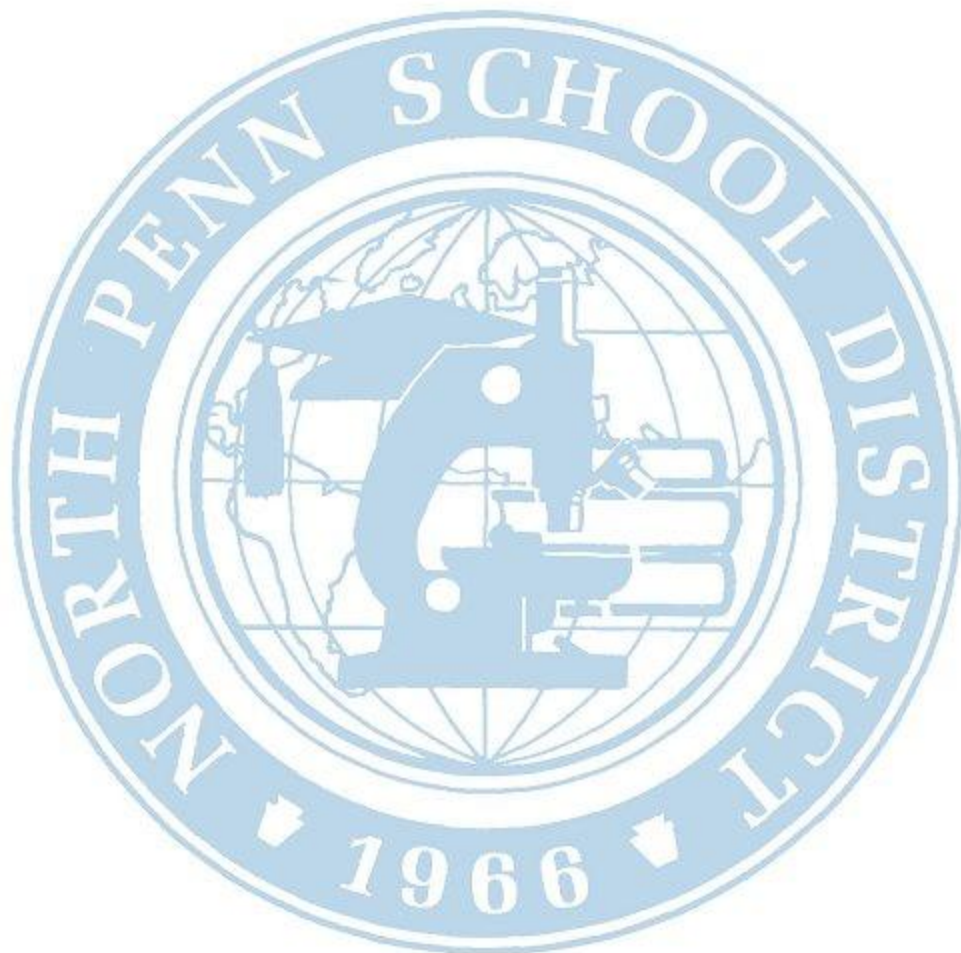


# **North Penn School District**

**Coordinator of Emergency Management & Safe Schools**



## **Report to the Board of School Directors (Public Version)**

**June 2022**

## **Executive Summary**

### **PURPOSE**

This report is provided to the North Penn School District Board of School Directors under the requirements of Section 1309-B (c) of the Public School Code of 1949, which describes the duties of the School Safety and Security Coordinator.

***1309-B(c) Specific duties.--The school safety and security coordinator shall:***

***(5) Make a report no later than June 30, 2019, and each June 30 thereafter, to the school entity's board of directors on the school entity's current safety and security practices that identify strategies to improve school safety and security. The report shall be presented to the school entity's board of directors at an executive session of the school entity's board of directors. The report shall be submitted to the committee and shall not be subject to the act of February 14, 2008 (P.L.6, No.3), known as the Right-to-Know Law.***

Further, this report is intended to provide School Board Directors with a review of the current safety and security practices employed by the District, as well as areas identified for improvement or consideration.

