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St. Charles County Government

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SCHOOL SAFETY TASK FORCE SUBMITS INITIAL REPORT OF FINDINGS

Recommendations include increased security, communications, mental health services and education, liaisons with law enforcement

ST. CHARLES COUNTY, MO - The Schools, Mental Health and Emergency Services Task Force submitted its Initial Report of Findings on Feb. 7 to St. Charles County Executive Steve Ehlmann.

In December, the County Council passed Emergency Bill Number 3930 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 on Jan. 8 and 22 to hear a variety of schools, mental health and law enforcement representatives' report on initiatives their organizations have developed or adopted and to discuss ideas.

"I thought the entire process will prove extremely beneficial," said Dr. Bernard DuBray, Superintendent of the Fort Zumwalt School District and Task Force Chairman. "In particular, I thought the mental health services presentations were worthwhile and will make available some resources we were not aware of."

The Task Force was charged with making initial findings to the County Executive on security measures, policies and training, enhanced security options, on-site school security reviews, and other measures designed to enhance the security of schools throughout the county. These were compiled for the Initial Report of Findings, which includes the following 12 recommendations:

1. That parties explore opportunities to expand the use of School Resource Officers in high schools and middle schools;
2. The County invite its contractor, Motorola Solutions, to present to all schools and law enforcement in the county technical solutions available for installation in school facilities that would connect into the County's new emergency radio communications system;
3. Law enforcement and schools establish liaisons and ongoing working relationships between one another;

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4. When education institutions build or renovate school facilities that they be done so with a focus on facility security;
5. All schools be made aware of mental and behavioral health resources, including Behavior Health Response's 24-hour response access line and mental health first-aid training;
6. All education institutions implement a mechanism for identifying troubled students, such as Fort Zumwalt School District's Risk/Threat Assessment Worksheet or the St. Charles Community College Behavior Intervention Team (BIT) approach, and integrate law enforcement participation into such procedures;
7. The community focus on increased funding for school based mental health services;
8. For information to be shared with all schools so that they know to request Crisis Intervention Trained officers when necessary;
9. Encourage the state legislature to identify funds to assist police departments in expanding assignment of School Resource Officers;
10. Work toward de-stigmatization of mental health issues;
11. That the County Council review the state of the law regarding video games sales and ratings;
and
12. That schools review their policies regarding entrances and exits both during the day and after-hours and take appropriate steps to ensure safety.

The Task Force recommended that the Initial Report of Findings be shared with all school administrators in the County. In addition, they asked that County staff arrange for an event or forum at which all school administrators and law enforcement be in attendance to present the Task Force's findings, to hear presentations from mental health providers and to share information about accessing services and identifying troubled students.

"I am impressed with the work of the Task Force," said Steve Ehlmann, St. Charles County Executive. "They have helped lay the groundwork to allow the school boards to make our schools safer and to build stronger relationships with mental health services providers and law enforcement."

Ehlmann will review the Initial Findings Report and the Task Force will determine next steps in March. The Final Report is due June 1, 2013. A full copy of the Initial Findings 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.

Task force members include: Bernard J. DuBray, Superintendent, Fort Zumwalt School District, representing the school community; Jeff Marion, Superintendent, St. Charles School District,

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representing the school community; Bernard Naumann, President, Duchesne High School, representing the school community; Rebecca Schmidt, Principal, Immanuel Lutheran School, representing the school community; John Oldani, Vice President for Student Development, Lindenwood University, representing the school community; Tom Neer, Sheriff, St. Charles County, representing law enforcement; Tom Bishop, Chief of Police, city of St. Peters, representing law enforcement; Lisa Harrison, Chief of Police, city of Wentzville, representing law enforcement; Nancy L. Schneider, Circuit Judge, Division 2, 11th Judicial Circuit, representing law enforcement; Kenneth Simmons, Chief Juvenile Officer, St. Charles County, representing law enforcement; Laura Heebner, President and Chief Executive Officer, representing mental health treatment; Barbara Griffith, President /CEO, Community Living, representing developmental disabilities services; Joe Brazil, St. Charles County Council, District 2, representing the County Council; and Terry Hollander, St. Charles County Council, District 5, representing the County Council.

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