

## **List Serve Summary Issue-Specific Report on School Security Budget Cuts June 2010**

The effects of the national recession are far-reaching and have created a wave of budget cutbacks to valuable services offered by K-12 schools and Institutions of Higher Education (IHE). Specific services, as well as entire programs and departments, have been impacted by fiscal constraints. In many instances these services, programs, or departments have been eliminated due to the pressure for educational organizations to reduce costs while continuing to provide quality education. Numerous reports have come to the attention of the U.S. Department of Education (ED) regarding significant cutbacks in the areas of safety and security, alcohol/drug prevention, and emergency planning, which have prompted schools and IHEs to make changes in how these programs and services function. Most importantly, schools are being prompted to decide whether to simply reduce these services, or to eliminate them altogether. In the alternative, many schools and IHEs have engaged in innovative practices to balance the availability of funding and staff with the task of educating our nation's youth in a safe and secure environment. .

To better understand how schools are working to ensure school safety despite a limited or nonexistent budget, ED queried several of their list serves to elicit feedback on whether schools/districts/IHEs have had to reduce their services in areas of school safety and what actions have been taken to counter the effects of such cutbacks.

Responses to the thread posted by ED were collected from June 22 through June 30 for inclusion in this summary. As of June 30, 2010 a total of fifty-seven responses were made, including responses from both past and present Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (REMS) Grantees as well as prior and present Emergency Management for Higher Education (EMHE) grantees, school security chiefs, and state safe school center directors. Responses to this thread have been redacted in the following summary to include only the name of the respondent's resident state. This enables the information provided to be shared with a wider audience, while preserving the confidentiality of respondents.

The majority of respondents indicated their districts have experienced significant budget cuts due to the recession. Forty-four (44) respondents provided insight into the current financial status of their district, school, or institution as it relates to their ability to provide safety, security, and prevention services to students and staff. The total numbers of affirmative responses from each resident state are as follows:

- California—(3)
- Colorado—(4)
- Florida—(2)
- Georgia—(2)
- Idaho—(1)
- Illinois—(2)
- Indiana—(3)
- Kansas—(1)
- Kentucky—(1)
- Louisiana—(1)
- Maryland—(4)
- Michigan—(1)
- Mississippi—(MS)
- Missouri—(1)
- Nebraska—(2)

- Nevada—(1)
- New Mexico—(1)
- New York—(3)
- Ohio—(1)
- Pennsylvania—(1)
- Tennessee—(1)
- Tennessee—(1)
- Texas—(2)
- Virginia—(2)
- Washington—(2)

While responses included in-depth descriptions of the ways in which budgetary constraints have influenced the delivery of school safety and security services, many expressed uncertainty for how these gaps in funding could be addressed. Simply put, the only alternative arrived at by many is to cut staffing and programs and to attempt to cover these losses through the following:

- program and departmental reorganization
- increased staff training and collaborative efforts
- innovative use of technology
- identification of alternative funding sources.

Many responses included information pertaining to budget cuts in areas not directly related to school safety and security, but which have indirectly affected the perceived level of safety of schools and student well-being. **A California County Office of Education** reported that, in an effort to save operating costs, one district decided to turn off outside campus lights in the evening. These sites, in turn, were then subjected to increased vandalism and burglary. Another issue reported by the Office is that although supplies were purchased for emergency go-kits, overall reductions in staff have made it difficult to delegate time for someone to assemble them. As a result, the Office plans to submit a REMS grant application, but expressed concern that staff will not be available to draft the application or implement the activities, if awarded.

Two respondents noted that although they have not experienced budget cuts, they face issues from not receiving a budget *increase* in over ten years. **A response from Indiana** reported that since 1999, their Academy has grown by 4 times the number of participants. While the program is state-mandated, the budget amount is not and has remained the same since 1999, resulting in the need to reduce program expenses. Methods described for obtaining cost savings include:

- Not providing coffee, snacks, or refreshments at trainings;
- Providing online rather than onsite training session;
- Moving towards regional trainings at free venues; and,
- Lowering printing costs by posting resource materials online.

