

Portage Township Schools: A Comprehensive Approach to School Safety and Security



Implementation: Fall of 2018

School Safety and Security Statement

School safety is a top priority for the Portage Township Schools (PTS) leadership team. PTS constantly review and revise the security plans based upon the latest crisis prevention research. PTS does not wait for a crisis to strike; maintaining a proactive system is the top priority which reflects the community's high expectation for school safety and security in order to keep students and staff safe. This priority requires effective school safety efforts that are designed, funded, and implemented as comprehensive district-wide approach that facilitates interdisciplinary collaboration and builds on a multi-tiered system of supports designed to meet the unique needs of the school community. These comprehensive safety and security efforts include best practices for creating safe and successful schools as outlined in Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

While PTS constantly address school safety threats with preventative and proactive measures, parents and the public may not always see activity. Advertising school safety plans weakens school safety and puts students at risk. Instead, PTS places great importance on maintaining confidentiality over the school safety policies and procedures. This prevents potential threats from exploiting the crisis management plans. Likewise, publicly discussing areas of opportunity in the security plan is equally dangerous. PTS routinely works to identify security weaknesses and correct them immediately; however, this is done confidentially so weaknesses are not exploited.

The Safe School Committee has a constant proactive desire to learn and improve to keep students safe and schools secure to ensure a safe and secure learning environment. The Committee meets regularly to review school safety and security issues including crime prevention, school violence, bullying and other issues to ensure safe and secure schools. The Committee performs regular trainings and professional development meetings to ensure staff members are educated on the school safety policies and procedures.

PTS has twelve administrators that are trained as certified School Safety Specialists via the Indiana Department of Education's Indiana School Safety Specialist Academy. These administrators learn leading-edge state and national best practices that they then use to train other PTS faculty and staff in advanced school safety, security, intervention/prevention, and emergency preparedness planning. This professional development is ongoing and continuous so that PTS administrators and teachers remain at the forefront of safety and security.

Additional efforts will take place during the summer of 2018 and will remain in future safety plan procedures. Some of these efforts include hosting a roundtable discussion with members of local law enforcement to address school safety issues and to further strengthen the District's school safety plan. These discussions will also guide future building renovations, such as Portage High School West, so that we can incorporate security measures as appropriate. District leaders and the Superintendent will also lead discussions with local law enforcement agencies to various ways to further improve our school safety such as enhancing our School Resource Officer (SRO) program and implementing best practices based on leading local, state and federal data.

Finally, PTS continues to follow the leading trends in preventing and detecting students in need of social and emotional support. In order to provide a comprehensive approach to school safety, PTS has identified additional best practices that are essential in addressing early warning signs of students in distress in order to increase the safety monitoring of our students and schools.

Indiana State Statute

HEA 1421

School discipline. Provides that the department of education's (department) model evidence based plan for improving student behavior and discipline must: (1) reduce out-of-school suspension and disproportionality in discipline and expulsion; (2) limit referrals to law enforcement or arrests on school property to cases in which referral to law enforcement or arrest is necessary to protect the health and safety of students or school employees; and (3) include policies to address instances of bullying and cyberbullying on school property of a school corporation. Provides that, beginning in the 2019-2020 school year, the department, in collaboration with parent organizations, teacher organizations, educational support professional organizations, and state educational institutions, shall, upon a school corporation's request, provide information and assistance to the school corporation regarding the implementation of the school corporation's evidence based plan to ensure that teachers and administrators receive appropriate professional development and other resources in preparation for carrying out the plan. Urges the legislative council to assign to an appropriate interim study committee the task of studying the use of positive student discipline and restorative justice practices by elementary and secondary schools. Requires the department to conduct a survey of school corporation school discipline policies to determine the extent to which positive discipline and restorative justice practices are being utilized.

Federal Statute

Compliance with Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) makes significant changes to policies and practices previously mandated by No Child Left Behind. ESSA took effect in the 2017-2018 school year, and PTS is making significant changes to comply with the law.

