

2020



Annual School Safety Report



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Letter from Ohio Department of Public Safety Director

Since Ohio Governor Mike DeWine established the Ohio School Safety Center (OSSC) in August 2019, we have thought about school safety in new ways. That was certainly exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ohio was among the first states to adopt strong measures to slow the spread of COVID-19. After all K-12 schools and colleges and universities had to immediately close their doors in March 2020 for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year, educators across Ohio quickly adapted. They developed creative solutions to complete the school year with innovative online teaching and engagement and made sure students did not miss important milestones such as graduation.

The OSSC adapted, as well. As Ohio schools limited or suspended in-person learning and extracurricular activities in school buildings into the next school year, the nature of school threats and vulnerabilities changed. The OSSC and its partners have supported communities in navigating this new educational landscape with a continuing, but evolving, focus on safety.

The OSSC provided training and guidance for schools to integrate their COVID-19 procedures with their emergency management plans. The 24/7 Safer Ohio School Tip Line bridged communication gaps and added a safety net for students, educators, and staff coping with the stressors and anxieties of physical separation. The OSSC also provided a virtual forum for safety partners on the Governor's Ohio School Safety Working Group to discuss new gaps created during the pandemic and how to ensure information sharing of available resources.

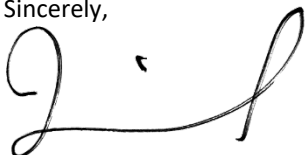
School safety programs not directly related to the COVID-19 pandemic response, including emergency management training and tabletop training toolkits, were adapted to virtual formats, making them accessible and continuing to bring together safety partners.

The OSSC's goal is to support all schools in ensuring the safety of students, employees, and visitors through effective policies and procedures, training, and community and interagency involvement. We are excited to continue to build the state school safety program with federal grant opportunities and strong partnerships with our stakeholders.

In 2021, the OSSC will use federal grant funds to develop and implement new resources for schools and first responders including the addition of school safety regional liaisons to assist their local schools, expanding and enhancing the Safer Ohio School Tip Line, hosting a virtual school safety summit, and developing a virtual continuing education academy for school resource officers.

I appreciate the work by so many that went in to the development of this report. I am grateful to be a part of a team that thinks about school safety every single day, particularly during these challenging, unprecedented times. I look forward to continuing our work with all of our school safety partners in the coming year to keep our students, educators, and staff safe.

Sincerely,



Director Tom Stickrath



Governor Mike DeWine announces the Ohio School Safety Center at the Ohio Statehouse on August 21, 2019 (pre-pandemic).

Creating the Ohio School Safety Center

On August 21, 2019, Governor DeWine signed Executive Order 2019-21D creating the OSSC within Ohio Homeland Security (OHS). The OSSC is responsible for assisting local schools and law enforcement with preventing, preparing for, and responding to threats and acts of violence, including self-harm, through a holistic, solutions-based approach to improving school safety.

“Having one office where the staff solely focuses on keeping our students safe and our schools secure, will allow analysts to nimbly assess threats, proactively address potential issues, and expertly train and support school faculty in a more streamlined manner,” said Governor DeWine.

Mirroring national trends, Ohio has experienced several incidents of violence in schools over the past several years, including shootings at Chardon High School in 2012, Madison Junior/Senior High School in 2016, and West Liberty-Salem High School in 2017. In addition, suicide is the second leading cause of death among youth and young adults aged 10-24 years.

The OSSC is headquartered at the OHS offices within the Ohio Department of Public Safety (ODPS) in Columbus and will continue the current work of OHS staff to annually review approximately 5,600 school emergency management plans and offer free security and vulnerability assessments to schools throughout the state.

Governor DeWine’s executive order also created the [Ohio School Safety Working Group](#), consisting of experts in the fields of public safety, education, mental health, emergency management, and others. The group meets quarterly to discuss current issues and trends regarding school safety and local needs and would assist with the development of a yearly report on the state of school safety in Ohio.

The OSSC is the latest in a series of school safety initiatives launched by Governor DeWine over the last decade.

