

Jackson Local Schools

Striving for Excellence



March 2, 2018

Dear Jackson Local School District Parent:

We recognize that in these trying times for school communities, it is important that we communicate with you regarding issues surrounding the recent student deaths and school safety issues.

We want to update you on the current efforts underway to address the events impacting our children, their families and our community.

We have been fortunate that for years, the school districts in Stark County have had a strong and ongoing collaborative relationship among themselves, law enforcement and mental health agencies in order to address common problems. Once again, we have come together to collectively address the current issues. As a result, our district, along with 23 other school districts, are doing the following:

- A "Safety and Security Task Force" has been formed to discuss and recommend short and long-term measures to be implemented by our schools. It includes individuals with years of experience, both at the local, state and national levels, who have dealt with such issues. **The initial report of the Task Force is enclosed.**
- A coordinating committee composed of experienced mental health experts, our health departments, law enforcement and education representatives have been meeting to try to find the root causes of teenage deaths and school violence in our community. Specific recommendations have already been shared and adopted with our schools.
- Two individuals associated with the Society for the Prevention of Teenage Suicide were brought to Stark County this week. They both have years of experience in advising schools and communities on this issue. Training sessions are being conducted this week for all 23 districts. **Enclosed are two resources you may find helpful.**

This has been a most difficult school year. Please know that we have done and continue to do everything humanely possible to protect your children. Our district constantly reviews and revises our safety and security measures. Just as important however, we need your help to address the serious mental health and family issues our children often face.

These problems will not be solved overnight. Some issues can and are being addressed now. However, many solutions will not be quick, easy or inexpensive and may involve helping one child at a time.

We know our parents, students and community deserve no less than our best efforts. This is what we are continuing to pursue.

Sincerely,

Chris DiLoreto
Superintendent

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JACKSON HIGH SCHOOL	JACKSON MEMORIAL MIDDLE SCHOOL	AMHERST ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	LAKE CABLE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	SAUDER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	STRAUSSER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	SPECIAL SERVICES	FOOD SERVICES
7600 Fulton Dr. N.W. Massillon, Ohio 44646 (330) 837-3501	7355 Mudbrook St. N.W. Massillon, Ohio 44646 (330) 830-8034	8750 Jane St. N.W. Massillon, Ohio 44646 (330) 830-8024	5335 Villa Padova Dr. N.W. Canton, Ohio 44718 (330) 834-4673	7503 Mudbrook St. N.W. Massillon, Ohio 44646 (330) 830-8028	8646 Strausser St. N.W. Massillon, Ohio 44646 (330) 830-8056	7602 Fulton Dr. N.W. Massillon, Ohio 44646 (330) 830-8006	7602 Fulton Dr. N.W. Massillon, Ohio 44646 (330) 830-8031

STARK COUNTY SCHOOLS SAFETY AND SECURITY TASK FORCE REPORT

March 1, 2018

I. BACKGROUND

Since the school year began, there have been numerous events involving student deaths and concern for school safety issues. Therefore, law enforcement and educators convened a task force to review current safety and security issues in our schools and to make recommendations for any additional measures.

I. COMMITTEE MEMBERS

George Maier, Sheriff, Stark County

Todd Krajeck, FBI agent, Canton Office

Tim DeVecchio, Consultant for Security Services; formerly Ohio Department of Homeland Security

Doug Swartz, President, Police Chiefs Association

Joe Chaddock, Superintendent Stark County Educational Service Center (SCESC)

Joe Knoll, Superintendent, Marlinton Local School District

Brent May, Superintendent, Plain Local School District

Chris DiLoreto, Superintendent, Jackson Local School District

Jeff Talbert, Superintendent, Alliance City School District

Mary Jo Shannon Slick, Esq., General Counsel (SCESC)

II. FOCUS OF THE TASK FORCE

Review issues raised by school districts, community members, parents, law enforcement and security experts regarding additional equipment, procedures, personnel and plans that have been suggested for implementation in Stark County School Districts, e.g. metal detectors, arming staff, increased law enforcement.

