

# COLORADO OFFICE OF THE STATE AUDITOR



DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
DEPARTMENT OF LAW  
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT  
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY

## SCHOOL SAFETY



SEPTEMBER 2019

PERFORMANCE AUDIT

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# OFFICE OF THE STATE AUDITOR



September 5 2019

DIANNE E. RAY, CPA  
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STATE AUDITOR

Members of the Legislative Audit Committee:

This report contains the results of an informational performance audit of the State's approach to school safety. The audit was conducted pursuant to Section 2-3-103, C.R.S., which authorizes the State Auditor to conduct audits of all departments, institutions, and agencies of state government. The report presents summarized information about the cost and funding sources of the State's key programs related to school safety, the school districts served by the programs, and audit observations. The Departments of Education, Law, Public Health and Environment, and Public Safety have provided letters outlining their views and perspectives on the observations contained in the report.





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# REPORT HIGHLIGHTS



## SCHOOL SAFETY

PERFORMANCE AUDIT, SEPTEMBER 2019

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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### CONCLUSION

Colorado's programs to promote school safety are not centralized and, in general, statutes do not require them to work together. There is no consolidated information about all state-supported school safety programs, including their purposes, funding sources and amounts, reach (i.e., the number of school districts they support), or impact.

### KEY RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

- The existing patchwork of school safety programs creates a risk of uncoordinated efforts, gaps in services, and challenges in determining reach and impact. For the years and programs we reviewed, we observed:
  - Eight of the 12 programs we reviewed, across all four departments, touch on aspects of student mental and behavioral health, but are not coordinated.
  - Both Safe2Tell and the School Safety Resource Center offered trainings on similar topics, including bullying, mental health, school violence, and suicide, but have not coordinated their messaging or coverage of school districts.
  - There is no mechanism to determine the reach and impact of the programs in combination.
- Some programs work cooperatively. For example, in Fiscal Year 2019 the Departments of Education and Public Safety communicated about some of their grant programs to prevent duplication in funding of approved projects. Similarly, the Departments of Law and Public Health and Environment work together to provide funding for suicide prevention programs.

### BACKGROUND

- Over the last 20 years, the General Assembly has established a variety of programs aimed at school safety.
- The 12 programs we reviewed generally fit into five categories: (1) tipline, (2) training and technical support to implement safe school practices, (3) grants for capital improvements to make schools physically safer, (4) grants to improve emergency preparedness and response, and (5) grants for environmental and behavioral initiatives to improve school climate.
- Oversight of the programs is spread over four separate departments: Education, Law, Public Health and Environment, and Public Safety.
- In Fiscal Year 2018, the programs we reviewed spent a total of \$19 million on school safety efforts; most of the funding was in the category of grants for school climate.
- In Fiscal Year 2019, the programs spent a total of \$55.6 million, most in grants for emergency preparedness. For Fiscal Year 2020, the programs are budgeted to spend \$29 million, most projected to be grants for school climate.
- The type of program that was most frequently accessed by school districts was the tipline (Safe2Tell) with 141 (78 percent) using it in Fiscal Year 2019. No school districts accessed all of the State's programs for the years we reviewed.

### AUDIT APPROACH

Our audit summarizes and reports data on 12 state programs for K-12 public schools that address human-caused threats to both physical and psychological safety. We worked with all of the programs to collect and summarize information on each program's funding, expense, and interaction with schools.



# CHAPTER 1

## OVERVIEW

School safety has been a topic of high interest to Colorado policymakers for the last 20 years. Following the 1999 Columbine shooting, the General Assembly enacted requirements for school districts to create certain policies related to safety [Section 22-32-109.1, C.R.S.]. In 2008, the General Assembly created the School Safety Resource Center to help schools prevent and prepare for acts of violence and other emergencies. In 2014, the General Assembly established the Safe2Tell anonymous tip line as a part of state government; it had previously been a public-private partnership started by a Colorado nonprofit. In the 2018 and 2019 legislative sessions, the General Assembly funded several grant programs to help schools with school safety initiatives. Most



recently, the General Assembly created the School Safety Committee, which is authorized to hold four meetings between mid-July and October 2019, to study the State’s school safety policy and consider ways to improve the State’s approach. As a fast evolving area of policy, this report provides a point-in-time review of programs the State had in place in Fiscal Years 2018 and 2019; the report may not capture some of the most recent initiatives and developments that may be occurring.

The State’s approach to school safety policy has generally been to place some requirements on school districts to develop their own school safety policies and then to offer a patchwork of programs and resources to schools that wish to participate.

## STATE REQUIREMENTS RELATED TO SCHOOL SAFETY

Article IX, Section 15 of the Colorado Constitution establishes that elected school district boards have control of the schools in their districts. While school districts broadly have discretion in deciding how they will keep their schools safe, Section 22-32-109.1, C.R.S., outlines several specific requirements for school districts regarding school safety. School districts must adopt school safety mission statements and plans; enter into agreements, to the extent possible, with law enforcement officials, the juvenile justice system, and social services to keep each school environment safe; and adopt policies to share certain student information in the interest of making schools safer.

Statute [Section 22-11-206(4)(a), C.R.S.] requires the Department of Education to “obtain assurances” that school districts are in compliance with the provisions of Section 22-32-109.1, C.R.S. School districts provide written attestations on whether or not they are in compliance with each provision of the law. From our review of school safety reporting forms from school districts for the 2017–2018 academic year, almost all 178 school districts reported to the Department of Education that they have policies in place to comply with Section 22-32-109.1, C.R.S. For the two school districts that reported they were not in full

compliance, the Department of Education followed up with them until their required policies were in place.

Important to note is that the Department of Education does not review schools' or school districts' policies to ensure certain elements are included. For example, the Department of Education does not review a school's safety policy to ensure that it includes elements that are recommended by national best practices or federal guidance. School districts have a lot of discretion to craft their own approaches to address school safety. Statute does not specify how the Department of Education should obtain assurances of school districts' compliance with Section 22-32-109.1, C.R.S.

## STATE PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES FOR SCHOOLS

Over the years, the General Assembly has created different programs and services to support school districts in keeping schools safe. These are programs and resources that schools can opt into.

To identify these state programs, we looked to national best practices and federal guidance, as well as common definitions, to define what would be included in a common understanding of school safety. We focused our work on state programs for K-12 public schools that address human-caused threats to safety, including threats to both physical and psychological safety, ranging from fights and active shooter incidents to suicide and bullying. Our work focused on programs and resources designed to help schools; it did not include a review of programs that are provided as a general resource for citizens such as the State's crisis services for mental health, substance use, or emotional issues. Our work also did not include a review of other types of threats to safety caused by fire, building hazards, natural disasters, or biological hazards such as disease outbreak and foodborne illness, among others. As a result, our work did not include a review of the State's programs to address school building fire and building codes, school bus transportation safety, food safety at schools, immunization

and infectious disease control, or other ways in which the State's programs touch schools.

We identified 12 key state programs for K-12 public schools that address human-caused threats to safety during our review period, Fiscal Years 2018 and 2019. These programs can be grouped into several main categories:

- The Safe2Tell tip line.
- Training and technical support services for implementing safe school practices, including services provided by the School Safety Resource Center.
- Grant funding for capital improvements to make schools physically safer.
- Grant funding to improve emergency preparedness and response to safety incidents.
- Grant funding for environmental and behavioral initiatives to improve school climate.

We have used the word “program” broadly to describe some state functions that are not established in statute as programs or considered by the agencies to be programs. For example, the Department of Public Health and Environment and the Department of Law provide funding for schools to be trained on a specific suicide prevention program called Sources of Strength. We have called Sources of Strength a program, even though it is not established in statute as a program, and neither department considers Sources of Strength to be a distinct program within its operations.

EXHIBIT 1.1 lists the 12 key school safety programs we identified, organized by category; the department(s) within state government responsible for the program; and a brief description of the services the program provides. A summary of each program can be found in APPENDIX A.

### EXHIBIT 1.1. STATE SCHOOL SAFETY PROGRAMS FISCAL YEARS 2018 AND 2019

PROGRAM	DEPARTMENT(S)	SERVICES PROVIDED
TIPLINE		
Safe2Tell	Law Public Safety	A service for taking tips on safety concerns about schools and students and for forwarding those tips to school and law enforcement officials so that they can provide resources for early intervention and resolution.
TRAINING AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT		
School Safety Resource Center	Public Safety	A program to serve as a resource for schools on the topic of school safety.
Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports	Education	A program to provide training to schools on an evidence-based framework for improving school climate and safety.
Project AWARE (Advancing Wellness and Resiliency in Education)	Education	A pilot program to support student mental and behavioral health in schools.
FUNDING FOR CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS		
Building Excellent Schools Today (BEST)	Education	A matching grant program to address schools' health, safety, security, and technology capital construction needs.
School Security Disbursement Program <sup>1</sup>	Public Safety	A disbursement program to provide local education providers (e.g., schools, school districts, and charter schools) with matching funds to improve security within public schools.
FUNDING FOR EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS		
Enhance School Safety Incident Response Grant Program	Public Safety	A grant program to provide one or more non-profits with funding for research, program development, and training to improve emergency responses to school safety incidents such as an active shooter or bomb threat situation.
School Access for Emergency Response Grant Program	Public Safety	A grant program to provide schools and public safety communication systems owners (e.g., local entities responsible for emergency communications, such as local law enforcement or 911 dispatch centers) with funding for interoperable communication hardware, software, equipment maintenance, and training.
FUNDING TO ADDRESS SCHOOL CLIMATE		
Crisis and Suicide Prevention Training Grant Program	Public Health and Environment	A grant program to assist schools in providing crisis and suicide prevention training for teachers and staff.
School Bullying Prevention and Education Grant Program	Education	A grant program to reduce instances of bullying in Colorado schools.
School Health Professional Grant Program	Education	A matching grant program to enhance the presence of school health professionals in schools throughout the state.
Sources of Strength	Law Public Health and Environment	A program to fund Colorado schools' implementation of the Sources of Strength suicide prevention program.

