

West Virginia

# SAFE SCHOOLS



Practical, local steps  
to prevent and prepare  
for school violence.



*Educators, law enforcement and communities  
working together for safe schools.*

[www.WVSafeschools.org](http://www.WVSafeschools.org)





Dear Partner,

Last December's horrific mass murder at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, was an unthinkable national tragedy. It was also an urgent call to action on the issue of school safety. Over and over, we have seen our schools fall victim to senseless violence perpetrated by disturbed individuals. In recent years, several West Virginia schools have narrowly avoided tragic attacks, with police or school officials stopping planned violence at the eleventh hour.

After Sandy Hook, I talked with many friends in the law enforcement and education communities about what could be done to prevent school violence and to be prepared if it happens. It became clear that the first step was to bring together the many people who care deeply about this issue to share perspectives and develop a strategy. Those conversations prompted me to organize a Summit on West Virginia Safe Schools.

The response to the Summit was overwhelming. We reached our capacity of 500 registered attendees just a few days after we announced the event. On February 6, 2013, I was humbled and honored to host these hundreds of concerned West Virginians for a frank and wide-ranging discussion involving educators, law enforcement professionals, students, parents, government officials, and citizens.

This report summarizes the Summit's most critical lessons. It starts with an agenda for West Virginia safe schools: ten things that we must get to work on right now if we want to make our schools safer. The rest of the report lays out these imperatives in detail.

We owe it to our children and our educators to do everything in our power to keep our schools safe. Anything less is unacceptable. I know you share my determination to make West Virginia's schools the safest in America, and I look forward to working with you in the months ahead to help make these goals a reality.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Booth Goodwin".

Booth Goodwin  
United States Attorney  
Southern District of West Virginia

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# An Agenda for WEST VIRGINIA SAFE SCHOOLS



- 1 Establish a single, locked point of entry for every school, where a school official can see and identify would-be visitors before they enter.
- 2 Install classroom doors that lock quickly from inside the classroom—or keep doors locked all the time.
- 3 Install emergency buttons that broadcast a school-wide alarm and call the police.
- 4 Explore the use of shatter-resistant materials on glass windows and door panels in schools.
- 5 Establish a Prevention Resource Officer Corps to place more law enforcement officers, as well as retired police officers and veterans, in schools as prevention resource officers.
- 6 Local police and educators should work together to establish a regular presence in all schools, so faculty, staff, and students know their local police officers—and police know the layout of every school.
- 7 Every school should conduct an active-shooter drill at least annually, with full participation from law enforcement.
- 8 Develop a statewide program to identify potentially violent students early and intervene immediately.
- 9 Introduce a proven anti-bullying program in every school.
- 10 Implement a communication system to immediately disseminate information about incidents to parents, other schools and child care facilities,







The Office of the United States Attorney for the Southern District of West Virginia hosted a statewide Summit on West Virginia Safe Schools on February 6, 2013. The Summit highlighted what's been done, what's being done, and what can be done to enhance safety in our schools at a local and practical level. The Summit featured a presentation by Lt. Col. Dave Grossman, an internationally recognized speaker who is one of the world's foremost experts in the field of human aggression and the roots of violence and violent crime. The afternoon was devoted to panels on Preparedness and Response for Schools and Law Enforcement, Preventing Violence at School, and Voices from the Front Lines.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### *Preparedness and Response*

**If possible, schools should have only one point of entry.**

It is advisable to keep all external doors locked at all times and direct all traffic to and from the school through a single entry point—usually the door closest to the school's office. The West Virginia School Building Authority (SBA) has commissioned vulnerability assessments for every school in the state and has distributed \$31.5 million over the last 4 years to school boards in order to address safety concerns and help secure buildings. As a part of this effort, resources have been devoted by schools to two-way remote entry systems. The remote entry systems allow the single point of entry to remain locked, while someone within the school office (usually the secretary) has the ability to unlock the door remotely for known individuals. Some of these systems even have cameras and the capability to scan a driver's license and check it against offender databases. In an effort to make schools even more secure, the SBA is also exploring the use of new technologies such as a window film that prevents windows from shattering in the event of a gunshot or an explosion.