### Results of budget-cuts

In general, the experiences reported by list serve members involve significant reductions in staff: both lead and support staff, and full-time as well as part-time staff. The elimination of several significant funding sources (e.g., Title IV, Safe and Drug-Free Schools) from both national and local budgets has also resulted in the elimination of entire programs that provided a framework for school safety and prevention efforts. Programs being cut include Student Assistance Programs, Youth Development Programs, and Professional Development Programs. Staff members are being laid off, including SROs, nurses, counselors/psychologists, teachers, and custodians. While not necessarily directly related to

school safety, these programs and positions serve vital roles in providing a positive, healthy school environment and mitigating potential hazards and threats.

Prior to initiating layoffs, many respondents reported eliminating unfilled positions. **One school district in New Mexico** eliminated seven full-time equivalent positions and anticipates personnel layoffs in 2010-2011. **Another Florida school district** reported cutting their unfilled positions two years ago. Combined with attrition, their loss is of around 30 school police officers.

More widespread layoffs appear to be the most typical response to address budgetary constraints. **A Colorado school district** reported middle school SROs were cut city-wide. **In New York City, one district** stated they will need to lay off about 120 Intervention and Prevention Specialists. **A School Police Department in Indiana** was directed to cut FTE's of 20 officers; local law enforcement will then be expected to assist in covering needed responses. In some instances, only one or two positions have been eliminated; however, these same positions often constitute the remainder of the department and such layoffs effectively eliminate entire programs.

Another alternative to conducting layoffs is to reduce the number of days in a year that officers or school staff work. This type of reduction in force (RIF), known as "furlough" days, is becoming more common. While furlough days help to cover gaps in funding and budgets, as budgets continue to decrease, furloughs will no longer be feasible and districts will have no choice but to eliminate additional positions.

Five (5) respondents reported budget cuts were so severe their organization, department, or office has ceased to operate due to eliminated funding or the lack of an approved state budget. These responses came from school districts, a state safe school center, and a board of education from the following five states:

- Tennessee (TN);
- Missouri (MO);
- Ohio (OH);
- Louisiana (LA); and,
- New York (NY).

**A response from a Virginia school district** summarized the district's experience during the current recession as the "doing more with less or the doing less with less thing," saying, "We're all out of innovative ideas."

#### Program and Departmental Reorganization

As a result of sweeping layoffs and program and departmental cutbacks, many respondents describe a general re-organization and shifting of people and their duties and responsibilities within schools and school districts. Reorganization efforts might include reducing a staff member's allotted time from full- to part-time, eliminating positions altogether, or assuming the duties of a position as an existing staff member's alternate job assignment.

**One school district in New York**, faced with the elimination of an additional five security department positions (and possibly additional layoffs pending the adoption of the New York State budget), is attempting to minimize staff loss by redistributing existing staff amongst high priority sites.

Some respondents indicated their school security departments have been more active due to an increase in student behavioral problems attributed to reductions in staff and programs. In these instances, as with instances of layoffs, districts stated they had to realign their service areas to better fit their capabilities. As with the redistribution of existing staff in New York schools, **a school district in Maryland** stated they had to realign their patrol areas to accommodate the loss of a night patrolman.

#### Increased Staff Training and Collaborative Efforts

Training staff in positions that have been eliminated is important. In response to the reduction in counseling staff, **some schools in Georgia** have leveraged REMS grant funds to provide remaining staff members crisis response training. Schools also report collaborating not only with community partners, but also with other schools and local school districts to conduct joint trainings and share resources.

Cross-training staff members, including nursing and custodial staff, was also mentioned as important since many remaining staff are assuming additional responsibilities as positions are being eliminated. The difficulty in cross training staff as a response to the recession is that there are fewer people and less time available to catch everyone “up to speed” on how certain duties are performed and the roles and responsibilities inherent in certain positions.

