Ohio SCHOOL SAFETY CENTER

2021 Annual School Safety Report

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Letter from Director Stickrath

Since the creation of the Ohio School Safety Center (OSSC) in 2019 by Ohio Governor Mike DeWine, the center has been focused on making the school environment safer for Ohio students, educators, and staff. The OSSC leveraged its partnerships, statewide reach, and staff expertise to increase school safety in 2021 through a collaborative and holistic approach.

A return to the classroom in the fall last year presented a challenging atmosphere after a school year of mostly online learning. The OSSC partnered with the Ohio departments of Education and Mental Health and Addiction Services on a back to school safety and wellness campaign. The resources covered mental health, social media, cyber safety, physical and emotional safety, and addressing the whole child.

A rise in social media challenges, online threats to schools, and increased bullying and violence during the 2021-22 school year prompted the OSSC to issue bulletins warning administrators of the trends circulating online. A multi-agency collaborative again worked together to create a list of strategies to increase school safety and reduce incidents of violence in response to social media challenges.

Last year also marked the first Ohio School Safety Summit. The 2021 virtual event boasted 1,300 registered attendees representing all 88 counties in Ohio and 23 other states. Sixty-eight presentations from over 100 subject matter experts were viewed over 5,000 times.

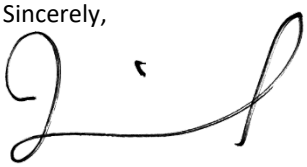
The OSSC reviews about 5,600 Pre-K-12 school emergency management plans and offers free security and vulnerability assessments to schools throughout the state. This past year saw the OSSC working to develop a new safety portal for schools to submit their emergency plans, consolidating resources on family reunification, and releasing higher education tabletop exercise guidance.

The OSSC continues to ramp up its staffing. New employees included regional contractors and positions to support school safety compliance and outreach and information sharing. In 2022, the team will be conducting interviews and onboarding additional staff including regional liaisons, grant support personnel, a training officer, a tip line coordinator, and an intelligence analyst. This will bring the full-time staff total to 19.

Governor DeWine has created a center where team members wake up every day thinking about school safety and how to improve our resources for students, schools, and first responders. None of this would be possible, without the Governor's continued support. By prioritizing funding and working with the General Assembly, he was able to ensure that the OSSC receives $2.7 million in operating funds each year, thus enabling us to expand our services and reach. I look forward to seeing this team grow and integrate within our schools and communities to create tailored trainings, best practices, and necessary supports to keep our students and staff safe.

As you can see, the OSSC had another productive year in 2021. Read on to learn more.

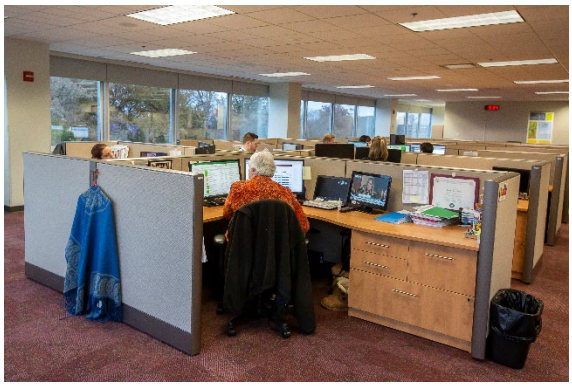
Sincerely,



Director Tom Stickrath

History/Overview

The Ohio School Safety Center (OSSC) was created through the Executive Order on Aug. 21, 2019, with a staff of six team members tasked with assisting local schools and first responders 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. The Center partners with federal, state, and local providers to ensure that we can find the best practices across the different school safety disciplines. One of the tasks in the executive order was to initiate information sharing opportunities, such as the school safety summit, to ensure that stakeholders understand the different disciplines involved in school safety and wellness. The OSSC aims to bring all the partners together to share resources across the state and make that information accessible to stakeholders at every level.



Ohio Homeland Security (OHS) within the Ohio Department of Public Safety (ODPS)

The OSSC is housed in Ohio Homeland Security (OHS) within the Ohio Department of Public Safety (ODPS) and is located in Columbus. OSSC staff annually review about 5,600 school emergency management plans, offer free security, and vulnerability assessments to schools throughout the state. In a comprehensive approach to school safety, OSSC strives to make information, education, and resources available to all stakeholders, while fostering partnerships with Ohio Department of Education (ODE), Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OhioMHAS), the Governor's School Safety Workgroup, and other community non-profits.

Collaboration & Strategic Partnerships

The OSSC is dedicated to a collaborative approach to ensure the physical and emotional safety of students in Ohio schools. This comprehensive approach includes but is not limited to experts in education, public safety, law enforcement, school administration, and mental and behavioral health. The OSSC has been working closely with the ODE and OhioMHAS throughout the year on multiple projects to ensure a holistic approach to student safety and wellness.

