



MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF THE
LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION ON SCHOOL SAFETY AND JUVENILE VIOLENCE
(Assembly Bill 686, Chapter 607, *Statutes of Nevada 1999*)
November 9, 1999
Reno, Nevada

The second meeting of the Nevada Legislature's Commission on School Safety and Juvenile Violence (Assembly Bill 686, Chapter 607, *Statutes of Nevada 1999*) during the 1999-2000 interim was held on Tuesday, November 9, 1999, commencing at 9:30 a.m. The meeting was held in Conference Room B of Nevada's Division of Wildlife, 1100 Valley Road, Reno, Nevada. Page 2 contains the "Meeting Notice and Agenda" for this meeting.

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT IN RENO:

Senator Valerie Wiener, Chairman

Michael E. Johnson, Parent, Vice Chairman

Marcia Bandera, Superintendent, Elko County School District

Barbara Baxter, Teacher, Sparks High School

Tom Burns, Chief of Police, Henderson

Pamela Hawkins, Principal, Western High School

M. Kim Radich, Teacher, O'Callaghan Middle School

Annie Rees, Parent, Owner of Annie's Bail Bonds

Vince Swinney, Retired, Law Enforcement Representative

COMMISSION MEMBERS EXCUSED:

Assemblywoman Bonnie Parnell

Keith Savage, Principal, Yerington High School

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL BUREAU STAFF PRESENT:

Juliann K. Jenson, Senior Research Analyst

R. Rene Yeckley, Senior Deputy Legislative Counsel

Linda Chandler Law, Senior Research Secretary

All place names mentioned in these minutes are in Nevada, unless otherwise noted.

MEETING NOTICE AND AGENDA

Name of Organization: Commission on School Safety and Juvenile Violence

(Assembly Bill 686, Chapter 607, *Statutes of Nevada 1999*)

Date and Time of Meeting: Tuesday, November 9, 1999

9:30 a.m.

Place of Meeting: Nevada Division of Wildlife

Conference Room B

1100 Valley Street

AGENDA

I. Opening Remarks by the Chairman and Introductions

Senator Valerie Wiener

*II. Approval of the Minutes of the October 7, 1999, Meeting

*III. Presentation and Training: The Development of a Statewide Emergency Response Plan to Incidents of School Violence

Cheri Lovre, Executive Director, Crisis Management Institute, Salem, Oregon

IV. Public Comment

V. Future Meetings and Directions to Staff

VI. Adjournment

*Denotes items on which the committee may take action.

Note: We are pleased to make reasonable accommodations for members of the public who are disabled and wish to attend the meeting. If special arrangements for the meeting are necessary, please notify the Research Division of the Legislative Counsel Bureau, in writing, at the Legislative Building, 401 South Carson Street, Carson City, Nevada 89701-4747, or call Linda Chandler Law, at (775) 684-6825, as soon as possible.

Notice of this meeting was posted in the following Carson City, Nevada, locations: Blasdel Building, 209 East Musser Street; Capitol Press Corps, Basement, Capitol Building; City Hall, 201 North Carson Street; Legislative Building, 401 South Carson Street; and Nevada State Library, 100 Stewart Street. Notice of this meeting was posted in the following Reno, Nevada, location: Division of Wildlife, 1100 Valley Street. Notice of this meeting was faxed for posting to the following Las Vegas, Nevada, locations: Grant Sawyer State Office Building, 555 East Washington Avenue; and Clark County Office, 500 South Grand Central Parkway.

OPENING REMARKS BY THE CHAIRMAN AND INTRODUCTIONS

Senator Valerie Wiener called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m., and she:

- Reviewed committee rules and operations;
- Discussed briefly the charge of the enabling legislation;
- Explained that the meeting time had been changed, from 9 a.m. to 9:30 a.m., to ensure that members from southern Nevada would have ample time to locate the meeting place; and
- Apologized for any inconvenience that change may have caused.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE OCTOBER 7, 1999, MEETING

MS. REES MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON OCTOBER 7, 1999, IN CARSON CITY, INCLUDING ANY CLERICAL CHANGES OR CORRECTIONS FOUND NECESSARY.

MS. BAXTER SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (MS. BANDERA WAS NOT PRESENT FOR THIS VOTE).