SOURCE: Office of the State Auditor analysis of Colorado Revised Statutes and information provided by state departments.

<sup>1</sup> The School Security Disbursement Program provides funding for capital improvements and emergency preparedness. Although it fits in both categories, it is listed in this table only once.

School safety is an area of policy that touches multiple disciplines and departments within state government. For example, the Department of

Public Safety houses the School Safety Resources Center and oversees grants related to emergency preparedness and building security. The Department of Law oversees the Safe2Tell program, which is carried out in partnership with the Department of Public Safety. The Department of Education oversees several grant programs to support schools in addressing bullying, behavioral health issues, and capital needs for school buildings, including security upgrades. The Department of Public Health and Environment oversees grants to help schools address suicide.

With the State's decentralized approach to addressing school safety, policymakers and the public have lacked a centralized repository of information about these programs. This performance audit seeks to provide policymakers and the public with information about the State's approach to school safety.

## AUDIT PURPOSE, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

We conducted this performance audit pursuant to Section 2-3-103, C.R.S., which authorizes the State Auditor to conduct audits of all departments, institutions, and agencies of the state government. Audit work was performed from November 2018 through August 2019. We appreciate the assistance provided by the management and staff of the Departments of Education, Law, Public Health and Environment, and Public Safety during this audit.

We conducted this audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our conclusions based on our audit objectives.

The purpose of the audit was to provide information to policymakers and the public about the State's programs for improving school safety. The key objectives of the audit were to identify (1) the State's key programs related to school safety, (2) the costs of these programs and



how they are funded, (3) which school districts are served by the programs, and (4) what the programs report about their activities.

The scope of the audit did not include an evaluation of the accuracy of what programs report about their activities, the effectiveness of the programs, or any of the programs' internal controls. Since school safety is a fast evolving policy area, we focused our analysis on programs that were active between January 2018 and January 2019, and did not include newer programs established after this date.

To accomplish our audit objectives, we performed the following audit work:

- Researched national best practices and federal guidance on how safety at schools is defined, interviewed school safety experts at the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence at the University of Colorado, and worked with the departments to define the types of school safety issues that would be the focus of this audit.
- Reviewed Colorado laws and other resources, and worked with the departments, to identify the state programs that address school safety issues and the information the programs are required to report about their operations.
- Reviewed program policies, reports, and other resources, and interviewed program staff and management to understand key aspects of school safety program operations.
- Analyzed expense data from the State's accounting system, Colorado Operations Resource Engine (CORE), and other sources, and worked with department accounting and budget staff to estimate program costs.
- Analyzed data provided by the departments about the school districts served by the programs in Fiscal Years 2018 and 2019, and worked with the Department of Education to understand their framework for classifying school districts into settings.

CHAPTER 2 contains summarized information about (1) the cost and funding sources of the State’s programs related to school safety, (2) the school districts served by the programs, and (3) audit observations. APPENDIX A contains summary information about each program, including more detailed information about the services it provides and how it reports on its activities. As an audit that was designed to be informational, the report does not contain recommendations for corrective action or identify areas for policy improvement.

A draft of the report was provided to the departments for review and comment. We have incorporated the departments’ perspectives into the report where relevant. APPENDIX B contains letters from each department with their comments.

# CHAPTER 2

## SCHOOL SAFETY PROGRAMS— SUMMARIZED INFORMATION ABOUT FUNDING AND SCHOOL DISTRICTS SERVED

This chapter provides summarized information about the costs and funding sources of the State's key programs that address school safety for Fiscal Years 2018 through 2020, and information about the school districts that the programs serve.

The programs are organized in this chapter into the main categories of (1) the anonymous tipline service, (2) training and technical support provided directly by the State, (3) grant funding for capital improvements, (4) grant funding for emergency preparedness, and (5) grant funding to improve school climate. We reviewed a total of 12 programs. Four of the programs were new in Fiscal Year 2019: Crisis and Suicide Prevention Training Grant Program, Enhance School Safety Incident Response Grant Program, School Access for Emergency Response Grant Program, and School Security Disbursement Program. At the end of the chapter, we offer some observations about lack of coordination and statewide assessment of program effectiveness, possible gaps in the State’s approach to providing school safety programs, and weaknesses in one program’s reported information.

## WHAT DO THE STATE’S SCHOOL SAFETY PROGRAMS COST AND HOW ARE THEY FUNDED?

To estimate how much each of the State’s 12 key programs related to school safety cost, and to identify their funding sources, we analyzed: (1) expense and funding data in the State’s accounting system, the Colorado Operations Reporting Engine (CORE); (2) budget requests and the Long Bill; and (3) information provided by the relevant departments. This chapter provides summary information about how the State’s school safety programs are funded. Details about each program’s funding sources and expenses can be found in APPENDIX A.

The State’s 12 key programs that address school safety had the following funding sources in the years we reviewed, which are listed in order of most funding to least:

- **GENERAL FUNDS** appropriated to the Departments of Law, Public Health and Environment, and Public Safety. In some cases, the

General Assembly appropriated funds for specific school safety programs, including the Crisis and Suicide Prevention Training Grant Program, the Enhance School Safety Incident Response Grant Program, and the School Security Disbursement Program. In other cases, the General Assembly appropriated funds for a department's operations and some of those funds have been used to support a school safety program. For example, the Department of Public Health and Environment relies, in part, on General Funds appropriated for the operation of its Office of Suicide Prevention to administer the Crisis and Suicide Prevention Grant Program.

- **MARIJUANA TAX CASH FUND** monies appropriated to the Departments of Education, Law, and Public Health and Environment, and to the Governor's Office. The Marijuana Tax Cash Fund established by Section 39-28.8-501, C.R.S., consists of (1) sales tax revenue collected on medical and retail marijuana sales; and (2) a portion of special sales tax revenue that is collected on retail marijuana sales, based on a formula outlined in statute. The General Assembly appropriated Marijuana Tax Cash Funds to be used for specific school safety programs, including Safe2Tell, the School Bullying Prevention and Education Program, and the School Health Professional Grant Program. The General Assembly also appropriated Marijuana Tax Cash Funds for broader purposes, such as substance abuse prevention and evidence-based policymaking evaluation and support, which have been used to support school safety programs. For example, the Department of Public Health and Environment used some of the Marijuana Tax Cash Funds it was appropriated for substance abuse prevention to support Sources of Strength.
- **STATE PUBLIC SCHOOL FUND** monies appropriated to the Department of Public Safety. The State Public School Fund is established in Section 22-54-114, C.R.S., and consists primarily of federal mineral lease revenue and a portion of rent and royalties from state school trust lands. Starting with Fiscal Year 2019, the General Assembly provided authority for the transfer of \$5 million



annually from the State Public School Fund for the School Access for Emergency Response Grant Program.

- **FEDERAL FUNDS** awarded or allocated to the Departments of Education and Public Health and Environment. For example, both Project AWARE and Sources of Strength use grant funds awarded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, for school safety programs. Sources of Strength also uses funds awarded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The State has also used federal block grant allocations for school safety programs, including Individuals with Disabilities Education Act funds used for Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports.
- **PUBLIC SCHOOL CAPITAL CONSTRUCTION ASSISTANCE FUND.** The Building Excellent Schools Today (BEST) program is funded from the Public School Capital Construction Assistance Fund [Section 22-43.7-104, C.R.S.], which consists of revenues from (1) state trust land proceeds, primarily from leasing state-owned trust lands for agriculture and oil, gas, and mineral extractions; (2) marijuana excise taxes, which are paid by marijuana cultivators on the retail marijuana they provide to retailers; (3) Colorado Lottery spillover proceeds, which are profits that exceed the annual cap; and (4) interest income on the fund.
- **CUSTODIAL FUNDS** managed by the Department of Law. Custodial funds are accounts that the Department of Law holds custody over for a specific purpose, as established by a court order. The authority for these funds is established in Section 24-31-108, C.R.S. The Department of Law has used custodial funds that it holds for consumer protection purposes to fund Safe2Tell and Sources of Strength.
- **CASH FUNDS CONSISTING OF FEES AND GRANTS.** A very small portion of the funding for the State's school safety programs come from fees and grants maintained in cash funds. The School Safety Resource Center (Resource Center) charges fees to cover the costs of its

conferences. It also received a \$6,000 grant in Fiscal Year 2018. Although Safe2Tell no longer charges fees for its materials, it used some of the fees previously collected to cover nominal costs in the years we reviewed.

