

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

School Safety and Security Committee Meeting

September 28, 2022

MINUTES

Members/Designees: Mr. Derin Myers, Designee for Chairman Ramsey
Ms. Janice Bart, Member
Senator James Brewster, Member
Representative Donna Bullock, Member
Ms. Nikki Bricker Cameron, Member
Ms. Tanoa Fagan, Designee for Acting Secretary Snead
Dr. Benjamin Feeney, Member
Mr. David Hein, Member
Mr. Mike Hurley, Member
Mr. Mike Kelly, Member
Dr. Scott Kuren, Designee for Secretary Ortega
Dr. Jamie Piraino, Member
Dr. Kathleen Reeves, Member
Major Jeremy Richard, Designee for Col. Evanchick
Ms. Wendy Robison, Member
Mr. Jeffrey Thomas, Designee for Director Padfield
Dr. Helena Tuleya-Payne, Member
Mr. Mike Vereb, Designee for Josh Shapiro

Staff:

Pamela Bennett	Samantha Koch
Lindsay Busko	Carol Kuntz
Christina Cosgrove-Rooks	Mike Pennington
Chris Epoca	Debra Sandifer
Lynn Fidler	Becky Szczypta
Heather Hewitt	Lindsay Vaughan
Kirsten Kenyon	Shaun White
Rebecca Kiehl	

Guests:

Hannah Barrick, PA Association of School Business Officials (PASBO)
Sean Brandon , PA House Appropriations (D)
Andrew Christ, PA School Board Association (PSBA)
Gwenn Dando, PA Senate Republicans
Mike Deery, PA Senate Democrats
Jacob Derrick, Governor's Office
Erin Donohoe, PA Department of Education
Tim Hubbard, Stonegate Services Group LLC
Bradley Keen, PA House Democrats
Westburn Majors, PA Emergency Management Agency (PEMA)
Tyler Marshall, Verkada
Heather Masshardt, PA School Board Association (PSBA)
Christine Seitz, PA House Republicans
Vicki Wilken, PA Senate Republicans

• **Call to Order of the September 28, 2022 Meeting and Adoption of Minutes**

Mr. Myers called the meeting to order at 1:02 PM and welcomed participants. A quorum of members was established. Mr. Myers noted that the minutes from the August 31, 2022 meeting were part of the packet of materials made available prior to today's meeting.

Motion to approve the minutes from the August 31, 2022 meeting as submitted

Motion: Brewster. **Seconded:** Vereb. **Abstentions:** None. **Not Present for Vote:** Bullock. **Aye Votes:** 16, **Nay Votes:** 0. **Motion Adopted**

Mr. Myers shared the plan for a presentation on the results of the Mental Health survey and the Physical Security Baseline Criteria as included in the most recent round of grants. Since the information contained in the survey and the portion pertaining to the baseline criteria of the grants are confidential by law, the Committee would be moving into Executive Session for the presentation and any discussion. He noted the prudent importance of the Committee reviewing the results of the survey due to interest in some form of public release and use of the aggregate data.

Motion to enter into Executive Session

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

Following the vote, Mr. Myers reminded members of the need to keep the focus of the Executive Session on the results of the survey, the baseline criteria, and the potential release and use of aggregate data. Guests and others not participating in the Executive Session were moved into a Teams breakout room for the duration or were invited to leave the meeting and rejoin in 45 minutes or so.

Motion to exit out of Executive Session

Motion: Vereb. **Seconded:** Hurley. **Abstentions:** None. **Not Present for Vote:** None. **Aye Votes:** 17, **Nay Votes:** 0. **Motion Adopted**

Mr. Myers welcomed everyone to the General Session and provided a brief recap of the Executive Session discussion centered around presentation of the results of the Mental Health Survey, the Physical Security Baseline Criteria included in the latest round of grant opportunities, and use of aggregate data that has been collected in both areas by school entities. Given the interest in releasing certain aggregate data and the Committee's authority to do so under the Public School Code, Mr. Myers asked for a motion.

