



California Department of Education

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March 6, 2018

Dear County and District Superintendents and Charter School Administrators:

A Message from State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson and California's Homeland Security Advisor

No words can adequately express the overwhelming grief that we are all feeling after the violent tragedy at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Florida. Our hearts are heavy with the loss of innocent lives and the valiant efforts of students, teachers, school leaders and public safety professionals to protect them. We are continuing to keep the families and loved ones of those lost in our prayers.

In the wake of every tragedy, there is an opportunity for reflection and growth. As leaders for California's public instruction and homeland security, we want to reassure everyone in our education community that the safety of our students, faculty and staff remains our highest priority.

We are writing to you today to again emphasize the importance of taking the time to talk with your staff and leadership about school safety in light of this tragic event. Regardless of what motivated the shooting in Florida, it's important for all of us to take another close look at the safety plans and security procedures we have in place to reduce the risks on our campuses, housing facilities and in our workplaces.

We know that many of you are already working closely with your school leadership, safety teams and local, state or federal law enforcement agencies to ensure that you are maintaining the safest learning environments possible. We deeply thank you for keeping safety a top priority. Through your combined efforts, many of you are exemplary leaders of safety planning and preparedness. Also, remember to share any best practices you've established or experiences with your colleagues in the education community.

Whether it's a review of your security procedures or special outreach to teachers, faculty, parents and staff, any steps you can take now to be prepared for any emergency are extremely important. The need for continual communication, coordination and review of emergency procedures and facilitating exercises cannot be

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overstated. Some of the most shocking plots to do harm to our schools and communities have been thwarted by simple actions of alert and prepared individuals.

The California Department of Education annually reminds California's more than 10,000 public schools that they must update mandatory School Safety Plans, which help ensure that schools are as prepared as possible for emergencies and also maintain safe and secure learning environments. Information is available at this CDE Web site at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/ss/vp/safeschlplanning.asp>.

The California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) has compiled a wide range of federal, state and local resources to help you. These are starting points to help find best practices in school safety and preparedness. You can find these resources at <http://www.oesnews.com/safeschools> or on the Cal OES Web site at <http://www.caloes.ca.gov>.

Thank you for your continued dedication to educational excellence and the safety of all California's staff, students and parents.

Sincerely,



Tom Torlakson
State Superintendent of Public Instruction
California Department of Education



Mark Ghilarducci
Director
California Governor's Office of Emergency Services

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