N.C. Center for Safer Schools 2013 Report to the Governor

NORTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY
PREVENT. PROTECT. PREPARE.

Division of Adult Correction and Juvenile Justice

Governor McCrory Announces N.C. Center for Safer Schools

In March 2013 Gov. Pat McCrory created a new center in the Department of Public Safety to study ways to make North Carolina's schools safer. During the news conference held at Apex Middle School, Gov. McCrory announced that the new Center for Safer Schools will serve as a clearinghouse and a center of excellence for creating safer schools through research, training and technical assistance by effectively and efficiently collaborating with state, federal, local and community-based resources.

"We want to make sure these schoolchildren are not only safe here at Apex Middle School but are safe at in every school in North Carolina," Gov. McCrory said as he stood in front of a group of children in the school's media center.

Also speaking at the event were the leaders of some of the key agencies involved in school safety programs, including the N.C. Department of Public Safety; the N.C. Department of Public Instruction; the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services; and representing local law enforcement agencies, the Wake County Sheriff's Office.

N.C. Center for Safer Schools

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Executive Summary

Gov. Pat McCrory envisions a North Carolina education environment that nurtures learning and prepares students for the workforce in ways that are academically and vocationally responsible. A critical requirement for that environment is school safety. Following his inauguration, Gov. McCrory directed the Department of Public Safety (DPS) to evaluate the status of school safety across the state, to gather input from multiple persons and entities, to collaborate with other state and local agencies in his efforts, and to review what is known about current best practices. Gov. McCrory directed these results be reported back for consideration and next steps.

This report focuses on work accomplished to date. It documents the initial scan of the state's current school safety practices by the DPS leadership team. As part of an overarching strategy, DPS worked with the Governor to establish the N.C. Center for Safer Schools as a collaborative, convening entity to serve as a centralized and customer-focused school safety and crisis prevention resource within DPS, specifically in the Division of Juvenile Justice. The Center assumed responsibility for reaching out to nine locations across North Carolina and conducted nine multi-staged forums. Key partners throughout the process included the departments of Health and Human Services, Public Instruction and Justice, as well as a variety of other groups. The forums allowed the Center and its partners to listen to various stakeholders' viewpoints regarding school safety—hearing not only their concerns and worries about system gaps, but also about best practices and innovative approaches toward safe, effective schools. To supplement the listening tour, Center staff members conducted a literature review to bolster the knowledge base and to strengthen findings.

The forums helped the Center for Safer Schools and collaborating agency staff learn that school administrators, teachers, students, volunteers, elected officials and many others across the state are working extremely hard to ensure safe environments. Schools and school systems use a myriad of solutions when responding to the complex circumstances confronting their physical environments and school climates. They leverage federal, state and local resources and often find additional ways to bring supports to their students and staff members. A familiar theme at the forums is that schools do not have all the resources and tools desired to fully respond to every need and situation. Needs range from insufficient numbers of personnel to physical plant upgrades or improvements, to challenges with communications and training, among other issues.

The forums and literature review helped create a practical theoretical and conceptual way to think about school safety preparation and crisis response. This conceptual model includes four levels in a continuum of preparation and response: (1) prevention, (2) intervention, (3) crisis response and (4) crisis recovery. This continuum is illustrated in the graphic above. The model affords universal prevention to everyone in a school environment (including whole school prevention programming, physical environment improvement, comprehensive school security, supportive environments in schools and buses, student support staff, programs, etc.). Intervention occurs when a particular risk is observed and identified, and a specific assessment/treatment or other intervention

occurs in response (e.g., referral to special services, suspension to alternative programming, legal intervention, etc.). Crisis responses are unique to the identified risks and occur with urgency. Crises can be man-made or naturally created (such as tornadoes, hurricanes, disease outbreaks, etc.). Crisis responses must be swift, comprehensive, appropriate to the threat, and well-rehearsed so that everyone knows their role(s). Crisis responses should also involve the proper mixture of personnel and resources geared to the emergency nature and characteristics of the crisis. Finally, crisis recovery requires special training and delivery of various individualized services—mental health/trauma, physical recovery, rehabilitation of physical plants, etc.

Jamestown, N.C. May 2, 2013

Findings from the forums and the literature review generated future action steps that can be thought of within the concepts of the model. The findings are comprehensive and affect all the complex levels of responsibility associated with school safety in North Carolina: the Governor and Council of State including the Departments of Public Instruction and Justice, N.C. General Assembly, Cabinet agencies, school districts and communities, individual schools, families and care givers, and students. The action steps are provided as suggestions for policy, funding or other programmatic approaches. Gov. McCrory and his administration will ultimately consider the action steps and decide future directions.

- The most compelling finding from this work is that school safety is everyone's responsibility. No single state agency can provide all the necessary ingredients. Effective, efficient collaboration across state and local entities is a basic requirement. Local collaboration must include active involvement of parents, teachers, administrators, school resource officers and the community at large.

Jamestown, N.C. May 2, 2013

- Another important finding is that school safety depends on a complex blending of monetary and human resources—yet solutions can include approaches that do not require extensive financial commitments. Such solutions depend on creative and innovative approaches, including a more widespread involvement of volunteers and other professionals in the everyday school environment.

- School resource officers (SROs) are highly valued in every environment visited throughout the study process. The key finding here is that when properly trained and equipped, SROs are thought to be the only professionals who should be required or permitted to carry weapons on a school campus. Each and every site visited across the state requested assistance in finding more options to recruit, train and retain SROs for deployment throughout their local school systems. While SROs are primarily thought of by many as "safety" officers, in reality when properly trained and integrated into school climates, they serve multiple roles such as providing positive adult role modeling, serving as confidential listeners and advisors, and acting as part of student support teams.

- Safety is best ensured when there are comprehensive, district-wide and school-specific safety plans that include everything from prevention to crisis response and recovery,

with the full range of emergency management and first responder requirements included. The plan must be reviewed, updated and practiced regularly, so that there is confidence that all contingencies have been considered and responsibilities articulated for everyone involved.

- One core requirement is that all school safety planning includes mental/behavioral health and trauma-focused elements. Too often there is attention to the law enforcement, emergency management, and/or physical structure components while the student supports languish. Each forum site demonstrated an inadequate capacity to provide the needed behavioral health screening, testing, treatment and referral supports for students within their schools. Some sites found creative ways to improve their situations through the leveraging of non-school resources (e.g., private provider agreements, shared in-kind arrangements, or use of state mental health dollars and Medicaid funding to help supplement school or state education system funding).

- Bullying and cyber-bullying continue to be of critical importance when thinking about safe school climates. According to the 2011 NC Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 42 percent of middle school students and 20 percent of high school students in North Carolina have been victims of bullying. Bullying leads to significant social, emotional and later psychiatric or adjustment problems for victims and perpetrators. Reports referenced throughout this document demonstrate that bullies and victims of bullying are far more likely to create school-based emergencies than outside persons.

In addition to these main findings, the forums and literature review produced a significant number of other results, best practices and suggestions that are included in the full report. The appendices and end notes document actual themes and outcomes from the sites visited, as well as important literature supporting the work. It is hoped that this initial work will lead to a better understanding of what is needed to ensure safe schools and a prudent, reasonable way for the N.C. Center for Safer Schools to work collaboratively with local school districts to foster and sustain safe learning environments.

Acknowledgments

No collaborative effort of this nature can be done well without the expertise, guidance and professional support from everyone involved. Leadership for this issue begins with Gov. Pat McCrory and his office. Gov. McCrory's vision for safe schools in North Carolina demonstrates a very high priority and vision within his administration. The North Carolina Center for Safer Schools extends its deepest appreciation to the Governor for bringing forward this priority and for offering his support in the work. The Center also would like to appreciate the departments of Public Instruction, Health and Human Services and Justice for their strong support and provision of services to schools, law enforcement and families and students in North Carolina. We are especially grateful to the staff from these agencies that traveled with us across North Carolina during our Safer Schools forums, partnered with us to write this report, and with whom we look ahead to continuing highly collaborative relationships as we move forward. Special thanks to Dr. Ben Matthews, Chris Minard, M.S., Special Agent Eric Tellefson, Mark Strickland, Sherry Bradsher, Rob Kinsvatter and Pearl Burris-Floyd.

We also extend special thanks to the local stakeholders throughout North Carolina who helped us plan and conduct our Safer Schools forums from the coast to the mountains. These dedicated school board members, superintendents, local law enforcement,

behavioral health and substance abuse providers, juvenile justice professionals, district court judges, Juvenile Crime Prevention Council members, other community program providers, county management, other elected officials, parents and other key volunteers impressed us to no end with their expertise in their chosen fields and their passion for and commitment to helping ensure that students in North Carolina are safe in every aspect of their school involvement.

And finally, we extend a heartfelt thank you to the many Department of Public Safety leaders and other staff members contributing to the work, by pulling together to leverage resources and opportunities for a safer North Carolina. Members of the N.C. Highway Patrol, Governors Crime Commission, Emergency Management, Communications Office, Division of Adult Correction, Division of Law Enforcement, Division of Administration, Division of Juvenile Justice, N.C. National Guard and Information Services have contributed substantially to the report, as well as to the Center for Safer Schools forums. Such teamwork is exemplary and foreshadows a supportive environment from which the North Carolina Center for Safer Schools will operate.

Introduction

The elementary school shootings in Newtown, Conn., both shocked and saddened us all. The event also changed the country in many ways. The tragedy forced policy makers, administrators, parents and students to look at our systems from every perspective and ask if we are doing everything possible to prevent another horrendous incident, and to be fully prepared should a crisis arise in our schools. School gun violence is statistically rare, but the outcomes are catastrophic; therefore we must consider and plan for every contingency.

Following his inauguration, Gov. Pat McCrory directed the Department of Public Safety (DPS) to evaluate and recommend strategies to ensure that North Carolina's schools are safe. The Governor encouraged DPS to research evidence-supported practices and to gather additional information by speaking with and getting recommendations from students, faculty, administrators, parents and community members across the state. The Governor asked that DPS report back on best practices regarding all aspects of school safety, including mental health, substance abuse, law enforcement and emergency management.

A working group was quickly convened within DPS, which inventoried DPS assets and resources and discussed earlier efforts across North Carolina to improve school safety. The group understood that no one person or agency, either in state government or the public, had all the answers or resources to comprehensively address school safety, so the group next formed a plan to involve other state agencies and stakeholders. Ultimately, the DPS leadership team pursued a two-tiered strategy: (1) recommend to the Governor that a convening entity (to be named the N.C. Center for Safer Schools) be established within DPS and its Division of Juvenile Justice to be a customer service center for school safety, a best practices and research repository, a 24-hour statewide solution to anonymous reporting needs, a technical assistance and resource center, and a facilitator of public engagement activities throughout the state; and (2) conduct "Safer Schools forums" with events across the entire state to engage youth, school administrators, teachers and other staff, volunteers, parents, school administrative and political leaders, and the public. The tour would gather feedback and help DPS staff to learn about current school safety initiatives, ideas or requests that could be shared with government officials and others around the state.

The Governor accepted the recommendation to establish the N.C. Center for Safer Schools within DPS and authorized budget adjustments for the assignment of staff and

office capacity. He also supported the idea of the forums and encouraged DPS to move forward. Gov. McCrory helped launch the Center by participating in a media event in March that outlined his vision for the initiative. The new Center for Safer Schools coordinated the forums in association with partner agencies including the Department of Public Instruction (DPI), Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and Department of Justice (DOJ), along with local school administrators. The Center arranged and held nine forums across North Carolina and included four sequential activities at each location. Each forum consisted of safety and on-site review tours at schools; a facilitated small group discussion with students; an informal discussion facilitated by the DPS Secretary with local stakeholders (e.g., school board members, superintendents, local law enforcement, behavioral health providers, juvenile justice professionals, district court judges, Juvenile Crime Prevention Council members, other community program providers, county management, other elected officials and key volunteers); and a general forum open to the public facilitated by DPS staff.

Forum Locations and Dates (2013)

Edenton, Chowan County	April 9
Morehead City, Carteret County	April 10
Boone, Watauga County	April 17
Sylva, Jackson County	April 18
Durham, Durham County	April 23
Concord, Cabarrus County	April 25
Fayetteville, Cumberland County	April 30
Jamestown, Guilford County	May 2
Hispanic/Latino Forum, Durham County	May 7

Meeting with Students - Edenton, N.C. April 9, 2013

School Tour - Fayetteville, N.C. April 30, 2013

Meeting with Stakeholders - Durham, N.C. April 23, 2013

Public Forum - Durham, N.C. April 23, 2013

Rationale and Methods

This report compiles feedback received during the listening tour buttressed by a review of the scientific and applied literature on effective school safety practices. The approach to the work taken by DPS includes an overarching theoretical model for effective school safety, coupled with a scientific research review and the listening tour. The theoretical model encompasses four domains of thinking about the dimensions of school safety: **Prevention, Intervention, Crisis Response and Recovery (from crisis)**. It can be thought of as a four-part series of successive but inclusive and related strategies, where Prevention represents the broadest and most comprehensive dimension. It is important to note that all school emergency management and recovery models include resources for bilingual and multicultural audiences.

Prevention is the broadest dimension. It includes a broad focus on the general population of students (and surrounding persons) and can incorporate such things as "hardening" the physical environment, enhancing protective factors among all students, strengthening positive school climates, and reducing overall risk factors through education and curricula. Particularly relevant to youth violence prevention is the Center for Disease Control's excellent materials that include broad population-based efforts in this dimension (see http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/youthviolence/prevention.html).

Intervention includes more specific activities focusing on evidence-based practices that reduce risk or threats involving the recognition of students whose characteristics or behaviors have been identified as at-risk through a variety of screening, evaluation or observation methods. This includes a robust, 24-hour capability for anonymous reporting using multiple modalities (e.g., suspicious activity reporting). Interventions are just that – specific activities or programs designed to deter/reduce problems and enhance positive outcomes for both the student as well as others in the school environment. Examples of interventions may include mental health or substance abuse services to individual students (or small groups), evaluation and referral to appropriate exceptional children's services, direct parent engagement for specific behaviors, specific changes to a facility based on a known threat, altering supervision levels on a bus due to credible information that a student may be planning to act out, etc. *In this theoretical model, prevention efforts are geared toward populations as a whole, while interventions are planned and delivered to identified students or situations.*

Crisis Response is a directed, urgent and comprehensive response to a known crisis. A school crisis could be in many forms: students with weapons, visitors to campus with threats/weapons, weather emergencies such as tornadoes or hurricanes, health emergencies such as outbreaks of disease, death of a student, or a chemical spill on or near a campus. Effective crisis responses require teams at multiple levels to plan, practice, prepare and respond when called upon. There are many guides and papers on the subject of effective crisis response. One example can be found at: http://crisisguide.neahin.org/crisisguide/ (the National Education Association). Also, the American Institutes for Research (AIR) has an online resource guide for effective school crisis / violence prevention (http://cecp.air.org/guide/annotated.asp) – AIR works with the Office of Special Education Programs through the Center for Effective Collaboration and Practice to promote the full spectrum of school preparedness.

