



# NEWS RELEASE

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### SCHOOLS TASK FORCE FINAL REPORT PRESENTED AT COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING AUG. 26

**ST. CHARLES COUNTY, MO** – St. Charles County Executive Steve Ehlmann presented the Final Report of the Schools, Mental Health and Emergency Services Task Force at the St. Charles County Council meeting on Aug. 26.

“It’s been well worth the time,” said Ehlmann. “It was great to see educators, law enforcement, and mental health professionals all in the same room basically addressing the same challenge.”

In response to the tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary, the County Council passed Emergency Bill Number 3930 in Dec. 2012 establishing a task force to study and make recommendations to improve safety procedures at public and private schools and colleges in St. Charles County. The Schools, Mental Health and Emergency Services Task Force met earlier this year to hear a variety of school, mental health and law enforcement representatives report on initiatives their organizations have developed or adopted and to discuss ideas. The Task Force was charged with studying, identifying best practices and making initial findings to Ehlmann by Feb. 8 on the security measures, policies and training, available and emerging security options, on-site school security reviews, and other measures designed to enhance the security of schools throughout the county. The Task Force submitted their final report to Ehlmann on July 29.

“I think the biggest development of the Task Force was allowing various agencies to share ideas but also to find out what is available, especially in the mental health field,” said County Councilman and Task Force member Terry Hollander.

As a result of the information received from experts, service providers, and the public, the Task Force compiled a list of best practices for schools, which include:

- Using risk assessment worksheets and plans as a means of identifying troubled students as early as possible and coordinating a response.
- Utilization of Mental Health First Aid and Crisis Intervention Training. Mental Health First Aid training teaches how to recognize symptoms of mental health problems, how to offer and provide initial help, and how to guide a person towards appropriate treatments and other supportive help, while Crisis Intervention Training helps police officers react appropriately to situations involving mental illness or developmental disability.
- Further building relationships between schools and law enforcement and training with law enforcement so both

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parties are familiar with each entity's plans, drills and the layout and workings of school facility buildings.

Based on the Best Practices and discussions, the Task Force put together a list of recommendations regarding school safety, resource allocation, technology and mental health issues. These recommendations resulted in the following initiatives:

- As a result of the Task Force's identified need to expand Mental Health First Aid training to those who work with children and teens, two groups have stepped up to help:
  - The Community and Children's Resource Board of St. Charles County (CCRB) is funding Mental Health First Aid training for school personnel. The five-day program will be held by the Missouri Institute for Mental Health during October. Individuals who complete the program must then conduct three training seminars a year to maintain their certification. Tuition is \$1,855, of which \$855 will be paid by the CCRB. The program can accommodate up to 30 people and slots are still open. Schools interested in sending a participant to the program should contact CCRB Executive Director Bruce Sowatsky at (636) 939-6200.
  - St. Charles County's Juvenile Justice Center is also training Deputy Juvenile Officers in Mental Health First Aid. The Center applied for and received a grant from the Missouri Institute of Mental Health, which provided a scholarship for the Family Court Psychologist, Dr. Stacie Bunning, to attend the Youth Mental Health First Aid Instructor Course. Dr. Bunning will coordinate with the CCRB to provide training to others in the county that have contact with youth, such as personnel with the Missouri Division of Youth Services and school counselors.
- Also, as a result of interest from the Task Force in learning more about the County's new Emergency Radio Communications System, the County hosted a forum with Motorola to provide school administrators an opportunity to learn about the technology solutions available for improving in-school communication and communication with law enforcement. The school districts expressed an interest in having a radio in facility offices, and interested schools will be able to purchase radios off the County's contract. The County will work with schools and law enforcement to facilitate further discussion about implementation.

Task force members include: Bernard J. DuBray, Superintendent, Fort Zumwalt School District; Jeff Marion, Superintendent, St. Charles School District; Bernard Naumann, President, Duchesne High School; Rebecca Schmidt, Principal, Immanuel Lutheran School; John Oldani, Vice President for Student Development, Lindenwood University; Tom Neer, Sheriff, St. Charles County; Tom Bishop, Chief of Police, city of St. Peters; Lisa Harrison, Chief of Police, city of Wentzville; Nancy L. Schneider, Circuit Judge, Division 2, 11th Judicial Circuit; Kenneth Simmons, Chief Juvenile Officer, St. Charles County; Laura Heebner, President and Chief Executive Officer, Crider Health Center; Barbara Griffith, President /CEO, Community Living; Joe Brazil, St. Charles County Council, District 2; and Terry Hollander, St. Charles County Council, District 5.

The Task Force's Final Report is available on the Schools, Mental Health and Emergency Services Task Force page under Departments – Boards and Commissions on St. Charles County's website, [www.sccmo.org](http://www.sccmo.org).

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