2021-2022 BACK TO SCHOOL SAFETY & WELLNESS CAMPAIGN

Heading back to school for the 2021-2022 school year was a very different experience for many students, as numerous parents and educators only had online learning during the past school year. Most experienced unprecedented hardships that have raised concerns about anxiety, mental health, and changed the focus of educators and administrators. Because of these challenges, the OSSC, ODE, and OhioMHAS collaborated to provide resources to address these unique situations.

Collections of trainings, toolkits, tips, organizations, and help lines were organized based on stakeholder need. Resources covered topics such as mental health, social media, cyber safety, physical and emotional safety, and addressing the whole child. The resources also featured a PSA campaign video from all three agency directors focusing on the importance of staying vigilant and meeting both the physical and emotional needs of students and staff. The resources were shared in a bulletin to school administrators and posted on the OSSC website.

SUICIDE PREVENTION SUPPORTS

The partnership between OSSC, ODE, and OhioMHAS has also strengthened suicide prevention efforts as well. The OSSC received several tips to the Safer Ohio School Tip Line where school staff did not know how to assist students with suicidal ideations. The OSSC assembled a work group between ODE and OhioMHAS to help develop a plan to regularly share information on suicide prevention. An awareness bulletin released November 2021 reminded schools of existing resources for suicide prevention and tips on how to develop a program at the school level.

Representatives from OhioMHAS also took the lead in reaching out to the Ohio Suicide Prevention Foundation to promote trainings for educators on suicide prevention. Kognito At-Risk professional development training is now available for educators through the Ohio Suicide Prevention Foundation until October of 2022. More information can be found on the OSSC training webpage under "Mental Health & Trauma." The team plans to send reminders out at least three times a year to remind schools how to create a comprehensive suicide prevention program and share available trainings.

OhioMHAS also partnered with PreventionFIRST and the Ohio Suicide Prevention Foundation to provide Sources of Strength, an upstream, research-based suicide prevention program to students in grades 3-12. The partners were able to utilize CARES funding to cover the costs for both the training and associated implementation costs of the Sources of Strength program. For more information about Ohio's Sources of Strength movement, please visit the website.

SOCIAL MEDIA THREATS & VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS

This school year also saw a rise in social media challenges, online threats to schools, and increased bullying and violence. In September 2021, the "Devious Licks" TikTok challenge caused considerable damage to school facilities where students were encouraged to vandalize school property, most commonly bathrooms, and post their results on the social media app. Some TikTok users devised a monthly list consisting of various pranks or "challenges" to take place at school. The OSSC sent out a situational awareness bulletin to school administrators in October informing them of the "Slap a Teacher" challenge.

A multi-agency collaborative again worked together to create a list of strategies to increase school safety and reduce incidents of violence in response to social media challenges. Schools can assist parents and families with the implementation of these strategies to help inform youth on safe and supportive learning environments, as well as healthy decision making regarding social media. The collaboration produced resources, which support school staff as they prevent, identify, and address inappropriate student behavior associated with social media use. During recent months, there have been increasing reports of students behaving inappropriately or engaging in dangerous acts because of social media challenges.

As the departments are made aware of viral trends or threats, school administrators will be notified for situational awareness.

A partnership between the OSSC and ODE resulted in Ohio's Whole Child Framework, which describes how students benefit from knowing they are surrounded by caring adults in school, at home and within the community at large. When schools and families work together and align efforts to support students' needs, students thrive. Schools can create multiple ways for families to engage and contribute to their child's education and support their development. To best support students as they make decisions related to social media use, schools and families should work together to provide safe environments and set expectations for appropriate behaviors.

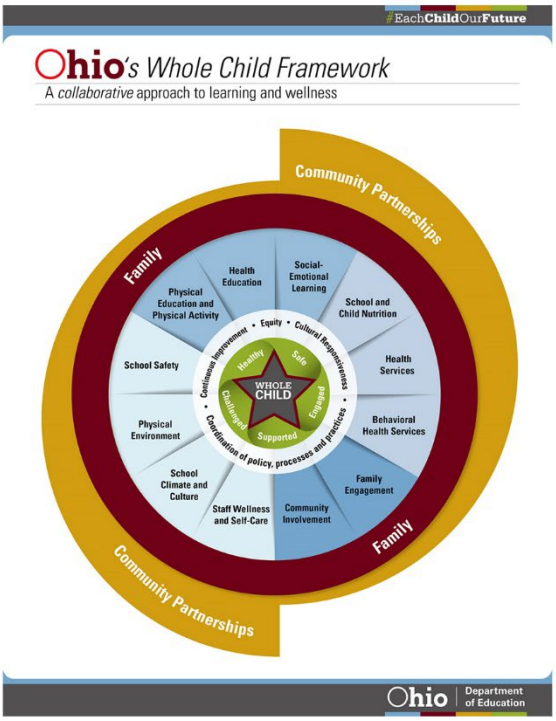
COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO SCHOOL SAFETY

Collectively, ODE, the OSSC within ODPS and the OhioMHAS have collaborated to develop an efficient, effective, and comprehensive approach for school safety based on best practices and evidence-informed strategies. Each agency respectively has an inherent interest and role in school safety in Ohio.