TITLE IV of Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

Safe and Healthy Students – Section 4108

- Promoting community and parent involvement in schools
- Providing school-based mental health services and counseling
- Promoting supportive school climates to reduce the use of exclusionary discipline and promoting supportive school discipline
- Establishing or improving dropout prevention
- Supporting re-entry programs and transition services for justice-involved youth
- Implementing programs that support a healthy, active lifestyle (nutritional and physical education)
- Implementing systems and practices to prevent bullying and harassment
- Developing relationship building skills to help improve safety through the recognition and prevention of coercion, violence, or abuse
- Establishing community partnerships

Comprehensive, Collaborative School Safety

Safe and supportive schools are central to student success. Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) provides significant opportunity and funding for schools and districts to implement key elements of comprehensive school safety, which are outlined in the *Framework for Safe and Successful Schools*. The framework was developed by the National Association of School Psychologists, the American School Counselor Association, the School Social Work Association of America, the National Association of School Resource Officers, and the National Associations of Elementary and Secondary School Principals to provide clear direction on current best practices for creating and implementing effective school safety policy and practice. These organizations represent key professionals responsible for improving school safety and student success. PTS is proud to collaborate with organizations such as the National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO), the Indiana Association of School Resource Officers (INSRO), the Porter County Safe Schools Commission in order to implement National Best Practices in alignment with the state and federal requirements relative to safety and security in our schools.

Leveraging ESSA

ESSA's *Framework for Safe and Successful Schools* requires effective school leadership and meaningful, ongoing collaboration and consultation to ensure that efforts to improve school safety encompass the continuum of prevention and intervention and are based on appropriately interpreted data collected from valid and reliable measures. States, districts, and schools can build on existing school safety efforts by leveraging opportunities in ESSA to:

- Blend various funding streams (e.g., Title I, Title II, Title IV) to implement multi-tiered systems of support to integrate service delivery for all students with efforts to improve school climate and safety.
- Implement comprehensive school mental and behavioral health services.
- Provide professional development to improve understanding of how to support children impacted by trauma.
- Implement evidence-based policies and practices to prevent bullying and harassment.

- Engage in efforts to prevent violence, including teen dating violence.
- Provide evidence-based school safety training to teachers, specialized instructional support personnel, and other relevant staff critical to comprehensive school safety efforts.
- Disseminate and promote examples of best practices in school safety.
- Improve coordination and collaboration with community agencies in efforts to improve school safety.

National Best Practices for Creating Safe and Successful Schools for ESSA Compliance

Effective school safety efforts must be designed, funded, and implemented as a comprehensive school-wide approach that facilitates interdisciplinary collaboration and builds on a multi-tiered system of supports designed to meet the unique needs of the school community. Comprehensive school safety efforts:

- Balance physical and psychological safety. Comprehensive school safety is supported when schools combine reasonable physical security measures (e.g., visitor check in procedures, locked doors) with efforts to enhance school climate, foster respectful and trusting relationships among students and staff, address students' mental and behavioral health (including providing trauma-sensitive supports), and promote overall student success.
- Integrate service delivery systems. Safe and successful learning environments are fostered through collaboration among school staff and community-based service providers while also integrating existing initiatives in the school. Integrated academic, behavioral, mental health, and social services lead to more sustainable and comprehensive school improvement, reduce duplicative efforts, and require principal leadership and a commitment from the entire staff.
- Improve access to comprehensive, school-based mental health services. Access to school-based mental health services directly improves students' physical and psychological safety, academic performance, and social-emotional learning. This requires adequate staffing levels in terms of school-employed mental health professionals (school counselors, school psychologists, school social workers) to ensure that services are high quality, effective, and appropriate to the school context. Importantly, increased access to these professionals empowers school leaders to more effectively

