



Date: February 15, 2020

Source of Report: L.D. 858 Resolve, Directing the Department of Education to Study and Make Recommendations Relating to School Safety and Security

Topic: Establishment of a School Safety Center

Context

The Maine Department of Education (MDOE) is fortunate to have secured the Grants to SEA's for Emergency Management (GSEM) Grant and now has the opportunity to utilize substantial resources to continue to improve the safety of Maine's schools for our students and staff. Maine is a unique state, both culturally and geographically, with a rugged, independent mentality and its vast areas of ruralness, interspersed with pockets of urban communities, which only add to the challenge of developing a plan to meet all needs. Clearly a one-size-fits-all approach will not work well in Maine. Therefore, the MDOE will strive to meet schools where they are related to their emergency preparedness and school climate and bring them to where they need to be—all within the scope of their resources and abilities. The MDOE will provide an environment and opportunity for schools to become successful in their emergency preparedness while at the same time being sensitive to local needs and concerns.

Strategy

Our overarching strategy is to employ a public health approach to address school safety. This approach is holistic, addressing the problem in a multidisciplinary manner. It utilizes preventative measures to improve the health and safety of all individuals by addressing underlying risk factors that may increase the likelihood of violence. We will also empower local, county and state stakeholders so that local resources can be leveraged to efficiently and effectively deliver services and supports to our school communities.

The collaboration with local resources will ensure each school administrative unit (SAU) has a plan and approach to safety that reflects its local needs and concerns. A key component of this effort will be a recommendation that each SAU assign one or more persons designated as a School Safety Lead (SSL), who can interface with DOE and the local school safety advisory team. The SSL will receive free training by the MDOE, and should be responsible for bringing that training to the SAU. Drills, procedures, policies, physical security, and behavioral interventions could all be facilitated by the School Safety Lead, in conjunction with the local safety advisory team and the MDOE.

Local safety and security teams will be developed and receive the same training, thereby assuring a level of up-to-date expertise commensurate with the task of creating and maintaining a safe and secure school community. This tiered approach of support and the delivery of services

to the schools will facilitate local involvement, with access to ample resources for the school team to utilize in meeting their school's safety and security needs. The development of the system described above, is to solidify the underlying premise that school safety and security is a communal responsibility, and all the stakeholders are a part of the greater whole in accomplishing this critical effort for our schools.

Key components recommended for success are as follows:

- Establish a point person as the School Safety Leads for each SAU
- Develop local, county and/or state multi-disciplinary teams for school safety planning
- Develop common language for School Resource Officers and or school security officer functions and duties that are delineated and solidified in agreement with stakeholder's input
- Implement mental health services/supports/programs in schools with agreed upon ratios of mental health professionals/school counselors to students be phased in over time
- Support schools in their ongoing efforts to provide:
 - Suicide mitigation programs and training
 - Bullying prevention programs and training
 - Substance use prevention programs and training
- Implement trauma-informed approaches in all schools
- Facilitate the coordination and partnership to local mental health services
- Develop an anonymous tip line with a follow-up protocol for every school
- Determine basic and annual required training for School Safety Leads, school staff, school board members and other appropriate stakeholders, appropriate to the positions held
- Conduct site assessment and climate surveys in tandem by either local teams or MDOE personnel
- Create a training institute "The Maine Emergency Management Safety and Security Institute for Schools" (MEMSSI). The Institute will conduct basic, advanced, and regular in-service training for core participants (Police, Fire, Health, School Safety Specialists, Other) Additional stand-alone trainings (seminars) would also be conducted. All training would be administered and coordinated by the Institute. Additional Staff are necessary to support the training institute; however, this staff would be augmented by state, county, and local EMA personnel, as well as other subject matter experts available for this purpose through the military and/or our higher educational system.
- The Institute will seek to partner with an organization of higher learning for additional resources and the development of a certificate program in Emergency Management.

