



Virginia Commission on Youth 2018 Legislative Studies and Initiatives

School Resource Officers ADOPTED RECOMMENDATIONS IN BLUE

Adopted Language

Recommendations on Threat Assessment and Follow-up Treatment for At-Risk Youth

Recommendation 1

Amend the *Code of Virginia*, the Virginia Juvenile Community Crime Control Act (VJCCCA), so that community services can be provided to juveniles before they are brought before the court on a complaint or petition. (House Select)

(Support legislation submitted by Speaker's Select Committee)

Recommendation 2

Request the Department of Education identify opportunities to increase access to trauma-informed care within schools and communities, and expand access to trauma-informed training for school, mental health, and law enforcement professionals. (Children's Cabinet)

- a. Promote increased access to telehealth services that will enable students to receive access to care during school hours.
- b. Identify funding streams that may be utilized to achieve this goal.
- c. Support the placement of behavioral interventionist positions in schools. These positions should promote whole-child education and the social and emotional wellbeing of all students, but especially our most at-risk students. These roles should serve as an intermediary between classrooms and administration.

(By letter)

Recommendation 2b

Support legislation defining "behavioral interventionist."

Recommendation 3

Request that the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, in conjunction with the Department of Health, Department of Criminal Justice Services, Department of Education, and advocacy organizations, coordinate and promote educational campaigns and trainings that will help school professionals, students, parents, and caregivers recognize behaviors that could indicate the potential for self-harm, or harm to others. (Children's Cabinet)

- a. Promote student-driven, peer-to-peer, communication campaigns focusing on suicide prevention, recognizing when a peer may be in need of additional support, and "See

Something, Say Something” principles. Particular emphasis should be placed on educating students, parents or caregivers, school professionals, and others on how to report information and to whom information should be reported.

- b. Local school divisions may consider adopting an anonymous reporting mechanism.
- c. Develop school-appropriate guidance for school, mental health, and law enforcement professionals on which questions should be asked in order to assess a student’s risk-level for harm to self or others.

(By letter)

Recommendation 4

Introduce a budget amendment to dedicate funding to the Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety under the Department of Criminal Justice Services to develop cross-disciplinary trainings for schools, law enforcement, and mental health professionals, improve data collection, and enhance information-sharing within the threat assessment team, as well as between threat assessment teams and their partners, including across school divisions. (House Select and Children’s Cabinet)

This additional funding is allocated to:

- a. Provide technical assistance to local school divisions on the school climate survey, school safety audit, threat assessment teams, and other public safety practices.
- b. Increase the availability of cross-disciplinary threat assessment training for all involved stakeholders (including community mental health partners) that encompasses key principles from each of the disciplines involved in threat assessment.
- c. Authorize and fund the Center to conduct a single school climate survey in consultation with the Virginia Department of Education (DOE) and the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS) that encompasses safety, education, and health interests. Survey students and staff in secondary schools (Grades 6-12) on an annual basis. This would reduce burden on schools, eliminate duplicative efforts, and provide statewide data to assist schools in addressing school climate issues and better direct their efforts.

(Support budget amendment submitted by Speaker’s Select Committee and Governor’s Children’s Cabinet)

Recommendation 5

Amend the *Code of Virginia* to enable the Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety under the Department of Criminal Justice Services to adopt and implement a case management tool for threat assessment teams to ensure that schools are able to collect important data, monitor outcomes, and track information over time. (House Select and Children’s Cabinet)

(Support legislation submitted by Speaker’s Select Committee and Governor’s Children’s Cabinet)

Recommendations on Training for School Resource Officers**Recommendation 1**

Amend the *Code of Virginia* to require that all school divisions employing school resource officers have a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the employing law enforcement agency consistent with the Model MOU from the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services. MOUs should be regularly reviewed and updated. (House Select and Children's Cabinet)

(Support legislation submitted by Speaker's Select Committee and Governor's Children's Cabinet. Additionally, send a letter of support to Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security and Secretary of Public Education and the Speaker of the House of Delegates with the following recommendation to be included in the legislation: A local school district's MOU shall be reviewed between and signed off by a designated school administrator and newly added SRO each time a SRO is assigned to a school. This will ensure everyone knows what is in the MOU.)

Recommendation 2

Amend the *Code of Virginia* to require every school resource officer to receive SRO training approved by the Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety before beginning their assignment in a local school, with exceptions permitted for training availability and staffing exigencies. Encourage school administrators to attend this training with their assigned SRO.

(Legislation and budget amendment submitted by the Commission on Youth)

Recommendations on Best Practices on School Discipline**Recommendation 1**

Amend the *Code of Virginia* to create a Commission on Student Mental Health. Recognizing that student mental health is a growing and multifaceted issue and that policy-making should be informed by adequate evidence and subject-matter expertise, direct the newly created Commission on Student Mental Health to study, among other topics, the: (House Select)

- a. Current school counselor-to-student ratio and whether the proposed realignment of counseling responsibilities is improving the delivery of direct student services;
- b. Feasibility and affordability of enhanced wrap-around mental health services in schools through partnerships with the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, the Department of Medical Assistance Services, and Community Services Boards;
- c. Effectiveness of de-escalation and alternative disciplinary policies when interacting with students suffering from mental health challenges;
- d. Value of additional teacher training requirements on student mental health, such as mental health first aid.

(Support legislation submitted by Speaker's Select Committee)

Recommendation 2

Request the Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety under the Department of Criminal Justice Services to develop online training on critical school and student safety issues that can be accessed by teachers (including provisional teachers), law enforcement, and school support staff who may not be able to attend in-person trainings. Training could include cultural competency, supporting special populations, the role of the SSOs/SROs, mental health awareness, Threat Assessment Teams, etc. (Children's Cabinet)

- a. Require at least one school administrator from each school to attend a comprehensive school safety training developed or approved by the Center.
- b. School divisions may require that teachers participate in certain trainings or modules as part of their in-service or re-certification requirements.

(By letter. Additionally, in the letter of support, recommend that as DCJS is developing an online training, they include a self-exam component to accompany the training.)