These agencies collaborated through the U.S. Department of Education-funded Center to Improve Social Emotional Learning and School Safety (CISELSS) to closely coordinate their safety and well-being efforts across the state. As a part of this process, the Ohio team identified a vision for their work and defined school safety using components from Ohio's Whole Child Framework.

A comprehensive interdisciplinary, collaborative, and cohesive approach is required to create and sustain genuinely safe, supportive schools that meet the needs of the whole child. Efforts to improve school climate, safety, and learning are not separate endeavors and must be designed and implemented as a comprehensive school-wide approach. Integrating mental health with safety programming and services into the overall multitier system of supports and positive behavioral interventions framework is essential for successful and sustainable improvements in school safety and academic achievement.

Additional information is anticipated to be released in 2022.



Overview of Finances & Expansion

In 2021, Governor DeWine signed House Bill 110, the main operating budget, which included $2.7 million per year to be spent on personnel, equipment, developing a new emergency management submission portal for K-12 schools, annual school safety summits, and proactive social media scanning for both K-12 and higher education.

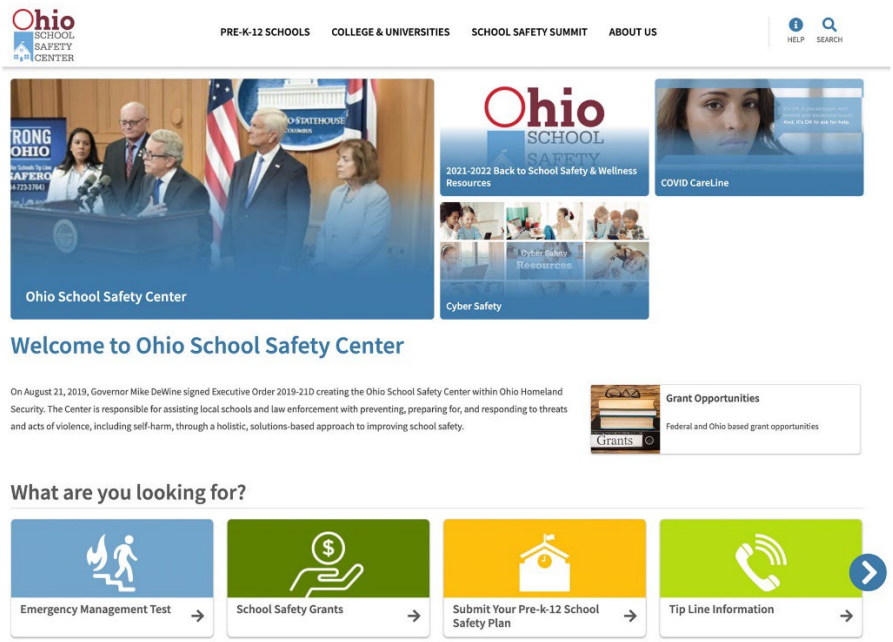
This year brought several changes for the OSSC. Between receiving a first-time operating budget in July 2021, and the 2019 Bureau of Justice Assistance STOP School Violence Grant, the OSSC was able to onboard eight new staff members this year including regional contractors, as well as, positions to support school safety compliance and outreach and information sharing. In 2022, the team will be conducting interviews and onboarding additional staff including regional liaisons, grant support personnel, a training officer, a tip line coordinator, and an intelligence analyst. This will bring the full-time staff total to 19 team members with four grant-funded contractors.

The OSSC continues to utilize funds received in 2019 and 2020 from Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) STOP School Violence Grants for the purpose of annual school safety summits, anonymous reporting system upgrades, equipment for OSSC situational awareness and training, and hiring regional contractors to support schools by providing the tools they need to recognize, respond to, and help prevent acts of violence.

The 2019 BJA grant enabled the OSSC to host its first virtual school safety summit in 2021 as well as hire four regional contractors to help create and improve safety resources for schools. The 2020 BJA grant is assisting the team with increasing supports for the Safer Ohio School Tip Line.

Information Sharing

Information sharing is a cornerstone of the OSSC and one of the original objectives that Governor DeWine tasked the center with upon its creation. The OSSC not only strives to make resources available to schools in a one-stop shop format, but to also respond to immediate needs using a variety of tools. Collaborations with several other agencies have allowed for knowledge and material exchange, as well as innovation.



WEBSITES

The OSSC operates a website that serves as a clearinghouse for all things school safety related. Federal, state, and local resources are organized for K-12 and higher education institutions. The website is constantly updated with training opportunities and material relevant to administrators, teachers, counselors, school resource officers, and other school personnel. The website launched in December of 2020 and had 24,911 visitors in 2021.

The OSSC also serves as the primary point of contact and content provider for Ohio's page on the federally operated website. Recently, this website released analytics on Ohio's page and shared the following insights:

- The top three items accessed on the Ohio page were:
  - Ohio School Safety Center Tip Line
  - Ohio School Threat Assessment Training
  - Ohio School Safety Center School Safety Grants
- OSSC's website was listed third under "Top State Information Sharing Tool Content"
  - From July 1, 2020 to Nov. 1, 2021, the Ohio page received the second highest amount of page views following Idaho, indicating that our audience is very engaged with Ohio's state page resources and information.