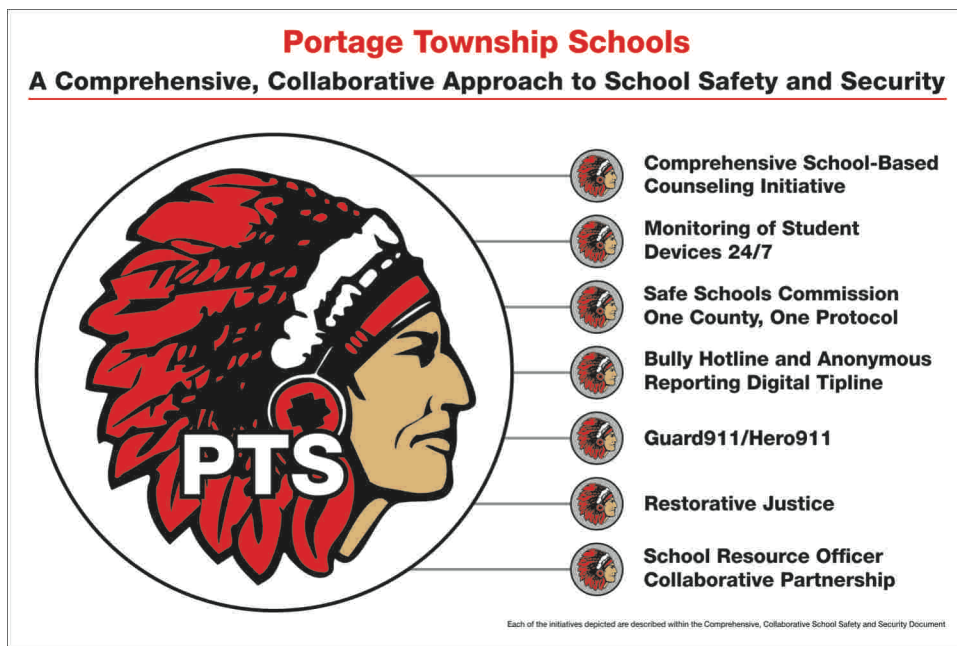
deploy resources, ensure coordination of services, and enhance collaboration with community providers to meet the more intense or clinical needs of students.

- Employ positive discipline practices. Positive discipline enhances positive behavior, supports an environment where students feel respected and supported, improves student engagement, fosters home–school–community relationships, and improves school climate and safety. In contrast, overly punitive measures reduce student connectedness, do not improve student behavior, and negatively impact school climate and safety perceptions.
- Incorporate appropriate professional development, training, and planning. School crisis and emergency preparedness training should encompass prevention/mitigation, early intervention (which is part of ongoing school safety), immediate response/intervention, and long-term recovery. Training and planning must be relevant to the learning context, make maximum use of existing staff resources, and involve reviewing and practicing safety and crisis plans.
- Establish a multidisciplinary school safety and crisis team. Comprehensive school safety planning and implementation must be led by a multidisciplinary school safety and crisis team that includes, at a minimum, principals, school employed mental health professionals, school security personnel, and appropriate community stakeholders (e.g., law enforcement). The team must be empowered to understand and identify areas of risk and need that are unique to the school in order to address preparedness objectives related to prevention, mitigation, protection, response, and recovery. Effective efforts build upon ongoing school safety and mental health services.

A Comprehensive, Collaborative Approach to School Safety

The following diagram provides the comprehensive approach to school safety to be deployed in the fall of 2018.

Portage Township Schools: A Comprehensive, Collaborative Approach to School Safety and Security



Initiative 1: Comprehensive School-Based Counseling Program

For the start of the 2018-2019 school year, PTS will provide mental health services to students via a contracted mental health provider. By providing mental health services, PTS will treat many student issues leading to school safety threats. These efforts are in alignment with HEA 1421 and the requirements outlined in ESSA to implement positive prevention and intervention strategies regarding student discipline.

Co-located mental health professionals/services within the school setting has gained national attention as a model for an accessible and cost-effective way to address student mental health needs, in particular students who otherwise do not have meaningful access to such services. Numerous research studies on school-based mental health point to measurable gains in academic achievement, declines in suspension and grade retention, and reductions in typical childhood mental illness such as depression and behaviors associated with conduct disorder and attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder when students have regular access to mental health services as needed. Co-located mental health professionals also serve a role in helping school districts to create a culture within the school of competence, growth and inclusion for all students.

