



KEEPING NORTH CAROLINA SCHOOLS SAFE & SECURE

Attorney General Roy Cooper
Secretary of Crime Control and Public Safety Bryan Beatty
November 2006
A Report to Governor Mike Easley

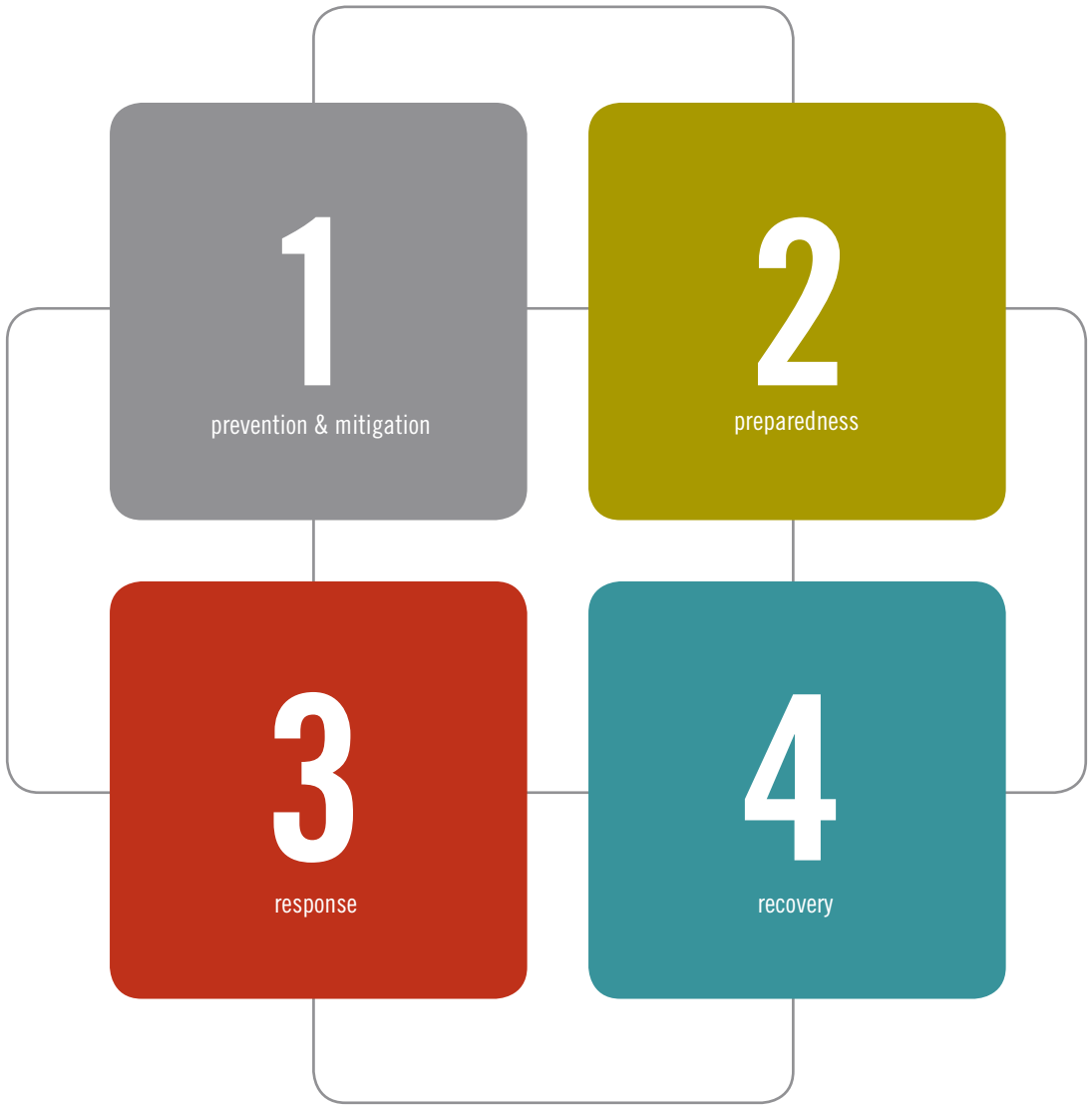
prevention & mitigation

preparedness

response

recovery

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Providing children with a safe learning environment is critical to academic success. Just as caring and effective parents, teachers, and communities are necessary for a sound education, they are also important in ensuring a secure schoolhouse. In short, when North Carolina parents send their children to school, they expect schools to protect their children and prepare them for the future.

At the request of Governor Mike Easley, Attorney General Roy Cooper and Secretary of Crime Control and Public Safety Bryan Beatty conducted a comprehensive review of our State's school safety and security program. This review led to the recommendations found in this report. The recommendations are structured on the four phases used by the United States Department of Education's *Practical Information on Crisis Planning: A Guide for Schools and Communities*. These four phases are: (1) Prevention & Mitigation, (2) Preparedness, (3) Response, and (4) Recovery.

During this review, one common theme emerged: school administrators, law enforcement officers, and emergency managers continue to collaborate and coordinate in protecting our children at school. As part of Governor Easley's request, the Department of Public Instruction conducted a survey of school superintendents that found a majority of the State's schools have close working relationships with local law enforcement. This connection is rooted in North Carolina's historical commitment to school safety.

The findings, set out in detail later in this report, indicate that while many North Carolina schools know what to do in the event of a crisis, some do not, and all would benefit from more preparation, better communication, and expert help.

prevention & mitigation

Sharing information is essential to preventing school violence

Recommendation 1:

Establish a school violence data analysis program that collects, analyzes, and provides information to local school districts and law enforcement officials.

Recommendation 2:

Expand the anonymous North Carolina Safe Schools Tip Line that allows students, faculty, and parents to share information about possible threats.

Recommendation 3:

Help school personnel receive ongoing threat assessment training and security assessment technical assistance.

preparedness

Training and practice by schools and law enforcement help protect children in the event of violence

Recommendation 4:

Hold school districts accountable for obtaining school safety preparedness certifications.

Recommendation 5:

Expand mandatory school drills to include a wider range of threat preparedness.

Recommendation 6:

Gather technology, law enforcement, and school experts to provide recommendations on school safety technology.

response

First responders familiar with the school and its students are necessary to minimize the threats of violence

Recommendation 7:

Expand the successful School Resource Officer program.

