

## **APPENDIX A**

Pearl, Mississippi

**April 24, 2000**

Pearl, Mississippi has a middle class population and approximately 1,000 high school students, 1,100 middle school students, and 1,000 upper elementary level students.

On October 1, 1997, a 16-year-old sophomore entered Pearl High School with a 30/30 hunting rifle and opened fire, killing two students and wounding seven others. Prior to entering the high school, the juvenile killed his mother at home and stole her car so he could drive to school to accomplish his goal.

Upon arrival in Pearl, Mississippi, on April 24, 2000, we were met by Chief William Slade of the Pearl Police Department, and Captain George Bergus, who is the Fire Chief and assistant to Chief Slade. For the next three days, the Task Force, Chief Slade and his staff worked hand-in-hand to gather information that would be vital to the Task Force Team. It was clear to the group early in our visit that one of the key things that Chief Slade wanted to convey to us was that

*open-ended communication with school administrators and law enforcement officials must take place during the planning. Each individual must know what his or her responsibility is and be comfortable with it. A tragedy is not the time or place to start debating responsibilities, assignments or turf.*

Also assisting Chief Slade during the three-day work session with our Task Force was Tommye LeGrand, who works as the Victims' Assistance Coordinator for the Rankin County District Attorney's Office. One of the issues brought up during our meetings in Pearl was how rumors are faced and the rumor mill that you need to deal with. In Pearl, the community is a very tight-knit group, located in the middle of the Bible Belt region. Everyone in the community is involved with the schools. It was

the belief of Chief Slade that this is why the community came together as quickly as it did and was able to survive the shooting at Pearl High School.

Jonesboro, Arkansas

**May 15, 2000**

The incident in Jonesboro, Arkansas, involved two elementary school students who positioned themselves outside the Westside Elementary School. One of the individuals pulled the fire alarm and as the students came out of the school, both individuals shot down upon the students, killing several students and a teacher.

Members of the Task Force Team met with Chief Kermit Perdew of the Jonesboro, Arkansas, Police Department; Sheriff Frank Augustus of Craighead County Sheriff's Department; Dick Young, superintendent of Westside Schools; Karen Curtimer, principal of Westside Schools; Rick Thomas, chief deputy of the Craighead County Sheriff's Department; and Jack McCann of Craighead County Sheriff's Department.

From our three-day site visit, we learned that Jonesboro is also a very tight-knit community in the Bible Belt, and that churches played a key role during the incident at Westside Elementary School and also in assisting the community in rebuilding after the incident.

Phone lines and cell phones became useless during the incident, as all lines were jammed up. The need to look at the surroundings of the school area became a key issue in Jonesboro. After the incident, several trees and fence lines were removed, because they had allowed cover for individuals who fired on the students exiting the school.

Locking doors after the students were out raised several questions afterwards. The students went out of the building, the doors locked behind them, and they were unable to get back into the building for safety after the shots began.

The importance of having a designated spokesperson who has been identified and trained prior to any incident to deal with the media was addressed. At the end of the three days in Jonesboro, the Task Force Team had a better understanding of similar problems that had occurred in Pearl, Mississippi, and Jonesboro.

The churches played a key role in the incident at Westside Elementary School. Outside agencies and facilities that play a significant role need to be put into place prior to an incident, because of the immediate need for them at the time of the incident.

Port Huron, Michigan

**May 3, 2000**

The task force had a one-day site visit with Captain Brian Moeller of the Port Huron Police Department; William D. Kimball, superintendent of Port Huron Schools; and Thomas C. Miller, assistant superintendent for Instruction and Administration of Port Huron Schools.

The incident in Port Huron was different from the two previous site visits because intervention prevented anyone from being hurt during the incident.

A student within the school system heard a rumor that four individuals had made a plan to bring bombs and guns into the school during an assembly and shoot and kill as many students and staff as they could. This student felt very comfortable in taking this information to a counselor who then took it to the school liaison officer and the principal.

Because of their cooperation, the Port Huron Police Department was able to apprehend all parties involved before the incident took place. Port Huron was faced with the same problems as Pearl and Jonesboro. It had significant problems with local, national, and international media, and between the school and police.

Communication was a problem, as phone lines did not work shortly after the information was leaked out. Having pre-planned locations to deal with students and getting them out of the school and the process of relaying information to school staff members, parents, and the community presented a problem.

Because of the ability of all parties to work together and having a crisis plan in place ahead of time with a crisis response plan manual, the Port Huron schools and the Port Huron community felt they were able to avert the incident within the school.

West Paducah, Kentucky

**September 5, 2000**

A 14-year-old student in West Paducah, Kentucky, killed three students at his high school during an early morning prayer meeting. The Task Force Team met with Lewis Carr, police officer and school resource manager; Tim Heller, superintendent of schools; Karen McQuiston, school public relations officer; Barbara McGinty, principal of Heath High School; Alan Warford, high school counselor; and Linda Wyatt, the school violence prevention curriculum coordinator.

The Team was aware of a pattern of the types of problems facing all the communities involved up to this point. This is a small, very proud community that had felt prior to the shooting at Heath High School that it was immune to this type of tragedy.

During our three-day site visit, several work sessions were held with key officials within the community, schools, and law enforcement. The sessions were vital for the Task Force Team to gather information.

Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado

**September 26, 2000**

In the tragedy that took place at Columbine High School, two students entered the building and in approximately 45 minutes killed 12 students, one teacher, and then themselves.

The Task Force Team had two separate work sessions in Littleton, Colorado. They included Richard Veech, area administrator for Jefferson County Public Schools; George M. Latuda, director, Construction Management for Jefferson County Public Schools; Marilyn Saltzman, director of communications for Jefferson County Public Schools; William Pessemier, fire chief, Littleton Fire Department; Betsy Thompson, Safe and Drug Free/Crisis Response Program, Jefferson County Public Schools; Jeff Schraeder, division chief, Jefferson County Sheriff's Department; Lt. Patsy Mundell, Jefferson County Sheriff's Department; Sgt. Jim Parr, Jefferson

County Sheriff's Department; and Linda Burton, assistant principal, Wheat Ridge High School, Jefferson County Public Schools.

During the work sessions in Littleton, some key issues were discussed and brought to our attention. The school liaison officers -- or community resource officers as identified in Littleton -- played a key role during this incident. This proved to be a common similarity in all our site visits.

Even though the community resource officer had been in place for approximately five years in the Jefferson County School District and that did not prevent the incident at Columbine High School, the officer was able to play a key role in working with the students after the incident.

Sgt. Parr of the Jefferson County Sheriff's Department stated that the effectiveness of its community resource officers linking the school with law enforcement is due to having a common ground philosophy, working toward the same goal, and establishing areas of responsibility between the schools and the law. Sgt. Parr said another key is new legislation that has been passed in Colorado allowing information to be released and shared between schools. In Michigan, this is covered under Public Law 102 of the School Law.

The Task Force Team's second work session was with school officials and fire officials at the area administration office for Jefferson County Public Schools. During the work session, we were given an overview of the tragedy and the staff at Jefferson County Public Schools and the fire chief at Littleton Fire Department brought up key points.

Of major importance is the ability to communicate and work together and build a strong relationship before an incident occurs. **Communication** was a key problem at Columbine because of the large area and the number of police, fire, and rescue departments involved. Within two minutes after the first shots were fired, the entire phone system was down and cell phones were not useable. The agencies were unable to communicate with one another at the beginning of the incident.

**Identification** of students and staff members became a problem during the incident and since then, identification cards have been implemented at the Columbine School.

