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School Safety and Security

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School Safety and Security

BACKGROUND
When Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Luna first took office, he secured funding from the Idaho Legislature to conduct a statewide school safety and security assessment in fall 2007. This assessment included surveys, site visits, focus groups and community meetings. Some results were concerning, such as the lack of training and resources, inability to control access to buildings, outdated/inoperable security equipment. Other results were very promising and not surprising, such as the fact that school personnel and communities are highly supportive and understanding of the need to address security and make safety improvements in our schools. Based on these results, the State Department of Education worked closely with local school districts to develop recommendations and improve safety and security for all students.

In December 2012, as a result of the tragic school shooting in Newtown, Connecticut, Superintendent Luna called on the state to take a renewed look at school safety and security. To accomplish this, he requested an appropriation of $100,000 in FY2014 to facilitate a Safe and Secure Schools Task Force in which school officials would work more closely with first responders. The Legislature appropriated this funding, specifically to, *"facilitate a safe schools task force, develop a common threat assessment tool and accompanying rubric, establish a support structure for the implementation of the tool throughout the state, establish a secure mechanism for collecting data results on the threat assessment, and assist school districts in the creation of safety plans at the local level, based on the deficiencies identified in the assessment."*

OVERVIEW
The Idaho State Department of Education (Department), in partnership with the Governor's office and retired Idaho State Police Director Colonel Jerry Russell, convened a Safe and Secure Schools Task Force with representation from the Idaho Chiefs of Police Association, Idaho Sheriffs Association, Idaho School Boards Association, Idaho Association of School Administrators, Idaho State Police, Idaho Division of Building Safety, Bureau of Homeland Security, Idaho Emergency Manager's Association, district health and safety coordinators, counselors, and instructional staff. The Task Force identified the following core concerns related to school safety:
- There is a wide variance in the level of attention and preparation for school safety and security issues in the school districts and charter schools across the state.
- Valid and reliable information on the current status of school safety and security in schools across the state does not exist.
- Ownership and responsibility for school safety and security at the state and local district level has been nebulous and not well defined.
- The majority of districts in the state lack the resources (expertise, personnel and funding) to establish meaningful and sustainable school safety and security improvement.

The Task Force crafted the following statements to guide its work:
- To identify the critical infrastructure, resources and action steps (statewide plan) to create a culture of readiness to prevent and respond to crises in every school community in Idaho.

- To build capacity for local jurisdictions to effectively prevent and respond to their unique crises situations.
- To assure every student, parent and staff member feels safe in Idaho schools.

ACTIVITIES
The Task Force conducted and guided the following activities through four face-to-face meetings and interim committee work between January and June, 2013:

- Analyzed recent reports, findings, research and guidance on school safety.
- Established critical trustee considerations for arming school personnel.
- Identified a reliable, valid school safety and security threat assessment tool and adapted for use in Idaho.
- Implemented the common threat assessment among a random sample of 74 public schools.
- Implemented a pilot project connecting a rural high school and the Bureau of Homeland Security's emergency communication infrastructure.
- Coordinated an emergency response drill with local first responders and a rural high school.
- Reviewed emergency communication solutions and crisis response training materials for school staff.

Common School Safety Assessment Implementation
The most fruitful and time-intensive activity involved the implementation of the common school safety assessment among a sampling of Idaho schools. The goals of this activity were to 1) build local capacity to assess safety and security threats, and 2) capture a real-time snapshot of Idaho's school vulnerabilities to inform training, policy and funding priorities.

Safety Assessment Study Design
To achieve a reasonable level of statistical validity, a 10% sample of the approximately 730 public schools was required. A stratified random sample of 74 schools was selected for inclusion in the study. Enrollment was stratified to ensure equitable rural / urban representation.

