

Chapter 2

LAW ENFORCEMENT/COURT SYSTEM RECOMMENDATIONS

From the beginning of this task force project, it has been apparent that law enforcement must take an active role in school safety, not only during the crisis phase of the response plan, but during the pre-planning and post-planning phases. Through our group sessions and our site visits, the need for law enforcement to be a strong partner in any type of response plan was reinforced. Since 1995, the Youth Services Unit in Isabella County has been very active in the lives of students both within and outside the schools. The Youth Services Unit includes officers from the four police agencies within Isabella County. Officers from the Mt. Pleasant City Police Department, Isabella County Sheriff's Department, Saginaw Chippewa Tribal Police Department, and the Michigan State Police have committed themselves to active participation in the lives of the students of Isabella County as school liaison officers.

PRE PLAN PREVENTION PHASE RECOMMENDATIONS

BUILDING BETTER RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN SCHOOLS AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

To promote a safe environment, it is essential that a better relationship be created between law enforcement, courts, and schools. To this end, it is recommended that:

- A. Quarterly meetings should be held with local law enforcement administrators, juvenile court personnel, prosecuting attorney, school administrators and representatives from the Youth Services Unit to educate about and discuss the implications of new and existing laws, e.g. Public Act 102 (see Appendix F) and the Truancy Law (see Appendix G).
- B. All schools within Isabella County should have a copy of Public Act 102 and the Truancy Law. The schools should notify the Youth Services Unit regarding incidents involving students that occur under the guidelines of Public Act 102.

- C. The Youth Services Unit should notify all students within 24 hours of any incident, under the guidelines of Public Act 102.
- D. The Isabella County Trial Court should notify the schools quarterly with a list of students on probation within its system.

INTERVENTION PROGRAMS

It has been determined from the site visits and work group meetings that it is imperative that intervention programs be implemented and continued utilizing a proactive approach. Today's youth face a variety of adult problems long before they develop the ability to cope with them. Peer pressure, drugs, alcohol, divorce, and illiteracy are leading many of our youth down the path of self-destruction. The Isabella Trial Court feels that the responsibility for assisting troubled teens does not rest with the parents alone, but rather that the entire community must be committed to this effort. The Court has found working with community volunteers a way to reach these troubled youth. By utilizing a variety of programs, it is working to provide a community model of justice that prevents juvenile delinquency, promotes family participation, enhances juveniles' self-esteem, reduces community tension, increases community awareness, and conserves community dollars. It is the court's recommendation to the task force that the following programs, which are currently in operation, be continued:

- A. **Youth Services Unit.** Currently the Youth Services Unit has staff in the following schools:
 - 1. Full-time school liaison officer (SLO) in Mt. Pleasant High School.
 - 2. Full-time school liaison officer (SLO) in Shepherd Middle School with duties in the Shepherd Elementary School and the Shepherd High School. DARE (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) officer doing DARE presentations throughout the Isabella County Schools.
 - 3. Full-time school liaison officer (SLO) in West Intermediate School in Mt. Pleasant.

4. Two officers who split the duties of covering the 22 elementary schools in Isabella County, providing uniform status with a very proactive presence in the elementary schools.
5. The role of the school liaison officer is to:
 - a. Act as a problem-solver and liaison to community resources for the schools.
 - b. Be an educator about criminal laws, ordinances, fines, and penalties.
 - c. Work as a liaison between schools, law enforcement, probation and counseling.
 - d. Act as a mentor.
 - e. Participate in presentations and demonstrations to children and parents in the schools and community.

B. Teen Court. Teen/Family Court provides first-time offenders and those involved in minor violations of the law the opportunity to appear in court without establishing a formal court record. The court is held before Honorable Judge William T. Ervin and a jury of area high school students. The jury does not determine guilt or innocence; however, the jury determines the ultimate disposition of the case. Teen jurors must come to a unanimous decision in making an appropriate disposition of the case. Several disposition alternatives are available. Teen/Family Court provides an opportunity for juvenile defendants to be sentenced by their peers and can aid in interrupting patterns of criminal behavior by promoting self-esteem, self-improvement, and a healthy attitude toward authority. The juveniles must assume responsibility for their behavior and accept the consequences imposed by the jury. The program aids in the learning process by providing an educational experience for both the juvenile defendants and the teen volunteers.