Recommendation 8:

Educate staff on how to respond to non-traditional threats.

recovery

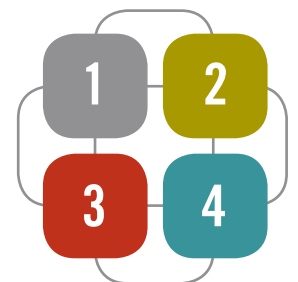
Helping communities heal so that students can return to learning is essential

Recommendation 9:

Identify key partners and behavioral health responders during the recovery planning.

Recommendation 10:

Adopt a formal debriefing process to help schools evaluate their own performance and educate other districts.



BACKGROUND

PURPOSE

On October 9, 2006, Governor Mike Easley asked Attorney General Roy Cooper and Crime Control and Public Safety Secretary Bryan Beatty to coordinate a comprehensive review of North Carolina's school safety programs. In his request, Governor Easley also urged them to examine the use of technology and protocol measures, student and faculty incident responses, as well as the communication between classroom and administrative offices.

This report surveys the educational, law enforcement, parental, and emergency management roles in school safety. In addition, it describes a range of educational and training strategies, technology-based tools, and legal approaches that can help keep children safe at school. Thus, this report provides a framework for State policymakers to address school safety.

SCOPE & METHODOLOGY

Based on the agencies' expertise in emergency management and law enforcement training, the report focuses its review on crisis planning and emergency response. The report is organized on the four phases of crisis management: (1) Prevention & Mitigation, (2) Preparedness, (3) Response, and (4) Recovery. These phases are also utilized in the United States Department of Education's *Practical Information on Crisis Planning: A Guide for Schools and Communities*. Strategies to improve school safety include more than law enforcement and emergency management, however. It is important that State policymakers continue to pursue other preventive approaches, including efforts to stop bullying, child abuse, exposure to violence on television, gang activity, and substance abuse. As one criminal justice expert writes, "The realization that school violence is a community problem, not a school problem, is necessary to develop interdisciplinary strategies that will have a positive effect on school violence."¹

The methodology consisted of conducting a literature review, analyzing data, interviewing key experts, and identifying best practices. The literature review included North Carolina's 1993 *Governor's Task Force on School Violence Report* and 1999 *Governor's Task Force on Youth Violence and School Safety Report*, academic publications, and research studies. Furthermore, the agencies analyzed the State's data on school violence. North Carolina is fortunate to have an enormous amount of information, including the Department of Public Instruction's *Annual Report on School Crime and Violence*. In addition, the Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention-Center for Prevention of School Violence (DJJDP-Center) regularly evaluates the State's school violence statistics and School Resource Officer (SRO) program.



Key personnel were interviewed in the following North Carolina agencies and departments: Governor's Office, Department of Public Instruction, State Board of Education, Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Department of Crime Control and Public Safety, Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Insurance's Office of the State Fire Marshal, State Bureau of Investigation, and North Carolina Justice Academy. Additionally, the following professional organizations were consulted: North Carolina Association of Educators, North Carolina Association of School Administrators, North Carolina School Boards Association, North Carolina Parent Teacher Association, Insurance Federation of North Carolina, and North Carolina Association of School Psychologists. The agencies also benefited from a school safety roundtable set up by the Governor's Office, Department of Public Instruction, and State Board of Education, which included school administrators and directors of security for school districts. In preparation for this roundtable, the State Board of Education and Department of Public Instruction administered a short school safety survey to all superintendents.²

The agencies also sought expertise outside of North Carolina. This included federal agency documents from the United States Department of Education, Federal Emergency Management Agency, and Government Accountability Office. The National Conference of State Legislatures surveyed other state legislation. With their aid, several states with promising practices were identified: Kentucky, Virginia, Illinois, and Florida. Finally, key staff were consulted at the Kentucky Center for School Safety and the Virginia Center for School Safety.

NORTH CAROLINA – A LEADER IN SCHOOL SAFETY

Thanks to strong leadership, North Carolina has made progress in keeping its schools safe.³ More than 30 years ago, it was one of the first states in the country to establish an SRO program. Over the last 15 years, the State convened two statewide task forces that produced significant changes in the way our school administrators and law enforcement officers respond to violence. In 2002, North Carolina established the Critical Incident Response Kit (CIRK), one of only three promising practices in school emergency plans cited by the United States Department of Education.⁴

In 1993 and 1999, the two task forces addressed school violence. In April 1993, the first task force recommended changes including the establishment of a weapons-free school zones law, more SROs, and creation of the Center for the Prevention of School Violence.⁵ In 1999, the second task force built on these changes by recommending the establishment of a statewide toll-free tip line, stronger safe school plans, and the creation of alternative schools for suspended or expelled students.⁶

Table 1: Highlights of School Safety Initiatives

1993-1994	1999-2000	2002-2003
Established weapon-free zones	Strengthened safe schools plan	Established Critical Incident Response Kit program
Required schools to report violent offenders to law officials	Established toll-free tip line	Instituted rapid deployment training
Funded school resource officers	Created alternative schools for suspended or expelled students	Provided multi-hazard training to schools
Created Center for Prevention of School Violence		

In 2002, Attorney General Roy Cooper, in partnership with Secretary of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention George Sweat and State Superintendent Mike Ward, launched CIRK through funding from the Governor’s Crime Commission. CIRK walks school officials through a step-by-step process and recommends procedures for addressing a crisis. Since its creation, CIRK has been distributed to every public, private, and charter school in North Carolina. More than 11,000 videos and guides have been distributed in the last four years. The United States Department of Defense uses CIRK to protect American schools located on overseas military bases. That same year, the Department of Crime

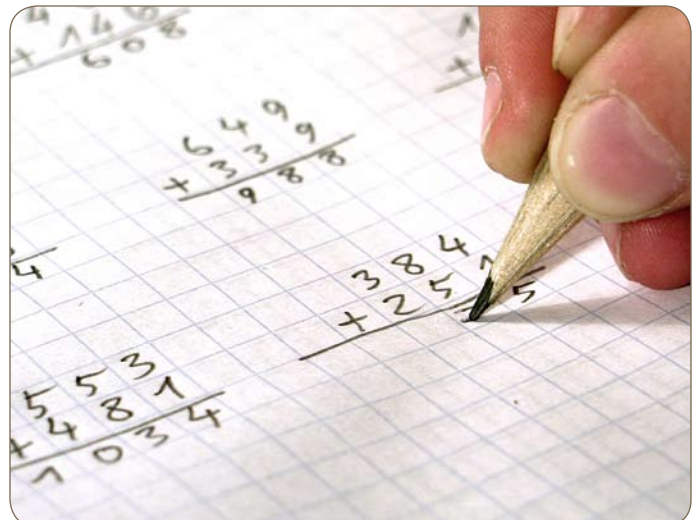
Control and Public Safety’s Division of Emergency Management along with DJJDP-Center began providing multi-hazard training to schools. Twenty-seven school districts have received this training.

