SCHOOL SAFETY
TASK FORCE REPORT

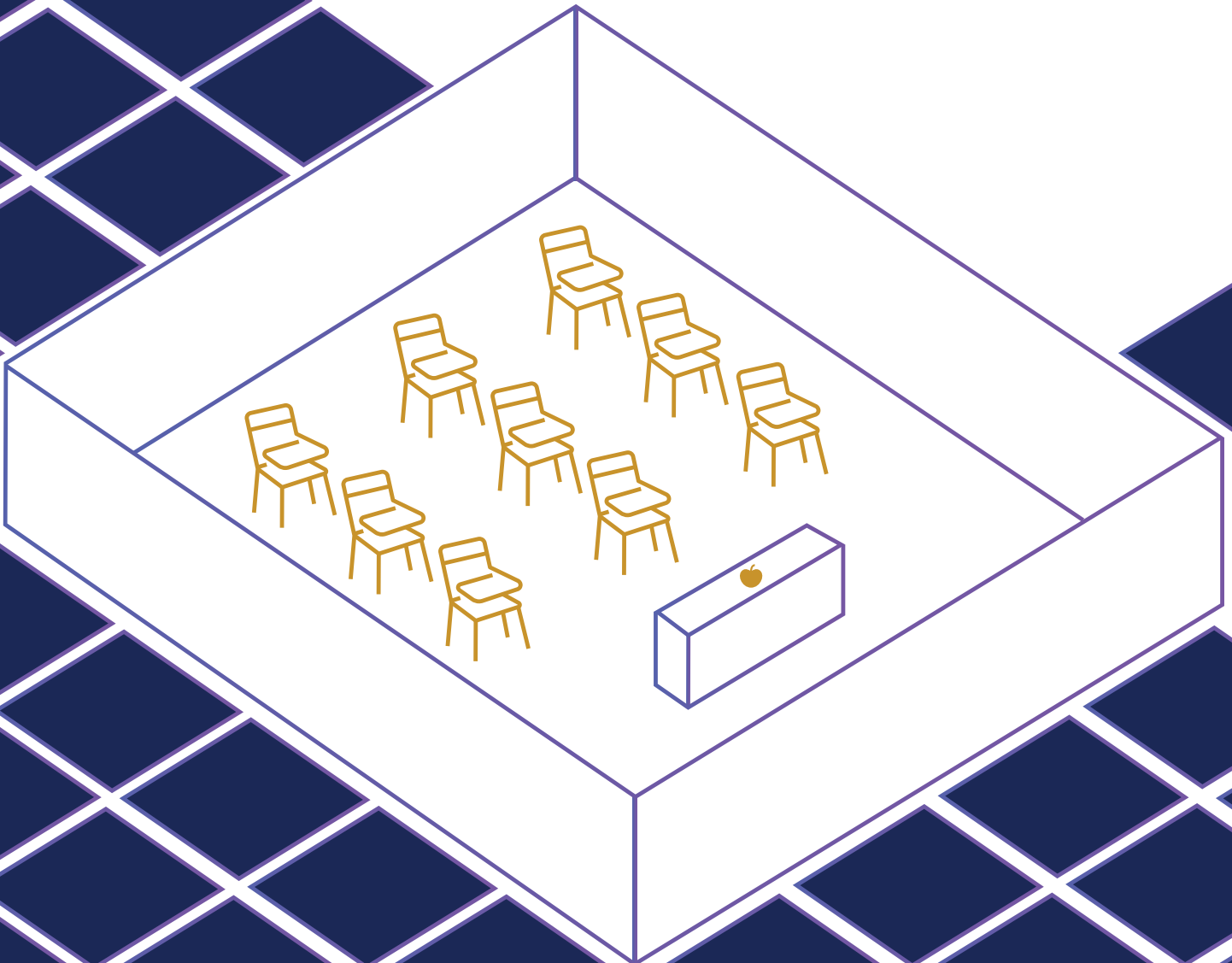# 2018

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
THE GOVERNOR

EUGENE A. DePASQUALE
AUDITOR GENERAL

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Every Pennsylvania student deserves to learn in a safe, respectful, and inclusive school environment. While Pennsylvania has taken important steps to improve student safety and well-being through policy, funding, and programmatic interventions in recent years, more work is needed to ensure that all students feel safe and supported.

Over the past several years, Pennsylvania's students have increasingly reported experiencing peer harassment and violence[1], while school administrators across the commonwealth have expressed concern about increasing physical, mental, social, and emotional needs of students that have not been met with increased capacity or resources. Nationally, students, educators, law enforcement and public safety officials, and other community members have called on elected officials to address school-based violence in the wake of the mass shooting that killed 17 students and staff in Parkland, Florida, in February 2018. Since January 2018, there have been 14 shootings that have killed 32 people – including 26 students – and injured another 67 in schools across the country[2]. In the years since a gunman killed 20 first graders and six adults at Sandy Hook Elementary School in 2012, more than 400 people have been shot or killed in over 200 school shootings[3].

In March 2018, Governor Tom Wolf and Auditor General Eugene DePasquale announced the creation of Pennsylvania's School Safety Task Force to identify strategies to improve school safety, security, and preparedness. During six regional meetings held from April through June 2018, Task Force members heard from government officials, statewide education organizations, law enforcement officials, community leaders, school officials, teachers, parents, and students. In each conversation, participants made it clear: promoting a healthy and safe learning environment for all students is imperative and possible only through coordination among the state, schools, law enforcement, communities, and local government.

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1 Pennsylvania Youth Survey (PAYS) data, 2017.

2 "School Shootings This Year: How Many and Where," Education Week, updated June 19, 2018, https://www.edweek.org/ew/section/multimedia/school-shootings-this-year-how-many-and-where.html.

3 Jugal K. Patel, "After Sandy Hook, More Than 400 People Have Been Shot in Over 200 School Shootings," New York Times, February 15, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/02/15/us/school-shootings-sandy-hook-parkland.html.

> *"I commend the work of all those who participated in the task force – especially the students – for providing their incredible perspectives,...It was clear in every region of the state that keeping our schools safe requires a holistic approach focused on students and our communities so that our classrooms can be focused on learning."*
> **– Governor Tom Wolf**

> *"In the last few months, it's been my privilege to travel the state meeting students who are deeply invested in each other's safety," said Auditor General DePasquale. "This generation of students is smart, informed, and eager to positively impact the world around them. It's become clear to me during these discussions that each school has its own unique set of challenges – but some major themes remain consistent across the state. Our regional conversations helped identify those themes; now it's time to take what we learned and turn it into action."*
> **– Auditor General Eugene DePasquale**

This coordination, however, often proves challenging in practice. Participants identified several key areas related to school safety that require a multidisciplinary approach to prevention, intervention, and response:

- Social isolation and bullying;
- Comprehensive social and emotional education throughout a student's K-12 education;
- Insufficient staffing levels for both physical and mental health needs;
- Stigma associated with accessing mental health services;
- No one-size-fits-all solution will solve the problem of school-based violence;
- Out-of-school services are often inaccessible;
- Need for established relationships with community partners;
- Competing priorities;
- Increased needs with insufficient funding; and
- Lack of comprehensive planning, training and drills.

With this report, the School Safety Task Force addresses ways the state, schools, and communities can create secure environments where learning can be prioritized. Based on feedback from more than 200 meeting participants – as well as from the more than 788 Pennsylvanians who shared their suggestions through an online feedback survey – the Task Force has identified 31 targeted and actionable recommendations to improve school safety and student well-being. These recommendations address three key questions posed to Task Force meeting participants, and include strategies for:

- Improving communication and information sharing;
- Enhancing social and emotional learning for students;
- Increasing the number of physical and mental health professionals in schools;
- Increasing access to mental health services;
- Strengthening school security;
- Building connections to the community;
- Effectively integrating law enforcement and school resource officers;
- Providing actionable guidance and information to schools to determine priorities;
- Increasing funding; and
- Utilizing training and evidence-based practices.

This report summarizes feedback shared through the online survey as well as at regional listening sessions and offers recommendations to improve school safety through a variety of actions. State, community, and school officials should work collaboratively with each other and with students and families to use all the tools at their disposal to prevent school-based violence from occurring – and must be completely prepared to minimize the impact if it does occur.

Perpetrators of school-based violence have wounded and killed students, teachers, and school employees across the country. Shootings, stabbings, and threats of other attacks by intruders and those within the school leave long-lasting, detrimental effects on individuals and communities. Violence, whether the threat of it or the memory of it, compromises students' ability to learn and grow.

Since the mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, where 17 students and teachers lost their lives and another 17 were injured, Pennsylvanians have called for state leaders to work together to address

this urgent issue and promote safe, inclusive, and secure learning environments in all schools across the commonwealth.

In response to calls from the community for the state to help address the threat of school violence, Governor Tom Wolf and Auditor General Eugene DePasquale announced the creation of the School Safety Task Force. The School Safety Task Force brought together students, parents, teachers and administrators; school nurses and health care professionals; government officials; statewide education organizations; law enforcement and public safety officials; and community members from across Pennsylvania to discuss how to improve school safety. Governor Wolf and Auditor General DePasquale co-chaired the Task Force, along with vice chairs:

- **Charles Ramsey**, chairman of the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD);
- **Mark DiRocco**, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators (PASA);
- **Judy Morgitan**, Immediate Past President of the Pennsylvania Association of School Nurses and Practitioners;
- **Bonita Allen**, President of the Pennsylvania Parent Teacher Association (PTA); and
- **Dolores McCracken**, President of the Pennsylvania State Education Association (PSEA).

Marcus Brown, director of Pennsylvania's Office of Homeland Security, served as the governor's designee. Supporting the work of the Task Force were Education Secretary Pedro A. Rivera, Health Secretary Dr. Rachel Levine, Labor and Industry Secretary Jerry Oleksiak, Pennsylvania State Police Acting Colonel Robert Evanchick, Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency Acting Executive Director Derin Myers, and Human Services' Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services' Deputy Secretary Lynn Kovich.

The co-chairs led the six Task Force meetings along with five vice-chairs. Each vice chair was responsible for inviting multiple participants to each meeting, leading to more than 40 community participants at each regional discussion.
At each meeting attendees were asked the following three questions as a guide for discussion:

1. *How can we help prepare school staff, students, and first responders to address and respond to school-based violence and threats?*
2. *How can we strengthen efforts to address the health (both physical and mental) needs of students?*
3. *How can we help ensure school buildings are secure and appropriate training is conducted for students and staff?*

In addition to the Task Force meetings, the Governor invited the public to share their thoughts and ideas on these important topics through an online feedback form. The Task Force received 788 comments from individuals across the commonwealth through this online survey.

In order to explore ways to enhance school safety in Pennsylvania, the Task Force's priorities included:

- Hearing from school officials, teachers, parents, students, law enforcement, health professionals, and community partners about their concerns with safety and potential policy changes;
- Determining additional funding needs for security and safety personnel, school counselors and nurses, and additional or upgraded security equipment;
- Examining effectiveness of student support, physical and mental health programs, and information sharing;
- Evaluating stronger state requirements for active shooter trainings and other security protocols, including current programs offered by the Pennsylvania State Police and other state agencies;
- Strengthening information sharing and best-practice sharing among local schools, law enforcement, health care providers, and human services programs; and
- Examining new or existing tools to ensure easy and effective anonymous reporting of suspicious activity to law enforcement.