C. Victim Offender Reconciliation Program (VORP). VORP is a program that provides face-to-face mediation between victims and juvenile offenders who are guided by trained mediators. It holds juveniles accountable for their

behavior and reduces neighborhood disputes. VORP provides victims with a safe forum in which to discuss the offense and regain a sense of control over the situation. The victims have direct input into the determination of restitution and a chance to begin putting their victimization in the past. The Isabella Trial Court refers all juvenile offenders who have committed property-related offenses to the VORP. Communication is maintained with both the victims and the juvenile offenders until the terms of the agreements are completed.

- D. **Controlled Substance Abuse Testing Program.** The Isabella County Trial Court/Family Division has implemented a Controlled Substance Abuse Testing Program within the juvenile probation department in an attempt to provide early detection, treatment, and prevention of abuse of illegal substances by juveniles within Isabella County. This program provides graduated rewards and sanctions for juveniles, which may deter continued use of illegal substances and criminal activity and hold juveniles more accountable for their behavior.
- E. **Volunteer Probation Officer Program (VPO).** The VPO program utilizes volunteers from Central Michigan University and the community to assist in the supervision of juveniles during their probation. Acting as positive role models, the volunteers communicate with school personnel (regarding report cards, behavior, and academic progress) and juveniles' parents to evaluate their work.
- F. **Community Service Youth Garden.** The Community Service Youth Garden gives juvenile offenders between the ages of 10 and 17 the opportunity to repay their community as well as to be held accountable for their negative actions. By performing community service, juveniles can learn responsibility and experience the rewards of giving time and energy to those in need. The Trial Court/Family Division utilizes two acres of land for the garden, which is located at the Isabella County Fairgrounds. The garden's produce is distributed by the juveniles and adult volunteers to local non-

profit organizations, senior citizens, and needy families in the community. Donations from local organizations fund this program.

G. **Tutoring Program.** The Tutoring Program utilizes volunteers from Central Michigan University and the community to aid juveniles who are on probation and need academic assistance. The volunteers provide tutoring and communicate with school personnel to examine juveniles' academic progress. The volunteers also work to improve study skills and social skills, and deal with other academic problems.

H. **School Suspension Program.** The School Suspension Program is designed for juveniles who are on probation and suspended from school. The juveniles must report to the Trial Court with one of their parents immediately upon being suspended from school. They are ordered to spend their school day at the holdover site at the Isabella County Sheriff's Department working on schoolwork. If the parents are unable to report, they are required to find a responsible adult to stay with their child.

FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

In addition to the programs that are currently in operation in Isabella County, it is the recommendation of the task force that the **Second Step Program** be implemented and that someone from law enforcement, the schools, and the courts be trained in Second Step to bring the program into our school system and community. Second Step is a violence prevention curriculum that teaches children to change attitudes and behaviors that contribute to violence. The curriculum teaches students the skills of social competence. The Second Step school and family components are important parts of any comprehensive plan to improve children's social skills and reduce violence. After reviewing several similar programs, the task force believes the Second Step Program successfully encompasses key elements, such as empathy training, impulse control, and anger management, and mandates parental involvement. After the incident in West Paducah, Kentucky, the Second Step Program was implemented in the district. A three-day training session is conducted in Seattle, Washington (see Appendix H).

The community also would benefit from the following programs; however, prior to any decisions, more extensive research is necessary.

- A. **Family Resource Center.** A Family Resource Center would be a resource for the community where parents, juveniles, and community members could access information regarding needed services, resources, and information within the community. Services and resources should include, but not be limited to, social service/counseling programs, educational opportunities, recreational activities, and spiritual organizations.
- B. **Juvenile Risk and Needs Assessment.** The purpose of obtaining a risk and needs assessment is to provide a tool to be used to assess a juvenile and provide recommendations for appropriate programs and methods of treatment. This assessment would specifically address the needs of the juvenile and promote community safety.
- C. **Juvenile Assessment Center.** An Assessment Center would provide 24-hour crisis intervention to juveniles and their families following police involvement. It would provide an alternative to detention services for youth who are arrested or charged with minor offenses. It would link youth and their families with appropriate mental health services and provide a safe haven for youth in crisis. An individualized plan would be developed that would aid the criminal justice system in taking appropriate action.