The Maine School Safety and Security Center

The development of a multidisciplinary School Safety and Security Center (SSSC) is fundamental to this project, as the center will focus equally on technical and operational target hardening methodologies, as well as encouraging positive social emotional learning (SEL)

environments, trauma informed practices, and mental health supports for students. The placement of the SSSC within the Office of School and Students Supports (OSSS) means that the team members from OSSS will be able to provide much of the training and guidance in these areas. The Center will provide free training and education, technical support, guidance, model policy and procedure information, and facilitate access and sharing of local, county, and state resources to the schools.

Working with our various stakeholders; Emergency Management Agencies (EMA), Department of Public Safety (DPS), Mental Health, Public Health/Center for Disease Control (CDC) and other identified parties, the SSSC will design a delivery service for the above stated resources. The creation of local teams (Schools Safety Advisory Teams) of professionals guided by the MDOE to assist the schools on their path to improved security will be a key component of this system of delivery.

The development of this network of emergency management stakeholders and the administrative managing of this network will be managed by the SSSC. Once the infrastructure and system are in place, we will have a complete mechanism for service delivery to SAUs. This will be a robust system with year-round duties consisting of training, technical support, data collection, resource support, mental health and SEL support. Partnership with other safety professionals/stake holders (i.e. EMA/DPS/Public Health) may mitigate the number of MDOE staff initially required for this work, providing the partners are willing to assign staff to this effort.

To date (1/29/2020), MEMA has confirmed a high degree of support for this plan and is committed to providing staff, logistical support and physical infrastructure (classrooms) as needed and within their capabilities. Feedback from our stakeholders indicates support leading to optimism that additional resources will be available to the Maine Emergency Management and Security Institute (see below) to facilitate our training needs.

Maine Emergency Management Safety and Security Institute for Schools (MEMSSI)

A training institute will be developed with a vetted and approved training program. This training will be available to all the stakeholders involved, to facilitate a common knowledge and language to promote uniformity in effort and action. There are 174 school districts in the state of Maine, therefore there will be, if all participate, 174 School Safety Specialists to train. Smaller districts may explore the ability to share a School Safety Specialist. Each district can send more personnel to be trained, and other stakeholders (Advisory team members (EMA/DPS/etc.) are also encouraged to attend especially if they are working with the school for emergency planning. Regular annual in-service training will be provided to ensure new material is covered on a regular basis to keep all schools up to date on the most recent standards and procedures. The Institute, in conjunction with the SSSC, will be a one stop shop for all things school safety and security related.

The staffing of this security center and institute will consist of current stakeholders who are experts in their fields i.e. MEMA, DPS, Public Health, Mental and Behavioral Health. There will be a need to augment this staff with other paid staff employed by the MDOE.

Currently the MDOE is in the process of developing a Training Coordinator position to fulfill the duties and responsibilities encompassed in running the Training Institute. This position will accelerate our ability to implement the process outlined above.

Multidisciplinary Advisory Committee

To be considered with this model is a Multidisciplinary Advisory Committee to assist with the long-term planning and ongoing direction of the institute.

Mental Health, Social Emotional Learning, Positive School Climate and Threat Assessment

Insuring the safety of our students and staff moves well beyond the physical mechanisms of security that include hardware and technologies which are designed to impose tangible, visible and concrete measures. The equally and arguably more effective measure of security and safety is the overall health and well-being of the school community itself. The factors that lend themselves to this universal sense of a community's well-being are also the factors that create positive school climate, a sense of community, and a general feeling of inclusiveness and belonging. All these factors equally contribute to the safety and security of the school.

The numbers of juveniles afflicted with mental health conditions have demonstrated a steady increase, while at the same time access to services continues to be limited, with less than 50% of juveniles in need of treatment obtaining services. This condition, coupled with the need for our schools to have a threat assessment protocol when concerns present themselves, supports a holistic approach to the overall mental health of our students.

