



Roy Cooper North Carolina Attorney General

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North Carolina should reinforce school safety efforts

National school safety plan mirrors AG Cooper's CIRK

Raleigh: North Carolina's efforts to develop a comprehensive plan to respond to a school shooting are serving as a national model, and the state should reinforce it with support for local schools and law enforcement, Attorney General Roy Cooper said Wednesday.

"We hope that a tragedy never happens at any of our schools, but we must take steps to prevent it and be ready in case it does," said Cooper, who developed a plan 10 years ago. "North Carolina should make sure every school and every law enforcement professional has the right tools and training."

On Wednesday, a task force headed by Vice President Joe Biden has put forward recommendations that model emergency response plans be developed for schools, and that law enforcement and school officials be trained to respond to active shooter situations. The recommendations closely mirror North Carolina's Critical Incident Response Kit and related training, which Cooper took statewide in 2002.

A vital part of the plan, Rapid Deployment Training, is available to law enforcement statewide and instructors from Cooper's Justice Academy were in Hillsborough training deputies. For example, also on Wednesday, deputies at the Orange County Sheriff's Department were putting part of the plan to work by making sure they were trained to respond.

Cooper is calling on the legislature and the governor to revisit recommendations in a [school safety study](#) he led in 2006, some of which have languished. The recommendations outlined in a letter sent to Governor Pat McCrory today include:

- More School Resource Officers in schools to provide security and guide students to safe behavior;
- Reestablish a statewide school tip line for parents and students to report threats anonymously;
- More training for educators on how to recognize potential safety threats and respond to them; and
- Reestablish the Center for the Prevention of School Violence.

Many of the report's recommendations have been put into place, such as routine lockdown drills and better building security. But as schools reevaluate security, the state should offer incentives and assistance to local districts who need it.

The Critical Incident Response Kit (CIRK) was provided to North Carolina schools to help them prepare for a crisis such as a school shooting. Among the items recommended to include in a completed kit are architectural blueprints; procedures to cut-off fire alarms, utilities, sprinkler systems, and cable television; keys to the school in a separately

locked container; information on evacuation routes and safe rally locations; and emergency contact information for students and school personnel.

Cooper started the program with the Center for the Prevention of School Violence, which has been diminished by budget cuts. Each public, private, and charter school in North Carolina received a booklet and a video explaining how to assemble the kit in 2002 and 2003. Many school systems have since used the CIRK materials in developing their own school safety plans and training.

At the same time, the plan implemented training law enforcement to respond to mass shootings.

Rapid Deployment Training teaches officers who are the first to arrive on the scene of a school shooting or similar event to assemble a contact team of officers, enter the building, and find any active shooters. Next, a rescue team of officers is dispatched to assist anyone who may have been injured.

The North Carolina Justice Academy, a part of Cooper's Department of Justice, instructs law enforcement on how to train fellow officers in rapid deployment. The Justice Academy has trained 836 officers to serve as Rapid Deployment trainers since 2001. In 2006, Rapid Deployment was added to the Basic Law Enforcement Training program for all North Carolina officers to ensure that every law enforcer had some training in how to defuse a potentially deadly incident like a school shooting.

The Justice Academy also teaches a course to train School Resource Officers and others on how to respond alone to an active shooter situation. Since July 2010, 54 officers have attended this course.

Rapid deployment technique can prevent tragedy, as it did during a shooting at Orange County High School in 2006. Because a brave School Resource Officer and another officer trained in Rapid Deployment were there and intervened, no one was killed at the school before the shooter was captured.

Following the tragic shooting at Virginia Tech, Cooper convened a task force to look at safety for college and university campuses. That Task Force issued a number of [recommendations](#) in 2008 about how campuses could better identify, prevent and respond to threats of violence. The Task Force also advocated that North Carolina prohibit those who have been involuntarily committed from purchasing guns, a measure Cooper helped get passed into law in 2008.

“Prevention, preparation and training can save lives,” Cooper said. “We owe it to our students, teachers and parents to do everything possible to make our schools safer.”

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