

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

School Safety and Security Committee Meeting

December 1, 2021

MINUTES

Members/Designees:

Mr. Derin Myers, Designee for Chairman Ramsey
Ms. Janice Bart, Member
Mr. Steve Bekanich, Designee for Director Padfield
Senator James Brewster, Member
Ms. Nikki Bricker Cameron, Member
Ms. Tanoa Fagan, Designee for Acting Secretary Snead
Representative Barbara Gleim, Member
Mr. David Hein, Member
Mr. Mike Hurley, Member
Mr. Mike Kelly, Member
Dr. Scott Kuren, Designee for Secretary Ortega
Senator Wayne Langerholc, Member
Dr. Gennaro "Jamie" Piraino, Member
Lt. Col. Scott Price, Designee for Colonel Evanchick
Dr. Kathleen Reeves, Member
Mr. Jonathan Ross, Member
Dr. Helena Tuleya-Payne, Member
Mr. Mike Vereb, Designee for Josh Shapiro

Staff:

Sally Barry	Samantha Koch
Pamela Bennett	Carol Kuntz
Vicki Bonner	Roi Ligon
Lindsay Busko	Crystal Lauver
Rolanda Chung	Mike Pennington
Chris Epoca	Debra Sandifer
Lynn Fidler	Alyssa Subsinsky
Kirsten Kenyon	Shaun White
Rebecca Kiehl	

Guests:

Jonathan Berger, PA School Board Association (PSBA)
Sean Brandon, PA House Democrats
Ellen Brown, PA Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA)
Gwenn Dando, PA Senate
Mike Deery, PA Senate
Jacob Derrick, Governor's Office
Gerry Huesken, PA Department of Education (PDE)
Sean Jennings, PA State Police (PSP)
Bradley Keen, PA House Democrats
Heather Masshardt, PA School Board Association (PSBA)
Westburn Majors, PA Emergency Management Agency (PEMA)
Alison Piccolino, PA Senate
Christine Seitz, PA House of Representatives
Stephen St. Vincent, PA Office of Attorney General
Jennifer Ward-Tripp, PA State Police (PSP)

I. Call to Order of the December 1, 2021 Meeting and Adoption of Minutes

Mr. Myers called the meeting to order at 1:00 PM and welcomed participants. A quorum of members was established. Mr. Myers noted that the minutes from the July 28 and August 25, 2021 meeting were part of the packet of materials made available prior to today's meeting.

Motion to approve the minutes from the July 28 and August 25, 2021 meeting as submitted

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

II. Violence Intervention and Prevention (VIP) Grants, FY 2021-22

Mr. Myers reviewed the discussion from the July meeting pertaining to the three-pronged approach for the use of the \$30 million in VIP funding that PCCD received as part of the FY21-22 state budget. He said that approximately \$5 million of those funds were used to support applications submitted as part of the Gun Violence solicitation in June, which were then approved by this Committee and the Commission in September. A small amount was also used to augment a few previously awarded Gun Violence grantees so they could continue their projects through June of 2022.

Mr. Myers stated that a competitive solicitation was issued in September to distribute the remaining \$24 million, with \$750,000 set aside for technical assistance. He reviewed those eligible to apply, based on the fiscal code language, noting that the maximum project amounts were based on the size of the organization and ranged between \$50,000 and \$2 million to support project activities over a two-year period. A wide range of activities were allowed, with the main goal being to prioritize support for effective local intervening and preventive measures to stop gun and group violence that is occurring across the state.

Referencing the Project Summary included in the meeting materials, Mr. Myers reported that PCCD received 340 unique applications requesting approximately \$170 million. The applications were sorted by project type to facilitate the review process. Following the initial review, recommended projects were refined by considering additional criteria, including prior funding, performance history if the applicant was known to PCCD, familiarization with new applicants previously unknown to PCCD, project location, the type of project being proposed, and the direct connection to the issues of gun and group violence.

Based on that review, Mr. Myers announced that 40 projects totaling approximately \$16 million received support to move forward in a first round of VIP grants, though he acknowledged that some further outreach needs to be done and due diligence to ensure that duplication of currently funded efforts (such as Philadelphia's Anti-Violence Community Expansion Grant Program) does not occur. The goal is to continue to review the outstanding applications and come back to the VIP Workgroup and the Committee in January to make additional award recommendations for the entirety of the \$30 million appropriated, utilizing this two-phase approach.