To help law enforcement respond to school violence, the North Carolina Justice Academy and then State Bureau of Investigation began offering rapid deployment training in 2001. This technique teaches law enforcement officers — who arrive first on a school violence scene — to assemble a team, enter the building, and locate and subdue the assailant. During an emergency at a school or business, training in rapid deployment can save lives. In September, it did. An Orange County Sheriff’s Deputy responded immediately when a former student began shooting at a high school and was able to stop the shooter before any students were seriously injured.⁷ “Orange High School is proof that [rapid deployment training] works,” he said. Today, more than 400 instructors and 200 officers have been trained by the North Carolina Justice Academy. To make sure that all new officers receive this training, rapid deployment has been added to the Basic Law Enforcement Training curriculum. It is also an in-service training option for current law enforcement officers.

SCHOOL VIOLENCE IN NORTH CAROLINA

Despite the recent highly publicized school shootings, statistics show that schools are a safe place for children. The 2005 *Indicators of School Crime and Safety* issued by the United States Department of Justice notes that “Students are less likely to be victims of a violent crime at school than away from school.”⁸ Yet, these real and perceived threats influence the way teachers teach and students learn.

In North Carolina, school violence statistics paint a more complex picture. According to the Department of Public Instruction’s *Annual Report on School Crime and Violence*, the total number of incidents⁹ has fluctuated,



dropping by nearly 14 percent in 2002-03 only to rise by more than 14 percent the following year. The increase was less dramatic in 2004-05 with a three percent increase in the number of school incidents.

To gain a better understanding of the school safety data, we categorized eight of the seventeen reportable offenses as “most violent.” These nine “most violent” offenses are: bomb threat, possession of a firearm or powerful explosives, burning of a school building, assault involving use of a weapon, assault resulting in serious injury, rape, kidnapping, and death by other than natural causes. A review of these “most violent” incidents shows that while the overall numbers of offenses have increased, the “most violent” incidents have decreased. In 2002-03, there was almost a seven percent drop in the number of “most violent” school incidents. The next year, there was an increase of one percent in “most violent” incidents despite a 14 percent total increase. In 2004-05, “most violent” incidents dropped by six percent even though all incidents increased three percent (See Table 2).

Table 2: Number of Reported School Offenses and Percentage Change from Previous Year, 2001-02 through 2004-05

Reporting Year	Total Reportable Offenses		“Most Violent” Reportable Offenses	
	Number of Offenses	Percentage Change	Number of Offenses	Percentage Change
2001-02	9,921	--	446	--
2002-03	8,548	-13.84%	417	-6.50%
2003-04	9,800	14.65%	422	1.20%
2004-05	10,107	3.13%	394	-6.64%



SCHOOLS FACE NEW CHALLENGES IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Today, schools face new and unimaginable threats to their safety. In 1999, the Columbine school shootings opened educators’ eyes to the possibility of violence within the student body. The 2004 school killings in Beslan, Russia, underscored our worst fears — that terrorists could target our children. In North Carolina, recent events have demonstrated that our schools must also be prepared for natural and manmade disasters such as severe weather and chemical explosions. For instance, the January 2005 ice storm challenged the Wake County Public School System’s safe school plan when hundreds of students had to be housed overnight due to treacherous roadways. In 2006, five Wake County public schools responded quickly after an Apex chemical plant explosion involving hazardous material made school buildings unusable. As Ronald Stephens of the National School Safety Center puts it, the new century represents a “new age of serious and complex threats.”¹⁰

¹ Johnson, Ida M. 1999. School Violence: The Effectiveness of a School Resource Officer Program in a Southern City. *Journal of Criminal Justice* 27 (1): 173-92.

² State Board of Education Chairman Howard N. Lee and State Superintendent June St. Clair Atkinson. Letter to Attorney General Roy Cooper and Secretary of Crime Control and Public Safety Bryan E. Beatty. October 26, 2006.

³ Council of State Governments. 2001. *Youth Violence: Prevention in North Carolina*. Lexington KY.

⁴ Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools. Lead & Manage My School: Emergency Planning. Examples of Promising Practices in Emergency Response. United States Department of Education. <http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/emergencyplan/index.html>.

⁵ Governor’s Task Force on School Violence. 1993. *Executive Summary Report of Task Force on School Violence Report*. Raleigh, NC.

⁶ Governor’s Task Force on Youth Violence & School Safety. 1999. *Executive Summary Report*. Raleigh, NC.

⁷ Rocha, Jessica, Meiling Arounath, and Lisa Hoppenjans. 2006. School shooting suspect tells cops he killed father. *The News & Observer*, August 31, Sec. A1.

⁸ DeVoe, Jill F., Katharin Peter, Margaret Noonan, Thomas D. Snyder, and Katrin Baum. 2005. *Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2005*. United States Departments of Education and Justice. Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office.

⁹ In 1993, the General Assembly passed legislation requiring local education agencies and school principals to report certain offenses to the State Board of Education. N.C.G.S. 115C-47(36) (2006); 115C-288(g) (2006). Pursuant to their authority under N.C.G.S. § 115C-12(21), the State Board of Education expanded the list of 14 reportable acts to 17 reportable acts in 2000.

¹⁰ Stephens, Ronald, June Arnett, and Hilda Quiroz. 2006. *What if? Preparing Schools for the Unthinkable*. Westlake Village, CA.

PREVENTION & MITIGATION

Experts recommend that school administrators and law enforcement officials take steps to prevent and mitigate disasters. Studies show that prior to most school attacks, the perpetrator had told someone about the plan.¹ A school that trains students and staff to share information about threats can prevent a crisis before it happens. Prevention and mitigation also include gathering school violence information and assessing the school facilities.