From April through June, the School Safety Task Force held six listening sessions across the commonwealth:

- **South Central Region**: Central York School District (York, PA)
- **North Central Region**: Central Mountain High School (Mill Hall, PA)
- **Northeast Region**: Solomon Elementary School (Plains, PA)
- **Northwest Region**: Erie High School (Erie, PA)
- **Southwest Region**: Woodland Hills High School (Pittsburgh, PA)
- **Southeast Region**: Technical College High School-Pickering Campus (Phoenixville, PA)

The following Listening Observations include sections that detail Task Force participants' opinions shared during those regional sessions, as well as those provided through Pennsylvania's online feedback form.

Pennsylvania's public education system serves more than 1.7 million students in grades pre-K through 12. The commonwealth's 500 school districts range in size from

approximately 200 students to more than 140,000 students. These students are supported by more than 147,000 teachers, principals, superintendents, and other school leaders, as well as approximately 72,000 paraprofessionals and other support staff.

Research suggests that a positive school climate is critical for helping students learn, stay engaged, and develop social skills.[4] Recognizing the importance of providing a safe, inclusive learning environment for all students, Pennsylvania has enacted laws, developed policies, and invested resources in recent years aimed at preventing violence and helping schools and communities respond effectively when issues arise. According to the U.S. Department of Education, overall rates of crime victimization – including the rate of violent incidents – for students in and around schools has declined over the past two decades.[5]

Despite these significant efforts, more work is needed to improve school safety across the commonwealth. Recent surveys[6] of Pennsylvania middle and high schoolers.

- Only 41.3 percent of students surveyed statewide reported enjoying being in school during the past year (with rates as low as 34.8 percent for 10th-graders and 34 percent for 12th-graders).

- One in five students surveyed in Pennsylvania reported being threatened with violent behavior on school property in the past year, and 8.3 percent of students reported having actually been attacked on school property. 16.5 percent of students surveyed in 2017 reported experiencing bullying through texting or social media.

- Overall, 28.2 percent of students in Pennsylvania indicated they were bullied in the prior year, up from 16.9 percent in 2015; 6.9 percent of students reported being bullied at least several times per month.

- While bullying "on school property" was the most frequently reported location of bullying, only 63 percent of students said adults at their school stop bullying when they see or hear about it.

- When asked about depression and suicide, 38.1 percent of Pennsylvania students reported they felt sad or depressed most days in the past 12 months, and 16.5 percent of students had seriously considered attempting suicide, and 10.0 percent reported attempting suicide at least once.

Many of these issues and concerns were prominent in feedback shared with Pennsylvania's School Safety Task Force by students, parents and family members, educators, public safety and law enforcement officials, and health care professionals.

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4   A. Thapa, et al., School Climate Research Summary, National School Climate Center, August 2012.
5   *2017 Indicators of School Crime and Safety*, U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, https://nces.ed.gov/programs/crimeindicators/.
6   *2017 Pennsylvania Youth Survey (PAYS) / State of Pennsylvania*. Harrisburg, PA, 2018. The PAYS, conducted in the fall of every odd-numbered year, is voluntary. The 2017 PAYS was administered during the fall of 2017 to youth in grades 6-12 from 973 schools across the Commonwealth, resulting in 253,566 valid surveys. The 2017 report compares the results of the 2013, 2015, and 2017 surveys, as well as similar national data. More information at www.pccd.pa.gov/Juvenile-Justice/Pages/Pennsylvania-Youth-Survey-(PAYS)-2017.aspx.

LISTENING OBSERVATION:
IMPROVE COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION SHARING

Lack of communication was a main issue addressed at all Task Force meetings and in feedback received online. Attendees at each regional meeting spoke of a need for more communication between systems and professionals that serve students, as well as between students themselves.

This communication is critical not only for improving services and supports that improve student well-being, but also in preventing school-based violence. Research has found that often those who look to harm themselves or others communicate their plans or give some type of warning or indication prior to the event.[7] In addition, research on targeted school violence, including school shootings, indicate that, although attackers' plans are often known by other students, most did not report their concerns to a school official, parent, law enforcement officer, or other adult.[8]

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7 Silver, Simons & Craun, 2018; Meloy & O'Toole, 2011.

8 *Enhancing School Safety Using a Threat Assessment Model: An Operational Guide for Preventing Targeted School Violence,* U.S. Department of Homeland Security, United States Secret Service, National Threat Assessment Center, July 2018.

Figure 1. Community Systems Approach to Threat Assessment[9]

HOBBIES

ONLINE

CLASSIFIEDS
EMPLOYMENT

NEIGHBORS

CLASSMATES

STUDENT

SOCIAL

TEACHERS

FAMILY

JUDICIAL

LAW
ENFORCEMENT

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9 Adapted from *Enhancing School Safety Using a Threat Assessment Model,* National Threat Assessment Center.

Promising Practices – Multidisciplinary Threat Assessment/Prevention Teams[10]

- To reduce the likelihood of violence, many schools have implemented prevention plans or threat assessment capabilities – including multidisciplinary teams – to establish or update existing reporting, information sharing, and risk management protocols.

- Multidisciplinary threat assessment and prevention teams can serve one school or many, and should include a variety of individuals from within the school community, including teachers, school counselors, school resource officers, mental health professionals, school administrators, coaches, as well as community-based partners, such as law enforcement, mental and behavioral health providers, etc.

- These efforts should be part of a comprehensive targeted violence prevention plan that addresses how schools and partners will define and address concerning behaviors, create systems for reporting and sharing information about concerns, and establish thresholds for response (including law enforcement intervention).

- To help create climates where students feel connected, respected, and safe, schools should encourage teachers and staff to build positive and trusting relationships with students. This can also aid in encouraging communication between students and staff/faculty.

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10 *Enhancing School Safety Using a Threat Assessment Model*, National Threat Assessment Center.

Communication among Stakeholders: Information and Record Sharing

Participants in regional meetings and those submitting online feedback surveys consistently identified a need for better information sharing among stakeholders. Individuals reported that more consistent information sharing would allow stakeholders to "connect the dots" before an incident occurs.

Barrier: Confidentiality Concerns

Healthcare providers reported challenges to accessing records they need to understand the full history of a student's experiences, communications, and behaviors, as well as the resources and supports they do – or do not – have available to help them overcome challenges. Additionally, increased information sharing would strengthen continuity of care. However, students and parents/guardians also stressed the need for confidentiality to be protected, expressing concern about reinforcing stigma of seeking help if individuals feel their issues will be shared broadly among peers or adults not immediately involved in providing assistance.

Task Force Discussion Summaries

- School personnel need opportunities to talk together about students they are concerned about in a manner in which confidentiality would not be breached. With a better understanding of the full picture, there would be a greater likelihood that a student would be identified and referred to the help that individual needs before an incident occurs.

- Confidentiality requirements, specifically the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), as well as state confidentiality laws, are perceived as hindering multidisciplinary partnerships and information sharing.

Snapshot: Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

- The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a federal law that prohibits the sharing of personally identifiable information from student education records maintained by an educational agency or institution without prior written consent of either a parent/guardian (in the case of minors) or the student themselves if they are not a minor. The law is enforced by the U.S. Department of Education's Family Policy Compliance Office in the Office of the Chief Privacy Officer.

- "Education records" include all records, files, documents, and other materials – including school health records and student discipline records – that contain information directly related to a student and are maintained by the educational institution or by a person acting on its behalf. (20 U.S.C. §1232g(a)(4)(A); 34 C.F.R. §99.3)

"I'm very grateful that I had the opportunity to be a part of this, because I am part of the action that will one day not only affect my siblings below me, and maybe even my children that come in the future."

- o Investigative reports and other records created and maintained by law enforcement agencies are not considered "education records" under FERPA, which means law enforcement units may disclose information to anyone without parental consent.[11]

- Personally identifiable information can include:
  - o Student's name or the name of the student's parent/guardian or other family members;
  - o Address of the student or student's family;
  - o A personal identifier, such as a social security number or student ID number;
  - o Indirect identifiers (date of birth, place of birth, mother's maiden name, etc.);
  - o Other information that would allow a reasonable person in the school community without personal knowledge of circumstances to identify a specific student; or
  - o Information requested by someone the agency reasonably believes knows the identity of the student to whom the records relate.

- Exceptions for information sharing under FERPA do exist, however, including in cases where there is a need to share information with appropriate officials in connection with a health or safety emergency. (20 U.S.C. § 1232(g)(b)(1) (I))

- School officials may also disclose information from education records without consent under other exceptions, including:
  - o Information gained through personal knowledge, observation, or hearsay;
  - o Identified school officials with a legitimate educational interest in a student, such as teachers, administrators, paraprofessionals, support staff, school resource officers, school police officers, and other staff;[12]

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11 *Balancing Student Privacy and School Safety: A Guide to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act for Elementary and Secondary Schools,* U.S. Department of Education, October 2007, https://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/brochures/elsec.html.

12 Note: Local education agencies must notify parents/guardians annually about the identity of these school officials.

- Directory information, including participation in activities and sports, name, photograph, grade level, honors and awards, etc.;
- Sole possession records that are not accessible or shared with any other person are not considered to be education records until they are disclosed to another party;
- Personally identifiable information disclosed pursuant to a court order or subpoena;
- Information from student records disclosed to officials of other schools or school systems in which the student seeks or intends to enroll, so long as officials notify a parent/guardian of the records transfer and have the opportunity to review and challenge the content of the records, if desired; and/or
- Information disclosed to agency caseworkers or other representatives of a state or local child welfare agency with legal responsibility for the student's care and protection who have rights to access a student's case plan.

- Article 14 of Pennsylvania's Public School Code contains a provision that addresses confidentiality, transference, and removal of health records (24 P.S. § 14-1409). The provision, unlike FERPA, is specific to "health records," and, like FERPA, prohibits disclosure and states that "their contents shall be divulged only when necessary for the health of the child or at the request of the parent or guardian…"

- Under both federal and state law, schools must determine whether circumstances qualify for an exception on a case-by-case basis.

Communication among Students, School and Communities: Engage Students

Students, schools, and community members need to more effectively communicate concerns and red flags. By increasing communication among students, schools, and communities, students will have more opportunities to have the support and resources they need to feel safe in school and to ask for help when it is needed.

Barrier: Students Less Comfortable Sharing Concerns with Adults than Peers

> *"It was a great opportunity to be at the table."*
>
> **– Alton N.**, 15, a freshman who attended the task force meeting at Erie High.

Students frequently expressed concerns about talking with adults and indicated that they would be more comfortable talking to their peers about mental health issues. Students reported it is not easy opening up to teachers, and they fear going to the administration for help or sharing their concerns about another student. Some students are concerned about their peers knowing they are seeking help, and others have a fear of being wrong or blowing something out of proportion when flagging concerns about another student. Students often feel as though they are not connected to the decision-makers within their schools.

Task Force Discussion Summaries

- Schools and communities need to assess their climate and culture to ensure they are creating environments where individuals feel comfortable stepping forward when they are concerned or when they need help. Students shared that they will not reach out if there is no trust developed, and students expressed interest in having additional opportunities to engage with teachers to build trust.

- Schools can utilize all school staff to build relationships with students, not just classroom teachers. School personnel who see their students every day and engage in casual and intentional conversations will notice when something does not seem right.

- Students reported wanting more time with teachers and other trusted adults to talk about issues they are struggling with, specifically issues that are difficult to talk about with parents and family members. Schools should create more access to staff by students creating flex time in schedule to allow students to seek counselors, teachers, and others for support.