PTS is requesting proposals for local mental health providers who are Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC) to provide school-based mental health with the district's schools beginning in the fall of 2018. In order to respond to this RFP, the service provider must: a) be committed as an organization to the concept of recovery and resiliency; b) ability to accept a variety of private and public insurances and have credentialed staff to meet these requirements; c) ability to provide mental health services to language minorities, including Spanish-speaking students and families; d) have procedures for on-call, after-hour services or 24-hour access to support for students and families during the school year and during student holidays/vacations and summer breaks.

The RFP is looking for highly qualified providers/agencies to provide the following mental and behaviors health services to PTS students:

- Comprehensive clinical assessments
- Individual therapy
- Group therapy
- Family therapy

- Medication Management
- On-Site Training and Consultation
- Day Treatment for PTS as an alternative to suspension/expulsion

The School-based mental health services will be available for all students, regardless of ability to pay. All financial obligations related to the provision of mental and behavioral health services will be the responsibility of the provider.

Goals for the School Based Mental Health Services:

- Meet the requirements set in Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)
 - Provide mental health programs that address early intervention and prevention services for PTS students and families
 - Increase the accessibility of mental health services for PTS students in need of such services in a non-stigmatized environment

Scope of Mental Health Services:

- Services will be provided and supervised by a local mental health provider agency
- Family engagement and active family involvement is critical at the initiation and throughout the treatment process. Services will only be provided to students following the receipt of parental consent.
- Services should be proactive and positive, building on the strengths of the student and families.
- Service providers should show willingness to build strong alliances collaborating with school administrators, student services staff, teachers and a Multi-Tiered System of Support Team for inclusive student services.
- Services must follow the mandate to be least instructive, least restrictive and responsive to the individual needs of the child within the school setting.

Initiative 2: Monitoring of Student Devices 24/7

PTS will be implementing a monitoring system that will flag any signs of cyberbullying or self-harm. If disturbing or concerning content is found on the device and the accounts and applications accessed by students, an alert will be sent to guidance counselors immediately and individuals on the school-based SRO in accordance with the cyberbullying statute requirements outlined in HEA 1421. This allows students' needs to be determined and a plan of action to be implemented in a direct effort to support the individual needs of students, socially and emotionally, with intervention. These reports will also be analyzed by the district security team to develop future prevention activities to further enhance students in reporting safety concerns. These alerts can also be sent to parents in order for them to partner with the school district in the monitoring of the device for the safety of each student outside of the school day.

The devices will be monitored 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by PTS. No matter where students access their device, the district will have the ability to receive alerts and warning signs that need attention of appropriate school personnel. There are levels of alerts to determine the immediate needs of students to be addressed that include concerns for self-harm and other student safety concerns that need immediate attention whether within the timeframe of the school day or within a given school week.

The monitoring of devices is in collaboration with a team of trained analysts to include individuals with psychology and sociology backgrounds. Due to their experience dealing with sensitive needs of students, the message's intent is analyzed and a threat level based on plausibility is determined. This includes the monitoring of email, social media, and the overall device applications and activity.

Initiative 3: Safe Schools Commission - One County, One Protocol

State and national law enforcement agencies, including the Indiana State Police, have indicated that joint efforts for school safety between neighboring law enforcement agencies (city, county, state) are the most effective in providing top-level security. Since its inception, PTS has participated in the “One County, One Protocol” school safety program lead by the Porter County Safe Schools Commission. This collaborative effort which includes the Portage Police Department, the Indiana State Police, and the other Porter County law enforcement agencies, has continually lead the state in school safety initiatives.

“One County, One Protocol” has developed a single school safety protocol which has been adopted by each school district throughout Porter County. This helps reduce confusion that can occur when different law enforcement agencies respond to a school threat.

Porter County’s efforts in “One County, One Protocol” has been recognized as “setting the pace” for school safety collaboration in the State of Indiana by the Indiana State Police Superintendent Doug Carter. He lauded Porter County’s efforts for reducing territorialism between departments and encouraging closer working relationship between various law enforcement agencies.

