

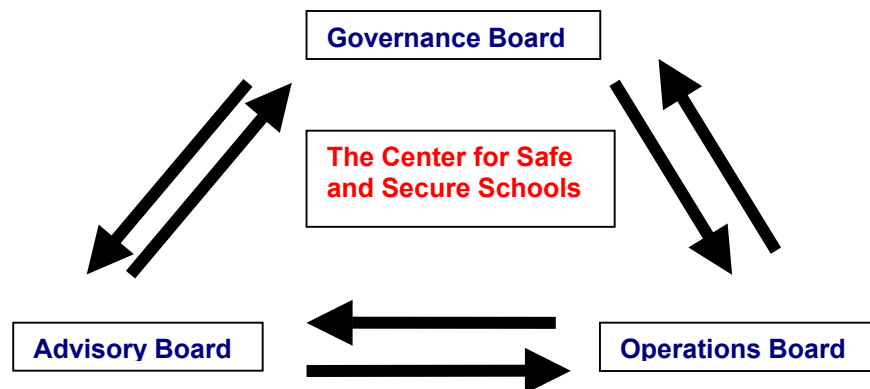


Citizen Corps and the Center for Safe and Secure Schools – A Great Partnership

Who is the Harris County Department of Education Center for Safe and Secure Schools?

The year 1999 was a landmark year in school safety. The nation was struggling to deal with the multiple homicide student violence at Pearl High School in Mississippi, Heath High School in Kentucky, Westside High School in Arkansas, and Thurston High School in Oregon. In Harris County school districts were handling threats, bomb threats, weapons on campus, attempted abductions, and other serious security concerns in the best ways they could. The Harris County superintendents working with the Harris County Department of Education determined that there was a need to set standards and identify the best practices in safety and security to define what a 'safe school' is. These superintendents decided to form the Center for Safe and Secure Schools just before the horrible events at Columbine High School in Colorado.

The Center mission is to advance safe and secure environments for teaching and learning. The approach used by the Center is to bring together a network of industry, government, non-governmental agencies, and schools (both public and private). The following diagram exemplifies this systematic approach:



The Governance Board is composed of the superintendents of member school districts. Member districts include:

Waller ISD
Tomball ISD
Klein ISD
Aldine ISD
New Caney ISD
Humble ISD
Huffman ISD
Dayton ISD
Crosby ISD

North Forest ISD
Houston ISD
Cypress Fairbanks ISD
Katy ISD
Spring Branch ISD
Alief ISD
Stafford MSD
Galena Park ISD
Channelview ISD

La Porte ISD
Deer Parks ISD
Pasadena ISD
Pearland ISD
Friendswood ISD
Clear Creek ISD
Goose Creek CISD
Sheldon ISD
Dickinson ISD

The Advisory Board is composed of invited volunteers from the following business, higher education, government and non-governmental agencies:

- Baylor College of Medicine
- Ben L. Landers & Assoc.
- CenterPoint Energy
- ChevronTexaco Global Security
- City of Houston - Mayor's Office of Public Safety & Drug Policy/Homeland Security
- Crime Stoppers of Houston
- Cypress-Fairbanks ISD, Mental Health Services
- Dansby and Miller
- DuPont
- FBI - Houston Field Office
- Focus Media Group
- Griffin & Associates
- Harris County Department of Education
- Harris County Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management
- Harris County Precinct Two
- Harris County Sheriff's Office
- Hewlett-Packard
- Houston Airport System
- Houston Chronicle
- Houston Fire Department
- Houston ISD
- Houston Police Department
- Law Offices of Patrick F. Timmons, Jr.
- Lyondell Chemical Company
- Memorial Hermann Healthcare Systems
- METRO
- NASA Johnson Space Center
- Prairie View A&M University
- Sam Houston State University, College of Criminal Justice
- SkyPort International, Inc.
- Texas Rangers
- Thomas & Horn Architects
- U.S. Custom Service
- U.S. Secret Service - Houston Field Office
- Union Pacific Railroad Police
- Victim Assistance Centre

The Operations Board is composed of the school professionals from each district concerned with the safety and security of their districts or campus. This board includes assistant superintendents, safety directors, police chiefs, principals, and mental health professionals.

Harris County Citizen Corps Partnership with the Center for Safe and Secure Schools.

In 2003 the Center for Safe and Secure Schools was working with Houston area school districts in a grant application to the Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools at the US Department of Education. One of the partnerships formed to support the grant application was between Harris County Judge Robert Eckels and the Center. Judge Eckels has proven himself to be a great supporter of safe schools. When the grant was awarded in October 2003, Mark Sloan from the Judge's Office became chair of the Grant Task Force. The Task Force has guided the grant project throughout.

Through the grant project the Center has been able to provide training to about a thousand school staff members. In addition over 350 non-school personnel have attended training sessions offered through the grant. The training topics have included:

- Suicide Prevention
- Crisis Intervention
- Post incident crisis recovery
- First Aid, CPR and AED (Red Cross)
- Incident Command System
- National Incident Management System
- Community Emergency Response Team
- Strategic National Stockpile and Points of Distribution
- School Bus Security
- Protecting students from abduction and exploitation (by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children)
- Senior Officials Workshop on Weapons of Mass Destruction
- Public Health Risk Communications, Air Pollution Monitoring, Disease Surveillance System, Child Fatality Review
- Texas Weather Disaster Preparedness
- An Overview of Terrorism by the local FBI

- School Security for the School Office Staff
- Arson Prevention and Crime Scene

In 2005, the Harris County Citizen Corp has started a new initiative with the Center. Teen CERT started in March in the two high schools in North Forest Independent School District. This program is a cooperative project of the Citizen Corp, the Center, the Cooperative for After School Enrichment and the Navy ROTC at Smiley and Forest Brook High Schools. The Teen CERT program has as its major goals:

1. Training students in skills they can use as citizens to help their school
2. Building stronger connections between the students and their high school
3. Encouraging students to be the catalyst for starting CERT in the northeast corner of Houston
4. Giving students opportunities to volunteer and to build leadership skills to assist them in their either future college of career
5. Reducing the risk that students will drop out of school

This program is already generating interest from other school districts in Harris County and through partnerships in schools in other areas of the state.

In a recent meeting with the Center's Task Force, schools were again challenged to look for ways that trained volunteers can be used to improve school safety, security, disaster response and recovery.

The Center encourages individuals with an interest in becoming a "safe schools volunteer" to contact us at (713) 696-0770 or by email to jbremer@hcde-texas.org. We are looking for individuals with a background in law enforcement, fire service, safety, security, public health or education. Individuals volunteering to work with the Center or in public schools must agree to a background check.