- Students are a knowledgeable resource with a wealth of information about what is going on within a school. They are often able to identify troubled students before teachers, staff, or the administration, and if there is a relationship built around trust, students are more likely to talk and identify safety risks. Getting to know students and building positive relationships are critical to these efforts.

- Students want additional opportunities to connect with adults and be involved in decision-making. Student summits were suggested as a good strategy for convening and hearing directly from students.

- Participants expressed that there was a major need for communication and coordination between schools, law enforcement, and the community. Participants recommended forming multidisciplinary teams -- possibly comprising school administrators, teachers, non-professional staff, students, parents, law enforcement, and first responders -- to meet on a regular basis to open these channels of discussion and jointly develop and review policies and procedures.

Promising Practices – Improving Student Relationships and Engagement

- At the Erie High School Task Force meeting, participants discussed a "student mapping" project that the school facilitated. The exercise demonstrated which teachers had strong relationships with which students. They then compared the students who did not have strong relationships with those who are getting in trouble or struggling in school. The exercise helped to identify how to change those relationships to make all students feel connected to an adult within their school.

Promising Practices – Improving Transparency and Information Sharing

- Each year, the PA Department of Education hosts a statewide Data Summit for school administrators and teachers. At the 2019 Summit, attendees will be introduced to school safety data and shown how to analyze and interpret data for their respective schools. The PA Department of Education, in cooperation with PA Commission on Crime and Delinquency, will also provide webinars for school administrators on how to review the Pennsylvania Youth Survey as it relates to mental health needs and resources and use the survey to inform schools and communities on the specific issues impacting students in their community.

> *"We need guidance counselors and officers and people just communicating with the kids and getting involved with the students."*
> **– Rhiya G.**, a high school junior.

Improving Communication and Peer Relationships

Recognizing the importance of social connections and positive relationships to good mental health and positive school climate, Task Force participants also identified a need for open and honest communication among students.

Barrier: Social Isolation and Bullying

Task Force participants stated that students need to be taught interpersonal and social-emotional skills throughout their PreK-12 education. Pennsylvania is currently one of eight states with social-emotional competencies; however, these only cover early grades (PreK-2). Students reported they often struggle to relate to one another because of social isolation. Task Force participants shared that students need more support to address bullying and harassment. Several parents and school personnel reported seeing numerous unsuccessful attempts to address bullying, saying too much happens online and out of adults' sight. Participants urged each other and their communities to get involved with youth and to monitor what is happening on social media.

Task Force Discussion Summaries

- In several forums, the use of social media and texting was brought up as a major concern for bullying and for students' mental and emotional health.

- Schools should create venues to provide space for students to talk to each other about their concerns and identify solutions.

- Students, school staff, and law enforcement expressed concern about the amount of bullying that occurs on social media, especially during non-school hours. Participants reported that bullying and peer harassment often go unresolved and students are left to deal with the issues themselves. One participant suggested utilizing call-in numbers and online tools for students to anonymously report bullying to address concerns about confidentiality and retaliation.

- Participants expressed support for providing students with a well-rounded education that includes art, music, sports, clubs, and other activities that provide youth with "human support" and a chance to get involved with and cooperate with one another.

Promising Practices – Improving Communication and Peer Relationships In Person and Online

- Task Force participants highlighted several evidence-based programs that help reduce school-based and community violence, such as Positive Action, Big Brothers, Big Sisters, and Olweus Bullying Prevention. Several Task Force participants also mentioned that the Communities-That-Care (CTC) model is effective in helping a school or community determine what evidence-based program is needed.

- At one Task Force meeting, a student described an overnight camp they attended that prohibited cellphone use and allowed for students to learn positive interactions with one another.

- There are a number of resources available that help students and families navigate the internet and social media safely, including Be Internet Awesome, parent guides from ConnectSafely, resources from the Family Online Safety Institute, and the Federal Trade Commission's Consumer Information Kids Online portal.

LISTENING OBSERVATION: ENHANCE SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING FOR STUDENTS

Addressing the Impact of Trauma and Improving Students' Coping Skills and Resilience

Participants reported that students are struggling with stress, anxiety, and overwhelming emotions, and they are often not equipped to handle those emotions. The Task Force participants identified a need for better coping skills among youth. Teaching resilience and coping skills would prepare children for challenges and conflict as they grow older.

Schools play a critical role in promoting protective factors and positive emotional development for children, serving as the site for mental health services in seven out of 10 cases of children who receive such services.[13] Individuals frequently cited a need for improved collaboration between state and local partners to expand the availability of school-based behavioral and mental health services, including ensuring sufficient resources to support those efforts.

Barrier: Social-Emotional Education Not Emphasized Enough in Pre-K-12 Education

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13 *Advancing Education Effectiveness: Interconnecting School Mental Health and School-Wide Positive Behavior Support*, ed. S. Barrett, L. Eber, and M. Weist, U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP).

Task Force participants called for prioritizing social and emotional learning at an early age and throughout their pre-K-12 education. By teaching these skills to young children and reinforcing those skills consistently, students will be better equipped to handle challenges throughout their lives and build resiliency, which will allow them to deal with challenges in a healthy way.

Task Force Discussion Summaries

- Several Task Force participants stressed the need to address trauma or adverse childhood experiences and help students improve their coping skills and resilience.

- Several participants cited the importance of after-school programming in relation to promoting social and emotional growth.

Promising Practices – Promoting Social Emotional Learning throughout Pre-K-12 Education

- One participant shared about "Positive Action," a national pre-K-12 social and emotional learning curriculum that teachers and counselors are using to teach and reinforce social skills at every grade level.

- Pennsylvania is one of eight states participating in the Collaborating States Initiative, led by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). Through this work, Pennsylvania will develop a roadmap for schools and districts looking to embed social-emotional competencies within their curriculum, instruction, professional development, and school climate initiatives. The PA Department of Education will continue ensure these competencies and curricula are available on the state Standards Aligned System (SAS) Portal and provide professional development opportunities at the annual SAS Institute in December.

- Pennsylvania also identified promoting positive school climate and social-emotional learning as a priority for federal Title IV, Part A funds in its Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Consolidated State Plan, which was approved by the U.S. Department of Education in January 2018.

- The PA Department of Education is embedding culturally responsive and trauma-informed concepts and competencies within professional development programs and resources available for educators throughout the commonwealth. The state has set a goal to reach at least 2,000 educators and administrators each year through these efforts.

- Effective February 2018, baccalaureate or graduate degree granting institutions, alone or in cooperation with other institutions, community colleges or school entities, may offer short programs (12 credits maximum) that lead to the Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Wellness of Pre-K-12 Students Endorsement Program. The Program Endorsement documents knowledge in new and emerging areas where formal certification does not exist. These endorsements are added to existing Level I or Level II certificates but are not required to perform service in these areas. More information about the endorsement is available online.

LISTENING OBSERVATION: INCREASE THE NUMBER OF PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS IN SCHOOLS

Every Task Force meeting included requests from multiple participants to increase the number of both physical and mental health professionals in schools. Task Force participants specifically requested additional nurses, social workers, psychologists, school counselors, and other support staff in schools to help meet students' needs.

According to the PA Department of Education,[14] during the 2016-17 school year, there were significant variations in the availability of school-based health and support personnel, and Pennsylvania falls short of staffing levels recommended by national and statewide organizations:

- **School Nurses:** : In the 2016-17 school year, 552 local education agencies (79.7 percent) reported 1,997 full-time equivalent (FTE) school nurses serving pre-K-12 students at an average ratio of 809 to 1. (The National Association of School Nurses recommends a school nurse to student ratio of 750 to 1.)

- **School Counselors:** There were 605 local education agencies (87.4 percent) that reported 4,314 FTE elementary and secondary school counselors in public pre-K-12 public schools, with an average ratio of 387 to 1. (The American School Counselor Association recommends a ratio of 250 students to 1 school counselor.)

- **School Psychologists:** 435 local education agencies (62.9 percent) reported 1,275 FTE school psychologists, with an average ratio of 1,164 to 1. (The National Association of School Psychologists recommends a ratio range of no more than 1,000 students per school psychologist, and no more than 500 to 700 students for each staff member when more comprehensive services are being provided.)

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14 *Professional and Support Personnel*, https://www.education.pa.gov/Data-and-Statistics/Pages/Professional-and-Support-Personnel.aspx.

- **School Social Workers:** Only 17.2 percent of local education agencies (119) reported having school social workers in 2016-17. These local education agencies reported 225 FTE staff, with an average ratio of 2,285 to 1. (The School Social Work Association of America recommends a ratio of 400 to 1.)

Addressing Students' Health Needs

Several Task Force participants reported that school nurses are often the first to notice or identify an issue, yet they often are not equipped with the necessary supports and do not have the time to adequately address the concern. Because school-based mental health and other supports are often limited or unavailable, many participants noted that educators and other untrained staff are often relied upon to respond to students in crisis.

Barrier: Insufficient School Nurse Staffing Ratios

Participants frequently shared concerns with the high ratio of school nurses to students. For example, at Erie High School, one participant shared that nurses in her area cover 1,100-1,500 students. Many other school personnel reported that their school nurses are required to travel to different schools within a district and therefore may not be readily available to assist with an immediate need. Regardless of the caseload and the number of schools that nurses are covering, they are still responsible for the students' health and well-being. One participant reported that schools will pay the fine for inadequate numbers of nurses rather than hire a nurse for each school because it is less costly.

Task Force Discussion Summaries

- Participants and stakeholders identified the need for increased funding and support to ensure that all schools — including those in low-income and remote communities — can provide necessary services and supports related to student's health needs.

- School personnel frequently cited high ratios of health professionals to the student population as a barrier to students receiving necessary support and treatment. Task Force attendees suggested schools ensure nurses are available in every school building throughout the school day. An increase in school nurses would allow for lower caseloads and a higher likelihood that students will have their physical and mental health needs met.

- Participants discussed the importance of health professionals being able to effectively communicate both medical and educational needs and function within different settings.

- Schools should consider providing a family/student health liaison for students with more serious or longer-term health needs.

Barrier: Limited Availability of Mental Health and Other Professionals for Students

Task Force participants discussed how the availability of mental health professionals within schools should not be contingent upon a school's location or tax base. Every student should be able to access mental health care. Participants noted the difficulties in meeting students' needs with ever-growing caseloads. Many school personnel reported their school social workers cover multiple schools with thousands of students, which leads to unmanageable caseloads and unavailable or inaccessible services.

Task Force Discussion Summaries

- Participants and stakeholders identified the need for increased funding and support to ensure that all schools — including those in low-income and remote communities — are able to provide necessary services and support.

- School personnel frequently cited low ratios of mental health professionals to the student population as a barrier to students receiving necessary support and treatment. Numerous participants said there should be at least one full-time mental health professional in every school building. A few participants thought that mental health professionals were limited to students in special education or with special learning plans due to lack of availability, but said that mental health professionals should be available to all students. A number of participants called for adequate staffing of counselors, school psychologists, and social workers, including specialists when necessary.

- Several Task Force participants recommended specific staffing ratios as determined by professional associations and stakeholder groups. The School Social Work Association of America recommends a ratio of at least one school social worker for every 400 students (general education). When a school social worker is providing services to students with intensive needs, a lower ratio is suggested.

Promising Practices – Increasing Availability of School-based Mental Health

- One Task Force participant shared an initiative of Ohio's Department of Education, which provides grants for an internship program for psychologists. The participant suggested Pennsylvania explore similar opportunities to provide steady funding to students preparng for careers in mental health who are interested in serving in school-based settings.