The Safety Assessment Instrument
The assessment instrument was adapted from the Texas School Safety Center, is holistic in nature, and considers most facets of school safety and security. The study assumed that those items evaluated within the tool contain value in making schools safer and more secure in a multi-hazard environment. The tool was altered to meet Idaho's schools needs by a team and reviewed and approved by the multi-disciplinary group assembled by the State Department of Education. A total of 45,806 data points were collected in the process of the study, which provides a rich data set for a representative statistical analysis of the current condition of school safety and security in Idaho.

Assessment Results Highlights

Domain: Intruder Assessment

Expected Standard of Care:

1. Limited access to the interior of a school through designated and monitored entrance/exit points.
2. Staff awareness and training to route all visitors back to the school office for credentialing.

Observed Standard of Care:

In 71 of 74 schools, entrance to the school was achieved through other means than the designated main entrance. In 66 schools, multiple points of ingress were available. In 71 cases, the kitchen door was not secured. In 29 secondary schools, a gym door was propped open. The average amount of time in the interior of a school before being contacted was 9.43 minutes. In 19 cases, the assessment team member was not contacted and self-reported to the office.

Domain: Access Control/Visitor Procedures

Expected Standard of Care

1. Visitor policy in place to assure identification and accountability for all visitors to a school.
2. Identification and accountability for vendors, contractors and non-building assigned school district staff.
3. Process in place to inspect and approve all deliveries to a school.
4. Policy on facility use during the school day.

Observed Standard of Care

Visitor policies show wide variance across the sample set. Twelve schools in the sample required positive identification, and 27 required a visible, dated visitor's pass be worn. Eight of the sample schools required vendors/contractors/district staff to follow the school visitor policy. Ten schools had policy/procedure in place to address unauthorized/suspicious packages/deliveries.

Fifty-seven schools were used for civic activities (polling places etc.) during the school day, and 27 of those had procedures in place to keep participants in the civic activity separate from the student population.

Domain: Keys and Identification

Expected Standard of Care

1. Key and lock policies designed to maintain secure building.
2. Identification and credentialing policy for staff and students.

Observed Standard of Care

In 31 cases, there was no master key control policy. In 45 cases, keys could not be matched to the individual who was issued the key. In 43 cases, keys could be duplicated without great difficulty. In 65 cases, policy had no previsions for when doors should be re-keyed. Twenty-eight schools required the wearing of identification, and of those schools, fewer than 50% of staff complied with the policy. Students were not required to wear identification in any school in the sample set.

Domain: Monitoring and Surveillance

Expected Standard of Care

1. Schools to be monitored by electronic means in a fashion to assure student safety and security.
2. Schools to be monitored by staff members in a fashion to assure student safety and security.

Observed Standard of Care

Of the sample schools, 44 had some exterior cameras in place, and in 4 cases, all installed cameras were functional on the date of observation. In 12 cases, the installations considered adequate coverage of the building exterior. In 33 cases, the equipment would be considered obsolete. Of the sample schools, 44 had some interior cameras in place (it should be noted that while there is some overlap, this is not the same 44 as discussed above). In no case would the current installation be considered adequate coverage of the building interior. In only one case were all interior cameras functional on the date of observation (in this case the DVR was nonfunctional as it lacked recording capability). In 55 of 74 cases, the hallways and restrooms were monitored. The 18 not monitored were in high school settings. As observed, a challenge to student monitoring in all settings is a consistent over-tasking of the staff.

Domain: School-Based Law Enforcement

Expected Standard of Care

1. School Resource Officer is located on site, having visibility of entrance/halls.
2. School Resource Officer regularly makes presentations to students and staff.
3. School Resource Officer is dedicated to a single campus.
4. School has security officers (not sworn law enforcement).
5. Security personnel conduct daily inspections for suspicious packages, etc…
6. Local Law Enforcement provides after hours patrols of school site.

Observed Standard of Care

School Resource Officers were found to be located on 19 of the assessed school campuses. However, in 20 schools officers designated as "School Resource Officers" regularly presented to students. Eleven schools had dedicated officers on their campus while 7 schools had non-law enforcement security people. Ten schools have Resource Officers in offices that face the primary entrance and/or hall. In 4 of the 74 schools, security personnel/law enforcement conducted inspections for suspicious packages and/or other items. After hours patrols are conducted at 57 of the schools assessed.