Motion to release the aggregated Mental Health Survey data presented in Executive Session

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

Before moving on, Mr. Myers shared a point that was made during the Executive Session pertaining to the tragic incident that occurred last night where a young man was shot and died following a school's athletic event. This event both highlights the importance of the work done by this Committee and raises the possibility for the Committee to consider safety and security around extracurricular activities.

- **Update on FY 22-23 School Mental Health & Safety and Security Grants**

Mr. Myers reported that PCCD received 738 applications as of the grant's closure on August 31, and staff are working with the remaining 45 school entities to get their applications submitted. He stated that most of those who had not applied are interested in submitting applications and shared that they often did not know that the funding was available or had another rationale why they did not apply by the August 31 deadline.

Mr. Myers said that around 15 staff are working on reviewing these grant applications, noting that the review is more significant than in recent years and will take some time to complete. He reviewed some suggestions to help with this process for the Committee's input. As shared in the August meeting, PCCD staff have gotten a lot of questions from school entities about fully meeting Tier 1 before applying for funds for other purposes or for eligible activities other than

the one(s) in which they are deficient. A number of schools have indicated that they are deficient in some of the Tier 1 activities. While some have submitted applications to use their grant funds to meet their deficiencies, Mr. Myers acknowledged that others have instead budgeted for items not related to their Tier 1 deficiencies and provided some examples. Staff have questioned these responses and asked for justification, some of which are valid and reasonable, though others have either given questionable or no justification, or cite sustainability as the rationale for not addressing their deficiencies.

Mr. Myers reviewed the language of Act 55 on this area for Committee members and shared the suggestion of PCCD staff that when school entities don't meet all Tier 1 criteria and do not provide a valid justification as to why they are not addressing their deficiencies, those entities should be limited to activities supporting Tier 1 standards only. He invited feedback from Committee members and responded to the following questions regarding taking that approach:

- Mr. Myers clarified that the applicant would be allowed to proceed if they provide a valid reason and would present any questionable reasons to the Committee if needed
- A member expressed concern that a school entity could expend their entire amount on just a few security items, i.e. fences and vehicle barriers to which Mr. Myers responded that staff are seeking to understand the reasons behind the request and go from there, but based on the legislation and what was put forth in the funding announcement allowing schools to obtain missing Tier 1 items is appropriate
- Another member asked if there are any reasons as to why behavioral health assessments are not being done
 - PCCD staff responded that of the 60-70 applications she has reviewed, she has not seen any justification as to why those assessments have not been done, nor how they will fulfill that gap
 - The member suggested that a simple fix might be for staff to note the gap to the school and share a list of behavioral health assessment providers
 - Another staff noted that for applications she has reviewed there seems to be some confusion as to what is meant by a behavioral health assessment, adding that some seem to think it's the same as the school climate survey or don't know what it is and agreeing with the idea of having some recommendations to provide to the schools
- Regarding schools that meet a higher tier but not a lower tier, a member asked if the school entity still needs to meet the lower tier standard
 - Mr. Myers said that reviewers are seeing schools requesting some Tier 2 or 3 items that satisfy or include the Tier 1 requirement and is inclined to let them do that
 - A member agreed, stating he thinks that is a very good approach

Mr. Myers noted that the executive summaries from all of the submitted applications have now been posted on the private area. He cautioned that if that information is used, it is important to keep it confidential.

- **Staff Training Standards and Coordinator Training Criteria**

Mr. Myers transitioned the discussion to the Staff Training Standards and Coordinator Training Criteria that PCCD is statutorily required to develop. He invited PCCD staff Lindsay Vaughan to present on the status of efforts underway. Ms. Vaughan began with the new training requirements for school safety and security coordinators. Act 55 of 2022 legislatively directed eleven topics, which are referenced in the Coordinator Training Criteria provided in the meeting materials. She reviewed expectations for the training on these topics, including that it cannot exceed a total of 7 hours. Currently appointed coordinators will have 1 year from the time the first trainings that meet the criteria are approved and posted by the Committee to complete their training. Thereafter, coordinators must complete the training within 1 year of being appointed.