Mr. Myers invited members to share any questions on the approach, process, or summary document. Noting that most programs have some track record of success, one member asked if programs have mechanisms to show success on some variables and if that is considered. Mr. Myers responded that there's a range of implementation and some are new projects, but PCCD tries to cross-reference the components with those that have shown to be effective and will work with each applicant to track data relative to implementation and thus be able to report out on the impact.

Another member referenced post-audits that are often done to assess how funds were used. He asked if PCCD looks at local involvement and collaboration with community stakeholders

and tries to ascertain if the applicant organization is getting to the scenes of violence and/or connecting with the families of the victim and/or perpetrator. He noted the need to dig into the core causes and look at what the applicant organization is trying to accomplish and how they are doing that. Mr. Myers stated that those aspects are factored in when reviewing applications, and that staff are being diligent with balancing the requirement to report quality and relevant data while not being overly burdensome to the grantee. He said that throughout the grant review process and implementation, staff looks at progress, challenges that are being faced with implementation, staffing, etc. and supports efforts to mitigate issues that arise.

Mr. Myers highlighted the range in grant amounts shown in the document, as well as the geographic diversity. A member commented that she was pleased to see that many projects focus on skill-building. She pointed out the university connection for one grant, stating that they will be doing a lot of careful collaboration and record keeping (which speaks to the previous member's point), and it will be interesting to see what they report in terms of outcomes.

Mr. Myers informed the Committee about the plan for the \$750,000 that had been set aside for technical assistance resources. The VIP Workgroup discussed what that would look like, incorporating the recent experience in onboarding the FY2021 Gun Violence Reduction grantees, which indicated significant need for capacity building and technical assistance. PCCD thinks there is a value in providing program specific technical where it makes sense, where there are a lot of similar type projects that would support a statewide community of practice, peer-to-peer training type of opportunities. Mr. Myers noted that many of those being funded now are newer to us and to the process of managing state resources in general. PCCD staff will work on developing a funding announcement solicitation to provide capacity building and some program-type specific technical assistance and bring it to the January meeting for Committee approval to issue that solicitation, with selection of a technical assistance provider or providers later in the spring. Mr. Myers noted that PCCD is communicating with Philadelphia, which is also selecting a technical assistance provider for grantees in the city, and will coordinate and collaborate with them on it as appropriate.

Motion to adopt the 40 VIP applications referenced in the summary document requesting a total not to exceed \$15,708,048, pending programmatic and fiscal review.

Motion: Veréb. **Seconded:** Bekanich. **Abstentions:** None. **Not Present for Vote:** None. **Aye Votes:** 17. **Nay Votes:** 0. **Motion Adopted, no discussion or public comment**

III. General Updates

Ms. Kuntz provided a status update on the School Safety and Security Grants from the past few years. She reported that in 2018, 730 grants were awarded, and 45 are still active. They all were approved for project modifications due to the effects of COVID (needing to change providers because of supply limitations as equipment and supplies were not available, and continued costs for personnel and consultants, as work was not able to be completed in time because of the pandemic). There were also 25 Community Violence Prevention Grants awarded, 18 of which are still active with project modification requests mainly for time extensions to complete the work.

Ms. Kuntz continued with reporting on the 2019 grants, noting that of the 640 grants that were awarded, 158 grants (both meritorious and competitive) are still active, with some having project modifications for the same reasons noted above. In addition, the 30 Community Violence Intervention Grants that were awarded are still active, as the closing date is not until the end of February 2022.

Finally, Ms. Kuntz reported that all the COVID-19 Health and Safety Grants that were awarded to public school entities in 2020 have been completed. The COVID-19 Nonprofit School Health and Safety Grants that were awarded through the Intermediate Units have also all been completed except one that asked for an extension as two of the nonprofit schools in their grant were unable to obtain the items requested due to availability issues. All 498 ESSER (Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief) Grants for school districts and nonpublic schools remain active, as the grant closure date is not until September 30, 2022. Likewise, all 30 of the Community Violence/Reduction Grants remain open, as that grant also does not close until 2022.