As part of the 2019-2020 biennium operating budget, the state invested \$675 million in wrap-around services for schools to design individualized programs, working with local mental health providers or social service organizations, to address the social and emotional challenges students face. In December of 2020, the Ohio Department of Education [released a report](#) showing this investment made by Ohio Governor Mike DeWine and the Ohio General Assembly has resulted in the planning or implementation of more than 3,000 student support initiatives that are serving more than 1 million Ohio students.

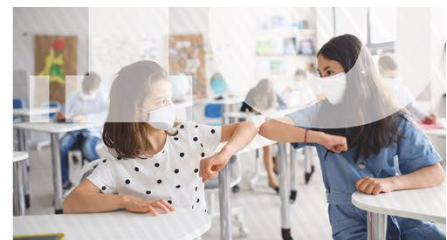
“HAVING ONE OFFICE WHERE THE STAFF SOLELY FOCUSES ON KEEPING OUR STUDENTS SAFE AND OUR SCHOOLS SECURE, WILL ALLOW ANALYSTS TO NIMBLY ASSESS THREATS, PROACTIVELY ADDRESS POTENTIAL ISSUES, AND EXPERTLY TRAIN AND SUPPORT SCHOOL FACULTY IN A MORE STREAMLINED MANNER.”

—Governor DeWine

“For Ohio students to succeed today and into the future, they need to be academically, physically, and emotionally strong. The allocation of Student Wellness and Success Funds is one of the most important ways we can invest in their wellbeing,” said Ohio Governor Mike DeWine. “I am particularly pleased to learn that nearly two-thirds of school districts reported planning or implementing a mental health initiative for their students. These capabilities will make a tremendous, positive difference in the lives of the young people they serve.”

While serving as Ohio’s Attorney General, Governor DeWine provided training to thousands of educators and law enforcement officers on preparing for and responding to active shooter threats. He also worked with schools across the state to achieve greater compliance on school safety plans and convened a School Safety Task Force that issued dozens of school safety recommendations.

In 2018, he launched a program to assist law enforcement with aerial photos of schools for inclusion in emergency school safety plans and developed an educator’s guide promoting coordination between schools and law enforcement in an effort to prepare for and react to a violent school incident. He also awarded \$12 million in grants to schools across the state to help pay for enhancements to school safety and security.



Overview of Finances

When the OSSC was created, ODPS reallocated OHS staff to dedicate as full-time school safety employees. This group of six team members are responsible for programming for all K-12 schools and higher education institutions in Ohio. The majority of the OSSC's funding comes from competitive federal grant funds.

To support the development of the OSSC and its resources, the team applied for and received two federal Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) Student, Teachers, and Officers Preventing (STOP) School Violence grants.

The first grant awarded in 2019 will be used to host annual school safety summits and hire regional contractors to support schools by providing the tools they need to recognize, respond quickly to, and help prevent acts of violence. The second grant awarded in 2020 will be used to enhance the state's anonymous reporting system to improve accessibility, training, and crisis response resources. The state continues to provide this service to all Ohio schools free of charge.

Governor Mike DeWine also signed into effect Ohio's general operating budget ([Am. Sub. House Bill 166](#)) which allocated \$300,000 per fiscal year toward the promotion of the Safer Ohio School Tip Line, as well as analytic tools to proactively alert local officials to school security threats. The OSSC has been able to purchase two social media scanning tools with these funds as well as print additional promotional posters and cards for schools.



Information Sharing

The OSSC serves as a centralized source for all information related to school safety for Ohio's K-12 schools and higher education institutions. In order to facilitate this goal, the OSSC has created and maintains the below resources:

WEBSITE

The OSSC operates the ohioschoolsafetycenter.ohio.gov website (formerly saferschools.ohio.gov) to provide on-demand resources related to school safety. Federal, state, and local resources are uploaded to the relevant sections of the website for K-12 and higher education. The OSSC also serves as the primary point of contact and content provider for [Ohio's page on schoolsafety.gov](https://www.dhs.gov/ohio), a site operated by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

In the summer of 2020, the OSSC started a quarterly newsletter to ensure schools are aware of new opportunities, events, grant funding, and best practices. These newsletters also include important announcements and highlight best practices from schools across the state in different school safety categories. To view recent newsletters, visit the [OSSC website](#).

