

ESSEX COUNTY PROSECUTORS OFFICE PRESS RELEASE



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Subject: Law Enforcement and School Officials Discuss School Safety
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Defendant(s):

Acting Attorney General John Hoffman, Acting Essex County Prosecutor Carolyn A. Murray and more than 100 Essex County school and law enforcement officials gathered in Newark today to discuss school security.

The goal of the summit was to foster communication between first responders and school administrators.

“In the wake of the mass murder at Sandy Hook elementary school in Newtown, Connecticut and similar tragedies across the country, New Jersey has been working to make sure that every school has plans in place to deal with a similar crisis,” said Acting Prosecutor Murray.

Among other things, conference speakers discussed the importance of drills, particularly during inconvenient times such as recess or closing time; making sure local police departments have building plans for all schools in the district; proper training of all staff, including custodians and cafeteria personnel; and effective communication with parents and other partners who might be needed in the event of crisis.

“We can only do our best to be prepared, so that we can act swiftly and effectively in the face of an emergent threat, and avoid the panic and confusion that can make a very bad situation worse,” said Acting Attorney General Hoffman. “For the sake of New Jersey’s children, we must always treat school security as a continuum. Complacency is not an option.”

The summit focused on public schools, charter schools and other school facilities.

In 2006, New Jersey established the Governor’s K-12 School Security Task Force to address issues relating to how agencies could work more collaboratively to ensure school safety. New Jersey is ahead of many other states when it comes to these issues. In fact, New Jersey was the first state in the nation to require districts to have regular lock down drills.

After Sandy Hook, 11 other states began requiring lock down drills. New Jersey and Arizona are the only two states that provide specific requirements regarding what should be included in those drills.

“The Essex county school safety and security mini-conference is one of the pillars of the state’s Safer Schools for a Better Tomorrow initiative. This platform provides strategic information to ensure that educational leaders and local law enforcement are partnering at all levels of the prevention, planning, response and recovery process. Consequently, having our education and

emergency responders communities aligned is critical to creating and maintaining safe school environments,” said Anthony Bland, state coordinator of the Office of School Preparedness and Emergency Planning.

Others speakers included: Edward Dickson, director of the New Jersey Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness; Jacquelyn Leon of the New Jersey Department of Education; Christopher Lynam of the New Jersey Office of Homeland Security Preparedness and Interim Essex County Executive Superintendent Joseph Zarra.

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