

REPORT

Special
Committee
on School
Shootings

REPORT



January 07, 2019

The Honorable Erik A. Hooks, Secretary
North Carolina Department of Public Safety
512 North Salisbury Street
Raleigh, NC 27604

Dear Secretary Hooks:

The following report is respectfully submitted to you by the Governor's Crime Commission Special Committee on School Shootings (SCSS). The SCSS operated with your charge in mind and offers a list of recommendations that attempt to reflect a "whole-of-community" and "whole-of-government" approach to making North Carolina's schools safer.

As a committee, we appreciated your guidance and involvement as we worked through the many issues that are part of the daily challenge of making our schools the safest they can be.

We look forward to further actions that we can support. We stand ready to answer any questions you may have or offer any clarifications you require.

Respectfully,

Special Committee on School Shootings
Governor's Crime Commission

Acknowledgments

The Governor’s Crime Commission Special Committee on School Shootings (SCSS) acknowledges and thanks the many state agencies, organizations, groups, and individuals who worked with us. Representatives of the following shared their expertise at the SCSS committee meetings and contributed important information that we used in our work:

- NC School Boards Association
- NC Center for Safer Schools
- Panther Creek High School Students
- Rockingham County Public Schools
- Charlotte-Mecklenburg County Public Schools
- Davie County Public Schools
- Orange County Public Schools
- Duke University
- NC State Bureau of Investigation
- NC Association of Chiefs of Police
- NC Sheriffs’ Association
- NC Justice Academy
- NC Criminal Justice Education and Training Standards Commission
- NC Sheriffs' Education and Training Standards Commission
- NC State Emergency Response Commission
- NC Department of Public Safety – Division of Adult Correction and Juvenile Justice

Executive Summary

In 2018, North Carolina, like other states, found itself in the position of responding with statewide actions to school shootings. Several efforts emerged as a result of these shootings, including a request by Department of Public Safety Secretary Erik A. Hooks that the Governor's Crime Commission establish a special committee to develop recommendations to strengthen school safety with a "whole of community" / "whole of government" approach. Announced on April 19, 2018, the Special Committee on School Shootings (SCSS), comprised of representatives from law enforcement, juvenile justice, courts, schools, state agencies, and other stakeholders, held five meetings and two public forums in 2018.

Co-chaired by Gaston County Sheriff Alan Cloninger and Wake County Sheriff Donnie Harrison, the SCSS identified five themes to frame its work: training; physical security; threat intelligence / assessment; school - law enforcement partnerships; and possible statutory changes. An additional category for "Other Recommendations" was also established.

The SCSS applied consistency, uniformity, standardization, and common sense as drivers to its decisions. Articulating the need for consistent understanding and terminology, uniformity in actions, and standardization via training and legislation when appropriate were noted as particularly important in defining and describing how law enforcement needs to perform in its safe school efforts. Noting that "common sense isn't so common," the co-chairs were determined to use the reality check of common sense throughout the SCSS's work.

Eleven Guiding Principles served as the foundation for the SCSS's efforts:

- "I" (meaning everyone, including law enforcement and school personnel, students and parents) have responsibility for keeping schools safe
- Input from everyone is needed as putting together different perspectives enhances understanding
- Integrity in conduct and practices is valued and practiced
- Involvement in multiple approaches is essential as the "causes" of school violence are multiple in nature
- Integrated approaches are best...ones that are based in cooperation and collaboration
- Information sharing is critical and providing methods for information sharing is key to effective communication
- Improvement in current practices as well as Innovative new practices should be supported when evidence of effectiveness is provided
- Investigative approaches are valuable in preventing school violence
- Intentional efforts help with preventing school violence, and preventing school violence is the best way to make schools safer

The meetings and public forums played critical roles in the SCSS's effort as they were well attended by many different stakeholders representing different viewpoints, expertise, and experiences.

In the following report, twenty-two recommendations are categorized into the five SCSS themes with another eleven placed in "Other Recommendations." Consideration of identifying recommendations that might be acted on immediately as well as the development of a statewide strategic plan for school safety given the many efforts in the state are conclusions offered in the report.

