

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

School Safety and Security Committee Meeting

September 27, 2023

MINUTES

Members/Designees:

Mr. Mike Pennington, Designee for Chairman Davis
Ms. Sabrina S. Backer, Member
Mr. Andrew Barnes, Designee for DHS Secretary Arkoosh
Ms. Janice Bart, Member
Senator James Brewster, Member
Ms. Nikki Bricker, Member
Representative Donna Bullock, Member
Lt. Kyle Gautsch
Representative Barb Gleim, Member
Mr. Mike Hurley, Member
Ms. Brittney Kline, Designee for Attorney General Michelle Henry
Dr. Scott Kuren, Designee for PDE Secretary Mumin
Senator Wayne Langerholc, Member
Mr. Randy Padfield, Member
Dr. Jamie Piraino, Member
Ms. Wendy Robison, Member
Dr. Helena Tuleya-Payne, Member

Staff:

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|--------------------------|------------------|
| Pamela Bennett | Jordan Lewis |
| Kiara Brown | Elizabeth Locke |
| Lindsay Busco | Leo Lutz |
| Christina Cosgrove-Rooks | Zoe Miner |
| Jennifer Ely | Kariem Morssy |
| Chris Epoca | Ian Murray |
| Chuck Hogan | Derin Myers |
| Kirsten Kenyon | Debra Sandifer |
| Rebecca Kiehl | Alyssa Subsinsky |
| Samantha Koch | Lindsay Vaughan |
| Crystal Lauver | Shaun White |

Guests:

Diane Acri, PA House
Shaun Ali, WestEd/LISC
Carlee Capece, PA Department of Education (PDE)
Andrew Christ, PA School Board Association (PSBA)
Ryan Conn, Verkada
Gwenn Dando, PA Senate
Mike Deery, PA Senate
Steve D'Ettorre, Office of the Governor
Neil Hartnett, Office of the Lieutenant Governor
Kerwin Henderson, WestEd
Jason Henry, Office of the Lieutenant Governor
Kate Krueger, PA Association of School Business Officials (PASBO)
Simon Mallett, Risk and Strategic Management Corporation (RSM)
Heather Masshardt, PA School Board Association (PSBA)
Chris Stone, Risk and Strategic Management Corporation (RSM)
Camille Traczek, PA Department of Education (PDE)

Call to Order of the September 27, 2023 Meeting and Adoption of Minutes

Mr. Pennington called the meeting to order at 1:01 PM and welcomed participants. A quorum of members was established. Moving to the agenda, Mr. Pennington noted that the minutes from the May 31, 2023 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 May 31, 2023 meeting as submitted

Motion: Brewster. **Seconded:** Barnes. **Abstentions:** None. **Not Present for Vote:** Bart, Bullock & Gleim. **Votes:** 14. **Nay Votes:** 0. **Motion Adopted**

Mr. Pennington introduced new member Sabrina Backer, who is replacing David Hein in representing the PA School Boards Association on the Committee.

FY 2023-24 State Budget/Legislative Update

Mr. Pennington provided a status update on the state budget and a short overview on pending legislation that is currently moving through the General Assembly. Referencing the budget that was signed by the governor in early August, Mr. Pennington stated that it allocated \$50 million in state funding to the School Safety and Security Grant Fund and an additional \$100 million in federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding for mental health. In addition, it increased the Violence Intervention & Prevention (VIP) funding by \$10 million in state funding, from \$30 million last year to \$40 million this year, after an overall reduction of \$65 million due to the loss of federal ARPA funding supplementing that program last year.

However, Mr. Pennington noted that these funds have not yet been released as the related Code bills needed to provide direction are still working their way through the legislature. He apprised members on the current status of [HB 1300](#), which includes direction on implementing the VIP line item, noting it was passed by the Senate but has not yet been taken up by the House and will likely be further amended. The Senate also passed [HB 27](#), which includes a rather comprehensive School Safety amendment that makes a variety of changes to both [Article XIII-A \(Safe Schools\)](#) and [Article XIII-B \(School Safety and Security\)](#). Mr. Pennington highlighted key provisions of the bill, stating that its implementation will necessitate working closely with the PA Department of Education (PDE).

Mr. Pennington concluded by sharing that PCCD intends to reconvene the VIP Workgroup and to convene a new School Safety Grant Program Workgroup to develop draft solicitation frameworks for those grant programs and invited any Committee members interested in volunteering to serve on those workgroups to let PCCD staff know. A member asked if there would be any opposition to the bill. PCCD staff responded that the bill passed unanimously out of the Senate, though the outcome of its consideration in the House is unknown.

