

2018 Pennsylvania School Safety Task Force Report

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After almost a half-year of research and discussion, Pennsylvania has released its 60-page 2018 School Safety Task Force Report designed to provide a road map for tighter security in and around the state's schools.

In March, Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Wolf and Auditor General Eugene DePasquale introduced the [Pennsylvania School Safety Task Force](#) to identify and offer strategies aimed at improving overall school safety, security and emergency preparedness, and the recent report lays the groundwork for that initiative.

The full text of the report [can be found here](#).

The state's task force includes a broad array of stakeholders including community members, statewide educational organizations, and law enforcement and public safety officials, among others.

From [April through June](#), the task force conducted six listening sessions across the state to gather information from students and parents, teachers and administrators, law enforcement officials and healthcare professionals. Participants were asked to focus on three primary areas:

1. How can we help prepare school staff, students and first responders to address and respond to school-based violence and threats?

2. How can we strengthen efforts to address the health (both physical and mental) needs of students?

3. How can we help ensure school buildings are secure and appropriate training is conducted for students and staff?

The report includes a number of recommendations concerning mental health services available to students through school, including improvements to access, expansion of standards from pre-kindergarten through 12th grade to address broad screening, and making mental health supports available to all students through programming and increasing the number of mental and physical health professionals in schools.

In addition, the report highlights six areas focusing on enhanced communication, security, and programming viewed as necessary to improve school safety:

1. Improving communications and information sharing, including building multidisciplinary "Threat Assessment/Prevention Teams," enhancing information sharing efforts while effectively balancing student privacy and school safety concerns, and increasing communication between students, schools and community stakeholders.

2. Enhancing social and emotional instruction by addressing [the impact of trauma and improving coping skills and resilience](#).

3. Building community connections by involving the community in safety planning and strengthening school community partnerships.

4. Effectively integrating police and school resource officers into schools through enhanced training and establishing best practices criteria
5. Establishing priorities, such as strengthening school security and implementing enhanced training and evidence-based practices.
6. Providing financial resources to schools.

School districts throughout the nation have been grappling with how to improve student safety through new policy initiatives, security requirements and new programs. While it is clear there is no "one-size-fits-all" solution to this multifaceted issue, the renewed focus is generating important insight and more detailed suggestions for immediate steps to ensure a safe, inclusive learning environment for all students.

If you have questions about any of the items outlined in the Task Force Report and the impact on your current policies and procedures or staff training needs in these areas, please contact any of the attorneys in the [Barley Snyder Education Practice Group](#).