TRAINING RECOMMENDATIONS	
1.	Support Training & Standards changes in School Resource Officer (SRO) training and recommend that qualified personnel be able to train SROs with the NC Justice Academy (NCJSA) course at community colleges and other venues as long as qualified trainers and approved materials are used. (NOTE: Qualified trainers are those recognized by the NCJA and meet standards that reflect being certified instructors, completion of SRO training, and completion of train-the-trainer training.)
2.	Enhance mental health training for SROs, including but not limited to community specific Crisis Intervention Training.
3.	Enhance SRO training with Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) training as described by the NC School Boards Association (NCSBA). Recommend that NCSBA work with the NC Justice Academy to develop strategy for this so that it is taught as part of SRO training. NOTE: Generating awareness and understanding of Health Information Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) in SRO training should also take place per Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) input.
4.	Engage professionals from various disciplines (law, education, social work, mental health) to develop a best practices model for distinguishing the difference between bad behavior and criminal conduct. Include results as a part of SRO training and training of educators.
5.	Endorse law enforcement training that reflects best practices and prepares law enforcement for immediate “no waiting” active shooter response. This includes single responder to active shooter incident.
6.	Train SROs to be able to teach the schools to which they are assigned how to respond (run, hide fight) to an active shooter crisis and strategies to implement as the initial responders to help mitigate casualties.

PHYSICAL SECURITY RECOMMENDATIONS	
7.	Require vulnerability assessments to be done. Such needs assessments should consider the placement and use of equipment such as metal detectors, alarm systems, hardened entrances, visible signage, and cameras / video surveillance. (NOTE: metal detectors should NOT be manned by SROs. Camera placement should be considered in all parts of a school, including classrooms.) Such assessments should also note single access policies and controls that are in place at each school.
8.	Employ Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) and its four principles (natural surveillance; natural access control; territorial reinforcement; and maintenance) to “harden” schools that are being built or renovated. Consider the development of code specifications that recognize “security certification” of schools. Review and designation of such certification shall be done by third parties.
9.	Enhance active shooter drills and require that local schools, law enforcement agencies, and emergency responders work together on such drills. Local authorities (local schools, law enforcement agencies, and emergency responders) shall together determine whether and to what extent students participate. These same authorities shall decide together what drill approach to practice which, at a minimum, shall be a table top exercise with walk throughs, partial drills, or full drills considered and full drills the preferred approach. Note also that having more than one drill per year is recommended in order to prepare for possible incidents. A monitoring and reporting process to document these drills needs to be established.

THREAT INTELLIGENCE / ASSESSMENT RECOMMENDATIONS
10. Support individual school multidisciplinary Threat Assessment Teams (TATs) which should include certified personnel. If no law enforcement (SRO) is assigned to the school, non-school-based law enforcement should be included on the TAT. TATs shall be set up to meet at regular (suggested weekly) intervals in order to share information and generate awareness as to possible threats. Encourage connecting to treatment and ensuring involvement with behavioral health providers for TATs.
11. Support Statewide Tip Line Application or tip lines / apps established through local cooperation. Any threats received through such tip lines /apps or other reporting media shall be immediately shared with the appropriate responding local law enforcement agency(cies). Consider how these reporting media can link to the SBI. Establish an education campaign about the tip lines / apps so that the entire school community is aware of and can access them to report concerns. NOTE: The Say Something Anonymous Reporting System (SS-ARS) from Sandy Hook Promise is available now and public forum participants strongly suggested that it be researched as an immediate option for reporting. Materials are being provided to the Special Committee.
12. Address mental health needs through a continuum approach from early warning signs to mental health services and require that school, law enforcement, students, and parents / families be made aware of the continuum. Emphasize the importance of reporting early warning signs to the TATs which, by definition, will ensure that law enforcement is made aware early when concerns arise. Emphasize how bullying is a warning sign and require that it must be addressed through school policy and discipline.
13. Include students in school safety conversations, planning, and training designing the involvement according to age/grade appropriateness. Important to note that certain types of tactical information shall not be shared or made public.
14. Support the SBI's BeTA (Behavioral Threat Assessment) Unit as a means to preventing and reducing school violence.

SCHOOL – LAW ENFORCEMENT PARTNERSHIPS RECOMMENDATIONS
15. Support FERPA training for all school and law enforcement personnel per suggestions offered by the NC School Boards Association. Include a component of parental / family awareness regarding FERPA and its exceptions.
16. Identify opportunities to expand information sharing within the interpretation of FERPA and HIPAA guidelines to allow sharing of critical information with agencies that have jurisdiction over programs that can be beneficial to our children. These can include, but are not limited to, the improved sharing of information and data from school to school and the court system to the schools.
17. Recommend that SRO programs operate with current signed memoranda of understanding (MOUs) that are based on model MOUs. Such MOUs should delineate the roles and responsibilities of school personnel and SROs as they work together. They should specify to the extent possible the fine line that separates school discipline from statute enforcement and who has responsibility for each in school settings. And they should address all SRO equipment needs especially given that continuing challenges with communications equipment in schools throughout the State exist and need to be addressed through funding, training, and school building renovations.
18. Recommend that each jurisdiction convene stakeholders for dialog about how to partner and cooperate to address the "school-to-prison pipeline."
19. Improve school violence incident data collection and data sharing so that education and law enforcement officials at the state level have a consistent set of definitions and data to use as they work together on future safe school efforts. Explore incorporating "averted school violence incident" data into reporting to identify prevention strategies that work in North Carolina.