Finding 1: Schools need help in accessing and analyzing timely school violence data.

For many states, collecting school violence statistics poses a barrier to effective safe school planning. Fortunately, in North Carolina school administrators can consult several sources of data when developing a safe school plan. Currently, at least three State agencies disseminate information about school safety. These agencies are Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, State Board of Education, and State Bureau of Investigation.

Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (DJJDP):

DJJDP continues to develop the North Carolina Juvenile On-Line Information Network (NC-JOIN), which gathers information about all juvenile complaints filed in the State. NC-JOIN has recently been updated to track school-based offenses. This will provide a clearer picture of how many complaints are reported from schools. In addition, DJJDP-Center for the Prevention of School Violence (DJJDP-Center) collects data from the North Carolina Safe Schools Tip Line. This information includes who called, where calls are placed, and how calls are resolved. Data gathered from the tip line is informative because the callers are students.

State Board of Education (SBE):

Through the State Board of Education, the Department of Public Instruction publishes two reports on school violence. First, it publishes the *Annual Report on School Crime and Violence* which is based on information collected from all 115 local education agencies and 99 charter schools. Under State law, the State Board of Education must compile an annual report on violent or criminal acts that are school-related.² Second, the Department of Public Instruction publishes the *Annual Study of Suspensions and Expulsions*. This report documents the number of student dropouts, suspensions, expulsions, or alternative placements. In addition, the State Board of Education compiles the *North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey* biannually. Specifically, teachers are asked whether their school environment is safe.

State Bureau of Investigation (SBI):

The State Bureau of Investigation publishes the *Uniform Crime Report* which provides statewide crime statistics based on reports from local law enforcement agencies.

Table 3: State Reports Tracking School Violence

Conducting Agency	Mechanism	Respondents
Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention	NC-JOIN	Juvenile Court Counselors
	Tip Line	Students
State Board of Education	Annual Report on School Crime and Violence	Local Education Agencies and Charter Schools
	Annual Study of Suspensions and Expulsions	Local Education Agencies and Charter Schools
	North Carolina Teacher Working Condition Survey	Teachers and Faculty
State Bureau of Investigation	Uniform Crime Report	Local Law Enforcement Agencies

Currently, school administrators lack assistance in analyzing school violence data for trends. In addition, this comprehensive data is only available a year or two after the data is gathered. Good data analysis can help in a number of ways. It can more accurately guide school safety teams in developing their safe school plan. It can also provide information to local school districts and law enforcement officials to develop appropriate school safety programs.



Recommendation 1: Establish a school violence data analysis program that collects, analyzes, and provides information to local school districts and law enforcement officials.

Because of the many school violence data sources available, the State Board of Education and DJJDP-Center should integrate this information in a usable, timely format for educators and law enforcement. This school violence information analysis program should utilize expertise from university statisticians and law enforcement.

The analysis should be developed with three goals in mind. First, it should examine the integrity of the existing data. Second, the program should compare current State data with information gathered by local education agencies.³ Finally, this program should disseminate the information on a regular and timely basis so that a school district's safe school plan is accurate.

Finding 2: North Carolina Safe Schools Tip Line works.

Established in 1999, the toll-free North Carolina Safe Schools Tip Line (Tip Lip) was one of the first of its kind in the country. The launch of the Tip Line was accompanied by a student awareness campaign. This campaign focused on middle and high school students through an awareness center, wallet cards, and brochures. The Tip Line offers students the chance to provide anonymous information about threats to school safety without retribution. As the 1999 National School Safety Center (NSSC) study of student tip lines observed, "Such lines are intended to solve previously unsolved crimes or to reduce or eliminate potential harmful occurrences."⁴

The success of tip lines is noted by school safety experts. As Delbert Elliot, Director at the Center of the Study and Prevention of Violence, said, "After Columbine, one of the first recommendations put forth by the Columbine Review Commission was that we have a statewide tip line so that individuals who had some knowledge of the event could report this in a confidential manner . . . Since Columbine, we have averted many, many serious violent crimes because we got a tip."⁵

DJJDP-Center's data collected indicates that the Tip Line is working. During the first two years of the Tip Line's existence, it received almost 300 calls.⁶ Of the follow-up on 84 allegations, more than 60 percent of the tips proved to be true. According to DJJDP-Center's assessment of the Tip Line, law enforcement was most likely to investigate allegations of possession of a controlled substance, possession of a firearm, and possession of a non-firearm weapon. Twelve percent of the calls received by the Tip Line alleged "imminent danger." During a recent school safety

roundtable, a school security director stated that four weapons had been recovered due to information from the Tip Line.⁷

Although the Tip Line is available to all schools across the State, only 661 schools take advantage of it and the student awareness campaign. The primary barrier has been a lack of dedicated funding. Good publicity is critical to a tip line's use, as implied by the NSSC study.⁸

Recommendation 2: Expand the anonymous North Carolina Safe Schools Tip Line that allows students, faculty, and parents to share information about possible threats.

Given the success of the Tip Line, the State should expand it. This expansion should include an increase in public awareness, more student involvement, and regular evaluation of the Tip Line. Expertise can be provided by the State Bureau of Investigation, which operates its own crime tip line, and other law enforcement officials.

Finding 3: The State offers limited threat assessment training and security assessment technical assistance.

School administrators and law enforcement officials must conduct different kinds of assessments when developing approaches to prevent school violence. Such assessments can be divided into two categories. First, threat assessments focus on the *internal* behavior and threats within the student body. The United States Secret Service observes "Environments in which students, teachers and administrators pay attention to students' social and emotional needs as well as their academic needs will have few situations that require threat assessments."⁹ Second, there are security assessments which evaluate the physical grounds of the school campus and help prevent *external* threats.¹⁰ Internal and external threat assessments are equally important components of a comprehensive school safety plan.

Threat Assessments

Law enforcement experts observe that in almost all school shootings, the perpetrator will share this information with someone beforehand. After the wave of school shootings in 1999, the United States Secret Service joined with the United States Department of Education to study 37 school shootings involving 41 attackers who were current or recent students at the school.¹¹ It found that the attacks were rarely impulsive. In well over three-fourths of the incidents, the perpetrators planned the attack. In addition, the report revealed that prior to most incidents, the attacker told someone about the plan. In August 2003, North Carolina officials invited the United States Secret Service to share this information with local school administrators and law enforcement officials at two separate seminars, one in Greenville and one in Winston-Salem.

