

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
PENNSYLVANIA COMMISSION ON CRIME AND DELINQUENCY
3101 North Front Street, Harrisburg, PA

School Safety and Security Committee Meeting

March 27, 2024

MINUTES

Members/Designees:

Chairman Austin Davis
Ms. Sabrina S. Backer, Member
Mr. Andrew Barnes, Designee for DHS Secretary Arkoosh
Ms. Janice Bart, Member
Maj. George Bivens, Designee for PSP Col. Paris
Mr. Jeffrey Boyle, Designee for PEMA Director Padfield
Senator James Brewster, Member
Dr. Benjamin Feeney, Member
Ms. Angela Fitterer, Designee for PDE Secretary Mumin
Lt. Kyle Gautsch, Member
Mr. Mike Hurley, Member
Ms. Brittney Kline, Designee for Attorney General Henry
Senator Wayne Langerholc, Member
Dr. Gennaro "Jamie" Piraino, Member
Ms. Wendy Robison, Member
Dr. Helena Tuleya-Payne, Member

Staff:

Pamela Bennett	Samantha Koch
Matthew Conn	Crystal Lauver
Camila Contreras	Jordan Lewis
Christina Cosgrove-Rooks	Elizabeth Locke
Amelia Dizo	Levi Looks
Jennifer Ely	Leo Lutz
Chris Epoca	Heidi Metzger
Alison Gantz	Zoe Miner
Stacey Herman	Kariem Morssy
Heather Hewitt	Ian Murray
Chuck Hogan	Derin Myers
Daniel Hull	Mike Pennington
Kirsten Kenyon	Lindsay Vaughan

Guests:

Diane Acri, PA House of Representatives
Patrick Beaver, PA State Police (PSP)
Sean Brandon, PA House of Representatives
Andrew Christ, PA School Board Association (PSBA)
Kristen Daniels, PA State Police – Homeland Security
Mike Deery, PA Senate
Stephen D'Ettorre, Office of the Governor
Tobi Downing, Office of the Attorney General
Steve Fickes, Legislative Budget and Finance Committee (LCFB)
Noah Glattke, PA Senate
Kate Krueger, PA Association of School Business Officials (PASBO)
Scott Kuren, PA Department of Education (PDE)
Heather Masshardt, PA School Board Association (PSBA)
Shelley Neff, Governor's Budget Office
Preston, Unknown
The DT Firm
Matthew Thomas, Legislative Budget and Finance Committee (LCFB)
Camille Traczek, PA Department of Education
Michele Kelly Walsh, Office of the Attorney General
Vicki Wilken, PA Senate
Steven Williams, PA Office of the Lieutenant Governor

Call to Order of the March 27, 2024, Meeting and Adoption of Minutes

Chairman Davis called the meeting to order at 1:00 PM and welcomed participants. A quorum of members was established. Moving to the agenda, Chairman Davis noted that the minutes from the January 10, 2024 meeting were part of the packet of materials made available prior to today's meeting and called for a motion to approve them.

Motion to approve the minutes from the January 10, 2024, meeting as submitted.

Motion: Brewster. **Second:** Barnes. **Abstentions:** None. **Not Present for Vote:** Langerholc & Piraino. **Votes:** 14. **Nay Votes:** 0. **Motion Adopted**

Following the vote, Chairman Davis shared a few updates. First, he introduced Rep. Stephenie Scialabba who was appointed by the House Minority leader to the Committee and is replacing Rep. Barb Gleim. He welcomed her to the Committee, stating he looks forward to working with her.

Chairman Davis then moved on to share highlights from the Governor's proposed 2024-25 state budget pertaining to the work of this Committee. He noted that the continued investments include \$50 million for school safety and security grants, \$100 million for school mental health grants and \$100 million for the Violence Intervention and Prevention (VIP) grant program. He stated that the Committee will be kept updated as the budget process gets underway.

Finally, Chairman Davis apprised members on the status of the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee (LBFC) study initiated by [SR 178](#). Referencing its purpose to examine the outcome of school safety grants that have been awarded since 2018 and to look at national best practices in school safety, he stated that PCCD has provided general grant information to the LBFC and will work with them in more depth as their study progresses.