### **SCOPE**

This report is limited to the work of the NPSD Office of Emergency Management and Safe Schools. It is important to acknowledge that school safety is necessarily interwoven with numerous peripheral programs and processes within the District, however the analysis of these contributing components falls outside of the scope of this report. For example, this report does not include specific detail regarding mental health services, behavioral support and intervention, or disciplinary practices.

### **MODEL STANDARDS**

North Penn School District recognizes that consensus on leading school safety and security practices exists, in large part, throughout the expert community. Subject matter experts have contributed to a number of published resources which describe leading practices, to which our own strategies can be compared.

The most relevant standard to North Penn is the School Safety and Security Assessment Criteria created by the Pennsylvania School Safety and Security Committee within the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency. These criteria, originally created in 2018 and revised most recently in February of 2021, are designed to assist schools in evaluating facilities and programs in order to identify potential safety and security vulnerabilities. The PCCD criteria are a compilation of best practices and recommendations developed by experts and adopted by the SSSC. The criteria includes assessment of physical security, school climate and behavioral health, and related policies and training.

Additional consensus standards are also considered when assessing current safety practice. Chief among them are the School Security Guidelines published by Partner Alliance for Safer Schools (PASS), revised in 2020, which are primarily focused on physical security and life safety.<sup>1</sup> Also used are

---

<sup>1</sup> PASS Guidelines can be found at [passk12.org](http://passk12.org)

best practices published by the National Center for Spectator Sports Safety and Security (NCS4) which apply to before and after school activities.<sup>2</sup>

Further guidance and performance standards are contained within the requirements of Pennsylvania law including the Public School Code of 1949 and PA Title 22 - Chapter 10. Additional guidance is drawn from the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency, PA Department of Education, National Fire Protection Association, Federal Emergency Management Agency, US Department of Education, PA Interscholastic Athletic Association, the "I Love U Guys" Foundation, Sandy Hook Promise, and other independent advisory organizations.

## **ASSESSMENT METHODS**

Continual evaluation is important to maintain a school environment which is consistently as safe and secure as possible. The Office of Emergency Management and Safe Schools endeavors to assess its work and the state of school safety within the District by using several methods.

Individual stakeholders who directly observe and experience school safety in their environment are perhaps the most valuable source of feedback. Whether it be a school-based safety team or an individual conversation with staff, these observations have shed light on the need for consistent training and communication. School-based safety teams which were disrupted due to the pandemic were able to resume meetings in the fall of 2021.

In addition to feedback shared by those in the school community, a more standardized approach is also necessary to ensure that the strategies already in place are effective. To accomplish this members of the District security team conduct daily audits of school security as part of a directed patrol program. These mini-audits are designed to check compliance with physical security directives, test communication, evaluate supervision of students, and create an open dialog with school leaders. By focusing on only a handful of assessment criteria per visit, the locking of classroom doors for example, the strategy is not overwhelming or time consuming and results in greater engagement. This abbreviated assessment format has proven effective not only in creating a level of accountability for school safety policy, but also by helping to forge relationships between security staff and school personnel.

Local experts play an important role in informing North Penn school safety strategies. Regular collaboration, both formal and informal, takes place with the North Penn area law enforcement agencies, fire officials, emergency managers, and the Montgomery County Department of Public Safety. Local police in particular provide regular guidance and feedback to school administrators, and have their own agency goals of developing relationships within our school communities. Without a doubt all of our local emergency responders place foremost emphasis on school safety. In addition the Montgomery County Intermediate Unit hosts a monthly roundtable of school safety and security leaders and local experts. This collaborative effort is a valuable platform for sharing ideas and learning from one another.

Finally, formalized objective assessments are an essential part of any evaluation program. This year, for the first time ever, North Penn underwent a comprehensive, district-wide, school safety and security assessment performed by a team of expert consultants. Previous school security assessments

---

<sup>2</sup> NCS4 Best Practices are available at <https://ncs4.usm.edu/>

conducted by the Pennsylvania State Police Risk & Vulnerability Assessment Team (RVAT) in 2010 and 2008 were more narrow in scope and limited to only one school.