Security Assessments

An assessment can provide an audit of existing security conditions as well as identifying needs and areas for improvement. An assessment plan, for example, examines how visitors and trespassers have access to the school. In recent school shootings, many of these intruders had no personal connection to the school. According to one source, 70 percent of schools lock some but not all doors, and nearly all leave the front doors unlocked.¹² Furthermore, the large numbers of mobile classrooms found in many fast-growing school districts pose unique security concerns.

While North Carolina offers schools an inventory checklist, new national recommendations ask schools to compile much more information. Currently, the State makes available a 17-page “Safe, Orderly, and Caring Schools” assessment inventory form.¹³ This inventory includes evaluating the physical environment, surveillance, access control, safety devices, safety provisions, and safety planning.¹⁴ In January 2006, the National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities announced a “Safe School Facilities Checklist” which is 50 pages and more comprehensive.

Recommendation 3: Help school personnel receive ongoing threat assessment training and security assessment technical assistance.

The State should help schools address threat and security assessments. First, the State should develop a program to assist principals, staff, and SROs with internal threat assessments based on the research of the United States Secret Service and the United States Department of Education. Second, the State should update the “Safe, Orderly, and Caring Schools” inventory assessment form by reviewing best practices throughout the nation. These best practices include the “Safe School Facilities Checklist.” In addition, the State should develop an assessment team consisting of law enforcement officials, juvenile justice officials, school administrators, and emergency managers. This team should meet with local school officials and parents to review and improve their school safety plan.

Finally, the North Carolina Justice Academy should make available to SROs training to conduct threat and security assessments at school. These SROs could perform assessments as part of training for schools that need extra help.

standard format adopted by the State Board.” N.C.G.S. § 115C-12(21) (2006).

³ North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. 2003. Guidelines for Developing the Local School Administrative Unit Plan for Alternative Schools/Alternative Learning Programs and Maintaining Safe, Orderly and Caring Schools. Raleigh, NC, <http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/docs/schoolimprovement/alternative/reports/others/guidelines.pdf> (accessed October 31, 2006). The Department of Public Instruction guidelines recommend these surveys as part of the Local Education Agency Safe School Plan. N.C.G.S. § 115C-105.47 (2006).

⁴ National School Safety Center. 1999. “School Crime Prevention Through the Use of Tiplines.” Resource Paper Series. Westlake Village, CA.

⁵ Elliott, Delbert S. 2003. White House Conference on School Safety. Preventing Violence in Schools, October 13, in Chevy Chase, Maryland, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/education/schoolsafety/index.html#> (accessed October 31, 2006).

⁶ North Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Center for the Prevention of School Violence. 2002. “North Carolina Safe Schools Tip Line: Year-Two Assessment.”

⁷ North Carolina State Board of Education. 2006. Superintendents’ School Safety Roundtable, October 19, in Raleigh, North Carolina.

⁸ National School Safety Center.

⁹ Fein, Robert, Bryan Vossekuil, William Pollack, Randy Borum, William Modzeleski, and Marisa Reddy. 2002. *Threat Assessment in Schools: A Guide to Managing Threatening Situations and to Creating Safe School Climates*. United States Departments of Treasury and Education. Washington, DC.

¹⁰ The National Association of School Psychologists refers to this distinction as “psychological safety” (the behavior and emotions of school staff and students) and physical safety (the safety of the school building and grounds).

¹¹ Fein, Robert, Bryan Vossekuil, Randy Borum, William Modzeleski, and Marisa Reddy. 2002. *The Final Report and Findings of the Safe School Initiative: Implications for the Prevention of School Attacks in the United States*. United States Departments of Treasury and Education. Washington, DC.

¹² Thomas, Pierre. 2006. School Security Remains Relaxed, Seven Years Post-Columbine. ABC News. television newscast. New York: ABC Television, September 28.

¹³ North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, Alternative & Safe Schools/Instructional Support. 2006. Assessment Screening Inventory for Safe, Orderly & Caring Schools. Raleigh, NC, <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/schoolimprovement/alternative/drugfree/assessment/> (accessed October 31, 2006).

¹⁴ Completing this inventory is a prerequisite for Super Safe School recognition from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction.



¹ For instance, in Cleveland County, North Carolina, a school shooting took place where the threat was known. Kenna, Amy and Joy Scott. 2003. Teen made threats of his intentions known. *The Shelby Star*. September 26.

² Specifically, the State Board of Education is required to “monitor and compile an annual report on acts of violence in the public schools. The State Board shall adopt standard definitions for acts of school violence and shall require local boards of education to report them to the State Board in a

PREPAREDNESS

During the preparedness phase, school administrators, law enforcement officers, and emergency managers coordinate, train, and practice the school safety plan. As the United States Department of Education observes, “Good planning will facilitate a rapid, coordinated, effective response when a crisis occurs. Being well prepared involves an investment of time and resources – but the potential to reduce injury and save lives is well worth the effort.”¹

Finding 4: Many rural school districts lack proof they are prepared for a crisis.

In 2003, two recognition programs for school violence preparedness were launched. In January 2003, the Attorney General’s Office and Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention–Center for the Prevention of School Violence (DJJDP-Center) established the Critical Incident Response Kit (CIRK) recognition program. To satisfy the program’s requirements a school must do the following: (1) assemble two kits; (2) complete the school site survey form with law enforcement; and (3) show the CIRK video to staff. To date, more than 1,500 schools are CIRK-trained though only 782 schools have been recognized. A review of the school districts published on DJJDP-Center’s website shows that 28 counties still lack CIRK-recognized schools.

Also in 2003, the Department of Public Instruction launched the “Super Safe School” (Triple “S”) recognition program. To satisfy this recognition program, schools submit a portfolio of information documenting their efforts to establish a safe school environment. According to the Department of Public Instruction’s web site, 67 schools have been recognized. The same data also reveals that in 74 counties no schools have been designated as Triple “S.”

Comparing the information from these two programs shows that 23 primarily rural counties lack proof that they are prepared for such a crisis. A survey of school superintendents found that urban school districts were better prepared than rural school districts in preventing and preparing for a mass-casualty event.² According to the school safety roundtable, the challenges for these rural school districts are a lack of staff and financial resources. The recent school shootings in Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, and Colorado also make evident that violence can take place in rural schools.