There are several programs that provide this level of care for our student population, for example, Comprehensive School Mental Health Systems (CSMHS) are school district-community partnerships that provide a continuum of mental health services to support students, families and the school community. However, all these programs, in general terms, have the same components that consist of a multi-disciplinary team, early identification of at-risk students, documentation/investigation of the concern, referral to an appropriate professional, follow up services/interventions, and tracking to assure the interventions are appropriate and working.

These same steps are incorporated in the various threat assessment models. Therefore, our recommendation is to provide the framework, training and support for schools to develop their own response to the overall mental health concerns in their schools to include the most serious response, necessitating the need to apply a threat assessment. Within the frame work of these components, an informed school can create a protocol that meets the goals of both a threat assessment and improved social emotional climate in the school. Connecting schools with mental health services is a state-wide challenge and a key component within the above outlined steps. The MDOE will continue to examine this challenge and search for resources/opportunities to increase capacity in this area.

Training of all the stakeholders in this process will be an initial and ongoing role for the MDOE. Police officers, district attorneys, school staff, school boards, mental health professionals and others will need to understand the foundational rationale and the strategies to assure this essential

element of school safety. The development of our training institute will greatly assist in the educational requirement necessitated by this process.

The SSSC will have a dedicated line of service that directly addresses this important issue. The most serious conditions identified in schools and the juvenile demographic are suicidal ideation, depression, anxiety/stress, exposure to trauma, self-harming, and being the victim of bullying (victimization). All these conditions are associated with some degree of risk to contribute to school violence. We will also focus on assisting schools in developing a positive school climate, strong social emotional learning environment, and trauma informed practices.

A key area of focus is the nexus between the physical security and the socio-emotional/mental health climate of the school. Neither is mutually exclusive of the other when developing a safe and secure community. Our trainings and guidance will incorporate both concepts and seek out pragmatic and efficient methodologies of imparting the best practices within the resources of the local school district.

Seeking out collaboration with our key mental health stakeholders will be an identified task for the SSSC. Our federal, state, and local stakeholders will be communicated with to determine their level of support and desire for involvement.

The lack of access to mental health services, as well as the stigma associated with seeking and or obtaining mental health services for juveniles, are both substantial barriers to reaching the stated goal of a safe and secure school. These barriers are also a limiting factor to following the above outlined components of a model mental health/threat assessment program for schools. To that end, we will offer support, guidance and facilitated collaborations with stakeholders to schools to mitigate these barriers.

School staff are also affected by climate and the fear of violence. As part of our mental health lane we will provide resiliency training for staff. Resiliency will assist staff in combating burn out, stress, and compassion fatigue.

Currently the MDOE is coordinating efforts with several stakeholders who are applying for grants to support mental health in schools. Should we accomplish this coordination, we will be able to make significant headway on the process explained above.

Site Assessment/schools culture survey

Initial cursory feedback from our constituents demonstrates a substantial desire for site assessments of our schools. Several prior efforts have been made to accomplish this task throughout the state, however currently there is no complete up-to-date central database that includes this area of concern. A major undertaking and role of the infrastructure outlined above is to provide the resources, technical expertise, and personnel needed to accomplish this task. As designed, the tiered approach of support should enable most school districts to accomplish this task independently, utilizing their School Safe Specialist and local safety team. In areas where there is need, and or gaps in this system, MDOE would work through any barriers with the school to accomplish this effort. Our plan calls for the pairing of site assessments with school

climate surveys to gain a holistic picture of the school. Thereby supporting our premise that school safety is a combination of strong physical measures and equally strong environment and culture.

Planning/EOP Review/Exercises

Our stakeholders at every level are eager for high quality emergency plans and the associated and prerequisite exercises that are needed to practice these plans. The MDOE School Safety and Security Specialist, working with the local school safety team and empowered by the DOE via training and technological support, will be able to develop high quality plans and procedures that meet or exceed standards. To be considered in this process is;

1. Prior work accomplished in this area
2. Is there a central repository of all plans in the state?
3. Where are they located,
4. What agency is responsible for their storage and review.