PRESENTATION AND TRAINING:

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A STATEWIDE EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLAN TO INCIDENTS OF

SCHOOL VIOLENCE

Chairman Wiener introduced Cheri Lovre, Executive Director, Crisis Management Institute (CMI), Salem, Oregon, together with her intern Judy Axleson, and noted that Ms. Lovre:

- Has more than 20 years of experience working with children suffering from grief;
- Has a program that is centered around a philosophy and procedures based on the unique requirements of survivors of trauma;
- Spent eight days responding to the Thurston High School (Thurston), Springfield, Oregon, shootings, and was called in by the superintendent's office of Jefferson County, Colorado, during the siege stage of the Columbine High School (Columbine) shootings in Littleton, Colorado;
- Is currently working with several states to create catastrophic event response teams; and
- Will provide an expert's perspective and insight, which will assist the commission in constructing a framework for Nevada's emergency response plan.

Cheri Lovre

Ms. Lovre explained that establishing the superstructure for a crisis response or a violence prevention plan is a complex task; however, of all the states with which she has worked, Nevada is the first to begin this process by soliciting direction from someone experienced in constructing such programs. Most states simply want someone to come in and "train a team." In her view, it is imperative that the policy and infrastructure be in place prior to training staff.

Crisis prevention and response, planning and training, and a school's culture (whether students are willing to come forward with information that may avert violent incidents) are all part of a continuum. In her view, the first aspect of that continuum is the establishment of policy, to create a firm foundation upon which to construct a functional overall program.

Ms. Lovre asked members to provide their personal mission statements for the commission, for today's meeting and ultimately. Points raised by members during this discussion included the need for a plan that:

- Provides a school environment where children do not have to worry about their safety;
- Is workable and useful for identifying potential problem situations;
- Enforces a "zero-tolerance" policy for violence consistently;
- Provides a foundation for statewide policy that has no gaps and ensures continuity of emergency response services;
- Is realistic in light of what is already in place and available;
- Encourages consensus between law enforcement and school plans;
- Does not result in "just another social services program" but one that grasps the big picture;
- Sets forth a consistent statewide policy but, at the same time, allows districts to tailor their plans to the needs of the local community and its resources;
- Is well thought out and designed but never has to be put to use; and
- Includes and involves parents.

Ms. Lovre, in response to those points, noted that each suggestion will play an important part in establishing the foundation for the state plan, and there will be a need to:

- Develop a state team that will do violence prevention training and responds to incidences when they occur;
- Identify the various roles that must be filled during a response to an incident of school violence;
- Understand that the organizational options are not decided in isolation and that all stakeholders need to participate in charting the state's course; and
- Recognize that those involved must avoid turf or power struggles that would interfere with a pragmatic approach.

She referred to three handouts that she would use during her discussions. See Exhibit A for copies of proprietary CMI documents titled "State-wide School Catastrophic Events Response Teams" (A₁), "Flow of Training" (A₂), and "Command Post Staff 'Positions'" (A₃). During the meeting she also referenced information (see Exhibit B) from CMI manuals, titled "Crisis Resource Manual" (B₁), "Catastrophic Events, Resource Manual" (B₂), and "Catastrophic Events Resource Manual, SERT" (B₃).

Describing the various alternative models of crisis response teams that may be helpful in understanding the commission's task in developing a statewide plan, and which are thoroughly discussed and defined in Exhibit A₁, she explained that in the wake of the Thurston shooting:

- •The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) responded to the tragedy by sending its condolences.
- •Because the NASSP found itself unprepared to respond appropriately to such an event, the decision was made to call Ms. Lovre and ask that she collaborate with the organization to establish a plan to train a team of 12 principals chosen from throughout the nation who could respond to and assist principals faced with such a catastrophe.
- •After pointing out the benefits and detriments of limiting the scope of such training, Ms. Lovre developed the Principal's Emergency Response Team (PERT) model for NASSP, which is now a functioning unit ready to respond to assist a principal anywhere in the country.
- •When the PERT team responds, however, she also goes to the site since so many of the response activities deal with the crisis rather than the administration of the school.

Ms. Lovre also explained that when she received the call from Jim Millhouse, Assistant Superintendent, during the Columbine siege, he told her:

- •The number of gunmen in the buildings was unknown;
- •The number of wounded or dead was unknown;
- •What the gunmen wanted was unknown; and

- The estimated time of arrival for the Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) team was about 20 minutes.