Recommendation 4: Hold school districts accountable for obtaining school safety preparedness certifications.

Because school safety is essential to learning, the State should hold all school districts accountable. This accountability should include establishing minimum standards for certification, if necessary. These standards should be based on the four phases of crisis management



set forth by the United States Department of Education and existing effective school safety programs. It should also incorporate periodic drills, tabletops, and live exercises involving school officials, law enforcement officers, and emergency responders.³

At the same time, the State should proactively target schools that are not adequately prepared by relying on the assessment team discussed in Recommendation 3. The team should build on the efforts that DJJDP-Center and the Department of Crime Control and Public Safety’s Division of Emergency Management provide already. This team should enlist help from parents, community members, and experts to find ways to reach these schools and evaluate their safe school plans.

Finding 5: North Carolina’s fire drill legislation does not reflect that school districts practice non-evacuation drills.

Preparedness requires emergency drills and crisis exercises for staff and emergency responders. In some instances, schools also involve their students. At a minimum, these drills help teachers and students know where to go and how to get there during an emergency. The United States Department of Education’s crisis management guide identifies four principle emergency drills⁴ :

EVACUATION requires all students and staff to leave the building for emergencies, such as a fire. These drills should also include transportation options for students with disabilities who have restricted mobility.

REVERSE EVACUATION occurs when students outside the school building return inside due to a suddenly occurring event, such as severe weather. This usually takes place during a sporting or extracurricular activity.

LOCKDOWN is a drill that occurs when students are unable to evacuate due to dangers outside the building. A lockdown may also be required when there is a crisis inside the building and student mobility would place students in danger. During a lockdown, all exterior doors are locked and windows covered.

SHELTER-IN-PLACE is a drill commonly used during hazardous material spills. During this drill, students and staff are held in the school building and windows and doors are sealed. A shelter-in-place drill differs from a lockdown in that limited movement within the building is allowed.

Currently, State law mandates that the principal conduct a fire drill during the first week after the opening of school and at least once each school month. These drills must include all students and school employees. The regulations are established by insurance and education officials.⁵ These drills have been highly successful in keeping students and staff prepared in responding to a fire.

However, it is important that students and educators prepare by practicing how to respond to different threats such as school shootings, chemical explosions, severe weather, and terrorism. Many school districts already conduct non-evacuation drills in close partnership with law enforcement and emergency managers.



Recommendation 5: Expand mandatory school drills to include a wider range of threat preparedness.

Because of other life-threatening hazards, the current drill legislation should be amended. Revision of State law should include establishing minimum standards and compliance, amending the types and kinds of drills required by schools, and integrating these drills into the safe school plan. One model to consider is the Illinois *School Safety Drill Act* which significantly updated the way Illinois schools respond to emergencies.⁶

Finding 6: Some schools lack resources and expertise when it comes to security technology.

School security technology, when effectively used, can complement safe school plans. As the National Institute of Justice reports, “They [security technology] can provide administrators or security officials with information that would not otherwise be available, free up manpower for more appropriate work, or be used to perform mundane tasks.”⁷

For school districts, the problem is twofold. First, school safety technology can be complex for the people who use it. Often, a school official may lack the technical expertise about the most effective and appropriate technology to use. “If your patient isn’t bleeding to death, you don’t need a tourniquet; that is, if your school situation isn’t that bad, you don’t need x-ray machines and metal detectors,” observes Ray Downs, past manager of the National Institute of Justice’s School Safety Program.⁸ Second, many school districts may simply lack the funds to purchase this kind of technology. Video surveillance cameras alone, generally the most common school safety technology,⁹ can range in cost from \$7,000 to \$30,000 in addition to long-term costs for maintenance and repair.

Recommendation 6: Gather technology, law enforcement, and school experts to provide recommendations on school safety technology.

Recognizing that many school administrators lack expertise in this area, North Carolina should gather experts in technology, education, and law enforcement with input from private industry to recommend solutions. These experts should focus on two goals. First, they should focus on the need and effectiveness of school safety technologies by collecting information from the school districts. During a recent school safety roundtable, the following observations were made:

- Some school districts lack basic two-way communications between classrooms and the main office, which could critically hinder response; and
- Some school districts lack automated telephone calling technology to immediately communicate crisis information to parents.

Second, these experts should consider adopting the National Institute of Justice's guidelines for school safety technology. These guidelines should provide school officials with non-technical, non-vendor-specific information on (1) the types of products available; (2) strengths and weaknesses of these products; (3) the costs of these products, including maintenance, personnel, and training expenses; (4) requirements to include in any requests for procurements; and (5) legal issues to consider.¹⁰

North Carolina should consider ways for school districts to acquire new technology. Any statewide funding initiative should include two requirements if a school district applies for assistance. First, it must complete the revised "Safe, Orderly, and Caring Schools" assessment inventory form discussed in Recommendation 3. Second, the school district must be recognized by the State for its preparedness.

Brunner, Judy and Dennis Lewis. 2006. The Ultimate Tool for School Safety Training. *Principal Leadership* 7(1): 65-66.

⁴ During the school safety roundtable, a fifth drill that involves the Special Response Team was also discussed. However, this does not appear to be a common practice throughout the State. School Board of Education. 2006. Superintendents' School Safety Roundtable, October 19, in Raleigh, North Carolina.

⁵ N.C.G.S. § 115C-288(d) (2006).

⁶ 105 Ill. Gen. Stat. § 128 (2005).

⁷ United States Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice. 1999. *The Appropriate and Effective Use of Security Technologies in U.S. Schools*. Washington, DC, <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/pubs-sum/178265.htm> (accessed October 31, 2006).

⁸ National Institute of Justice, National Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology Center. 2003. *Safe Schools: A Technology Primer*. *TechBeat*. Winter 2003 Edition.

⁹ Garcia, Crystal. 2003. School Safety Technology in America: Current Use and Perceived Effectiveness. *Criminal Justice Policy Review* 14 (1): 30-54.

¹⁰ United States Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice.

¹ United States Department of Education, Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools. 2003. *Practical Information on Crisis Planning: A Guide for Schools and Communities*. Washington, DC, <http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/emergencyplan/crisisplanning.pdf> (accessed October 31, 2006).