I would recommend that the DOE and/or MEMA work on these questions, including our schools input on their desire for our oversight and review of their plans. This work/lane will be a substantial undertaking and require a full-time person to coordinate, even in areas with strong school specialists and local safety teams. Considering this effort will be ongoing, the need for a central, consistent responsible party at the state level will necessitate a full-time person be assigned to this lane.

School Resource Officers

Maine recently conducted several inquiries about the effectiveness and appropriateness of schools utilizing police imbedded in their organizations. Currently there is no overarching oversight of SROs in Maine, nor are there uniform policies or procedures for the implementation of SROs. There is no agreement or standards on the training, role, or duties of an SRO in Maine. Maine is just at the beginning of addressing these issues. Therefore, it is appropriate that we provide guidance, support, information, training, and recommendations regarding SROs in schools. A subject matter expert will be assigned to lead this lane of service.

Currently an SRO model Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is being developed by the MDOE, in collaboration with numerous stakeholders. At the same time, SROs are in the process of creating an SRO Association for Maine. It is our hope that the development of both initiatives will assist us in working with representative groups to set guidelines and standards around this valuable resource. We recently met with the SRO Association, and they welcomed our partnership in their efforts and our desire to support them with training, technical support, guidance, policy and legislative review.

Law and Policy Review and Recommendations

At this time, we will not be assigning this lane to any one person. The combined expertise of the team, and our access to ample subject matter experts negates the need to staff this lane. However, both law and policy review and recommendations are critical to this effort, and the future may dictate a more focused resource be assigned for this purpose.

Timeline:

Phase I Beginning in the early spring of 2019, there was a redesign and reorganization of existing positions in the MDOE into the Office of School and Student Supports. This new team, with the addition of five new positions that came on board over the course of the next 8 months, works to strategically support capacity at the MDOE for providing help to the state in critical areas of need. This new team provides technical assistance, resources, guidance, etc. to local school districts in the areas of social-emotional learning, behavioral and mental health, trauma-informed practices, restorative practices, school nurses, cultural responsiveness, family engagement, physical and health education, LGTBQ+ students, migrant and foster students, homeless, truant, and other highly mobile students and student and staff wellness.

Once the vision of this team began to take shape, the Commissioner determined that the Office of School and Student Supports was a natural fit to provide resources and technical assistance related to emergency preparedness and response to the state, and that comprehensive emergency management planning aligns perfectly along its continuum of responsibilities. In order to make this the most effective team in the areas of school safety and security however, it was decided that bringing on two new positions to oversee the work of the emergency operation plans, and other school safety-related areas, would be the next move.

The Department moved through the lengthy hiring process over the course of the summer, which stretched into late fall of 2019. The hiring process was drawn out due to designing and getting approval for the new position job descriptions, internal document reviews, authorizations to hire, financial order signatures, job postings, interviewing, reference checks then offers being made and accepted. Lastly, we needed our top two candidates for the School Safety and Security Coordinator and Specialist positions to complete their current professional obligations before joining the Maine DOE team.

Phase II The second phase of our timeline encompasses perspective: gathering feedback sessions from the field, meeting with respective partners, and trainings that we have put on as the OSSS team were underway.

Beginning in May, as he was developing the OSSS team, Rich Meserve (OSSS Director) began attending monthly MEMA Director meetings to learn as much as he could about what they did while also introducing and updating that group to the direction in which we were headed with school safety and security. Over these months he, along with the Commissioner and others from her office, also met with other members of MEMA, school officials, restorative justice groups, mental health agencies, local law enforcement and first responder agencies as well as the U.S. District Attorney's Office, Secret Service and the F.B.I. in order to get feedback on what was needed to improve school safety in Maine and how MDOE could partner with all these various agencies and organizations.