Barrier: Roles and Responsibilities of School-based Mental Health and Support Professionals

A few Task Force participants addressed the need for school personnel, families, and communities to understand the differences among various mental health professionals such as social workers, school counselors, and psychologists. Participants with mental health backgrounds explained the differences in training requirements and expertise among these professions.

Task Force Discussion Summaries

- Several school personnel described times they had to act in the role of a mental health professional even though that is not their professional background. Participants agreed that school personnel providing mental health services need to be mental health professionals, not teachers and nurses.

- One participant reported that school counselors and other support professionals, such as social workers, are often utilized in a capacity that does not allow them to address the needs of students. They are not often able to perform necessary preventative work given certain administrative aspects of their workload.

LISTENING OBSERVATION:
INCREASE ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

The most consistent concern raised in online survey feedback and throughout the listening sessions related to the growing — and often inadequately addressed — mental health needs of students. The Task Force called for increased access to mental health services within both schools and communities. Task Force participants identified barriers to treatment including stigma, wait time after referrals, and consent. By providing screening services and treatment programs, schools and their provider partners can better help address students' mental health needs.

Barrier: Stigma

Stigma associated with mental illness was the most frequently reported barrier to students receiving needed support and/or treatment.

Task Force Discussion Summaries

- Mental health campaigns can help decrease stigma and make students more comfortable talking about mental illness.

- Several participants emphasized the need for a greater emphasis on mental health, social and emotional learning, and coping skills as a core component to pre-K-12 health education.

- Open communication among students, schools, and communities will help to decrease students' fear of speaking up about mental health issues.

- Communities should empower families to manage the myriad decisions and resources they need to meet their child's mental health needs. There is a delicate but critical responsibility of school and community professionals to respect the parent's role while conveying critical information about needed services. A trusting relationship viewing the parent/family as a partner is important.

Promising Practices – Increasing Access to Community-based Mental Health Services

- One participant cited the York County Mental Health Alliance as an agency that works to end stigma and increase access to services.

- An administrator providing feedback through the online survey shared that their school district provides private mental health providers with a space on campus to operate during the school day and provide services on-site to students.

Barrier: Need for a Clearer Understanding of Students' Needs and Increased Capacity to Respond

A few Task Force participants said that, within their school's administration, there was a struggle to identify which mental health professionals and what type of mental health services would best suit their students because those needs change quickly and may vary from one school to the next.

> *"More focus, availability of services/interventions and screening for mental health issues need to be put in place on entry to school. The demands students have on them between standardized testing, family problems and expectations are putting a great deal of pressure on these young minds."*
> **– Peggy V.**

Task Force Discussion Summaries

- Students should be screened for mental health needs, starting as early as the elementary school level, so administrators and community partners can work together to determine what is needed to address student needs.

- Throughout the meetings, students expressed concerns about going to school counselors and administrators with their problems and indicated that they would prefer speaking to their peers first for assistance, then to teachers and staff members they trust. Teachers and staff expressed that students approach them for assistance and/or they identify an at-risk child, but that they feel ill-equipped to handle those situations.

- Students are not experiencing health concerns for all the same reasons. School personnel should be cognizant of the many factors that may be contributing to mental health needs.

- Climate surveys should be conducted and data should be analyzed to identify concerns and needs, and to inform decision-making at state and local levels. These surveys should be reviewed not only by schools, but also by multidisciplinary partners. More information should also be communicated at the state level to shape technical assistance and other programs from relevant agencies.

- Smaller classrooms would ensure students receive more attention from teachers and that teachers have the opportunity to build relationships with students.

- The state should support the development of trauma-informed education systems. More students are experiencing trauma or have been exposed to traumatic situations, which calls for a need for training on trauma-informed practices. Teachers and staff should receive trauma-informed training so they can recognize trauma and understand how to respond.

Promising Practices – Improved Understanding of Needs through Behavioral Health Screenings

- The PA Department of Human Services' Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services is piloting a universal behavioral health screening (BHS) in two school districts, with an additional three expected to be on board in the 2018-19 school year. The BHS is a standardized, broad-based screening tool, validated for ages 12 and above, which screens for student risk across 13 domains (e.g., suicide, depression, anxiety, substance use, trauma, and bullying). The tool is self-reported and can be completed online in 10 minutes or less. The pilot is currently funded through a federal grant. Early results from the pilot are promising, and indicate that the process provided schools with an early identification and referral mechanism for those students at risk that may not have otherwise had the opportunity to connect with a school mental health professional to obtain information, resources, and support.

Promising Practices – Increasing Capacity to Respond through Mental Health First Aid Training

- Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training, which is designed to assist someone experiencing a mental health or substance-use-related crisis, was mentioned in a few forums as a potential resource to assist teachers, staff, and students in identifying warning signs. MHFA is an 8-hour course that teaches you how to identify, understand, and respond to signs of mental illnesses and substance use disorders. The training gives you the skills you need to reach out and provide initial help and support to someone with a mental illness or substance use problem or experiencing a crisis. MHFA also provides strategies on how to help someone in both crisis and non-crisis situations, and where to turn for help.

- More information and resources (including free and low-cost training) on MHFA is available at https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org

> *"I believe we need more mental health awareness and help in schools. Having teachers know how to identify the signs of a mental health or family issue. If we have the guidance counselors actually talk to kids some might talk."*
> **– Jillian U.**

Barrier: School-based Supports and Interventions Should Be Enhanced to Meet Students' Needs

Task Force participants frequently talked about students' unmet needs, including mental health. Individuals noted that there is a need for all students, not just those in chronic need of services, to receive access to supports and resources. In addition, several participants called for updates, expansion, or replacement of the existing Pennsylvania Student Assistance Program, which is established through state regulations[15] as part of alcohol, chemical, and tobacco abuse program requirements established through the PA School Code.[16] Many noted that Student Assistance Program provides assessment and referral services only and expressed concern that these services are not adequate to address need. They also shared concern that there are no credential or certification requirements for SAP professionals,
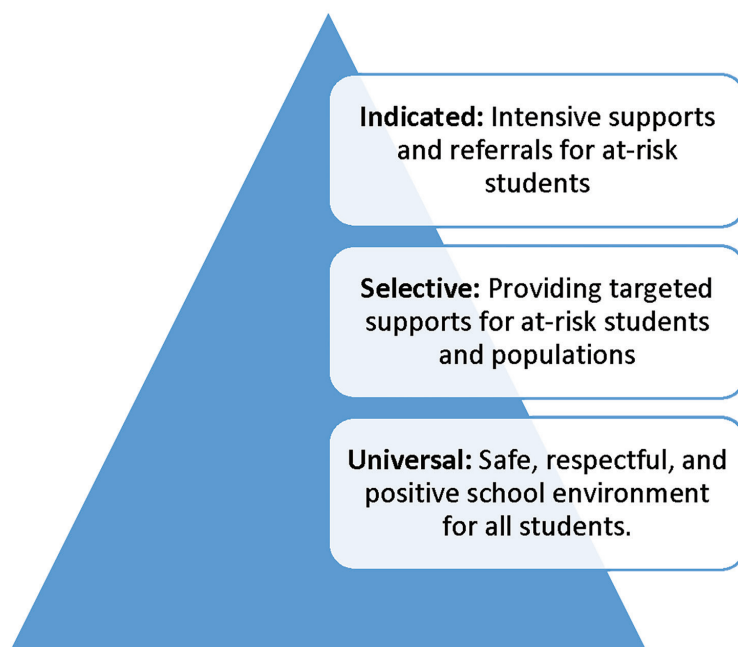
who often do not have the appropriate background or training to handle the issues they are facing, and that Student Assistance Program teams are over-burdened with high caseloads. Several students at Task Force meetings reported being unaware of the Student Assistance Program as a resource.

Despite those concerns, there was broad support for evidence-based supports that promote positive school climate, including Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports and Multi-Tiered Systems of Support. When implemented with fidelity, these programs can create a system of continuous care, and can ensure that resources are in place at classroom, school, and community levels to help address needs and keep students on track for success. They can also pair with existing efforts through the Student Assistance Program.

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15 22 Pa. Code §12.42 – Student Assistance Program.
16 P.S. § 15-1547(g)

Figure 3. Levels of Support and Interventions

Indicated: Intensive supports and referrals for at-risk students

Selective: Providing targeted supports for at-risk students and populations

Universal: Safe, respectful, and positive school environment for all students.

Task Force Discussion Summaries

- Students, families, and schools need to better understand what resources are available within their communities. When students are labeled "at-risk," more resources and assistance should be provided to them. Schools should support student mental health education. Students should have a basic understanding of mental health and should be provided the tools and knowledge on how to help other students get the help they need.

- Whenever possible, schools and community-based providers should offer flexible and alternative scheduling options, including making appointments available on weekends and beyond typical business hours, to meet students' and families' needs.

- Schools need a plethora of services to address a wide range of mental health issues at different levels of need; not all mental health issues need the same level of treatment.

- A few participants questioned whether mental health issues for out-of-school youth and cyber school students are addressed, and if so, how that is handled.

- Schools should connect with medical and mental health community partners to help ensure students are receiving the health treatment they need. Participants called for better partnerships between school and community mental health services in addition to school-based services, noting that many communities have out-of-school services that can be leveraged.

- A number of teachers and other school personnel noted that mental health programs and trainings are not implemented consistently in the schools and there is a great deal of variation from one school to the next.

- Students reported they are more likely to seek help from their peers first, but many shared that they did not know how to access peer counseling or that it was not available within their school. Schools should explore programs that identify peer leaders and empower them to speak about mental health, trauma, and community resources.

Barrier: Little Flexibility on Policies Relating to Treatment Consent

In multiple Task Force meetings, participants identified current policies on treatment consent as a barrier in ensuring students receive the mental health care they need.

Task Force Discussion Summaries

- Participants said they believe policies are too complicated, making it challenging for school personnel to navigate sensitive conversations – especially in cases where either the minor or a parent/guardian refuse to consent to treatment.

- Several participants expressed frustration over situations in which they believe a student needs treatment but either the student or the family will not consent.

Barrier: Out-of-School Services are Often Inaccessible

Task Force participants cited extreme differences in access to services and resources across the commonwealth. Discrepancies in access to certain types of mental health services were observed by Task Force attendees and participants, who said students may be able to see a psychiatrist, but there seem to be fewer options for students who need a lower level of support, such as a student struggling with grief and loss rather than clinical depression.

Participants frequently said accessing community mental health services takes too long.

Task Force Discussion Summaries

- School personnel reported a lack of discharge planning for students who are moving out of mental health treatment, but still should be receiving some level of support. Communities need a full continuum of care to address mental health needs.

- Special needs of communities in rural areas, such as transportation, make access to treatment more challenging.

- Several school personnel and mental health clinicians at Task Force meetings commented on the long wait times between receiving a referral for mental health services and a clinician providing services. Participants recommended that the process to access mental health services should be much like accessing physical health services.

- School personnel and other service providers need to help caregivers understand the resources within their schools and community to support the needs of their students.

- Some school administrators shared that they were experiencing success with having mental health therapists embedded in their school buildings as it provided students with direct, easy access to needed services.

- Some school staff expressed frustration that students had been identified as having issues which required treatment, but parents failed to follow up.

Barrier: Treatment System Focuses Too Narrowly on Individual Needs

Task Force members commented on the various issues that could be contributing to students' mental health and identified the need to consider the big picture rather than one specific symptom, diagnosis, or condition.