² Graham, James, Steve Shirm, Rebecca Liggin, Mary Aitken, and Rhonda Dick. 2006. Mass-Casualty Events at Schools: A National Preparedness Survey. *Pediatrics*. 117(1): 8-15.

³ A "tabletop" is a written exercise containing a scenario of facts that require the participants to problem solve and make decisions to bring the event to a conclusion with minimal negative impact. Ideally, tabletops involve school administrators, first responders, and emergency management.



RESPONSE

Response is the process of carrying out the crisis plans that schools have prepared and practiced. In all stages of crisis management – prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery – the school resource officer (SRO) is a prominent player.

Finding 7: School resource officers in North Carolina play a critical role in keeping schools safe.

North Carolina has been a national leader in establishing a statewide SRO program. An SRO is a “certified law enforcement officer who is permanently assigned to provide coverage to a school or set of schools.”¹ The SRO is specifically trained to perform three roles: (1) law enforcement officer; (2) law-related counselor; and (3) law-related education teacher. In our State, the first SRO program started in Forsyth County in 1974. Today, every local education agency receives the dollar equivalent of one SRO position per high school. In addition, the North Carolina Justice Academy offers SROs specialized training and certification.

There is evidence that the vast majority of principals, students, and the SROs themselves believe this program works in keeping schools safe. In 2001, North Carolina high school principals and administrators rated their SRO program at the top of a scale of effectiveness.² A study in Birmingham, Alabama, found that students thought the SRO program ensured their safety and even deterred trouble-making students.³ Similar results have been reported in many other SRO studies.⁴ But perhaps the best testimony to the SRO program has been the increase in local funding of such programs despite a 24 percent decrease in federal funding. As the Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention-Center for Prevention of School Violence (DJJDP-Center) concluded, “These trends note the value that communities place on having SROs in schools.”⁵

There are different levels of SRO coverage at primary and secondary schools. High schools have the greatest percentage of SRO coverage while elementary schools have the least. Specifically, 93 percent of high schools, 86 percent of middle schools, and 9 percent of elementary schools have SROs. In addition, 88 percent of high schools have an exclusive SRO⁶ compared to 81 percent of middle schools and almost no elementary schools.

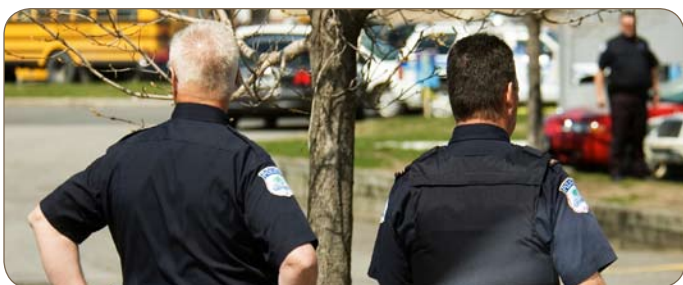


Table 4: School Resource Officer Coverage by School-Type, 2005-06

Grade Level	Total Number of Schools ¹	Schools without SRO Coverage	School with SRO Coverage	
			shared coverage	exclusive coverage
High School	390	27	18	345
Middle School	424	70	48	306
Elementary School	1,333	1,219	99	15
TOTAL	2,147	1,136	165	666

¹ This Table does not include SRO coverage for alternative learning programs or special education schools.

Recommendation 7: Expand the successful School Resource Officer program.

According to DJJDP-Center, 773 SROs work in primary and secondary schools throughout the State. While the number of SROs dramatically increased between 1995 and 2002, the increase has stabilized over the last four years (see Table 5). Since 2002, the increase in SROs averaged two percent. Due to the demonstrated success of the SRO program, the State should increase the number of SROs in high school and middle school with a goal of providing one SRO per 1,000 students.

Table 5: Increase in School Resource Officers, 1996-97 through 2005-06

Academic Year	SRO Numbers	Percentage increase from previous year
1996-97	359	47.7%
1997-98	450	25.3%
1998-99	507	12.7%
1999-00	567	11.8%
2000-01	623	9.9%
2001-02	683	9.6%
2002-03	731	7%
2003-04	747	2.2%
2004-05	754	1%
2005-06	773	2.5%

In addition to expanding the SRO program, North Carolina should evaluate SRO programs across the State.⁷ Additional instruction through the North Carolina Justice Academy should accommodate the increase in SROs.

Finding 8: The most prepared school districts incorporate multi-hazard emergencies into their safe school plans and train staff in basic emergency management.

Emergency management experts note that the multi-hazard response model is the most effective approach for schools to respond to an emergency. However, not all local education agencies plan for such dangers. In light of these challenges, the United States Department of Education suggests that school crisis plans address a number of events and hazards, including:

- Natural disasters
- Severe weather
- Fires
- Chemical or hazardous spills
- School shootings
- Bus crashes
- Bomb threats
- Medical emergencies
- Student or staff deaths
- Acts of terror or war

The benefits of planning for the unexpected were recently illustrated by the Wake County Public School System during the Apex chemical plant explosion. The superintendent arrived at his office at 3 a.m. and stayed through the morning. The director of security was at the Incident Command Post and coordinated with the County to set up security at all shelters to ensure the safety of evacuees. The school webmaster published frequent updates. An assistant superintendent worked in the County's emergency operations center. "It was a remarkable experience of cooperation and teamwork," said Del Burns, Wake County school superintendent.⁸

Recommendation 8: Educate staff on how to respond to non-traditional threats.

The State should better prepare school districts by providing more multi-hazard training. This can be done by training school districts to establish crisis teams based on the Incident Command System (ICS). Today, ICS is part of the new National Incident Management System which provides a "consistent template" for local, state, and federal agencies to prepare and respond to an emergency.⁹

The idea behind ICS is that every emergency, no matter how large or small, requires that certain tasks be performed. The ICS provides the flexibility to rapidly activate and establish an organizational model around five functions: (1) management, (2) planning, (3) operations, (4) logistics, and (5) finance and administration. The Critical Incident Response Kit program recommends that every school establish an ICS team.

¹ North Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Center for the Prevention of School Violence. 2001. *The Effectiveness of School Resource Officers*. Raleigh, NC, <http://www.ncdjjdp.org/cpsv/Acrobatfiles/brief4.pdf> (accessed October 31, 2006).

² Ibid.