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTERS

The OSSC quarterly newsletters continue to make an impact on school administrators by sending out updates and important reminders. The recent fall newsletter reminded administrators that 2020 emergency management tests were due after being postponed. This resulted in several inquiries from schools that nearly missed this benchmark if not for the reminder. In addition to the quarterly newsletters, OSSC releases bulletins periodically such as the October TikTok challenge bulletin and a 2021 School Safety Summit bulletin. These newsletters and bulletins help keep schools engaged and aware of new opportunities, events, grant funding, and best practices.

TRAINING SUMMARY

The OSSC facilitates a variety of free training and professional development opportunities. Overall, in 2021, the OSSC reached 565 stakeholders through 20 virtual training opportunities covering 59 Ohio counties. These trainings included annual emergency management; suicide prevention; planning and executing an exercise for K-12 schools; involving students in creating safer schools; self-care; and crisis awareness. The OSSC is developing further training opportunities for 2022 and strives to reach stakeholders in all 88 counties.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social Media has created its own set of opportunities and challenges for school safety. OSSC has been able to keep a finger of the pulse of social media viral posts to get information out to educators, administrators, and parents in a timely manner. In October of 2021, OSSC sent out a bulletin about a TikTok challenge, giving educators and parents the information necessary to engage their students in conversations about the challenge. Again, in December 2021, TikTok prompted another situational awareness bulletin, this time several social media posts threatened violence on December 17. The bulletin allowed administrators and parents to make informed decisions regarding the incident.

The OSSC created new Facebook and Twitter accounts in the fall of 2021 to help increase awareness to partner resources. Recent posts have included reminders that School Safety Summit materials were still available online, as well as information about the Safer Ohio School Tip Line. The tip line information became increasingly important due to increased threat activity towards year-end.

Governor's Ohio School Safety Working Group

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.

The working group met quarterly in 2021 to discuss current issues and trends regarding school safety and local needs. In 2021, the working group developed a list of speakers/content for the OSSC Summit, provided feedback on Safer Ohio School Tip Line marketing materials, and content for quarterly newsletters. The group regularly discussed upcoming trainings, events, and opportunities from the various organizations represented so they could be added to the OSSC events calendar and thus, all members could take advantage of them. Many of the group members presented at the 2021 OSSC Summit.

Members represent the following groups/associations:

- 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
- Center for Student Supports, Ohio Department of Education
- Children's Initiatives, Office of Governor Mike DeWine
- Emergency Management Association of Ohio
- Equality Ohio Education Fund
- Kent State University & State University Law Enforcement Administrators
- Lakota Local Schools
- Mad River Local Schools
- Madison Local Schools
- Mental Health and Addiction Advocacy Coalition
- National Alliance on Mental Illness Ohio
- Ohio Association of Chiefs 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 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
- Southwestern City Schools
- St. Marys City Schools
- University of Cincinnati

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 and foster information sharing between education, mental health, physical safety, and security for K-12 schools and higher education. Information sharing amongst the agencies and disciplines helps to improve access to resources, create efficient programming, and ensure gaps are filled with existing or new supports.

Anonymous Reporting Systems

Thanks to increased awareness about anonymous reporting, the tip line received 316 tips in 2021, a more than 100% increase compared to 2020.

Ohio's general operating budget allocates $300,000 per fiscal year toward the promotion of 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. The OSSC coordinates this free statewide safety resource which 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.

Information about the tip line, along with free marketing materials, are available on the newly redesigned OSSC Tip Line webpage.

The OSSC sponsors the "Speak Up-Save Lives" campaign to promote the tip line. The campaign features electronic posters and images with printable materials available to be posted in the schools.

The OSSC regularly promotes the tip line through social media posts, newsletters, and bulletins. An OSSC bulletin in August reminded schools about HB 123 requirements regarding Anonymous Reporting systems just before the start of the new school year. A social media push was made to remind parents, students, and administrators about the tip line in response to increased threat activity in December.

All of these efforts made an impact to the success and utilization of the tip line.

A large portion of these tips were related to bullying/harassment/intimidation, self-harm, and threats of violence. We now have 3,836 school buildings registered with the tip line, with more schools being registered weekly.

The Ohio School Tip Line has had success in mitigating threat situations and avoiding harm. We received a tip from a parent wanting to report suicidal social media posts from their child's peer, a middle school student. The student made comments about wanting to shoot or cut themselves. Local law enforcement and the school resource officer were able to complete a wellness check on this family. The parents had no idea that the student was struggling and were able to get the student into regular counseling and mental health services. After the incident, the school resource officer (SRO), school counselor, and the principal all followed up with the student and parents to get them on a plan to help them get back into school, reintegrate, and access follow-up services.