Task Force Discussion Summaries

- Participants raised concerns about the increased needs of students – including behavioral health – without requisite increases in resources, capacity, or supports, including funding.

- Another participant commented on the correlation between mental health and substance use, stating that students may be self-medicating. Interventions should address underlying issues and not the symptoms that schools may identify, such as drug use and attention-seeking behavior.

- A holistic and evidence-based approach should be utilized when providing mental health treatment. In addition to increasing access to mental health treatment, schools should consider counseling and other assistance, as well as alternative holistic activities to reduce stress and anxiety. These activities can help to supplement care and treatment of mental health professionals.

LISTENING OBSERVATION: STRENGTHEN SCHOOL SECURITY

Task force participants identified the need for a number of physical security changes within schools to keep students safe from people trying to get inside as well as from

individuals within the school environment. Task Force participants discussed common security upgrades, such as installing metal detectors and locks on classroom doors as well as secure entrances, among many other options, to make schools physically safer. Task Force participants also noted that not all schools would have the same priorities in terms of school safety improvements. Additionally, participants cited new and emerging needs for school buildings and called for updates to existing schools, where necessary. While some recommendations require significant financial resources, many recommended practices were no or low-cost, such as using parent or community volunteers as extra safety measures within schools or allowing police officers to visit schools at random.

Beyond schools' physical security, meeting participants and individuals sharing feedback through the online survey also raised the issue of limiting children's access to firearms and other weapons through the practice of safe storage and other security measures. Recent research suggests that only three in 10 gun-owning households with children keep firearms stored unloaded and locked.[17] Across the country, 14 states have "negligent storage laws" where gun owners who know – or reasonably should know – a child is likely to gain access to a firearm can be held criminally responsible.[18]

Promising Practices – Preventing Children's Access to Firearms[19]

- Few accidents are as tragic, or as preventable, as those involving children and firearms. Having children in the home, whether they live there or are visiting, makes it even more important to practice safe storage of firearms.

- There are several educational campaigns that provide information and resources focused on promoting safe firearm storage and use, including the "Be SMART" Program, Project ChildSafe, ASK (Asking Saves Kids) Campaign, and the "Lock It Up" information campaign.

17 D/ Azrael et al, "Firearm Storage in Gun-Owning Households with Children: Results of a 2015 National Survey," *Journal of Urban Health*, vol. 95, issue 3, June 2018, https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs11524-018-0261-7.

18 States include California, Connecticut, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New Jersey, North Carolina, Rhode Island, Texas, and the District of Columbia. Adeel Hassan, "Can Parents Be Charged for Failing to Keep Their Guns Locked Up?" *New York Times*, May 21, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/21/us/parents-guns-negligent-storage-laws.html.

19 *Education Campaigns and Clinical Interventions for Promoting Safe Storage*, RAND Corporation, https://www.rand.org/research/gun-policy/analysis/supplementary/safe-storage.html

Barrier: Outside Threats to School Safety

Task Force participants frequently expressed the need for secure entrances to buildings to prevent people who do not have business at the school from having the ability to walk into the school at any time.

Task Force Discussion Summaries

- Students recommended having locks on classroom doors and keeping them locked while classes are in session. Students recommended the use of metal detectors, security cameras, and other safety features.

- There is a need for more secure school entrances. A few participants described systems in which individuals trying to enter the school during the day must ring a bell and enter through the school's office. It was also suggested that students and staff swipe cards to enter the building.

- Task Force participants noted that schools are in need of architects and engineers to provide assistance in retrofitting older school buildings.

- Many individuals shared that while they may feel safe during school hours, they felt vulnerable to threats at activities held after hours, such as athletic events. They recommended that the same security standards should apply to all students and staff on school premises, including before- and after-school programs, sports, and extracurricular activities. Before- and after-school programs are typically held in unsecured areas (e.g. cafeteria, gym, lobby), and participants have nowhere to go or no one to turn to if an incident occurs.

Barrier: Inside Threats to School Safety

While much of the focus on school safety has been on warding off external threats, many students reported feeling concerned about threats to their safety and well-being that could come from someone within their school community, such as a fellow student or a staff member.

Task Force Discussion Summaries

- School staff can conduct daily walk-throughs of the school or appoint school personnel as floor captains to monitor floor activity and ensure the security of their respective floors.

- Schools should periodically allow for local law enforcement to come into schools unannounced. The spontaneity and randomness of the visits may be a deterrent to members of the school community planning to commit acts of violence.

- Staff, students, teachers, and administrators need additional education to understand mental health and signs of potential perpetrators. School personnel and parents may not be aware of a students' mental health needs until after an incident has already occurred. Teachers and other school-based staff need to be provided training on de-escalation tactics so they can safely intervene, when appropriate, while awaiting a professional.

- School personnel need help identifying potential perpetrators. One participant recommended schools develop an online standardized risk-assessment tool that the public could use to determine if the characteristics they are seeing in an individual are indicative of a problem. A few other participants cited information currently available on school-shooter profiles, such as an FBI handout that could be shared with school staff.

Barrier: Extended Response Times During School-based Violence

A number of individuals expressed concern over the amount of time it could take for local law enforcement and emergency responders to respond to a threat or an incident has occurred, especially in rural and remote areas of the commonwealth.

Task Force Discussion Summaries

- School resource officers (SROs) are trained to assist during a crisis and can help mitigate harm while local law enforcement and emergency responders travel to the scene. Some schools have utilized county sheriff offices and other law enforcement officials to fulfill the SRO role.

- Coordination between schools and first responders must be strengthened. Schools and first responders should collaborate before a potential incident, and develop emergency plans, training/drills, and coordinated responses.

- The overwhelming majority of individuals providing feedback to the Task Force expressed concerns with individuals who are not trained law enforcement having guns in schools. Participants in regional meetings as well as respondents providing feedback via the online survey indicated that they believe schools should be places where teachers can focus on instruction and students can focus on learning, and that untrained personnel with firearms can detract from that important function.

Barrier: Need for Technical Assistance and Guidance

Task Force Discussion Summaries

- Participants noted that many schools — especially those that lack financial and human capital resources — often spend money on programs and initiatives that do not yield the best results because they are unaware of more cost-effective, high-quality programs and services already available through state and other initiatives.

- Task Force participants, especially school administrators and personnel, called for state agencies to provide guidance to schools regarding resources, best practices, and other information related to school safety that could aid in shaping decision-making at a local level.

- Task Force attendees called for technical assistance for schools, including guides for developing security plans and assistance in implementing the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency toolkit.

- A number of school personnel and a few administrators noted the Pennsylvania State Police's Risk and Vulnerability Assessment Team (RVAT) that inspects schools for safety concerns was helpful to their schools. These participants urged that all schools should be aware of this program.

- Participants expressed the need to establish a common language between crosssector partners to ensure clear communications and response expectations from each partner.

- The state should provide schools with quality controls and guidelines for selecting effective school safety features as well as identifying organizations to conduct comprehensive school safety assessments. Participants also identifi ed a need for guidance on best/promising practices, standards, and intruder trainings. There should be standardized training or suggestions on best practices for procedures and trainings that are already working throughout the state so schools know what training to choose.

LISTENING OBSERVATION: BUILD CONNECTIONS TO THE COMMUNITY

The importance of establishing connections to the community was frequently identified as part of the solution to creating safer schools. Community participants can create safety nets for students facing a number of challenges. Task Force participants suggested utilizing the community as a necessary support system for students and as a referral source and treatment option for students with mental health and other needs.

A number of Task Force members provided specific examples of positive relationships between schools and community partners to ensure the safety and well-being of the community's students and urged other schools and communities to pursue similar partnerships.

"I'm really pleased that you are doing a state-wide survey. As a parent and PTA officer, I think school safety is certainly of great importance. However, I think we do need to be judicious in the decisions made, and we should avoid making reactionary decisions state-wide."
– Martha R.

Barrier: Lack of Community Involvement in Safety Planning

Participants cited the importance of community members being involved in security planning to inform schools of their concerns but also to reiterate schools' plans to students for consistent messaging. Participants also noted that active community members can be an important source of information to schools. Neighbors and active community members can also help keep schools informed as to what happens outside of school walls.

Task Force Discussion Summaries

- Schools should recognize the importance of engaging the full community in conversations about what to do in the event of school-based violence.

- Community members need to be educated on school-based drills that students are undergoing so the full community can support their students and schools in working together.

- School security plans should strike a balance between increased safety measures and the role schools play as a welcoming place for students, families, and communities.

- Schools should utilize the resources they have in their community and seek out experts and potential volunteers for assistance.

- Schools should partner with mental health providers and victim service organizations that offer counseling services and develop a warm, hands-off approach for students who need support. There is a need for more collaboration with the local medical community. Schools should capitalize on wellness visits to have doctors promote physical well-being, and mental and emotional health, as well as to look for risk factors. This could possibly be tied in with school-required physician visits.

Promising Practices – Build Connections to the Community

- One participant recommended the "Dad Watch Dog" program, which allows fathers to come into the school for a day to walk around as monitors. The purpose of the program is to have additional eyes

within the school to help identify safety risks and create a safer, more secure space. This particular program uses fathers but schools can include other parents, family members, or additional volunteers to provide the same type of monitoring.

- Participants highlighted some current best practices, including a Community Schools framework (such as "Communities in Schools") where schools partner with community-based organizations and service providers to meet the academic and non-academic needs of students through integrated services and supports.

- Pennsylvania identified addressing the needs of students through school-based supports and community partnerships, including through the Community Schools Framework, as a state priority for federal Title IV, Part A funding in its approved Consolidated State Plan under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The PA Department of Education can provide guidance and technical assistance to local education agencies and communities to help identify ways federal and state resources can be leveraged to improve supports and services for students and families.

- One participant in the Wilkes-Barre forum shared information about Communities that Care, which brings together the heads of agencies throughout the area to work together to identify resources and strategies to help the community.

- Another group in the community noted in the Erie High School Task Force meeting was "Blue Coats," which was started by a church to address youth violence. Blue Coats aims to bridge the gap between the community and the school, contextualizing the school as part of the community.

LISTENING OBSERVATION: EFFECTIVE INTEGRATION OF LAW ENFORCEMENT AND SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS

Across the commonwealth, Task Force participants emphasized the role of school resource officers and other school-based law enforcement officers. A number of school personnel participating in the Task Force meetings reported that local law enforcement and school resource officers are essential to ensuring school safety.

Barrier: Fostering Positive Relationships between Students and Law Enforcement

While most participants were supportive of law enforcement and school resource officers' presence within schools, some students noted that they are apprehensive of law enforcement. The relationship between students and law enforcement is unique to each community, however, and Task Force participants agreed building positive relationships between students and law enforcement is necessary. When a positive relationship

exists between school resource officers, police officers, and students, the school resource officers and police officers can serve as individuals to whom students are more likely to report information when they have concerns about school safety or other students.

Task Force Discussion Summaries

- Participants emphasized the need for school resource officers and local law enforcement to be properly trained to work in educational settings with students, including students of color, students with disabilities, LGBTQ+ students, English Learners, and other historically marginalized populations. Training should also emphasize cultural competence and disrupt racial bias.

- Students and school personnel stressed the importance of officers understanding child and adolescent development, being   aware of bias and community norms, and knowing how to effectively communicate with students, parents, and community members.

- School resource officers should be integrated into the school so they are perceived as another school staff member and are able to build relationships with students and staff.