Portage Township Schools remains dedicated to safety protocols developed at the county level in collaboration with the Porter County Safe Schools Commission. PTS will enhance the professional development practices in place to execute the protocols and also provide tabletop drills with employees and students.

Initiative 4: Bully Hotline and Anonymous Reporting Digital Tip Line

PTS will be launching an anonymous tip line in collaboration with the already established bully hotline for each individual school for anonymous reporting. This allows for the alerts to be sent out 24/7 to the SROs and guidance counselors in the event that a tip needs immediate attention. This further enhances the bully hotline as the alert system is a feature that will work in collaboration with the ability to anonymously report on-demand for those more urgent matters. This initiative is in alignment with ESSA's *Framework for Safe and Successful Schools*.

Initiative 5: Guard911/Hero911

PTS employees are trained on the application known as SchoolGuard which is part of the “One County, One Protocol” plan. This initiative is in alignment with ESSA’s *Framework for Safe and Successful Schools*. Once installed on a staff member’s electronic device, it works essentially as a panic button: a downloadable app which, when activated at the first sign of trouble by a teacher or staffer, simultaneously speed-dials 911; alerts every other staffer in the school with the app; and alerts all neighboring schools.

SchoolGuard’s particular functionality is augmented, moreover, by its link to the Hero911 app, available only to sworn law enforcement officers. When SchoolGuard is activated, officers with the Hero911 app on their smartphones will be alerted as well, no matter where in Porter County they reside, no matter what department they serve with, making them, in essence, volunteer members of an on-call rapid-response team. The common response plan developed by “One County, One Protocol” further enhances the effectiveness of Hero911 by ensuring each responding officer is utilizing the same response protocol.

Initiative 6: Restorative Justice

Restorative justice empowers students to resolve conflicts on their own and in small groups, and it's a growing practice at schools around the country. The premise of this initiative is to bring students together in peer-mediated small groups to talk, ask questions, and air their grievances. Restorative programs have been deployed throughout PTS and continues to have a positive impact on the school culture by preventing incidents of bullying and reduce student conflicts. According to the research, Restorative Justice has a direct impact on students feeling happier and safer in school. HEA 1421 and ESSA requires schools to utilize National Best Practices for the prevention and intervention of eliminating student conflict, decreasing school suspensions and expulsions, and providing students with the strategies when conflicts arise through restorative practices.

Restorative Justice in Schools: A Doorway to Discipline

Taken from: *Taking Restorative Justice to Schools: A Doorway to Discipline*. J. Holtham. (2009). Del Hayes Press.

| Infraction | Punitive | Restorative |
|---|--|--|
| Putdowns, gossip, or interpersonal conflicts | Spend time in detention. | Write a letter of apology to the individual(s) harmed; write a reflection paper on how it feels to be put down or gossiped about. |
| Classroom disruption | Be shamed in front of the class by the teacher. | Verbally apologize to the teacher and fellow students with a promise to contribute more positively in the future. Request that peers hold him/her accountable. Spend a week assisting the teacher with classroom supervision or clean-up. |
| Bullying younger students | Sent to in-school suspension; have privileges removed. | Set up a weekly book reading with the younger students and read to them a fable that specifically addresses a restoring a student's behavior. Discuss in a circle with victims of the bully to find out how bullying affects others. |
| Ridicule or racial slurs of another individual or group | Given a sanction to stay away from the person in the future. | Help on a project to raise community awareness to stop hate crimes. Set up a panel of speakers who can talk to the entire class or school about intolerance and the effect it has on our communities. Write a letter of apology to the person harmed and his/her family. |
| Fighting | Out-of-school suspension. | Prepare and deliver a speech to a classroom or larger school assembly about how to negotiate with words rather than fists. Teach a class during detention on anger management and self-control. |
| Theft | Out-of-school suspension | Return the stolen items with a sincere verbal or written apology. Pay for replacement of stolen items. |
| Use and possession of drugs | Out-of-school suspension and/or expulsion | Do community service in a drug rehab center or hospital where addicts are being treated. Spend a night under supervision in a rehab center. |
| Internet harassment | Out-of-school suspension | Contribute to a school newsletter article on how Internet harassment damages individual relationships. Write a research paper on recent Internet harassment incidents that have resulted in emotional depression or suicide of the person who was harmed. |