At that time, she began to understand the complexity and the depth of what needed to be conveyed to Mr. Millhouse in that 20-minute period. It was important that she not hang up the phone to call someone else to find out what to do. Had she hung up, she may never have gotten through again to provide help. She explained that in the Thurston experience she learned that:

- Within four minutes of the incident, the school telephone lines were jammed; and within about seven minutes, the 911 emergency services to the area were generally down, due to the inundation of calls, and they stayed down for about an hour;
- When a SWAT team arrives, the school administration must be well on the way to handling the crisis because SWAT personnel take charge of the scene and may only provide information on a "need-to-know" basis, which can preclude school personnel from having access to or authority over the affected premises and students; and
- Effective response coordination can be achieved but not from the national level because it takes too long to mobilize. It must be immediate. Someone needs to stay in contact with the on-site administrators, both by telephone and facsimile, from the time of the initial contact to provide instantaneous and vital information.

With that as background, Ms. Lovre went on to say that what is most gratifying about working with this commission is that Nevada:

- Has the opportunity to become familiar with intrastate people who can respond quickly to provide direct support;
- Will be able to provide a terrific amount of information and support that, within the first ten minutes of an incident call, will be crucial, perhaps, in determining how many students die, how much litigation will be faced, how the relocation of the remaining students will be managed, and how long it will take the community and the students to recover from the trauma; and
- Will have the chance to put measures into place that will sustain those initial efforts.

In addition, she noted that NAASP's PERT team has suggested that each state put its own team in place. Recently, California formed the first statewide emergency response team (SERT) to be trained. That state-level training opportunity resulted in some members of California's team:

- Realizing how ignorant they had been of the range of issues involved in crisis response;
- Recognizing the magnitude of what should be done if a program is to be truly effective;
- Discussing the need to provide staff or coordinators who could compile and use the information and expertise gained during each encounter to further enhance the effectiveness of future responses; and
- Understanding that this is not about creating a plan that simply directs what to do . . . it is about implementing a program that will be a living-breathing program that can work well.

In her view, Nevada should benefit from California's experience and put into place more than "just a team of trained people." This commission has the opportunity to take a more pragmatic/checklist approach in establishing a comprehensive structure and a program that, "when the rubber hits the road," will support the process and ensure that the methods and trained personnel are in place to respond quickly and effectively. To make that happen, the core team that is formed and trained will need:

- To be familiar enough with one another so that they know how and what to do by being versed in their responsibilities and functions and acquainted with the use of collaboration and team building methods within and outside that entity;
- To be able to rely on each other, so that individual egos do not lead to turf issues that override the interest of the children; and
- To elicit the help of NASSP members and others in Nevada who may already have been exposed to crisis management training and concepts.

Some national groups, among others, that become involved in these incidents include:

- The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA);
- The National Organization of Victims' Assistance (NOVA); and
- The National Red Cross.

In the Thurston incident, having NOVA representatives available (many of whom had not met one another previously) allowed every family of a child who was injured or who died to have a victim's advocate to counsel them and work with a school liaison. That support started the day of the incident and is still going on. The NOVA organization also does community training nationwide. When a state governor or a district superintendent contacts NOVA about a major event, help is usually offered in the form of sending a number of advocates. That response, however, does not have the same focus as the policy-based program that will come from this commission's work, she said.

Ms. Lovre explained that when she arrived in Littleton, Colorado, and began talking to the administrators at Columbine, one statement that was repeated over and over was, "We knew it could happen in Denver, but we didn't think it would. Nobody thought it would happen in Littleton. And, if it ever was going to happen in Littleton, nobody thought it would be at Columbine." From that, it can be understood that it can and does happen "here."

When a team is formed from representatives of national organizations, law enforcement, the schools, and others who can respond quickly, there is a more sustained effort that allows for better assessment of:

- The root causes of violence;
- The programs that should be in place; and
- How programs should be implemented.

Such an assessment takes time.

The violence prevention piece also needs to be in place and working. A state's catastrophic emergency response team (SCERT) itself can be a force in manifesting the violence prevention aspect because its members will:

- Know each other well;
- Want to work together collaboratively; and
- Benefit every district they come from by upgrading what is happening there.

Ms. Lovre noted that she would, therefore, first focus on forming SCERT or SERT teams, then move to violence

prevention and more generic issues. She distributed the Exhibit A documents at this time.