- Schools should include teachers in the process of selecting a school resource officer.

- Trained personnel should be relied upon to address school safety concerns.

- At all of the forums, students expressed a desire to help provide information to avert potential school safety incidents and/or help fellow students in crisis, but would prefer to do so in a confidential, anonymous fashion.

LISTENING OBSERVATION: UTILIZE TRAINING

Training was identified as a need in all Task Force meetings, including programs and activities designed to help students, teachers, school staff, law enforcement, parents and families, and others gain skills and competencies needed to improve prevention and response efforts.

Barrier: Lack of Comprehensive Planning

Participants noted that school violence takes different forms and therefore there is no one-size-fits-all approach. Participants also reported an anticipated lag time between the moment law enforcement is notified of a crisis and when they are able to arrive on the scene and assist. Therefore, participants called for increased planning and coordination within schools and among community entities.

Task Force Discussion Summaries

- Individuals, schools and communities should use the tools that are available, including the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency's school safety toolkit.

- Emergency plans need to be continuously updated and kept as living documents.

- A few participants noted that potential perpetrators could be students or staff within the school who can learn the coordinated response and adjust their plans. These participants recommended keeping parts of the coordinated response known only to a few key people or changing it frequently to avoid predictability for potential perpetrators.

Barrier: Lack of Training and Drills

Participants called for intruder response training to have the same priority as fire prevention planning and training. Students and school personnel noted the importance of all staff, students, administrators, and community members being aware of and participating in intruder responses.

Schools face a significant challenge choosing the best training for them. It is difficult to discern the quality of different active shooter training programs because they are so numerous. Community members shared ideas for changes or additions to existing training models to better fit the needs of their schools.

> *"I believe that one way to maintain safety in schools is to have all doors locked to anyone on the outside and all individuals must register at the school office. I do not believe that teachers need to be armed with guns."*
> **– Kristy D.**

Task Force Discussion Summaries

- Students specifically discussed the added level of panic when under a stressful situation and said they want to be trained on what to do during a crisis.

- Standardization is needed across schools to make sure all schools are receiving the same education and training on emergency response.

- Each school should have mandated drills with full evacuations. Intruder training should be a dynamic, ongoing engagement with all levels of staff and students. Intruder drills should include emergency responders and key community players. All training should be age appropriate.

- A few participants recommended schools identify a few specific school personnel to do an initial sweep before sending students outside of the building during an intruder drill to ensure that outside the building is safe for evacuation.

- Community members suggested incorporating school safety and security training for teachers into educator preparation programs. This would allow for training to occur earlier in teacher education and ensure there is a basic level of understanding before their first time on the job.

- In-service days for teachers can be an opportunity for providing school-safety-related training.

- All school officials should be mandated to take an incident command class, such as the National Incidence Management System (NIMS) training, to provide for universal language during response to an emergency.

- First aid and emergency medical services training should be provided for those interested. It would be beneficial for staff, students, teachers, and administrators to know first aid and emergency management system (EMS) training to assist the wounded.

Promising Practices – Utilize Training

- At the Central Mountain High School meeting, one individual shared the idea of intruder drills that put the students in control rather than the adults. The students need to navigate through two different types of drills, evacuation and barricading the building, without the assistance of teachers and other adults in the school. The participant noted that students usually look to adults for instructions in a crisis, but that is not always an option in an intruder situation. By allowing students to lead drills, they are preparing in a way that makes them actively think about what to do next.

- Tiered response training was recommended to be conducted in schools by first responders with the participation of teachers, staff, and students. Tier one includes response to intruder situations, tier two is triage and treating the wounded, and tier three includes interviews and reuniting people. Individuals need to be educated and practice the entire process, including the actions after evacuation, so they are aware of what will happen, for instance, in the case of a shooting. It was suggested that tier-two and tier-three training in particular be practiced more often using live drills.

- Activity clubs can bridge the knowledge gap in EMS skills and facilitate community relationships. Stop the Bleed is a program that was often mentioned at Task Force meetings.

- The Title I State Parent Advisory Council (SPAC) and the Pennsylvania Parent Teacher Association (PTA) encourage schools to consider providing professional development to staff and parents/families simultaneously, and to regularly include parents/families as well as staff in workshops and other learning opportunities.

Based on the input from participants at regional meetings as well as through the online feedback survey, the Task Force recommends the following actions from the state, schools, and communities to improve students' safety and well-being. Recommendations are organized by the framing discussion questions posed during regional Task Force meetings.

Many of these recommended actions require resources at the school, community, and state levels to ensure effective implementation.

A. How can we help prepare school staff, students, and first responders to address and respond to school-based violence and threats?

Improve Communication and Information Sharing

1. Schools should establish multidisciplinary threat assessment teams that include educators, students, community members, local law enforcement (including School Resource Officers), healthcare providers, and local social services agencies, such as children and youth, to develop school safety plans and review policies and procedures. The state should support these efforts through technical assistance and guidance.

2. Schools should build time into each day for community-building between students, educators, law enforcement, and other partners.

3. The Administration should identify and address unnecessary barriers to information sharing, coordination, and services with the aim to improve professionals' ability to work together and assist students in need. This can include, but not limited to, developing legislation in collaboration with the General Assembly to:

   a. Explicitly permit information/record sharing, including disciplinary records, among members of school threat assessment teams, including law enforcement and juvenile justice agencies, with the understanding that team members may not disclose information to others;

   b. Allow law enforcement and juvenile justice agencies to release information on juvenile arrests to each other and other law enforcement agencies, upon request, to be used for current investigation purposes; and/or

c. Provide school boards with authority to require information regarding a student's previous expulsions, arrests, juvenile justice actions, and referrals to mental health services.[20]

4. The Administration should also provide clear guidance to schools regarding their authority to disclose information about students for educational, health, and safety reasons under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Similar guidance should be provided to health care and other providers regarding use and disclosure of medical information under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).

5. The Administration should also work to improve coordination and data sharing between state agencies for purposes of connecting key systems supporting children and youth (foster, child welfare, education, etc.).

6. The Administration should develop and disseminate a family engagement framework as a resource to increase parent/family participation and improve relationships between families and schools.

7. Families should be regularly and actively engaged with their child's social media usage, and should avail themselves of resources to help identify, prevent, and respond to potential issues. Community partners should assist and inform families about the availability of these resources and support their use.

Utilize Training and Evidence-based Practices

8. Schools should provide access to evidence-based training and education programs for students, educators, school personnel, and families to recognize and appropriately respond to bullying, harassment, and violence – including bias-related incidents or discrimination. This includes providing training and professional development on implicit bias and ways to create positive learning environments for all students, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, religious identity, immigration status, or ability.

9. The Administration should provide guidance and technical assistance to schools to inform the development, implementation, and communication of reunification plans that clearly establish where and how students will be reunited with families during and after an emergency as part of more comprehensive crisis planning done in collaboration with local law enforcement and first responders.

Increase Access to Mental Health Services

10. All schools should conduct climate surveys – such as the PA School Climate Survey – and use other available data sources, including the Pennsylvania Youth Survey (PAYS), to identify issues and potential solutions. The Administration should provide guidance and technical assistance to support schools in these efforts.

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20 Section 13-1304-A of the Public School Code currently provides that "Prior to admission to any school entity, the parent, guardian or other person having control or charge of a student shall, upon registration, provide a sworn statement or affirmation stating whether the pupil was previously or is presently suspended or expelled from any public or private school of this Commonwealth or any other state for an act or offense involving weapons, alcohol or drugs or for the willful infliction of injury to another person or for any act of violence committed on school property. The registration shall include the name of the school from which the student was expelled or suspended for the above-listed reasons with the dates of expulsion or suspension and shall be maintained as part of the student's disciplinary record."

B. How can we strengthen efforts to address the health (both physical and mental) needs of students?

Expand Pre-K-12 Academic Standards to Address Social, Mental, and Emotional Health

1. The State Board of Education should review and revise Pennsylvania's health education standards to more explicitly address social, mental, and emotional health. The Administration should provide resources and technical assistance, including model curricula, to schools to help implement updated standards.

Increase Availability of Physical and Mental Health Professionals and Other Support Personnel

2. The Administration should work with the General Assembly to conduct a workforce study to determine supply and staffing gaps for health care and support personnel, including both school- and community-based nurses, psychologists, social workers, counselors, and other professionals.

3. Schools should utilize social workers and other trained support personnel to provide services that primarily fall within their scope of practice to provide for optimum use of their knowledge and skills.

Increase Access to Mental Health Services

4. The Administration should make a universal behavioral health screening available for all schools in Pennsylvania, and should explore making mental health screenings part of comprehensive health examinations required as part of enrollment in public schools in Pennsylvania.

5. The state should strengthen existing statewide programs and intervention frameworks, such as the Student Assistance Program (SAP), Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS), and Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), to improve quality, availability, and awareness.

6. The Administration should organize a mental health campaign to increase mental health education and decrease stigma, with a focus on school-age populations and families.

7. Schools should work with community partners to provide multiple options for students to access supports and a continuum of care, both in and out of school, including mental health services, peer-to-peer mentoring and mediation, and other services. These options should be communicated to students and families, including those that ensure confidentiality. The Administration should also continue to work with the General Assembly to support legislation that allows for reimbursement for telemedicine.

Utilize Training and Evidence-based Practices

8. The Administration should share age-appropriate mental health first aid training materials for students, teachers, administrators, and other school staff.

9. State partners, including agencies and associations, should embed opportunities to share best practices in school safety and establish mentor relationships between schools within existing conference, networks and professional communities, and other professional development programs.

10. Schools should consider the use of best practices utilized in the juvenile justice system, such as restorative practive and restorative justice,[21] to address student behavioral issues.

11. Schools should adopt trauma-informed approaches to address student needs and consider specialized training for educators in de-escalation tactics and cultural competence to assist them in identifying and defusing potentially dangerous behaviors as well as effectively relating with students.

C. How can we help ensure school buildings are secure and appropriate training is conducted for students and staff?

Strengthen School Security

1. Schools should continue to rely on law enforcement and other trained officials for school security and response to incidents.

2. The state should provide additional resources to schools to increase security measures such as cameras, school vestibules, locked doors or other door-securing mechanisms, metal detectors and limited points of egress in and out of schools.

3. The state should identify best practices criteria to assess school safety and preparedness to assist schools as they evaluate options for services. Schools should refer to those criteria, or the PA State Police's Risk and Vulnerability Assessment Team (RVAT) unit, when conducting risk assessments.

4. The state should develop an approved vendor list of risk-assessment and other security companies to help schools choose reputable providers.

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21   Restorative justice equally addresses community protection, victim restoration through accountability, and youth redemption through competency development. Youth-aid panels are a good example of this approach. Rather than arrest a non-violent juvenile or student for an offense, a youth-aid panel, comprised of students and community members, encourages them to accept responsibility for their actions, while raising community awareness and involvement.

5. Schools should increase the presence of school resource officers (SROs) and/or school police officers (SPOs) to provide support and build positive relationships between law enforcement and students. Schools without the resources or means to have an SRO/SPO should partner with local law enforcement to provide regular contact with students (e.g., random walk-throughs of schools, present during the lunch hour, etc.).

6. The state should provide funding and technical assistance to increase availability of SROs and SPOs, especially in underserved areas, and ensure they are properly trained to work in an educational setting (e.g., understand child/adolescent development, communication, considerations for students with disabilities and English Learners, etc.). This state-supported training should specifically address racial bias.