Ms. Kuntz next provided an update on the Assessment Provider and Third-Party Security Vendor Registries. She reported that 11 new providers were added to the [Assessment Provider Registry](#), for a total of 137 approved providers. Of those, 102 are approved for physical security assessments, 26 for behavior health assessments, and 9 for both physical security and behavior health assessments. Ms. Kuntz recognized and expressed appreciation to Committee member Helena Tuleya-Payne for writing an article that was published by the PA Psychological Assn. about the Registry and the need for psychologists to get involved in doing assessments, noting that over the last few months there has been an increase in the number of individuals submitting applications to the Registry. Finally, regarding the [Third-Party Security Vendor Registry](#), another vendor was approved since the last SSSC meeting, for a total of 19 vendors approved to provide security guard personnel to schools throughout the commonwealth.

Ms. Kuntz moved on to a review of the School Safety and Security Personnel Training Standards. She gave a brief overview of the development of the Standards, referencing Act 67, which amended the school code to require school security personnel to successfully complete the NASRO (National Association of School Resource Officers) Basic or an equivalent course. PCCD looked at NASRO's standards and modified them so they apply to all school security personnel and also include Pennsylvania-specific requirements. To date, seven vendors have been approved by PCCD to offer an equivalent basic security personnel training in PA. Since 2019, PCCD has been able to monitor four out of the seven vendors' training opportunities, to ensure that they are following the coursework as approved and to assess the training for any future improvements.

Ms. Kuntz reported that in accordance with Section 1315-C of the Public School Code, in 2021 PCCD solicited feedback from the vendors and invited their participation in a workgroup, along with PCCD, the PA Department of Education (PDE) and PA State Police (PSP), to discuss any updates and changes needed for the Standards. She reviewed some of the highlights of the preliminary feedback, including the desire for more detail and information on local children, youth and family services, *Safe2Say*, mandatory reporting, equity and inclusion, use of force and de-escalation tactics, and expansion of the mental and behavioral health module. The workgroup drafted some modifications which will be circulated to Committee members for review and feedback and discussed at the January meeting, with the goal of developing a final document for review by the Commission in March.

Ms. Kuntz addressed the need for review of the Assessment Provider (Assessor) Criteria that the Committee adopted in 2018. She noted that over the past three years, it has become apparent that an update of the assessor criteria is needed. She gave the example of individuals who have made application and have qualifications and experience to perform the tasks but did not have the 5 years of experience in working in a school setting. PCCD would like to return to the criteria to determine possible combinations of experience and work history to broaden the scope for people to become assessors. Such a review will also provide an opportunity to determine current practices in education to assure that terminology, competencies and qualifications are up-to-date and inclusive. In accordance with section 1304-B (which establishes the periodic review of the criteria), PCCD would like to form two small workgroups to review

the behavior health and/or physical/security assessor criteria and propose any modifications, which will be shared with the Committee for discussion and adoption at the next meeting. Ms. Kuntz invited members interested in participating in the workgroups to let her know.

Ms. Koch provided an update on the continued good progress of the K-12 Threat Assessment Technical Assistance and Training Network initiative. She reported that since August 2021, PCCD and its partners at RSM Corporation have hosted eight in-person regional threat assessment team "train the trainer" sessions across the Commonwealth, engaging a total of 382 participants thus far. Four additional trainings are scheduled to be held by the end of January 2022, taking place in the greater Pittsburgh region, Reading, Lancaster, and another one in the Philadelphia area. She said that feedback from training participants has been overwhelmingly positive and shared some of the results. In addition, Ms. Koch reported that engagement continues with the online course, with 1400 participants completing all 12 modules since its launch at the end of April.

Moving forward, Ms. Koch said that in response to requests and feedback from training participants, PCCD and partners RSM and PDE are developing additional resources and updating the FAQs guidance for school-based threat assessment teams. These include materials to aid in documentation as well as information about the intersections of school-based threat assessment protocols and community-based resources such as mental and behavioral health. PCCD also anticipates revamping the [Threat Assessment](#) webpage on PCCD's [School Safety and Security section](#) of the website to be more streamlined and easier to navigate. Ms. Koch stated that more detailed information on these developments will be forthcoming at the January meeting.