ANNUAL SCHOOL SAFETY SUMMIT

Governor DeWine tasked the OSSC with hosting an annual school safety summit to share information, best practices, and provide training opportunities to schools and first responders. The 2020 [Ohio School Safety Summit](#) was scheduled for June of 2020 and had to be cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to the overwhelming positive reaction to the summit, it solidified the desire for such an event and work is currently underway to secure dates for a virtual 2021 event.

TRAININGS

The OSSC facilitates a variety of free training and professional development opportunities. Overall, this year the OSSC has reached a total of 1,416 stakeholders through virtual training opportunities covering 77 Ohio counties. The OSSC will continue to work with the Governor's Ohio School Safety Working Group and partner agencies to make training opportunities more accessible to Ohio's school safety community.



PREPAREDNESS

School leaders should be equipped with all the vital resources, information, and expectations to create a comprehensive safety plan and response protocols for any emergency situation, including natural disasters, violent incidents, and terrorist acts – before, during, and after the event.

Governor's Ohio School Safety Working Group

In addition to establishing the OSSC, Governor DeWine also created the [Governor's Ohio School Safety Working Group](#). The Governor's Ohio School Safety Working Group is charged with advising the OSSC and meets at least quarterly to discuss current issues and trends regarding school safety and local needs. The working group is comprised of experts in the fields of public safety, education, mental health, emergency management, and other school safety-based fields. This group of experts continuously evaluates school safety programs and resources to identify areas of improvement.

"Members of this working group all have a common goal of making Ohio's schools as safe as they possibly can be," said Governor DeWine. "I'm confident that this group will be a great asset as they work to promote a safe environment for Ohio's school students and school employees."



Working group member Bradley Paramore, Ohio School Psychologists Association, at the December 2019 Kick-Off meeting (pre-pandemic). (Photo by WOSU Radio)

One of the largest benefits of this group is identifying and sharing school safety resources across multiple disciplines. This group is specifically designed to bridge communication gaps between education, mental health, and physical safety and security for K-12 schools and higher education. Information sharing among agencies and disciplines helps to improve access to resources, create efficient programming, and ensure gaps are filled with existing or new supports.

Over the past year, members have discussed gaps in school safety resources and even re-evaluated those gaps with respect to the pandemic. Based on feedback from this group, the OSSC developed new promotional materials for the Safer Ohio School Tip Line and hosted various online trainings in suicide prevention, crisis and addiction awareness, and emergency management.

"THIS GROUP WILL BE A GREAT ASSET AS THEY WORK TO PROMOTE A SAFE ENVIRONMENT FOR OHIO'S SCHOOL STUDENTS AND SCHOOL EMPLOYEES."

—Governor DeWine

GROUP MEMBERS

Agudath Israel of Ohio
American Academy of Pediatrics
Begun Center for Violence Prevention Research and Education,
Case Western Reserve University
Bowling Green State University
Buckeye Association of School Administrators
Buckeye State Sheriff's Association
Buckeye United School District, Department of Youth Services
Chardon High School
Children's Initiatives, Office of Ohio Governor Mike DeWine
Columbus City Preparatory School for Girls
Emergency Management Association of Ohio
Equality Ohio Education Fund
Kent State University & State University Law Enforcement
Administrators
Lakota Local Schools
Mad River Local Schools
Mental Health and Addiction Advocacy Coalition
National Alliance on Mental Illness Ohio
Newcomerstown Exempted Village Schools
Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police, Hilliard Division of Police
Ohio Association of County Behavioral Health Authorities
Ohio Attorney General's Office
Ohio Child Care Resource and Referral Association
Ohio Children's Alliance
Ohio Children's Hospital Association
Ohio Council of Behavioral Health & Family Services Providers
Ohio Department of Commerce, Division of State Fire Marshal
Ohio Department of Education
Ohio Department of Higher Education
Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services
Ohio Department of Public Safety
Ohio Facilities Construction Commission
Ohio Family and Children First
Ohio Fire Chiefs' Association
Ohio School Boards Association
Ohio School Counselor Association
Ohio School Psychologists Association
Ohio School Resource Officers Association
Olentangy Schools
Prevention Action Alliance
Public Children Services Association of Ohio
St. Marys City Schools
University of Cincinnati
Wilson Hill Elementary, Worthington Schools