As a result of many of those meetings it was determined that there was a need for immediate training. MDOE brought two full day Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (REMS) trainings to Maine in late August. On August 26, 2019 MDOE hosted a REMS Developing Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) K-12 Train the Trainer (TtT) in Augusta. The

next day we hosted a REMS Developing Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) K-12 Train the Trainer (TtT) and Conducting K-12 Site Assessments with Site Assess Training, also in Augusta. Both events were well attended, with representation from school safety teams, school administrators, law enforcement and county EMA directors.

Starting this summer there were two significant multi-agency collaborations that pertain to school safety; The Opioid Response Task Force and the Governor's Children's Cabinet were both created by Governor Mills to explore ways that the governmental agencies of Maine, along with community partners and resources across the state, could help to address the problems associated with opioid misuse as well as problems facing Maine's early childhood and at-risk student populations. MDOE and the Office of School and Student Supports have multiple representatives on both groups, and use the information gathered at these meetings to better define the needs across the state in the areas of school safety and security.

Late in 2019 there were two legislatively-mandated task forces that were put together and facilitated by the O3S team and the Commissioner's Office. These task forces were the Trauma Informed Task Force and the Bullying Prevention Task Force. These were both three-day task forces that met weekly through December and January. The concerns and recommendations that came from those two task forces provided invaluable information to help us better define the work of the School Safety and Security team, as well as address needs for training to the field. To that end, the Office of School and Student Supports organized the following training:

Trauma Informed Readiness and Response (TIRR) Workshop I January 24th, 2020 Orono, Maine

Feedback from task forces, which included administrators and education staff as well as community partners, reported an urgent need for resources to support students who are facing significant barriers to their education that are related to adverse life experiences. The Commissioner of Education called for a workshop to provide space and expertise for school teams to develop trauma informed interventions for their unique school settings. Through the DOE Office of School and Student Supports, a structure of best-practice, systemic evaluation and structured implementation was designed to be presented to school teams who would consist of administrators, mental health, support and/or academic staff. Teams of three were encouraged to sign up from the same district.

The first TIRR Workshop was attended by 250 educators with roles including: principals, superintendents, teachers, social workers, school counselors, support staff and occupational therapists as well as members of Maine School Management Association, Maine Administrators of Services for Children with Disabilities, Maine School Counselors Association and National Social Workers Association. The feedback from this workshop was overwhelmingly positive with many comments that noted the immediately-useful information and tools provided to make a difference in student's lives and overall school culture.

Trauma Informed Readiness and Response (TIRR) Workshop II March 19th, 2020 Portland, Maine

Due to the enthusiastic response to the first TIRR Workshop, the Office of School and Student Supports is putting on a second workshop to accommodate the many people who could not get

into the first one, as well as other interested education, mental health and law enforcement professionals.

Trauma Informed Readiness and Response (TIRR) Workshop III Date and location to be decided

A third TIRR workshop will be held in the spring in northern Maine (date and location are still to be determined). We do know we are hoping to hold this workshop in the northern part of the state to facilitate the ease in which interested parties can access the training without driving 4-8 hours to attend a workshop in the central or southern parts of Maine.

Phase III Started January 20, 2020

0-4 weeks

Research and stakeholder meetings to gain knowledge and consensus on direction Team
– meet with local emergency planning teams (EMA/School/Police/Fire)