She diagramed and discussed the basic plan a school or district must have in place to deal with a small crisis (one or two children are killed, perhaps in a car accident). She pointed out that when staff is pulled from one school to assist another, a gap is left at the first school and the remaining students do not have that resource person available for their needs. It is important, therefore, to leave schools potentially affected by the crisis (where friends or family of the victims may attend) intact and draw assistance from more distant areas. See Exhibit A₁ for:

- Definitions, diagrams, and descriptions of the progressively more-encompassing structures and levels of response teams (from the building site to the state), response flow charts and time lines, and team models;
- Staff assignments, including how those assignments tie into the response flowcharts;
- SERT team member roles, including field and state representatives;
- A map of how events unfold during major school crisis events; and
- A list of "Things to Consider" about crisis response training.

As part of her coverage of that material, Ms. Lovre explained that:

- There have been situations in which a local area and its schools have been affected by several crises in a row, which overtaxes the affected administrators and personnel, while response teams outside the area get no response experience at all.
- Spreading the experience over larger groups of people does two things: (1) It reduces the burdens and stresses on the affected school's personnel; and (2) It broadens and heightens the experience and awareness of teams that otherwise would be idle.
- School counselors and nurses need to stay in their own schools so the schedules and needs of unaffected students are not disrupted.
- When 35 satellite trucks show up at the site of an incident of school violence, it changes the needs and activities of everyone, i.e., staff, students, parents, and the community; and trained assistance needs to come from across the state.

- The number of people involved in the response to a media-type incident is huge, and the logistics are complex. At Thurston, 212 counselors were needed in the first five days following the incident to serve the needs of the district and its schools.
- Doing things in the heat of the moment, by the seat of your pants, is not the best way to respond.

She described the wide-range of people, organizations, facilities, and details that are involved with high-profile crisis coverage and the need for administrators and school staff to continue to serve their students' on-going and routine needs, to maintain as much normalcy as possible. Those people should not be responsible for setting up and staffing the safe room, for example. The ideal is to return to homeostasis as soon as possible.

In terms of violence prevention, every time a student dies or some other crisis or tragedy happens, it generates a "teachable moment." Schools should be like a community where the population is told what is going on and where the students can take place in and be part of a forum that recognizes who they are. Providing that type of support during times of small crises often results in students, even those who have been marginalized, feeling more a part of that community.

Ms. Lovre read the suicide note Eric Harris wrote, as it was reported in an article by columnist Dan Savage. She said, the level of isolation expressed in that note was one of the most profound aspects of Littleton. In her view, if schools stressed the principle that everyone counts, and harassment will not be tolerated, a more accepting environment might develop for all students, not just those who are considered sports or social "royalty."

Ms. Lovre and the panelists engaged in a brief discussion of:

- How best to prepare students for crisis situations;
- Establishing evacuation procedures and designating gathering points for parents and students;
- Continuing or reopening schools (or an alternate site) as soon as possible;
- The importance of recognizing that students need support and the ability to gather together to discuss their feelings and share their grief, rather than going out on their own, since dealing with these incidents personally is far too difficult for many children; and
- The differences between the ways each child handles such crises.

She also reviewed the detailed time line for and roles of "flight team" members who respond to such incidents, see Exhibit A₁. The schedule for the first response day includes various notifications and:

- Meetings between the team leader, the principal, and others at the school;
- The addition of team support for the teachers who work with the administration to provide status reports to students;
- Establishment and team staffing of safe rooms; and
- Team debriefing, including reminders of the need to care for one's self during crisis.

The various flight teams include those at the building, districtwide, countywide (if different), county and agency collaborative, SERT, and PERT levels.

Although the principal remains in charge, the SERT and flight team members coordinate such things as:

- General public information dissemination;
- Additional trunk-hunting telephone and facsimile lines, which needs to be located, installed, and monitored;
- Triaging incoming calls from and making informational calls to hospitals, parents, the media, and other volunteers;
- Holding conferences with the media, as soon as possible and at regular intervals thereafter;
- Training counselor volunteers to respond to mega-trauma situations, which is different from the grief counseling that most counselors deal with ordinarily; and
- Using a web master to set up a web page, where questions can be answered quickly, thereby cutting down on incoming calls, that can be updated during the following days (or weeks).

Ms. Lovre said, in her view, the reason there has been no litigation filed against either Thurston High School or the Springfield School District (and this is the only school shooting incident that has not resulted in such litigation) is that

each and every student (and his or her parent) received a personal telephone call from a teacher the day of the shooting explaining the status of the events of the day and what would occur the next day at school. That level of communication is not something that is normally attempted or attained during such times, but, by using teachers to contact students on their second-period rosters, it was relatively easy and very effective.