Governor's Ohio School Safety
Working Group

Anonymous Reporting Systems

Victimizations, bullying, and other disorders such as drug and alcohol use are often not reported directly to school authorities or even to parents and guardians. Oftentimes this is because students do not want to be identified, do not want a friend or classmate in trouble, or do not know how or where to report these threats.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, students may have had outlets within the school through counselors, school resource officers, educators, and peers where they could voice their concerns easily throughout the regular school day. Now that learning has transitioned to a virtual format in some cases, with little to no in-person interaction, students may feel that they do not have an outlet to express concerns or easily talk with someone about how they are feeling.

To help bridge the gap, the OSSC coordinates the state's free 24-hour anonymous reporting system, the Safer Ohio School Tip Line, which can receive anonymous calls and text messages about school safety concerns. This free statewide safety resource allows students and adults to anonymously share information with school officials and law enforcement about threats to student safety—whether that involves a threatened mass incident or harm to a single student.

In 2019, Governor DeWine signed into effect Ohio's general operating budget ([Am. Sub. House Bill 166](#)) which allocated \$300,000 per fiscal year toward the promotion of the Ohio School Safety Center Tip Line, informational materials to enhance awareness and utilization of the Tip Line, as well as an analytic tools to proactively alert local officials to school security threats.

This year, the OSSC conducted focus groups with students and several administrators from the Lakota Local School District in Butler County as well as student representatives from the Ohio Association of Student Leaders to discuss innovative ways to market the tip line to students. They recommended contests for schools to submit public service announcements (PSAs), featuring real students in marketing materials, and distributing stickers that students could affix to their water bottles, laptops, or planners.



The graphic features the Ohio School Safety Center logo at the top, which includes a red outline of the state of Ohio and the text "Ohio SCHOOL SAFETY CENTER". Below the logo, the text "Safer Ohio" is written in a large, bold, dark red font, followed by "School Tip Line" in a smaller, dark red font. A dark red rounded rectangle contains the phone number "844.723.3764" in white. At the bottom, the text "Report concerns for student safety" is written in a bold, dark red font.

“SPEAK UP, SAVE LIVES” CAMPAIGN

In response to the feedback received from the groups, the OSSC established a “Speak Up, Save Lives” campaign to promote the tip line. The [new campaign](#) features electronic posters and images for schools to share during virtual learning as well as a [PSA campaign](#) to feature real students in statewide marketing videos.

The OSSC continues to provide schools with posters and cards to encourage students, parents, and teachers to report bullying, self-harm, substance abuse or other threats to student safety and wellness. Free print materials are provided upon request.

More information on the state’s free tip line service can be found on the [OSSC website](#).

The graphic features the Ohio School Safety Center logo at the top left. The main text reads "SPEAK UP SAVE LIVES" in large, bold letters. Below this, a hand holds a smartphone displaying a grid of icons representing various safety threats: Bullying, Drugs, Weapons, Threats, Gang Activity, Suspicious Activity, Self-Harm, Depression & Suicide, Fighting, Cyberbullying, School Safety, and Domestic Violence. At the bottom, contact information for the Safer Ohio School Tip Line is provided: Phone Number: 844-723-3764 and Website: saferschools.ohio.gov.

TIP LINE SUCCESS STORIES

While COVID-19 required many schools in 2020 to rely on virtual learning instead of classroom instruction in school buildings, it did not stop reports of bullying, harassment, self-harm or threats. Among the calls received this past year at the OSSC tip line:

- A police department called when it discovered online posts about a student threatening to bring a firearm to school.
- An anonymous tipster reported a school bus driver suspected of working while intoxicated.
- A caller alerted the tip line about a student who had set a date to commit suicide.
- A TikTok video that included a threat of targeting a middle school for a mass shooting was forwarded to the tip line.

In each case, analysts promptly notified local officials so they could take action to ensure student safety. Follow up was conducted with the affiliated schools to provide support and resources as needed.