Recovery is the final dimension in the model being used. Recovery includes the full range of mental health first aid, trauma-focused interventions, victim treatment, crime scene management and restoration, media management, debriefing, physical and disease management, etc. An outstanding compendium of resources is housed on the U.S. Department of Education website, "Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools Technical Assistance Center" (see http://rems.ed.gov/Display.aspx?page=additional_resources_Recovery_Mental_Health_Resources)

What follows in this report is largely the result of feedback from the tours supplemented by the literature review. Findings collected through the forums serve as the primary source for the action steps and recommendations in this report. The forums allowed policy makers, administrators, teachers, students, parents and other collaborating partners from different schools with diverse needs to have a voice; sites visited included large and small schools, rural and urban schools, newer and older schools, and elementary/middle/high schools in locations ranging from the far eastern region of North Carolina to the far western counties. At each forum, participants learned about the collaborative philosophy of the new Center, with DPS, DHHS, DPI and DOJ as core partners. The facilitated discussions covered a wide range of topics. DPS staff recorded the dialogue and recommendations. DPS captured, streamed and archived each session via Livestream (http://new.livestream.com/) for viewers in other locations. Following completion of the forums, research staff compiled the data from each segment and used generally accepted content and thematic analysis techniques to help with data reporting and interpretation. Summaries and findings can be found in the appendices to this report (see Appendix A and B).

Live Streaming from Edenton, N.C. April 9, 2013

Additionally, participants in each location received multiple methods for further communication with DPS leadership, N.C. Center for Safer Schools staff and DPS in general. The forum facilitator provided email and telephone/fax contact information and encouraged all participants to continue sending suggestions, recommendations, resources and materials to help supplement the research and report.

Finally, staff members from multiple sections of DPS along with DPI, DHHS and DOJ researched library and web-based resources to contribute reports, policy documents, bulletins, etc. for additional consideration. These additional research materials can be found in the end notes and at the end of this report.

Characteristics of Safer Schools

During the forums the general public, parents, students, school staff, law enforcement and the academic community agreed on many of the characteristics necessary to have a safer school. These characteristics were supported by research done by the Center for Safer Schools and form the foundation for the action steps and recommendations in this report:

> "Safety is what occurs in the mind first. There is no learning that can occur unless the students feel safe." -Cabarrus County Principal Carla Black

Have comprehensive Safe School Plans that consider prevention, intervention, crisis response and recovery strategies balanced with physical security and emotional social needs. These plans should be evaluated on a regular basis and use evidence-based strategies, or promising programs supported by

research, and should be informed by community stakeholders including students, parents, law enforcement, mental health professionals, youth-serving agencies and juvenile justice professionals.

Focus on academic performance. Schools with poor academic quality also have high levels of student and teacher victimization and high rates of suspensions, expulsions and referrals to juvenile court.[1] Schools that effectively engage students in the classroom have fewer incidents of violence, so it is important for schools to not lose focus on their purpose, which is to educate kids. "Research shows that safe schools have higher test scores and other positive academic outcomes than unsafe schools."[2] When there are concerns about safety, it is difficult for students and teachers to concentrate on learning. Moreover, approximately 4 percent of middle school students in North Carolina reported that they did not go to school at least one day in the last 30 days because they were afraid of being attacked or bullied.[3] It stands to reason that if students are not in the classroom they will not perform as well academically.

Involve community partners and resources. Community partnerships should most importantly begin with family involvement. When parental involvement increases on a school campus, discipline referrals drop on that school campus.[4] One program mentioned during several of the forums was the WATCH D.O.G.S. (Dads of Great Students) program, which was seeing great success in involving fathers, grandfathers, stepfathers, uncles and other father figures in schools in meaningful ways. "Encouraging parents to be involved in the educational system has proven to positively affect student achievement."[5] Parents say they often do not get involved at their child's school because the involvement does not seem meaningful or they do not feel accepted by the school community. *Schools that give parents concrete ways to get involved note much higher rates of participation.*

WATCH D.O.G.S. (Dads of Great Students) - Is the father involvement initiative of the National Center for Fathering that organizes fathers and father figures in order to provide positive male role models for the students and to enhance school security.

To learn more visit www.fathers.com

School safety is a community issue, not just a school concern. Schools should not be afraid to open up their doors to community resources—mental health providers, local law enforcement, local emergency management, clergy and community youth- serving agencies. The highest-functioning schools welcome community partners and resources and work collaboratively with those partners. *Safe schools don't just add more programs, however. They create robust links among the various resources available in the community.*

Have caring and competent staff. There is no replacement for caring and competent staff when it comes to identifying and intervening with troubled youth. **"Safe schools don't let kids fall through the cracks."**[6] Staff members need to know the warning signs of youth who are at-risk for violent behavior.[7] Many speakers at the forums stated that people are more essential to solving school safety issues than technology or building improvements. Safer schools have positive, caring school climates characterized by mutual respect and a sense of connection between students and the school, supported by teachers and other school staff. A functional school climate balances structure and support through an organized, school-wide approach practiced by all personnel.[8] Students emphasized at the forums that it is easy to tell the teachers who truly care about them from those who do not and they spoke of the need to protect all students from abuse and bullying, especially those who are different.

Deal with safety issues in a transparent and open way. Some forum speakers expressed concern that there seems to be a disincentive for schools to be transparent with the public regarding the safety concerns facing each school. Research shows, however, that schools

willing to state that they have a problem and engage students, staff, parents and community members in solving it achieve better results. Failing to acknowledge and address issues can transform small concerns into major incidents.[9] **Safe schools identify problems and assess progress toward solutions.**[10] Schools need to develop a systematic method of dealing with problems and should choose a targeted approach that addresses the root causes of the particular issues faced over a scattershot approach.

Give students multiple ways to share their concerns. In focus groups, many students told the interview team that they had at least one trusted adult they could turn to on their school campus if they needed to report a school safety concern. A number wished, however, that there were anonymous ways to report these issues. According to the U.S. Secret Service's Implications for Prevention of School Attacks in the United States, "In most cases, other people knew about [an] attack before it took place. In over three-quarters of the incidents, at least one person had information that the attacker was thinking about or planning the school attack."[11] *The ability for students to report their concerns in anonymous, accessible and reliable ways is therefore critical to school safety.*

Promote good citizenship and character. Schools that incorporate effective character education programs into their daily routine have seen decreases in discipline referrals and increases in student achievement.[12 13] Schools are already mandated by state law to teach character education, but too often this goal is accomplished through putting up a couple of posters or offering a school assembly once a year. To eliminate the burden of teaching another subject matter in an already crowded school day, character education should be woven into the common core curriculum. This can be done by finding teachable moments within other subject matter, i.e. describing the character traits a character showed in a book.

Intervene with misbehavior quickly, before it can grow into more serious acts of violence.[14] Schools that do not react to minor acts of misbehavior such as name-calling, put-downs and trash talk may be increasing the risk of more dangerous acts in the future. "As a matter of sound policy, proactive efforts that include a range of both disciplinary and non-punitive interventions are desirable."[15]

Focus on physical security through the use of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED). Schools are soft targets because of their openness to the public, but with a few inexpensive steps schools can make their school environment a harder target. A list of low-cost security measures for schools are listed on this page and in The National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities.[16] This can be accomplished with environmental control which includes access control, natural and formal surveillance, territoriality and target hardening. School security technologies include electronic access controls, surveillance systems, motion detection systems, visitor badging and metal detection. Environmental design concepts cover everything from entry roads and traffic management to visual pathways for school ingress and egress, parking lot configuration and lighting and many other topics.

Low-Cost Security Measures for School Facilities

- Using incident reporting data, locate trouble spots in the school and consider alternative solutions.
- Use signs, vegetation, fencing or other methods to clearly define school property.
- Trim shrubbery and trees and relocate other obstacles such as trash containers to eliminate hiding places and provide clear lines of sight throughout school grounds.
- Prevent access to windows and roofs by trimming trees, relocating objects near the building that can be used as climbing devices, and ensuring that down spouts, covered walkway supports, light posts and other building or site features are not scalable.
- Keep school grounds and buildings policed, and make immediate repairs to damage inside or outside the building.
- Routinely inspect exterior lighting for damage and bulb wear, and make immediate repairs.
- Clearly mark and separate visitor parking.
- Give each school building a distinctive marking to help emergency responders, new students, and visitors quickly find their way.
- Clearly mark the main entry to the school and post signs on other entries redirecting visitors to the main entry.
- Ensure that portable classrooms are adequately identified, lighted, and tied down, and that trailer hitches and tongues have been removed and access beneath them is restricted with fencing, siding, or other materials.
- Institute strict procedures for key control.
- Routinely inspect all windows accessible from the street for damage and faulty hardware, and make immediate repairs.
- Keep unoccupied rooms and spaces locked when not in use.
- Ensure that all classrooms, including portables, have two-way communication with the office.
- Provide back-up emergency lighting in stairs, hallways, and rooms without windows.

To see all of the Low Cost Measures visit http://www.eric.ed.gov/PDFS/ED539487.pdf

Findings and Considerations for Future Action

The following section highlights some of the major findings, recommendations and considerations for potential action steps that were provided to the Center for Safer Schools through the forums. The items encompass the full array of prevention, intervention, crisis response and recovery dimensions but are reported here based on the person or agency potentially responsible for them should they materialize. There are many different ways to conceive of school safety. Fundamentally, academics and practitioners agree that schools exist within an ecology. That is, there are multiple levels of a school and its environment and each of those levels should be considered when planning for safety. Federal agencies, state agencies, local school boards, local school administrators and staff, students, parents, volunteers and the surrounding communities are all components to be considered. Putting these complicated layers together and leveraging their resources takes a great deal of planning. Many of the findings presented below have been turned into concrete action steps by DPS and its partnering agencies (DPI, DHHS and DOJ). Considerations for future action were generated by the public (the primary intent of the forums), and in addition DPS staff members have added a research foundation to those recommendations to validate them through best practices.

Future action steps or recommendations are briefly captured in the table below, along with the entity responsible for the work as well as the conceptual model category where they may operate. Following the table, these action steps are described in more detail:

Action Step and/or Recommendation	Party Responsible	Category	Page
Create a State-Level Task Force on School Safety.	Gov. McCrory	Prevention/ Intervention/Crisis Response/Recovery	22
Require an Annual Report on the Status of School Safety in North Carolina.	Gov. McCrory	Prevention/ Intervention/Crisis Response/Recovery	23
Charge Cabinet and Council of State Officials to collaborate and combine the efforts of their agencies to provide school safety resources and initiatives in North Carolina.	Gov. McCrory	Prevention/ Intervention/Crisis Response/Recovery	23
Conduct an annual review of policy-making and legislative documents related to the area of school safety.	Gov. McCrory	Prevention/ Intervention/Crisis Response/Recovery	23
Promote and encourage volunteerism and community support in schools.	Gov. McCrory	Prevention/ Intervention/Crisis Response/Recovery	24

Action Step and/or Recommendation	Party Responsible	Category	Page
Provide additional resources for hiring student support services professionals, including school resource officers, school social workers, school nurses, school psychologists and school guidance counselors.	General Assembly	Prevention/ Intervention/Crisis Response/Recovery	25
Acknowledge the Governor's call for supporting school safety and the Center for Safer Schools.	General Assembly	Prevention/ Intervention/Crisis Response/Recovery	24
Allow local flexibility for school safety drills based on a school's unique vulnerabilities and require at least one lockdown drill.	General Assembly	Crisis Response	26
Require that schools have a safe school plan and group rehearsal that is updated at least every two years.	General Assembly	Prevention/ Intervention/Crisis Response/Recovery	26
Produce an Annual Report on School Safety in North Carolina.	N.C. Department of Public Safety(NCDPS): Center for Safer Schools	Prevention/ Intervention/Crisis Response/Recovery	27
Convene and support a state task force on school safety.	NCDPS: Center for Safer Schools	Prevention/ Intervention/Crisis Response/Recovery	27
Collaborate with the N.C. Justice Academy to update the SRO curriculum.	NCDPS: Center for Safer Schools	Prevention/ Intervention/Crisis Response	27
Conduct an Annual Census of School Resource Officers.	NCDPS: Center for Safer Schools	Prevention/ Intervention/Crisis Response	27
Host School Resource Officer, Juvenile Court Counselor and School Administrator forums.	NCDPS: Center for Safer Schools	Prevention/ Intervention	27
Continue to educate local schools and school systems regarding the harmful impacts of bullying; seek evidence-based solutions for bullying prevention.	NCDPS: Center for Safer Schools	Prevention/ Intervention	28

Action Step and/or Recommendation	Party Responsible	Category	Page
Help create a web-based resource center of funding sources available to schools for school safety initiatives.	NCDPS: Center for Safer Schools	Prevention/ Intervention/ Crisis Response/Recovery	29
Serve as a repository for best practices.	NCDPS: Center for Safer Schools	Prevention/ Intervention/Crisis Response/Recovery	29
Establish anonymous reporting systems for reporting school safety concerns for schools statewide.	NCDPS: Center for Safer Schools	Prevention/ Intervention	29
Encourage information sharing and the use of best practices to create safer schools.	NCDPS: Center for Safer Schools	Prevention/ Intervention/Crisis Response/Recovery	29
Encourage schools to put in place more effective alternatives to suspension.	NCDPS: Center for Safer Schools	Intervention	30
Provide information and technical assistance to schools and the general public.	NCDPS: Center for Safer Schools	Prevention/ Intervention/Crisis Response/Recovery	30
Develop a best practice guide on crisis mitigation and response.	N.C. Department of Public Safety (NCDPS): Emergency Management	Prevention/Crisis Response	31
Encourage school districts to participate in the All-Hazards Training.	NCDPS: Emergency Management	Crisis Response	31
Assist local school districts and local emergency management offices with web-based emergency planning and drills.	NCDPS: Emergency Management	Crisis Response	32
Encourage law enforcement officers to maintain high visibility around schools.	NCDPS: Law Enforcement Division	Prevention/ Intervention/crisis response	32
Empower local youth violence prevention planning bodies to integrate services through collaboration and to use mixed funding streams.	NCDPS: Juvenile Justice	Prevention/ Intervention	32