Ms. Vaughan related the responsibilities of the School Safety and Security Committee under Act 55 regarding this training, to (1) develop and approve training criteria for these topics (including the number of hours) by September 30, 2022 and (2) make the criteria available to school administrators, groups, organizations or providers. In addition, while the law is silent as to whether this Committee *may* or *shall approve* groups to provide the training, Ms. Vaughan noted that it does specify that any group who provides the training *shall meet* the standards adopted by the Committee.

Ms. Vaughan presented the criteria provided in the meeting materials as developed by the workgroups, noting that upon the Committee's approval PCCD will share them with school entities on Friday, October 1, 2022. She stated that the criteria are designed to set the baseline for the information that must be included in each required topic in order for a training course to satisfy Act 55. Ms. Vaughan highlighted that part of the standards includes the amount of time that is to be spent on each topic, as was required by law, and noted that these criteria also provide resources to school safety and security coordinators that align with the training topics and will assist them in executing their duties.

Ms. Vaughan referenced a concern previously raised by a member via email and asked if they wanted to mention it. The member said that postvention is important include for suicide awareness and that Ms. Vaughan's response had satisfied her concerns. In response to another member's question, Ms. Vaughan clarified that the one-year timeframe for coordinators to complete the training does not start with the release of the coordinator training criteria but will begin when PCCD posts the first trainings. She verified that this clarification will be included with the release of the criteria.

Motion to approve the Coordinator Training Criteria as presented

Motion: Brewster. **Seconded:** Tuleya-Payne. **Abstentions:** None. **Not Present for Vote:** Robison, Thomas. **Public Voice:** None. **Aye Votes:** 15, **Nay Votes:** 0. **Motion Adopted**

Following the vote, Ms. Vaughan covered next steps for the coordinator training. Since PCCD needs to ensure that the standards are met, staff will work with experienced curriculum developers to fund a project to develop a curriculum and training packet for school safety and security coordinators that meets the criteria approved by this Committee. She added that because the timeline for coordinators completing the training requirement does not start until the first trainings that meet the criteria have been posted, staff believe that it is important to take time to solicit additional feedback on training needs to ensure delivery of a meaningful, quality product to the field.

In addition, Ms. Vaughan stated that the plan is to structure the deliverables of the project in a way that will allow multiple providers to take the curriculum and training packet and provide the training with fidelity to coordinators commonwealth-wide. She anticipated that proposed providers will need to be approved to deliver the curriculum with fidelity in accordance with the training packet.

Ms. Vaughan said that while efforts to select a provider and develop the curriculum and training packet are underway, PCCD expects that the criteria will serve as a valuable tool for coordinators, identifying state and national resources that will assist them in fulfilling their duties. She noted that staff also plans to include an introduction to provide guidance on the immediate use of the criteria as well as relevant timelines for implementation.

Next, Ms. Vaughan reviewed the requirement of Act 55 that school employees have training annually on specified topics related to school safety and security with delineated training hours for each topic area. She stated that the understanding is that these updated training requirements took effect upon the enactment of Act 55. Ms. Vaughan added that while the topics were already required learning for employees, Act 55 increased the number of training

hours dedicated to those topics. In addition, Ms. Vaughan stated that the law requires the Committee to (1) develop and approve standards for those topics by September 30, 2022; (2) make the standards available to school entities; and (3) provide geographically disbursed training that meets the standards at no cost to school entities.

Ms. Vaughan referenced the standards included in the meeting materials, stating that once approved they will be disseminated and made available to school entities. She noted that they are similar in form to the Coordinator Training Criteria and are designed to set a baseline for the content that must be included for each topic required by law. While the standards focus on providing a basic understanding of each topic, Ms. Vaughan said that the workgroup members felt it was important that attendees be required to review their own school policies and procedures related to the topic at hand as a component of each training. Like the Coordinator Training Criteria, the standards are also designed to provide valuable resources to both those taking the training and curriculum developers and trainers who wish to pursue a deeper understanding of any particular topic.

