

2026 EXECUTIVE FORUM

Leading the Way to Bring the School Safety Vision Into Focus

**Sponsored by the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services
Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety**

In partnership with:

- Virginia Department of Education (VDOE)
- Virginia Office of the Attorney General (OAG)
- Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police (VACP)
- Virginia Association of School Superintendents (VASS)
- Virginia Sheriff's Association (VSA)
- Virginia School Boards Association (VSBA)
- Virginia Risk Sharing Association (VRSA)
- Virginia Drug Awareness Resistance Education (DARE) Association

DRAFT AGENDA as of 5/12/2026

10:00–10:10 Framing the Future of School Safety in Virginia: Aligning Purpose, Partnership, and Progress

Lindsay Burton, Division Director, Public Safety Training and the Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety, Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services

Shellie Evers, Supervisor, Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety, Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety

This opening session will establish the frame through which we will advance our shared priorities to underscore this year's theme, "Leading the Way to Bring the School Safety Vision into Focus." Presenters will outline the goals of the forum, highlight the data shaping Virginia's current school safety priorities, and establish a shared understanding of the challenges and opportunities ahead. This session sets the foundation for a day dedicated to collaboration, clarity, and a forward-looking vision for safer school communities.

10:10–10:35 Challenges and Collective Progress: Top 3 Issues Facing Virginia Schools and Communities

1. Public Safety and Violent Incidents

Facilitators: Law Enforcement, School Superintendents, and School Board

Public safety continues to rank as one of the top risks for Virginia's K–12 schools (34% of respondents), with violent threats and incidents remaining high even in the post-pandemic landscape. This segment will take a collaborative look at emerging violent threats and incidents, and showcase what effective cross-agency response partnerships look like in practice.

Highlight: *Virginia leaders who are making a measurable difference*

2. Student and Staff Mental Health and Well-Being

Sarah Bazemore, Behavioral Health and Instructional Supports Coordinator, Virginia Department of Education

Betsy Bell, Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Programs Coordinator, Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety

Student mental health remains a top-10 risk in Virginia schools (21%), and educators continue to report increases in student anxiety and fear following violent events. This quick dive into the growing mental health needs of both students and staff will include how practical strategies are being embedded as proactive supports within school systems. The focus includes trauma-informed practices, crisis counseling, and sustainable approaches to strengthening a culture of well-being.

Highlight: *VDOE and VCSCS resources, along with successful division-level implementations*

3. Strengthening Anti-Bullying/Cyberbullying Protections

Sarah Bazemore, Virginia Department of Education

Betsy Bell, Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety

Virginia law defines and mandates anti-bullying measures—including cyberbullying—at the division level, making effective policies and ongoing training essential. This focused segment will walk through the practical question: *Is it rude, is it mean, or is it bullying?* Participants will hear a snapshot of Virginia's anti-bullying statutes, current cyberbullying trends, and how divisions are implementing protocols that actually work.

Highlight: *Model prevention/intervention programs; VDOE model policies and DCJS curriculum*

10:35–11:20 Focusing on Prevention: Key Perspectives from Leading Experts

Update from the Secret Service

Lina Alathari, Chief, National Threat Assessment Center

The Digital Threat Landscape from Safer Schools Together

Theresa Campbell, President and CEO, Safer Schools Together

Steven MacDonald, Executive Director, Safer Schools Together

Online Networks Targeting Our Youth from the Virginia Fusion Center

Bethany Sajan, Threat Analyst, Virginia Fusion Center, Virginia State Police

As threats to our schools and communities grow in scale and sophistication, leaders must guide with clarity, foresight, and strategic direction. This executive session provides an examination of key threat challenges (both IRL and online)—including online harassment, vulnerabilities within social media platforms, the rise in swatting events, and the increasing influence of AI-generated misinformation. Attendees will gain a future-oriented perspective on how these issues are affecting school safety across Virginia and the nation, and how leadership can proactively strengthen preparedness and response.

11:20–11:30 Quick Break

11:30–12:10 Panel Discussion: Cross-Agency Collaboration Before, During, and After a Crisis

Law enforcement, education, and School Board leaders discuss coordination, MOUs, joint emergency planning, and real-world collaboration challenges and triumphs around the following topics:

- What are the best practices between school divisions and SROs/police, including MOUs and drills?
- What does the implementation of new legislation look like in our schools and communities?
- What should our collective action plans look like in the three key areas: Public Safety and Threat Response, Mental Health and Student Well-Being, and Strengthening Anti-Bullying/Cyberbullying Protections

12:10–12:15 Closing Remarks and Next Steps

Convene final thoughts, summarize commitments, preview the 2026 School Safety Training Forum, and provide contacts and resources.

12:15–1:00 Lunch (Provided)

1:00 – 5:00 2026 School Safety Training Forum Kickoff

Executive Forum attendees are invited to stay to hear more on these topics – and join over 1,000 other school and division leaders, mental health professionals, and law enforcement partners at Virginia’s largest and longest-running conference.

REFERENCES:

- Top 10 Risks Facing K-12 Schools, campussafetymagazine.com
- Overview and Summary - The Educator's School Safety Network, eschoolsafety.org
- Division and School Safety, Virginia Department of Education, doe.virginia.gov
- Virginia Anti-Bullying Laws & Policies - StopBullying.gov
- Virginia School Discipline Laws & Regulations: Bullying, safesupportivelearning.ed.gov
- \$12 million in grants support school safety across Virginia, wsls.com
- The 2025 Virginia School Safety Survey DATA BY QUESTION, dcjs.virginia.gov
- Youth Violence Project - University of Virginia, and Bullying | UVA School of Education and Human Development, education.virginia.edu
- New Virginia education laws: Here's what's changing in schools ...13newsnow.com
- Vision for Virginia 2025: Education Policy – Six Education Policy ... thomasjeffersoninst.org
- Virginia - SchoolSafety.gov, schoolsafety.gov
- Supporting Safe Schools: A Report Focused on Prevention, Response, and ...ncsl.org
- The 2025 Virginia School Safety Audit State and Regional Comparison, dcjs.virginia.gov
- VA SCHOOL Violence - EdNews Virginia, ednewsva.org
- Crime, Violence, Discipline, and Safety in U.S. Public Schools, nces.ed.gov
- Statistics & Reports | Virginia Department of Education, doe.virginia.gov