While school campus settings with multiple buildings are more challenging to secure, efforts should be made to limit entry points, and, as much as possible, direct individuals to a single entry point per building.

**Classrooms need to be easily securable in the event of an incident – or kept locked at all times.**

Locking classroom doors helps prevent entry by an intruder and contain a situation that could spread to other areas of the school. Keeping doors locked all the time may affect the learning environment, but efforts are underway to minimize that impact with technologies like card readers on internal, as well as external, school doors.

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### Build lasting relationships between law enforcement and schools.

Familiarity between law enforcement—especially first responders—and schools is crucial to building relationships. And such relationships are essential to preventing, preparing for and responding to critical incidents. While efforts are underway to make available to first responders the blueprints for every school in the state, there is no substitute for actual, in-person familiarity with a school’s layout. That’s why it is important for law enforcement officers to get out into the schools in their jurisdictions, even if it is simply to stop by periodically for coffee or lunch with the kids and staff.

Some great things are already happening. Shortly after the Summit, West Virginia State Police Superintendent Jay Smithers directed that each of his field troopers visit the schools in their jurisdictions within sixty days. Kanawha County Sheriff John Rutherford obtained a grant from the Kanawha County Commission to provide overtime for Kanawha County Sheriff’s Deputies to visit and spend time at each of the county’s schools. Such efforts promise to yield lasting results. To ensure they do, both law enforcement and school personnel need to embrace these efforts and find ways to make them more systematic and routine.

For instance, in Summersville, West Virginia, the middle and high schools have had a prevention resource officer for some time. After the tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary, the mayor and police chief in Summersville recognized a need for a law enforcement presence at the elementary school. However, Summersville has a relatively small police department, which makes it difficult to add yet another prevention resource officer. So the chief and the mayor reached out to the elementary school, and the school agreed to give the police a small office within the school. The chief assigned officers to work out of that office rather than coming back to the police station to write their reports and take calls. Of course, this means that there will often be a police cruiser parked in front of the school and an officer on site. But perhaps more important is the familiarity the officers gain with the school, its kids and its personnel, not to mention the fact that the faculty and students have the opportunity to interact with the officers in circumstances that do not involve something bad happening.

### Drills are critical.

We haven’t had a child killed by fire in a school in over 50 years, yet we still—and should—continue conducting fire drills. A child is vastly more likely to be injured by school violence than by fire, yet joint drills aimed at preventing and responding to such violence—drills including first responders and school personnel—have not been emphasized everywhere. Certainly, most schools have a plan and do conduct drills for various scenarios such as lock-down and shelter-in-place. However, it is critical for first responders to be fully engaged in these efforts.

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Law enforcement and education officials need to know what each other plan to do and discuss what each other should do in the event of a critical incident.

Law enforcement protocol in a school “active shooter” situation involves going into the school as soon as possible. No longer do law enforcement set up a perimeter and wait for a SWAT team or special response team. This is, of course, more dangerous for law enforcement personnel, but the judgment has been made that such action is imperative to save lives. And proper planning can greatly diminish the risks to law enforcement and enhance their ability to save lives in such a situation.

It is important that school personnel and first responders be engaged in planning and executing a drill. Each know their respective areas best and can make judgments in planning that can save precious time in a critical event. ***Law enforcement and school personnel should endeavor to conduct a joint drill at each school, every year.*** A sample drill plan and checklist is available at [www.wvsafeschools.org](http://www.wvsafeschools.org).