Behavioral Threat Assessment & Management

According to the National Threat Assessment Center at the United Stated Secret Service, “The goal of a Threat Assessment is to identify students of concern, assess their risk for engaging in violence or other harmful activities, and identify intervention strategies to manage that risk.” (USSS, NTAC, “Enhancing School Safety Using a Threat Assessment Model: An Operational Guide for Preventing Targeted School Violence” (2018), pp 5.)

Behavioral threat assessment and management consists of multidisciplinary teams thoroughly evaluating and managing potential threats to student safety. 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 support, and prevent the threat from occurring.

HB 123, the "Safety and Violence Education Students (SAVE Students) Act," requires each local, city, exempted village, and joint vocational school district to create a threat assessment team for each school building in the district serving grades six through twelve. Each team shall be multidisciplinary, when possible, and may include school administrators, mental health professionals, school resource officers, and other necessary personnel. The deadline to implement these teams is March 24, 2023. Each team member is required to complete a threat assessment training program from the approved list, upon appointment, and once every three years thereafter.

Currently the OSSC has compiled a list of ten approved training programs for school threat assessment team members.

Name of Program	Provider	In Person or Online	Link for More Information
Ohio School Threat Assessment Training **(FREE)**	Ohio Attorney General's Office	Online	Instructions for accessing the training
Safety Assessment and Intervention Training **(FREE until Sept 22)**	Sandy Hook Promise	Online (Oct.21 – Feb 22) In Person March 22 – June 22)	https://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Student-Supports/Safety-Assessment-and-Intervention-Training
Threat Assessment Management for Schools	Educator's School Safety Network	In Person	http://eschoolsafety.org/tam
Disrupting Pathways to Violence	The Pohl Group	In Person	www.thepohlgroup.com
Comprehensive School Threat Assessment Guidelines (CSTAG): CSTAG Level 1 Training, CSTAG Level 2 Training	Navigate 360	Online	https://navigate360.com/safety-solutions/comprehensive-school-threat-assessment-guidelines-training/
Comprehensive School Threat Assessment Guidelines (CSTAG)	School Threat Assessment Consultants LLC	In Person	https://www.schoolta.com
School Behavioral Threat Assessment Training	SIGMA Threat Management Associates	Online & In Person	https://www.sigmatma.com
Threat Assessments for Schools	Safeguard Risk Solutions	In Person	https://safeguardrisksolutions.com
Safer Ohio Schools Using Threat Assessment Management	University of Findlay	Online & In Person	https://www.findlayallhazards.com/
BIT Standards Training, Risk Rubric, Violence Risk Assessment	NABITA	Online & In Person	NABITA - National Association for Behavioral Intervention and Threat Assessment

If a school's provider is not listed above, they can send them this bulletin and ask them to apply for consideration. Applications will be reviewed bi-weekly and there is no deadline to apply to ensure programs can be added.

The OSSC is also working on developing a model policy for threat assessments for schools to use in their emergency management plans to be released this year. Schools will be required to include a school threat assessment plan with a protocol for the threat assessment team into the building's existing emergency management plan.

The OSSC website maintains an up-to-date list of approved trainings, additional resources and updates on any changes in requirements for schools.

Emergency Management Planning

PRE-K-12

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.

As mentioned before, the passing of HB 123 ushered in changes for school safety. Along with other changes, HB 123 transfers the responsibility to adopt rules pertaining to comprehensive school emergency management plans to the director of Public Safety.

2021 saw the OSSC working to develop a new safety portal to be released in 2022. The new portal will allow for due dates to be realigned per district, consolidating of co-located programs, options to submit newly required threat assessment and anonymous reporting documentation, and other improvements to the user experience.

The OSSC also hosted seven emergency management trainings over the year to help school administrators with statutory requirements and provide technical assistance. These trainings reached 116 stakeholders. For 2022, there are already 12 virtual training opportunities available for emergency management including annual plan certification, annual emergency management tests, and new administrator tools. These videos have also been included in an on-demand format on the website for those that cannot attend live presentations.

The OSSC has also assembled a multi-disciplinary team to develop family reunification best practices for schools and first responders to include in their safety plans with regard to various school hazards. This team is looking at resources for different types of communities including rural and urban and making suggestions for types of reunification sites for different hazards. The group is planning to release these best practices in the spring of 2022.

HIGHER EDUCATION

In December of 2020, the Center teamed up with a diverse group of experienced emergency management directors across Ohio, to form a working group known as the Ohio School Safety Center and Institutions of Higher Education Emergency Management Collaboration Group.

Higher education emergency management toolkits were created and released in 2021 by the working group and added to the OSSC webpage.

Exercises have a key role in preparedness as they allow personnel to become familiar with their roles in emergency response, validate plans and procedures, and identify strengths and areas for improvement.

Tabletop exercises are great foundation building exercises that foster the environment for discussion around specific scenarios to aid in development or familiarizing personnel with new plans, procedures, policies, etc. The OSSC and Institutions of Higher Education Emergency Management Collaboration Group has created an exercise template guide for discussion-based exercises as well as a PowerPoint aid.

