

# School safety task force issues recommendations for Oregon

PORTLAND (AP) — A task force formed to improve school safety says Oregon should establish a tip line, develop a database of school floor plans and fund a state-wide threat assessment system to identify and help students who present a potential risk for violence.

The recommendations were included in a report released Wednesday by the Oregon Task Force on School Safety. It was established by the Legislature last year following shootings at the Clackamas Town Center and the massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Connecticut.

The group's goal was to come up with strategies to more effectively respond to school violence and active-shooter situations. Its report addresses safety at grade school through high school levels.

Experts say many schools ramped up safety measures after the 1999 shootings at Columbine High School in Colorado, again after the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, and more recently after Connecticut's Sandy Hook Elementary School in

2012. Since the Connecticut massacre, at least another dozen school shootings have taken place throughout the country, including at Rosemary Anderson High in Portland, at Reynolds High in Troutdale and at Umpqua Community College, where last month a gunman killed nine and before turning the gun on himself.

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“With the recent shooting on the UCC campus in Roseburg and other incidents across our state and nation, it is clear we need to do everything we can to help make our schools safer,” said

Clackamas County Sheriff Craig Roberts, who chaired the Oregon task force.

Use of tip lines or hotlines, various threat assessment systems, and even sharing of floor plans with law enforcement is now happening in at least a dozen states across the U.S., said Ronald D. Stephens, executive director of the National School Safety Center.

A government survey released in May also showed the uptick in other safety measures, including safety drills, parent notification systems, written plans of how to respond to an active shooter, and the use of security cameras or security personnel.

“It’s becoming a more frequent practice across the country,” Stephens said. “I would call it a work in progress.”

One popular school safety tip line in Colorado, Safe2Tell, launched a mobile app this summer. The tip line, which has received more than 13,000 tips via web, text or call since it opened in 2004, was based on the Columbine Commission Report’s recommendation that students need a safe and anonymous way to

keep lines of communication open.

In December, the state of Ohio established 24-hour tip line for students, parents and other community members to report threats to school safety.

Oregon used to have a school safety tip line, created after the 1998 Thurston High School in Springfield, but it was discontinued due to budget cuts. The report strongly recommends its reinstatement. It would include voice, text, and online options.

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But tip lines have a varying level of success, Stephens said. That’s because they require funding so that someone can manage and review the hotline 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The Oregon report also

recommends that the state fund a threat assessment system. The task force suggests one similar to Oregon’s Salem-Keizer model, which helps identify and evaluate students in crisis and helps schools in addressing threats.

Some school districts in other states have developed similar protocols for threat assessment, Stephens said, and have formed assessment teams that include school administrators, mental health professionals and law enforcement.

A third recommendation is an online database of school floor plans. Officials say it would assist first responders in knowing the layout of a building before entering it during an emergency, and allow them to know where utilities are in case they need to be shut off.

Lastly, the report suggests that school districts and first responders adopt standardized terminology — such as lockdown, lockout, shelter in place, evacuate — during emergencies.

The Legislature still needs to approve and fund the recommendations.

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