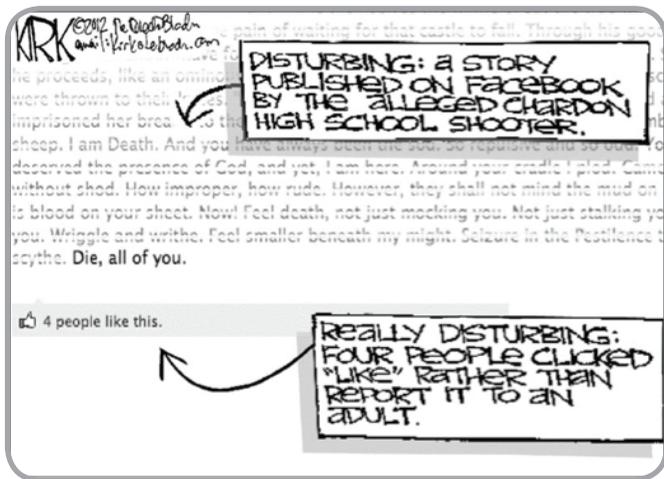
**Implement a communication system to immediately disseminate information about incidents to other schools and child care facilities, and to parents.**

It is essential that schools and law enforcement have a system in place to inform parents, other schools (public and private), child care facilities and the community about critical incidents. These will likely be the same systems that are used to communicate weather-related delays and snow days. It is recognized that not all information about an incident can be shared immediately. However, even a relatively modest amount of information can go a long way toward preventing panic. The natural tendency of parents is to race to the scene. Many parents converging on a school could create delays and even dangerous situations for first responders. Also, there most certainly will be an increased use of cell phones, texting and social media in and around the school in the wake of a critical incident. Too much wireless traffic can overload the communication system. Therefore, the dissemination of timely and accurate information will cut down on the use of such devices in and around the school, leaving the communication networks open for critical first responder use. Consideration should also be given to discussing with staff, parents and students the problems created by their use of cell phones during and in the wake of an incident.

## ***Prevention***

**There must be a concerted effort to address bullying.**

It used to be that bullying happened in the corner of the school yard. Now – with social media – it can happen 24 hours a day, with hundreds, if not thousands, of eyes watching. While 24% of students have been bullied at school within the last 12 months, 67% of social media-using teens have witnessed other people be mean or cruel on social networking sites. If school bullies stay on the same path, 60% of them will end up doing jail time by the time they are in their early twenties. Such statistics are deeply



Harassment and bullying have been linked to 75% of school-shooting incidents.

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troubling. And the statistics showing the relationship between bullying and school violence generally, and school shootings in particular, are alarming: Harassment and bullying have been linked to 75% of school-shooting incidents.

Often the focus is simply on the bullies and the ones being bullied. But perhaps the strongest focus needs to be on those who simply stand by doing nothing, thinking it's someone else's problem or someone else's job to stand up and do something. An episode of bullying involves more than just the ringleader bully and the victim. It has assistant bullies who join in. It has reinforcers who laugh or encourage the

bullying. And it has bystanders who take no side at all. Only between 10% and 20% of bystanders actually stand up, step in and provide some sort of help for the victim of bullying.

The "It Does Matter" campaign by the West Virginia Department of Education (<http://wvde.state.wv.us/it-does-matter>) and resources like those found at [www.stopbullying.gov](http://www.stopbullying.gov) are important tools in combatting bullying. However, local, school-by-school efforts using tools like these are critical. Counselors and prevention resource officers should be at the helm of such efforts, with the entire faculty and student body fully engaged.

**Identify and intervene with troubled children early.**

Teachers and school administrators may believe "something just isn't right" with a child, but often no one has the complete picture. For instance, there is the student whose writings have turned very dark, but when viewed in isolation, can be discounted as simply creative or provocative. If a teacher knew the child was encountered by police in one of their law enforcement operations, that teacher would most certainly raise a red flag about the writings. Almost without exception, there were warning signs in the behavior and conduct of school shooters, and also without exception, no one person or entity had the complete picture. More must be done to foster the sharing of information between and among school personnel and law enforcement.

Pilot projects are underway and tools are being tested to ensure consistent information sharing between law enforcement, school personnel, and social services. One such pilot project involves the Charleston Police Department and Mary Snow Elementary on the West Side of Charleston, West Virginia. If a Charleston police officer encounters a child in the course of his or her law enforcement duties (for instance, a drug raid or domestic violence incident) the officer forwards that information to a departmental contact, who in turn produces a "Handle with Care" notice that is provided to the school. While the notice does not include the details of the law enforcement operation, it allows school personnel to react in a manner appropriate for the situation should a child exhibit emotional, academic, behavioral, or cognitive problems during the instruction time

immediately following the trauma. Schools can then provide trauma-sensitive interventions and effective linkages to services when appropriate. To learn more about this project visit [www.wvsafeschools.org](http://www.wvsafeschools.org).