## **2021 - 2022 School Year In Review**

### **SECURITY DEPARTMENT**

The primary role of security officers in the North Penn School District is to assist with student supervision, maintain physical security of school buildings, and assist school administration with investigation of and response to incidents that occur in school. The security department is made up of nineteen permanent staff members who are assigned throughout the District. In addition to permanent security staff members, the department maintains a roster of per-diem security officers who are called upon when needed.

The 21-22 school year saw unprecedented levels of security service by almost every measure, as activities fully resumed from the pandemic disruption. Challenges with student and guest behaviors became quickly apparent in the fall, as did the difficulty in scheduling adequate supervision historically performed by teaching staff. Security staff filled many of these gaps, extending their presence in areas which have not required security services in the past. For example, elevated student behavior in middle school lunch periods, and a decrease in teacher availability to assist with supervision, resulted in requests for supplemental security staff to assist with the smooth operation of lunch times. Part-time security staff were temporarily increased to a full-time schedule and per diem staff filled 260 shifts at the middle schools to help with this supervision. Additionally, challenging behavior from members of the public resulted in the need for additional security staffing at school board meetings, sports contests, and many elementary school evening events. A total of 3,496 personnel hours of security staffing was scheduled for duties outside of the regular school day during the 21-22 year. This is a notable increase from the 2,183 extra-duty hours scheduled during the 2018-19 year, 1,234 hours<sup>3</sup> during the 2019-20 school year, and 2,179 hours during the 2020-21 year. If sustained, this level of need exceeds current staffing levels and will require additional personnel resources.

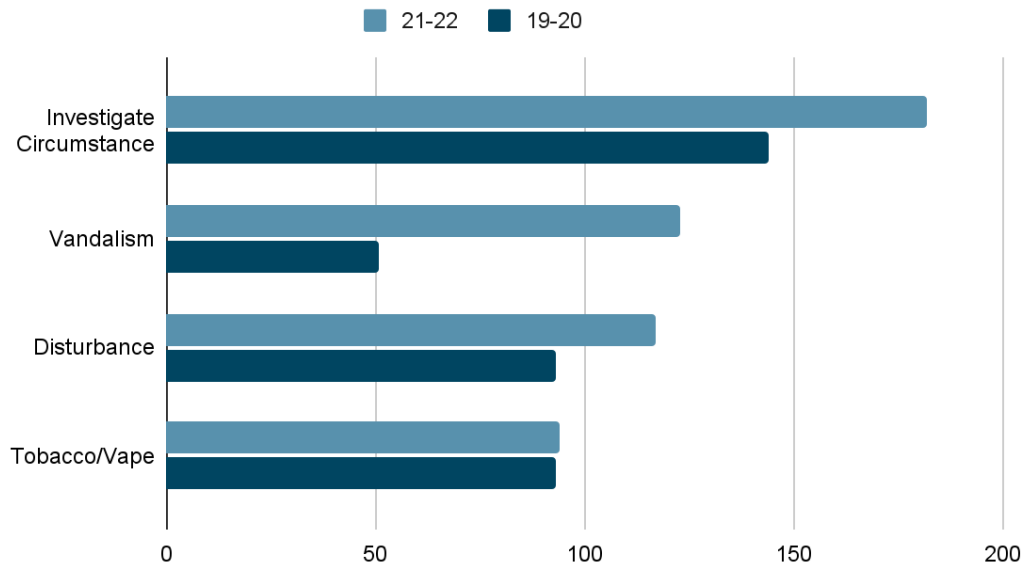


Security productivity during the previous twelve months also reflects this increase in service. Security officers wrote 1,001 reports to document the wide variety of incidents they handled, an increase from 746 in 19-20. These reports range from incidents involving students during school hours, to investigations and matters occurring outside of the school day. Examples of non-student related matters handled by the security department this year include thefts of catalytic converters from school vehicles, vandalism to property occurring after hours, medical emergencies involving members of the public, trespassing on school property, and assists to local police. 178 of the incidents documented by security officers this year involved contact with local police.