Everyone knows what happened at Columbine; however, most people do not realize that in the eight days that followed, an average of three evacuations occurred in some of the other 141 schools in the district because of bomb threats. No one felt safe in the schools. Therefore, there was an immediate need to meet with and support the other principals in the district who were exhausted. The members of the response teams took over that role. In addition, as reflected in the handouts, teachers are kept apprised of the situation.

Setting up unique structures for each event can be a huge undertaking, i.e., how to make budget decisions about services that are required, how to receive donations, how to answer all the letters that pour into the school, how to plan vigils and memorials, and so forth. From the beginning, the state coordinator provides support from a distance and stays on the phone with the site until the state field team is dispatched to the school.

She described her work as a liaison among all affected parties at Columbine and discussed the array of meetings and communications work that was necessary. She also noted that it is her preference to work with local media representatives, rather than the national media.

Discussion followed regarding the pros and cons of doing drills with students in anticipation of various types of threats. It was suggested that schools should work with local law enforcement and school police, perhaps during an in-service day, to become familiar with various scenarios. Such training should be separate from the evacuation and response drills that include students. It was noted that local authorities should have both detailed plans and videos of school facilities on hand in addition to sets of master keys so that they have effective and immediate accessibility.

After lunch, Ms. Lovre continued to discuss the:

- Need for heightened communication during a crisis. There is such a demand for communication that every method should be used, i.e., electronic mail, hunting-trunk telephone banks, remote information centers, and web sites;
- Various types of security operations, i.e., lock downs, SWAT intervention, the securing of utility shut-off valves, and so forth;
- Lack of correlation between local cultural/societal conditions and school violence, i.e., incidents being no less

likely in rural or suburban areas than in intercity schools; and

- Fact that schools are still the safest place for children to be, e.g., approximately 15 students die per year at school, while nearly 15 children die per day outside the school environment. For the benefit of all children, that perspective must be underscored.

It is mandatory that schools maintain a sense of community, and law enforcement plays an important and necessary role in ensuring school safety. Collaborative training is the key to making that mix work. The cultural changes in society are reflected in the culture of schools, and a community's cultural identity also affects students' perceptions of danger. Neighboring towns in Oregon, for instance, have very different views of themselves, i.e., Umatilla runs pollution drills, while Pendleton (less than 25 miles distant) has more of a cowboy/rodeo mind set. Such diversity is prevalent throughout the nation.

All children respond positively to adults who know their names. Students reap benefits from observing a police presence in the community that is not always linked to juvenile or law enforcement duties. The marginalization of students who are different should be avoided since pushing those children to the social fringe engenders a sense of failure in them.

Character development should be encouraged for every child, and parents should be paying attention to what their children are doing. Surveillance cameras and metal detectors may be a part of a prudent plan in some schools, but if character development programs and opportunities are not taken advantage of, then this battle will be lost, Ms. Lovre said. Explaining that comment, she said character development:

- Should not be seen as a newly mandated class or curriculum, with certain worksheets and practice lessons;
- Needs to be a social skill developed by emulating role models at home, in school hallways, and in the community at large;
- Requires "human" people to be in contact with these children to nurture them in a way that truly develops character, e.g., extra staff on the playgrounds who know and can intimately talk to children who display behavior that is either out of the ordinary for them or is against school rules, rather than yelling at that child from a distance; and
- Is an area of human interaction, not a content area.

Senator Wiener noted that one area of personal responsibility that must be demonstrated more often and consistently is the need for adults to guard against children gaining access to weapons. In Jonesboro, Arkansas, following the school shootings there, a student wrote a report on the subject of securing weapons and was asked by a teacher to rewrite the assignment because, "We don't want to talk about this any more." That type of response, in her opinion:

- Is inappropriate and may reflect an historical revisionist mode (many people wanted to forget the incident ever happened);
- Does not lead to the healing of a community;
- Leaves the community vulnerable to further violent behavior; and
- According to Ms. Lovre, stresses the need for a statewide team to be involved.

It is important for those at the event site to speak with people who have been through similar situations. Follow up, in some instances, has been lacking, e.g., few people know that one of the mothers whose child died at Columbine walked into a pawn shop, bought a gun, and shot herself. Another child, a boy who survived a gunshot wound at Thurston, died in a hunting accident at the hand of his little brother. In anticipation of situations such as these, others who have been through the aftermath of school violence can assist in laying the groundwork for an appropriate follow-up structure.