Not only is staff training seen as a means to bridge the gap in staffing and funding availability, but training sessions can also be a source of funding if registration fees are collected and the money earmarked for certain expenses, such as ensuring the provision of future trainings.

#### Innovative Use of Technology

The use of the Internet and other web-based technologies is enabling schools to continue to provide resources and support while saving costs for printing materials and conducting on-site trainings. **One Colorado school district** reported providing staff refresher courses online to counter the lack of funds to provide face-to-face trainings. These online courses are anticipated to be incentivized by offering Professional Development units for state licensure. **Another school district in Georgia** stated they are developing a similar online professional development training course.

In addition to reorganizing and reallocating resources, **a New York school district** reported they have also begun to leverage their recently completed IP-based security surveillance camera network and proximity card access control system to reduce reliance upon security personnel.

Web-based tools are also filling the gap in training needs where funding is unavailable to provide stipends for trainers. Schools have developed their own training curricula and are utilizing trainings that have been made available for use online, e.g., NIMS training through FEMA and the four phases through REMS TA Center.

### Identifying Alternative Funding Sources:

For the most part, the future of funding is uncertain. Although many respondents reported they have located additional funds or plan to locate additional resources, the continued availability of these new sources is unknown. Many take a “cross that bridge when we come to it” attitude towards future funding. Types of additional funding sources mentioned by respondents include:

- Partnering with like-minded organizations who share concerns
- Looking for donations
- Using registration fees to cover costs of trainings

Many respondents highlight the REMS and EMHE grants as their only and remaining source of useful funding since budgetary losses have been incurred. One respondent stated, however, they are concerned with how some of the proposed activities under the grant—if awarded—will be implemented since they are not sure if efforts can be sustained after the grant period ends.

Some districts mentioned they have used outsourcing as a means of significant cost savings. **A Nebraska school district** reported they now contract out substitute security officers as a result of eliminating the district’s security officer position. The vendor is fully insured and trained in pressure-point control tactics (PPCT) and disruptive student management for schools and in some cases have their own patrol cars, depending on the event they are working.

Below are highlights of specific responses from organizations that provided in-depth feedback regarding their school’s experiences with attempting to counter budget cutbacks and losses. These summaries are reflective of 18 respondents from the total of 57 responses collected through this thread.

### School Districts

Colorado:

- Budget cuts vary from district to district because the district is site-base managed.
- Overall, custodial support has been reduced by 2.5%, despite the addition of square footage in new construction.
- The district-wide security department was restructured to mitigate the effects of less available funding and fewer Campus Monitors.
- Classroom size increased due to reduction in teacher FTE.
- REMS grant funds have helped the district provide more training opportunities around emergency management.
- The district plans to include a secure “authorized employees only” section on their Web site to house individual schools’ crisis plans and EOPs, training videos, links to written resources, etc.

Florida:

- The district reduced the number of unarmed security guards to address the Department’s 10% budget cut.

Indiana:

- The Corporation has reduced its overall budget by \$4.5 million.
- The renovation of eight schools and the new construction of a middle and high school underwent major modifications to adjust to budget reductions; the community approved a referendum to allow these projects to move forward.
- REMS grant funds provide a focus on emergency management that otherwise would not be possible without the additional funding.
- The Corporation reported their security department has been more active due to the increase in behavioral problems correlating with the reduction in staff and school programs.

Maryland:

- All four school security positions have been retained by implementing a system-wide furlough plan last year and no COLA or Step increases for the past two years.
- The county police department has been able to maintain SROs in schools, but this may change in the future.
- The district has negotiated with vendors to maintain previous contract prices with no increases.

Michigan:

- The district was prepared for a 15% reduction in staffing and a %10 cut across the board in all other security-related accounts.
  - After presenting to the School Board, the Superintendent, and Chief Financial Officer, the district opted not to cut the budgets for Public Safety/School Security, allowing the district to fill all vacant positions.