Costs for the programs generally comprise personnel, operations such as travel and overhead, and award disbursements (for grant programs). For some programs, costs could be easily identified through CORE because the program's operations are associated with a discrete fund. However, for several programs, the program's expenses are integrated with those of other department programs, or the program addresses more than school safety. For example, BEST provides funding for schools to improve the security of their buildings; however, the program also addresses capital needs of schools beyond security, so not all of its expenses relate to school safety. For such programs, we worked with departments to estimate costs related to school safety. Costs reported for Fiscal Year 2019 are current as of August 2019; it is possible some Fiscal Year 2019 costs will change as departments complete their year-end accounting.

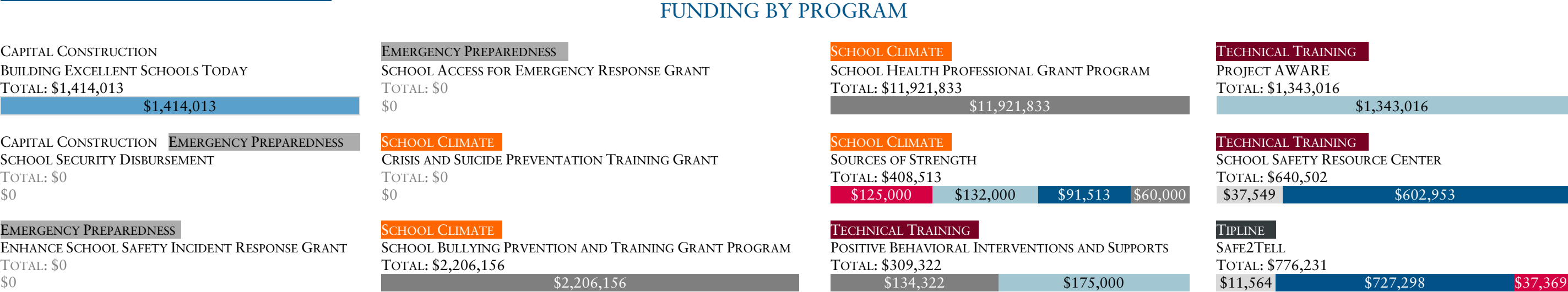
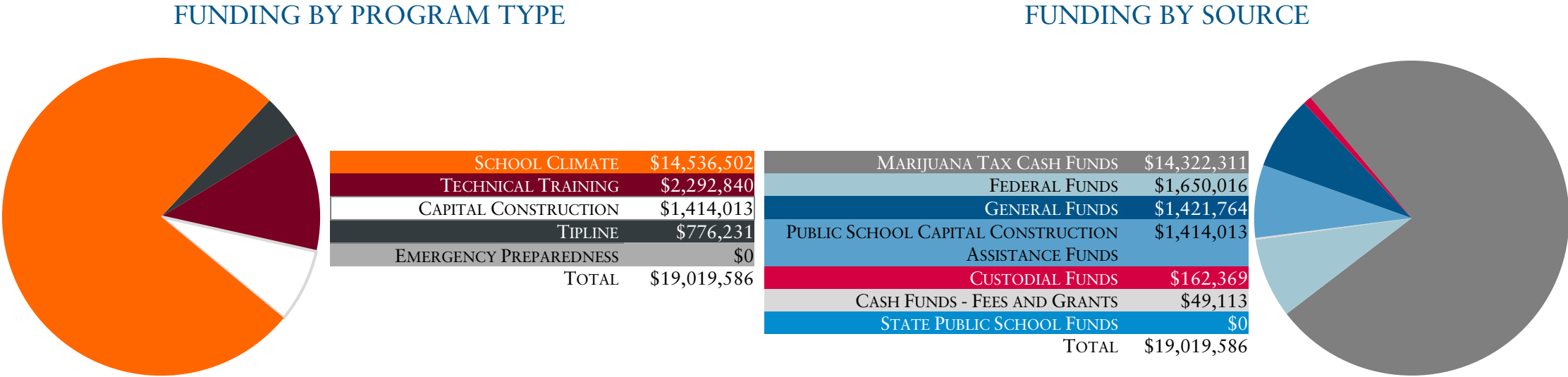
The following exhibits summarize total expenses for the State's key programs that address school safety by funding source and by the aspect of school safety that the program is designed to address for Fiscal Years 2018 and 2019, and budgeted expenses for Fiscal Year 2020.



FISCAL YEAR 2018  
SNAPSHOT

8 PROGRAMS  
\$19,019,586 EXPENDED

EXHIBIT 2.1





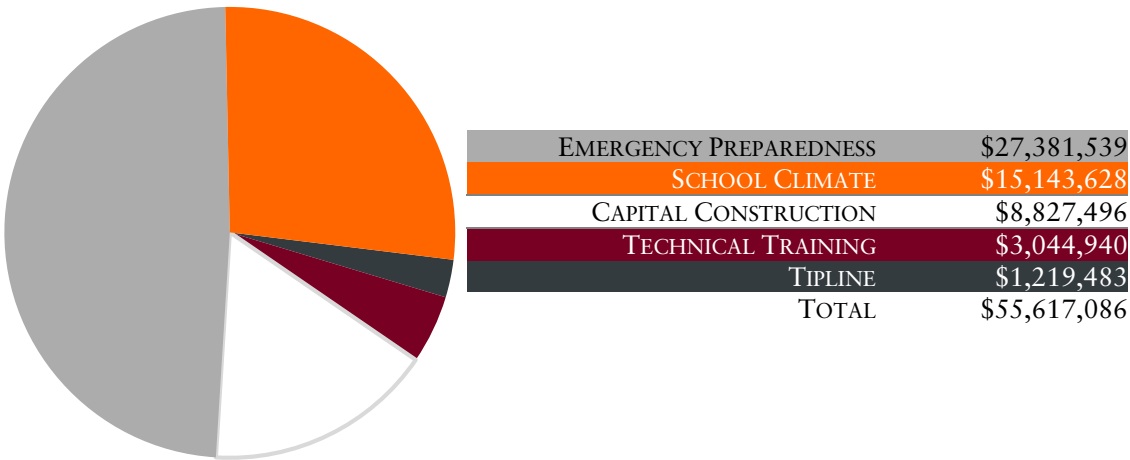


FISCAL YEAR 2019  
SNAPSHOT

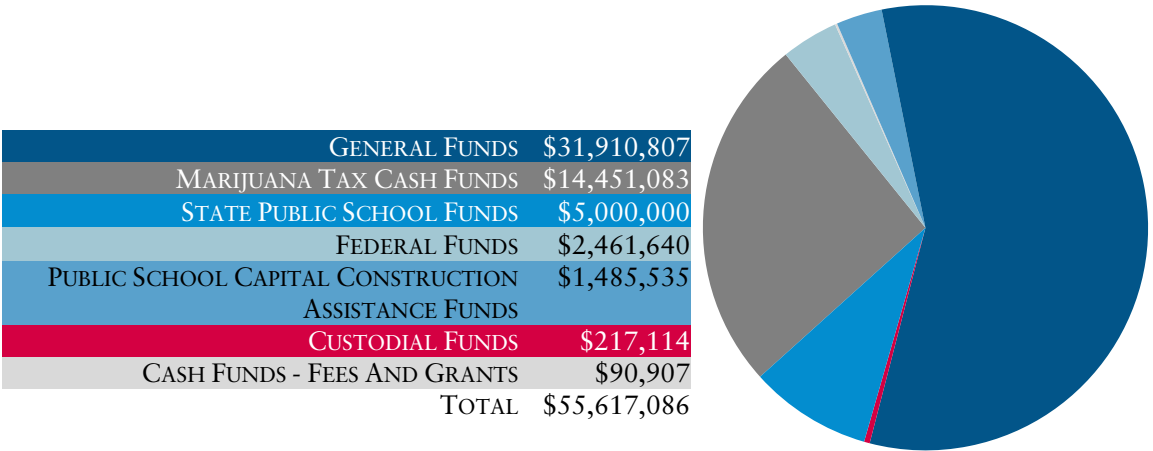
12 PROGRAMS  
\$55,617,086 EXPENDED

EXHIBIT 2.2

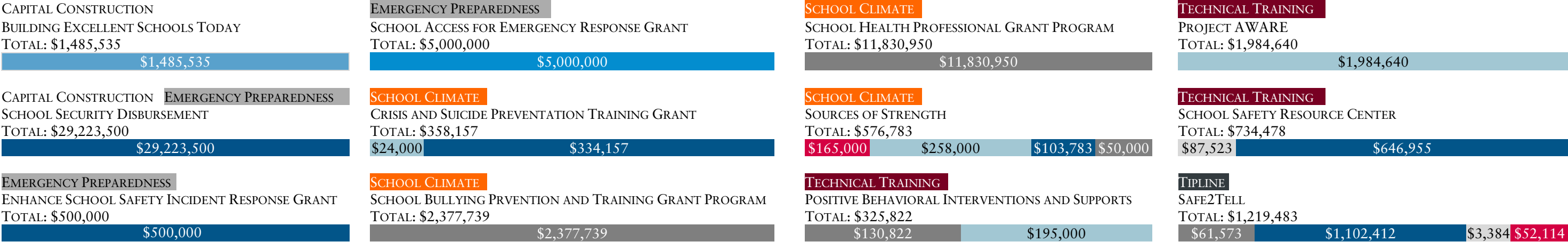
FUNDING BY PROGRAM TYPE



FUNDING BY SOURCE



FUNDING BY PROGRAM



SOURCE: Office of the State Auditor analysis of Fiscal Year 2019 expense data from the Colorado Operations Reporting Engine (CORE) and information provided by the Departments of Education, Law, Public Health and Environment, and Public Safety.