**Emphasize school climate: Happier schools = safer schools.**

Schools should have a strategy to focus on the climate within the school and a designated individual – or better yet, a team – to promote that positive climate. There are myriad tested resources available to assess and improve school climate. A selection of such resources can be found at [www.wvsafeschools.org](http://www.wvsafeschools.org). However, ultimately, it should be up to the local professionals on a school’s climate team to determine and implement what will work best for a particular school.

**Employ a system to compile all information about students with behavior issues.**

The West Virginia Department of Education has a system for collecting and storing available information about students with behavior issues. Individual schools have developed their own such systems. The most important thing, however, is that individuals within the school collect the information they have and be furnished with information—by law enforcement or otherwise—which will assist in appropriate intervention with a troubled child. Of course, the next step is what to do with that information. Schools should consider designating a threat assessment team—likely led by the school counselor—which monitors this information. Such a team may be the same as the school climate team.

**Expand the number and role of school counselors and prevention resource officers.**

The prevention resource officer program in West Virginia has been extremely successful. There are a number of instances in which prevention resource officers have successfully intervened and prevented episodes of school violence. The presence of these trained law enforcement officers in schools also aids in the cooperative and collaborative relationship between schools and law enforcement necessary to prevent and respond to serious incidents of school violence. Efforts should be undertaken to expand the prevention resource officer program. To do so, the establishment of a more formal Prevention Resource Officer Corps is recommended. Such a Corps should be administered by the West Virginia Division of Justice and Community Services. It would, of course, include the full time law enforcement officers who currently serve in such a capacity throughout the state. However, such a Corps would provide an organizational structure that could employ as Prevention Resource Officer Corps members retired law enforcement officers and veterans who meet certain



Schools should consider designating a threat assessment team—likely led by the school counselor—which monitors information on students with behavioral issues.

selection and training requirements. Additionally, there should be a special focus on placing prevention resource officers at more rural schools – where response time is likely to be greatest.

The role and number of school counselors should also be expanded. School counselors are essential in promoting positive school climates. They also should be the point people for identifying and intervening with troubled children.

## Where do we go from here?

“I think for all of us, the only thing that makes sense is to make some sort of positive change come out of all of this.”

The most significant impediment to making schools safer is denial—thinking that “it can’t or won’t happen here.” It was the intent of the Summit and is the intent of this report to overcome that mindset, build relationships and start a conversation about how to keep our kids safe at school. We were very fortunate to have a West Virginia native and current Newtown, Connecticut resident and parent, Lisa Petrovich, join us at the Summit for a conversation. She said, “Not to scare anyone here, but I will tell you, my children went to [Sandy Hook Elementary] and I always felt incredibly safe. [The school] is tucked back at the end of a long driveway. You can’t see it from the street. The fire station is right at the end of the driveway. I know how they are about letting people in and out of the building, and if it happened there, it could happen anywhere.”

Ms. Petrovich continued, “People [in Newtown] are sad, but they definitely are taking the next step to heal and to make a positive change. Because I think for all of us, the only thing that makes sense is to make some sort of positive change come out of all of this.” She concluded, “Don’t forget us. Something positive has to come out of this tragedy.”

We hope you will continue to help create positive change in your schools and communities and keep the conversation going at [www.wvsafeschools.org](http://www.wvsafeschools.org).