FY23-24 Violence Intervention & Prevention (VIP) Grant Recommendations

Chairman Davis invited Ms. Zoe Miner to present information on the VIP and Coordinated Community Violence Intervention (CCVI) grants. Ms. Miner shared a PowerPoint presentation, providing an overview of these grant opportunities and the funding available. She stated that 276 applications were received through SurveyMonkey with a total request amount of more than four times the available funds. She covered the scoring and review process, noting the priority criteria, additional factors, and prioritization of groups with greater need, with the final recommendations presented to the VIP Workgroup for consideration. Details on the recommended projects are included in the meeting materials.

At the conclusion of her presentation and with no questions being heard, Chairman Davis called for a motion to approve the FY23-24 VIP Grants as presented.

Motion to approve one CCVI application and 63 VIP applications, totaling 64 applications, not to exceed \$40,526,988 in state VIP funding, pending the resolution of any outstanding programmatic or fiscal concerns.

Motion: Hurley. **Second:** Backer. **Abstentions:** None. **Not Present for Vote:** None. **Votes:** 16. **Nay Votes:** 0. **Motion Adopted**

Executive Committee Report

Chairman Davis summarized the creation of the Executive Committee in of [Act 33 of 2023](#) and invited Michele Kelly Walsh, the Executive Deputy Attorney General for the Criminal Division who serves as Chair on behalf of Attorney General Henry, to provide this first report. Ms. Walsh stated that the Executive Committee convened their inaugural meeting on March 22, 2024 with their initial discussion covering the statutory requirements, frequency of meetings, and ways that the Executive Committee can support the work of the full School Safety and Security Committee (SSSC).

Ms. Walsh said it was a productive first meeting. She shared some of the issues that came up, including supporting communication between the different school entity types, increasing training on how to respond to crisis situations as they occur, and how to relay real time messaging and alerts to communicate rapidly in a positive way.

Ms. Walsh stated that the next meeting is tentatively scheduled for May 16. She noted that the suggestion was made to have updates at the next meeting from the Safe2Say Something program and real-time feedback from the PA State Police and PA Department of Education (PDE) on the current trends that they are seeing at their agencies so that the Executive Committee could focus on those emerging issues and share that information.

Update on the Status of School Safety and Security Grants

Chairman Davis invited Ms. Kenyon to provide an update on the status of the current round of school safety and security grants. Ms. Kenyon stated that four separate funding announcements were released on January 10, 2024 in accordance with the \$155 million School Safety grant solicitation package that was approved at the last meeting. Given that over 2,300 applications were received as of the application deadline of February 29, 2024, she opted to cover each solicitation separately.

School District Meritorious Grant Program

Ms. Kenyon noted that this first solicitation is a separate carve out of \$18 million available for school districts to expend funding on any eligible activity allowed in [Section 1306-B\(j\)](#) of the PA Public School Code. She stated that 478 of the 500 school districts have applied for these funds, and 327 awards totaling \$12.1 million have been distributed to school districts thus far.

School Mental Health Grant Program

Ms. Kenyon stated that this solicitation provides a total of \$90 million in noncompetitive formula-based grants for specified public school entities, including school districts, charter and cyber charter schools, intermediate units, and area career and technical centers, to address the mental and behavioral health needs of students. She reported that 699 of 778 eligible school entities have submitted applications for these funds thus far, with a current total of \$34 million already awarded to 270 applicants.

While Ms. Kenyon stated that staff continue to work with the “stragglers” to submit their applications for these noncompetitive funds, she informed Committee members that there are a few schools that have been totally unresponsive thus far to multiple outreach efforts, leaving several million dollars available. In trying to balance efforts to engage these schools to ensure they receive their allotted funds with the great amount of need for additional dollars, Ms. Kenyon requested the Committee’s support in attempting one more outreach to these outliers, perhaps with legislative assistance, and then reallocating any unused funds from school entities which do not respond within two weeks to the available competitive funds.

In response to a legislator’s inquiry and desire to assist, Ms. Kenyon stated she will share the list of unresponsive school entities. Another member offered assistance both with her connections and general support as an intermediary, given that extended unresponsiveness may indicate something else is going on. A member from a school district also offered to reach out through the PA Association of School Administrators (PASA).