Domain: The Emergency Operations Plan (EOP)

Expected Standard of Care

1. School has an EOP that is Multi-hazard, addresses the four phases of the emergency management cycle, contains Incident Command System (ICS) and is National Incident Management System (NIMS) compliant.
2. School EOP is developed by a school safety planning team, reviewed and updated annually.
3. Local first responder representatives have been an integral part of the planning.
4. School EOP contains updated maps, site plans, room numbers, utility shutoffs, along with other detailed information that pertain to site specific emergency operations.
5. School EOP contains an established chain of command, has a designated primary and alternative Incident Command post location.
6. School EOP addresses go kits, their content and usage.

Observed Standard of Care

Twenty-four of the 74 schools assessed have a multi-hazard EOP. Thirteen have an EOP that addresses the four emergency response cycles, and 18 schools have an EOP that adheres to ICS and NIMS principles. Thirty-one schools used a safety planning team to develop EOPs, yet 40 schools report integrating local law enforcement in their EOP planning. Thirty-nine schools have also included EMS in their planning. 25 schools include school floor plans, site plans, and utility location. Thirty-two EOPs identify an established chain of command, 20 designate an incident command post with alternative location. Seventeen of 74 schools address classroom and facility emergency go kits.

Domain: School Climate and Culture
Expected Standard of Care
1. School has a Student Code of Conduct.
2. Code of Conduct contains statements regarding anti-bullying, harassment, violence policies.

Observed Standard of Care
Thirty-six of the schools assessed review and update Codes of Conduct annually. Sixty-six schools have an available, published Student Code of Conduct. Sixty-eight schools publish/promote statements regarding the prevention of bullying, harassment and violence.

Domain: Disciplinary Procedures
Expected Standard of Care
1. Disciplinary Procedures focus on root causes and contain school wide problem solving strategies.
2. Alternatives to suspension/expulsion are in place.
3. Procedures used to make decisions regarding student behavior are well known to all.

Observed Standard of Care
Forty-nine of the schools assessed have developed systematic problem solving strategies. Sixty-eight of the schools have alternatives to suspension and/or expulsion. Sixty-two of the schools have procedures that are known throughout the system by students, parents and staff.

Domain: Parent and Student Involvement
Expected Standard of Care
1. Parents are an integral part of the school's safety planning and policy development and student perspectives are represented.
2. Students are actively involved with promoting a positive school climate, a large percentage are involved in extracurricular activities.

Observed Standard of Care
Five Schools include parents and/or students in safety planning and/or policy development. Student involvement in building positive climates and participating in extracurricular activities happens in 42 and 36 schools respectively.

Domain: Staff and Student Training
Expected Standard of Care
1. Key staff is trained in NIMS/ICS procedures.
2. Administrators, teachers and staff receive annual training in conflict resolution, bullying prevention, suspicious packages or items, suspicious people and behavior.
3. Staff has been trained to respond to threats from students, including threats in writing.

4. Office staff has been trained to respond to threatening/suspicious telephone calls, including bomb threats.
5. Students receive training in social skills, violence prevention, conflict resolution, decision making, bullying prevention (cyberbullying), sexual harassment, gender respect, dating violence and Title IX.
6. School has implemented a character education or social skills program.
7. Substitute staff is trained in emergency operation procedures.
8. All student and staff trainings are documented.

Observed Standard of Care

Eleven schools have key staff trained in NIMS/ICS procedures. Nineteen schools provide annual staff training in conflict resolution / problem solving, and 22 schools train staff annually for bullying prevention. Six buildings have received some level of training in recognizing suspicious packages and items; while 29 have received training in recognizing suspicious people and behavior on campus. Thirty-four schools report that staff has been trained on recognizing student threats in notes, journals, classwork and conversation. Forty-one of the school's office staff has been trained in threatening suspicious phone calls/bomb threats.

