

CONTAINED HEREIN IS THE SANTA CRUZ COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION BOARD OF TRUSTEES RESPONSE TO THE 2015-16 GRAND JURY INQUIRY INTO “K-12 SCHOOLS SAFETY AND EMERGENCY PLANNING”.

PREFACE

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION (SCCOE) ROLE IN SAFE SCHOOL PLANNING INCLUDING EMERGENCY RESPONSE:

Historically, the SCCOE has always taken an active leadership role in the coordination of Safe Schools Planning and the Development of School Emergency Response Procedures for all county schools. However, in 2009, the California Legislature enacted what was arguably the largest change to California’s school finance system in decades. It relaxed spending on 40 categorical programs including school safety. Prior to these changes and the subsequent changes brought about by Local Control Funding (LCF) in 2013, the SCCOE was the California Department of Education’s (CDE) Regional Lead for Safe Schools Planning. As such, the SCCOE offered annual workshops to school site teams on the development of Comprehensive Safe School Plans, including School Emergency Response.

The following workshops were provided with CDE fidelity aligned with ED Code 32280-32289:

- Comprehensive Safe School Planning
- Crisis Response and Emergency Management

Additional Workshops that were offered to school districts over the years included:

- Bully Prevention, Including Cyber-bullying
- Active School Shooter workshops provided by Law Enforcement
- Code Red Lock Down Procedure Workshops
- Emergency Communication Workshops
- Teen Dating Violence Workshops
- Safe Schools Planning with a Suicide Prevention focus
- Safes School Planning with a School Climate focus
- Symposium on Bullying

In 2005 and 2007, the SCCOE received two federally funded Readiness and Emergency Management (REMS) grants totaling \$500,000 to create uniform emergency response protocols and procedures for all schools throughout the county. The funding included the distribution of materials and supplies.

Through these grants, the SCCOE brought together all county first responders: Red Cross, mental health, public health, and school district leaders. The result was the creation of a first-in-the-state countywide manual for School Emergency Response and Crisis Management (ERCM) to be used by all school sites throughout the county. In addition, the grant purchased emergency buckets and backpacks for every classroom in

the county. These items were later purchased with unrestricted SCCOE funds for new classrooms after the initial distribution. The last distribution of such supplies took place in the fall of 2015 to Santa Cruz City Schools. Emergency vests and go-kit bags with material lists for every role in a School Incident Command System were also distributed to every school site in the county through the REMS grant.

Once the grant funding ended, the SCCOE committed to continuing its leadership role in coordinating the multi-disciplinary school emergency planning team, renaming the group the County Safe School Consortia. The Consortia is the collective group responsible for the oversight of the countywide school emergency manual. The Consortia meets twice a year to (1) review and update, as needed, the County School Emergency Manual; (2) debrief on critical incidents; (3) identify training needs; (4) identify resource needs; and (5) provide networking for first responders to discuss site-specific school safety or emergency needs. The last meeting of the Safe School Consortia was on November 20, 2015. The purpose was to review the recent updates to the Federal guideline for school emergency response and discuss what, if any, revisions were needed to the County ERCM manual.

RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY QUESTIONS

R1. All schools should have a plan that is reviewed and updated yearly.

The Board of Trustees of the SCCOE agrees that all schools should have a plan that is reviewed and updated yearly. To further that, the SCCOE provides technical assistance to districts and school sites on the development of safe school plans, including emergency response through annual workshops and site-specific assistance. However, the SCCOE cannot compel districts to attend these workshops or ask us for assistance.

Districts have been asked to send all of their site emergency plans to the SCCOE and their local first responders. This has been a local request and is not part of an Ed Code mandate. Per Education Code 32288 (a): “In order to ensure compliance with this article (School Safety), each school shall forward its comprehensive school safety plan to the school district OR county office for approval”. School sites only have to send their comprehensive safe school plans to their District Offices. The SCCOE-administered programs send their plans to the SCCOE.

R2. Publicly available school safety plans should be on all school websites. The location of this information should be prominently and uniformly displayed on the homepage of each school’s website.

The Board of Trustees of the SCCOE concurs and complies with this recommendation for SCCOE-operated programs. However, the SCCOE has no jurisdiction in this matter as it relates to local school districts. Nevertheless, the SCCOE can and does provide technical assistance to school districts requesting such support. Please note, however,

that certain aspects of the emergency plan are for school personnel eyes only, as per the request of local law enforcement and as agreed to by the Safe School Consortia. Ed. Code 32281 (f) states: “a school’s district or county office of education may elect not to disclose those portions of the comprehensive school safety plan that include tactical responses to criminal incidents”.

R3. The County Office of Education should ensure that schools have sufficient and appropriate emergency supplies.

With the reallocation of safe schools planning funds to districts under LCF, the SCCOE no longer has a funding base to be able to provide emergency supplies to districts. However, while not required by the CDE, the SCCOE does maintain emergency supply lists for classrooms and go-kits on our website. The SCCOE is available to also provide technical assistance to districts on how to obtain these supplies through their own school community resources. Upon district request, the SCCOE will conduct an audit of a school’s emergency supplies readiness and offer free training as needed

R4. All schools and district offices should have a printed copy of the school safety plan readily available.

The Board of Trustees of the SCCOE concurs. This is a mandate under Education Code and is shared with school districts as part of the comprehensive Safe School Planning and Emergency Response workshops provided by the SCCOE. Safe School Planning templates are provided during workshops. Additionally, through the REMS grant funding, the SCCOE provided every school site with a copy of the Emergency Response Manual. Emergency Response plans are uniform in nature, but the site-based Safe School Plans are unique to the needs of individual schools. Comprehensive School Safety Plans, at a minimum, shall include: “the assessment of school crime committed on school campuses and at school-related functions and the identification of appropriate strategies and programs that will provide or maintain a high level of school safety, including child abuse reporting and disaster procedures”.

R5. All district and school staff members should know about the existence of the safety plan and should know the exact location of their printed safety plan.

The Board of Trustees of the SCCOE concurs. The SCCOE staff will update school districts on this requirement. Heretofore, this information was part of the Safe School Planning and Emergency Response workshops provided by the SCCOE as recommended by CDE. This was something that the SCCOE looked for when providing categorical program site reviews as requested by the State. As previously mentioned, California law no longer requires the SCCOE to provide such reviews as categorical programs including School Safety are now the responsibility of school districts per LCF.

R6. County Office of Education should require a yearly report from each district superintendent certifying the existence and annual update of each school's safety plan. (F1)

The County Office of Education does not have the legal authority to require a school district to submit a yearly report certifying the existence and annual update of each school's safety plan within their district. However, the County Superintendent of Schools will make that request to each of the 10 local school districts based on the Grand Jury recommendation.

SUMMARY

The Board of Trustees of the SCCOE believes that the SCCOE is in full compliance with State regulations. In addition, the SCCOE goes beyond State regulations as it assists K-12 schools to comply with safety and emergency planning as requested.