

**JOINT AD-HOC SHELBY COUNTY
TASK FORCE ON SCHOOL SAFETY**



FINAL REPORT

March 29, 2018



Members of the Joint Ad-hoc Shelby County Task Force on School Safety

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ABOUT THE TASK FORCE

Foreword

In the wake of recent incidents of school violence across the country and more recently in Parkland, Florida, the need for responsive action at the local level became apparent. Leadership from law enforcement, government and schools convened to review Shelby County's level of preparedness in the event that we should be faced with a dangerous encounter involving an active shooter. Our objective was to review our plans for an immediate reaction to a violent incident, our ability to contain and control an incident as soon as possible, and our level of preparedness to prevent such action in the future.

We also felt it was imperative to review all policies, practices, and training required to prepare faculty, staff, and students should such an incident occur. First responders and school staff must be fully aware of response protocols and the roles played by all concerned. Our work is not intended to be a comprehensive security review but instead a review of the roles and responsibilities we each have and our ability to perform them effectively.

The challenge for all committee members going forward is to review our operative procedures in the event of a violent incident in our schools and gauge our required response. Where, and if, any deficiencies are identified corrective action should be initiated. Transparency in all remedial efforts to strengthen our level of preparedness will be our goal in order to assure our citizens that progress is being achieved.

Summary

In February 2018, Shelby County Mayor Mark H. Luttrell, Jr., formed the Joint Ad-hoc Shelby County Task Force on School Safety ("Task Force"). The Task Force was formed as a result of the violent and horrific events at Stoneman Douglass High School in Parkland, Florida and the escalating incidents of school shootings and violence around the country.

Chaired and convened by Mayor Luttrell, the Task Force consists of community leaders, elected officials, and key stakeholders concerned with the safety of schools in Shelby County. The Task

Force was charged with developing recommendations to promote, maintain, and enhance existing and new safety measures at schools and school related events.

Task Force Recommendation Process

Over the course of several meetings, the Task Force considered, debated, and discussed a wide array of issues related to school safety. This brief report summarizes some of the key short-term and long-term recommendations of the Task Force to enhance school safety. Understanding that there is no panacea for effectively addressing all situations related to school safety, the recommendations are intended to serve as a snapshot of various measures that further promote safety in and around schools.

SHORT-TERM ACTION RECOMMENDATIONS

I. AWARENESS

Public Relations

Better educate and bring greater awareness to critical issues related to school safety, including, but not limited to: mental and behavioral health concerns, illegal use of guns and other weapons, gangs, cyber and physical bullying, and breaking the culture of silence.

It is recommended that these messages be spread out across several mediums and platforms to enhance effectiveness and visibility.

In-School Media

Promote in-school media messaging targeted specifically at school-aged youth regarding issues related to school safety. In-school media messaging should be consistent with the schools' aims of safety, prevention, intervention, and awareness (i.e. "See Something Say Something" campaign, etc).

Designated Points of Contact

Each school should make students, faculty, parents/custodians, and law enforcement aware of those designated individuals who serve as points of contact for matters of prevention, intervention, and during emergencies. Those designated points of contact should receive proper and adequate training.

24 Hour Hotline

Schools should continue to promote and maintain a 24-hour hotline dedicated to school safety issues. The 24-hour hotline number for Shelby County Schools is 901-416-5773. In the event of an immediate threat or emergency individuals should still dial 911.

Youth Advisors

Engage youth or peer-to-peer advisors to mentor students with a focus on guiding them to positive paths and encouraging environments conducive to learning and safety.

II. PHYSICAL SECURITY MEASURES

Review of Annual School Safety Assessment

Local law enforcement agencies should review the annual safety reports submitted by the school systems. The primary purpose of this review is to further ensure the completeness of the annual report and to provide any additional feedback and input by law enforcement to improve safety in schools. Law enforcement agencies will timely review the annual reports and provide feedback regarding physical and intelligence security from lessons learned.

Locked Doors

Keep the appropriate doors and points of access locked at all relevant times. A locked door is generally one of the first and simplest ways to discourage would-be intruders.

Metal Detectors

Continue the use of metal detectors at entry and exit points. Through safety assessments, consider additional locations where detectors might be appropriate.

Identification

Proper identification, such as uniforms, badges, etc. should be standardized and a part of the school culture. This measure will help readily those parties who have rightful access to the schools.

III. TRAINING AND POLICIES

Active Shooter Training

Provide active shooter training for students, teachers, and administrators. Active shooter training will help individuals identify potential threats and warning signs. Maintain, review, and update procedures in the event of an active shooter at a school. This training should be provided at no cost. A date certain should be established to begin and conclude the training. Schools should ensure that all relevant parties receive training.

Drills and Tabletop Exercises

Continue to perform scheduled and random multi-hazard in-school drills. Promote tabletop exercises and discussion sessions where team members discuss their roles during an emergency and their responses to various situations. At the minimum, such exercises should be conducted annually.

First Aid Training

First aid and related safety training should be up-to-date and made available to students, faculty, and administrators. Ensure that all first aid equipment in use is current and up-to-date.

Document Existing Programs

Designate a centralized location to access the policies and procedures related to school safety. Along with school officials, law enforcement should have access to these policies, procedures, up-to-date blueprints, and programs. It is suggested that the Shelby County Office of Preparedness serve as the central location to house such policies, procedures, and documents.

Cell phone and mobile devices

Schools should continue to review their student cell phone and mobile device policies to determine best practices for acceptable use and allowable possession during schools hours.

Staff Training

Train trainers within schools who will themselves be able to provide school safety training (i.e. active shooter training, etc.) as needed.

Guidance Counselors

Ensure guidance counselors and teachers continue address behavioral and mental health concerns, and respond to critical incidents on short notice.

LONG-TERM STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS

Legislation

Encourage legislation, at the local and state level, that further enhances school safety and security, focuses on gun access and punishment associated with gun crimes.

Risk and Threat Assessments

Risk and threat assessments, in partnership with local law enforcement officials, should be performed regularly at each school. Each school is encouraged to form risk and threat assessment groups and teams.

Enhanced School Security Systems

Ensure state of art systems in place and inspections are routinely performed to guarantee operability. Resources should also be identified to further enhance school security and monitoring systems.

SROs in Schools

Ensure that schools are adequately and sufficiently staffed with school resource officers. Law enforcement and school officials should annually assess all schools to determine whether additional SROs are needed.

Collaboration between Agencies

Increase the communication and sharing of information between law enforcement agencies, juvenile court officials, and schools. Develop a formal process for distributing critical and time sensitive information.

Redesign School Access Points

Where feasible, consider designing and/or redesigning school entry and access points to enhance and promote security.

Funding and Resources

Resources should be identified to sustain funding for school safety and other related needs. Funding sources should consider and prioritize security needs in schools at the same level as academic and infrastructure requirements.

CONCLUSION

The results of this review will be shared with any school system undertaking review of operational processes, policies and procedures. The purpose of this report is to provide the schools with short- and long-term recommendations to improve safety in schools. It is our sincere hope that these recommendations, if not already implemented, will be given serious consideration and ultimately enforced. Violence has no place in our society, least of all our schools. Our endeavor to protect our children and ensure a safe environment for education is crucial to protect our successes in student academic achievement.