Violence Intervention & Prevention (VIP) Update

Mr. Pennington invited Zoe Miner and the team at WestEd/LISC to present information on the Violence Intervention & Prevention (VIP) program. Ms. Miner shared that as of September 26, 2023, 97% of all grants under the FY 2022-23 VIP Competitive Grants Program have been awarded as well as the five FY 2022 Coordinated Community Violence Intervention (CCVI) Strategies Pilot Grant Program grants. In addition, funding for National Opinion Research Center (NORC), the selected grantee under the VIP Grants Evaluation funding announcement, has also been awarded. Ms. Miner noted that PCCD has started providing data to NORC to facilitate their familiarization with the grantees and preparation of the program survey to be administered to the grantees for evaluation selection.

Ms. Miner introduced Kerwin Henderson from WestEd, which serves as the training and technical assistance provider for both the VIP and CCVI grants, adding that Lori Toscano and Shaun Ali also provide support for the project but were unable to participate today. Mr. Henderson provided an update on the work underway, stating that it's going very well with the 276 VIP grantees, including the 24 grantees in the intensive cohort for technical assistance. He shared some of the efforts to build technical capacity with the grantees, particularly with focusing on target populations and

grant priorities, using evidence-based tools, and developing cohesive outcomes. In addition, they are working with projects on setting short- and long-term goals and connecting with resources and networking within their localities.

School Safety and Security Training Update

Mr. Pennington invited Ms. Samantha Koch and the Risk and Strategic Management (RSM) Corporation to present an update on the Threat Assessment Training and Technical Assistance (TA) Network connected with the action item to allocate a portion of the remaining funding to support continuation of the PA K-12 Threat Assessment Network initiative.

Ms. Koch reviewed a PowerPoint presentation to provide a brief overview of the PA K-12 Threat Assessment Training & TA Network and what has been accomplished to date. Highlights of the presentation included the origination through a federal grant, the timeline of key activities, and extent and impact of this initiative which has engaged the majority of school entities over the past three years. She reported that the team has worked hard to provide quality multi-modal training to assist schools in navigating the new mandate requirements. Ms. Koch reported that since the federal grant supporting this initiative is coming to a close, they are looking to continue their good efforts with state funds, with approval from the Committee.

At Ms. Koch's invitation, Mr. Simon Mallet from RSM continued the presentation, sharing both the participation in the training network and the findings of the 2022-23 survey as summarized in the Survey Report provided to members in the meeting materials. He reported that the impact has been strong from the outset and building in value, and the feedback from schools has been positive. He noted that the demand for in-person training remains high and the tag-team training model using a pair of presenters has worked very well. In addition, Mr. Mallet stated that the recently released stand-alone module, which focuses on identifying what threat assessment is, has been viewed nearly 4,000 times. Mr. Mallet shared that the survey results indicated significant positive impact and showed some gaps that they hope to address with continued funding, adding that there remains strong demand for continued support.

Mr. Mallet noted that RSM was also selected as the provider for the K-12 School Safety & Security Training and Technical Assistance Project (SSSTP) and passed the presentation to his colleague, Chris Stone, the project manager for the Act 55 training, who thanked PCCD staff and others who are working with them on the project. Mr. Stone stated that REM is about six months into the project and reviewed the key aspects. The needs assessment that was sent out over the summer included feedback on how school entities wanted the information provided, so in response they started with the online modules. He reviewed plans for rolling out the training and anticipated that the first module on behavioral health would be out in a week or so. He noted that the one module on training drills will have to be in person, and they are working with the IUs on scheduling those which they plan to offer in a train-the-trainer format. He added that the School Safety & Security Coordinator trainings will be in person, starting in January 2024.

Mr. Mallet concluded the presentation by noting the potential for cross-over between the K-12 Threat Assessment and the SSSTP, so they are conscious of the need to ensure a clear distinction between the two. He shared that there needs to be one look and feel and one form of access for each side, so it's separate but feels integrated. They also plan to create a registry of approved providers that incorporates their self-certification of competency as a resource for school entities.

Mr. Pennington expressed appreciation to RSM as well as WestEd and LISC for the great work on both projects, and their presenters left the meeting. He then invited PCCD staff Lindsay Vaughn to introduce the first of two action items related to these projects. Referencing the Delegation of Authority motion provided in the meeting materials, Ms. Vaughn reviewed with the Committee that while RSM has been developing the standards-aligned training to provide free of charge to school employees, schools have had the option to provide their own training if they met the standards. In addition, the law allows for the Committee to approve groups, organizations, or other entities to provide the training.