Fifty-two schools report that students have received training on bullying and conflict resolution; 29 schools reporting that students have been specifically trained on issues of sexual harassment and gender respect. Nine Schools report that their students have received specific training on dating violence. Twenty-five schools report Title IX coordination for students and staff. Fifty-four Schools have implemented a character education or social skills program school-wide. Nineteen Schools have trained their substitute staff on emergency operations procedures. Sixteen schools document staff and student trainings in the fore-listed areas.

Domain: Referral Resources
Expected Standard of Care

1. School has a formalized Student Assistance Program.
2. School has a process to identify and serve students with at-risk and disruptive behaviors.
3. Staff who are trained to identify and work with potentially dangerous students.
4. School has a mental health threat assessment process in place.
5. A well-developed network of service providers is available for student referral.

Observed Standard of Care

Fifty of the schools assessed have a formalized Student Assistance Program. Sixty-three schools have an internal process to serve the needs of high-risk, at-risk students. Thirty-nine schools have staff members who have been trained to identify and work with potentially dangerous students. Twenty-six schools have some type of formal mental health threat assessment process. Thirty-six schools have a well-developed list of service providers for student referral.

Threat Assessment Next Steps
- Further refine the tool to meet Idaho's needs.
- Train local schools and law enforcement to implement the tool.
- Support schools in safety planning based on assessment data.

EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION PILOT PROJECT

Project Overview
This Bureau of Homeland Security/State Department of Education school connectivity pilot project (Payette High School is the initial site) provides an opportunity to utilize existing state operated communication networks in support of Idaho school safety and security. Advancements in standard internet protocol (IP) have enabled radio, broadband, and microwave networks to interoperate with each other. The project goal is to establish a model to leverage existing resources to increase emergency communication capabilities between schools and first responders.

The Public Safety Communications Network
The state public safety communications network is operated by the Bureau of Homeland Security and is based upon the backbone of mountaintop repeaters which transmit data across the state through microwave technology. Several types of communications technology can tie into this system including broadband and radio.

The Scope of the Pilot Project
The framework for these tests hinges on the ability to detect, assess and respond to school emergencies. The detection component includes cameras for the interior and exterior site surveillance. This capability can serve to assist in the prevention of incidents through early identification of threats and hazards, allowing schools to enact their emergency operations plans. The assessment component consists of video surveillance feeds from those test cameras, transported over the network to first responders. Viewing of surveillance feeds by dispatchers, emergency managers or law enforcement assists in determining tactical options and can reduce putting individuals in harm's way. The final component includes response which consists of voice over IP phones (VOIP) installed at select locations in the schools and interconnected with the statewide BHS Emergency Operations Center VOIP network. This system currently provides secure, direct broadband communications between state and county EOCs. These phones can also include push-to-talk features so that first responders could communicate directly with the school during an incident. Additional response components to be explored through the pilot project are access control and lock down capabilities. In addition, VOIP phones with video capability will be tested between schools and sheriff's offices.

Current Status of the Pilot Project
Since April of 2013, several meetings, site visits, equipment installations and demonstrations have taken place. In August 2013, a microwave link was made from Clay Peak to Payette High School. This connection brought the school onto the state BHS network. The first phase of equipment installs was made including cameras at the school and network management equipment at BHS. A demonstration of capabilities was conducted at the BHS Meridian communications office in December 2013. This included demonstration of live video feed capability, access control/lock down functions and push-to-talk from radios to VOIP phones

Next Steps
Management plans and agreements will be completed for a full demonstration of the proof of concept. As steps are completed and lessons learned, outcomes will be tracked in order to guide

future decisions. Throughout the process it has been demonstrated that local school districts, the Department and BHS are committed to school safety utilizing the latest and most secure technology. It has also been demonstrated that current technology exists within state government that can be an asset to school safety efforts and should be explored for its full potential.