---

<sup>3</sup> Covid-19 shutdown

## Top Reported Incident Types



### **PUBLIC SAFETY COORDINATION**

As in years past, North Penn schools continued to enjoy excellent service from local public safety agencies. Routine foot patrols during the school day, as well as prompt response times and thorough communication have become emblematic of our cooperative relationship with the police, fire, and EMS agencies that serve our district. In addition to regular communication, three in-person meetings were held between District administration and local police chiefs this year to discuss pertinent topics and school safety data. In October 2021 a re-execution of the Safe Schools memorandum of understanding between North Penn schools and all six local law enforcement agencies took place, transitioning from the Montgomery County DA's model language to the State model.

As was true with our own security staffing, the use of public safety personnel for special service details also saw a substantial increase from prior years. Special police and/or EMS services are requested for North Penn events based on threat profile and size of the public gathering involved. During the initial planning phase for each event, available intelligence is analyzed and the need for these resources is determined. Total cost to the District for these services during the 21-22 school year totaled \$17,493. While the use of dedicated public safety services at North Penn events has been steadily increasing over the past four years, the 21-22 school year represents the most significant year-over-year increase thus far.

### **THREAT ASSESSMENT & RESPONSE**

Formalized threat assessment and related training has been taking place in the North Penn School District since the summer of 2018. Since that time the process for assessing threats of violence has evolved considerably as practical experience is gained and new mandates were established. North Penn's eighteen individual school teams and single District-level threat assessment team exceeds the State requirements of Act 18 of 2019. Each team consists of a school administrator, counselor, school health representative, and special education representative. The District team is led by the Coordinator of Emergency Management & Safe Schools and additionally includes a behavior analyst, school psychologist, counselor, supervisor of pupil services, Director of Elementary Education, Director of

**38**  
**Threats**  
**Investigated**

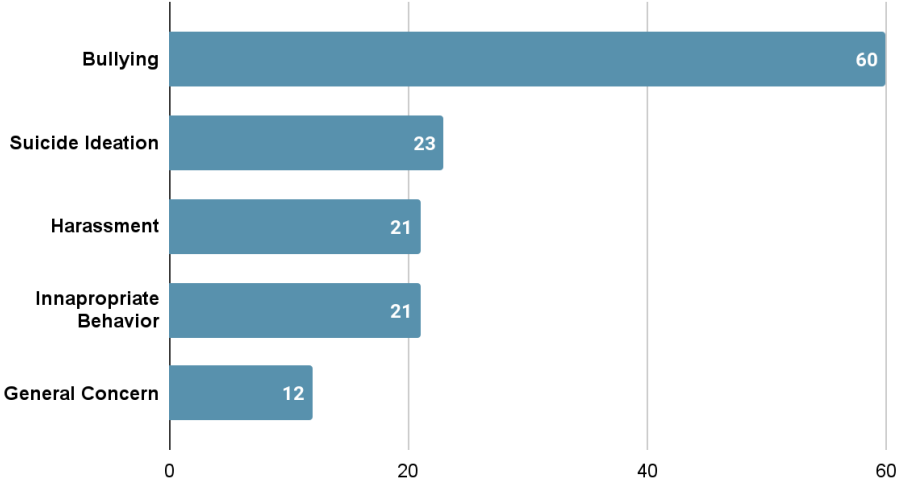
**267**  
**Anonymous**  
**Tips**

Secondary Education, and assistant superintendent. The Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) published model guidelines and training materials for schools in April of 2021 which differs slightly from the CSTAG (Virginia) model which had been the focus of North Penn’s efforts. As a result, this new guidance was reconciled with our existing process and the threat assessment protocol, documentation, and training revised. Threat assessment documentation and data collection has been modified to align with existing student discipline recording processes, which will result in more accuracy and accountability for teams. Staff training on the updated PCCD threat assessment process has begun and will continue in the coming school year.