Scenarios available in the toolkit include:

- Winter Storm
- Flood
- Tornado/Derecho
- Evacuation
- Reunification
- Hostage Situation
- Active Shooter Building Lockdown
- Fire on Campus with Potential Fatality
- Hazmat Situation Requiring Medical Response

This group is working on adding to this list of toolkits in 2022 and will be looking into hosting roundtables for universities to share best practices on response efforts and lessons learned.

Mental Health Resources

A comprehensive approach to school safety means integrating mental health with resources, education, and support at multiple levels for administrators, teachers, and students. When many students returned to in-person learning in 2021, the mental health toll of the pandemic was being felt more than ever.

The OSSC collaborated with other agencies this year to provide virtual trainings on various topics relating to mental health issues. The OSSC hosted Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR) Suicide Prevention Training with OhioMHAS. These seven suicide prevention trainings reached over 200 stakeholders and is being offered again in 2022 with two sessions already scheduled.

OhioMHAS and OSSC also offered two self-care trainings, and one crisis awareness training. These trainings reached nearly 150 stakeholders. The OSSC has more training opportunities lined up beginning in January 2022.

The OSSC website includes a back to school section for mental health resources for parents and guardians, educators, students, first responders, administrators, behavioral health support staff, and school support staff.

Proactive Social Media Scanning

In April of 2020, the OSSC launched a program to scan open source media such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram for threats to K-12 schools. In November of 2021, Higher Education Social Media Scanning was added. The OSSC implemented the program with strong protocols to safeguard privacy and free speech, while tailoring systems to identify threat language against all 5,600 K-12 school buildings, as well as just over 350 higher education institutions. These tools are used to detect threat language only on public facing websites and social media and are not used to follow or investigate individuals or groups.

SOCIAL MEDIA SCANNING SUCCESS STORIES

In December of 2020, the OSSC reviewed and analyzed three Twitter posts referencing a bomb threat concerning a school district in Southeast Ohio. The information was provided to the SRO and they stated that they were not aware of the threat. The SRO then informed the OSSC that the schools were evacuated and searched manually for bombs. Thankfully, none were found and school was able to resume. The SRO stated that they would obtain a subpoena for the Twitter accounts making the posts.

In January of 2021, similar posts were found and shared with the school for investigation. The school was aware this time around because parents started sending the tweets to the school after they were made aware of how the threat occurred the previous month.

The OSSC has also been able to use the social media-scanning platform to conduct incident tracking across the state. This has provided situational awareness of events and the location since there isn't mandatory reporting currently. The team has notified schools of increased social media activity related to safety concerns, policies, or events that have occurred.

The OSSC has also reached out to schools after events to inform them of what resources the OSSC offers and suggest they adopt the state's tip line.

OSSC analysts are also currently gathering information from the social media-scanning program, other public media, and news alerts to generate weekly incident reports to share internally to identify trends.

Between Sept. 1 and Dec. 31, 2021, OSSC has captured 252 school/youth based incidents between K-12 and Higher Education, which includes:

- 21 bomb threats
- 82 gun violence incidents
- 47 threats of violence

The rest of the events were assault, murder, vandalism, transportation issues, drugs, hazing, social media threats, and miscellaneous.

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.