Some reported figures include departments’ estimates. Detailed information about each program's Fiscal Year 2019 expenses and funding sources can be found in APPENDIX A.

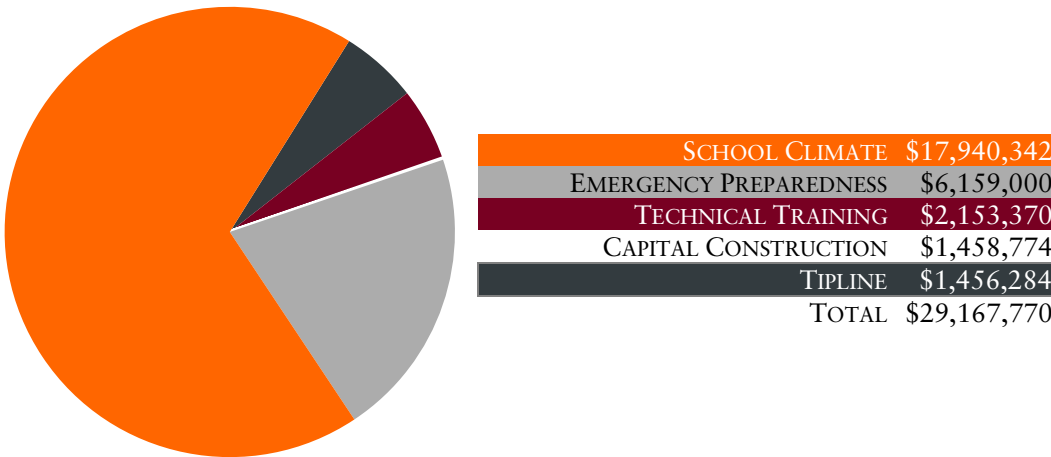


FISCAL YEAR 2020  
SNAPSHOT

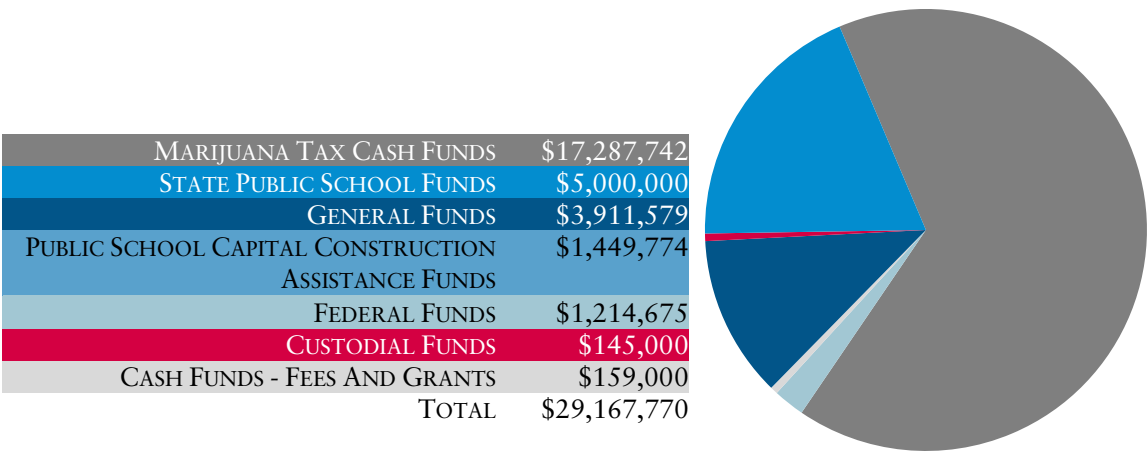
12 PROGRAMS  
\$29,167,770 BUDGETED

EXHIBIT 2.3

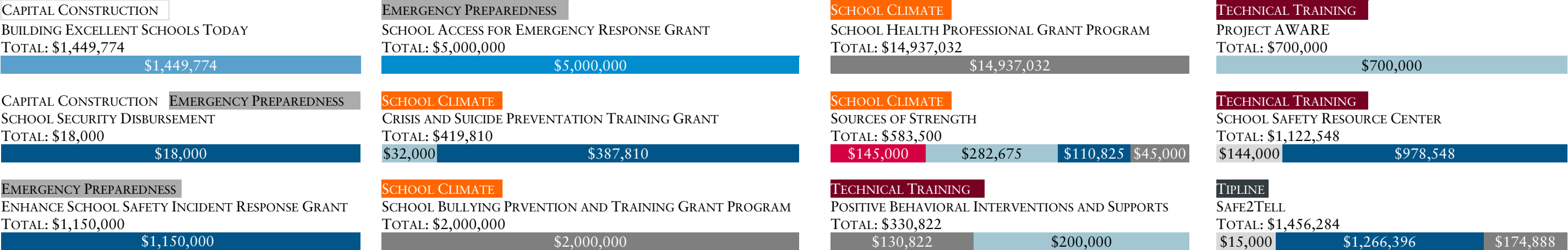
FUNDING BY PROGRAM TYPE



FUNDING BY SOURCE



FUNDING BY PROGRAM



SOURCE: Office of the State Auditor analysis of Fiscal Year 2020 budget information from the Long Bill and other budget documents, and information provided by the Departments of Education, Law, Public Health and Environment, and Public Safety.

Some reported figures include departments’ estimates. Detailed information about each program's Fiscal Year 2020 budgeted expenses and funding sources can be found in APPENDIX A.



# WHICH SCHOOL DISTRICTS ARE SERVED BY THE STATE'S SCHOOL SAFETY PROGRAMS?

We collected data on the unique count of school districts that used the State's school safety programs in Fiscal Years 2018 and 2019 and summarized the information based on the Department of Education's method for categorizing school districts by setting. The purpose of this work was to provide information about the types of school districts that access the programs using the Department of Education's school district settings.

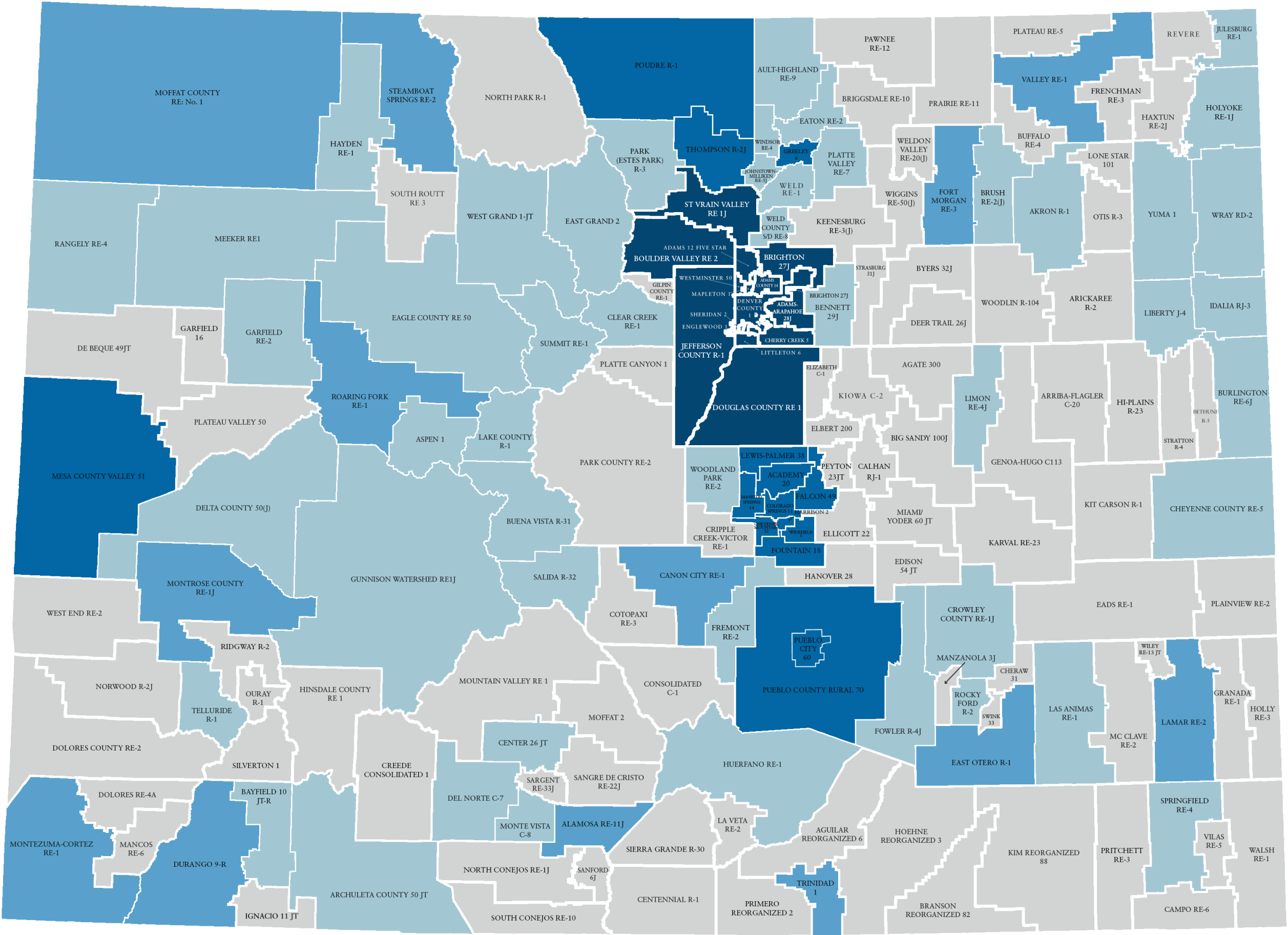
**CATEGORIZATION OF COLORADO SCHOOL DISTRICTS.** For its reporting on school districts, the Department of Education groups Colorado's 178 school districts into settings that are based on the resident population of the school district and its location. The Department of Education also categorizes other entities including the Charter School Institute and the Colorado School for the Deaf and Blind into these categories. The count of school districts included in this report is 180, as bulleted below. EXHIBIT 2.4 shows a map of the state's school districts and the setting that applies.

