to submit Corrective Action Plans to GaDOE.
September 15 – September 30	GaDOE will review and approve Corrective Action Plans. Corrective Action Plan approval letters will be sent to LEA/school upon approval.
September 1 to October 30	GaDOE will administer School Safety Audits for Status Two schools.
November 15	GaDOE will send follow-up letters regarding School Safety Audit results.
December 1	Deadline for LEAs to submit mid-year USCO reports to GaDOE.
As requested	GaDOE will provide technical assistance as requested.

2. Status Three: Persistently Dangerous Schools

July 1	GaDOE will send notification letters to LEAs to identify persistently dangerous schools.
10 school days after July 1 notification	Deadline for LEAs to provide school choice.
July 1 – July 15	GaDOE will contact LEAs by telephone to follow-up on notification letters to set up technical assistance visits. Confirmation letter to LEA/school is sent immediately after date is set.
20 school days after July 1 notification	Deadline for LEAs to submit Corrective Action Plans.
July 1 - August 15	GaDOE will review and approve the submitted Corrective Action Plan. Corrective Action Plan approval letters will be sent to LEA/school upon approval.
July 1 - August 30	GaDOE will visit LEAs/schools as planned with LEA/school to determine needs and to set schedule for providing technical assistance and professional development.
September 1 - October 30	GaDOE will administer School Safety Audits.
November 15	GaDOE will send follow-up letters regarding School Safety Audit results.
December 1	Deadline for LEAs to submit mid-year USCO report to GaDOE.
As requested	GaDOE will provide technical assistance as requested.