State Trends in School Safety
Recent Key Takeaways on School Safety and Homeland Security

**Key Takeaways on School Safety**

- Emergency Management Framework: Prevent, Prepare, Respond, and Recover
- Comprehensive Targeted Violence Prevention Plan
- Behavior Health Threat Assessment and Early Intervention
- Collaboration and Coordination

**Approaches**

- Adopting comprehensive emergency response frameworks, which include:
  - Measuring and Improving School Climate
  - Behavior Health Threat Assessments
  - School Safety Emergency Operations Plans
  - Emergency Response Drills and Safety Audits

- Measuring and Improving School Climate
- Social and Emotional Learning
- Behavioral Health Threat Assessment

- Incorporating Behavioral Health Threat Assessments at local level
- Anonymous Reporting Tip Lines or Apps

- School Safety Coordinators
- School Resource Officers
- Increasing Emergency Response Drills and Safety Audits

References:

- School Safety and Security Task Force Report, Massachusetts, 2014
- School and Firearm Safety Action Plan, Texas, 2018
- An Operational Guide for Preventing Targeted School Violence, USSS, 2018
Key Themes

I. School Safety Governance and Approaches
II. Prevention Efforts
III. Planning and Personnel
IV. Preparedness and Response
School Safety Governance and Multidisciplinary Approaches
State Trends: Multidisciplinary Approach for Statewide Bodies

• Governors play a critical role in setting a statewide agenda, convening agencies, and encouraging collaboration.

• Partnerships across the state with a comprehensive approach including: physical security, preparedness planning and response strategies, positive social and emotional development, school-based interventions, family-school-community partnerships, and more.

• Statewide plans have also been based in the framework of an emergency management cycle, applying education, health, and public safety partnerships throughout the continuum.
Multidisciplinary Programmatic Example: New Hampshire

New Hampshire Prevention, Intervention, Response & Recovery Efforts

- The state is undertaking a comprehensive approach to prevention efforts and creating off-ramps at every stage where a young person may be at risk.

New Hampshire School Safety Preparedness Task Force, Department of Safety, 2018
Prevention Efforts
## Behavioral Health Threat Assessment

A structured process to evaluate and address identified threats of violence

- Assess the credibility and severity of a threat of violence
- Structured process used by a multidisciplinary team with complementary expertise – often in counseling, school administration, instruction, and law enforcement
- Primary strategy recommended by federal law enforcement to prevent violent attacks on schools

## State Specific Example: Virginia

- Field tested at 35 schools; Virginia was the first state to require behavioral health threat assessment teams in every K-12 school via legislation
- Virginia model for behavioral health threat assessment resulted in reports of lower suspension rates and less bullying
- In 2016-2017 two-thirds of Virginia schools conducted assessments:
  - 9,238 assessments conducted
  - 50% threats related to self harm
  - 10% classified at highest level of assessment
  - State reports that in 96% of cases, the threat was averted
Tip Lines or Apps: Report school safety threats, suicide threats, bully, drug use, or other violence

- Reporting through text message, toll free hotlines, voicemail, email, and smartphone apps allowing for anonymous reporting.
- Reported information directed to law enforcement, state homeland security apparatuses (such as fusion centers), or school administrators - depending on whether a criminal nexus
- Philosophy: students are the best sources of information before an event occurs.

State Specific Examples: Colorado and Michigan

- Michigan, “OK2SAY” student safety program that allows students to confidentially report tips of potential harm or criminal activities directed at students, employees, or campuses.
  - Since launching in 2014 it has received over 14,000 tips
  - Michigan State Police hired special civilian positions just to handle tips
- Colorado, “Safe2Tell” received over 12,000 tips in the past year
  - Colorado tip line data shows 28 prevented attacks in a six year period
  - Most tips come through mobile-based apps
  - Anonymity mandated in statute
  - Largest impact has been in suicide prevention

OK2SAY, Michigan, Stats and Resources, 2014
JLARC Report, Virginia House Select Committee on School Safety, 2018
Planning and Personnel
**State Trends: Planning & Personnel – School Safety Plans**

**School Safety Plans**: Detailed document governing school responses to a variety of emergencies

- Procedures to follow before, during, and after an emergency including: lockdown protocols, communication with emergency personnel, and notification of and reunification with parents
- Staff training to implement plan

### Common School Safety Plan Practices in States

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<th>Practice</th>
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<tr>
<td>Collaboration with local police, fire, rescue, or other community partners</td>
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<td>Require public schools to submit school safety plans to state school safety center, department of education, law enforcement, or homeland security professionals for review</td>
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<td>Plans available to first responders and school officials online</td>
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<td>Encourage memorandums of understanding between first responders and charter/private/parochial schools</td>
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- Certain states are required to have a school safety plan.
- Comprehensive plan (natural disasters, acts of violence, medical emergencies etc.)
- Must be provided to local law enforcement
- Reviewed annually by school board

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JLARC Report, Virginia House Select Committee on School Safety, 2018
Safe Arizona Schools, AZ Office of Education, 2018
School Resource Officers (SROs): Sworn or certified law enforcement assigned to a school

- Engage in community policing to create a safe environment
- Authorized to carry a firearm on campus
- SROs have a variety of roles, including: first responder, informal counselor, and liaison between the school and public safety agencies

Common Considerations for SROs

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<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Details</th>
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<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>Topics such as: trauma-informed approaches, implicit bias, positive youth development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Certification</td>
<td>Specialized training standards and certification from the state</td>
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<tr>
<td>SRO Selection Protocols</td>
<td>• Picking officers best fit for the role</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Potential input from administrators</td>
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<tr>
<td>SRO Performance Metrics</td>
<td>• Cannot be based on # of arrests</td>
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*SROs are authorized in at least 36 states; their use however is typically decided at the local level.*

JLARC Report, Virginia House Select Committee on School Safety, 2018
National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments, School Discipline Laws & Regulations by State, AIR, 2018
Preparedness and Response
**Physical Security**: States are minimally involved with the process of physical security in schools

- School divisions, not states, typically determine the design of a building on a school campus and the physical security measure, if any, that would be used.
- State limited to: providing guidance informed by federal practices, encouraging or directing school security assessments, or providing funding contingent on adherence to requirements.

If states provide funding it is primarily through two avenues: **One-time capital grants** or through **loans/permitting localities to raise levies for the project**, some examples include:

- **One-Time Capital Funding** ranging between 10 and 99 million dollars.
- **Various Loan Sizes and Localities Raising Funding**.
State Trends: Preparedness and Response – Safety Audits

**Safety Audits**: Utilized to identify different ways to improve school safety

- Physical safety of school buildings and grounds
- Safety plans, policies, and procedures can all be revisited when a safety audit is being conducted
- Many states rely on “self-audits” conducted by school staff

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<th>Type of Safety Audit</th>
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<tr>
<td>General School Safety Audit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Audit of Facility Site (physical safety of school building &amp; grounds)</td>
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Drills and Exercises: used to prepare students and staff for a myriad of emergencies

- Most common drills conducted in schools across the country focus on: fire, inclement weather, and lock downs.
- Number of schools reporting that they now conduct active shooter drills has risen.
- Drills and exercises are governed by a clear plan, but various states take different approaches.