- **DENVER METRO.** 15 districts in the Denver Metro area. There were 485,960 students enrolled in this setting in the 2018-2019 Academic Year, which was 55.4 percent of the State's student population.
- **URBAN-SUBURBAN.** 17 districts total, including 15 school districts outside the Metro Denver area with resident populations of greater than 30,000, and the Charter School Institute and the Colorado School for the Deaf and Blind. The Charter School Institute serves as a school district for charter schools not otherwise associated with a district. The Colorado School for the Deaf and Blind is a state-run school and not part of a school district. The Department of

Education categorizes these two entities in the urban-suburban district setting; throughout this report we count these entities as districts in this setting. There were 247,841 students enrolled in this setting in the 2018–2019 Academic Year, which was 28.2 percent of the State’s student population.

- **OUTLYING CITY.** 13 districts with resident populations between 7,000 and 29,999. There were 38,921 students enrolled in this setting in the 2018–2019 Academic Year, which was 4.4 percent of the State’s student population.
- **OUTLYING TOWN.** 49 districts with resident populations between 1,000 and 6,999. There were 70,973 students enrolled in this setting in the 2018–2019 Academic Year, which was 8.1 percent of the State’s student population.
- **REMOTE.** 86 districts with resident populations of less than 1,000. There were 30,655 students enrolled in this setting in the 2018–2019 Academic Year, which was 3.5 percent of the State’s student population.

EXHIBIT 2.4. SCHOOL DISTRICT SETTINGS



- LEGEND:
- DENVER METRO
  - URBAN-SUBURBAN
  - OUTLYING CITY
  - OUTLYING TOWN
  - REMOTE

SOURCE: Office of the State Auditor analysis of school district setting information provided by the Department of Education.

NOT PICTURED: Colorado Charter School Institute (Urban-Suburban) and Colorado School for the Deaf and Blind (Urban-Suburban).

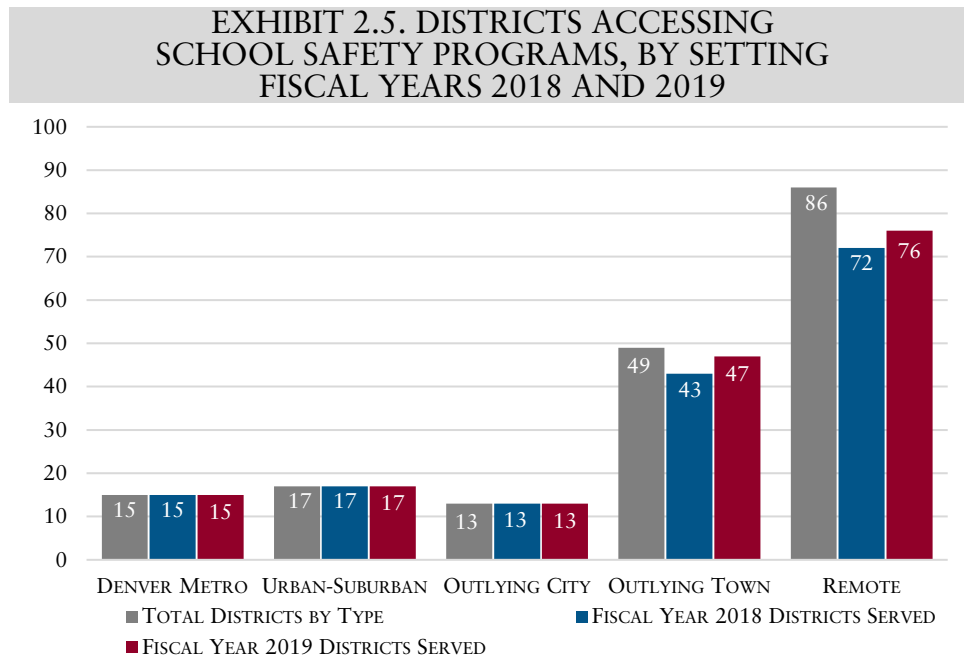




**SCHOOL DISTRICTS SERVED BY THE STATE'S SCHOOL SAFETY PROGRAMS.**

To report on the school districts served by the programs, we collected information from each program for Fiscal Years 2018 and 2019. There were eight programs that served school districts in Fiscal Year 2018 and 11 programs that served school districts in Fiscal Year 2019. The Enhance School Safety Incident Response Grant Program, which was new in Fiscal Year 2019, provides funding to one or more nonprofits for training services. We were not able to report on which school districts may have used the training services of the nonprofit that received grant funds in Fiscal Year 2019; the Department of Public Safety does not collect this information from the grantee.

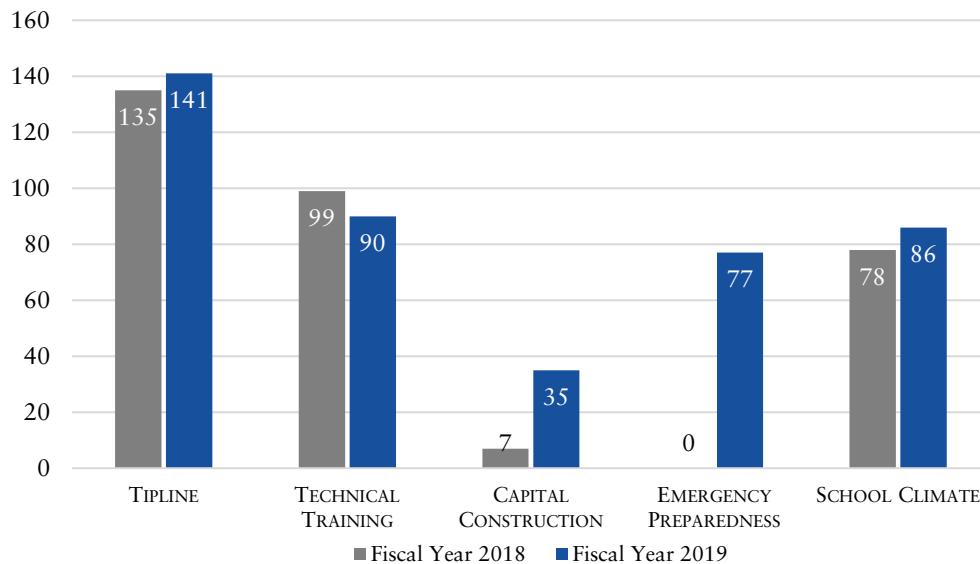
Overall, we found that most school districts accessed at least one of the State's school safety programs in Fiscal Years 2018 and 2019. In Fiscal Year 2018, 160 school districts (89 percent) accessed at least one program. In Fiscal Year 2019, this number increased to 168 (93 percent). EXHIBIT 2.5 illustrate the number of districts by setting that accessed at least one of the State's school safety programs.



SOURCE: Office of the State Auditor analysis of information provided by the Departments of Education, Law, Public Health and Environment, and Public Safety about school districts served by the State's school safety programs in Fiscal Years 2018 and 2019, and school district setting information provided by the Department of Education.

EXHIBIT 2.6 illustrates the number of districts that accessed the State's different type of programs in Fiscal Years 2018 and 2019, with a total of 180 districts counted. School districts that accessed more than one program in a category were counted only once per category.

**EXHIBIT 2.6. DISTRICTS ACCESSING SCHOOL SAFETY PROGRAMS, BY PROGRAM TYPE  
FISCAL YEAR 2018 AND 2019**



SOURCE: Office of the State Auditor analysis of information provided by the Departments of Education, Law, Public Health and Environment, and Public Safety about school districts served by the State's school safety programs in Fiscal Years 2018 and 2019.

