

MSD Public Safety Commission – Initial Report

Summary Recommendations

School hardening and Security measures

- Enacting a statewide board of subject matter experts to oversee the physical security of schools to improve consistency and ensure compliance of best practices¹
- Legislature should mandate compliance with the following, and include sanctions and removal from office as consequences for noncompliance:
 - Staff shall have clearly established roles/responsibility during emergencies. A school safety/security team should be designated at each school and meet regularly to review policy, train for emergencies and coordinate with law enforcement
 - Each school district and school should have a written policy for Code Red/Active Assailants threats. The policy must make unequivocally clear that all personnel are empowered to activate emergency active assailant response procedures and that those procedures are to be immediately implemented upon notification
 - Schools should have a system in place wherein students and staff are immediately notified, through sight or sound, that a Code Red/Active Assailant has been called in
 - Gates must remain closed and locked, and if they are opened for ordinary ingress/egress, they should be staffed
 - The same applies for all doors that lead to classrooms, buildings, or student occupied space
 - Teachers must always have their keys on their person and be able to lock doors from the inside of classrooms
 - Classroom safety measures such as establishing hard corners and the ability to cover windows and doors quickly
 - Schools should evaluate any decisions to lock bathroom doors
 - Districts should establish a system to ensure compliance with the above policy recommendations
- FDOE Office of Safe Schools should be required to approve all district policy related to active assailant response and each superintendent shall approve each school's policy
 - For Charter schools, each school policy should be approved by the Board of Directors and the Office of Safe Schools

¹ Page 84, *modeled on* Connecticut School Safety Infrastructure Council

- Campus monitors should be carefully selected, have clear roles, and be trained on best practices
- Campuses should have single entry/exit posts to the extent financially possible
- Florida Safe Schools Assessment Tool
 - Legislature should adopt FSSAT for physical site security of schools
 - FDOE should be given compliance authority to monitor FSSAT implementation and review annual FSSATs
 - FDOE should be given funding for training and monitoring district FSSATs
 - Assessments should:
 - Be coordinated with law enforcement
 - Discuss annual progress
 - Deficiencies identified should be directed to the school board and a remedial plan should be approved by the board
 - Individual school FSSATs should be approved by the superintendent (or their deputy, assistant, or district safety specialist) before submission to FDOE
 - Legislature should require sanctions for noncompliance

Law Enforcement and Guardian Program

- School Resource Officers (SRO's, or other equivalents) should be part of a single unit and closely supervised by a centralized system
 - Primary responsibilities of these individuals should be safety/security of the school and all personnel
- Contracts between law enforcement and schools should require information sharing:
 - Such as Emotional and disciplinary records
- School administrators and staff are not to interfere with law enforcement decisions such as arrests and security
- SROs should have immediate access to rifles and ballistic vests on campus
- SROs should receive annual training on active shooters
- Minimum of one law enforcement officer at every middle and high school and minimum of one law enforcement officer or Guardian at every elementary school
- Guardian Program
 - Guardians should be carefully selected and trained in carrying a concealed firearm for the purpose of safety of themselves and school personnel
 - Legislature should expand law to allow teachers to volunteer as guardians
 - School districts and charter schools should implement the most expansive use of the Guardian program and allow any eligible employees into the program
 - Amend Florida Statute 30.15 (1)(k) to state that upon a majority vote of the School Board, the sheriff shall establish a Coach Aaron Feis Guardian Program to aid in the prevention or abatement of active assailant incidents on school premises
- The legislature should:
 - Provide more funding for SROs/Guardians

- Increase recurring funding for the program and expand funding for individuals solely hired as SROs
- Allow for the use of school safety funding between different categories based on need and amend current version of Senate Bill 7026 to allow for safe school's allocation to be used for new or existing school resource officers
- Allow school board to levy up to \$500,000 without the need for referendum if it is related to law enforcement, guardian, or security expenses
- All Florida Public and Charter schools should provide live and real time access to camera systems
 - Schools should provide training to law enforcement on camera systems
- Diversions programs
 - Any school based criminal diversion programs should be approved by the school district and defined in district policy
 - These programs should be cumulative and not reset each school year