Action Step and/or Recommendation	Party Responsible	Category	Page
Work to expand training resources for court counselors and community program providers/staff in areas related to school safety. For court staff, develop specialized training modules on the recognition and reporting of risk behaviors and warning signs that could lead to school violence; actively engage court counselors in student support teams throughout the state.	NCDPS: Juvenile Justice	Prevention/ Intervention	32
Provide technical assistance on how to foster a positive social climate.	N.C. Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI)	Prevention	34
Assist school districts in increasing the physical security of their school buildings through the creation of a standardize school safety assessment tool and encouraging school districts to use the Safe Schools Facilities Planner.	NCDPI	Prevention/Crisis Response	34
Help school districts identify funding to make safety improvements.	NCDPI	Prevention/Crisis Response	33
Offer an online module for teachers on how best to collaborate with their SROs.	NCDPI	Prevention/Crisis Response/Recovery	35
Improve school bus safety.	NCDPI	Prevention/ Intervention	35
As a policy consideration, DHHS leadership strongly recommends and supports intervention at the earliest possible point where risk or problem behaviors are identified.	N.C. Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS)	Intervention	36
Facilitate the presence of more positive adults at every local school.	NCDHHS	Prevention	36

Action Step and/or Recommendation	Party Responsible	Category	Page
Grow public awareness of, and greater involvement of consumers and advocates in NC Families United and Youth M.O.V.E. chapters across the state (including the development of new chapters).	NCDHHS	Prevention	37
Work to involve more families and communities in the parent-centered education resources and activities provided by NC Parent Resource Center (www.ncparentresourcecenter.org).	NCDHHS	Prevention	37
Increase resources for Crisis Intervention Team training (CIT).	NCDHHS	Intervention	37
Pilot and expand use of tele-mental health and substance abuse services, especially in school based settings where feasible.	NCDHHS	Prevention/ Intervention	38
Develop and maintain additional resources to ensure access and training to Youth Mental Health First Aid (see http://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/cs/youth-mental-health-first-aid).	NCDHHS	Prevention/ Intervention	38
Help professionals and parents grow their awareness of the role of trauma in the psychological, physical and social growth of children.	NCDHHS	Prevention/ Intervention	39

Action Step and/or Recommendation	Party Responsible	Category	Page
Assist state and local mental health administrators, in partnership with educators, in learning and managing effective crisis response strategies, tools, and techniques.	NCDHHS	Prevention/Crisis Response	39
Foster broader training and implementation of System of Care throughout North Carolina.	NCDHHS	Prevention/ Intervention	40
Evaluate and potentially expand the School Based Child and Family Team Initiative.	NCDHHS	Prevention	40
Prioritize School Resource Officer training and provide classes in summer months so more officers can attend when school is out of session.	N.C. Department of Justice (NCDOJ)	Prevention/ Intervention/Crisis Response	40
Update crisis response techniques to reflect best practices.	NCDOJ	Crisis Response	40
Offer updated rapid deployment training through N.C. Justice Academy.	NCDOJ	Crisis Response	41
Institute training for educators and staff on warning signs of prescription drug abuse among students.	NCDOJ	Prevention	41

Action Step and/or Recommendation	Party Responsible	Category	Page
The N.C. Department of Commerce should consider working with the Center for Safer Schools and other entities to identify funding opportunities and programs available through federal, state or local entities that could be used to grow employment, school-to-work, entrepreneur, apprenticeship and other workforce development alternatives for teen-aged youth.	N.C. Department of Commerce (NCDOC)/ other Workforce Development Entities	Prevention/ Intervention	41
The Department of Commerce should consider working with the Center for Safer Schools, other Cabinet agencies and various business groups to help research other areas around the state and country where youth employment programs are in operation, determine how funding and sustainability were developed and see if they are transportable to North Carolina communities.	NCDOC/other Workforce Development Entities	Prevention/ Intervention	41
North Carolina workforce and business development officials are encouraged to leverage federal efforts from the departments of Labor, Education, Housing and Urban Development, Agriculture and others and to consider establishing a youth employment roundtable, task force, or similar entity to develop a strategic plan for increasing student and youth employment opportunities.	NCDOC/Other Workforce Development Entities	Prevention/ Intervention	42

Action Step and/or Recommendation	Party Responsible	Category	Page
Have a district-level safe school plan.	School Districts and Communities	Prevention/ Intervention/Crisis Response/Recovery	42
Develop and review interagency agreements with local law enforcement and emergency management.	School Districts and Communities	Prevention/ Intervention/Crisis Response	42
Seek opportunities for integrating support services.	School Districts and Communities	Prevention/ Intervention/Crisis Response/Recovery	43
Collaborate with juvenile justice and mental health agencies to create blended funding streams.	School Districts and Communities	Prevention/ Intervention	43
Invest in effective prevention programs.	School Districts and Communities	Prevention	43
Follow best practices when designing and retrofitting schools.	School Districts and Communities	Prevention/Crisis Response	43
Hire support service professionals already funded by the state budget and focus professionals' time on their specialty rather than ancillary roles.	School Districts and Communities	Prevention/ Intervention/Crisis Response/Recovery	43
Create effective alternatives to out of school suspension schools/programs.	School Districts and Communities	Prevention/ Intervention	44
Expand volunteer programs.	School Districts and Communities	Prevention	44
Have a safe school planning committee and develop a plan that includes prevention, intervention, crisis response and crisis recovery strategies.	Schools	Prevention/ Intervention/Crisis Response/Recovery	44
Increase the capacity of staff to intervene quickly when they notice early warning signs of potentially violent behavior.	Schools	Intervention	45

Action Step and/or Recommendation	Party Responsible	Category	Page
Ensure students and parents have access to 24-hour anonymous reporting systems for reporting school safety concerns.	Schools	Prevention/ Intervention	45
Empower students to be part of the solution.	Schools	Prevention/ Intervention	45
Have school resource officers address staff at the beginning of each school year regarding school safety concerns.	Schools	Prevention/ Intervention/Crisis Response	45
Implement school social climate initiatives, e.g. restorative/transformative justice, Positive Behavior Support or bullying prevention programs.	Schools	Prevention/ Intervention	45
Conduct annual surveys of the student body to assess school climate.	Schools	Prevention	46
Conduct vulnerability/ safety assessment of schools every year with partnering agencies (law enforcement and emergency management).	Schools	Prevention/Crisis Response	46
Utilize school support staff in appropriate ways that reflect their expertise.	Schools	Prevention/ Intervention/Crisis Response/Recovery	46
Seek out and grow family/ community engagement strategies.	Schools	Prevention/ Intervention	46
Conduct at least one lockdown drill annually.	Schools	Crisis Response	46
Look for ways to integrate supportive services that involve community partners.	Schools	Prevention/ Intervention	46

Action Step and/or Recommendation	Party Responsible	Category	Page
Parents should reach out to schools and other professionals to help increase parental knowledge and capacity to recognize and respond to student vulnerability, risk and the early warning signs of struggle.	Parents	Prevention	47
Parents should work with community resource providers, agencies and their schools to learn about services and programs that can prevent or reduce the risk of school problems including the risk of violence.	Parents	Prevention	48
Parents should prioritize conversations with their children about school safety on a continuing basis.	Parents	Prevention/ intervention	48
Parents and their employers should explore the possibilities of flexible work/job schedules so that parents may attend school-based activities and/ or volunteer in schools whenever possible.	Parents and their Employers	Prevention	48
Students must take ownership of their role in creating positive school climates by promptly reporting warning signs of violence.	Students	Prevention	49
Students should take the initiative to learn about the support services, programs and other resources within school settings so that when questions or circumstances arise, they know who may be of assistance in a responsive way.	Students	Prevention/ Intervention/Crisis Response/Recovery	49

Action Step and/or Recommendation	Party Responsible	Category	Page
Students should participate in programs and services designed to help them recognize problem behaviors, respond appropriately, and foster restorative and transformative practices within schools.	Students	Prevention/ Intervention	50

Each action step or recommendation from the table above is considered in more detail in the following sections of this report.

Governor McCrory

Based on the data and findings, it is asked that the Governor consider taking the following actions to make schools in North Carolina safer:

1. Create a State-Level Task Force on School Safety.

Relationships established among key agencies and other stakeholders who provide services related to school safety should be built upon and supported by the formation of a state-level task force on school safety. The purpose of the task force would be twofold: 1) to assist policymakers and the newly formed N.C. Center for Safer Schools ensure that they engage in coordinated state efforts on school safety that would trickle down to the community level; and 2) to ensure that all initiatives related to school safety are effective, efficient and evidence-based solutions. The board would include leadership from the state departments of Public Safety, Health and Human Services, Public Instruction and Justice; the N.C. General Assembly, and the N.C. State Board of Education. It should also include the following representatives from the local level: chief court counselor, sheriff, police chief, mental health provider, school psychologist, superintendent of schools, principal, teacher, parent and student. The N.C. Center for Safer Schools, housed in the Department of Public Safety, could provide staff support and expertise to the Board.

Press Conference, Apex Middle School March 19, 2013

One of the findings of the National Rifle Associations' (NRA) School Shield Report was that "there are numerous federal agencies and programs that provide valuable school safety resources; however there is a lack of coordination between the federal agencies resulting in gaps, duplication and inefficiencies." Moreover, "within each department there are multiple sub-agencies that are working (sometimes independently of each other) on school safety programs."[17] The same could be said about state agencies and programs that provide valuable school safety resources in North Carolina. A recently released report co-

authored by the American School Counselor Association, National Association of Elementary School Principals, National Association of School Psychologists, National Association of School Resource Officers, National Association of Secondary Principals, and School Social Work Association of America reported, "Efforts to improve school climate, safety, and learning are not separate endeavors. They must be designed, funded, and implemented as a comprehensive school-wide approach that facilitates interdisciplinary collaboration and builds on a multi-tiered system of reports."[18]

2. Require an Annual Report on the Status of School Safety in North Carolina.

The N.C. Center for Safer Schools should release an annual report on school safety in North Carolina that will provide information regarding the status of the state's efforts toward creating safer school environments. As part of the Annual Report, the Center will provide updated recommendations, including which efforts are going well and should be expanded and which require improvement or re-evaluation. The Annual Report will include summary data from, but not limited to, the following sources:

- parent and student surveys
- annual census and survey of school resource officers
- Teacher's Working Condition Survey
- Annual Report of School Crime and Violence
- Annual Report of Suspensions and Expulsions
- Youth Risk and Behavior Survey
- an analysis of school-based juvenile justice complaints, and
- Annual Report of Dropout Rates

The N.C. Center for Safer Schools will develop interactive web-based tools that parents and other concerned citizens can use to access information provided in the Annual Report. Accessible information would include statewide data related to the status of school safety as well as data from specific parts of the state and school systems.

3. Charge Cabinet and Council of State officials to collaborate and combine the efforts of their agencies to provide school safety resources and initiatives in North Carolina.

One of the major themes conveyed at the Safer Schools forums conducted around the state was that collaboration and coordination are essential components in successful community school safety efforts. When the local service providers saw their state counterparts collaborating during the Safer Schools forums, they were inspired and encouraged to discuss openly the challenges and benefits of pursuing school safety efforts in a coordinated and comprehensive manner. They spoke about the need for communication among parents, school administrators, support staff, teachers, law enforcement and mental health providers to share information about what is being done for a child and what services are being made available to them. With proper communication, schools or other agencies can deal with potential problems in the prevention stage, before they develop into larger concerns.

4. Conduct an annual review of policy-making and legislative documents related to the area of school safety.

The information gathered from communities across the state during the forums should help shape policy and legislative action required to maintain and improve school safety

in North Carolina. Some of the information gathered from communities that could require policy and/or legislative action might include improving physical safety and the level of security by upgrading school safety features and expanding or enhancing the presence of school resource officers (SROs) at schools, training for SROs, access to mental health services and programs designed to increase parent and student involvement in schools.

5. Promote and encourage volunteerism and community support in schools.

Input from the forums emphasized the importance of every child having a trusted, positive adult at school to talk with and confide in when they need advice or to express concern, especially when students do not have such an adult available at home. Secretary Aldona Wos of the Department of Health and Human Services said at one of the forums, "We heard a repeated theme from the students that they are longing for participation from adults… We shouldn't be bystanders because of policy. Kids' safety is our responsibility, and we have to encourage others to act." Teachers and school support staff have many responsibilities and time constraints already, so the addition of volunteers at the school could help fill this need.

The North Carolina Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service, located within the Office of the Governor, encourages community service and volunteerism as a means of problem solving across the state. It administers two federal programs that are involved with youth and their families in educational and community settings: AmeriCorps and Citizen Corps. AmeriCorps engages volunteers to meet educational and public safety or human service needs in public or nonprofit settings, while Citizen Corps provides volunteers to help make families, homes and communities better prepared for all kinds of disasters and emergencies. Having AmeriCorps volunteers within the schools could serve the purpose of providing more trusted and positive adult figures to offer emotional and educational support to students. Citizen Corps volunteers could help school children and their families through disasters and emergencies that could arise from weather, fire and school behavior incidents. Another way of providing support to students is through the N.C. Mentoring Partnership. In North Carolina, mentoring programs across the state are changing the lives of children and youth. According to the Partnership website, "many more thousands of young people could benefit from a positive relationship with a caring adult," and "as little as one hour a week makes a tremendous difference in the lives and futures of our next generation."

One way to promote and encourage volunteerism in North Carolina is through the Governor's Volunteer Service Award, which honors the true spirit of volunteerism by recognizing individuals, groups and businesses that make a significant contribution to their community. An award could be given to the top 20 volunteers in the state whose volunteerism in North Carolina schools most helps impact school safety.

General Assembly

Based on the data and findings, it is asked that the General Assembly consider taking the following actions to make schools in North Carolina safer:

1. Acknowledge the Governor's call for supporting school safety and the Center for Safer Schools.

During the Safer Schools forums and stakeholder meetings the public asked for the

Concord, N.C. April 25, 2013

new Center for Safer Schools to be a repository of best practices that they could turn to when they had questions regarding school safety issues. Currently, as one Cabarrus County SRO put it, "[Schools] feel kind of like we are writing our own book." As was recommended from the federal level by the National Rifle Associations' (NRA) School Shield Report, the state needs a coordinating body to ensure that school safety remains a top priority and can coordinate all the different efforts taking place in different departments. The NRA report recommended "Either through legislation or executive action, a lead agency should be designated to coordinate the federal programs and funding of local school safety efforts. The Department of Homeland Security should be designated as the lead, supported by the Department of Education and Department of Justice."[19] During the forums many speakers stated that they were heartened by multiple state agencies collaborating to create solutions. The Center will continue to convene interested stakeholders and collaborating partners to ensure the tasks laid out in this report are accomplished. In addition, the Center will be tasked with providing annual updates to the Governor, the Secretary of the Department of Public Safety and the public on the progress made towards completing the tasks laid out in this report. *Quote from Dr. Smith, Edenton/Chowan Schools Superintendent "The Center for Safer Schools should weed through all of the good and the 'feel good' information and inform us of effective and best practices."*

Edenton, N.C. April 9, 2013

2. Provide additional resources for hiring student support services professionals, including school resource officers, school social workers, school nurses, school psychologists and school guidance counselors.