**TIPLINE.** The type of program that was most frequently accessed by school districts was the tipline (Safe2Tell) and it was the *only* program accessed by 34 (19 percent) school districts in Fiscal Year 2018 and 28 (16 percent) school districts in Fiscal Year 2019.

**TECHNICAL TRAINING.** Programs that offer training and technical assistance were also widely accessed by school districts. The Resource Center was the program in this technical training category most often accessed by school districts with 67 (37 percent) in Fiscal Year 2018 and 82 (46 percent) in Fiscal Year 2019 accessing its on-site trainings. School districts usually accessed the Resource Center in conjunction with other programs; for all but nine school districts in Fiscal Year 2018 and five in Fiscal Year 2019, the Resource Center was accessed in conjunction with another one of the State's programs. It is possible that more districts than we report accessed services from the Resource Center; the numbers we report reflect only school districts that received an on-site training from the Resource Center. As discussed in the AUDITOR OBSERVATIONS section below and APPENDIX A, we were not

able to report on the school districts trained through the Resource Center’s regional trainings or the school districts that contacted the Resource Center for consultations and technical assistance.

**CAPITAL CONSTRUCTION AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS.** The large jump in school districts accessing capital construction and emergency preparedness programs was due to the General Assembly’s creation of the School Security Disbursement Program and the School Access for Emergency Response Grant Program for Fiscal Year 2019. In Fiscal Year 2018, there were no state level programs for emergency preparedness, but in Fiscal Year 2019, a total of 77 school districts accessed emergency preparedness programs; only five of these school districts did not access any other programs in Fiscal Year 2019. In Fiscal Year 2018, seven schools districts accessed capital construction funding under BEST. In Fiscal Year 2019, four school districts accessed BEST for capital construction, an additional 29 school districts accessed capital construction under the School Security Disbursement Program, and two accessed capital construction under both grants For capital construction programs, all but two districts accessed capital construction funding in addition to using at least one other state program.

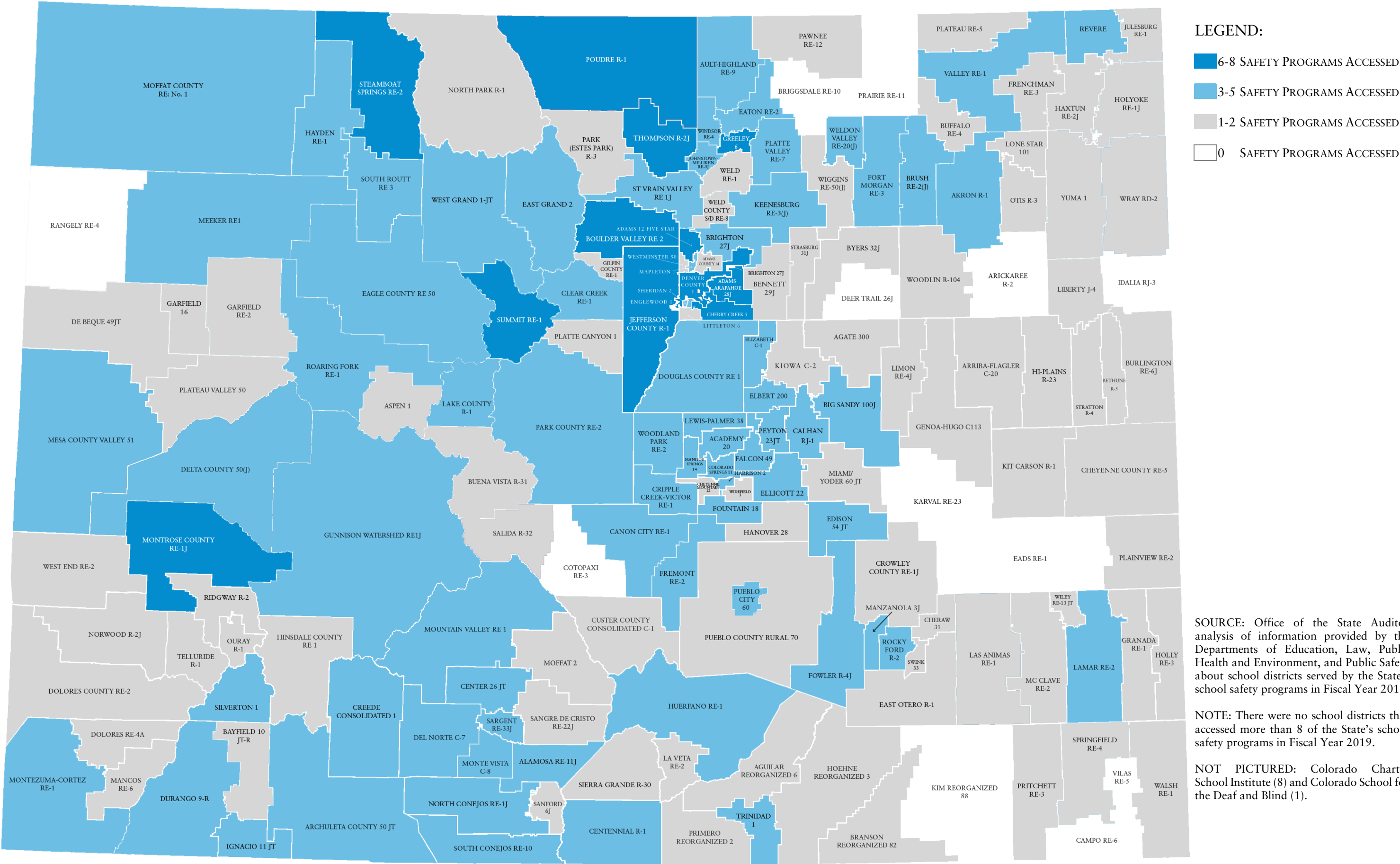
**SCHOOL CLIMATE.** The increase from 78 (43 percent) to 86 (48 percent) school districts accessing programs to address school climate can be attributed, in part, to the General Assembly’s creation of the Crisis and Suicide Prevention Grant Program starting in Fiscal Year 2019. Several school districts accessed more than one of the State’s programs in this category. Specifically, in Fiscal Year 2018, 21 school districts accessed more than one of the three school climate programs; in Fiscal Year 2019, 25 school districts accessed more than one of the four school climate programs. School climate programs were usually accessed in conjunction with programs in other categories; for all but six school districts in Fiscal Years 2018 and two in Fiscal Year 2019 the school district accessed a school climate program along with a program in another category.

No school districts accessed all of the State's programs and very few accessed more than five programs. Specifically, three school districts (2 percent) accessed six or more of the eight programs available in Fiscal Year 2018 and 13 school districts (7 percent) accessed six or more of the 11 programs available in Fiscal Year 2019.

EXHIBIT 2.7 shows the number of programs accessed by school districts in Fiscal Year 2019.



EXHIBIT 2.7. NUMBER OF SCHOOL SAFETY PROGRAMS ACCESSED BY SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN FISCAL YEAR 2019







# AUDITOR OBSERVATIONS

The State's overall approach for promoting school safety across Colorado is a policy choice and the purpose of this audit was not to identify an optimum strategy for Colorado's school safety structure. Through our review, we made observations about the State's approach to providing programs to address school safety that are both promising and concerning.

First, we noted several instances of coordination among the programs, such as:

- Before awarding BEST grants for security improvements in Fiscal Year 2019, Department of Education staff inquired with Department of Public Safety staff about the schools and projects funded by the School Security Disbursement Program, so as not to duplicate funding.
- Staff who manage school-safety related grants at the Department of Education and at the Department of Public Health and Environment sit on the board of the Resource Center to help with information sharing.
- The Department of Law and the Department of Public Health and Environment work together to provide funding for suicide prevention programs, since suicide accounts for the greatest share of tips received by Safe2Tell.
- The Department of Law and the Department of Public Safety report that in the last year they have worked to improve coordination in following up on resolution of Safe2Tell tips; previously both departments independently followed up with schools and law enforcement on the resolution of tips.

Second, we learned that Colorado's programs to promote school safety are not centralized; they have been established piecemeal over the last 20 years; oversight of them is spread over four separate departments;

and, in general, statutes do not require programs to work together, although recent bills have provided for coordination among some programs. The decentralized patchwork of programming may create a risk for duplicated efforts, gaps in services, and challenges in determining the overall impact of the State's programs. We observed the examples outlined below that may indicate areas for policymakers to focus future initiatives.

**LACK OF COORDINATION AND RISK OF DUPLICATION.** While there is cross agency collaboration (such as the efforts listed above), there is an overall lack of coordination and oversight to ensure that the programs that have similar purposes do not duplicate efforts, that their priorities and messaging are consistent, and that they collectively reach the greatest number of schools. For example, eight of the 12 programs we reviewed touch on aspects of student mental and behavioral health. Specifically:

- The Department of Education has two programs where staff provide direct training to schools on behavioral health issues (Project AWARE and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports) and two grant programs that provide funding for schools to address behavioral health issues (School Bullying Prevention and Education Grant Program and School Health Professional Grant Program).
- The Department of Law provides funding for the Sources of Strength suicide prevention program and, during the years we reviewed, its Safe2Tell staff delivered training content related to suicide prevention.
- The Department of Public Health and Environment has two programs to provide funding for schools related to suicide prevention (Crisis and Suicide Prevention Training Grant Program and Sources of Strength).
- The Resource Center at the Department of Public Safety delivers training content on suicide prevention.

