



March 26, 2018

Governor's School Safety Working Group Recommendations for Consideration

The Governor's School Safety Working Group prepared recommendations for consideration using the following **guiding principles** that emerged throughout the process:

- Students and educators fundamentally deserve to feel safe in schools.
- School safety and emergency operations planning must be approached comprehensively with attention to safety planning, preparation, and prevention.
- School climate planning and assessment strategies must be integrated into the school safety planning process.
- Districts, schools, and local communities must prioritize placing trained law enforcement officers in schools.
- State funding for school safety should be allocated and distributed as fairly and equitably as possible with attention to the areas of greatest need based on a standardized assessment of security risks.
- The state should support and encourage maximum utilization of technology to support school safety.

Based on these guiding principles, the working group submits the following **immediate priorities and recommendations for consideration**:

I. Immediate Priorities

1. Review and assess all school facilities to identify vulnerabilities and determine the most appropriate use of resources to address those vulnerabilities.
2. Provide funding for school resource officers with an initial focus on schools with lesser capacity to fund through local resources.
3. Develop or secure a statewide technology application for the anonymous reporting of threats and critical concerns.

II. Further Recommendations and Detail

1. Facility Security and Planning

- Every school in Tennessee should be assessed for safety and security measures and rated using a standardized tool to identify strengths and areas of risk. State funding should be prioritized for local needs as determined by this assessment. Each school emergency operations plan should be reviewed and assessed annually.
- The Tennessee Department of Safety and Homeland Security (TN DOS) should develop statewide physical security model standards for schools and establish statewide physical assessment training and protocols to enable



March 26, 2018

local school districts and first responders to identify and address vulnerabilities.

- The Tennessee Department of Education (TN DOE) should require individual school emergency operations plans (EOPs) to be reviewed by relevant local subject matter experts on an annual basis and ensure specific facility risks and hazards are identified and addressed.

2. School Safety Personnel

- The state should prioritize the use of school resource officers (SROs) for school security personnel and provide guidance to local school districts, local law enforcement, and local funding bodies relative to available state and federal funding.

3. Training and Drills

- The TN DOE should ensure required school safety drills and exercises address current risks and hazards at the local sites as identified by the security assessment and that such risks and hazards are reviewed annually for the purpose of updating and revising corresponding training.
- Local school districts should expand required safety drills and exercises to include scenario-based discussions, simulations, and post-drill reviews under the leadership of local first responders.
- TN DOE, TN DOS, and the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (TN DMHSAS) should create a model and roll out supporting resources (tools/training) for establishment of a student threat reporting, assessment and response system in every district.

4. Promoting Positive Behavioral Health for All Students

- TN DMHSAS in conjunction with TN DOE should expand training areas to include:
 - Early and periodic screening and identification of student behavioral health needs;
 - Strategies for creating, expanding, and sustaining school-based behavioral health services;
 - Strategies for promoting positive behavior and decision-making among all students; and
 - Strategies for increasing staff awareness and responsiveness to signs and symptoms of student behavioral and mental health needs.
- The Basic Education Program (BEP) Review Committee, utilizing multiple state and national sources, should conduct a review of current staffing of student support professionals (school social workers, counselors, school psychologists, etc.) and recommend model staffing to promote and enhance school climate and healthy learning environments.



March 26, 2018

5. Technology

- The state should explore the utilization of an anonymous reporting system for students, faculty, staff, and others to report suspicious activity and concerns to law enforcement and school officials. Additionally, the state should explore inclusion of mental health services as part of the technology development.
- The state should encourage the utilization of technology whereby school districts can provide local law enforcement with EOPs, site maps, floor plans, and other relevant facility information with first responders via a secure online system.
- The TN DOS should identify model components of school safety response and threat alert technology