



OFFICE OF THE STATE AUDITOR



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Stelios Pavlou (303) 869-2833
stelios.pavlou@state.co.us

DIANNE E. RAY, CPA
STATE AUDITOR

September 18, 2019

COLORADO'S PATCHWORK OF SCHOOL SAFETY PROGRAMS RISK BEING UNCOORDINATED AND DUPLICATIVE

DENVER—according to a report released by the Office of the State Auditor (OSA), Colorado's school safety programs are not centralized with respect to purpose, oversight, or assessment of outcomes. Programs have been established in a patchwork fashion over the last 20 years and administration of key programs is spread across 4 different state departments. The audit was designed to be largely informational and offers no recommendations. However, through their work, auditors were able to compile information about the purposes, spending, and reporting of 12 key programs that offer a range of supports including an anonymous tipline where anyone can report unsafe, violent, or criminal activities in schools; training on assessing threats to school safety and recognizing suicidal signs in youth; and grants to improve the physical safety of schools.

The report notes that the piecemeal approach to school safety may create duplication and gaps. Auditors observed that 8 of the 12 school safety programs they reviewed offer some level of support to address student mental and behavioral health needs, but the programs are not coordinated to reach the most students. Two of the programs also offer training on bullying, school violence, sexting, and suicide, but do not work together to reach a wider audience and avoid conflicting messages.

OFFICE OF THE STATE AUDITOR
1525 SHERMAN STREET
7TH FLOOR
DENVER, 80203
COLORADO

303.869.2800

Auditors compiled information on program spending for 2 years—Fiscal Years 2018 and 2019 and budgeted amounts for Fiscal Year 2020. The number of programs and their costs fluctuated over the period, with 8 programs and \$19 million in state-supported spending in Fiscal Year 2018; 12 programs and \$55.6 million in spending in Fiscal Year 2019; and 12 programs and \$29 million budgeted in Fiscal Year 2020. Over the 3-year period, most of the spending was, or planned to support improvements in school environment and student behaviors.

Auditors also found that some programs work cooperatively. For example, in Fiscal Year 2019 the Departments of Education and Public Safety shared information to prevent duplication in funding of approved grant projects and the Departments of Law and Public Health and Environment worked together to provide funding for suicide prevention programs.

Almost all of Colorado's 178 school districts used at least one of the programs during the 3 year period reviewed and the type of program most frequently accessed was the Safe2Tell tipline.

The Legislative Audit Committee voted to publicly release the report today; however, a full hearing for the report will occur tomorrow at 9:00 a.m. in Hearing Room A of the Legislative Services Building located at 200 E. 14th Avenue in Denver. The full report is available on the OSA's website at www.colorado.gov/auditor.

Under the direction of the state auditor, the OSA is the state's nonpartisan, independent external auditor with broad authority to audit state agencies, departments, institutions of higher education, and the Judicial and Legislative Branches. The OSA's professional staff serve the people of Colorado by addressing relevant public issues through high-quality, objective audits and reviews that promote accountability and positive change in government. Performance audits address whether programs operate in compliance with laws and regulations and in a manner that accomplishes intended program goals. Financial audits include annual audits of the state's basic financial statements and federal grants on a statewide level. IT audits review procedures and technology to ensure the confidentiality, integrity and availability of the state's critical computer systems and taxpayer data. The OSA also tracks about 4,000 Colorado local governments for compliance with the Local Government Audit Law.