POSSIBLE STATUTORY CHANGES / ADDITIONS RECOMMENDATIONS
20. Consider new legislation: Recommend full funding for an SRO position with equipment to be assigned to each school in North Carolina. NOTE: See alternative recommendation in "OTHER" section. NOTE: There is recognition that SROs need to be part of multifaceted approaches to making schools safer and that evaluations of SRO programs need to be conducted.

<p>21. Support unpassed* Safe Schools Legislation:</p> <p>Vulnerability Assessments</p> <p>Threat Assessment Teams (The proposed legislation may require some clarification regarding the type of information which may be shared under subsections in the previously proposed legislation. For example, other than criminal history and health, juvenile court files may contain other information putting a child at risk which may not be available to school officials (unhealthy associations, gang affiliations etc.))</p> <p>Data / incident reporting (work to strengthen this)</p> <p>Extreme Risk Protective Order / Gun Violence Protective Order legislation (Work with law enforcement and relevant constituencies to develop a version of Extreme Risk Protective Order legislation with a chance of passage in NC.)</p> <p>*NOTE: Not all unpassed legislation was considered by the Special Committee given its limited time to conduct business. Several of these pieces of unpassed legislation were mentioned at public forums (e.g., arming teachers).</p>
<p>22. From the Governor's 2018-2019 budget:</p> <p>Support Youth Mental Health: Adds \$55 million for mental health personnel and training, including \$40 million for local school districts to hire more nurses, counselors, psychologists, and social workers who directly support student mental health, and \$15 million for innovative, evidence-based programs including training to help teachers, school staff, and mental health professionals identify and respond to student mental health challenges.</p>

OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS
<p>23. If not willing to pursue an SRO in every school, recommend the state push the issue of SROs in elementary schools, even if it is one SRO per three or four elementary schools. This would improve security and allow for the elementary schools to have a resource to call on instead of always relying on middle and high school SROs and taking them away from their respective schools.</p>
<p>24. Support Center for Safer Schools (CSS). Require that CSS, DPS, DOJ, and DHHS collaborate on school safety issues so that all relevant state agencies work together to make North Carolina schools safer.</p>
<p>25. Develop NC specific resources for safer schools: Threat Assessment guide.</p>
<p>26. Use state resources to identify and provide threat assessment teams with a universal and effective mental health screening tool, which would evaluate students on an individual basis and allow the school to take personalized preventive action.</p>
<p>27. Review the upcoming report (January 2019) regarding the Parkland, FL, shooting and assess where gaps exist in the State's school safety efforts in order to develop a plan to address the gaps.</p>
<p>28. Support legislation identifying gaps in the Juvenile Justice Reinvestment Act. Monitor and lobby for full funding of the act as established in existing fiscal notes. Adequate mental health counseling and other effective programs (such as psychological and assessment centers) for at risk youth must be fully funded if the threat assessment and school - law enforcement partnerships are to be effective.</p>
<p>29. Support by legislation/administrative rule changes expanding existing tools and new tools assisting schools in dealing with disruption not arising to the level of criminal conduct (including sanctions for neglectful parents).</p>
<p>30. Support legislation on impersonating a teacher, school staff member, or principal over electronic means or computer. Committee members have had a few cases of someone sending e-mails to others as if they were coming from a teacher in hopes of disrupting the school setting and/or causing undue harm to their intended victim. In each of the incidents there was no statute to support an investigation or criminal charges.</p>
<p>31. Provide some model policies for conducting searches for weapons and drugs.</p>
<p>32. Expand programs that emphasize character education as part of school violence prevention efforts (Many such programs exist).</p>
<p>33. Create a safe school certification program. In 2013, Texas created a school safety certification program. The Texas School Safety Center awards certificates to schools that meet certain safety requirements outlined by the Center. Some of the requirements include creating emergency plans and holding emergency drills. This might be a way to encourage compliance with certain provisions without passing a host of new state laws. (NOTE: North Carolina had a similar program in place when Critical Incident Response Training was emphasized in the early 2000s.)</p>

The North Carolina Department of Public Safety Governor's Crime Commission (GCC) gratefully acknowledges the support of the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in these materials do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice. These materials were prepared by the GCC through the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant: 2015-DJ-BX-1076.



Governor's Crime Commission
1201 Front Street
Raleigh, NC 27609
919-733-4564