Coming up with a prevention plan for school violence rarely takes into consideration the "student component." If you put a rule on a student, there is something about the culture of adolescence that often ensures the rule will not be followed; however, the more you can make the students a part of that prevention plan, the more successful it may be.

At a school in Ohio, the morning after the shooting at Columbine, an administrator went to his students and asked, "What should we (the administration) be doing to help you feel safer and to address this issue of safety?" The students, after a few days, came up with a plan that the school adopted. That plan, created by the student body through its student council, had as a primary aim the goal of breaking down the "high school royalty" illusion (the star football player should not be able to bend a rule to play in the game on Friday night when that rule is steadfast for other students). The plan also closed the school campus for the balance of the school year and instituted assigned seating in the cafeteria that integrated various types of students, e.g., one jock, popular kid, and so forth, who normally did not interact with one another, at each lunch table. At the end of the year, students requested the continuation of the closed campus and the use of seating assigned by the school council one week out of each month for the following school year. They understood the benefits and the differences the plan had made.

The size and structure of a school makes a difference in the school's culture, and:

- Larger schools engender less familiarity among students;
- Low funding levels often result in understaffing; therefore, personal contacts and relationships suffer; and

- Some schools create an effective safe zone for students, which generally results from the type and degree of school leadership exerted by its principal or some other individual.

Ms. Baxter agreed and noted that, in her view, closed campuses precipitate a more cohesive student body. An open campus encourages fragmenting by making it noncompulsory for students to fraternize with one another, thereby decreasing the feeling of community and unity on campus. Students from schools that required a closed campus and uniforms have remarked to her that such an environment:

- Was "not so bad";
- Encourage students to become more familiar with one another;
- Removed barriers to interacting with members of other groups;
- Generated an equality that allowed students to interact with one another more freely; and
- Reduced the dominance of the "proud crowd" and the disenfranchisement that it engenders.

Ms. Lovre noted that:

- One school's principal has worked to include nonconformist students by including them in the announcements and display cases used at the school. A shift in the awareness of the administration can go a long way in promoting such inclusion.
- Another approach that has allowed students to step out of their normal cultural patterns has encouraged a wide range of students to participate in problem-solving groups to address various campus issues. That program gave students written information on how to lead, participate in, take notes on, brain storm for, and address those tasks. It required the leadership and facilitator position within the group to change among its members over time.
- Still other programs require a leadership program for all students during their junior year, in which each student is required to report on ways that he or she has applied those principles in their lives beyond school.
- A program in Salem, Oregon, has transitioned its efforts from the school to the community on several different levels. The message of the "Hands Are Not for Hurting" program has been disseminated throughout the community in many ways. Part of that program includes a one-hour presentation, in October of each year

(Domestic Violence Prevention Month), in all schools in the community to heighten violence awareness. Following the presentation, children are asked to take a pledge that says, "I will not use my hands or words for hurting myself or others," and they draw their hand on purple paper, cut it out, sign it, and put it up for display. That pledge activity has included the governor, the mayor, the principal, and students. Each school keys its process to the age level of its students. At the high school level, the program invites students to examine how they use power in their relationships to avoid the patterns that foreshadow domestic violence. The program also elicits the same pledge from parents who have babies at the local hospitals, thereby attempting to arrest child abuse. It is utilized throughout the community to change its culture.

- The "Character Counts!" program in California has been successful by involving skating rinks that allow free skating on Saturday mornings for children while their parents attend certain meetings that provide training in parenting skills and aid in violence prevention.

In conclusion, Ms. Lovre offered that:

- Just providing surveillance cameras and metal detectors will not prevent school violence.
- The change must be more endemic and must make children believe that they do not want to participate in violent acts to begin with.
- The administration must make it easy for students to come forward with information that may prevent violence.
- It is her purpose to illustrate the necessity to change the larger philosophical picture in addition to instituting the physical-plant equipment that may be prudent.
- No students should have to wonder if they are going to come home from school at the end of the day.
- No parents should have to wonder if their child is going to come home from school at the end of the day.

To tie all this into the role of the SERT team and to revisit how that applies to the points raised by members at the outset of the meeting, Ms. Lovre explained that:

- People should be included on SERT teams not because of their job but because of their special expertise;
- Formation of these teams should not be seen as "just another mandate" but as an opportunity for schools to

buy-in to safety and to become empowered;

- Team members need to be kept "fresh" and updated on techniques by learning from the debriefing reports filed by other teams after incidents; and
- A clearinghouse for such reports needs to be established to collect that information and update districts.