Utah:

- The district is partnering with the Red Cross to provide First Aid/CPR training for free while schools only incur the cost of certification
- The district has collaborated with the police department and county sheriff's department to write a grant for security cameras.
- The district collaborates with United Way, who recently submitted a Promise Neighborhood grant on the schools' behalf.

Virginia:

- The Risk Management & Security Services Department will no longer have a Gang and Violence Intervention Specialist on staff; delivery of these services in the future will be attempted by the Training Specialist.
- Student Assistance Program specialists were reduced from 7 persons to 2 persons (1.5 FTE).
  - Many SAP groups (anger management, stress management, children of alcoholics), classroom lessons (gateway drugs, tobacco, behavior, bullying), and campaigns (Red Ribbon, Prom Promise) will not be done due to lack of personnel.
- The Student Assistance Program has recently been restructured from a direct services model to a consultation/education model.

- The district continues to offer monthly parent/student programs for students who incur substance abuse infractions.
  - Referrals increased from 100 to 124 in 2009, so the district anticipates a growing need.
- The district will offer bi-monthly Focus on Tobacco sessions.
- SAP specialists will serve as substance abuse consultants to the district and offer screening evaluations, primarily to middle schools.
- To compensate for drug/violence prevention no longer provided by SAPs, school counselors will develop and present lessons previously delivered by SAP specialists.
- Community-based mental health therapists will deliver direct services at the high school level.

### Departments/Offices of Education

#### California:

- Due to Title IV ending, there is no longer funding support for model programs that have been in effect for over 15 years.
  - There are not enough staff to monitor curriculum revisions and teacher trainings.
  - Provision for and advocacy of youth development programs has decreased.
    - Teachers continue to act as advisors without financial support but due to budget cuts this will likely change.
- The County has applied for additional funding:
  - Tobacco Use Prevention Education funds
  - County Asset Forfeiture Fund
  - County Behavioral Health Department's Mental Health Services Act funding
- The County is no longer eligible to receive Drug-Free Communities grant funds.
- Competition for national grants seems grim. As a large state competing for funds, providing district support at a reasonable level is difficult. As a rural area, the County might not always have the resources to compete for available grant funds.

#### Mississippi:

- The Division of School Safety experienced a 70% reduction in funding and has lost all but two staff members.
- To offset travel costs associated with onsite services such as trainings, school safety assessments, or technical assistance, the Division has begun requesting districts to reimburse these costs.
- The Department utilizes school resource officers and trained school safety administrators to assist with school safety assessments and accreditation, which benefits both the Department as well as individual schools by having "inside" information on accreditation issues.
- The Division has collaborated with the US Attorney General's Office, state Attorney General, state emergency management agency, and state Regional Counter Drug Training Academy to furnish instructors and training sites at no cost.

- The Division will be seeking a \$1 apportionment for all traffic citations issued in the state with the proceeds to fund the center and safe and drug free schools programs.

Tennessee:

- The Department provided a copy of their impact statement regarding the loss of Safe and Drug Free Schools funds.
- ARRA/SPSF funds will help replace 75% of Safe Schools funding; without it, funding would be zeroed out.
- Two new, small funding sources (approximately \$300,000) and SDFS carryover will enable most of the Department's training initiatives to continue through 2010-2011.
- The Department's strategy moving forward is to identify sources of funding who share the schools' concerns (e.g., Department of Justice, Homeland Security, Mental Health, School Reform) and to ask LEAs to pick up part of costs through registration fees, etc.

Washington:

- The Office utilizes a blend of tobacco settlement funds, student assistance funds, and SDFS funds to support nine regional prevention centers that provide 295 districts with technical assistance and programs that address all four phases of safety planning.
  - These centers will lose 25% of tobacco funds, all their SDFS funds, and about 100 of 253 student assistants.
- The only additional funding received is a \$90,000 budget provision from the legislature to assist districts with safety plans. This funding is allocated on a year-to-year basis and is under continual threat.