A staff person at one of these programs told us that there is a lot of duplication in the state concerning mental health in schools and there

needs to be one message going to schools. During the years we reviewed, both Safe2Tell at the Department of Law and the Resource Center at the Department of Public Safety reported to us that they gave trainings to schools that touched on bullying, mental health, school violence, sexting, substance abuse, and suicide, and that they did not coordinate the content or scheduling of their trainings. We did not perform an in-depth review of each program's training materials to conclude on whether the trainings conducted by the two programs conflict or overlap, but the lack of coordination creates a risk that schools may get mixed messages. Staff at both departments raised this concern. For example, one staff person told us that the fact that the two different programs train on suicide prevention confuses people if the messages are not always the same. In addition, despite both programs reporting difficulty in fulfilling the high demand from schools for training, they do not coordinate with each other to make sure that they collectively reach the greatest number of schools without duplication.

**POSSIBLE GAPS IN SERVICES.** All of the programs we reviewed are voluntary, meaning school districts must take action to obtain services or funds. The data we reviewed showed variations in use of the programs across districts. As illustrated in EXHIBIT 2.7, 12 school districts accessed none of the State's school safety programs in Fiscal Year 2019 and 85 accessed only one or two of the programs. School districts that accessed a lower number of the State's programs tended to be in remote settings. For example, in Fiscal Year 2019, a majority (71 percent) of the school districts categorized as Remote accessed only one or two of the State's programs, whereas the majority (80 percent) of Denver Metro school districts accessed between three and eight programs. To the extent the General Assembly intends to help all school districts improve the safety of their schools, this discrepancy may indicate a need for policy or programmatic changes.

**LACK OF INFORMATION ON EFFECTIVENESS.** Almost all of the 12 programs we reviewed track and report some data about their operations, but there is no mechanism to determine the extent to which the programs, in combination, are improving Colorado's school safety

landscape. The lack of coordination in establishing and operating the programs does not lend itself to an overarching assessment. Statute does charge the Resource Center with responsibility “to conduct regular research and assessment projects to determine the efficacy of statewide and local policies and programming” [Section 24-33.5-1803(3)(d), C.R.S.]. The Resource Center reported that since its founding, it has researched and assessed issues related to school safety policies and programming. For example, in 2018 and 2019 the Resource Center reported that it (1) analyzed threat assessment protocols used by schools in and out of Colorado to update the threat assessment materials it provides to schools, and (2) held meetings of school health professionals to generate recommendations for school districts in creating suicide strategies. While these efforts may have considered the effectiveness of the specific protocols and strategies evaluated, they do not provide an assessment of the efficacy of the State’s overall approach, as required by statute.

**CLARITY OF REPORTING.** There are no statutory reporting requirements for the Resource Center; however, the Resource Center provides an annual report to the General Assembly on all of its activities for the previous calendar year and posts it on its website. The report includes information on its trainings, outreach, consultation and collaboration, workgroups, and available resources. We noted one area of the report that may be misleading to readers. The Calendar Year 2018 report stated that the Resource Center received and responded to about 2,200 “contacts for resources, trainings, consultations, and technical assistance on a variety of school safety-related issues.” As reported, the 2,200 figure can reasonably be read to mean that the Resource Center provided some type of school safety support on 2,200 occasions during the year. However, according to information we collected during the audit, the 2,200 figure encompasses *all* phone contacts and meetings involving the Resource Center, such as phone calls from vendors for event planning, calls to the OIT helpdesk to get new staff set up with their computers, and internal staff meetings. By characterizing all these events as contact about “resources, trainings, consultations, and technical assistance on a variety of school safety-related issues” in its annual report, the Resource Center may mislead readers. We also

learned that policymakers likely relied on this figure for decision-making; the Department of Public Safety cited the number in June 2019 when requesting \$327,549 in emergency supplemental funding for four additional FTE for the Resource Center. We did not report on the number of school districts that contacted the Resource Center for consultations and technical assistance because of our concerns with the validity and reliability of the data. We have provided a letter to the Department of Public Safety outlining our concerns about its reporting of this information.



# APPENDIX A





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## PROGRAMS

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# TIPLINE

## SAFE2TELL

DEPARTMENT OF LAW

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY

A service for taking tips on safety concerns about schools and students and for forwarding those tips to school and law enforcement officials so that they can provide resources for early intervention and resolution.

### WHAT IS THE PROGRAM AND WHAT SERVICE DOES IT PROVIDE?

The purpose of Safe2Tell is to provide an anonymous platform for anyone to report “unsafe, potentially harmful, dangerous, violent, or criminal activities in schools or the threat of those activities” [Section 24-31-606, C.R.S.]. Students and community members can provide tips by calling Safe2Tell, submitting an online web form tip at [safe2tell.org](http://safe2tell.org), or using Safe2Tell’s mobile application. Analysts are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to take the tips and forward them to the relevant school(s) and law enforcement. Safe2Tell staff are required to “analyze and follow up with law enforcement and schools to determine the outcome of a report made to the program, including actions taken on the report” [Section 24-31-606(2)(n), C.R.S.].

In 2003, Safe2Tell was founded as a non-profit organization to establish a statewide anonymous threat reporting tool. State Patrol within the Department of Public Safety (Public Safety) provided dispatch services starting in 2004. In 2007, the General Assembly established the duties and functions of Safe2Tell in statute and provided protections for the anonymity of tips [Senate Bill 07-197], but it remained a public-private partnership.

In 2014, the General Assembly fully incorporated Safe2Tell as part of state government within the Department of Law [Senate Bill 14-002]. Safe2Tell is administered with seven staff who:

- Create the procedures for the operation of the tipline.

- Provide resources and materials to educate schools about the program.
- Deliver technical assistance to schools and law enforcement on how to set up their response systems.
- Work with schools and the Department of Education to update the contact information for staff who should be receiving tips.
- Offer trainings to parents, students, and school staff.
- Review every tip to ensure the consistency of information inputted into the system.

The Department of Law transferred funds to Public Safety annually for its dispatch services for Fiscal Years 2015 through 2019, which were about \$42,000 in Fiscal Year 2018 and \$73,000 in Fiscal Year 2019. Public Safety initially used its State Patrol dispatchers to take Safe2Tell tips as part of their other duties. Department of Law's payments for dispatch services were based on Public Safety's analysis of previous year use of dispatch services by Safe2Tell as a percentage of the total dispatch efforts.

When State Patrol dispatchers were no longer able to absorb the increasing volume of Safe2Tell tips, Public Safety requested and received funding from the General Assembly to staff a separate unit of analysts specifically to take Safe2Tell tips; Public Safety received funding for 5.2 FTE in Fiscal Year 2019, which was increased to 8 FTE starting in Fiscal Year 2020. These staff analysts are dedicated to Safe2Tell, taking only Safe2Tell tips, and are part of the Colorado Information Analysis Center, within Public Safety. Analysts' duties include:

- Inputting tips into the tip system.
- Communicating with reporting parties as needed to gather necessary information.
- Following up with schools and law enforcement to ensure that they received and acted on the tips.

- Finding contact information for schools that have not opted into the system but receive a tip.

Safe2Tell forwards tips to schools and law enforcement through its electronic platform. Schools and law enforcement create accounts and are notified when a tip is forwarded to them; they can then log in to read the details of the tip and record their actions and resolution of the tip.

Safe2Tell received about 15,000 school or school district-related tips in Fiscal Year 2018 and about 21,000 tips in Fiscal Year 2019. The following exhibit shows the number of school districts by setting that received at least one tip via Safe2Tell in Fiscal Years 2018 and 2019.

SAFE2TELL SCHOOL DISTRICTS THAT RECEIVED SAFE2TELL TIPS FISCAL YEARS 2018 AND 2019		
SCHOOL DISTRICT BY SETTING	2018	2019
Denver Metro	15	15
Urban-Suburban	15	15
Outlying City	13	13
Outlying Town	42	44
Remote	50	54
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>141</b>
SOURCE: Office of the State Auditor analysis of data provided by the Department of Law and school district setting information provided the Department of Education.		

## HOW IS THE PROGRAM FUNDED AND HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?

Safe2Tell is funded by a mix of General Funds, custodial funds, and cash funds flowing through both the Departments of Law and Public Safety, as described in the bullets below.

- **GENERAL FUNDS** appropriated to the Department of Law for the Office of Community Engagement. The Department of Law uses these funds to pay for its work related to Safe2Tell. In addition, through Fiscal Year 2019, it transferred some of these funds to Public Safety for its dispatch services related to Safe2Tell. In Fiscal Year 2019, this transfer was about \$73,000. Starting with Fiscal Year

2020, the General Assembly began appropriating these funds directly to Public Safety and decreased the Department of Law's General Fund appropriation accordingly.