Motion to approve the Staff Training Standards as presented

Motion: Hurley. **Seconded:** Hein. **Abstentions:** None. **Not Present for Vote:** Robison, Thomas. **Public Voice:** None. **Aye Votes:** 15, **Nay Votes:** 0. **Motion Adopted**

Ms. Vaughan reviewed next steps for these Standards, which are slightly different than those previously discussed for the Coordinator Training Criteria. She stated that with the Standards now approved, school entities can utilize them immediately to ensure that their requisite employee training this school year complies with the standards, regardless of whether it is provided in-house or conducted by an external provider. Ms. Vaughan added the expectation that the Committee and PCCD will be required to approve every training curriculum that meets the standards but that it will take some time to get a process in place to manage that well.

Ms. Vaughan said that over the next few months PCCD staff will solicit feedback from school entities regarding their existing trainings, training needs, and what aspects would be most meaningful to them. That feedback will inform the development and funding of a project to (1) provide virtual and geographically dispersed in person training and (2) allow for the review and approval of pre-existing or newly developed trainings that also meet the standards to be in place by the 2023-2024 school year. Ms. Vaughan reiterated that this Committee will be responsible for approving the vendor/provider who will develop and provide the training and who will also approve additional curricula. She said that once the free trainings are available, school entities will have the option of utilizing either approved providers that offer training that meets the standards, or the free training approved and provided by the Committee.

Ms. Vaughan said that while the trainings are being developed, the approved standards will provide school entities with the necessary guidance to ensure Act 55 compliant school safety and security training for their employees. She added that PCCD plans to include some additional information regarding the immediate use of the standards and relevant timelines and will also work with PDE to address questions that schools have raised, such as guidance on other how school entities might handle mandatory training requirements for similar topics.

• **Violence Intervention and Prevention (VIP) Grant Program Update**

Mr. Myers invited PCCD staff Samantha Koch to provide a brief update on the VIP Grant Program. Ms. Koch reviewed the Committee's approval and subsequent announcement on September 5, 2022 of \$100.5m for two new VIP grant program solicitations. She summarized the key components and eligible applicants for these solicitations. Ms. Koch gave a brief overview of the two-phase application process for the larger two-year \$85.5 VIP competitive funding announcement. She said that applicants must submit a SurveyMonkey form by October 12 for preliminary review, after which those invited to move forward to the second phase will

be notified by October 31 and asked to submit a formal application in Egrants by early December.

Ms. Koch next shared details of the second \$15m solicitation for collaborative prevention and response efforts in focused service areas through 5-8 pilot projects, stating that applications must be submitted in Egrants by October 31, 2022. She noted efforts to promote these opportunities and said that PCCD has hosted two webinars thus far that have been well received and attended, with a final webinar coming up on October 4 that will include answers to frequently asked questions. Updates to the funding announcement Q&A have also been posted on the PCCD website. Ms. Koch concluded by stating that following review and scoring in Egrants, recommended projects will be presented to the Committee at the January 11, 2023 meeting and approved projects will start February 1, 2023.

- **Member Updates/Comments/Questions**

None offered.

- **Public Comment**

Mr. Myers invited any public comment. Timothy Hubbard from Chester County addressed the Committee. After thanking everyone for all their hard work he raised an issue for future consideration. He said that in working from a threat assessment perspective, police departments are constrained by the juvenile justice laws and they can't always have open and clear communication with the school districts. He expressed his hope that future school safety legislation might recognize the issue and allow local law enforcement to have more open communication with schools, whether that's just the school safety and security coordinator or certain personnel within the district, to make the threat assessment process much smoother and easier. Mr. Myers thanked Mr. Hubbard for making that good point and they agreed to have further conversation about this issue.

- **Adjournment**

Mr. Myers announced the plan to hold the next SSSC meeting on January 11, 2023 at the usual time of 1:00 PM. Following the vote, the meeting adjourned at 2:56 PM.

Motion to adjourn

Motion: Vereb. **Seconded:** Tuleya-Payne. **Abstentions:** None. **Not Present for Vote:** Thomas. **Aye Votes:** 16; **Nay Votes:** 0. **Motion Adopted**