School Safety Competitive Grants

Ms. Kenyon reviewed the third solicitation regarding the \$32 million allocated for School Safety Competitive Grants. She noted the expanded eligibility for these funds which allows municipalities, law enforcement agencies, and approved vendors, in addition to public school entities, to request funding to address school safety needs. Ms. Kenyon stated that over 600 applications have been received requesting \$178 million in funding. She reported that the review process is currently underway for these application with the goal of presenting recommended projects to the Committee at the April 2024 meeting.

Targeted School Safety Grants for Nonpublic Schools

Ms. Kenyon provided some context for this final solicitation of \$14 million to support the safety needs of nonpublic school entities, noting that these funds had previously been administered by PDE. She thanked PDE, the PA Association of Intermediate Units, and other stakeholders for their assistance and guidance in crafting this new solicitation. Ms. Kenyon reported that just

over 450 applications were received requesting \$29 million in funds. She noted that these submissions are currently under review, and details and recommendations will be shared with the Committee at the April meeting.

Ms. Kenyon concluded her update by stating that the release of these solicitations went as well as could be expected, especially given the multiple funding opportunities and scope of the eligible applicants. She related that staff heard appreciation for the resource materials and webinars, adding that the Revised Baseline Criteria Standards also helped to simplify and streamline the process, providing clarity for both applicants and staff in reviewing their requests. She asked if there were any questions with the only response being a member's comment recognizing staff for all the hard work and commending their efforts.

Discuss Assessor Registry & Assessment Criteria

Ms. Kenyon apprised the Committee regarding plans for two areas that emerged from feedback received during the grant process. She focused first on the [Assessment Provider Registry](#), providing a brief history of its development as part of [Act 44 of 2018](#). She noted that the latest round of grants and revised Baseline Criteria put Assessors on a higher level by prioritizing funding for gaps identified by Registered Assessors. Ms. Kenyon stated that feedback received as a result identified some potential updates to PCCD's process, including background clearances and qualifications to meet the physical security [Registration Criteria](#). She proposed a plan to review the Registration Criteria and develop some recommendations for the Committee's consideration later this year.

In response to a question of how many school entities utilize the Registry, Ms. Kenyon clarified that school entities are not required to use a registered assessor, but funding is prioritized for those that do. Another member commented that some schools have very qualified safety and security staff, supporting the option of district self-certification.

Ms. Kenyon moved on to the second related topic of the Assessment Criteria documents and corresponding instructions and guidance contained in the [School Safety and Security Assessment Criteria Toolkit](#). She noted that these documents were also required to be developed early on by the enactment of [Act 44 of 2018](#). Given the many statutory changes that have been made since then as well as the revised Baseline Criteria and general evolution of best practices in the school safety field, Ms. Kenyon suggested that the time has come to reconvene the work groups to review and revise these materials to present to the Committee later this year.

General Updates

Status of Act 55 School Safety and Security Criteria and Training

Chairman Davis invited Ms. Lindsay Vaughan to update the Committee on the status of the various School Safety and Security Training Standards, Criteria and Delivery required by [Act 55 of 2022](#). Ms. Vaughan briefly reviewed the requisite components of Act 55 pertaining to training school employees and school safety and security coordinators and the progress made thus far, including the partnership with Risk and Strategic Management (RSM) Corporation to develop curricula and deliver training.

Referencing the seven prescribed school safety and security topics required for school employees, Ms. Vaughan stated that the six modules eligible to be taken online were launched at different times between October 2023 and January 2024. She announced that just under 55,000 people have completed one or more of those modules so far, 86% of whom reported that the training was either helpful or very helpful.

Since it is required to be conducted in person, Ms. Vaughan informed Committee members that Training of Trainers (ToT) sessions have been successfully employed to empower over 700 individuals to deliver the seventh module on Emergency Training Drills in person to their own school employees. She noted that these ToT trainings will continue to be offered in the future.

Moving on to the school safety and security coordinators, Ms. Vaughan stated that the Coordinator Training successfully launched on February 2, 2024. She emphasized the significance of this date

as per the statute, coordinators who were appointed prior to that date are required to complete this training by February 2, 2025. Coordinators appointed after the launch date have one year from their appointment date to complete the training.

