

VIRGINIA COMMISSION ON YOUTH

School Resource Officers Recommendations

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

Recommendations:

1. Request that the Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety under the Department of Criminal Justice Services work with the Department of Behavioral Health & Developmental Services and the Department of Education to produce state level guidance/best practices on information-sharing between law enforcement, schools, and mental health providers (FERPA/HIPAA). As a part of this effort, have DCJS produce model documents for information-sharing. (Children’s Cabinet)
2. Request that the Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety under the Department of Criminal Justice Services identify and recommend ways to enhance the timely notification from law enforcement to schools, and schools to law enforcement when they are aware that a student has experienced, or may experience, a traumatic event in the community. (Children’s Cabinet)
3. 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)
4. 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.
5. Request that the Department of Criminal Justice Services in conjunction with the Department of Education develop 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)

This additional funding is allocated to:

- 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.
6. 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.
7. 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)

Training for School Resource Officers

Recommendations:

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)
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 within 12 months of employment, and encourage school administrators to attend this training with their assigned SRO. Also, introduce a budget amendment to provide adequate funding to the Center for School and Campus Safety to implement this recommendation. (Children's Cabinet)

Best Practices on School Discipline

Recommendations:

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.
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 to school 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.

Please note: The Commission on Youth will hear a presentation at the December 4, 2018 meeting on the work of the Governor’s Children’s Cabinet and its subcommittees on Early Childhood Development and School Readiness, Nutrition and Food Security, Student Safety, and Trauma Informed Care. In addition, the Virginia Department of Education will be presenting on the Virginia Tiered Systems of Supports as a best-practice to address the academic, behavioral and social-emotional needs of students.