SECURITY ISSUES

Law enforcement needs to take an active role in security issues involving the schools and properties of schools in Isabella County. Both the law enforcement and school members of the task force support these recommendations.

- A. A security checklist should be provided by law enforcement (Youth Services Unit) to schools and completed by the first week of the school year in the fall. Items on the checklist would include:
 - 1. Building entrances and exits and their locations.
 - 2. How they are secured and if they are secured.

- B. All outside doors should be numbered to assist law enforcement and other emergency personnel (see Appendix I for illustrations of how entrances and exits are numbered at Shepherd Middle School).
- C. Copies of basic floor plans of all schools within Isabella County should be supplied to all law enforcement agencies within the county, to the Youth Services Unit, and to the Isabella County Emergency Services Team.
- D. A mandatory communication system throughout all schools should be put into operation.
 - 1. Building public address system.
 - 2. Phones in each classroom.
 - 3. Another type of communication system as a backup, in case the threshold phone system is non-operational. Our recommendation is cell phones for all members of the BERT team, (Building Emergency Response Team) Youth Services law enforcement personnel, fire, media, and emergency response personnel. Nextel phones would be the preferred backup system because Nextel phones are a combination phone, two-way radio, and pager. BERT members could phone out, communicate with other members of the BERT team, and communicate with law enforcement and emergency response personnel.
 - 4. A minimum of one hand-held walkie-talkie in each school with police and fire emergency frequencies. The principal or superintendent should keep the units. School personnel on the BERT team should be trained in the use of the radio. This radio will be placed in the crisis response box when the appropriate school person leaves the building.
- E. A consistent method of communicating threats in the school is needed.
 - 1. It is the recommendation of the task force that no codes be used. Codes can be confusing at the time of the incident, forgotten, or unknown to substitutes.

2. We recommend the terminology **lock down inside**, meaning there is an incident within the school, and the threat is inside. If there are students outside, we do not bring them in to the problem.
 3. We recommend the terminology **lock down outside**, meaning the threat is outside, and no one is to leave the building.
- F. A fast and accurate accountability system for counting students during an incident should be implemented. Law enforcement strongly recommends the implementation of the red-green card program. This accountability system is based on simple 8 ½x 11 cards, one side being green and the other side being red. During an emergency situation schools would follow their manual flip chart. A teacher would take his or her classroom to a designated location. Once at the location he or she will do a headcount. If it is determined that all students are in attendance, the green side of the card would be displayed. Emergency personnel and principals would know that the teacher has accounted for his or her entire class. If a student were missing, the red side of the card would be displayed. These cards can also be used within the building during an emergency situation in which the students and teacher are in a lockdown room. The green-faced card can be placed on the door or in a window, showing outside personnel that the room is secured, and all are accounted for. The red card indicates students are missing, or there is problem, and action can be taken immediately. If the teacher wishes to convey any special message, a note can be attached to the green or red card.
- G. All law enforcement personnel, with the main focus being on the Youth Services Unit officers, should adapt the community policing philosophy while in the school. They should work under the guidelines of the principles of community policing in which the officer involved with the school takes ownership of the school, takes pride in the fact that he or she is assigned to that school, and makes that school his or her jurisdiction or city.
- H. It is the goal of law enforcement to put together a uniform response plan for all schools in Isabella County. Therefore, law enforcement recommends a flip-chart manual be supplied to all staff members to assist in safely

identifying and handling situations within the schools. All staff members must have their own copy of the manual. All staff members must be trained and annually updated and refreshed on the topics covered and the procedures to be followed. The guide should identify various types of incidents that could occur within the schools. Under each of the headings there would be detailed steps that need to be followed by the school staff, such as:

1. Abduction and runaway
2. Accidents at school and off campus
3. Aircraft disaster
4. Allergic reaction
5. Armed subject or hostage situation
6. Asphyxiation or poisoning
7. Communicable diseases
8. Assault and rape
9. Child abuse or neglect
10. Drive-by shooting
11. Drug overdose or poisoning
12. Explosives and bomb threats
13. Fire
14. Illicit drugs, selling or using
15. Overnight housing for students
16. Physical and sexual assault, rape or CSC
17. Riots or fights
18. Storm, tornadoes
19. Suicide at school and out of school, threats of suicide
20. Unwanted intruder
21. Gunman
22. Utility emergency (gas, electrical, water)
23. Emergency phone numbers