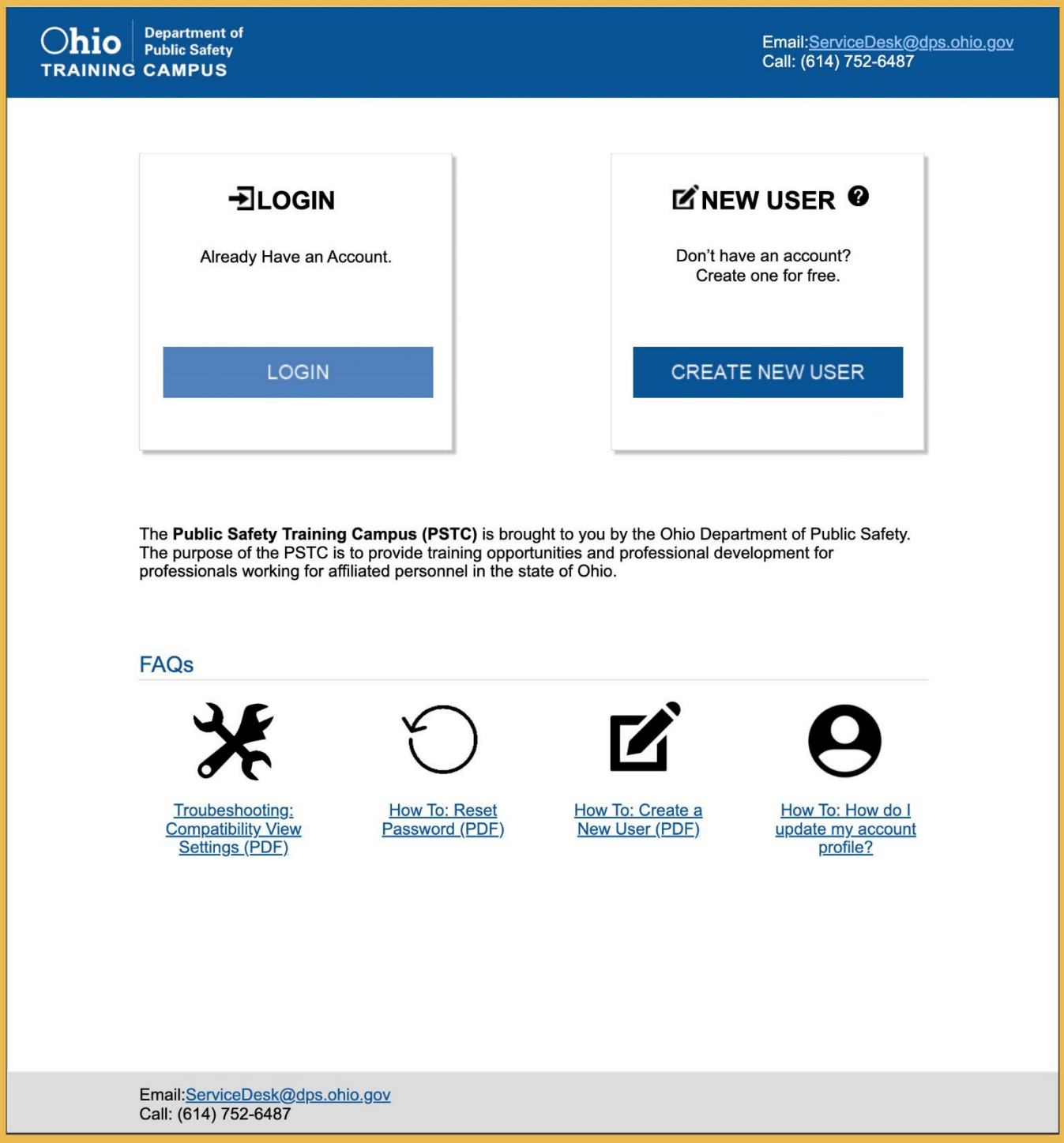
SROs are sworn, career law enforcement officers from a local police department or sheriff's office and are assigned to a school. Some schools may have alternative security staff, which are often non-sworn private security guards. This year, the Ohio Private Investigator Security Guard Services office within OHS produced guidance for schools looking to hire private security.

The OSSC participates in bi-annual trainings hosted by the Ohio School Resource Officer Association (OSROA) for the SRO Basic Academy. In the OSSC session during these trainings, SROs are provided with an overview of the OSSC and an explanation of emergency management requirements for K-12 schools. Many SROs sign up for newsletters and further trainings after attending. OSROA also offers various trainings throughout the year for its members and even hosts an annual conference.

The OSSC has been able to publish three trainings in the ODPS Training Academy for SROs: Youth Suicide Prevention for First Responders (WBT702) and Ohio Handle With Care Overview (WBT704) & Leadership (WBT706) course. In the first course, SROs will learn about youth suicide key terms and statistics, warning signs and risk factors associated with youth suicide, effective strategies for responding to youth at risk for suicide, and first responder self-care and support when serving at-risk youth. Ohio Handle with Care program is aimed at ensuring that children who are exposed to adverse events receive appropriate interventions and have opportunities to build resilience through positive relationships with teachers and first responders.

These courses can be accessed through the ODPS Training Campus. Students can find the course by searching the course name or number. If students need to create an account in the Public Safety Training Campus, they can do that here.

Going forward, the OSSC plans to work closely with the Ohio School Resource Officers Association to develop a virtual on-demand continuing education academy for SROs to utilize after their 40 hours of basic training. This will allow them to hone in on topics such as implicit bias, critical incident response training, suicide prevention, restorative justice, de-escalation and many more.



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. Due to the challenges of the ongoing pandemic, including schools being virtual for the first half of the year, the OSSC was able to complete six assessments in 2021.

In addition to the OSSC team completing assessments, the Ohio Attorney General's Office also trains school resource officers and law enforcement to conduct these assessments using OHS's template. Officers can complete both threat assessment and security and vulnerability assessment training in OHLEG. Over 2,000 law enforcement officers including command staff and school resource officers both in K-12 and Higher Education have taken the training so far and officers have completed over 1,000 assessments.

CAMPUS SAFETY GRANT

Ohio Governor DeWine announced in September that the state was awarding 27 institutions of higher education a total of $5 million in grants to fund security enhancements on their campuses.

"The commitment to school safety is one that I take seriously," said Governor DeWine. "By awarding these grants, campuses can go beyond identifying areas that need to be improved by developing and executing plans that promote the wellbeing of staff and students."

“The safety and security upgrades will assist campus law enforcement agencies and area first responders better prepare for and respond quicker to emergencies,” said ODPS Director Tom Stickrath.

To be eligible for grant funding, schools conducted a security and vulnerability assessment to identify potential areas for improvement. Eligible expenses include but are not limited to improved lighting in parking lots, security cameras at building entrances, and secure doors. The awarded funds are part of the 2021 Campus Safety Grant Program funded as part of Senate Bill 310. OSSC reviewed the campus safety grant applications in consultation with the ODE, and the Ohio Controlling Board approved the release of the funds.