Schools almost universally asked for more assistance in funding school support staff team members. School systems are currently allotted funds through DPI for one school resource officer per traditional high school. The amount that is allotted to each high school has not increased in the last decade. In fact, the amount decreased by 10 percent in 2009/2010 fiscal year. The last census of SROs conducted by the former Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention during the 2008 – 2009 school year showed that 849 school resource officer were employed in the state, and 40 percent of them were funded through state dollars, with nearly all the rest being funded through local county or city budgets, and 1 percent being funded through federal grants.[20] The North Carolina School Boards Association completed a survey earlier this year that found that during the 2012 – 2013 school year, 82.7 percent of high schools, 74.7 percent of middle schools and 3.6 percent of elementary schools had SRO coverage. On the same survey, at least seven school districts cited the need for more funding for school resource officers as their top need from the state.[21]

In addition, school districts asked for assistance in employing school psychologists, school social workers, school counselors and school nurses. This request was seen in surveys of school districts and was heard at the forums and stakeholders' meetings. According to the Department of Public Instruction:

- the state averages one school psychologist per every 2,000 students, which is far from the national standard of one per every 700 students;[22]
- the state averages one social worker for every 1,650 students, which is far from the nationally recommended standard of one for every 250 students;[23]
- the state averages one school counselor for every 375 students, which does not meet the nationally recommended standard of one for every 250 students;[24] and
- the state averages one school nurse for every 1,179 students, which does not meet the nationally recommended standard of one for every 750 students.[25]

Local stakeholders at forums understood that the state did not have the resources to meet these national standards but repeatedly requested assistance in making progress toward better ratios. Research shows that even without meeting the suggested standards, lowering the number of students per support professional is associated with better outcomes for students. Improved counselor-to-student ratios are associated with a myriad of better outcomes for students: in studies, attendance, graduation rates and measures of discipline and misbehavior were all better in areas with fewer students per counselor.[26] Improvement of this ratio was also associated with a decrease in teacher reports of fighting and drug use.[27] A study of North Carolina schools, moreover, found that children in districts with better nurse-to-student ratios received increased screening and follow-up for vision issues and improved care for potentially dangerous chronic illnesses like asthma and diabetes.[28] In addition, better nurse-to-student ratios heavily influenced the likelihood that a school site would have a trained first responder in case of injury: more than 70 percent of buildings in districts with better nurse ratios had an identified first responder, while fewer than 30 percent of buildings did in districts with worse ratios.[29] Improving the ratio of support personnel to students can measurably improve overall student functioning and school safety.

3. Allow local flexibility for school safety drills based on a school's unique vulnerabilities.

Current state law requires that a school must conduct 10 fire drills a year. To better prepare schools for other emergencies that they face in their local communities, the state statute should be amended to require school districts to substitute one of those fire drills for a lockdown drill/active shooter scenario, and the one other for another type of emergency drill. These other drills could include a second lockdown drill/active shooter scenario, tornado drill, nuclear plant/chemical spill drill or others based on a school's unique vulnerabilities.

4. Require that schools have a safe school plan that is updated at least every three years.

This requirement would ensure that every student in the state attends a school that has taken the necessary steps to address school safety. These plans should include the strategies schools use to provide whole school prevention efforts, targeted intervention efforts for at-risk youth, crisis response procedures for those incidents a school's vulnerability assessment shows they might face, and a crisis recovery plan. The plans should match local needs to resources, personnel and methods for effective local collaboration. Roles and responsibilities for all involved should be clearly documented and articulated, with memoranda of agreement in place to accompany the plans. In order to achieve this goal schools will need additional resources.

1. N.C. Center for Safer Schools

a) Produce an Annual Report on School Safety in North Carolina. The N.C. Center for Safer Schools will release a report on School Safety in North Carolina every year. The Report will summarize data from the following sources: parent and student surveys developed by the Center in cooperation with the University of North Carolina System, the annual census and survey of School Resource Officers (SROs), the Teachers' Working Conditions Survey, the Annual Report of School Crime & Violence, the Annual Report of Suspensions & Expulsions, the Youth Risk and Behavior Survey, an analysis of school-based juvenile justice complaints, and the Annual Report of Dropout Rates. This Report will help identify whether the state is creating safer school environments and will include updated recommendations on how further progress can be made. The Center will develop interactive web-based tools through which parents and other concerned citizen can access both statewide data and data from local schools.

b) Convene and support a state task force on school safety. The Center will staff the newly formed task force on school safety described on page 20. This task force will build on the partnerships developed by the departments of Public Safety, Health and Human Services, Public Instruction and Justice through the forums and past joint endeavors, and continue collaborating in the future. The task force will ensure a coordinated state effort on school safety moving forward and will work to ensure that all new initiatives are effective, evidence-based and an efficient use of taxpayer dollars.

Sylva, N.C. April 18, 2013

c) Collaborate with the N.C. Justice Academy to update the SRO curriculum. An SRO must act in multiple roles: law enforcement officer, law-related counselor and law-related educator.[30] The latter two roles are not included in ordinary law enforcement training. Accordingly, SROs must receive specialized training and professional development to fulfill all the roles of an SRO. In addition, during the forums, many public speakers raised concerns about over-criminalizing students for "normal adolescent behavior." For these reasons the Center will work with the North Carolina Justice Academy to enhance and update the SRO curriculum to reflect best practices in how officers can be a resource to schools in consideration of the different roles they typically fulfill.

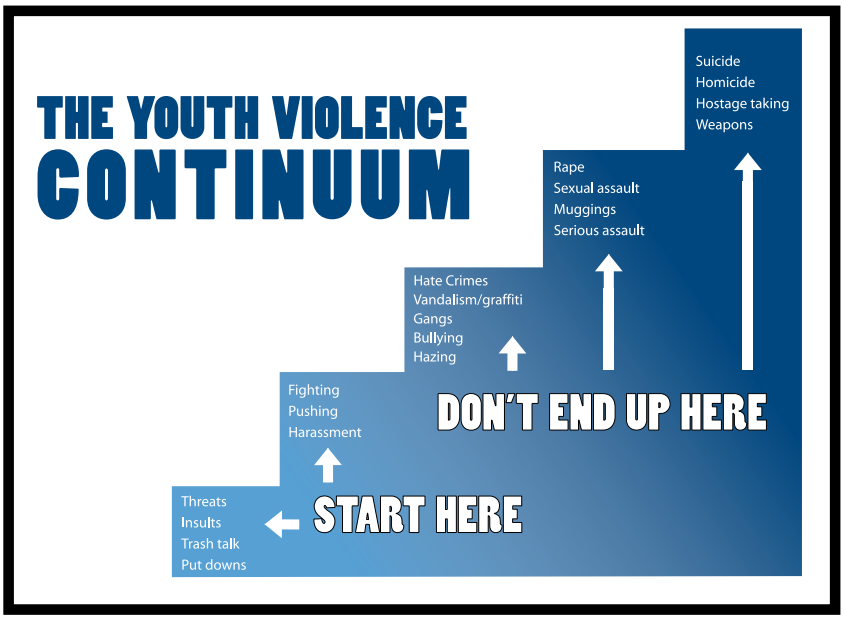
d) Conduct an Annual Census of SROs. The N.C. Center for Safer Schools will conduct an annual census of SROs and an annual survey of SROs to identify the number of SROs employed in the state, compensation for SROs, training SROs receive and the challenges SROs face.

e) Host SRO, Juvenile Court Counselor and school administrator forums. A number of members of the general public at the forums voiced their concerns about how SROs over-criminalize adolescent behaviors in schools. According to the N.C. Department of Public Safety's Division of Juvenile Justice 2011 Annual Report, 43 percent of all juvenile complaints filed in the state were school-based.[31] Because such a large percentage of complaints are being filed on school campuses, this is an area where better training SROs to appropriately make referrals will make a difference. According to DPS surveys, SROs are already referring students to other services besides juvenile court. "SROs indicated that they refer

students to other service agencies if additional assistance is needed. Some 94 percent responded that they make referrals to social services, 79 percent to public health agencies, 51 percent to legal aid and 45 percent to private service agencies."[32] To help achieve this goal, the N.C. Center for Safer Schools will host school resource officer, juvenile court counselor and school administrator forums to discuss what types of incidents warrant a juvenile complaint and which do not. These forums will also help educate all parties on the diversionary programs available in their communities. Research has shown that these diversionary programs are often more effective in changing student behavior and far less expensive than court involvement. A recent study by the Division of Juvenile Justice determined that the majority of juveniles who either have complaints closed at intake or are diverted to a plan/contract do not have further juvenile complaints. In a one-year cohort of first-time offending juveniles, 76 percent of them did not have another juvenile complaint made in the next two years.[33]

f) Continue to educate local schools and school systems regarding the harmful impacts of bullying; seek evidence-based solutions for bullying prevention. The 2008–2009 School Crime Supplement (National Center for Education Statistics and Bureau of Justice Statistics) indicates that, nationwide, 28 percent of students in grades 6–12 experienced bullying.[34] Bullying impacts victims in lifelong ways, including but not limited to: depression, unwillingness to attend school, poor or declining academic performance, impaired social functioning, truancy and/or dropping out of school, and potential aggression toward others. Youths that perpetrate persistent bullying have higher rates of juvenile delinquency and adult criminal justice system involvement. They are also more likely to have major interpersonal adjustment problems in adult life such as domestic violence and child maltreatment accusations.

The Center will continue to review evidence-based research, curricula and other tools on this subject. It will collaborate with other agencies to find efficient, effective ways to deliver prevention and intervention efforts in this critical area. One method for instructing audiences on this topic is to help them understand the youth violence continuum (see graphic below from Lassiter and Perry, 2013) and to strategically plan their resources around earlier stages of the



continuum. This tool helps prepare for earlier recognition of and intervention to prevent bullying and its behavioral/social precursors (e.g., teasing, gossiping, threats, etc.).

g) Help create a web-based resource center of funding sources available to schools for school safety initiatives. The Center will work with state and local partners to identify funding opportunities available at the local, state and federal levels to employ and better equip school resource officers and student support services staff such as counselors, psychologists, nurses and social workers to create safer school environments. The Center will also help schools identify funding opportunities for physical security improvements for schools and violence prevention and school climate enhancing programs. The Center will list these opportunities for funding on its website and email the opportunities to its listserv.

h) Serve as a repository for best practices. The Center will serve as a repository for best practices on how schools can effectively and efficiently safeguard their students and staff from manmade and natural disasters. Schools are looking for violence prevention programs, physical design improvements and technology that can make their schools safer. The Center will serve as a non-biased and independent voice on which programs and physical improvements are available and best for different types of schools.

i) Establish anonymous reporting systems to report school safety concerns for schools statewide. The Center will work to develop anonymous reporting mechanisms to include an app for smart phones for students, parents, school personnel and community members to report school safety concerns. This mechanism shall include multiple modes of reporting to enable full access to the attention needed when reports are submitted. The Center will work with students to make these reporting mechanisms teen and youth friendly. Furthermore, the Center will ensure that such apps and technologies are culturally responsive and afford multilingual/bilingual students and their parents the reporting access that they require.

According to the U.S. Secret Service's Implications for Prevention of School Attacks in the United States, "In most cases, other people knew about the attack before it took place. In over three-quarters of the incidents, at least one person had information that the attacker was thinking about or planning the school attack."[35] Giving students and community members the ability to anonymously report about concerns or suspicions of an incident increases the probability that school officials and law enforcement will be able to prevent an incident before it occurs.

j) Encourage information sharing and the use of best practices to create safer schools. The Center will partner with the departments of Public Instruction, Health and Human Services and Justice to host an annual statewide school safety conference where best practices can be shared, and where all interested stakeholders can meet and discuss what is or is not effective for school safety initiatives. During the forums, numerous SROs and school personnel stated that these conferences in the past were the most helpful and insightful trainings that they attended, and they requested that these conferences be reinstated. These conferences will be offered during the summer months to allow for greater attendance among SROs. In addition, the Center will host a roundtable discussion for school personnel who hold leadership positions on school safety to give them an opportunity to share best practices and areas of concern with each other and appropriate state agencies. The Durham Public Schools' Director of School Security suggested that hosting roundtable discussions with others who hold leadership positions in school safety would be an effective way for professionals working in the field to share ideas and to brainstorm solutions that might work statewide.

k) **Encourage schools to put in place more effective alternatives to out of school suspension.** The Department of Public Safety has previously produced a "Tool-Kit to Assist Communities and Schools in Establishing Alternative-to-Suspension Programs": http://www.ncdps.gov/Index2.cfm?a=000003,002476,002689,002706,002750.[36] The Center will work with the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) to update this guide and provide technical assistance to local education agencies on how they can implement effective alternative-to-suspension programs.

During the 2011-12 school year 134,522 different students were short-term suspended (one to 10 days) in North Carolina, with many receiving multiple suspensions, bringing the total to 258,197 short-term suspensions. Another 1,581 students received 1,609 long-term suspensions (11+ days). Students missed out on 790,000 school days as a result of out-of-school suspensions. One out of every seven North Carolina high school students receives at least one out-of-school short-term suspension each year, and each high school student who received a short-term suspension in 2011-12 averaged about two suspensions.[37] These numbers suggest that some schools or administrators are using this disciplinary technique for minor offenses when other disciplinary strategies or treatment services would be safer and more effective at curtailing the behavior.

"The School to Prison Pipeline describes local, state and federal education and public safety policies that operate to push students out of school and into the criminal justice system. This system disproportionately impacts youth of color and youth with disabilities." There is a clear correlation between suspensions and dropping out of school.[38] Students who have been suspended are three times more likely to drop out of school by the 10th grade than students who have never been suspended.

Suspension and expulsion are associated with many negative educational outcomes including: grade retention; poor academic performance; failing to graduate on time or dropping out; exacerbating behavior problems and/or anti-social behavior; preventing students from receiving needed treatment or assistance at school; providing students with more opportunities to socialize with peers who are negative influences; eliminating the possibility of school serving as a protective factor against delinquent conduct and violence; and breeding distrust and alienation, resulting in psychological damage and negative mental health outcomes for students.[39]

"Children who use illicit substances, commit crimes, disobey rules and threaten violence often are victims of abuse, depressed or mentally ill. As such, children most likely to be suspended or expelled are those most in need of adult supervision and professional help."[40] The impact of trauma in their lives is not recognized and often under-diagnosed. Too often suspension is seen as the intervention that a disorderly student needs, when in fact simply suspending a student may result in more problem behaviors and greater risk for reoffending than using evidence-based alternatives such as Teen Court, Saturday School, afterschool detention, counseling and mental health assessments and services.

l) Provide information and technical assistance to schools and the general public. The N.C. Center for Safer Schools will provide information and technical assistance to stakeholders involved in making safe schools safer and developing positive youth. The Center will provide information through presentations, meetings, mailings, phone, email responses and the Internet. The technical assistance provided will include workshops, trainings and forums, as well as efforts in the areas of program development, maintenance, research and evaluation.