- I. It is the recommendation of the task force that one spokesperson be designated for each agency that handles the incident within its jurisdiction. From our site visits, it was clear that the need for a single spokesperson was essential to ensure clear and uniform reporting.
- J. It is the recommendation of the task force that all law enforcement personnel be trained in basic tactical entry techniques. The initial training should be done in an eight-hour session with each session having 20-25 students. Each agency would be responsible for ensuring its officers attend three-hour refresher training within two years of the officer's last session. Members of the Isabella County Emergency Services Team (EST) should be utilized for developing the curriculum, as well as teaching the classes. This will allow the EST and the initial responding officers to work well together. In addition to the training, mock scenarios should be conducted annually. These scenarios would take place at schools in this area on a rotating basis and would involve members of every discipline (schools, law enforcement, emergency medical). Coordination of these exercises should be through the Youth Services Unit. An evaluation team composed of a representative from the school, the school superintendent, and Youth Services Unit would oversee and evaluate the exercise with the goal of improving procedures.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS INVOLVING LAW ENFORCEMENT IN SCHOOLS

- A. It is the recommendation of the task force that law enforcement personnel, including those assigned to the Youth Services Unit, take a very active role in the youth activities not only in the schools, but also outside the schools.
- B. It is apparent through our group sessions and site visits that positive role models from law enforcement are keys in building the connection between the youth in the school and the youth in the community.
- C. It is the recommendation of the task force that all law enforcement personnel who are not assigned to the Youth Services Unit come up with a program,

such as Adopt-A-School or Adopt-A-Cop, through their own agencies for becoming involved with schools in their jurisdiction.

- D. It is the recommendation of the task force that law enforcement personnel stop in on a regular basis and spend time in the schools getting to know the students in the hallways, at recess, and in the lunchrooms.
- E. It is the recommendation that uniform officers become involved with after-school activities and stop by for athletic activities where they can be seen and be approachable by youth.

INCIDENT CRISIS PHASE RECOMMENDATIONS

It is important that school personnel be prepared to react to any emergency that may occur at or around the school. School personnel must be able to effectively manage a crisis situation so that student and staff safety is ensured. In order to efficiently and effectively react to an emergency situation, it is imperative that schools give careful consideration to implementing a comprehensive emergency management plan to provide a quick organized response if and when an emergency occurs. A school emergency plan should:

- A. Outline a predetermined plan of action, which can be used to respond to emergencies.
- B. Establish small groups of trained individuals who collectively have the knowledge, skills, and sensitivity to act as emergency specialists.
- C. Increase the security of staff and students.
- D. Minimize the opportunity for serious injury and death.
- E. Minimize damage and loss of facilities.
- F. Provide immediate first aid to those in need.
- G. Provide counseling and first aid support for staff, students, parents, and community members.
- H. Facilitate accurate communication, effective decision-making, and coordination of services between the school and all emergency response providers, including police and fire departments, and paramedics.

- I. Provide accurate, up-to-date information to parents, community, and media.
- J. Establish guidelines for responding to the media during a crisis.
- K. Utilize community resources and create partnerships with parents following crisis events.
- L. Return the school to its normal level of function as soon as possible.
- M. Outline stress management and debriefing procedures for crisis workers.
- N. Provide specific evaluation of the situation and emergency plans implementation following an incident and provide for plan and procedure revision if needed.

Each emergency situation is unique and many decisions will need to be made at the site as the situation unfolds. Therefore, it is recommended that schools utilize the Incident Command System as the foundation for effective emergency management. Such a system does the following:

- A. Establishes a common organizational structure, common terminology and common operating procedures.
- B. Reduces confusion and uncertainty in the early stages of an emergency and provides for certain tasks and functions to be performed quickly and effectively.
- C. Establishes that one person will be in charge of the total emergency operation.
- D. Provides an effective span of control; i.e., who is responsible for what tasks and how many people that person will have in his or her charge.
- E. Provides for the effective interfacing of response agencies, such as police, fire, and other emergency responders, so that the school district does not infringe on the responsibilities, routines, or authority given to each agency by statute.
- F. Provides an effective transition of responsibility and authority during an emergency situation.