Initiative 7: School Resource Officer Collaborative Partnership

Strengthening PTS' Participation in "One County, One Protocol"

PTS is dedicated to the innovative best practices set forth by the school safety experts across the state and nation. These initiatives are in alignment with the National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO) and Indiana School Resource Officer Association (INSRO) deployment of effective SRO Programs pursuant to IDOE policies. As part of PTS' participation in "One County, One Protocol" has dramatically enhanced the SRO program to take advantage of the additional security measures offered.

PTS acknowledges that the district covers multiple jurisdictions. District schools are located in two of those jurisdictions (City of Portage and unincorporated Porter County). Due to PTS' multi-jurisdictional nature, it is paramount to have a multi-jurisdictional SRO team to ensure each of the schools throughout the district are properly secured.

PTS will work in collaboration with the member agencies of "One County, One Protocol" to build a comprehensive team of school resource officers. Officers from each of these agencies, and other, will have the opportunity to apply to serve on this team subject to intensive vetting and training. National Best Practices indicate SRO training continues to be critical to their success as effective SROs in schools. PTS, in conjunction with "One County, One Protocol," will lead the way in ensuring our SROs have ongoing training to stay ahead of the latest in school safety techniques at a state and national level.

This innovative, multi-jurisdictional team of officers throughout the secondary schools and also partner in collaboration for school-based prevention programs and the monitoring of safety plans in the elementary schools. This approach to school safety allows PTS to continue the deployment of National Best Practices in school safety in alignment with the leading experts.

The Research:

The National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO) provides research on an effective SRO Program grounded in interviews of SROs with a combined 150 years of SRO experience conducted by the FBI. The planning of PTS to implement an effective SRO Program for the 2018-2019 academic year focuses on the implementation of successful strategies in the latest research provided by NASRO and the U.S. Department of Justice regarding SROs

The research is clear regarding the implementation of SROs in schools. SROs have three main functions: law enforcement officer, teacher, and counselor. First, as a law enforcement officer, the SRO maintains a safe and secure environment on the school campus that will be conducive to an educationally stimulating atmosphere and serve as a means of preventing criminal activities and disturbances. Second, as a teacher, the SRO promotes positive attitudes regarding the police role in society and informs the students of their rights and responsibilities as lawful citizens. Third, as a counselor, the SRO establishes a more complete liaison with school personnel and students in a cooperative effort to prevent juvenile delinquency. An effective SRO Program in schools requires actions that put the main goal of the SRO to keep students and schools safe in the learning environment in alignment with ESSA's *Framework for Safe and Successful Schools*.

Building a Partnership:

PTS is committed to the development of a law enforcement-school partnership as evidenced by our longstanding participation in the Porter County Safe Schools Commission. Research supports the establishment of such a partnership to include a needs assessment and climate survey to determine the level and scope of police involvement within the school district as the first critical step.

The SRO Program, which has been implemented across the nation, involves the assignment of carefully selected and specially trained law enforcement officers to work directly in the schools within that particular law enforcement agency's jurisdiction. This is done in full cooperation with school administrators and faculty.

The SRO program for PTS will avoid arrests or criminal charges when more measured responses exist in order to avoid aggressive tactics for minor infractions that strain relationships, negatively impact school climate, discourage students

from reporting potentially harmful or suspicious behavior, and disproportionately introduce youth into the criminal justice system.

When speaking with PTS employees, parents, or community members, SROs must emphasize law enforcement's main goal of keeping students and schools safe, which constitutes a necessary component for successful learning. Building on this consensus with the school's focus on education sends the collaborative message that is in alignment with the Indiana Department of Education and HEA 1421, the new law regarding student discipline in schools.



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