III. REPORT

The committee has discussed the current state of school safety and security plans. Due to legal requirements, individual district plans are not public records. However, one of the task force members, Mr. DeVecchio, working in conjunction with law enforcement and district safety teams, has reviewed each of the schools building/district safety plans for compliance with legal requirements and any necessary upgrades.

Included in the task force's discussions were areas such as the purchase and use of metal detectors/wands, arming school staff and increasing professional law enforcement's presence in our buildings. The discussion included examples of the implementation of these tools that have been used in other school settings, their effectiveness, potential costs and any issues involving negative consequences of their use.

IV. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

While the task force can share its conclusions, it must be cautious in sharing the rationale for them. In discussing the pros and cons, we need to exercise discretion so that we don't educate someone who might contemplate harming our children.

However, each district must evaluate its own safety plan and circumstances, working with law enforcement to make any final determination on these issues.

- A. Metal Detectors: Due to significant logistical issues, and numerous points of ingress and egress, these are not recommended at this time.

Metal Detection Wands: These may be a more viable option, in the short term, to assess individual students who pose a reasonable suspicion.

- B. Arming School Employees: The Task Force has reached out to the Ohio Attorney General's Office to explore the legalities involved in arming school personnel. However, this should not be construed as an endorsement for or against such a proposal.

- C. Hiring additional law enforcement officers for our school buildings: The Task Force was unanimous in its conclusion that an increased presence of professional law enforcement should be seriously considered.

- D. Mental Health Services: There was overwhelming agreement for the urgent need of additional resources from the mental health community. Outreaches to both our students and their families is sorely needed.

V. **CONCLUSION**

While no one knows for sure what all the causes may be for our country's crisis involving teen deaths, school safety issues and gun violence, from the first-hand experiences of members of this Task Force, we can offer several factors we believe are relevant.

There are often factors impacting both children and their families. They include mental health issues, the lack of affordable health insurance to seek counseling services, misuse of technology and the increasing downward economic spiral of many families.

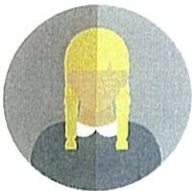
Therefore, it is now clear that no one segment of our society can solve these problems. It will take a combination of parents, students, schools, law enforcement, mental health, the private sector, national and state legislators and our communities to fix these problems.

We will need all of these individuals working together to demand the expertise and resources necessary to fund solutions. We should be aggressive and relentless in demanding these solutions. Our children deserve no less.



Know a young person
needing help?

Help is available.



**SUBSTANCE USE:
RESOURCES AND TALKING POINTS**

Explore local, prevention resources and learn how your family can stay substance free.

Alcohol & Marijuana All families, regardless of socioeconomic, race and other factors, can be affected by drugs and alcohol. Find resources to help parents be on the lookout at StarkMHAR.org/BOLO

Drug Drop Boxes Get rid of unwanted, expired prescriptions at 17 safe collection boxes accessible 24/7, free of charge. For a listing of permanent sites, visit StarkMHAR.org/DrugCollection

More resources for families and medical professionals can be found at StarkMHAR.org/Help



**YOUTH SUICIDE PREVENTION:
WHAT YOU CAN DO**

There is no single cause of suicide. No one cause or event makes a person consider suicide. Suicide is a result of multiple stressors that make an individual feel out of control, hopeless or unable to change what is happening.

Text 4hope to 741 741 Crisis Text Line serves young people in any type of crisis, providing them access to free, 24/7, emotional support and information they need via the medium they already use and trust: text messaging. Learn more at StarkMHAR.org/CrisisTextLine

Youth Suicide Prevention resources are available. Learn how you can talk with family and friends, help others feel less alone and know the warning signs at StarkMHAR.org/YouthSuicidePrevention



**YOUTH MOBILE RESPONSE:
HELP IS A PHONE CALL AWAY**

Mobile Response Youth Program provides a rapid, culturally competent, trauma-informed mobile response employing behavioral health interventions that are sensitive to the age-specific needs of preschool and school-age children.

Parents, caregivers and professionals can call Mobile Response based on their need for urgent intervention. All situations are considered valid.

