

This document is an extract of a larger publication.

civilgrandjury.org is a project of UnGovr.org, a US-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to government transparency and public accountability.



*THIS  
PAGE  
INTENTIONALLY  
LEFT  
BLANK*

# SCHOOLS, LEARNING IN A SAFE ENVIRONMENT SCHOOL SAFETY IN TULARE COUNTY

## SUMMARY:

Due to the numerous incidents that have occurred on school campuses throughout the Country, the Tulare County Civil Grand Jury decided to look into what local school districts are doing to ensure the safety of students and faculty.

On September 27, 2018, Governor Brown signed into law Assembly Bill 1747 School Safety Plans. The California Constitution guarantees California children the right to attend public schools that are safe, secure, and peaceful. The California Department of Education, public school districts, county offices of education, schools and their personnel are responsible for creating learning environments that are safe and secure.



## BACKGROUND:

The data from US Department of Education and US census states that since 2012, there have been 180 (K-12) school shootings with 356 victims. Each year since, the number of shootings has increased. Data shows 93 shootings in the last school year which is an increase of 11 from a decade ago. More school shootings with casualties occurred during the 2020-2021 school year than the previous year.

Assumption of safety cannot be taken for granted. We cannot wait for an emergency to occur in Tulare County schools. We need to identify and implement a responsive measure.

## METHOD OF INVESTIGATION:

1. Attended school crises response safety seminar
2. Interviewed witnesses

# TULARE COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT 2022-2023

3. Reviewed specific documents
4. Conducted a school safety survey

## **DISCUSSION:**

Per California Department of Education guidelines, schools, districts and County offices of education share responsibilities as well as play distinct roles in school safety planning and implementation. Every school in California is required to have a school safety plan. They recommend school districts provide training and support for school policies, establish relationships with local first responders to learn respective roles before an emergency and complete threat assessments for safe schools, such as fencing and doors that lock from the inside.

A questionnaire sent to the high schools consisted of four areas:

1. **Physical Safety Barriers:**  
Most schools have 6 foot fences and entrances that are monitored by staff and/or cameras in the morning, during lunch and after school. Most had solid classroom doors, while some of the newer schools had small windows. The doors also locked from the inside. Most schools have police guards on duty and/or security systems.
2. **Police and Security Systems:**  
Some schools have School Resource Officers for break or lunch only, but they are available at all times for an emergency. Some schools have a full-time police officer on the campus. Visalia Unified School District (VUSD) has police officers as helpers and not so much as guards. All schools have alarm systems and/or video cameras. Most schools have a technologically advanced security system with direct communication to first responders.
3. **Emergency Procedures:**  
Teachers and staff have been trained for emergency situations and have regular drills with students. Schools have the required scheduled practice drills for fire, earthquake and lockdowns. They receive emergency evacuation instructions and training. Schools have current and up-to-date contact information for all students and staff. They have varied communications systems between the classrooms and office.
4. **Student Threats:**  
Schools have different ways to handle students who have threatened violence. Some schools are in the process of response training for teachers and staff, others have a “threat response steps” procedure, while others call the local police department.

In the crisis response demonstration, officials recommended to block a door with heavy furniture, turn off lights, silence cell phones or other noise sources and remain quiet.

New computer technology allowing police and first responder’s access to real time school cameras and digital

# TULARE COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT 2022-2023

school maps is in the planning phase. This would give authorities immediate intervention in a crisis. The Tulare County Office of Education has developed an interactive crisis information system called ActVnet. VUSD uses a system called Raptor. These programs have direct contact with first responders and can provide information to parents/guardians. Law enforcement can log into these systems and access detailed maps of the school including whether doors are solid or full glass, the location of emergency shutoff valves if there is a gas leak or if electrical power needs to be shut down. The ActVnet system can access a digital floor plan of the campus, connect with campus security cameras and has building signs with special ID's to help first responders navigate the campus. So far 26 schools districts in Tulare County have signed up for ActVnet and are in various stages of implementing the system.

## **FINDINGS:**

- F1. ActVnet and Raptor are impressive intervention tools for any potential school emergency.
- F2. As stated by law enforcement agencies, it is not a matter if a shooting will occur, but when.
- F3. School districts are working to improve and strengthen school safety.
- F4. Training and drills help prepare students and personnel for a potential crisis.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- R1. School districts should strongly consider implementation of a comprehensive security system.
- R2. School districts should continue to provide the latest training and technology.
- R3. School districts need to ensure there is effective communication between schools, parents/guardians on emergency procedures.

## **REQUEST FOR RESPONSES:**

- |  |                |                       |
|--|----------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Tulare County Office of Education       | Findings F1-F4 | Recommendations R1-R3 |
| 2. Visalia Unified School District         | Findings F1-F4 | Recommendations R1-R3 |
| 3. Tulare Joint Union High School District | Findings F1-F4 | Recommendations R1-R3 |
| 4. Exeter Unified School District          | Findings F1-F4 | Recommendations R1-R3 |
| 5. Porterville Unified School District     | Findings F1-F4 | Recommendations R1-R3 |
| 6. Woodlake Unified School District        | Findings F1-F4 | Recommendations R1-R3 |
| 7. Farmersville Unified School District    | Findings F1-F4 | Recommendations R1-R3 |
| 8. Dinuba Unified School District          | Findings F1-F4 | Recommendations R1-R3 |