Ms. Koch responded to a member's question about representation by participants across the state, stating that the in-person trainings were intentionally scheduled in a number of locations to expand the reach of this initiative as much as possible. She anticipates that additional locations will be scheduled for the spring as needed to meet demand. Mr. Myers commented that the success experienced with this effort provides optimism for the solicitation of a technical assistance provider as discussed earlier, noting that it has been a really good model.

IV. Member Updates/Comments/Questions

Mr. Myers opened up the discussion, asking if any members had any other business to bring before the group. In light of an incident that recently occurred in Michigan, a member asked if and how we should follow up when mass shooting incidents occur across the country to glean insights and lessons learned. He wondered if this Committee could do more beyond providing grants and perhaps form a workgroup to conduct some in-depth review when these events occur to see if there's anything missing that might be beneficial and then sharing that information with the General Assembly. Mr. Myers noted the developments made around baseline standards, which was impacted by considerations from past events.

Another member responded that the PSP does studies on these incidents and also noted the state Office of Attorney General's (AG) collaboration with Sandy Hook Promise in the *Safe2Say* initiative. They find that there's not enough mental health service provision in the schools so are trying to pursue tele-mental health to assist. He noted that Sandy Hook Promise has both a gun violence side and a mental health school tip line side. He said that having someone come to this Committee or holding a bigger discussion is something to consider.

In addition, the member stated that kids do not have sufficient access to mental health resources. He said that during the pandemic the tip-line numbers dropped but increased in severity, and tips went from being more second and third hand referrals to first person, of kids calling directly who were considering suicide. He noted that guns have been removed from the schools as a result of tips made, and he encouraged participants to look at the reports from

each year on the Safe2Saypa.org website. He reported that over 75,000 tips have come in since it was launched in January 2019, far exceeding other tip-lines across the country. He stated that staff continue to promote the initiative and train and engage school communities on it. The other member commended these efforts, noting he both appreciates and is astounded by the numbers in the reports, as it is the kind of data that is critical for informing policy and system enhancements.

A member mentioned Dr. Peter Langman, a psychologist who has been affiliated with some of the Committee's workgroups and has done research and written extensively on school shooters and incidents of targeted violence in K-12 schools. She suggested that it may be helpful to have him address this group and give a short overview and provide insights into the Committee's efforts.

Another member expressed his support for the initial member's comments about the news media reports following an incident, stating that many times school administrators and staff get caught up in the hype of the news but there are significant discrepancies from their stories with the after-action reports that are released by the local law enforcement. He gave the example of Parkland High School in Broward County, FL, noting some of the strengths and challenges and that a lot of lessons were learned from that incident. He suggested that perhaps the PSP could share those after-action reports with the Committee once they become public, as there is a lot of information that can be learned on both the physical security and mental health sides.

Thanking the initial member for the discussion, a member brought up something else that she believes needs to be more closely examined and was highlighted by COVID, namely how other events, whether a pandemic or other social and structural determinants of health and wellbeing, affect violence, violence in our schools, and the trauma children experience and the unintended consequences of policies, such as those resulting from the pandemic. She relayed anecdotal reports of stimulus funds (which were greatly needed by those facing unemployment during this time) being used to buy ghost guns. She also noted the amazingly negative effect of not having broadband as a commodity and how that impacted schools as well as how that has now changed the environment in many public schools. Both examples illustrate the need to look at how major, historical events impact how violence plays out in our schools.

Mr. Myers commented that PCCD tries to balance provision of resources for both service delivery and evaluation and research, noting it's always a delicate balance. He also mentioned how the Committee's work is influencing things, particularly with therapeutic service. He said that some of the applications are referencing the absence of qualified individuals and are looking at creative ways to attract, recruit, train, and retain those staff. Mr. Myers concluded by stating that PCCD staff will coalesce on the comments made during this discussion and look at what we can do and some outreach in following up.

V. Public Comment

Mr. Myers invited any public comment however none was offered.

VI. Adjournment

Mr. Myers noted that the next meeting is tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, January 19 or 26, 2022 at 1:00 PM. Mr. Myers thanked everyone for their time and contribution to the discussion. Following the vote, the meeting adjourned at 2:00 PM.

Motion to adjourn

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