

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS



SCHOOL SAFETY
PERFORMANCE AUDIT, SEPTEMBER 2019

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF LAW
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY

CONCLUSION

Colorado's programs to promote school safety are not centralized and, in general, statutes do not require them to work together. There is no consolidated information about all state-supported school safety programs, including their purposes, funding sources and amounts, reach (i.e., the number of school districts they support), or impact.

KEY RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

- The existing patchwork of school safety programs creates a risk of uncoordinated efforts, gaps in services, and challenges in determining reach and impact. For the years and programs we reviewed, we observed:
 - ▶ Eight of the 12 programs we reviewed, across all four departments, touch on aspects of student mental and behavioral health, but are not coordinated.
 - ▶ Both Safe2Tell and the School Safety Resource Center offered trainings on similar topics, including bullying, mental health, school violence, and suicide, but have not coordinated their messaging or coverage of school districts.
 - ▶ There is no mechanism to determine the reach and impact of the programs in combination.
- Some programs work cooperatively. For example, in Fiscal Year 2019 the Departments of Education and Public Safety communicated about some of their grant programs to prevent duplication in funding of approved projects. Similarly, the Departments of Law and Public Health and Environment work together to provide funding for suicide prevention programs.

BACKGROUND

- Over the last 20 years, the General Assembly has established a variety of programs aimed at school safety.
- The 12 programs we reviewed generally fit into five categories: (1) tipline, (2) training and technical support to implement safe school practices, (3) grants for capital improvements to make schools physically safer, (4) grants to improve emergency preparedness and response, and (5) grants for environmental and behavioral initiatives to improve school climate.
- Oversight of the programs is spread over four separate departments: Education, Law, Public Health and Environment, and Public Safety.
- In Fiscal Year 2018, the programs we reviewed spent a total of \$19 million on school safety efforts; most of the funding was in the category of grants for school climate.
- In Fiscal Year 2019, the programs spent a total of \$55.6 million, most in grants for emergency preparedness. For Fiscal Year 2020, the programs are budgeted to spend \$29 million, most projected to be grants for school climate.
- The type of program that was most frequently accessed by school districts was the tipline (Safe2Tell) with 141 (78 percent) using it in Fiscal Year 2019. No school districts accessed all of the State's programs for the years we reviewed.

AUDIT APPROACH

Our audit summarizes and reports data on 12 state programs for K-12 public schools that address human-caused threats to both physical and psychological safety. We worked with all of the programs to collect and summarize information on each program's funding, expense, and interaction with schools.