The Center will provided training sessions or seminars on the following topics:

Prevention Topics

- Emerging Trends in School Safety and School Violence Prevention
- Identifying Risk and Building Resiliency in Youth
- Safe School Planning / Safe School Assessment / Site Assessment
- Bullying and Gang Prevention
- Conflict Management / Peer Mediation / Character Education / Citizenship
- Student / Parental Involvement
- Classroom Management
- School Resource Officer Roles / Best Practices

Intervention

- Alternatives to Out-of-School Suspension
- Early Warning Signs/Threat Assessment

Crisis Response

- Crisis Planning and Management/Critical Incident Response
- How to Practice your Plan (School Drills)

Recovery

- Recovery from Tragedy

2. Emergency Management

a) Develop a best practice guide on crisis mitigation and response. The N.C. Center for Safer Schools will work with the Emergency Management Division (EMD) to develop a best practices guide for working with schools to (1) mitigate the loss of life and property during crisis incidents, (2) plan and prepare for a crisis, and (3) exercise emergency plans on an annual basis. The EMD will partner with local emergency managers and other local disciplines as well as the State Emergency Response Team (SERT) to develop the best practice guide. The Center will distribute this guide to all schools, law enforcement agencies and local emergency management offices.

School Tornado Drill

b) Encourage school districts to participate in the "Multi –Hazard Emergency Planning for Schools" class, All-Hazards National Incident Management System (NIMS) Training (Independent Study IS100), as well as courses on emergency planning, first aid, and sheltering in place. The "Multi-Hazard Emergency Planning for Schools" class is designed for school administrators, principals and first responders. It addresses the potential hazards that all schools face—including natural hazards, technological hazards and human-caused hazards (intruders)—and how to develop and test a school emergency operations plan for these hazards. This course provides the student with a copy of the FEMA "Sample School Emergency Operations Plan" dated March 2011. The All-Hazards National Incident Management System (NIMS) training, independent study IS 100 "Basic Incident Command" and IS 235.b "Emergency Planning" can be found through the www.fema.gov training website. The Center for Safer Schools will work with the EMD to promote the All-Hazards NIMS Training for Schools and policymakers and the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) to consider the feasibility of requiring this training for all school districts.

c) Develop and host a web-based school emergency plan. The EMD, in collaboration with DPI, local agency representatives, the SERT and the Center for Safer Schools, will fund and develop a web-based school emergency plan that will be password-protected and housed in the servers in the data center at the State Emergency Operations Center. This plan will be updated, at a minimum, annually or as major changes occur. The EMD will assist local school districts and local emergency management offices in hosting emergency drills to test the emergency plan. The EMD, in collaboration with the Center for Safer Schools, will offer technical assistance to schools and local emergency management offices in hosting school emergency drills and in conducting the concluding debriefing sessions. The EMD will fund and work with other SERT agencies and local agency representatives to develop a web-based school emergency drill/exercise template that can be customized based on school location. The EMD, as available, will participate in scheduled school emergency drills/exercises. The agencies will also consider the feasibility of requiring this drill for all school districts on an annual basis.

3. Law Enforcement Division

a) Encourage law enforcement officers to maintain high visibility around schools. The Department of Public Safety (DPS) will continue to encourage DPS law enforcement officers to routinely stop at schools to complete paperwork, take lunch breaks or conduct any appropriate business. The presence of these officers on school campuses can serve as an effective deterrent to criminal behavior.

Catching Readers instead of Speeders

The State Highway Patrol in McDowell County has started a program where they come to schools and read with elementary school students who are interested in becoming law enforcement officers. This program helps to improve the law enforcement presence on elementary school campuses and sparks the imagination of students. While on campus, officers take the time to familiarize themselves with the school campus, so as to be able to increase their response efficient in emergency situations.

4. Juvenile Justice

a) Work to integrate local planning entities (e.g., Juvenile Crime Prevention Councils, System of Care Community Collaboratives, school-based advisory councils) to strategically plan youth violence prevention efforts and integrate services through collaboration and the use of mixed/blended funding streams. Each county should have one planning body, such as the Juvenile Crime Prevention Council (JCPC) or some other pre-existing entity, that develops effective programs to prevent youth violence and has the authority to blend funding sources to achieve the best outcomes for youth. This recommendation was repeated frequently at the forums. A number of other communities' reports issued in response to the Newtown incident make the same suggestion. For example in the report "A Framework for Safe and Successful Schools," endorsed by more than 30 associations with members who work on this issue every day, they recommend a model that "seeks to integrate all services for students and families by framing the necessary behavioral, mental health and social services within the context of school culture and learning. Integrated services lead to more sustainable and comprehensive school improvement, reduce duplicative efforts and redundancy, and require leadership by the principal and a commitment from the entire staff."[41]

b) Work to expand training resources for court counselors and community programs providers/staff in areas related to school safety. For court staff, develop specialized training modules on the recognition and reporting of risk behaviors and warning signs that could lead to school violence, and actively engage court counselors in student support teams throughout the state.

While Division of Juvenile Justice staff members have various levels of experience and expertise, community-based youth violence prevention and school safety are not specified areas of in-service or other training included in their basic curriculum. The Center for Safer Schools, along with the Division of Juvenile Justice, should work to develop and implement sustainable curricula for court counselors and community program providers and staff members specifically addressing the risk and protective factors associated with youth violence prevention. Center staff will work with Court Services and Community Programs leadership and field staff to develop effective training resources. These staff members routinely supervise students when youth are in school and away from school (home visits). Staff members have unique opportunities to witness youth behavior, and to gather other reports from parents and family members as to risk or warning signs. Knowing what to look for, how to engage and solicit information and how to effectively intervene (as well as report), can significantly extend the prevention and intervention elements of effective school safety practices.

5. Governor's Crime Commission

The Governor's Crime Commission will work with the Center for Safer Schools to fund the priorities laid out in this document through federal grants where feasible and within the guidelines of the federal funding sources. The Commission should consider adjusting its priorities to reflect the recommendations made in this report and the future recommendations of the School Safety Task Force. Justice Assistance Grants (e.g., "Byrne/JAG funding") among other sources can be applicable dollars for the efforts noted throughout this report.

Department of Public Instruction

1. Help school districts identify funding to make safety improvements.

Nationally, between the 1999–2000 and 2009–2010 school years, there was an increase in the percentage of public schools reporting the use of the following safety and security measures: controlled access to the building during school hours (from 75 to 92 percent); controlled access to school grounds during school hours (from 34 to 46 percent); faculty required to wear badges or picture IDs (from 25 to 63 percent); the use of one or more security cameras to monitor the school (from 19 to 61 percent); the provision of telephones in most classrooms (from 45 to 74 percent); and the requirement that students wear uniforms (from 12 to 19 percent).[42] In comparison, a North Carolina School Boards Association survey on school security found that schools in our state have not been able to make as many security improvements: only 34 school districts or 30 percent had surveillance cameras at all of their schools; only 49 school districts or 42 percent used buzz-in systems at their schools; and 107 school districts or 93 percent have parent emergency alert systems. On that same survey, school districts cited providing more funding for school safety improvements and giving schools more flexibility in how dollars are spent as the best thing the legislature could do to assist them in creating safer school campuses.[43]

The N.C. Center for Safer Schools will work with the Department of Public Instruction and the State Board of Education to identify funding opportunities available at the local, state and federal level to design and modify North Carolina's school buildings and to encourage the use of planning guidelines to allow for safer school environments for school children, teachers and administrators. These designs and modifications could be targeted grants including crime prevention through environmental control, school security technologies, health and life safety and school climate and order. Research clearly indicates a significant relationship between the design of school facilities and school climate and order.[44]

Dr. Ben Matthews, NCDPI, Edenton Forum

2. Provide technical assistance on how to foster a positive social climate.

Recent studies have linked the need for conducive school environments both with academic achievement and students feeling safe to come to schools. Many schools in North Carolina have invested in the Positive Behavior Intervention and Support Initiative (PBIS) to create a more positive social climate which the research has shown to be effective. However, PBIS is not the only program available that research has shown to achieve this goal. The Department of Public Instruction and the Center for Safer Schools should work with schools to identify the strategies that will work best for individual schools across the state. An excellent review of the research on this topic can be found at http://www.schoolclimate.org/climate/documents/policy/sc-brief-v3.pdf. The importance of establishing and maintaining positive school climates cannot be overstated.[45] The modules encompass K-12 and include resources and strategies to assist in dealing with behavioral issues in the classroom. Teachers and school staff should be encouraged to utilize these resources.

Studies of school experiences now include measures of "school climate," a caring community where students feel safe, secure [46] and "connected" to schools.[47] Safety and security derive from two conditions: an orderly, predictable environment where school staff provide consistent, reliable supervision and discipline and a school climate where students feel connected to the school and supported by their teachers and other school staff. A balance of structure and support is essential and requires an organized, school-wide approach that is understood and practiced by all school personnel. The N.C. Department of Public Instruction has developed two online professional development modules to assist teachers and school staff: Understanding Student Behavior in the Classroom, and Understanding Young Student Behavior in the Classroom.

The North Carolina Positive Behavior Intervention and Support Initiative is a prevention and early intervention strategy supported by the Exceptional Children's Division of the N.C. Department of Public Instruction.

Vision: All schools in North Carolina will implement Positive Behavior Intervention and Support as an effective and proactive process for improving social competence and academic achievement for all students.

Mission: Provide leadership, professional development, resources, and ongoing support for schools to successfully implement Positive Behavior Intervention and Support.

Action: The North Carolina Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS) sites are working to integrate their Safe School Plans, Character Education efforts and strategies, and discipline efforts in order to make schools caring and safe communities for learning.

3. Assist school districts in increasing the physical security of their school buildings through the creation of a standardized school safety assessment tool and encouraging school districts to use the Safe Schools Facilities Planner.

The Department of Public Instruction, in cooperation with the Center for Safer Schools, the School Boards' Association and the State Fire Marshall's Office, will update the Safe, Orderly and Caring site assessment tool to reflect best practices identified through Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED). This tool will provide schools with a standardized tool to conduct vulnerability and safety assessments on their school campuses.

The Center for Safer Schools can draw upon the tools created by the National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities and the tools created by a number of other state school safety centers to update our state's school safety assessment tool. These include but are not limited to:

NCEF Safe School Facilities Checklist
http://www.mass.gov/anf/docs/dcam/mafma/manuals/safe-school-facility-checklist.pdf

The Kentucky Center for School Safety: Safe School Assessments Tool
http://www.kycss.org/ssaprocess.php

U.S. Department of Education -A Guide to School Vulnerability Assessment.
http://rems.ed.gov/docs/VA_Report_2008.pdf

Colorado School Safety Resource Center (CSSRC)
http://www.colorado.gov/cs/Satellite/CDPS-SafeSchools/CBON/1251621089752

Washington State's School Safety Center
http://www.k12.wa.us/safetycenter/Planning/Manual.aspx

These updates to the Safe, Orderly, and Caring site assessment tool would include using the standards found in CPTED, which is built on three simple concepts: natural surveillance, natural access control and territoriality.[48]

4. Offer an online module for teachers on how best to collaborate with their SROs.

This module will help school personnel to develop an awareness of the role and effective utilization of SROs in order to create a caring and safe educational environment that benefits learning and community. The Center for Safer Schools can serve as a convener and co-developer of these kinds of tools in partnership with the departments of Public Instruction and Justice/ Justice Academy, the N.C. Association of School Resource Officers, and others.

5. Improve school bus safety.

The N.C. Center for Safer Schools will work with the Department of Public Instruction and the State Board of Education to identify funding opportunities at the local, state and federal level to improve safety for North Carolina school children riding school buses. Some of these safety measures could include: surveillance cameras both on the interior and exterior of the buses, communication devices such as cell phones and 2-way radios to be used by adults, and safety monitors/assistants on the buses.

Department of Health and Human Services

The N.C. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) is one of the largest state agencies in North Carolina. As the agency responsible for the health, safety and well-being of all North Carolinians across the lifespan, it interfaces in multiple ways with children and youth. Everything from early childhood education, infant and child/youth health services via Medicaid and Health Choice, child welfare, mental health, substance abuse, etc. is within DHHS's purview. Given the vast responsibilities of DHHS, the following recommendations are focused on the continuum of services from early childhood through the school years. DHHS has a central role in helping to collaboratively design and disseminate resources in the four domains captured in this report: Prevention, Intervention, Crisis Response and Recovery. DHHS, along with community stakeholders across North Carolina, strongly supports a much more holistic perspective when preventing or intervening with children in school settings. This perspective integrates physical health with emotional/behavioral health and substance abuse care, in addition to attending to the developmental needs of young persons in integrated and specialty settings, where services are efficiently and effectively provided.

1. **As a policy consideration, DHHS leadership strongly recommends and supports intervention at the earliest possible point where risk or problem behaviors are identified.**

Press Conference, Apex Middle School March 19, 2013

Effective and early identification of problem behaviors can lead to more successful and long-lasting results when dealing with students and their families. To that end, DHHS provides effective, efficient delivery of early childhood education and support programming. DHHS, through the Division of Child Development and Early Education, as well as the N.C. Partnership for Children (Smart Start and local partnerships), support high quality early childhood initiatives because evidence shows that the road to academic and life success begins at birth. High quality early education experiences result in better school preparation, greater success in school and in turn, lower involvement in crime, better overall health and increased workforce success and production as children age and mature. Children who arrive at school healthy and ready to learn help build safe and productive schools and a safe and productive North Carolina, which is a benefit to them and to everyone around them. Studies have repeatedly shown that high quality care and time spent in nurturing environments in a child's first years lead to greater future success. "Research on the developing brain has identified a set of skills that are essential for school achievement, workforce productivity and health. Scientists refer to these capacities as executive function and self-regulation—a set of skills that enable us to hold onto and work with information, focus thinking, filter distractions, plan ahead and adjust to changing circumstances. Children aren't born with these skills—they are born with the potential to develop them."[49]

2. **Feedback from the forums across North Carolina, as well as from DHHS staff and leadership, focused on the need to have many more positive adults included in the lives of school children at every local school.**

Positive adult engagement, through mentoring, tutoring or simply participating in school activities, creates a greater nurturing environment for all children, but especially those

missing key adults in their lives. Significant levels of positive adult engagement can help instill resiliency in children and youth; it can also provide needed supports when higher degrees of risk are observed, or when crises occur. One example of this is the WATCH D.O.G.S. program managed by the National Center for Fathering referenced on page 9 in this report (www.fathers.com). Also an important reference example, the Fathers Involvement Research Alliance (www.fira.ca) hosts many presentations, reports, studies and links demonstrating the positive impacts that consistently and positively involved fathers have on child and youth outcomes. A compendium research report from 2007 may be found here: http://www.fira.ca/cms/documents/29/Effects_of_Father_Involvement.pdf.