Noting that the training covers 11 topics over the course of seven hours, Ms. Vaughan shared that 14 trainings have already occurred and another 13 are scheduled for March and April. She said that 394 participants have been trained thus far with an average of 84% reporting that their knowledge on each topic had increased either slightly or significantly. Given the challenge of the diversity of attendees' positions and knowledge levels, Ms. Vaughan stated that a survey at the end of the training is being utilized to collect comments for future consideration of adjustments to the training, but noting that it has been well received overall. She added that online training is expected to launch in Fall of 2024, which will offer more flexibility to participants.

Finally, Ms. Vaughan provided an update on the external [Training Provider Registry](#), stating that 62 individuals have now completed the self-certification process verifying that their training covers the mandated scope and meets the PCCD [Training Standards](#).

Coordinator Survey Modifications

Chairman Davis thanked Ms. Vaughan and invited Ms. Kenyon to continue with the next presentation. She reminded Committee members that [Section 1309-B](#) of the PA Public School Code requires School Safety and Security Coordinators to make a report to their board by June 30 each year and submit information to the Committee via survey confirming that it was done.

Ms. Kenyon informed the Committee of the need to revise the current survey to incorporate new statutory requirements and additional requests, including:

- Court orders and training for School Police Officers
- Information on security personnel and training
- School-based diversion programming
- Information regarding the school entity's MOU process with local law enforcement

She anticipated that the revised survey will be presented to the Committee for consideration at the April meeting so it can be disseminated to the field in mid-May as usual.

In response to a member's question, Ms. Kenyon clarified that the school-based diversion programming question pertained to whether a school offers that program. The member expressed support for the revisions and also mentioned a network of school police officers that communicates and shares information, suggesting it may be helpful to provide examples of the court orders for school police officers and security personnel if they are not a school resource officer to make sure it's appropriate from school district to school district. Ms. Kenyon thanked the member and invited members to send her any questions or other ideas.

FY 2023 OJJDP Award – Building Local Continuums of Care for Youth

Mr. Mike Pennington provided the final update, announcing to the Committee that last month PCCD was notified that the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) selected PCCD for a \$825,000 federal award through the FY 2023 Building Local Continuums of Care To Support Youth Success solicitation. He stated that PCCD had applied for this funding in collaboration with WestEd's Justice & Prevention Research Center and state partners at the Department of Human Services' (DHS) Office of Children Youth and Families (OCYF) and the Juvenile Court Judges' Commission (JCJC).

Mr. Pennington explained that these funds will support an 18-month comprehensive "Supporting Youth Success in PA Statewide Planning & Assessment Initiative" to engage state and local partners through a comprehensive and collaborative systems mapping, assessment, and planning process. He added that these efforts align with recommendations from PCCD's 2023 Juvenile Justice Plan to the Governor and will result in the creation of a comprehensive statewide plan offering funding, policy, and program recommendations to guide Pennsylvania's youth-focused services, including schools and educational partners. As this project gets started, Mr. Pennington anticipated the creation of a joint workgroup involving the various partners and PCCD's youth-focused

Committees, including the SSSC, to help inform project activities. He invited Committee members to learn more about this opportunity and perhaps participate in the workgroup or other activities.

Chairman Davis thanked Mr. Pennington and the others for their reports. He reminded members that additional general updates were included in the meeting materials.

Member Updates/Comments/Questions

Chairman Davis asked if any member had updates or other business to bring before the Committee, but no one did.

Public Comment

Chairman Davis invited any public comment however none was received.

Adjournment

Chairman Davis noted that the next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, April 24, at 1:00 PM, with the agenda focused on the school safety grant recommendations. He stated that while the following meeting has not been set yet, it is anticipated to be in June or July after the passage of the next state budget. Following the vote, the meeting adjourned at 1:53 PM.

Motion to adjourn.

Motion: Bart. **Seconded:** Tuleya-Payne. **Abstentions:** None. **Not Present for Vote:** Brewster & Hurley. **Aye Votes:** 14. **Nay Votes:** 0. **Motion Adopted**