



North Carolina Department of Public Safety

Prevent. Protect. Prepare.

Roy Cooper, Governor

Erik A. Hooks, Secretary

March 7, 2018

Dear Sheriffs, Chiefs of Police, School Superintendents, Charter & Independent School Officials:

I am writing today to urge our continued and collective efforts in North Carolina to prevent tragedies such as the Florida school shooting from happening here. Doing so requires attention and action by all of us – law enforcement, education leaders, and the many other partners such as counselors, mental health professionals, community leaders, and families. Partnerships are essential to identifying potential threats, preventing acts of mass violence before they occur, and providing a coordinated response if the unthinkable happens here.

Below are steps we can take together to protect our schools and communities:

Rapid deployment training – Law enforcement officers using rapid deployment techniques can prevent tragedy. During a shooting at Orange County High School in 2006, a School Resource Officer (SRO) and another officer trained in rapid deployment were there and intervened, no one was killed at the school, and the shooter was detained. Rapid deployment training is required as part of Basic Law Enforcement Training (BLET) but it is not an in-service requirement, so the potential exists for law enforcement officers and SROs to go for extended periods without engaging these skills. Please make sure officers in your community are trained in rapid deployment and keep these skills updated. We encourage continued training such as the Solo Active Shooter Response Conditioning course (<http://ncja.ncdoj.gov/3367.aspx>) offered at the North Carolina Justice Academy for law enforcement officers and SROs.

Including law enforcement in school safety exercises/drills – School personnel, SROs, and families all play a role in preventing tragedies in our schools, as well as preparing for an effective response if needed. State law strongly encourages schools to include local law enforcement and emergency management agencies in their annual school-wide exercises and drills. These drills provide an opportunity to (i) discuss simulated emergency situations in a low-stress environment, (ii) clarify roles, responsibilities and logistics for response to an emergency, and (iii) identify areas for improvement in a school's Risk Management Plan. (See N.C.G.S. § 115C-105.49). Please work together to hold school safety drills in your community on a regular basis.

Updating school emergency response kits – Each North Carolina school should have in place a kit with all information needed in a crisis such as a school shooting. Plans and supplies for creating these Critical Incident Response Kits (CIRK) were made available to schools in 2002 and 2003 under the direction of then-Attorney General Roy Cooper, and many school systems have used these materials in developing their own plans and training. I urge you to make sure schools in your communities have their emergency kits completed and keep them updated.

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Our Emergency Management team is developing statewide initiatives to integrate these plans through a School Risk and Response Management System, which will bring these resources to law enforcement, local emergency responders and educators online. If your schools have not yet shared School Risk Management plans with us, we are happy to assist you in completing the process. For assistance, please contact North Carolina Emergency Management Assistant Director for Risk Management John Dorman at John.Dorman@ncdps.gov.

Ensuring knowledge of and training on best practices – Information about many best practices, such as the importance of continued rapid deployment training, are included in the 2017 *White Paper for the Integrated Public Safety Response to the Active Shooter/Active Assailant* ([Active Assailant White Paper](#)) by the North Carolina Active Assailant and Mass Violence Work Group. This public safety response document provides guidance based on best practices for the development and implementation of comprehensive, interagency strategies to reduce potential mortality during active assailant incidents. The State Emergency Response Commission, which I chair, passed a resolution in 2017 recommending that state and local law enforcement, emergency management and first response agencies use the *White Paper* as guidance to assist with their planning, preparation, and response efforts.

Support positive youth mental health and wellness – Positive youth mental health and wellness is directly linked to overall positive student achievement, school climate, high school graduation rates and prevention of risky behaviors, disciplinary incidents, and substance abuse. Schools are a natural setting for mental health prevention and treatment services. We urge districts and schools to consider resources such as the [Youth and Adult Mental Health First Aid Training](#), an evidence-based training that covers common mental health challenges for youth, reviews typical adolescent development, and educates personnel on how to help young people in both crisis and non-crisis situations.

Continuously share information – While we must plan and train for response to a mass shooting incident, we also must continue to improve our information sharing and processing procedures to mitigate threats before they materialize. We ask school administrators, students, and families to share information regarding threats or potential threats not only with school leaders but also with local law enforcement and the North Carolina State Fusion Center at 1-888-624-7222. More information is available at http://www.ncsbi.gov/NCISAAC/NCISAACFCFlyer_2017.aspx Fusion centers collect and share information across agencies related to possible or actual criminal or terrorist activity. I also encourage local law enforcement to communicate with the SBI's Field Liaison Office (FLO) to identify and mitigate potential threats.

Our professions' requirements and our desire for the safety and well-being of every child and family in North Carolina and beyond place us on the frontline of school and community safety. I am grateful for all that you have done and continue to do. By improving and enhancing our work on these fronts and others, we can make a lasting, positive difference.

Sincerely,



Erik A. Hooks
Secretary