Ms. Lovre also noted that in the crisis management field, this question is asked often, "When you are standing in the river pulling out dead bodies, how long are you going to wait until you go upstream to find out who's throwing them in?" What puts these kids at risk in the first place?

Ms. Bandera said she appreciated that point being made. In her discussions with other administrators, concerns have been expressed about the need to identify kids who pose potential problems. When schools' populations are small enough to encourage personal contact, there is a chance to get to know each student, to recognize when a student may be "on the edge," "in trouble," or "feeling desperate." It is not prudent to label a specific child as a potential threat simply because he (or she) is part of a group, which is similar to one that may have included a student who became violent at another school site. Ms. Lovre said that concern about school violence and juvenile violence is widespread. Although such incidents are not new -- they have been occurring in intercity areas for many years -- their increased frequency in suburban and rural areas has intensified the focus on these issues. Recent changes have heightened awareness in communities, and people are becoming desperate to stem the tide. In a rush to do that, however, the societal and human aspect of that change should not be overlooked or discounted; otherwise, it is just another exercise.

Few schools do not exhibit some level of value bias; therefore, it is important to include various viewpoints and levels of expertise, not only for those who participate in the policy forum but also for those who will have hands-on involvement. Focusing on a single aspect or solution should be avoided in this process. It is beneficial to gain a broad understanding of how violence manifests itself in today's schools.

A discussion followed regarding the:

- Effects of separatist cultures in schools, especially at the high school level. The high school royalty psychology, cheerleaders and jocks becoming the homecoming queens and kings, has to be addressed to avoid the disenfranchisement of other student groups and the development of situations like Columbine;
- Need to give credence to students' realities. There must be a zero-tolerance policy for harassment and violence that applies to everyone;
- Importance of recognizing and appreciating the sometimes conflicting roles of response team members and

volunteers, law enforcement responders and investigators, and trauma and grief counselors -- all of whom may have conflicting focuses but a common goal -- to meet the needs of the surviving students, including ascertaining why what happened happened; and

- •Need to set egos, outside influences, and politics aside.

Ms. Lovre referred members to Exhibit B for comprehensive information on resources and operational planning.

Ms. Rees noted that sometimes the perpetrators' families are also victims of these incidents. They are severely impacted, and it is easy to leave them out of the response. Siblings and parents bear significant levels of guilt and blame, whether it is founded or not. Ms. Lovre affirmed that opinion, and explained that one of the purposes of addressing this issue is to be able to move toward understanding these incidents on a higher level. She briefly recapped the suggestions made and concerns expressed by the members at the outset of the meeting and during her presentation. She asked them to reflect on how, or if, their perspectives had changed based upon the information presented at this meeting.

Responding to Ms. Lovre:

- •Mr. Swinney expressed the need for agencies to rise above turf issues and, perhaps through the public information officer, to give recognition to all of the people involved.
- •Ms. Rees remarked on what a big job was ahead for the commission and that it would be beneficial to include as many people as possible.
- •Ms. Radich pointed out that implementation of a sound program would require funding and questioned the source of that money. Chairman Wiener stated that is important for the commission to get support for the state's emergency response plan, and that financial support most likely would be obtainable through either the executive budget or the legislative bill process.
- •Mr. Johnson noted that this is an enormously complex issue that affects everyone and in which everyone has a vested interest.
- •Ms. Hawkins explained that most teachers and schools have had occasions to deal with smaller crises, during which schools have shared resources and personnel, and it is important to look to the wider pool of resources and personnel assistance.
- •Mr. Burns noted that, in his view, the size of the school is not so important as the efficiencies and insights that are gained from appropriate planning and training, and the establishment of guidelines and the use of feedback will be critical.

- Ms. Bandera said she is much encouraged about the concept of integrating agency efforts and less concerned about funding because the commission will establish basic concepts that districts will be able to adapt to their needs based on local criteria rather than mandating uniform and costly measures statewide. The purpose of this commission, in her view, is to establish a sound master response plan that will help to ensure that local plans will never have to be used.

Supplementing these comments, Ms. Lovre suggested that insurance carriers might also be approached for funding various aspects of the plan's implementation since potentially they stand to save large sums of money over time. In conclusion, Senator Wiener also emphasized the need to create a framework that would engender the development of sound and workable plans.

