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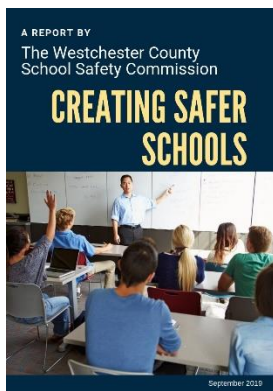
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### **A Report from the Westchester County School Safety Commission**

*“Creating Safer Schools: Recommendations to Strengthen and Enhance*

*Prevention, Planning and Response to School Violence”*



**Wed. Sept 18, 2019 White Plains, NY --** The Westchester County School Safety Commission released its recommendations to create safer schools in the County, schools of all levels, by following a core set of data-driven best practices and blue prints for success. The report called: *“Creating Safer Schools: Recommendations to Strengthen and Enhance Prevention, Planning and Response to School Violence,”* is a foundational document. It combines best practices being used at the state level and across the country to create a proactive climate to prevent school violence of any kind and to plan for action and response if a threat or incident takes place in one of the 400-plus school facilities here in Westchester.

The full report with important recommendations was released today at a news conference led off by Westchester County District Attorney Anthony A. Scarpino, Jr. and Westchester County Executive George Latimer.

The Commission was launch in August 2018, with a first meeting held just as the 2018-2019 school year got underway. Over the course of the year, the committees focused on distinct issues. On Feb. 27, 2019, the two committees met jointly to share their preliminary findings with the full Commission.

Today Committee recommendations were delivered by Michael Orth, Commissioner, Westchester County Dept. of Community Mental Health, serving as co-chair of the Threat Assessment Committee, and Chris T. McNerney, Chief Criminal Investigator, Westchester County District Attorney’s Office, speaking as the new chair of the Crisis Management/Law Enforcement Committee (as of September, 2019).

Key recommendations include:

1. Outline a comprehensive school violence prevention, planning and response for each school based on NYS Emergency Response Plans guidelines
2. Create circles of communication among stakeholders, including school building administration, school districts, mental health professionals, law enforcement and other first responders, parents, students and community members—including systems for anonymous tips, alerts, contacts for all emergency teams, teacher and staff training, and community meetings

**(more)**

3. Adopt a schoolwide systems approach to threat prevention in all schools
4. Follow models for building Threat Assessment Teams and Emergency Response Teams
5. Enhance relationships between local police and schools; and set guidelines for law enforcement to follow concerning commitment, planning and response
6. Utilize specialized training for law enforcement involved in school safety
7. Mandate regularly scheduled districtwide emergency and crisis response drills, such as disaster drills and active shooter drills, including school personnel, local law enforcement and first responders, and mutual aid responders

*"We could not be more proud of the work of this Commission and we thank all of the members who worked throughout the year to bring their knowledge and experience to this important initiative. Together they have laid the foundation of a comprehensive plan for Westchester County to help keep our children safer and more secure," said Westchester County District Attorney Anthony A. Scarpino, Jr. "Working together across jurisdictions and districts, across organizations and communities strengthens all of us."*

*Westchester County Executive George Latimer also commended the Commission's work. "County officials are continually working to ensure the safety of all of our schools. This Commission, a joint effort between my Administration and DA Scarpino, is tasked with finding solutions which meet the needs of all parties involved by both keeping our children safe while also making sure schools are places where our kids feel at ease and can focus on learning. That is why these efforts and those undertaken by our County Police, including constantly working to be prepared through communication and training for any type of horrific incident, are so important."*

Other information in the report includes NY's Red Flag Law, which is now in effect. New York educators, families and law enforcement can take legal action to potentially prevent violence when they spot so-called red flags in a person's behavior, which may indicate future violence.

The report also includes a list of resources and references. It will be distributed to all school districts, police agencies, libraries, elected officials and other stakeholders throughout the County, encouraging adoption of these recommendations. The Commission is planning seminars for stakeholders to better understand how to collaboratively implement them.

Click here for a [downloadable PDF](#) of the complete report.

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