During the 21-22 school year 38 threats were assessed using the CSTAG model protocol. 33 were determined to be transient and immediately resolved. Five were found to be substantive with one being very serious. All threats handled this school year were resolved safely and without incident.

The State-wide Safe2Say Something anonymous tip platform was the source of some, but not all, of the threats investigated this year. Tips received through S2SS also resulted in the need for welfare checks, direct interventions, discipline, and mental health referrals. A total of 267 tips were received between July 1st, 2021 and June 30th 2022, which is nearly half of the 596 tips received since the system was established in January of 2019. Twenty-two percent of tips, a total of sixty, were categorized as bullying. Twenty-eight tips were designated as life-safety concerns requiring immediate action.

**Top Tip Categories**

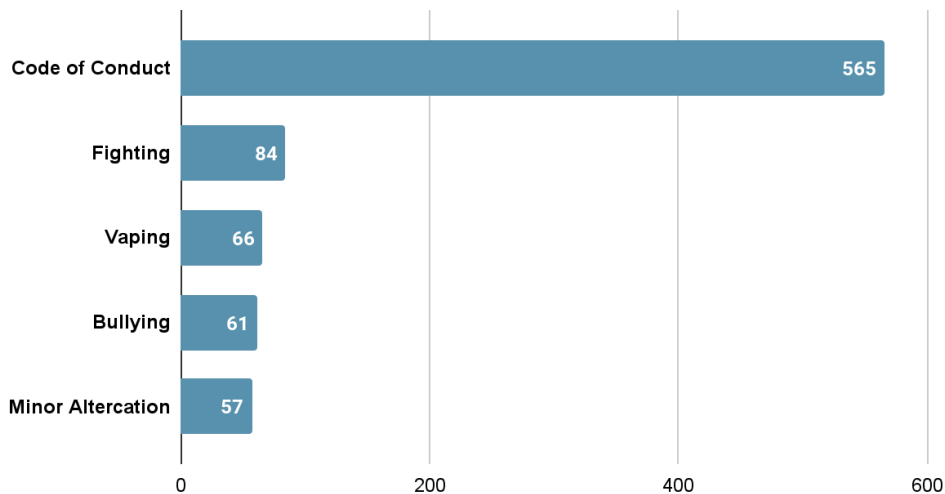


**SAFE SCHOOLS DATA**

The importance of data collection and reporting has been frequently discussed at Safe Schools Committee meetings, making clear the fact that North Penn prioritizes the accurate and transparent reporting of safe schools related data. This year, at the committee’s request, the administration provided quarterly reports on student discipline data including high level analysis and trends. Pertinent information was also reviewed with police chiefs at regular intervals throughout the year in order to ensure accuracy. The annual collection, recording, and validating safe schools data in preparation for

the required Safe Schools Profile submission to the Pennsylvania Department of Education is a significant effort involving school administrators, office support personnel, District technology and data specialists, and the Office of Emergency Management & Safe Schools. For the school year ending in June 2022 a total of 1,123 State reportable incidents were recorded across the District's eighteen schools. The most common incident types were student code of conduct infractions, fighting, and vaping. 117 incidents met the threshold for being referred to local law enforcement. Only one school, Oak Park Elementary, had no State-reportable discipline infractions this year. The 2021-2022 North Penn District profile will be published by the Department of Education later this year.

***Top Incident Categories (74% of Total)***



**COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL SAFETY ASSESSMENT**

A long-standing goal of the Office of Emergency Management & Safe Schools has been to have North Penn's school safety program evaluated by an objective third-party expert. This year, through collaborative efforts with the Safe Schools Committee, that goal was achieved.

A comprehensive RFP was developed and advertised in October 2021 which resulted in thirteen proposals being submitted by qualified firms. The proposals were evaluated and finalist firms took part in three rounds of interviews with the North Penn selection committee. Ultimately Margolis Healy & Associates was selected to perform this important work.