Ms. Lovre outlined the process of transitioning from this meeting through the development of the plan. She discussed four specific pieces that need to be put into place:

- Leadership, the identification of stakeholders who will assist in moving the process forward (the commission will be the basis for this group);
- Structure, the need to utilize a staff and office for the program, wherein the response teams can be organized and overseen and where incident feedback can be compiled and best practices can be determined and distributed to benefit other teams throughout the state;
- Collaboration, how to get all parties "going in the same direction at the same time" and how to achieve sanction of the project; and
- Resources, how equipment, funding, and manpower can be brought to the program for training and maintenance of the program.

Following Ms. Lovre's discussion:

- Ms. Radich questioned the cost of character building programs such as those in Salem, Oregon.
- Other members remarked that the statewide plan should not deal with small issues but, rather, the big picture relating to trauma in addition to policy issues.

Judy Axleson, a kindergarten through 12th grade consultant and former teacher, commented that, in her view, the creation of a school environment that is supportive of children, that develops a more personal and caring relationship between staff and students, and that increases the feelings of safety and concern may increase student achievement over time. The big picture could be extrapolated into a program of "smallness." Being attentive to the small crises and concerns of children is important in changing school culture.

Ms. Lovre explained that the members of response teams would be different from county to county. Many of the members, perhaps half, should be teachers, but in any given place, some of the types of people who can fill roles at the more local level are more diverse. People who have expertise or a sense of how to keep the press contained, to meet the needs of kids, to support the school generally should be included. Creating a well-balanced team often takes time; however, many people select themselves to be involved based on a desire to serve their communities and share their skills. The janitor, for instance, should be included in the response in a considerate way -- not just sent to clean up the mess but with a concern about his intimate involvement with the children at the school. Maybe an outside company should be brought in for cleanup work.

Nevada and other states need to learn from the experiences and lessons of Columbine, Thurston, and elsewhere. A discussion followed about team interactions and duties and how the students' welfare plays into those responsibilities. Mr. Johnson said it will be important to establish and train teams from the local level. In that way, as those team members are trained and practice what they are trained to do, they can assist in forming upper level teams. Then, when the crisis occurs, no one sees the response as requiring a level of skill and effort with which they are unfamiliar. When the process is seen from that perspective, Ms. Lovre noted, the children are reassured by seeing adults come together to ensure that they will be safe at school, and that is a strong message.

Ms. Rees said that, although it will take significant effort and some period of time, it is important to change the attitudes of people in Nevada about how to raise the children in this state by setting an example, personally and governmentally. Character development should be the goal. Reassessing our intolerances and prejudices, in light of new knowledge, is a difficult thing for everyone. We cannot expect students to change their behavior unless they see adults being successful at doing the same thing. When adults argue over turf issues, they cannot expect children to act differently or to learn collaboration skills.

Ms. Axleson pointed out that it will be critical to get the commission's message out clearly. Let the vision for the plan be easily communicated and concise.

Senator Wiener said that since the commission has a limited period of time in which to develop its model plan, members should review the materials supplied by Ms. Lovre to familiarize themselves with the checklists, components, and guidelines that have been used successfully (see Exhibit C). She asked staff to work on a draft plan, which may be revised during the next meeting of the commission, so that it can be presented to the Governor in a timely manner.

In conclusion, Ms. Lovre asked to be kept apprised of the commission's progress.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public testimony was offered.

FUTURE MEETINGS AND DIRECTIONS TO STAFF

There was no further discussion of this item.

Exhibit C is the "Attendance Record" for this meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the commission, the meeting was adjourned at 4:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Chandler Law

Senior Research Secretary

Juliann K. Jenson

Senior Research Analyst

APPROVED BY:

Senator Valerie Wiener, Chair

Date: _____

LIST OF EXHIBITS

Exhibit A, includes copies of proprietary documents titled "State-wide School Catastrophic Events Response Teams" (A₁), "Flow of Training" (A₂), and "Command Post Staff 'Positions'" (A₃), presented by Cheri Lovre, M.S., Crisis Management Institute (CMI), Salem, Oregon.

Exhibit B includes manuals that Ms. Lovre developed for CMI, titled "Crisis Resource Manual" (B₁), "Catastrophic Events, Resource Manual" (B₂), and "Catastrophic Events Resource Manual, SERT" (B₃).

Exhibit C is the "Attendance Record" for this meeting.

Copies of the materials distributed in the meeting are on file in the Research Library of the Legislative Counsel Bureau, Carson City, Nevada. You may contact the library at (775) 684-6827.