³ Johnson, Ida M. 1999. School Violence: The Effectiveness of a School Resource Officer Program in a Southern City. *Journal of Criminal Justice* 27 (1): 173-92.

⁴ American Prosecutors Research Institute. 2003. *School Crime and School Resource Officers: A Desk Reference for Prosecutors*. Alexandria, VA.

⁵ North Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Center for Prevention of School Violence. 2005. *Annual School Resource Officer Census 2005-06*. Raleigh, NC, www.ncdjjdp.org/cpsv/sro.htm (accessed October 31, 2006).

⁶ An "exclusive SRO" is a school resource officer whose services are not shared with another school. Ibid.

⁷ North Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Center for the Prevention of School Violence has participated in a nationwide study of school resource officers. Finn, Peter, Micahel Shively, Jack McDevitt, and William Lassiter. 2005. *Comparison of Program Activities and Lessons Learned among 19 School Resource Officer (SRO) Programs*.

⁸ Morning Announcements. WCPSS Schools Provide Shelter for Apex Fire Evacuees. Wake County Public School System. http://www.wcpss.net/announcements/archives/2006/10/wcpss_schools_p.html.

⁹ The National Incident Management System was established as part of the Homeland Security Presidential Directive-5 in March 2004. United States Department of Homeland Security. 2004. National Incident Management System. Washington, DC.



RECOVERY

Once an incident has been contained, school administrators must manage the aftermath of a crisis with the goal of restoring learning. While law enforcement must supervise the incident to make sure the school is safe, recovery also requires emotional support. This phase may linger for days, months, and even years. Students and staff may need to be monitored for emotional and psychological needs. In addition, school administrators, law enforcement, behavioral health specialists, and emergency management officials should debrief the incident and reevaluate the safe school plan.¹

Finding 9: The State has a wealth of trained mental health responders who can provide “psychological first aid” to students and families.

Research indicates that children are one of the most vulnerable groups following a disaster; however, they can better cope with a traumatic event if they receive developmentally appropriate services.² Behavioral health specialists recommend that students should receive “psychological first aid” to reduce the risks for subsequent disorders, such as an anxiety disorder.³ These specialists who are specially trained in disaster behavioral health response should be made available to students and families after a traumatic event.⁴

Currently, all local education agencies employ school psychologists, school social workers, or school counselors who usually take the lead in response in providing “psychological first aid.” If an adequate number of behavioral health specialists are unavailable within the school system, the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) can provide additional specialists upon request. DHHS has an abundance of volunteers throughout the State who are trained in responding to disasters. DHHS also works closely with the North Carolina Psychological Foundation-Disaster Response Network and interfaith groups.

Recommendation 9: Identify key partners and behavioral health responders during the recovery planning.

The plan for the aftermath of a crisis must take place in the preparation phase. For this reason, the State Board of Education and DHHS should increase coordination to ensure that the emotional and psychological needs of staff and students are met during the planning process. As a result, local education agencies should identify key partners and behavioral health specialists trained in responding to disasters. These responders should be included in their safe school plan. In addition, recovery should include behavioral health support for first responders.

Finding 10: School officials, law enforcement officials, and emergency managers informally educate themselves on “lessons learned” from incidents around the country and state.

During the recovery phase, it is critical to evaluate each incident with an assessment of what worked and what failed. During the school safety roundtable, the Orange County Superintendent discussed how well the school district responded to their recent school shooting incident. The superintendent noted the importance of having accurate information relayed to the media and parents through an automated telephone program. But, she also said that the school could have improved its response by separating the media rally point from the parent rally point.⁵ Currently, reviews of school incidents occur informally and anecdotally when school administrators and law enforcement officials gather at conferences or meetings.

Recommendation 10: Adopt a formal debriefing process to help schools evaluate their own performance and educate other districts.

The State should make available the assessment team discussed in Recommendation 3 to assist schools in the debriefing process. The team, in turn, should disseminate “lessons learned” through existing publications and conferences to local officials and communities. A clearinghouse of information would assist all schools in improving their school safety plan.

¹ United States Department of Education, The Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools. 2003. *Practical Information on Crisis Planning: A Guide for Schools and Communities*. Washington, DC, <http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/emergencyplan/crisisplanning.pdf> (accessed October 31, 2006).

² American Psychological Association Practice. *Reactions and Guidelines for Children Following Trauma/Disaster*. American Psychological Association. <http://www.apa.org/practice/ptguidelines.html>

³ National Child Traumatic Stress Network and National Center for PTSD. 2005. *Psychological First Aid: Field Operations Guide*.

⁴ National Conference of State Legislatures. 1999. *School Violence: Lessons Learned*. *State Legislatures Magazine*.

⁵ North Carolina State Board of Education. 2006. *Superintendents' School Safety Roundtable*, October 19, in Raleigh, North Carolina.



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In addition, our agencies gained valuable insight from a select group of educators and school security officials through a roundtable meeting. The participants for this meeting included Superintendent Barbara Carraway of the Orange County Schools, Jerry Cross of the Union County Schools, Russ Smith of Wake County Public Schools System, Jim Simeon of the Sandhills Region Education Consortium, and Superintendent Barry Shepard of Elkin City Schools.

Our agencies also benefited substantially from the contributions of several law enforcement and security professionals. This includes Eddie Caldwell of the North Carolina Sheriff's Association, Antonio Blow of the Greene County Public School System; London Ivey of the Orange County Sheriff's Office; Dale Welsh of the Guilford County Sheriff's Office and Robert Whitman of the Duplin County Sheriff's Office. The latter two are also active members of the North Carolina School Resource Officers Association.

Finally, the Department of Justice and Department of Crime Control and Public Safety also appreciates comments and assistance from the following organizations: Deborah Horton of the Parent Teachers Association; Donna Lynch, Allison Schaefer, and Ed Dunlap from the North Carolina School Board Association; Joe Stewart of the Insurance Federation of North Carolina; Doris Glass, Melissa Reeves, and Lori Unruh of the North Carolina Association of School Psychologists; Steve Kimberling at the Kentucky Center for School Safety; Myron Thompson and Joe Isaacs at the Kentucky School Boards Association; Joel Rosch and Susan Alexander at the Center for Child and Family Policy at Duke University; and Sara Vitaska at the National Conference of State Legislatures.



1

prevention & mitigation

2

preparation

3

response

4

recovery

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