Behavioral Threat Assessment & Management

Behavioral threat assessment and management consists of multidisciplinary teams thoroughly evaluating and managing potential threats to student safety. These teams often include administrators, teachers, counselors, social workers, mental health professionals, psychologists, and law enforcement.

There are various methods and best practices of assessing threats. Members of threat assessment teams are trained to evaluate threats through information sharing, open communication, and the identification of various risk factors.

Ultimately, the threat assessment team's goal is to intervene with the student(s) of concern, provide supports, and prevent the threat from occurring.

The OSSC shares best practices and training opportunities for schools. Over the next year, the OSSC will develop a flexible model policy for schools to incorporate in their emergency management plans.

The importance of threat assessment has not changed during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, it has created new challenges. Whether an in-person or virtual learning format is used, it is essential that these teams communicate and make extra effort to follow up on concerns. The National Association of School Psychologists produced [guidance for threat assessment teams](#) on how to operate in a virtual environment while ensuring privacy protection.

In February 2020, the Ohio Attorney General's Office developed the [Ohio School Threat Assessment Training](#). This publicly available training has 10 chapters and takes about three hours to complete, and includes information from both Ohio and national experts, including OSSC staff, about how to prevent violence. The program has trained over 1,600 school resource and law enforcement officers on how to develop these teams.

Under a 2018 Bureau of Justice Assistance STOP School Violence Grant, the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) contracted with a vendor for school safety assessment and intervention training. These trainings have shifted from in-person to a [virtual format](#) during the pandemic to remain accessible for Ohio's schools.

PREVENTION & MITIGATION

Schools can take action to increase the safety and wellbeing of their staff and students. To create a safe and supportive learning environment, schools may institute policies, positive behavior intervention supports, and prevention programs to improve the culture and climate of their building.

Emergency Management Planning

The OSSC oversees and assists Ohio's roughly 5,600 K-12 school buildings in developing and regularly updating [emergency management plans](#), and conducting annual emergency management tests. Through whole community-based planning, schools are better able to prevent, prepare for, respond to, mitigate against, and recover from natural, technological, and man-made hazards.

Hazards range from tornados and winter storms to active shooters and chemical spills, with 2020 serving as a reminder that emergencies are ever changing and unpredictable. The COVID-19 pandemic prompted schools, first responders, and the OSSC to collaborate on bolstering safeguards against infectious disease.

Specifically, in August, the OSSC provided schools with [guidance](#), training materials, and technical assistance to integrate their COVID-19 procedures with their emergency management plans. The OSSC also hosted five webinars this year on annual plan certification, annual emergency management tests, and an introduction to emergency planning for Ohio's K-12 schools.

K-12 schools licensed by ODE are required to submit an emergency operations plan in accordance with [ORC 3313.536](#) and [OAC 3301-5-01](#), and conduct regular drills and exercises.¹ Although there are not similar plan submission laws for higher education at the state level, universities are subject to the federal Clery Act of 1990. These institutions often operate all-hazards emergency management departments to continuously evaluate and improve preparedness through planning, exercising, and response.

Emergency management planning is a collaborative effort, emphasizing a whole-community approach. The process involves a variety of stakeholders that often include law enforcement, fire, emergency medical services, emergency management, public health, mental health providers, parents, teachers, school staff, and school administrators.

Each year, Ohio's K-12 schools are required to review their plans and conduct an emergency management test. To provide flexibility in response to COVID-19, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, in coordination with the OSSC, [postponed the 2020 deadline](#) to the end of 2021, enabling schools to have additional time to coordinate with their stakeholders and determine the best way to approach a test in a socially distanced and safe manner.

To help schools with completing these tests, the Ohio Emergency Management Agency (EMA), in cooperation with the OSSC, released three new tabletop exercise toolkits for Ohio's K-12 Schools this year. The toolkits cover hazardous materials, severe weather and active aggressors. More information can be found on the [OSSC website](#).

The OSSC also hosted three emergency management trainings over the summer to help school administrators with statutory requirements and provided technical assistance. Also in partnership with EMA, the OSSC hosted two trainings outlining the basics of school emergency management tests and exercises. These trainings reached 117 stakeholders.