Given the awareness that there are providers with great expertise, Ms. Vaughn noted that at the last meeting the Committee discussed allowing for providers to self-certify their expertise and reviewed the requirements and materials to support meeting the standard. She shared that approved providers will be on a publicly facing list as a resource for schools if they chose not to use the free training and referenced the list in the meeting materials of the 30 or so providers who have self-certified thus far. Ms. Vaughn reviewed the request for delegation of authority, noting its similarity to other processes and stating that it would allow for timeliness in updating the list and provide the most current list of providers prior to meetings.

Rep. Gleim asked who at PCCD will be administering an audit, and who will be doing what tasks. Ms. Vaughan responded that an internal decision has not yet been made, but it would be someone familiar with the standards at PCCD who will be doing the audits and confirmed that staff have the expertise and capability for that task. Hearing no further questions, Mr. Pennington invited a motion regarding this action item.

Motion to approve the delegation of authority to PCCD's Executive Director and staff to approve providers of school safety and security training who have certified that their training curriculum meets the [Act 55 Employee Training Standards](#)

Motion: Bart **Seconded:** Backer **Discussion:** None. **Abstentions:** None. **Not Present for Vote:** None. **Aye Votes:** 17. **Nay Votes:** 0. **Motion Adopted**

Moving on, Mr. Pennington invited Ms. Koch to introduce the next action item. Given the previous presentation, she summarized the recommendation detailed in the meeting materials, to approve the use of state funds in order to ensure continued availability of threat assessment training and technical support once the federal grant ends in a few days. She reviewed the training and related services that would be supported by these. With no further questions, Mr Pennington asked if there was a motion for this action.

Motion to approve an award of up to \$374,770 in remaining state School Safety and Security funds to support Threat Assessment Team Network activities for an additional three years (Oct. 1, 2023-Sept. 30, 2026), contingent upon the resolution of any outstanding fiscal and/or programmatic concerns

Motion: Tuleya-Payne. **Seconded:** Piraino **Discussion:** None. **Abstentions:** None. **Not Present for Vote:** None. **Aye Votes:** 17. **Nay Votes:** 0. **Motion Adopted**

General Updates

Status of FY22-23 School Mental Health & School Safety and Security Grants

Mr. Pennington invited Dr. Jennifer Ely to apprise the Committee on the status of the FY22-23 School Mental Health & School Safety and Security Grants. Dr. Ely shared that as of September 25, 2023, 91% of these grants have been awarded, equating to \$178 million of the \$190 million allocation for physical security and mental health needs. She noted that 22 (45%) have submitted Tier 1 eligible activities, stating that PCCD staff are working diligently to get all 49 remaining grantees to awarded status.

School Safety & Security Coordinator Survey Results

Dr. Ely continued her update with the results of the annual School Safety & Security Coordinator Survey. She provided some background on the annual survey which [Section 1309-B](#) requires school safety & security coordinators (SSCs) to submit. She noted an overall increase in survey responses, with 707 of 841 school entities participating and shared a breakdown of the number received by school entity type. Dr. Ely shared highlights of the survey results from the summary provided in the meeting materials.

PSP Annual RVAT Report

Mr. Pennington acknowledged that the PA State Police (PSP) provided PCCD with their annual Risk and Vulnerability Assessment Team (RVAT) report, which was included in the meeting materials.

Member Updates/Comments/Questions

Mr. Pennington acknowledged the Mental Health Crisis letter addressed to the Committee that was included in the meeting materials. He invited the author, Ms. Nikki Bricker, to comment on its content regarding the state of mental health supports within the Commonwealth. Ms. Bricker noted the improvements that have been made in identifying the need and referring for services, but the mental health providers are overwhelmed with the demand and facing multiple barriers that impede their ability to help children and families. Ms. Bricker offered to help create a workgroup or facilitate brainstorming on how best to support mental health professionals. Mr. Pennington recognized the frustration and thanked Ms. Bricker for her contribution and assistance.

Mr. Pennington asked if any other Committee member had any updates or other business to bring before the Committee. Sen. Brewster stated that he had been contacted by a parent of one of the deceased children from the Parkland School shooting in Florida who said that they were inviting legislators and members of concerned organizations to visit the facility on October 14 prior to its demolition. He extended the invitation to members of the SSSC.

Public Comment

Mr. Pennington invited any public comment; however, none was received.

Adjournment

Mr. Pennington noted that the next meeting date has been tentatively scheduled for October 25, 2023 at 1:00 PM but added that it is contingent upon the timeliness of the passage of the previously mentioned fiscal code bills. Following the vote, the meeting adjourned at 2:06 PM.

Motion to adjourn

Motion: Bullock. **Seconded:** Bart **Abstentions:** None. **Not Present for Vote:** Langerholm, Brewster, Barnes, Hurley & Robison. **Aye Votes:** 12. **Nay Votes:** 0. **Motion Adopted**