School Safety Departments/Centers

Colorado:

- Colorado School districts have experienced fiscal difficulties with layoffs, wage freezes, and other cuts for over two years.
- One larger school district reported a 30% decrease in their security budget, resulting in staff reduction of about 35% and the elimination of 24-hour facility coverage.
- Overall, the loss of state Title IV formula grant funds resulted in the elimination of 1.0 FTE.
- The Department experienced a 20% budget cut in 2008, had 8 furlough days, retains only four staff members, and will experience an additional 5% reduction to their General Funds for Operating Expenses in 2010.

Kansas:

- The capacity in schools to deal with safety/crisis management has been significantly reduced with the change of Title IV funding and with state reductions in funding to education.
- The Center is collaborating with other state agencies and school groups to offer joint training.

Missouri:

- The Center, although closed as of June 2009, continues to receive support from the University of Missouri-Kansas City, who has agreed to continue to maintain the Center's website and resources.
- Retired employees volunteer their time to provide limited online support and basic safety coordinator training.
- The infrastructure provided by the network of safety coordinators is still intact and strong.
- The Center's annual 6-hour training will still be held using registration fees to cover costs.
- The Missouri School Boards Association continues to host a school safety conference with funding support from the Office of Homeland Security.
  - Attendance has dropped as organizations are finding it difficult to pay for travel to such events.

Nebraska:

- The School Safety Program's budget was cut down to \$2,800 for 2010-2011.
  - If the legislature were to go into special session for additional budget cuts, this position—therefore, the entire program—would be cut.
- As people retire, positions are not being filled so money can be used to keep existing staff.
- The Center is applying for local grants from places such as Optimist Clubs, Masons, and Scottish Rites organizations.

Texas:

- Many staff members of the Safe and Drug Free Schools regional centers are being moved into other departments, such as mental health, where there appears to be more funding available.
  - Some departments have been successful tying in mental health issues with school safety.

Virginia:

- The Center is funded through a line item in the budget out of state general funds for four positions.
- The Center receives funding (5%) from a School Resource Officer Grant for administrative services and training.
- The Center works extensively with the Virginia Department of Health who has issues that cross the school's borders, such as suicide prevention, sexual assault, and injury prevention.
- The Center has not been hit by education reductions since they operate independently of the state education department, and school and campus safety remain a high public safety issue.

Responses from the following thirteen (13) states reported that, to date, they have either received no budget cuts related to safety and security or have been able to retain their budget amounts and staff levels:

- |                   |                  |                      |
|-------------------|------------------|----------------------|
| • Colorado—(1)    | • New Jersey—(1) | • South Carolina—(1) |
| • Connecticut—(1) | • New York—(1)   | • Texas—(2)          |
| • Illinois—(1)    | • Ohio—(1)       | • Utah—(1)           |

- Virginia—(2)

- West Virginia—(1)

A few respondents stated their districts are actually experiencing increases and stability in the amounts budgeted towards school safety and security, including alcohol and drug abuse prevention efforts. Some credit for this stability was given to funding received through REMS and EMHE grant awards. Credit was also given to members of the district financial team who were able to head off budgetary constraints in advance through strategic re-organization and planning efforts.

Other districts, such as **the response from Utah**, stated they have cut costs by streaming funding and services through community agencies. This school district reported they work with the Red Cross (who provides CPR/First Aid training for free; the district covers certification costs), they have collaborated with the police and county sheriff's department to allocate grant funds to purchase security cameras, and they work with the United Way, who recently submitted a Promise Neighborhood grant that will benefit the schools.

Nonetheless, many respondents noted that the future is unforeseeable when considering the 2011-2012 school budgets. Districts may not have experienced significant cutbacks yet, but as the recession continues to have a broad impact on the national economy, budgets and budget line items may be up for reconsideration.