

Q&A Considerations for individuals and organizations if armed staff is a helpful addition to your security...

First, is it legal for staff to carry a weapon in a school in MI?

The short answer is, yes. MI 750.237a (5a-e) clarifies that a principal or an agent of the school designated by the school's principal or a designee does have legal authority to grant permission to carry under a variety of circumstances: contracted security or individual CPL.

Does this permission to carry only apply to a church/school campus?

No. In fact the church aspect does not create some 'loophole' for private Christian schools. MI 750.237a (subsection 6) clarifies that in the case of firearms a school is legally separate, regardless of whether it's part of a larger church ministry or not. A private Christian school is legally held to the same standard as a public government school. For a church/school partner ministry it would be best for both the lead pastor and the principal to sign off on the permission since the campus is likely shared for a number of church and school ministries. This also means the senior pastor alone cannot sign off, even if it's one organization in facility and budget. The principal must grant permission for the school.

Is there a training standard in MI?

No. There is no Michigan state prescribed training standard. Some states have legislatures that allow educators to carry and they have clear training standards that must be met by the state. Michigan is not one of those states. It legally allows the principal to authorize an individual to carry a firearm during school but does not give a clear training requirement. This means that you as an organization need to uphold an extremely high standard, for both the safety of your students and also your liability protection. This is why independent organizations, like FASTER, provide so much value. They give high-level training along with shooting qualifications that exceed police academy requirements. The FASTER training covers everything from the basic fundamentals up through complex scenario training and medical training. This gives you confidence as an organizational leader/administrator that the individual has been assessed by a third party and has completed the necessary requirements to safely and capably handle this responsibility.

What is the FASTER organization?

They are a non-profit dedicated to protecting schools. They are based out of Ohio and lead school safety training throughout the country. They helped shape the standards for the State of Ohio and are staffed with trainers who are law-enforcement, SWAT and professional civilians. You can find more on their website: <https://fastersaveslives.org/>

Does this increase your liability?

You need to have a conversation with both legal counsel and your insurance. There are a number of things that could go wrong that need to be considered. All of these can be alleviated or eliminated with training but they need to be accounted for and considered.

What makes a staff person good for this role?

This isn't an exhaustive list but the primary quality you need is a person of strong character. Yes, they need to be competent with firearms and the training will qualify that, but they need to be someone with a high degree of maturity and discretion. They need to have a loving and courageous mindset. They need to be able to lead and think in very stressful situations. The gun-loving, outspoken shooter who loves talking about guns all the time on their social media may not be who you want. This role requires them to be very discrete and have a high degree of emotional regulation. Only a few key staff should know and certainly no student should ever know. They should also be a volunteer for this responsibility. If you are an administrator they should come to you and initiate the conversation. Depending on your relationship perhaps you could ask them to consider carrying, but ultimately, they should be the driving force. They are individually taking on a great deal of responsibility and liability. They need to accept the hazards of that responsibility without any coercion.

Do more guns make our schools safer or more dangerous?

With a high training standard, the answer is: safer. It gives you another option within your larger security framework. Even the best police response is 3-4 minutes, and could be significantly longer depending on your area. It's incredibly valuable to have an armed response almost immediately by someone who knows your building, staff, and students. They have access and keys to every area needed. They know and love the students and staff as well. They are a part of the regular organizational training so they know the specific procedures and can best fit into the necessary response for a given situation. Armed staff do not replace police or EMT, but they can be a life-saving addition. In a worst-case situation, they can be an important piece of your security procedures along with all your other training, communication plans and safety efforts.