



SAFER SCHOOLS | HEALTHIER KIDS

Protecting Our Students: Improving School Safety and Mental Health

Governor Cooper is committed to keeping students and schools safe, and his budget includes \$130 million to take concrete steps that can help protect students and prevent school violence. His budget recommendation is in addition to specific policy changes that the Governor supports to keep dangerous weapons out of the wrong hands. Read more about those policy changes [HERE](#).

Investing in Public Safety Enhancements

Governor Cooper's budget creates a \$65 million reserve for building improvements related to safety and security at K-12 public schools, state universities and community colleges. The funds can be used for communication system upgrades, equipment purchases, audio-visual security monitoring systems, panic alarms, improved doors, and other items designed to prevent and respond to threats.

Improving Student Support Services

School nurses, counselors, psychologists, and social workers play a critical role in identifying and treating youth mental health needs. Governor Cooper's budget provides \$40 million in flexible funding for schools to hire additional personnel to support students and youth mental health. This allocation would provide at least 500 additional positions statewide.

Increasing Funding for School Resource Officers

Recognizing the important work school resource officers (SRO) do to build strong, safe communities, the Governor's budget invests \$7 million to increase the allotment of funds for high school SROs, from roughly \$38,000 per high school to approximately \$50,000 per high school. Another \$3 million would go to supplement the grant program for officers stationed at elementary and middle schools. The budget will also recommend reducing the match requirement for Tier 1 and 2 counties.

Preparing a Risk and Response Program

When emergencies occur, schools and first responders need a plan in place to keep students and teachers safe. The Governor's budget provides \$444,000 to support the School Risk Management System that provides assistance with risk planning, school-wide exercises and monitoring to each school district. This web-based program allows school officials to work with first responders, law enforcement and emergency management to create a digital School Risk Management Plan that enables officials to quickly respond to potential threats in our schools.

More Training for Youth Mental Health

Governor Cooper's budget provides funding for innovative programs to support the mental health needs of children and youth. That includes resources to increase the availability of evidence-based training programs that help teachers, school staff, and mental health professionals identify and respond to student mental health challenges. It supports new funding to provide services to children with identified behavioral health needs and programs designed to give tools to families and providers who care for them. The budget also includes funding for early childhood programs and critical new family strengthening initiatives that will build family and child resilience, address childhood trauma, and prevent adverse mental health outcomes later in life.