Recommendations

The Task Force has made the following recommendations for school safety improvement in Idaho:

- Require school board trustees (or designees) to meet, at a minimum, annually with local first responders (those most directly responsible for responding to school crises) to discuss the Common School Safety and Security Threat Assessment implementation, safety planning, training and exercises.
- Establish an Idaho Center for School Safety to be housed within the State Department of Education. The Center will serve as the single state resource responsible for advancing the preparedness of schools to prevent, mitigate and respond to crisis situations and be governed by an oversight committee comprised of germane state agencies, first responders and education stakeholders.
    - Core functions of the Center include:
        1.) Implement Idaho's common School Safety / Security Threat Assessment in schools throughout the state; collect and analyze threat assessment results and report (aggregate) on the status and progress of school safety strengths and weaknesses to the legislature, the Governor, the State Board of Education and other stakeholders.
        2.) Build a repository of school safety research, best practices, resources, policy, standard operating procedures, guidelines and materials and disseminate as appropriate to support Idaho schools and establish school safety standards for Idaho schools.
        3.) Provide training, technical assistance and guidance to schools and first responders responsible for school safety and security in local jurisdictions. Assist schools in crafting and implementing school safety plans based upon the results of the common School Safety and Security Threat Assessment.
        4.) Leverage existing infrastructure, resources and activities to increase school safety (i.e. linkage between schools and county Emergency Operations Centers, engaging stakeholders and practitioners, etc…).

- Establish a funding mechanism to support ongoing safety improvements for Idaho schools.
    - All districts & public charter schools receive a base amount of $1,500 plus a prorated amount based on the prior year's average daily attendance.

    Initial Parameters (requirements):
    - Identify person most responsible for school safety and establish a committee (including first responders).
    - Implement the common threat assessment.
    - Craft plans based on the strengths and weaknesses uncovered by the assessment prioritizing the following:

- o Craft / refine multi-hazard, Incident Command System compliant emergency operations plan (jointly with first responders) - exercise the plan.
  - o Craft / refine communications plan including provisions for one to one, one to many and mass communication components- exercise the plan.
  - o School specific security / safety plans (access control, staff training, school climate, SRO considerations, etc…).
  - o The SDE will review and approve district plans for funding.

- Retain local trustee authority, currently articulated in statute, to arm school personnel for safety / security purposes. While the Task Force recommends retaining local jurisdiction's authority to allow school staff to carry weapons, the following are critical actions that must inform the decision:
  - o Consultation with the district insurance carrier to determine applicable policy changes and associated costs.
  - o Identification of the rules of engagement (for what purpose is it appropriate to brandish the weapon?).
  - o Identification of enhanced training required of those authorized to carry weapons on campus (training should be ongoing, not a one-time event).
  - o Consultation with local law enforcement to inform the decision to authorize school staff to carry weapons.
  - o Consultation with parents to inform the decision to authorize school staff to carry weapons.
  - o Clarifications of expectations (through policy) of the actions of authorized school staff when in contact with law enforcement personnel.
  - o Identification of psychiatric screening measures to ensure the sound mental health of staff authorized to carry.
  - o Determination of requirements to ensure weapon security and retention- security and retention measures prevent unauthorized access and use of the weapon.
  - o District policy should specify which specific staff member(s) are authorized to carry weapons, and should identify the specific the weapon(s) to be carried. The amount, location and security of ammunition should also be addressed.

Next Steps
Superintendent Luna's budget request for public schools in fiscal year 2015 will implement the recommendations of the School Safety and Security Task Force.
- Superintendent Luna has requested $500,000 to establish the infrastructure for the Idaho Center for School Safety and to carry out the activities described above.
- Superintendent Luna requested $2.2 million to be distributed to Idaho school districts and public charter schools to support ongoing safety improvements at the local level.

In addition, the Department will continue to work with educational stakeholders and first responders to do the following:
- Research, document and disseminate best practice models for arming school personnel.
- Establish parameters, timelines and reporting requirements for district funding distribution.