¹ The 133rd General Assembly passed [HB 123](#) in late 2020. This legislation moves the school emergency management plan statute from ODE to ODPS. This will change the statutory references in 2021.

Mental Health Resources

Mental health resources in schools have taken on increased importance during the pandemic. COVID-19 has required students and staff to adapt to virtual or hybrid learning, a significant decrease of in-person socialization, loss of loved ones, fear, and disruption of day-to-day routines. Students lost outlets for sharing their feelings and experiences. Educators, counselors and support staff have responded with virtual counseling sessions, wellness checks, and new strategies for providing support.

The OSSC partnered with agencies this year to provide trainings on various topics relating to mental health issues. Most of the trainings were scheduled to be in-person at the annual school safety summit, but with the emergence of the pandemic, the OSSC adapted the trainings to a virtual format. In support of Governor DeWine's [Suicide Prevention Plan for Ohio](#) and the [RecoveryOhio](#) Initiative, the OSSC collaborated with partner agencies to offer free virtual suicide prevention training for Ohio's K-12 schools, higher education institutions, and first responders.



The OSSC partnered with Nationwide Children's Hospital to host suicide prevention trainings. While specifically designed for first responders, the training was also well received by school counselors and administrators.



The OSSC hosted Question, Persuade, Refer Suicide Prevention Training with OMHAS. These six trainings reached more than 700 stakeholders.

OMHAS and OSSC also offered two self-care trainings, two crisis awareness trainings, and one addiction awareness training with the Columbus Department of Health. These trainings reached nearly 600 stakeholders.

This year, Ohio, along with five other states, was selected to be part of the Center to Improve Social and Emotional Learning and School Safety and Wellbeing Collaborative. Ohio's team consists of the OSSC, ODE, and OMHAS. Ohio's participation will allow for networking and resource sharing, while developing a cross-disciplinary approach for student safety and wellness. This group will enable Ohio to broaden the perceived definition of school safety and help to incorporate mental health initiatives as critical components.

RECOVERY

The primary objective of recovery is to provide a caring and supportive school environment so that staff and students can return to teaching and learning as quickly as possible. Creating a system of supports with community social service agencies and local first responders can reinforce the cycle of safety planning and restore the social, emotional and environmental needs of students and staff.

Proactive Social Media Scanning

In 2019, Governor DeWine signed into effect Ohio's general operating budget ([Am. Sub. House Bill 166](#)) which allocated \$300,000 per fiscal year toward the promotion of the Ohio School Safety Center Tip Line as well as an analytic tools to proactively alert local officials to school safety threats.

Using these funds, the OSSC launched a program to scan open source media, such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram, for threats to schools. OSSC implemented the program with strong protocols to safeguard privacy and free speech, while tailoring systems to identify threat language against roughly 5,600 K-12 school buildings, as well as just over 350 higher education facilities. These tools are used to detect threat language only on public facing websites and media and are not used to follow or investigate individuals or groups.



SOCIAL MEDIA SCANNING SUCCESS STORIES

Since implementation in April 2020, the K-12 system has scanned 8,748,315 posts, resulting in 1,145 alerts and 7,471 discussion points. Topics covered in the scanned posts included threats of violence, sexual assault, school restart plans, law enforcement interactions, as well as COVID-19 protocols, such as social distancing and cleaning. A few notable de-identified alerts are below.

- “Better watch out. This looks like a school shooter manifesto!”
- “I planted a bomb in the school”
- “I have explosives to kill everyone at [name of school]”
- “[Reference to school] crime tip! See above for threats against school!”
- “Attention: bomb materials discovered at school. School is closed.”

In both systems, each post is scanned and researched if necessary to determine whether a threat actually exists. When a threat is identified, OSSC staff conduct a threat analysis and share the information with local law enforcement and school officials. The goal is to provide information to local schools and first responders as soon as possible to enable them to intervene to prevent and/or mitigate potential harm. This proactive approach is another tool that OSSC uses to ensure the safety of students, personnel, and schools.