## AGENDA

8:00-8:50	Registration	1:40-2:40	<p><b>Panel: Preventing Violence at School</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– George Damous, Damous Psychological Services, Inc.</li> <li>– Dr. Christine Schimmel, West Virginia University, College of Education and Human Services</li> <li>– Dep. Scott Jefferson, Prevention Resource Officer, Wood Co. Sheriff's Dept.</li> <li>– Don Chapman, West Virginia Department of Education, Office of Healthy Schools</li> <li>– Jackie Payne, Director, Division of Child and Adolescent Behavioral Health, Bureau for Behavioral Health and Health Facilities, DHHR</li> </ul>
8:50-9:15	<p>Opening Remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– R. Booth Goodwin II, United States Attorney, Southern District of West Virginia</li> <li>– Dr. James B. Phares, State Superintendent of Schools</li> </ul>	2:40-2:50	Break
9:15-9:30	<i>Lisa Petrovich, Newtown, Connecticut parent and resident; West Virginia native</i>	2:50-3:35	<p><b>Panel: Voices from the Front Lines: Best Practices and Discussion</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Dr. Jerry Lake, Cabell County Schools</li> <li>– Cari Pauley, Teacher, Lincoln County</li> <li>– Susan Brossman, Teacher, Ohio County</li> <li>– Ashley Donohew, Student, Ripley High School, Jackson County, Ambassador for Justice</li> <li>– Eugenie P. Taylor, Parent Teacher Organization President, Overbrook Elementary, Kanawha County</li> </ul>
9:30-12:00	<p><b>The Anatomy of Violence in Schools</b></p> <p><i>Lt. Col. Dave Grossman, U.S. Army (retired)</i></p>	3:35-4:00	<p><b>Summit Wrap-Up – Next Steps Toward Safer Schools</b></p> <p><i>R. Booth Goodwin II, United States Attorney, Southern District of West Virginia</i></p>
12:00-12:45	Lunch (provided on site)		
12:45-1:30	<p><b>Panel: Preparedness and Response for Schools and Law Enforcement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Major General James A. Hoyer, Adjutant General, West Virginia National Guard</li> <li>– Dr. Mark Manchin, Executive Director, West Virginia School Building Authority</li> <li>– David Hoge, Director, West Virginia Homeland Security State Administrative Agency</li> <li>– Capt. David Lee, Commandant, West Virginia State Police Academy</li> <li>– Tim Stewart, Safety Manager, Cabell County Schools</li> </ul>		
1:30-1:40	Break		

A Summit on  
West Virginia

# SAFE SCHOOLS



**Summit on West Virginia Safe Schools Planning Committee**

Bonnie Bevers, *West Virginia Division of Justice and Community Services*

Leslie Boggess, *West Virginia Division of Justice and Community Services*

Justin Boggs, *West Virginia Department of Education*

Capt. Tim Bradley, *West Virginia State Police*

Keith Burdette, *West Virginia Department of Education*

Tracy Dorsey Chapman, *Office of the United States Attorney, Southern District of West Virginia*

Deanna Eder, *Office of the United States Attorney, Southern District of West Virginia*

David Hoge, *West Virginia Department of Military Affairs and Public Safety*

Dr. Jerry Lake, *Cabell County Schools*

Christy Morris, *West Virginia Department of Military Affairs and Public Safety*

Emily Papadopoulos, *West Virginia Center for Professional Development*



For more information about school safety and ongoing efforts to implement practical, local steps to prevent and prepare for school violence, please contact:

**United States Attorney's Office, SDWV**  
**Phone: 304-345-2200**  
**[www.justice.gov/usao/wvs/safeschools.html](http://www.justice.gov/usao/wvs/safeschools.html)**  
or **[www.wvsafeschools.org](http://www.wvsafeschools.org)**

*Special Thanks to West Virginia Media Holdings, LLC  
To view the WOWK-TV Safe Schools special aired on February 6, 2013,  
please go to: [www.wvsafeschools.org](http://www.wvsafeschools.org)*



Office of the United States Attorney, Southern District of West Virginia  
West Virginia Department of Military Affairs and Public Safety  
West Virginia Division of Justice and Community Services



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:  
West Virginia State Police  
West Virginia Department of Education  
West Virginia Center for Professional Development  
West Virginia School Building Authority

SPECIAL THANKS TO:  
Cabell County Schools  
West Virginia Prosecuting Attorney's Institute  
West Virginia Children's Justice Task Force

For more information visit:

[www.WVSafeSchools.org](http://www.WVSafeSchools.org)