1/29 MEMA

1/31 NAMI

2/4 at 1000 Hancock County

2/5 at 1000 Waldo County

2/6 at 0900 York County

2/6 met with MIAC, agreed to meet to work out collaborating going forward

2/7 NH School Safety Center

2/10 Meet with mental health experts to coordinate grant application

2/10 SRO meeting re: association

2/12 at 0830 Washington County

2/13 at 0930 Sagadahoc County

2/14 SRO MOU Taskforce

2/18 at 1000 Penobscot County

2/19 MEMA Board of Directors

2/20 at 0830 Kennebec County

2/24 at 0930 Aroostook County

2/25 at 1300 Lincoln County

3/5 at 1000 Oxford County

3/3 at 11:00 Knox County

3/6 at 1200 Cumberland County

3/18 MEMA Monthly Director's Meeting

3/12 at 1000 Piscataquis County

3/20 at 1000 Androscoggin County

3/27 at 1000 Somerset County

R. Susi attend REMS training/certification is ongoing

Web page development is ongoing

To date, stakeholders agreeing to support and work with us:

- MEMA
- MIAC/DPS
- York, Waldo, Hancock, Washington Counties
- NAMI Maine

4-12 Weeks

Planning and implementation/staffing of Safety and Security Center

Hire staff:

Training Coordinator

Mental Health/Threat Assessment Coordinator

Planning and EOP Review Coordinator

MOU's with partner agencies

Develop protocols/procedures and administrative duties for each lane of service

10-18 Weeks

Planning and implementation/staffing of the Training Institute

Develop curriculum

Schedule trainings

Staff instructors MOU's

Obtain physical infrastructure: classrooms, technology

19 -30 weeks

First training takes place

Teams are developed and trained

Synthesis of efforts to adjust strategic plan

Operationalize all lanes of service

Work plan for the next 6-12 months

30+ Weeks

School Safety Specialists and local safety teams are trained-ongoing

Network of tiered safety professionals are solidified and operationalized

Site/school climate assessments are operationalized-ongoing

Planning and exercise protocols and administrative process is operationalized-ongoing

Mental Health and Threat Assessment protocols are trained and implemented-ongoing

Expand training and support to preschool and higher education

Strategic Plan**Vision**

To assure the overall safety of Maine's schools, to the highest degree possible, providing an environment that allows students, staff, parents and visitors to feel welcomed, safe and secure thereby providing an environment where all students will grow, thrive and succeed.

Mission

To develop a safe school infrastructure that will deliver high quality, up-to-date, best practices, procedures, training and technical assistance and support to Maine schools.

Statement of Beliefs

1. The social/emotional well-being of students is as important as their academic performance. Together they contribute to a healthy school environment that is essential to the success of Maine students while also reducing school violence.
2. Everyone who comes in contact with students in a school system has a responsibility to help create and sustain a healthy school environment and to ensure a student's social/emotional well-being. The school should ensure that every student has a relationship with a caring adult within their academic setting.

3. The school environment, culture, approaches to discipline, and interface with the community is crucial to the well-being of all students, and particularly to those students who are alienated from the school program and those with behavioral and/or mental health issues.
4. Schools and communities are responsible for determining how they will collaborate to create a systematic approach to school safety.
5. To create a healthy school environment and reduce violence, schools and communities should:
 - Strive to adopt comprehensive, evidence-based and promising practices and approaches that reduce violence by successfully addressing conflict and resolving problems; identifying youth at-risk early; providing behavioral health and wrap-around services; and building on the strengths of families and young people seeking the education and skills to lead safe and fulfilling lives.
 - Prioritize training for those working in schools and with students, including law enforcement personnel and school resource officers, in developmentally sensitive, collaborative, proactive, restorative, positive, relationship-oriented, and communication-enhancing approaches that help students with behavioral challenges.
 - Reject policies and practices that have the unintended consequence of increasing the number of youths who unnecessarily come in contact with law enforcement, the courts, and the justice system.
 - Adopt policies and practices that are structured to continually evolve based on new data and community needs.
 - Adopt policies and practices that offer students behavioral, social, and emotional supports and learning programs.
 - Adopt policies and practices that include substance abuse prevention
6. Utilize the most up to date practices to assure the safety and security of the school to include ongoing site assessments, target hardening, procedures, protocols, and policies. Continued learning is necessary to maintain the most current practices in all venues, mental health as well as tactical.