Utilize Training and Evidence-based Practices

7. All schools should use the National Incident Management System (NIMS) universal language when responding to an incident to ensure clear and concise communication and command structure protocols.

8. Recognizing the significant linkages between different forms of violence impacting youth, the Administration should continue to advocate that the General Assembly amend Pennsylvania's current anti-bullying laws (24 PS § 13-1303.1-A, Act 26 of 2015) to create a comprehensive anti-violence and anti-harassment policy for K-12 schools that establishes clear prevention, reporting, and response requirements for bullying, hazing, suicide prevention, sexual assault, sexual harassment, dating violence, and other forms of violence and harassment. The state should also provide resources and technical assistance to schools to implement evidence-based and best practices related to these issues, including model policies.

9. All schools should have a school safety plan in place and should undergo drills and/or table-top exercises with first responders on a regular basis in order to be prepared for a potential incident. School safety plans should be filed with PEMA and all first responders in the school's area. Training should engage multidisciplinary teams, including school safety and law enforcement personnel, educators, students, and other support professionals, as well as parents and families, and should emphasize

steps individuals can take before, during, and immediately following an incident.

10. Active shooter and school safety drills teach students and staff how to handle the critical time between the arrival of an intruder and law enforcement. The state should provide technical assistance to schools on how to conduct security drills, as well as clear guidance regarding a new state law that requires schools conduct a safety drill within the first 60 days of the school year, with the option to conduct two additional safety drills in lieu of fire drills throughout the year (Act 39 of 2018).

11. The State Board of Education should review and update the model memorandum of understanding (MOU) and related school safety provisions established in Chapter 10 (Safe Schools) regulations to provide more clarity to school administrators about which incidents must be reported to local law enforcement.

> *"I believe Pennsylvania can further strengthen school safety by requiring all schools to have metal detectors and armed security guards. Furthermore, every person entering the school building should be required to walk through the metal detector. Metal detectors are only effective if they are used on every person, not just randomly. I hope you will take this into consideration."*
>
> **– Stacie T.**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Governor Wolf and Auditor General DePasquale also thank the following schools for their willingness to support the School Safety Task Force by providing accommodations for meeting space.

Central Mountain High School

Central York School District

Erie High School

Solomon Elementary School

Technical College High School–Pickering Campus

Woodland Hills High School

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Pennsylvania State Police and Governor's Office of Homeland Security: Overview of School Safety Services

ACTIVE SHOOTER TRAINING

Beginning in 2012 the Pennsylvania State Police (PSP)'s Bureau of Emergency and Special Operations Special Emergency Response Team (SERT) was tasked with providing Active Shooter Training to all members of PSP holding the rank of Sergeant or below. By 2014, all PSP first responders within the parameters received this training, which included realistic scenarios and role players. Additionally, all PSP Cadets receive this training prior to their graduation from the Academy. The PSP Bureau of Emergency and Special Operations members have also provided the training to municipal officers across the commonwealth.

COMMUNITY POLICING

PSP stresses the importance of community involvement and engagement as part of a holistic approach in school safety. PSP's Community Service Officers (CSO) visit churches, businesses, and other organizations, such as educational institutions to discuss issues relevant to safety and overall security. In addition, PSP stations regularly send representatives to Township and Borough meetings within their coverage areas to ensure the concerns of the citizens we serve are addressed. Often, topics involving school safety such as cyberbullying are addressed at these meetings. Furthermore, each Trooper on patrol understands the importance in developing strong relationships within the communities they serve. PSP's Troopers routinely volunteer for details such as Camp Cadet, Shop with a Cop, or Coffee with a Cop where Pennsylvania's youth çan interact with members of law enforcement in a positive environment.

RISK AND VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENTS

Specially-trained Troopers tour schools and provide a

confidential report on ways to improve security. The Troopers assess physical security, explosive effects on structural design, threat analysis, and practical target hardening techniques. All Risk and Vulnerability Assessments Team (RVAT) members are certified as Physical Security Professionals through American Society for Industrial Security (ASIS) a preeminent organization for security professionals with 38,000 members worldwide.

During 2017, RVAT conducted 42 risk assessments at public schools (K-12) and private sector facilities. Since January 2016, PSP has completed 147 RVAT assessments with the vast majority of those facilities being educational institutions.

In addition to educational facilities, RVAT will assess office buildings, warehouses, commercial buildings, utility/power plants, malls/shopping centers, arenas/stadiums, amusement parks, fairgrounds, hotels, courthouses, houses of worship, bridges/tunnels, and special event venues.

SCHOOL SHOOTER PREPAREDNESS WORKSHOPS/TABLETOPS

PSP provides free training to school administrators and staff regarding the active shooter threat which is designed to prepare individuals in the event they are involved in one of these incidents. These presentations are conducted by Community Service Officers and include recognition of warning signs that might be indicative of someone progressing toward violence and guidance about what actions to take if an active shooter enters their facility. Nearly 400 such presentations were conducted in 2017.

STOP THE BLEED

PSP is partnering with the Pennsylvania Trauma Systems Foundation (PTSF) to provide life-saving 'Stop the Bleed' tourniquet training to its Troopers. The 90-minute course combines lecture with hands-on training. Upon completion of the training course, each member will receive a combat application tourniquet to carry with them while on duty. The tourniquets are provided through a grant funded by the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC).

The training will provide live-saving instruction and tourniquets to Troopers. This will enable Troopers to act quickly to save a life in the event of a traumatic injury like those experienced in school violence incidents.

HOMELAND SECURITY - ACTIVE SHOOTER TRAINING

The Governor's Office of Homeland Security has conducted six school safety programs in the Commonwealth. In each of these programs, we have had audiences of no fewer than 400 attendees. The featured speakers included keynote addresses from Virginia State

Police regarding the Virginia Tech mass shooting, the Office of the Dale County Sheriff and the FBI HRT team regarding the Alabama hostage rescue, and the Pennsylvania State Police on the Lancaster County massacre of the Amish school children at Nickel Mines. These keynote presentations were followed by presentations from Center for Safe Schools; PEMA on the All-hazards School Safety Planning Tool Kit developed for the Commonwealth; a psychologist speaking on the mindset of the perpetrators and what school assessment teams should look for in their schools; the United States Secret Service on the development of assessment teams across the US; the FBI on the response by law enforcement to a school shooting and medical professionals to deal with the "aftermath" including psychological counseling and reuniting families; and the DHS programs available online for schools to use within their districts for self-teaching. At each event, a CD with an extensive list of presentation material that detailed each of these areas was provided to the attendees.

HOMELAND SECURITY - SOCIAL MEDIA/INTERNET SAFETY FOR PARENTS & TEACHERS

The Governor's Office of Homeland Security has developed a new program for parents, teachers, and community leaders that focuses on children. The Keeping Kids Safe: Social Media/lnternet Safety program discusses the risks of smart phone technology, cyber bullying, and other aspects related to the use of the Internet and Social Media. The office works directly with Intermediate Units to market the program and encourage the schools to inform their parents and teachers of the opportunity to hear from a nationally-recognized presenter. This presenter, who trains law enforcement on using online sources for tactical investigations, tailored the law enforcement presentation to one that highly benefits parents on the use and safety of the Internet. This presentation also gives a brief overview of the latest trends in cyberbullying and human trafficking.

Pennsylvania Department of Health: Overview of School Safety Services

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

The Department of Health's Bureau of Public Health Preparedness (BPHP) is responsible for providing direction, coordination and assessment of all activities that ensure state and local readiness, interagency collaboration and preparedness for the public health and medical consequences of all disasters and emergencies. The BPHP serves as the primary coordinating office within the Pennsylvania Department of Health and is charged with developing both internal and external processes to assure Pennsylvania 's ability to respond in a coordinated manner, at all levels of decision-making, to public health threats.

Emergency Guidelines for Schools – a collaboration between the Pennsylvania Emergency Health Services Council, the Pennsylvania Emergency Medical Services for Children and the Department of Health.

SCHOOL HEALTH

The School Health program serves all children of school age attending public, private and non-public schools in Pennsylvania and is responsible for providing technical assistance, training and coordination of programs and services to schools, parents and the community at large regarding school health programs and services.

Public school entities are required to submit an annual report which includes aggregate totals for select chronic conditions with medication administered, screenings, exams, injuries and staffing. Data are only published at the county level.

The Pennsylvania Public School Code requires certain school health services for all children of school age, regardless of the school setting. Those services include physical examinations and health screenings (growth, hearing, scoliosis, TB and vision) as well as dental health.

As required by the Pennsylvania Public School Code, the Department of Health, provides reimbursement for state mandated school health services through a state formula for reimbursement. These services include medical, dental and nursing services.

YOUTH RISK BEHAVIOR SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM (YRBSS)

A system developed by the CDC in collaboration with representatives from state and local departments of education and health, other federal agencies, and national

education and health organizations. It is designed monitor priority health risk behaviors that contribute markedly to the leading causes of death, disability, and social problems among youth and adults in the United States. The YRBSS monitors six types of health-risk behaviors that contribute to the leading causes of death and disability among youth and adults, including:

- Behaviors that contribute to unintentional injuries and violence
- Sexual behaviors related to unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV infection
- Alcohol and other substance use
- Tobacco use
- Unhealthy dietary behaviors
- Inadequate physical activity

YRBSS also measures the prevalence of obesity and asthma and other priority health-related behaviors plus sexual identity and sex of sexual contacts. YRBSS includes a national school-based survey conducted by CDC and state, territorial, tribal, and local surveys conducted by state, territorial, and local education and health agencies and tribal governments, which Pennsylvania participates. The YRBSS was designed to:

- Determine the prevalence of health behaviors.
- Assess whether health behaviors increase, decrease, or stay the same over time.
- Examine the co-occurrence of health behaviors.
- Provide comparable national, state, territorial, tribal, and local data.
- Provide comparable data among subpopulations of youth.
- Monitor progress toward achieving the Healthy People objectives and other program indicators

The YRBSS includes national, state, territorial, tribal government, and local school-based surveys of representative samples of 9th through 12th grade students. These surveys are conducted every two years, usually during the spring semester.

<u>VIOLENCE AND INJURY PREVENTION</u>

The Pennsylvania Department of Health (PA DOH) receives a grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to prevent and control injuries and injury-related deaths in Pennsylvania. These CDC funds are intended to assist the PA DOH to assess the social and economic burden of injuries in Pennsylvania; assemble a statewide Injury and Violence Prevention Network (IVPN); prepare an annual injury data report; and develop comprehensive injury prevention and control plan for Pennsylvania.

The Violence and Injury Prevention Program aims to prevent death and disability from intentional and unintentional injury by assessing the incidence of injury and developing programs that reduce risk of injury. Services are provided through a contracting process with various grantees from across Pennsylvania.

Injury and Violence Prevention Network's mission is *"To develop a comprehensive and coordinated injury prevention effort which will guide Pennsylvanians to prevent injuries and violence across the lifespan by empowering state and local partners through the collection and analysis of data and the leveraging of resources for injury prevention programs to recapture lost human potential."*

The IVPN has identified four main injury topics that are a great burden on Pennsylvania's population:

1. Child Maltreatment
2. Motor Vehicle Crashes
3. Unintentional Falls
4. Unintentional Poisonings

A workgroup was formed around each injury topic, with policy and data workgroup members supplementing each injury group. So far workgroups have produced logic models and action plans for cohesive interventions in their focus area.