3. Grow public awareness of, and greater involvement of consumers and advocates in NC Families United and Youth M.O.V.E. chapters across the state (including the development of new chapters).

Families United is supported by DHHS and other resources as a family support and advocacy organization that helps link families to services in their home communities that include mental health, physical health, social services, and educational needs. See www.ncfamiliesunited.org. Youth M.O.V.E., supported through Families United, is a nationally acclaimed and recognized youth advocacy group dedicated to giving a voice to and improving the lives of youth involved in mental health, substance abuse, juvenile justice and child welfare systems (http://www.ncfamiliesunited.org/m-o-v-e/). DHHS will work to increase consumer and citizen awareness of this resource so that families and youth have supportive networks to assist in the recognition of and management of issues related to mental illness, substance abuse and developmental disabilities.

4. Work to involve more families and communities in the parent-centered education resources and activities provided by N.C. Parent Resource Center (www.ncparentresourcecenter.org).

This resource focuses on the prevention of child and youth substance abuse through education and empowerment approaches targeting parents and caregivers. Through the managed care entities and other system collaborations, the department will help parents locate the resources needed for effective parenting strategies and interventions. Seen as intervention on the continuum, DHHS hopes to engage and educate parents concerning parenting practices, how to seek and maintain support, and what to look for in terms of risk, etc. are the goals for this action step.

5. Increase resources for Crisis Intervention Team training (CIT).

CIT is a police-based, pre-booking jail diversion approach that provides law enforcement (including school resource officers) and other first responders the training and tools needed to understand mental health and substance abuse crises and symptoms, as well as helping them make decisions that get youth needed services in lieu of incarceration (see http://www.ncdhhs.gov/mhddsas/services/crisisservices/index.htm). CIT is spreading across the state through the Local Management Entities-Managed Care Organizations ("LME-MCOs") through which North Carolina's mental health system is administered locally, in partnership with various local entities including local law enforcement, community colleges, county commissioners, advocacy organizations and similar groups. To effectively expand CIT, DHHS will continue to educate police chiefs, sheriffs, LME-MCOs and other local entities as to the benefits of CIT and how various sites are identifying resources for the training and materials, as well as provide technical assistance regarding best practices for implementing CIT programs.

6. **Pilot and expand use of tele-mental health and substance abuse services, especially in school based settings where feasible.**

Tele-health services (the use of videoconferencing and web/Internet technology that allow service providers to interact with consumers in other locations) have been growing, particularly in some of the more rural areas around the country. This technology allows for psychiatry, psychology, social work and other clinical services to extend to new locations and serve new consumers without the requirements of extended travel or physical offices. It also allows locations to access professional services that would not normally be available due to geographic and other constraints. Services such as medications, further examinations, etc. are coordinated with local mental health and substance abuse professionals and family members.

7. **Work with local communities to create innovative strategies for integrating behavioral health and substance abuse services on school campuses or nearby.**

Given DHHS's support for holistic care, and feedback from each community forum and key stakeholder sessions strongly supporting this recommendation, integration of these services appears to be a high priority for schools and school districts. Several sites, including schools in Carteret and Jackson counties (see sidebar re: Jackson Psychological Services), have unique, innovative arrangements with local providers to bring resources onto school campuses that allow for consulting, assessment, counseling, crisis intervention and recovery, evaluation and other related student behavioral health services. Schools consistently report a lack of qualified student support team members (psychologists, social workers, guidance counselors and others) and see the need for more immediately available behavioral health interventions as a very high priority. Other helpful resources include articles by P. Ambruster, The Administration of School Based Health Clinics, http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/11793571 [50]; and Atkins, Hoagwood, Kutash, and Seidman, 2010, Toward the Integration of Education and Mental Health in Schools (see http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2874625/).[51]

8. **Develop and maintain resources to ensure access to training in Youth Mental Health First Aid (see http://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/cs/youth-mental-health-first-aid).**

This training is for any adult or older adolescent that has regular interactions with children and youth, and is designed to help trainees recognize risk

In Jackson County, a private provider designed their system and recruited personnel specifically to support schools and their behavioral health needs. After nine years, the efforts have been so successful that the group has expanded into nearby Haywood and Macon counties. The basic premise is that in partnership with the school system, Jackson Psychological Services hires and stations psychological services staff (counselors, psychologists) on school campuses. The schools provide in-kind office space and other supports. The support of the superintendent, principal and other staff members is critical. The model also requires an excellent relationship with the local managed care entity (state behavioral health management agency). Core services include basic assessments, counseling, testing, medication management, family and group therapies, substance abuse interventions, day treatment, crisis intervention and recovery, critical incident debriefing, staff development for teachers and administrators, etc. Jackson Psychological Services relies on Medicaid and other state funding in addition to any funds available through private dollars, donated or in-kind resources. The school systems are extremely positive about the model, and see the partnership as critical to the effectiveness of their overall school climates and safety programs.

What is unique about this model is that it is community developed and planned, and relies on a thriving partnership with schools and the local behavioral health community, as well as excellent support from the managed care entity. This is a model that can be replicated around the state without a great deal of additional public dollars.

or warning signs associated with various mental health or substance abuse related crises. It also teaches helpful strategies to effectively respond to these warning signs. Youth Mental Health First Aid is taught by certified trainers in local communities. Fees are associated with the training, and the recommendation includes a call for the Center for Safer Schools, Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services, and others to work towards seeking grants or other funding to help support training for educators, parents and volunteers. Through the local System of Care coordinators and other outreach activities involving the Local Management Entities-Managed Care Organizations(LME-MCOs) and their network partners, DHHS will work to expand knowledge about this resource.

9. Help professionals and parents grow their awareness of the role of trauma in the psychological, physical and social growth of children.

Forum and key stakeholder feedback, much from behavioral health providers and their colleagues in various locations, emphasized the negative impact that trauma has on childhood learning as well as the need for teachers and school administrators to have knowledge on this topic. Experts and resources such as those offered through the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) (see http://www.nctsn.org/) can train clinicians and student support teams in the importance of recognizing the wide impacts that trauma have on children. The NCTSN has a highly effective curriculum for school personnel (Psychological First Aid, see http://www.nctsn.org/content/psychological-first-aid) to help them recognize, prevent and/or intervene for effective crisis management and recovery when students and families are affected by potential or real trauma. **Related to child and youth trauma, bullying and cyber-bullying often result in very poor outcomes for victims, including potential violence and sexual violence. Stakeholder recommendations in these areas included much more training on the impacts of bullying, cyber-bullying and the impacts of date/social/sexual violence on students.** One example of a resource in this area may be found here: http://www.svri.org/MentalHealthResponse.pdf (Sexual Violence Research Initiative – Briefing Paper: Mental Health Responses for Victims of Sexual Violence and Rape in Resource-Poor Settings). Bullying and cyber-bullying have been referenced in other sections of this report and more specific references can be found under recommendation (f) for the Center for Safer Schools.

10. Assist state and local mental health administrators, in partnership with educators, in learning and managing effective crisis response strategies, tools and techniques.

Again, at multiple forum locations, both educators and behavioral health professionals emphasized the need for more training on the management of crises. DHHS staff and allies are working on updating and disseminating a toolkit that helps identify and organize resources for responding to and recovering from a crisis. The NC-specific toolkit is being produced based on *Responding to a High-Profile Tragic Incident Involving a Person with a Serious Mental Illness: A Toolkit for State Mental Health Commissioners* *http://www.nasmhpd.org/docs/publications/docs/2010/ViolenceToolkit_Bkmk.pdf*. DHHS, through its state Medicaid plan and other resources, funds Mobile Crisis Services, Intensive In-Home and other family and community-based services. Helping school systems, counselors, school psychologists and others know the referral and treatment options available through local Managed Care Organizations and their providers will help with intervention and crisis response as well as recovery capabilities. DHHS will work with the Center for Safer Schools to determine the most effective strategies to help school systems and LME-MCOs best collaborate around awareness of mental health and crisis intervention resources available within each local community.

11. Foster broader training and implementation of System of Care throughout North Carolina.

Children with serious emotional disturbances and substance use problems face many challenges—at home, in school, in social situations and in the community. Therefore, they need coordinated services and supports from a variety of child-serving agencies as well as natural supports in their home communities. **Systems of Care** (SOC) are coordinated networks of community services organized to meet these challenges. SOC Coordinators are in each Local Management Entity-Managed Care Organization (LME-MCO) to work with partner agencies to provide services and supports. The SOC model is not a program; it is a philosophy of how care should be delivered. This approach recognizes the importance of family, school and community and promotes each child's full learning and other potential by addressing physical, emotional, intellectual, cultural and social needs. By ensuring that teachers, student support personnel, administrators, parents/caregivers, advocates and providers understand the important concepts of SOC, services are coordinated most effectively: based on child and family strengths as well as individualized service planning (see: http://www.ncdhhs.gov/mhddsas/services/serviceschildfamily/index.htm).

12. Evaluate and potentially expand the School-Based Child and Family Team Initiative.

This initiative, begun by the N.C. General Assembly in 2005 and now found in 21 school districts and 86 schools, embodies many principles of the foregoing recommendations. The initiative endeavors to build strong school-based child and family teams that integrate student support services, health services and other psychological and educational supports in a holistic approach using family and community strengths. The initiative is a blended funding effort, with coordinator funds channeled through DHHS, program funds through DPI and other supports coming through the DHHS divisions of Public Health, Social Services, Mental Health/Developmental Disabilities/Substance Abuse Services, and the N.C. Department of Public Safety-Division of Juvenile Justice, among others.

Department of Justice

1. Prioritize school resource officer training and provide classes in summer months so more officers can attend when school is out of session.

Consistently, participants at the forums reported that SROs did not have enough training opportunities and that a majority of the training was offered during the school year, when SROs cannot attend. In response to these concerns, by 2014, the N.C. Justice Academy should offer more SRO training that is not scheduled during the traditional school calendar. Course offerings should include Rapid Deployment Instructor Training, Solo Active Shooter, Juvenile Law and School Security, and Vulnerability Assessment.

2. Update crisis response techniques to reflect best practices.

The Center for Safer Schools will work with the Emergency Management Division of DPS, the Department of Justice State Bureau of Investigation (SBI), and the N.C. Justice Academy to update crisis response techniques for schools. This update will include:

- Incorporating technology, where feasible, to create a virtual black box that provides first responders with vital information they need for every school in the state, to include

schematics, blueprints, locations of emergency shut-off valves, aerial photographs of the school, evacuation points, safe rally points, contact numbers, school rosters, etc.

- Updating and distributing training DVDs and guidebooks that demonstrate how educators, staff, law enforcement and emergency personnel should react in an emergency. The video guide "A Critical Incident: What to Do in the First 20 Minutes" should be made available through secure download to higher education facilities for use in teacher preparation curriculums.

3. Offer rapid deployment training through N.C. Justice Academy.

The N.C. Justice Academy will continue to offer rapid deployment training to reflect current best practices and continue to offer a specialized course for school resource officers on single responder rapid deployment.

4. Institute training for educators and staff on warning signs of prescription drug abuse among students.

Drug poisoning has replaced car wrecks as the leading cause of accidental death in the United States. Prescription drug abuse is the reason. Prescription drug trading and selling, including prescriptions for attention disorder medications, can threaten students' health and safety.

Department of Commerce/Other Workforce Development Entities

Across North Carolina, communities are hungry for positive youth activities to support young people. Extracurricular and positive youth development programs offer opportunities for youths under economic or other stresses. In many of the community forums and key stakeholder groups, participants **requested that the Center for Safer Schools, along with various Cabinet and Council of State agencies, work collaboratively toward generating more employment opportunities for older students.** To that end, the following considerations were recommended for future work:

1. The N.C. Department of Commerce should consider working with the Center for Safer Schools and other entities to identify funding opportunities and programs available through federal, state or local entities that could be used to grow employment, school-to-work, entrepreneur, apprenticeship and other workforce development alternatives for teen-aged youth in the appropriate age-specific

Federal initiatives such as Job Corps, Workforce Investment Act (WIA) funding and WIA discretionary grants (see http://www.doleta.gov/youth_services/) endeavor to develop resources for youth. Funds appear to be limited, and local Workforce Development Boards often lack sufficient dollars for more diverse and robust programming.

2. The Department of Commerce should consider working with the Center for Safer Schools, other Cabinet agencies and various business groups (e.g., the N.C. Chamber, N.C. Association of County Commissioners, National Association of County Commissioners, Golden Leaf Foundation) to help research other areas around the state and country where youth employment programs are in operation,

determine how funding and sustainability were developed, and see if they are transportable to North Carolina communities.

Some locales find ways, through their chambers of commerce, civic clubs and other alliances to find or fund apprenticeship or even sustainable youth employment programs. Often, employment programs are supported by mayors, city or town councils or other more localized municipal bodies (ex., the San Francisco Mayor's youth employment initiative http://www.sfkids.org/Subcategory.aspx?subcat=288). Other state-level initiatives (see Massachusetts, http://www.massresources.org/youthworks2.html) afford a statewide strategy for lower income students and older youth.

3. **North Carolina workforce and business development officials are encouraged to leverage federal efforts from the departments of Labor, Education, Housing and Urban Development, Agriculture and others and to consider establishing a youth employment roundtable, task force or similar entity to develop a strategic plan for increasing student and youth employment opportunities.**

There should be a strong educational and career-technical education component of the strategic plan with a strong career/technical education component designed for collaboration among the N.C. General Assembly, Department of Public Instruction, the state's charter and private schools and others, with the goal of building an effective set of programs and funding options to support youth employment initiatives. A practical goal would be to link the statewide strategic plan for youth employment with efforts occurring in local education agencies to ensure a good fit between state planning and actual local needs and resources.

School Districts and Communities

1. **Have an updated and comprehensive district-level safe school plan.**

These plans should include the strategies the schools will utilize to provide whole school prevention efforts, targeted interventions for at-risk youth, crisis response procedures for those incidents a school's vulnerability assessment shows they might face, and a crisis recovery plan. The Center for Safer Schools will work with school districts in need of assistance in developing their safe school plans.

2. **Develop and review interagency agreements with local law enforcement and emergency management.**

Durham, N.C. April 23, 2013

School districts should have interagency agreements that define the role SROs will perform in schools and how emergency management officials will assist in crisis planning and drilling. "SROs have a unique position in which they are 'called upon to perform many duties not traditional to the law-enforcement function, such as instructing students, serving as mentors and assisting administrators in maintaining decorum and enforcing school board policy and rules.'" Community leaders need to better define the role of SROs. As was recommended in the National Rifle Association's School Shield Task Force report,

"Each school that employs an SRO should have a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), or an 'interagency agreement,' between the appropriate law-enforcement agency and the school district."[52] This contract should define the duties and responsibilities of the SRO, as well as the applicable laws, rules and regulations.
The objective of the SRO is not to increase juvenile arrests within a school, but to provide security and to support the normal disciplinary policies of a school consistent with the MOU. Sample memorandums of understanding/agreements can be found on the Center for Safer Schools' website at https://www.ncdps.gov/div/JJ/sro_agreement.pdf.