If a crisis in our schools has been confirmed, the Isabella County Emergency Services Team (EST) shall be activated. The EST is composed of 14 tactical officers and six negotiators. In the event the threat is too great for the initial

responders, the EST has specialized equipment and training that may be necessary to completely resolve a situation. Activating the EST immediately would ensure it would be available as soon as possible, but its response time would be close to an hour, depending upon how far the incident is from the city. Central Dispatch should be given specific guidelines indicating when it should activate the EST, as this is not normally its responsibility.

Most school shooting incidents that have occurred in the United States have been relatively short in duration and resulted in one of the initial responding officers resolving the situation. It is the recommendation of the task force that all law enforcement personnel in each local agency (Mount Pleasant Police, Michigan State Police, Tribal Police, CMU Police, Shepherd Police, Isabella County Sheriff's Department) be trained in a tactical entry technique that will allow them to respond quickly, efficiently, and as safely as possible, given the nature of the event.

Because no one agency in our area staffs enough officers to handle a crisis of this magnitude, it is imperative that officers from different agencies be able to function together as a team. The first officers on the scene will establish command and immediately form into small teams. These teams would then seek out any threat and try to either eliminate or isolate it. The command officer would coordinate the continued response of law enforcement personnel and eventually become part of the overall incident command structure. Having a pre-arranged response plan that all agencies and their personnel are trained in will allow for the most rapid and effective response to acts of violence in our community.

It is the recommendation of the task force that all law enforcement agencies have a readily available list of their officers who have children in school. It is crucial in a major incident to know that responding officers' priority assignment is as law enforcement officers, not as parents. This list should be readily available, along with floor plans of the schools.

IMPLEMENTING THE INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM

At the time of a major incident in the school, it is the recommendation of the task force that the school implement its Incident Command Team identified in the

pre-plan as BERT (Building Emergency Response Team). Once this team has been activated, it will be the responsibility of the members of BERT to follow the directions of the Incident Commander and carry out the tasks in which they have been trained.

The previously described red-green cards would be activated and used to assist the staff and students, law enforcement, and emergency personnel. The red-green cards would be placed in the windows and doors of the classrooms and in windows on the outside walls of the buildings.

The pre-designated areas that have been identified by the Youth Services Unit to locate students for safety and law enforcement purposes, for the law enforcement Incident Command, and for parents for student identification and pick up would be activated and implemented.

The media protocol, which has been explained in chapter five, would be activated. Identification for all volunteer, fire, emergency and medical personnel must be utilized.

POST INCIDENT FOLLOW-UP PHASE RECOMMENDATIONS

It is clear to the task force members from the site visits that the post-incident follow-up phase is extremely important. Following are the law enforcement task force recommendations:

- A. Communication after the incident needs to be continued; phone lines need to be set up for law enforcement, students, school personnel, and community members to talk about the incident and have their questions answered.
- B. The confidential tip line, which is currently in use at the Youth Services Unit, should be monitored closely after any major incident. That number is **1-800-440-8154**.
- C. The importance of the media in the post-incident follow-up phase is crucial. The media need to be kept updated after the incident. The media need to be enlisted to keep the community updated and to ensure the healing process

continues. Law enforcement and media need to work together after the incident as addressed in chapter five.

- D. It is the recommendation of the task force that all law enforcement personnel have mandatory sessions after the incident to critique their part in the incident and the tactical aspects of their job, but more important, to address the emotional impact on the officers, especially the officers with children in the school where the incident occurred.
- E. The task force recommends that law enforcement adopt a zero tolerance policy for any type of copycat or contagious incidents that may follow after a major incident in a school. It should be made clear to the community that law enforcement will not accept any type of copycat behavior; it will be dealt with seriously under the zero tolerance guidelines.
- F. Each law enforcement agency will conduct an evaluation of all officers involved in the incident, for a period of time to be determined by each agency but not to exceed six months. The purpose of the evaluation will be to ensure the officers' well being and understanding of the incident crisis process.