



**Report to the
Colorado General Assembly**

**School Safety and
Youth in Crisis
Interim Committee**

Prepared by

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School Safety and Youth in Crisis Interim Committee

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To Members of the Seventy-first General Assembly:

Submitted herewith is the final report of the School Safety and Youth in Crisis Interim Committee. This committee was created pursuant to Article 15 of Title 22, Colorado Revised Statutes. The purpose of this committee is to study issues relating to school safety and threat prevention in public and private schools; programs and methods for identifying and monitoring students in crisis; standardized criteria for school personnel to use in assessing potential threats; and the implementation of Senate Bill 15-213.

Sincerely,

/s/ Representative Dickey Lee Hullinghorst
Chairman

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Table of Contents

Committee Charge	1
Committee Activities	1
Reports on the Arapahoe High School Shooting.....	1
No Place for Hate Initiative	2
Summary of Recommendations	3
Resource Materials	5

This report is also available on line at:

<https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cga-legislativecouncil/2016-school-safety-and-youth-crisis-committee>

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Committee Charge

The School Safety and Youth in Crisis Interim Committee is charged with studying issues relating to school safety and threat prevention in public and private schools; programs and methods for identifying and monitoring students in crisis; standardized criteria for school personnel to use in assessing potential threats; and the implementation of Senate Bill 15-213. SB 15-213 allows school districts and charter schools to be held liable if they fail to exercise reasonable care in protecting students, faculty, or staff from reasonably foreseeable acts of violence while at the school or engaged in school activities.

The committee's evaluation of the implementation of SB 15-213 should include, but is not limited to: the duty of school districts and charter schools to exercise reasonable care to protect students, faculty, and staff from harm when the harm is reasonably foreseeable; any statutory provisions that may require modification to reflect local community circumstances and standards; and any recommendations the committee may have concerning steps that a school district or charter school may take to satisfy its duty of reasonable care.

Committee Activities

The committee held two meetings during the 2016 legislative and interim sessions. The committee heard several presentations pertaining to the 2013 Arapahoe High School (AHS) shooting, as well as a presentation about an anti-bullying initiative being implemented in schools across the region.

The committee did not request any bills to be drafted. The following sections discuss the committee's activities during the 2016 interim in further detail.

Reports on the Arapahoe High School Shooting

The committee was briefed by three independent groups of experts who analyzed the events leading up to the shooting at Arapahoe High School (AHS) in Littleton, Colorado, on December 13, 2013, and summarized their findings into three separate reports.

Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence report. Representatives from the University of Colorado's Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence briefed the committee on their report called "Report on the Arapahoe High School Shooting: Lessons Learned on Information Sharing, Threat Assessment, and Systems Integrity." They discussed several of the factors that led up to the shooting at AHS, including a lack of communication at both the school and school district levels, no formal training of students or staff about programs such as Safe2Tell, and a lack of an interagency information-sharing agreement that would have allowed agencies such as social services, law enforcement, the criminal justice system, and schools to share information about a student who exhibits concerning behavior. They discussed the need for schools to address the root causes of violence by establishing school climate surveys that allow officials to identify students in need and schools prone to particular issues, and implementing evidence-based anti-bullying and drug prevention programs. The presenters told the committee about the findings and recommendations outlined in the report, which were divided into three categories: information sharing, threat and risk assessment, and systems thinking.

Safe Havens International report. Representatives from Safe Havens International presented their post-incident review of the AHS active shooter incident to the committee. They explained that even though the school district and its public safety partners had preventative security measures in place at the time of the incident, as well as a structured threat assessment process, problems with the school's camera system and a misguided focus on proving that a student made a threat rather than a focus on whether or not a student posed a threat, allowed the shooting to occur. The presenters talked about opportunities for improvement in site-based management approaches to security personnel, and the benefit of interlocking protective programs at individual schools.

Kanan-Nicoletti report. The presenters discussed the results of their analysis of the AHS shooting detailed in their report called "A Review of Psychological Safety and Threat Assessment Issues Related to the Shooting at Arapahoe High School on December 13, 2013." They stated that the use of reporting mechanisms prior to the incident was informal and not systematic, and that there was a misunderstanding among school officials regarding the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), the legality of reasonable suspicion and electronic media searches, and the need for mental health and discipline teams to work together. The presenters spoke about the need for the inclusion of district-level threat assessment teams to consult with school officials and review cases, as well as the need for countermeasures to threatening behavior, which must include contingency plans in the event that the countermeasures fail. The conversation also focused on the impact of mental health on school violence, as well as the importance of a central data collection point for school and law enforcement officials and better training for school faculty, staff, and students.

Reports review working group. The committee heard a presentation by several members of the Colorado School Safety Resource Center Reports Working Group. The presenters spoke about the group's review of the three reports on the AHS shooting and explained that the three reports had five recommendations in common: the need for school climate surveys; the need for information-sharing agreements between schools and law enforcement; FERPA training for school staff; utilization of the 11 questions on the U.S. Secret Service school threat assessment; and promotion of the Safe2Tell program.

No Place for Hate Initiative

The committee heard a presentation by the Anti-Defamation League Mountain States Region (ADL) about its No Place for Hate Initiative. Representatives from the ADL told the committee members about the initiative, discussing the steps a school must take during the year-long process to implement the program, and the five program requirements each school must complete in order to be designated a No Place for Hate school.

Summary of Recommendations

The committee did not recommend any bills for consideration during the 2017 legislative session.

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Resource Materials

Meeting summaries are prepared for each meeting of the committee and contain all handouts provided to the committee. The summaries of meetings and attachments are available at the Division of Archives, 1313 Sherman Street, Denver (303-866-2055). The listing below contains the dates of committee meetings and the topics discussed at those meetings. Meeting summaries are also available on our website at:

<https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cga-legislativecouncil/interim-committees>

Meeting Date and Topics Discussed

January 22, 2016

- ◆ Briefing on the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence report
- ◆ Briefing on the Safe Havens International report
- ◆ Briefing on the Kanan-Nicoletti report

September 13, 2016

- ◆ Update from the Arapahoe High School Reports Review Working Group
- ◆ Presentation by the Anti-Defamation League Mountain States Region
- ◆ Overview of 2016 legislation affecting school safety and youth in crisis