3. Seek opportunities for integrated support services (see Department of Health and Human Services recommendations).

School districts should explore the possibility of co-locating services such as mental health, juvenile justice and law enforcement on school campus where possible. During the listening tour we saw a number of examples of law enforcement in the form of SROs stationed on school campuses, as well as mental health providers being housed on school campuses.

In those districts where mental health services were located on school campuses, both the school districts and the mental health providers saw a number of mutual benefits. Mental health providers received free office space and some basic supplies while schools received pro bono services from the mental health providers. In those counties where this was occurring, the schools were thrilled with the improved access to services that students were receiving from mental health providers.

4. Collaborate with juvenile justice and mental health to create blended funding streams.

School districts should actively participate with the Juvenile Crime Prevention Councils (JCPCs) and other planning bodies to help make collaborative decisions about how best to resource the needs of at-risk children in their communities. Communities should consider blended funding when working with youth because often those youth are involved with multiple systems: juvenile justice, child protective services, mental health and the education system.

5. Prioritize funding by utilizing effective prevention programs.

Many prevention programs can be both cost-efficient and effective. Schools and school districts can access a list of these programs through the Office of Justice Programs at www.crimesolutions.gov and the Institute for Education Sciences through the What Works Clearinghouse at www.whatworks.ed.gov. Both sites list evidence-based, best practice programs or interventions that address bullying, anti-social behavior and juvenile violence.[53]

6. Follow best practices when designing and retrofitting schools.

The "Safe Schools Facilities Planner," published in January 2013 by the Department of Public Instruction Division of School Support-School Planning, provides planning guidelines for new construction and modifications to existing facilities. School districts should use the best practices described in this guide when planning new construction or when they consider security improvements. The guide can be found at http://www.schoolclearinghouse.org/.

7. Hire support service professionals already funded by the state budget and focus professionals' time on their specialty rather than ancillary roles.

A number of school districts choose not to employ school psychologists and school social workers even though they are given state resources to do so. These positions are essential to helping schools address school safety concerns. Moreover, too often school counselors, school social workers, school nurses and school psychologists are pulled away from their assigned roles to complete tasks that are far outside their scope of duties. If schools are going to be able to address at-risk behaviors early and prevent tragic events, these professionals must be focused on their essential tasks.

8. Create effective alternative schools/programs.

The Department of Public Safety has posted a guide for schools to use to create effective alternative placement settings at the following link https://www.ncdps.gov/Index2.cfm?a=000003,002476,002689,002706,002750. During the 2011-12 school year, 134,522 students were short-term suspended (one to 10 days) in North Carolina resulting in a total 258,197 short-term suspensions and another 1,609 long-term suspensions (11+ days) were given to 1,581 students. This resulted in students missing out on 790,000 school days as a result of out-of-school suspensions. One out of every seven North Carolina high school students receives at least one out-of-school short-term suspension each year, and high school students who received short-term suspensions in 2011-12 averaged about two suspensions each.[54] Although school suspension may be an effective safety tool for removing a threat from a school environment, these numbers suggest that this disciplinary technique is being used for more minor offenses and that other disciplinary strategies or treatment services would be better suited to address school discipline problems.

"Children who use illicit substances, commit crimes, disobey rules, and threaten violence often are victims of abuse, are depressed, or are mentally ill. As such, children most likely to be suspended or expelled are those most in need of adult supervision and professional help."[55] Too often suspension is seen as the intervention these disorderly youth need, when in fact simply suspending a child may result in more problem behaviors and greater risk for reoffending than offering effective evidence-based alternatives such as Teen Court, Saturday School, afterschool detention, counseling, mental health assessments and services, and parental consultation.

9. Expand volunteer programs.

Parents and community members often want to give back to their local schools but are unaware of ways they can do so. Schools should reach out to volunteer groups and community youth-serving agencies and find out how they can contribute to the school. This can be one of the most cost beneficial, effective strategies overall. Schools often lack the personnel to manage complex volunteer programs beyond Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) and similar efforts. However, investments in high quality volunteer efforts can dramatically improve school climates, parent engagement and extracurricular supports.

Schools

1. Have a safe school planning committee and develop a plan that includes prevention, intervention, crisis response and crisis recovery strategies.

Work with each school district to develop a plan based on the foundation laid in the district-wide plan that accounts for your school's unique characteristics and vulnerabilities.

2. Increase the capacity of staff to intervene quickly when they notice early warning signs of potentially violent behavior.

Many teachers lack the skills to recognize early and/or imminent warning signs of potentially violent behavior. This lack of knowledge can cause school staff members to feel intimidated and unable to act when faced with a potentially violent student. Schools should provide the school staff with training and support regarding proper interventions and responses to warning signs. Interventions must be monitored by professionals who are competent in that area.[56] [57] Schools should simplify the referral process to get students help quickly, and schools should not put students who are displaying imminent warnings signs on waiting lists for services.[58]

3. Ensure students and parents have access to 24-hour anonymous reporting systems.

The Center for Safer Schools plans to establish a statewide system for students to report school safety concerns. Whether or not a school chooses to use the statewide system or another locally run system does not matter, as long as it is well publicized and tips are handled in an expedited manner. These reporting systems should include smartphone apps, web-reporting features and should be able to receive multilingual/bilingual calls or reports.

4. Empower students to be part of the solution.

Morehead City, N.C. April 10, 2013

Students who help develop solutions for making their school a safer place buy into those solutions and feel more connected to their school. Too often peer pressure is talked about as a negative influence on students, but by involving students in the problem-solving process, peer pressure can actually be a positive force, reinforcing the changes necessary to make a school a safer place. Some empowerment efforts could include placement of students on school safety task forces, mentoring and peer counseling programs, career exploration in public safety arenas, promotion of anti-bullying and positive mental health/social justice campaigns, and increasing student involvement with local Juvenile Crime Prevention Councils.

5. Have school resource officers address staff at the beginning of each school year regarding school safety concerns.

The principal and the SRO should meet at the beginning of each school year to discuss how they can best share information and interact with each other. During that discussion, they should identify mutual concerns and develop a plan to present solutions to those concerns to the school staff. Once these concerns are mutually agreed upon, the SRO should address the school staff about the role they can play in creating safer schools as well as the role the SRO will be performing at the school. This is a best practice that will lead to all staff understanding the role of the school resource officer.

6. Implement school social climate initiatives, e.g. restorative/transformative justice, Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS) or bullying prevention programs.

Many schools begin implementation of these programs but do not allow them enough time to be fully implemented before they have moved on to another program or drop the

effort completely. For example, a recent report released by the Department of Public Instruction on Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS) shows "only 39 percent of participating schools met implementing criteria."[59] Schools should choose an effort such as PBIS and stick with it for a long enough time to see if it is going to cause social change on their school campus. The research suggests that fully implementing a program in a school that addresses school climate takes up to three years to start showing maximum results.

7. Conduct annual surveys of the student body to assess school climate.

There is no better way to assess a school's climate than through surveys of the student body. Due to the anonymous nature of surveys students tend to be candid. With elementary school students, more age-appropriate activities can be conducted to assess climate.

8. Conduct vulnerability/safety assessment of schools every year with partnering agencies (law enforcement and emergency management).

Schools can currently use the Safe, Orderly and Caring Site Assessment to conduct these assessments in a standardized way. In the coming year, the Center for Safer Schools will partner with the Department of Public Instruction to update this tool. It is important that schools use a standardized tool so that they prioritize those items that need to be addressed first.

9. Utilize school support staff in appropriate ways that reflect their expertise.

School counselors, social workers, nurses and psychologists are often required by their administrators to contribute to an array of tasks separate from their assigned roles—these tasks can be substantially outside their traditional, professional scope of duties. If schools are going to be able to address at-risk behaviors early and prevent tragic events, they need these professionals to be fully focused on their essential tasks.

A Teacher in Jamestown, N.C. May 2, 2013

10. Seek out and grow family/community engagement strategies.

Give parents and community groups specific, concrete activities they can engage in to get involved with the school. If parents come to a school event and their participation does not seem meaningful or wanted, they will be discouraged from returning. If parents want to monitor student activities or even school hallways and buses, schools should provide appropriate training to parents and conduct background checks of those parents who are volunteering.

11. Conduct at least one lockdown drill annually.

The only way to know whether your crisis plan is going to work when you really need it is to practice your plan. If possible, schools should invite law enforcement and emergency response personnel to the school when the plan is practiced to assist in the debriefing process. Schools should consider doing a drill with teachers and emergency responders while students are not at the school and a second drill while students are in attendance.

12. Look for ways to integrate supportive services that involve community partners.

Beyond schools, a number of other organizations in the community support youth development. Schools should not be afraid to open their doors to these groups. Schools

should work with their school districts to consider whether co-locating mental health providers or juvenile justice professionals on their campuses makes sense. Schools that have taken these steps successfully are highlighted elsewhere in this report.

Carteret County Schools Access to Site-Based Mental Health Services – Creative Solutions

Carteret County Schools have been offering mental health and counseling services through a contractual agreement with LeChris Counseling Services Inc., Morehead City. These services had been offered since January 2011 for K-8 at the Bridges Learning Center, a separate building on the campus of West Carteret High School. An additional site was added this year at the Chatham Learning Center, a separate building on the campus of Newport Elementary School.

Services were expanded during the 2012-2013 school year to include high school students. The Newport site served students in grades K-5, and the West Carteret site served students in grades 6-12. For now the two sites serve all county students, but if there is a need for another center in the eastern part of the county to serve that area, it could be expanded into a section of East Carteret High School.

Administrators report an increase in the number of students requiring mental health and counseling services. "The need for mental health services is increasing as there are critical issues in our students' behaviors and decisions that negatively impact learning," he said. "Getting the students over this hurdle is paramount in reaching their educational needs."

The two programs not only provide mental health and counseling services, but allow students to continue their education while they are treated. Depending on the types of services needed, some students stayed in centers all day, while others were served both in the traditional school setting and in the centers. "Some students may only be at the center two hours a day for counseling, then go back to regular classes," said Assistant Superintendent Mr. Bottoms. "Other students may need to be at the center all day." The idea is to provide whatever services the students need so they can be reintroduced back into the regular classroom setting as soon as possible. LeChris Counseling Services provided a licensed therapist, program director and qualified mental health professionals at both sites. In addition, there was a certified substance abuse counselor at the Bridges Learning Center. The school system provided nine staff at the Bridges Learning Center, including an administrator, and the rest teachers and teacher assistants. At the Chatham site, there were four teachers and a teacher assistant.

Families and Caregivers

In every conversation at the Center for Safer Schools meetings across the state, the idea of family engagement as a core expectation for positive student outcomes (including optimal safety) was prominent. Families are the core unit of support for students and most importantly, one of the most critical places to turn when thinking about youth risk behaviors or tendencies. Parents/caregivers are the main drivers of resilience development in their children, and are expected to help identify when children struggle in any dimension of their development. When a home or caregiving environment is not supportive, students' physical, psychological and psychosocial functioning may be at risk. Forum participants had much to say about the often noticeable absence of engaged families as children grow older and move to middle and high schools—especially among children whose families are challenged by economics and other factors. It is this very time frame, when students are navigating so many social and developmental challenges, that supportive families are most needed.

1. **The Center for Safer Schools, state government agencies and everyone involved with schools should identify effective strategies for engaging parents and/or other caregivers in the academic and extracurricular lives of their children.**

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) requires parent engagement strategies at various levels depending on the overall rating or progress of schools as measured by NCLB criteria. The U.S. Department of Education has invested research funds in various family engagement research projects over the years (see www2.ed.gov/admins/comm/parents/pntinv.html), but a 2007 report stands out for its summary and conceptual model that values parents as partners with educators. In their "Engaging Parents in Education: Lessons From Five Parental Information And Resource Centers (Innovations in Education)"[60] (see http://www2.ed.gov/admins/comm/parents/parentinvolve/index.html), the authors identify best practices and "how-to" strategies as researched through five Parent Information Resource Centers across the country. While motivated by the NCLB outcome requirements, the report also indicates methods for increasing parent involvement in schools and at home regardless of specific federal policy requirements.

2. **Parents should reach out to schools and other professionals to help increase parental knowledge**

and capacity to recognize and respond to student vulnerability, risk and the warning signs of struggle.

By training parents in the warning signs of academic, emotional, social or other developmental risks, interventions can be tailored to the individual needs and environments of the child at the earliest point possible. A strong link between parents and educators, in partnership as described in recommendation #1 above, will help achieve this goal. A myriad of online and other training tools are available to parents. The National Child Traumatic Stress Network for example has excellent online materials for parents related to the recognition of stress or trauma, as well as evidence-based tools for intervention (see http://www.nctsn.org/resources/audiences/parents-caregivers). Parents that engage, intentionally or unintentionally, in problematic parenting practices foreshadow academic and potentially serious emotional and behavioral disorders as children develop. There is ample evidence that children whose parents, for example, engage in hostile, overly punitive, aggressive parenting styles as well as those that are neglectful significantly contribute to their children's risk for developing mental health, antisocial and/or violent behavior disorders.[61] Laurence Steinberg notes that schools are prime locations to identify and intervene early and appropriately with at-risk youth. His report serves as an additional call for effective parental engagement in the process of working with schools to identify warning signs and potential solutions to risk conditions that could lead to crises including violence.

Edenton, N.C. April 9, 2013

3. **Parents should work with community resource providers, agencies and their schools to learn about services and programs that can prevent or reduce the risk of school problems including violence.**

Parents can and should be the most effective advocates for their children in the prevention of academic, behavioral, or emotional problems. Parental advocacy begins with knowledge of the services available. But knowledge alone is not sufficient. Consistent parent engagement and the appropriate use of resource and program information should be the minimal expectations for all parents with children in schools.

4. **Parents should prioritize conversations with their children about school safety on a continuing basis.**

Through regular exploration of their children's activities at school and relationships with peers, teachers and administrators, parents can play critical roles in the recognition of risk factors as well as provide resilience and strength as their children navigate school and social environments.

5. **Parents and their employers should explore the possibilities of flexible work/job schedules so that parents may attend school-based activities and/or volunteer in schools whenever possible.**

Competitive business and economic conditions make it very challenging for both employers and parents to create space for adequate parental participation in

community schools. Finding innovative solutions to this issue will take a great deal of work as well as collaboration between parents, employers, schools and the greater business community at large. Establishment of policies and procedures that support parent engagement in community schools is a step in the right direction for any business that can afford to support their employees and their communities via family-friendly practices.

