MEMORANDUM

TO: Florida Sheriffs
    School District Superintendents
    Charter School Leaders
    Private Schools

FROM: Tim Hay, Executive Director
      Office of Safe Schools

DATE: June 9, 2023

SUBJECT: Changes to the Coach Aaron Feis Guardian Program

The 2023 Legislature passed House Bill 543 relating to public safety, and it was signed into law by Governor DeSantis on April 3, 2023. Much of the bill focuses on improvements to school safety; the purpose of this memorandum is to outline the specific changes to the Coach Aaron Feis Guardian Program.

Effective July 1, 2023, the Coach Aaron Feis Guardian Program will be renamed the Chris Hixon, Coach Aaron Feis, and Coach Scott Beigel Guardian Program to honor the three Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School staff who tragically died protecting their students.

House Bill 543 permits private schools the opportunity to participate in the guardian program. Private schools can request that their county sheriff establish a guardian program, or if the county sheriff does not have a program, the private school can contract with a sheriff from another county for training. The private school is responsible for all training costs and the sheriff providing the training must ensure that any moneys paid by a private school are not commingled with funds provided by the state.

The 144-hour training program is a standardized statewide curriculum and each sheriff providing the training shall adhere to the course of instruction. A school guardian who has completed the required training may not be required to attend another sheriff’s training program unless there has been at least a one-year break in guardian employment. Additionally, there are changes to the mandatory training hours. There is an increase of active shooter or assailant scenarios training time from eight hours of instruction to sixteen hours. This change is offset by a reduction of legal instruction time from twelve to four hours.
The Office of Safe Schools is grateful that we can continue to provide grant-related assistance for this incredible program. The next opportunity for funding for the Chris Hixon, Coach Aaron Feis, and Coach Scott Beigel Guardian Program will begin on July 1, 2023. Information surrounding the Request for Application will be forthcoming. Should you have any questions related to these updates, please do not hesitate to contact the office.

Commissioner Diaz recognizes the importance of this program to the safety of Florida’s schools, and he remains committed to supporting a guardian program in every county in the state.

For details on the guardian program changes, please refer to House Bill 543, now Chapter 2023-18, Laws of Florida: https://laws.frlrules.org/2023/18. Relevant sections include:

- Section 2, section 30.15, Florida Statutes (page 4)
- Section 17, section 943.03, Florida Statutes (page 25)
- Section 21, section 1002.42, Florida Statutes (page 32)
- Section 25, section 1006.12, Florida Statutes (page 37)

General information on the guardian program is available on the Safe Schools website: https://www.fldoe.org/safe-schools/guardian-program.stml.

Private schools seeking training for school guardians should contact their local sheriff; county-specific information is available via the Florida Sheriffs Association website: https://www.flsheriffs.org/sheriffs/directory/.

TH/mb