The Pennsylvania Violent Death Reporting System (PA-VDRS) is funded through a cooperative agreement with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and is part of the National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS).

The purpose of the PA-VDRS program is to create and implement a plan to collect and disseminate accurate, timely, and comprehensive surveillance data of all violent deaths in the selected target areas using the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines. As of January 2015, PA-VDRS began collecting data from six counties (Philadelphia, Allegheny, Delaware, Montgomery, Berks, and Bucks) in Pennsylvania (PA). These six counties represent 50 percent of all reported violent deaths in Pennsylvania in 2010 (NCHS data on Violent Deaths in PA, 2010). Starting in 2016, PA-VDRS will collect data from 16 additional counties. These 16 counties, along with the first six counties, make up approximately 80 percent of all reported violent deaths in the state (NCHS data on Violent Deaths in PA, 2010).

The National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS) considers violent deaths to be homicide, suicide, unintentional firearm deaths, and injury deaths of undetermined circumstance. Data is gathered from coroners/medical examiners, death certificates, and law enforcement offices. All violent deaths reported in PA are included.

The PA-VDRS advisory board represents a diverse group of interested stakeholders, including data collectors and prevention organizations, who advise the implementation and distribution of the collected data. The advisory board meets twice a year.

APPENDIX C

http://www.pema.pa.gov/planningandpreparedness/communityandstateplanning/Pages/All-Hazards-School-Safety-Planning-Toolkit.aspx

http://www.pema.pa.gov/planningandpreparedness/communityandstateplanning/Pages/Chapter-III-Basic-School-District-Plan.aspx

Pennsylvania Department of Human Services: Overview of School Safety Services

The following is a list of programs, initiatives, and resources in which the Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (OMHSAS) is involved through development, funding, and/or staff leadership and participation:

STUDENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The Pennsylvania Student Assistance Program (SAP) is a systematic team process used to mobilize school resources to remove barriers to learning. It involves a joint effort between the Departments of Education, Drug and Alcohol Programs, and Human Services (OMHSAS) and is required by Chapter 12 of the PA School Code. SAP is designed to assist in identifying issues including alcohol, tobacco, other drugs, and mental health issues which pose a barrier to a student's success. The primary goal of the Student Assistance Program is to help students overcome these barriers so that they may achieve, advance, and remain in school. Additional information about SAP is provided below:

- All SAP team members must complete a standardized 3 day training by an approved SAP training provider
- Anyone can make referrals to the school based SAP team
- MH and D&A Liaisons from local provider agencies are available to perform screenings and/or assessments if needed
- 13 Regional Coordinators across the Commonwealth to provide technical assistance to schools and counties
- Website: www.pnsas.org

SCHOOL-BASED VIOLENCE PREVENTION

Under Act 71, which passed in June of 2014, school entities are required to provide 4 hours of training in suicide prevention to educators in grades 6-12 every 5 years. They are also required to have policies that include procedures for suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention (i.e., response to a death by suicide), and these policies must include student education and awareness programming.

OMHSAS has supported Youth Mental Health First Aid and Question-Persuade-Refer (QPR) trainings across the Commonwealth through both the Garrett Lee Smith (GLS) Youth Suicide Prevention Grant and the System of Care Partnership. Additional trainings

on suicide risk assessment, safety planning, postvention, and family engagement have been offered to schools through the GLS grant. Grant staff have also provided consultation for schools on policy development, as well as the selection of staff and student education and training programs.

Prevent Suicide PA and the Pennsylvania Garrett Lee Smith Youth Suicide Prevention Grant recently announced the Suicide Prevention Online Learning Center. This site is designed to provide current and evidence-based information to anyone who may come into contact with individuals struggling with suicidal thoughts and behaviors, including educators, mental health professionals, medical professionals, and the general community. All trainings on the site are available at no cost, and there are multiple trainings available that would support schools in meeting Act 71 requirements. The Online Learning Center can be accessed by visiting the following website: https://preventsuicidepalearning.com/.

CRISIS RESOURCES FOR YOUTH

The Department of Human Services' Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (OMHSAS) recently announced a new partnership with Crisis Text Line, a free and confidential service that is available nationally to provide support to those in crisis. This partnership will provide the department with valuable information about data trends to help inform prevention and outreach efforts. Crisis Text Line may be accessed any time by texting PA to 741-741.

Additionally, OMHSAS promotes and disseminates the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline through various awareness events supported by Prevent Suicide PA and the GLS grant, including several Suicide Prevention Night at the Ballpark events. The Lifeline is also promoted through an annual high school PSA contest for suicide prevention. Winning posters are disseminated to schools throughout the Commonwealth via the SAP Regional Coordinators.

BULLYING PREVENTION PARTNERHIP

This partnership is spearheaded by the Office of Safe Schools at the Pennsylvania Department of Education and is a cross-system stakeholder group focused on bullying prevention initiatives across the Commonwealth. The Partnership is working to develop action plans around the following areas:

- Connecting School Climate Policy with Bullying Prevention
- Identifying Bullying Prevention Resources

There is also a Bullying Prevention Consultation Line for individuals experiencing chronic and unresolved bullying to discuss effective strategies and available resources to deal with school-based bullying. Additional information can be found at the following website: http://www.education.pa.gov/K-12/Safe%20Schools/Pages/Bullying-Prevention.aspx.

PENNSYLVANIA COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE ON SCHOOL BASED BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

This community of cross sector stakeholders shares a commitment to the advancement of early childhood, school age and adult behavioral health and wellness within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and is spearheaded by PaTTAN Pittsburgh. The CoP goal is to support school efforts to overcome the non-academic barriers to learning for children and youth so that all can successfully transition into adulthood. A primary area of focus us on the scale-up of PBIS (Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports) across the Commonwealth. PBIS is an evidenced-based three-tiered approach for establishing the social culture needed for schools to be effective learning environments for all students.

- Tier 1: Universal interventions for all students and settings
- Tier 2: Secondary interventions for students who are at-risk
- Tier 3: Tertiary Interventions for individual students needing specialized assistance

Additional information can be found at the following website: http://www.papbs.org/Home.aspx?PageID=68a5038d-36df-414f-8e1f-a78737463ace.

APPENDIX E

Pennsylvania Department of Education: Overview of School Safety Services

PDE Office for Safe Schools

The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) Office for Safe Schools coordinates

school safety and security programs, collection of the annual school violence statistics, coordination of antiviolence efforts, and development of policies and strategies to combat school violence. The office supports and provides technical assistance and professional development programs in the following areas and security-related activities to support school safety: crisis intervention, school police training, violence prevention, and social/emotional wellness and safety, and provides services to all local school entities.

Initiatives to Promote Positive School Climate and Social-Emotional Learning

Pennsylvania's schools should be safe havens where all students – regardless of their race, color, religion, ancestry, gender, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, national origin, or ability – feel safe, respected, and welcomed. A positive school climate is essential for academic achievement and success. The Department has implemented several initiatives to ensure all students feel safe, respected, and valued in school.

- The Office for Safe Schools has tools and resources, including a no-cost, customizable PA School Climate Survey, to help schools measure and improve student engagement, safety, and school climate. (See below for additional information.)

- In 2016, PDE launched the PA School Climate Leadership Initiative, in partnership with the PA Association of Intermediate Units (PAIU) and the National School Climate Center (NSCC). Participating schools receive training and technical assistance from a designated School Climate Regional Coordinator housed at 27 of the commonwealth's 29 Intermediate Units.

- The PA Equity and Inclusion Toolkit, developed in collaboration with other state agencies, organizations, and partners, focuses on strategies and actions that schools can take to address bias and discrimination in a

proactive and effective manner.

- The Department has embedded culturally responsive and trauma-informed concepts and competencies within professional development programs and resources available for educators throughout the commonwealth.

- In collaboration with state and local partners, Pennsylvania has worked to expand access to school-based behavioral and mental health services, which can leverage the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) framework and Schoolwide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS) approach.

- Pennsylvania is one of eight states participating in the Collaborating States Initiative, led by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning. Through this work, Pennsylvania will develop a roadmap for schools and districts looking to embed social-emotional competencies within their curriculum, instruction, professional development, and school climate initiatives.

- Resources related to social-emotional learning are available for educators and administrators through Pennsylvania's Standards Aligned System (SAS) Portal.

- The PA Career Ready Skills (PA CRS) project is to provide educators with resources to support the implementation of Pennsylvania Career Ready Skills in the school environment. Aligned to Pennsylvania's Career Education and Work (CEW) Standards, PA CRS focus on key areas employers have defined as essential – skills beyond technical understanding and subject knowledge: self-awareness and self-management, establishing and maintaining relationships, and social problem solving skills.

State Grants for School Safety

Each year the Office for Safe Schools receives state funding for school entities to develop and implement initiatives aimed at improving school climate, violence prevention, the Student Assistance Program, crisis intervention, and promoting social/emotional wellness.

School entities also may apply for funding for security-related equipment as well as School Resource and Police Officers. Nonpublic schools may apply for funding to support a school police officer. The funding may be used for the costs associated with obtaining the services of a school police officer from a list of approved vendors certified by the Office for Safe Schools. Grant awards for this purpose are paid directly to the approved vendor with which the nonpublic school contracts for services.

Emergency Management Planning

Every school must plan for emergencies, regardless of its size or location. The Office for Safe Schools partners with PEMA, the Pennsylvania State Police, and other agencies and security organizations to offer best practice planning, programs, and training throughout Pennsylvania. Below are several resources available on the PDE website:

- All Hazards School Safety Toolkit
- Model Memorandum of Understanding with Law Enforcement Agency
- PEMA: Basic School Plan Format
- Sample Superintendent's Letter - Parental Notification on Continued Warnings About Potential Threats

PA Bullying Prevention Consultation Line

The Bullying Prevention Consultation Line is a toll-free number for individuals experiencing chronic and unresolved bullying to discuss effective strategies and available resources to deal with school-based bullying. This supportive resource was developed in collaboration with the Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention (CHPDP) and is available at no cost to students, parents/guardians, and schools across Pennsylvania.

Messages can be left 24 hours a day, seven days a week and will be returned Monday-Friday during normal business hours. The Consultation Line is **1-866-716-0424**.

- PA Bullying Prevention Consultation Line Video
- PA Bullying Prevention Consultation Line Poster

Online School Climate Survey

The Office for Safe Schools developed free, online school climate surveys for use by school entities in Pennsylvania. The surveys provide schools with formative and summative climate data for use with needs assessments, program development, and short and long-term planning. The domains measured by the surveys include: Social Emotional Learning, Student

Support, High Expectations and Academic Rigor/Challenge, and Safe and Respectful School Climate.

Surveys are available for grades 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12, staff and faculty, parents, and community members. The surveys and their results are located on a secure website and are completely confidential. Survey data is the sole property of the school district. No results are reviewed by the PA Department of Education for any reason. School entities choose which surveys to administer, how they are used, and when to administer them.

Promoting Safety for Students with Disabilities

Developed by the Education Resources for Children with Hearing Loss (ERCHL) committee, an advisory committee to the PDE Bureau of Special Education, the Safety Checklist for IEP Teams is an additional resource for consideration by the IEP teams and safety committees in public schools that provide services to students who are deaf/ hard of hearing. Due to the unique nature of the communication needs of students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind, it is suggested that individualized education program (IEP) teams use this checklist to assure that students have full access to the language and implementation of safety plans. This list is intended to guide discussions to determine needs and supports for students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind during emergency situations.