Reporting Concerning Behavior

- Reporting concerning behavior is essential and there should be a system in place for individuals to report concerns anonymously
- FortifyFL² should be actively promoted and advertised for students and staff to utilize and report concerning behavior
- Districts should implement a policy that requires its personnel to report all indicators of suspicious student behavior to an administrator
 - Any threats to the school must be reviewed by the Principal and the threat assessment team (w/ law enforcement participation)
- This should all be well accessible and documented

Mental health

- Legislature should amend Section 394.4615 to require mental health providers to notify law enforcement of threats of life made from patients
 - Sharing of information between schools, mental health providers, and law enforcement should be required when threats are made
 - Schools should be required to share student mental health information with community-based providers
- Mental health and counseling records should be included in student files, and should accompany each student if they change schools or districts
- Any student referred for developmental delay or behavioral issue should be tested within 45 days and referred for services within 30 days after testing as necessary

² FortifyFL was created and funded by the 2018 Florida Legislature as part of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act. The app, which can be downloaded to a computer or phone, automatically routes your tip report to the appropriate law enforcement agencies and school officials

- Use a blended funding approach to SEDNET³ using school and community based behavioral health funding sources to facilitate cost sharing and improve information sharing and care coordination
 - Use case management between schools and community providers to students and young adults identified as safety threats to schools
- Individual Education Plans and ESE
 - School personnel should be regularly trained on ESE obligations under federal and state law
 - Threat Assessment Teams and IEP teams should coordinate and share information regularly
 - IEPs with severe behavioral issues should be referred to TAT
- The Florida legislature should consider changes to Florida school privacy laws that are not preempted by federal law

Threat Assessments and other tools

- Threat assessment process should be proactive instead of reactive, concentrating on behavior of potential threats to intervene early
- Threat assessment teams (TAT) should have several dedicated members as well as members who temporarily join due to their familiarity of the individual being assessed
- TATs should meet within 24 hours of receiving a referral when in school session
 - If not in session, the matter should be referred to law enforcement and the TAT should meet by the end of the next school day in session
- TATs should meet monthly and receive regular threat assessment training
- There should be district oversight of TAT process and district level review of all level 2 threats. Principals should be informed and approve of every threat disposition
- All School personnel should receive training on types of behavior that should be reported to TAT
 - This should be mandatory and incur sanctions for noncompliance
- DOE should create a statewide database of threat assessments available to all districts
- DOE should create a threat assessment instrument to be uniformly used⁴

³ SEDNET is a network of 19 regional projects that are comprised of the major child serving agencies, community-based service providers, students, and their families. Local school districts serve as fiscal agents for each local regional project. Within this framework, SEDNET focuses on developing interagency collaboration and sustaining partnerships among professionals and families in the education, mental health, substance abuse, child welfare, and juvenile justice systems serving children and youth with and at-risk of E/BD

⁴ Florida should model Virginia school threat assessment model, as it is the leading in the country. *See*

- The legislature should pass a deadline for this implementation
- SESIR⁵ should be overseen by FDOE to impose sanctions on districts that do not report required data
 - Inspection and auditing authority should be provided to FDOE
 - School districts must ensure schools accurately report SESIR incidents
 - Reporting requirements should be increased
 - Other incidents, such as robbery, should be required offenses to be reported to law enforcement

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5ae6702aa2772c3020f1057d/t/5bd07019b208fcfab364918/1540386848484/Decision+Tree.jpg> (Virginia Threat Assessment Tree)

⁵ School Environmental Safety Incident Reporting System (SESIR): A mechanism for schools in Florida to report crime, violence and disruptive behaviors on school grounds and transportation