Call Stark County's Crisis Hotline at **330-452-6000, Monday-Friday 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.**

Learn more at StarkMHAR.org/MobileResponse

FUNDERS & PARTNERS



Keep hope alive.

WARNING SIGNS

Each year in the United States, people of all ages complete suicide. Of these individuals, approximately 80% have given warning signs to their families, friends and neighbors.

- Talking or writing about suicide
- Giving away belongings
- Withdrawing from loved ones and activities
- Feeling hopeless, helpless, worthless
- Seeking ways to suicide, such as guns or pills
- Major eating or sleeping changes
- Increasing use of alcohol or other drugs
- Losing interest in things previously enjoyed

CRISIS RESOURCES

Suicide can be prevented. Counselors are available 24 hours/7 days a week/365 days a year. If you or someone you know are in crisis, please immediately contact:

- Call **330-452-6000**, the Stark County Crisis Hotline, anytime
- Text **4hope to 741 741**, Crisis Text Line, anytime
- Call **1-800-273-TALK (8255)**, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline anytime
- Call **9-1-1** if emergency services are needed. If requesting law enforcement, you can ask for a Crisis Intervention Team (CIT)-trained officer

What can you do about youth suicide prevention? Resources, talking points and shareable downloads are available. Spread the word and begin conversations with young people in your life. Learn more at StarkMHAR.org/YouthSuicidePrevention

MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID TRAINING FOR YOUTH

Youth Mental Health First Aid is designed to teach parents, family members, caregivers, teachers, school staff, peers, neighbors, health and human services workers and other caring citizens how to help an adolescent (age 12-18) who is experiencing a mental health, addiction or crisis.

The course introduces common mental health challenges for youth, reviews typical adolescent development and teaches a 5-step action plan for how to help young people in both crisis and non-crisis situations.

Learn more about upcoming trainings at StarkMHAR.org/MentalHealthFirstAid

StarkMHAR Care Network

Stark County residents can access behavioral health services regardless of their ability to pay through the Stark County Mental Health & Addiction Recovery (StarkMHAR) Care Network. StarkMHAR funded service providers accept various insurance programs, Medicare and Medicaid. Stark residents that are not covered by one of those options can receive services. Their ability to pay for those services will be determined by their income and could be fully subsidized by StarkMHAR. Learn more at StarkMHAR.org/CareNetwork

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|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Canton Community KidSummit Against Drugs 330-453-1155 | <input type="checkbox"/> ICAN Housing 330-455-9100 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Child and Adolescent Behavioral Health 330-454-7917 | <input type="checkbox"/> Make-A-Way 330-837-0650 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Coleman Professional Services 330-438-2400 (<i>Teens 16+ yrs</i>) | <input type="checkbox"/> NAMI Stark County 330-455-6264 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CommQuest Services 330-455-0374 | <input type="checkbox"/> OhioGuidestone 440-260-6466 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Crisis Intervention & Recovery Center 330-452-9812 | <input type="checkbox"/> Stark County TASC 330-479-1912 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Domestic Violence Project 330-453-7233 | <input type="checkbox"/> Stark Social Workers Network 330-455-2260 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Foundations, A Place for Education & Recovery 330-454-2888 | <input type="checkbox"/> Summit Psychological Associates 330-493-2554 |

(Italics indicates StarkMHAR-funded youth treatment.)

Talking to Children About Violence: Tips for Parents and Teachers

High profile acts of violence, particularly in schools, can confuse and frighten children who may feel in danger or worry that their friends or loved-ones are at risk. They will look to adults for information and guidance on how to react. Parents and school personnel can help children feel safe by establishing a sense of normalcy and security and talking with them about their fears.

