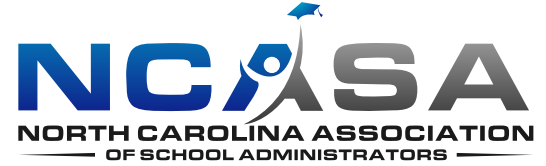


INCREASE SCHOOL MENTAL HEALTH AND SECURITY RESOURCES



BACKGROUND | With increasing incidents of school violence occurring around the nation, the North Carolina Association of School Administrators and our school leader members are committed to working with state and local policymakers to ensure that all schools in North Carolina create a safe learning environment for students and educators, and a conducive setting for personnel and visitors. Despite an increased commitment to implementing school safety initiatives, 2018 had the highest number of school shooting incidents ever recorded by the U.S. Center for Homeland Defense and Security, with figures going back to 1970. Furthermore, an estimated 1 in 5 children have a mental health or substance use disorder, with 75 percent of those going untreated, thereby enhancing the potential escalation into violence at school or elsewhere.

Since the Parkland, Florida school shooting which claimed 17 lives in February 2018, North Carolina has seen a dramatic uptick in school-related threats of either a bomb on campus

or a planned mass shooting, as well as an increase in incidents of students bringing weapons to school. In its most recent presentation to lawmakers, The State Bureau of Investigation indicated that during the 2016-2017 school year, there were 2,745 incidents of weapons possession, 105 incidents of a firearm or powerful explosive, and 89 bomb threats on public school campuses statewide. These and other potential threats require a concerted effort by state and local law enforcement, as well as school personnel, to ensure that all incidents are investigated in a timely and appropriate manner.

Ensuring safety on public school campuses is a top priority for superintendents, principals, and other administrators in NCASA's membership, and our organization stands ready to assist lawmakers with determining the best and most feasible steps that can be taken to protect students, personnel, and visitors to our K-12 schools across the state. We appreciate the increased attention to, and opportunity for collaboration on, this important issue.

RECOMMENDATIONS | There are a number of steps that can be taken at the state level to assist local school districts and law enforcement in ensuring safety is maintained on K-12 campuses statewide. To enhance school safety across North Carolina, NCASA asks the 2019 General Assembly to consider the following actions:

- Expand the 2018 investment in school mental health personnel by **providing recurring funds for grant initiatives that received only one-time funding**, particularly for adding nurses, psychologists, counselors, and social workers through a flexible funding stream, allowing school districts to hire the personnel needed most locally.
- **Support funding for capital improvements**, such as fences, locks, bulletproof glass, metal detectors, panic alarms, etc.
- **Support expanding avenues for anonymous reporting of potential threats**, through reporting vehicles like anonymous tip lines, the SPEAK UP NC app, etc.
- **Support the potential expansion of pre-existing school safety resources**, which include student resource officer (SRO) and panic alarm matching grants, conducting annual school safety exercises, and utilization of the anonymous tip line and volunteer SRO programs.