K-12 SCHOOL SAFETY GRANT

The 2021 K-12 School Safety Grant Program, administered in partnership with the Ohio Facilities Construction Commission , will award $5 million to qualifying public K-12 schools for physical security improvements, similar to the Campus Safety Grant Program. Applicants were required to submit a security and vulnerability assessment with their application and can apply for up to $100,000.

Awards will be announced in the spring of 2022. Additional information on the K-12 School Safety Grant Program is available at ofcc.ohio.gov.

Annual School Safety Summit

The 2021 Annual School Safety Summit was held as a virtual event in October, but presentations were available for viewing through the rest of 2021. There were over 1,300 registered attendees, representing all 88 counties in Ohio and 23 other states.

THE SUMMIT INCLUDED 68 PRESENTATIONS FROM OVER 100 SUBJECT MATTER EXPERTS AND THESE PRESENTATIONS WERE VIEWED MORE THAN 5000 TIMES.

During initial registration, attendees were asked to describe the word or words that come to mind when they think of school safety. The above word cloud represents the feedback received and demonstrates the importance of a comprehensive approach that includes prevention efforts and highlights mental health. It also serves as a good reminder of why we work on safety efforts, to protect our students.

The summit was designed in a multi-disciplinary collaboration form over three days, with participation representing health, mental/behavioral health, school administrators, educators, and staff, first responders and resource officers, physical & cyber security experts, emergency management, researchers, government employees, nonprofit representatives, business managers, homeschool parents, and graduate students.

Breakout sessions covered a variety of topics from suicide prevention plans, reunification, creating trauma informed schools, establishing partnerships across agencies and communities, family engagement, cyber safety, and much more.

The OSSC received a lot of positive feedback after the Annual School Safety Summit. Below are some of the comments received:

"Great presentation! Being an SRO I would love to present this to the students."

"Top notch professionals and experts in this field! Wow! It was so very informative. Thank you for taking the time to give us an opportunity to ask questions while listening to the presentation."

"The entire series was absolutely amazing! What a great job with very good information. I truly enjoyed all the knowledge gained from the SME's in their respective fields."

"It's hard to find professionals that truly know how to analyze and mitigate risk. He did a great job breaking it down into the correct components!"

"Wonderful resources, thanks for all the collaborative efforts in putting this together!"

The OSSC is currently working on hosting an in person event for 2022. More details will be released on the OSSC website as they are available.

Student Involvement

With students being our largest group of stakeholders in school safety, the OSSC made it a priority to involve students this year.

WHEN STUDENTS HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE PROCESS, THEY FEEL EMPOWERED TO BE PART OF THE SOLUTION.

In October of 2020, the Ohio School Safety Center invited Ohio students in grades 6-12, and those attending higher education institutions to participate in a school safety public service announcement (PSA) contest to spread awareness and encourage participation with the Safer Ohio School Tip Line. This was in response to a student focus group indicating they wanted to hear from students on why they should use the tip line instead of adults.

The student PSA contest concluded at the end of 2020 with winners notified in January 2021 and announced in Safer Ohio magazine: Two schools have been selected winners in the Ohio School Safety Center's PSA Contest: Parma City School District in the high school competition and the Liberty Arts Magnet School in Lima in the middle school competition.

Washington Local School District, Northwest Ohio

“The quality of the PSA submissions were outstanding. It made for some very tough decisions,” said Emily Torok, Administrator of the OSSC. “It is great to see students that genuinely want to help each other and promote positive school climate. We’re very excited to work with all of the students that submitted entries.”

The creators of winning video PSA submissions will be invited to the OSSC to work with our team to produce a professional quality version of their original submissions. The newly produced PSA will then be used in a statewide marketing campaign for the Safer Ohio School Tip Line. This year, the OSSC had the great fortune of having an intern from Cristo Rey High School. The OSSC intern developed a survey to gauge their peers on school safety. This included what school safety means to them, tip line understanding, tip line utilization, and what promotional items they would like to see promoting the tip line.

Once the survey and research were complete, they presented their findings to the Ohio Governor’s Working Group on Nov. 19, 2021.

Below are their findings:

- Over 90% of students would utilize school safety resources if they had knowledge of them.
- Over 75% would consider utilizing a confidential tip line to assist with school safety problems.
- Students defined school safety in the following manner:
    - “School safety means every student and teacher feels comfortable and safe in the learning environment.”
    - “Being able to learn without the fear of internal or external threats (school shooters, hateful words, harmful school/governmental policies.”
    - “To me school safety means feeling protected and secure when I am walking on campus or to my car. School safety means having sources to go to when you feel like there are people disrespecting you or someone around you.”

During 2022, the intern will focus on building out the peer survey, developing a toolkit for student organizations on how to use the survey and its results to open lines of communication with school administration on safety. The student will also present their work at the 2022 School Safety Summit.