Representatives from MHA traveled to the District for two weeks in March 2022 during which they interviewed over 140 North Penn stakeholders and physically inspected all twenty-one facilities. The comprehensive study was designed to exceed the school safety guidelines developed by the State of Pennsylvania, and compare North Penn to best and promising school safety practices Nationwide. Major areas of focus included physical security systems, policy and procedure, training, as well as mental and behavioral health. The resulting report was delivered to the District in May. The results of the comprehensive school safety and security assessment project will be used to guide future advancement of North Penn's safe schools work.

## NOTABLE PROJECTS

- **Crawford Stadium Event Operational Plans:** After the completion of the Crawford Stadium renovation in 2021, the OEMSS engaged in several planning meetings with North Penn High School leadership, facilities representatives, and the NPSD athletic department to develop operational guidelines for events. The objective of this work was to develop the new standard of safety and security to be applied to all events held in the multi-purpose stadium facility. These guidelines were substantially completed and implemented for the fall sports season in 2021.
- **Student Bus Ridership:** After suffering several pandemic-induced delays, the grant funded student bus ridership project is nearing completion. North Penn's vendor, Synovia Solutions, has installed all of the required equipment on transportation vehicles. The final data integration steps are underway and training for staff will take place during the summer of 2022. Students will begin to use their student IDs to log their attendance on school transportation vehicles in the fall.
- **Mass Notification Enhancements:** The continuation of a multi year effort, this year additional fire alarm systems were connected with the Alertus mass notification platform. This allows emergency notification to be distributed more widely, fills in notification gaps, and reduces the response time of District resources.
- **Updated Emergency Mapping:** Also part of a multi-year effort, collaborative response maps were created for five school facilities including NPHS and the new stadium complex. This work involved on-site walkthroughs, hazard identification, and collaboration with public safety. Updated maps will be placed in building response kits this summer and communicated to emergency responders. The completion of mapping for the final eight facilities as part of this project is funded in the 22-23 budget.
- **Knapp Elementary Construction:** During the Knapp Elementary School construction project this year the Office of Emergency Management & Safe Schools worked with the Facilities Department, designers, and construction managers to ensure safety and security was maintained during the construction process. In addition, a number of meetings were held to discuss the operation of security systems designed as part of the renovation project.

## Considerations for the Future

A major takeaway from the independent school safety assessment conducted this year is that North Penn is well positioned as a leader in providing a safe, secure, and healthy learning environment for all. The steadfast support of the Board of Directors and commitment of resources by District leadership has allowed our school safety program to grow to this point, and it is important that we continue that growth. Several years of data collection coupled with the findings outlined in the Margolis Healy report will help us to build a strategic roadmap for the future, and inform our mission to uphold the highest standards of school safety in an ever more challenging world. Some items of immediate focus include the following:

- **Training & Exercising:** The pandemic significantly disrupted the ability to train and ensure staff are competent in emergency situations. Online and self-paced resources are available, but



evidence suggests that in-person sessions are an important part of an effective training program. It has been challenging to find opportunities for this training amongst many other competing priorities which must be scheduled within a finite amount of time. Regardless, the District must ensure that school safety training is prioritized appropriately and supported by the necessary investment of time.

- **Standards & Policy:** Some basic practices within the school safety realm at North Penn are known and followed, but not codified as an official standard. Doing so in the immediate term is necessary to ensure as much consistency as possible across the District as well as support the ability of staff to perform school safety duties to expectation.
- **Staffing:** As evidenced by the security data outlined above, and supported by the findings of the MHA assessment, the needs of the District are overwhelming current school safety staffing levels. Existing department personnel have been increasingly stretched, resulting in strained productivity and a heightened potential for critical gaps to develop. School safety staffing must be strategically and collaboratively addressed in the near term.
- **Systems & Technology:** An ever evolving threat landscape has been met by private sector innovations in security related technology. From surveillance camera analytics and artificial intelligence, to weapon detection and communication apps, new and improved products are constantly coming to market. These emerging technologies will be evaluated by the District for inclusion in our school safety program. Many of these technologies can be an important force-multiplier with the potential to help staff increase their efficiency and effectiveness.

*Respectfully submitted, 29 June 2022.*

**Chris Doerr**

**Coordinator of Emergency Management & Safe Schools**