1. **Reassure children that they are safe.** Emphasize that schools are very safe. Validate their feelings. Explain that all feelings are okay when a tragedy occurs. Let children talk about their feelings, help put them into perspective, and assist them in expressing these feelings appropriately.
2. **Make time to talk.** Let their questions be your guide as to how much information to provide. Be patient; children and youth do not always talk about their feelings readily. Watch for clues that they may want to talk, such as hovering around while you do the dishes or yard work. Some children prefer writing, playing music, or doing an art project as an outlet. Young children may need concrete activities (such as drawing, looking at picture books, or imaginative play) to help them identify and express their feelings.
3. **Keep your explanations developmentally appropriate.**
 - **Early elementary school** children need brief, simple information that should be balanced with reassurances that their school and homes are safe and that adults are there to protect them. Give simple examples of school safety like reminding children about exterior doors being locked, child monitoring efforts on the playground, and emergency drills practiced during the school day.
 - **Upper elementary and early middle school** children will be more vocal in asking questions about whether they truly are safe and what is being done at their school. They may need assistance separating reality from fantasy. Discuss efforts of school and community leaders to provide safe schools.
 - **Upper middle school and high school** students will have strong and varying opinions about the causes of violence in schools and society. They will share concrete suggestions about how to make school safer and how to prevent tragedies in society. Emphasize the role that students have in maintaining safe schools by following school safety guidelines (e.g. not providing building access to strangers, reporting strangers on campus, reporting threats to the school safety made by students or community members, etc.), communicating any personal safety concerns to school administrators, and accessing support for emotional needs.
4. **Review safety procedures.** This should include procedures and safeguards at school and at home. Help children identify at least one adult at school and in the community to whom they go if they feel threatened or at risk.
5. **Observe children's emotional state.** Some children may not express their concerns verbally. Changes in behavior, appetite, and sleep patterns can also indicate a child's level of anxiety or discomfort. In most children, these symptoms will ease with reassurance and

time. However, some children may be at risk for more intense reactions. Children who have had a past traumatic experience or personal loss, suffer from depression or other mental illness, or with special needs may be at greater risk for severe reactions than others. Seek the help of mental health professional if you are at all concerned.

6. **Limit television viewing of these events.** Limit television viewing and be aware if the television is on in common areas. Developmentally inappropriate information can cause anxiety or confusion, particularly in young children. Adults also need to be mindful of the content of conversations that they have with each other in front of children, even teenagers, and limit their exposure to vengeful, hateful, and angry comments that might be misunderstood.
7. **Maintain a normal routine.** Keeping to a regular schedule can be reassuring and promote physical health. Ensure that children get plenty of sleep, regular meals, and exercise. Encourage them to keep up with their schoolwork and extracurricular activities but don't push them if they seem overwhelmed.

Suggested Points to Emphasize When Talking to Children

- Schools are safe places. School staff works with parents and public safety providers (local police and fire departments, emergency responders, hospitals, etc.) to keep you safe.
- The school building is safe because ... (cite specific school procedures).
- We all play a role in the school safety. Be observant and let an adult know if you see or hear something that makes you feel uncomfortable, nervous or frightened.
- There is a difference between reporting, tattling or gossiping. You can provide important information that may prevent harm either directly or anonymously by telling a trusted adult what you know or hear.
- Although there is no absolute guarantee that something bad will never happen, it is important to understand the difference between the **possibility** of something happening and **probability** that it will affect you (our school community).
- Senseless violence is hard for everyone to understand. Doing things that you enjoy, sticking to your normal routine, and being with friends and family help make us feel better and keep us from worrying about the event.
- Sometimes people do bad things that hurt others. They may be unable to handle their anger, under the influence of drugs or alcohol, or suffering from mental illness. Adults (parents, teachers, police officers, doctors, faith leaders) work very hard to get those people help and keep them from hurting others. It is important for all of us to know how to get help if we feel really upset or angry and to stay away from drugs and alcohol.
- Stay away from guns and other weapons. Tell an adult if you know someone has a gun. Access to guns is one of the leading risk factors for deadly violence.
- Violence is never a solution to personal problems. Students can be part of the positive solution by participating in anti-violence programs at school, learning conflict mediation skills, and seeking help from an adult if they or a peer is struggling with anger, depression, or other emotions they cannot control.

NASP has additional information for parents and educators on school safety, violence prevention, children's trauma reactions, and crisis response at www.nasponline.org.

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