Students

Students are at the epicenter of all safe schools conversations; and, they are at the nexus of actors involved in a school's climate. Students can be directly or indirectly responsible for the safety of a school by virtue of their behavior or lack thereof. Forum participants around the state voiced many recommendations for students, particularly in the areas of taking ownership for their own behaviors, as well as reporting concerns about others.

1. **Students must take ownership of their role in creating positive school climates by promptly reporting warning signs of violence.**

Warning signs can come in many varieties, from overt brawls in the halls or stairwells, to rumors and gossip, to overt or covert bullying (including cyber-bullying), to quiet observations of a peer at an adjacent desk or elsewhere in the school environment. Students know more about trends in social relationships, cliques, and other social dynamics than others. They also know about the ebb and flow of social relationships within their neighborhoods and communities affecting the school climate (e.g., gangs, drugs and alcohol, weapons, etc.). Students must know who the "go to" people are in schools for immediate reporting concerns or threats. They must also be aware of all the possible avenues for reporting (tip boxes, confidential notes, offices of key persons, Internet/cell phone/social networking reporting technologies, etc.). Many resources are available to students to help them recognize risks or threats to safety in the school environment. One excellent reference is the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence (CSPV) in Boulder, Colo. Specific to the early warning signs or problem behaviors that need further attention, students can and should be aware of their surroundings, changes in others' behaviors or concerns voiced by their peers that reflect a need for reporting or intervention (see http://www.colorado.edu/cspv/problembehaviors.html).

2. **Students should take the initiative to learn about the support services, programs and other resources within school settings so that when questions or circumstances arise, they know who may be of assistance in a responsive way.**

Students Against Violence Everywhere (S.A.V.E.)

On a Friday night in 1989, a young man named Alex Orange lost his life while trying to break up a fight at a party. Alex could have been just another statistic of another young life lost to violence. But the following Monday morning, his grieving classmates gathered and vowed to organize against violence in Alex's memory. The group formed Students Against Violence Everywhere (SAVE). SAVE was born out of sorrow, but has grown with hope. SAVE has expanded from that first chapter in Charlotte, to more than 230,000 members across the United States. SAVE members view each day as an opportunity to take steps that will save young lives like that of Alex, and they challenge others to do the same. SAVE serves youth in elementary schools, middle schools, high schools, colleges and community organizations.

SAVE is coordinated by the nonprofit, the National Association of SAVE, but it is still led by students, for students. SAVE promotes meaningful student involvement, education on crime prevention, conflict management and youth safety, and provides service opportunities in efforts to provide safer environments for youth. SAVE encourages and empowers students with life skills while engaging them in educational activities and opportunities to promote youth safety and good citizenship.

For more information, visit www.nationalsave.org.

Violence prevention is everyone's responsibility, and students frequently confront emergent or critical situations in which they must know how to act. By learning what people and resources are available within their school, they can be more informed as to the decisions they will make when faced with problems. The National School Safety Center (one of several centers around the country established as clearinghouses for school safety information and training materials) hosts several web pages describing the student's role in violence prevention or intervention, as well as constructive strategies for dealing with threats or actual occurrences of violence (see http://www.nssc1.org/students-role-in-stopping-school-violence.html). It is vital that students develop a trusting attitude toward the administration, school resource officers, and other faculty to facilitate the reporting of concerns.

3. Students should participate in programs and services designed to help them recognize problem behaviors, respond appropriately and to foster restorative and transformative practices within schools.

There are excellent restorative and transformative justice programs that teach students how to communicate effectively, provide restoration to both victims and "offenders" (students engaging in problem behaviors), and to transform their environment from threatening and negative to safe and positive. Some examples include: Teen Courts (sometimes referred to as "peer juries," peer mediation or peer mediation conferencing programs, listening/restorative circles (sometimes called "peacemaking circles), among others. These programs also help teach anger management, positive and effective communication, empathy skills, peer-to-peer mentoring and other personal and social justice skills. Each restorative justice effort is by definition transformative if students successfully complete the programs and tasks. That is, the programs teach accountability, restoration / compensation to the victim and community healing through shared awareness and problem solving. Students engaging in these types of programs report stronger attitudes of fairness, empathy, accountability, responsibility and similar outcomes as a result of their participation.[62] [63] Research now documents that restorative and transformative justice programs and practices yield much better outcomes than school environments that rely on zero tolerance policies to try and manage student behavior.[64]

Rachel's Challenge

Rachel's Challenge is a series of student-empowering programs and strategies that equip students and adults to combat bullying and allay feelings of isolation and despair by creating a culture of kindness and compassion. The programs are based on the writings and life of 17 year-old Rachel Scott who was the first student killed at Columbine High School in 1999. Rachel left a legacy of reaching out to those who were different, who were picked on by others, or who were new at her school. Shortly before her death she wrote, "I have this theory that if one person can go out of their way to show compassion, then it will start a chain reaction of the same. People will never know how far a little kindness can go."

To learn more about Rachel's Challenge visit: http://www.rachelschallenge.org/.

Conclusions

School safety is everyone's responsibility. Schools are microcosms of their communities, and reflect the characteristics of neighborhoods in which they operate. Thus they are prone to similar conditions and dynamics of the populations that they serve. There are a myriad of opinions and ideas as to how safety programs should be funded and carried out.

The intention of this report is to summarize feedback from nine community-based forums across North Carolina and to supplement those findings with evidence from a review of the existing literature so that best practices in North Carolina school safety can be

identified moving forward. The results have been synthesized and forwarded through action items and key considerations to the Governor, N.C. General Assembly, departments of Public Safety, Public Instruction, Health and Human Services and Justice, as well as to parents, students and communities in general. As the work unfolds, many more collaborating entities will be identified as potential resources and allies in the work. For example other inputs into this effort thus far have been provided by the N.C. School Boards Association, N.C. Psychological Association, N.C. Psychiatric Association, and centers of higher learning (University of North Carolina, Duke University among others) – these groups will continue to have input and consultation with the Center. Numerous national organizations and reports have been included in the review of the literature (e.g., the National Rifle Association, Centers for Disease Control, Department of Education, National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors, National Association of School Psychologists, National Child Traumatic Stress Network, to name a few). Other states' reports have been consulted (Mississippi, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Florida, California, Michigan and others).

The new N.C. Center for Safer Schools will develop its strategic plan and service capacity based on the work incorporated in this document as well as future input given by an advisory body as established by the Governor if he accepts the recommendation to do so. Part of the strategic plan shall include the building and maintaining of a comprehensive knowledge base that covers the full array of prevention, intervention, crisis response and recovery best practices in order to provide accessible tools for the general public. This knowledge base will be coupled with technical assistance, training, coaching and other guidance as requested and within the capabilities of the Center's staff capacity. The Department of Public Safety clearly heard the call for a state government resource that would be capable of providing centralized leadership, service coordination, assistance with the identification of helpful funding sources or strategies, training and technical assistance – all in a collaborative, efficient and effective manner through the best leveraging of cross-agency resources.

Boone, N.C April 17, 2013

Beyond the emerging work of the new Center, action items and concerns from the forums captured a broad array of additional needs within the dimensions of the theoretical model used for this report. Main conclusions include:

It is important to note **that not all required resources are monetary**. Indeed, one of the **main conclusions from the forums in every location** included the observation that human resources in the form of engaged parents, ***more volunteers***, peer-to-peer mentoring and adult mentors for students would go extremely far toward reducing the risk of youth or other violence in schools. Inexpensive ideas, like the WATCH D.O.G.S. efforts in Wilmington, Edenton and around the country are exemplars of effective strategies that bring caring adults into schools using the motivations to help, rather than expensive program budgets.

Another critically important finding from the statewide forums noted that **the most effective prevention and intervention strategies involve more strategic integration of mental health (e.g., behavioral health) student support services on or adjacent to school campuses**. Participants at each forum voiced support for the presence of trained behavioral/emotional evaluation and treatment staff on their campuses (or adjacent to them) for proactive services, rapid access and intervention. Schools in Carteret and Jackson counties were exemplars of this approach. Furthermore, each of these counties found ways to integrate outside

non-school funded behavioral staff without much additional public funding through effective collaboration and shared in-kind resources. Whether funded through state or other resources, these student support professionals are highly sought after and valued in every community.

While there is considerable dialogue across the country as to the scope of armed adults needed or desired on school campuses, there was **broad consensus that well trained and properly equipped school resource officers (SROs) are highly valued by administration, faculty, students and parents of students on campuses where they are deployed**. And there was consensus that more SROs are needed, particularly to help at the elementary and middle school levels. Keep in mind that SROs are thought of in multiple roles, and not just as "safety officers" when considering this conclusion (i.e. teachers/trainers, counselors, mentors, coaches, etc.). It was noted at all forum locations that if SRO and their law enforcement colleagues were properly armed and trained, there was little support for having others on campus with firearms in their possession.

Concord, N.C. April 25, 2013

Other key findings include feedback that schools and school districts have many complicated tasks to complete, often leaving limited time for safety and active shooter drills. Schools comply with state laws requiring that they practice safety drills. However, they do not necessarily practice active shooter scenarios often enough and in the scope required to be completely prepared should such tragedies occur. It is also unclear as to how effectively local schools update and evaluate the readiness of their communications plans. **Each forum location identified a need to find additional resources to help plan and practice safety and active shooter drills including the updating of critical incident response kits and the schools' comprehensive communications plans**.

The need for additional funding/financial resources was voiced in each forum. **Each location identified some need for federal, state or local county financial support to increase their safety preparations and response capabilities**. A myriad of federal resources are available to law enforcement and school systems for school safety efforts. Justice Assistance Grants, Office of Community Oriented Policing (COPS and COPS in Schools), (COPS dollars given to the Department of Education) are some examples. North Carolina also funds SROs through General Assembly appropriations and some local funding efforts – however, the state appropriations amount does not cover the full cost of an SRO, and the funds are not sufficient to provide an SRO in every middle or elementary school. Furthermore, many SRO staff positions originally funded through federal resources often lapse (the grants end); school boards, county commissioners, city councils, or other entities are then faced with the sustainability costs.

Edenton, N.C April 9, 2013

And finally, **responses from the forums as well as the literature point to the need for effective, ongoing, strategic and comprehensive planning in the areas of school safety. Such plans must incorporate school districts as well as individual schools**. They must include educators, law enforcement, emergency management and disaster recovery personnel, communications/information technology experts, and other consultants as required.

The plans must be updated and/or reviewed annually, and they should be practiced with regular precision to ensure that contingencies are appropriately reviewed and resourced. *Critical to the success of these plans is the implementation of effective bullying prevention solutions. Aggression between students is found in multiple forms, and ongoing bullying can lead to lifelong academic and adjustment problems.*

North Carolina has excellent schools and school systems, strong and engaged communities, and beneficial support from its state and local agencies. School systems appear to have strong support as well from their county commissioners on issues pertaining to school safety and disaster recovery. The findings in this report reinforce the great work already done in the areas of school safety; however, the findings also point to areas of improvement that could strengthen North Carolina's safety net and response capabilities. An actual documentation of the forums, key participants, themes and summaries are in the appendices that follow.

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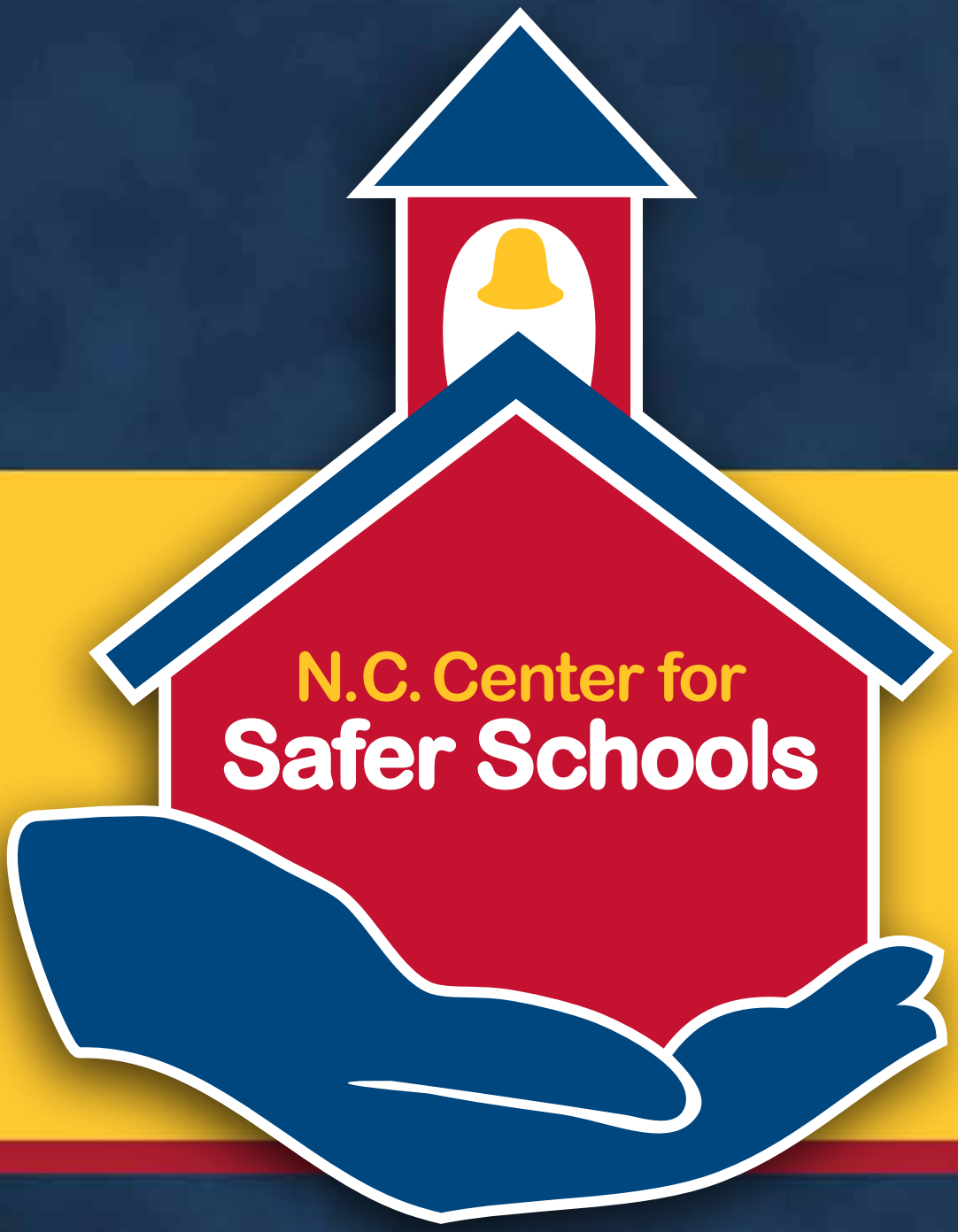
Notes



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