School-Based Law Enforcement

Many school districts employ or contract with safety officers in order to have trained, on-site first responders. The OSSC works with school districts and officers to support and enhance their partnerships to mitigate and respond to threats, as well as integrate into the school community.

School Resource Officers (SROs) are sworn, career law enforcement officers from a local police department or sheriff's office, and are assigned to a school. Some schools may have alternative security staff, which are often non-sworn private security guards.

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the roles of many SROs this year. With schools closed or on a modified schedule, SROs took on different responsibilities. At Lakota Local Schools, SROs packed and delivered meals to students. You can read more about their program in the [best practice spotlight in the OSSC Newsletter](#).



Lakota Local Schools SROs packed and delivered meals to students in 2020.

Many SROs in the state took the opportunity to help with socially distanced wellness visits with students to provide support during this challenging time.

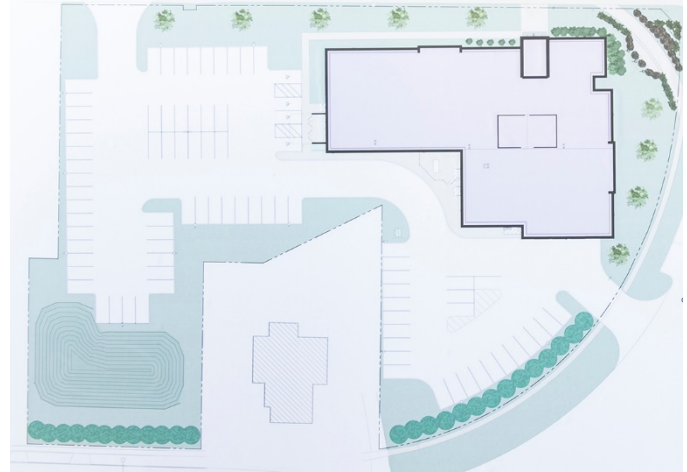
The OSSC partners with the Ohio School Resource Officer Association and has participated in both of their basic trainings this year for new members. The OSSC provides information about school safety plans and exercises, as well as information regarding available resources at the OSSC and partner agency programs.

The OSSC also invites school resource officers and school security staff to register for trainings on the [OSSC events calendar](#). The OSSC hosts various trainings in emergency management, suicide prevention, and other safety topics throughout the year to help support professional development.

Security & Vulnerability Assessments

The OSSC offers Pre-K-12 schools, as well as colleges and universities, free security and vulnerability assessments. At a school's request, the OSSC and critical infrastructure specialists in OHS, in collaboration with local first responder agencies, will evaluate building and classroom security measures and safety procedures. The assessments highlight gaps and devise strategies for lessening risks to students, staff, and the facilities.

COVID-19 highlighted the complexity of assessing school vulnerability and security. The strategy of keeping doors and windows closed for security purposes, for example, conflicted with efforts to improve airflow during the pandemic.



While schools and administrators came up with inventive dividers and plastic sheeting to ensure contact barriers, some of these solutions were found to contain highly flammable materials. Administrators worked with the [State Fire Marshal's Office](#) and local first responders to develop solutions that enhanced safety while adhering to code requirements. Vulnerability assessments help schools understand and balance the various, ever-changing and sometimes conflicting security challenges.

This year, the Ohio Attorney General's Office provided funding through the School Safety Training Grant to train local law enforcement agencies to conduct school vulnerability assessments using OHS' forms and procedures. The training extends the reach and impact of the program, and fosters partnerships between local law enforcement and schools.

The OSSC assists schools with uploading these assessments as an optional part of their school safety plans. Schools use the results of these assessments to improve operations, apply for grant opportunities, and purchase safety and security upgrades. Federal and state grant opportunities are posted on the [OSSC website](#).

RESPONSE

Assisting schools with the development of their all-hazards response plan is a key element of our goal. Safety and well-being in an emergency depends on how prepared students and staff are and on how everyone responds to a crisis. By being able to act responsibly and safely, school administrators will be able to protect students, staff and facilities. Our office will strive towards ensuring updates on school safety regulations, directives, policy, and deadlines will be communicated on a regular basis so schools can revise and implement the most current criterion and respond accordingly.