- **GENERAL FUNDS** appropriated to Public Safety for Safe2Tell. Starting in Fiscal Year 2019, the General Assembly provided funding directly to Public Safety for staff dedicated to Safe2Tell. In Fiscal Year 2019, the funding covered 5.2 FTE and for Fiscal Year 2020, the funding was increased to cover 8 FTE.
- **MARIJUANA TAX CASH FUNDS** appropriated to the Department of Law for Safe2Tell. Starting in Fiscal Year 2019 [House Bill 18-1434], the General Assembly appropriated Marijuana Tax Cash Funds to the Department of Law to fund (1) a training specialist to conduct additional statewide training to schools and law enforcement on the Safe2Tell program and the prevention of false reporting and other system misuse; and (2) a data specialist to conduct outreach with schools and law enforcement on the collection of Safe2Tell data, analyze Safe2Tell data, and prepare relevant reports.
- **CUSTODIAL FUNDS** managed by the Department of Law. Custodial funds are accounts that the Department of Law holds custody over for a specific purpose, as established by a court order. The authority for these funds is established in Section 24-31-108, C.R.S. The Department of Law reports that it has two types of custodial funds in the years we reviewed to supplement Safe2Tell expenses that the General Fund does not cover: (1) Consumer Protection Custodial Funds, which are available for consumer protection and may be used for Safe2Tell; and (2) for a one-time expense, the Special Prosecutions Custodial Fund. The Department of Law reported that custodial funds can fluctuate from year to year and are not guaranteed to be available for program use, and without these funds, the Safe2Tell program would need to find additional funding sources to cover expenses.
- **SAFE2TELL CASH FUND** established by Section 24-31-610, C.R.S., to hold any fees charged by the Department of Law for Safe2Tell

materials and any gifts, grants, and donations received for Safe2Tell. With Senate Bill 16-193, the General Assembly required the Department of Law to annually “provide Safe2Tell awareness and education materials to all preschool, elementary, and secondary schools in Colorado at no charge to the school” [Section 24-31-606(2)(g), C.R.S.]. The Department of Law reports that since Senate Bill 16-193 passed, the Cash Fund is not generally used to support Safe2Tell operations.

SAFE2TELL SOURCES OF EXPENDED FUNDS DEPARTMENT OF LAW AND DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY FISCAL YEARS 2018 THROUGH 2020			
FUNDING SOURCE	2018	2019	2020 (BUDGETED)
General Funds appropriated to the Department of Law and used for Safe2Tell	\$727,298	\$774,668	\$730,535
General Funds appropriated to the Department of Public Safety for Safe2Tell	\$0	\$327,744	\$535,861
Marijuana Tax Cash Funds appropriated to Law for Safe2Tell	\$0	\$61,573	\$174,888
Custodial funds managed by the Department of Law and used for Safe2Tell	\$37,369	\$52,114	\$0
Safe2Tell Cash Fund	\$11,564	\$3,384	\$15,000 <sup>1</sup>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$776,231</b>	<b>\$1,219,483</b>	<b>\$1,456,284</b>
SOURCE: Office of the State Auditor analysis of Fiscal Years 2018 and 2019 expense data and Fiscal Year 2020 budget data provided by the Department of Law, Fiscal Year 2019 expense data from the Colorado Operations Reporting Engine (CORE) for the Department of Public Safety, and the Fiscal Year 2020 Long Bill.			
<sup>1</sup> Represents amount letter-noted in the Fiscal Year 2020 Long Bill. As of August 2019, the Safe2Tell Cash Fund had \$6,450 cash on hand.			

Safe2Tell expenses include personnel both at the Departments of Law and Public Safety, Safe2Tell’s technology platform for the tip response system, travel expenses for on-site trainings provided by the Department of Law’s Safe2Tell program staff, awareness and educational materials provided to schools and youth organizations, and other operational expenses such as overhead.

## WHAT DOES THE DEPARTMENT REPORT ABOUT THE PROGRAM?

In 2018, the General Assembly created a requirement with House Bill 18-1434 for the Department of Law to annually analyze Safe2Tell data from the preceding fiscal year and prepare a written report to be posted on the program's website and provided to the General Assembly [Section 24-31-611, C.R.S.]. The Department submitted its first report in 2018 with the required elements, including:

- Summary of outcomes and actions taken on tips made to the program.
- Number of Safe2Tell reports by category, such as bullying tips or suicide tips, broken down by month. Safe2Tell received a total of 16,000 tips during the 2017-2018 Academic Year, with suicide as the highest category of tips received.
- Total number of incidents of misuse of the program, broken down into categories, such as if a tip was a prank, a misuse of Safe2Tell, or a false tip. Of the 16,000 tips, 395 (2.5 percent) were pranks, 161 (1 percent) were misuse, and 528 (3.3 percent) were false tips.
- Number of reports involving a single incident; Safe2Tell can receive multiple tips on one event and this reporting aspect captures how many tips were about unique events or about a shared event. A total of 14,992 tips were unique single incidents.
- Number of times Safe2Tell was used by a reporting party to make a threat against or otherwise harm another. Only one tip received was a reporting party threatening to harm another person.
- Number of times a reporting party was in crisis and was reporting to the program to obtain assistance, and the time it took to identify the reporting party and respond. In the 2017–2018 Academic Year, Safe2Tell received 17 reports of someone in crisis. The time it took to identify the reporting party was immediate, while the average response time was 51 minutes.



- Effectiveness of Safe2Tell dispatch center within Public Safety. The Department of Law reported, “Safe2Tell and the Colorado Office of the Attorney General are proud of the collaboration with Public Safety to operate the dispatch center and view the partnership as highly effective.”
- Recommendations regarding how to improve the program based on available data. The Department of Law identified several recommendations for improving the program including:
  - ▶ Use data to inform topic areas for training of school personnel and law enforcement.
  - ▶ Provide Safe2Tell response teams with directives on the difference between unfounded, false tips, and misuse of the program.
  - ▶ Recommend each school district provide Safe2Tell with designated schools contacts to oversee quality control on tip investigations, assist in trainings, and serve as a liaison between Safe2Tell, the district, and law enforcement.

The next report is expected in December 2019.



# TRAINING AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT

## SCHOOL SAFETY RESOURCE CENTER

### DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY

A program to serve as a resource for schools on the topic of school safety.

#### WHAT IS THIS PROGRAM AND WHAT SERVICES DOES IT PROVIDE?

The General Assembly created the School Safety Resource Center (Resource Center) in 2008 [Senate Bill 08-001] “to assist schools in preventing, preparing for, responding to, and recovering from emergencies and crisis situations and to foster positive learning environments” [Section 24-33.5-1803(1), C.R.S.]. The Resource Center provides support and resources to schools and other stakeholders to promote school safety and support safe learning environments through technical guidance; training; and resources; including on-site trainings, online trainings, and regional trainings and conferences. All of these services are offered at no cost to schools, except for conference fees charged for regional trainings.

The Resource Center is housed within the Department of Public Safety (Public Safety) under the executive director’s office. Prior to Fiscal Year 2020, the Resource Center had six full-time equivalent staff (FTE), which included three staff trainers. In June 2019, the Department was approved for an emergency supplemental appropriation to fund four new FTE as regional trainers located around the state starting in Fiscal Year 2020.

The Resource Center has a 19-member advisory board that meets four times a year and recommends policies to the Resource Center. Advisory board members include subject matter experts from other state agencies as well as local law enforcement and school personnel. The advisory board is set for sunset review in 2022 [Section 24-33.5-1804(6), C.R.S.].

The following two exhibits outline the statutory duties of the Resource Center, as listed in statute [Section 24-33.5-1803(3), C.R.S.], and the ways in which the Resource Center has reported fulfilling these duties. These exhibits are divided into (1) general duties and (2) consultation and collaboration duties.

SCHOOL SAFETY RESOURCE CENTER GENERAL DUTIES	
DUTIES	REPORTED ACTIVITIES FOR CALENDAR YEAR 2018
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To assist schools in developing and implementing safety and preparedness plans.</li> <li>▪ To assist schools in establishing practices and strategies for use in responding to an emergency or crisis situation.</li> <li>▪ To assist schools in developing and establishing prevention and intervention efforts to ensure safe and secure learning environments.</li> <li>▪ To make information and other resources available to all schools and school officials, specifically including awareness and prevention of child sexual abuse and assault, and crisis and suicide prevention and training.</li> <li>▪ To make available a model program concerning the risks and consequences of sexting.</li> </ul>	<p>Offered the following trainings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A statewide safety summit co-sponsored with the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, Safe2Tell, and the Department of Public Health and Environment.</li> <li>▪ 11 regional conferences covering a variety of school safety topics from nationally recognized experts.</li> <li>▪ 165 trainings with school officials on-site at schools.</li> <li>▪ 15 online training modules, including one on sexting and one on suicide warning signs and risk factors.</li> </ul> <p>Revised and published five resource guides covering information on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Conducting threat assessments and identifying resources to help schools.</li> <li>▪ Child sexual abuse and assault prevention.</li> <li>▪ Bullying and harassment prevention.</li> <li>▪ Suicide prevention and intervention.</li> <li>▪ Restorative practices for discipline for schools, which foster positive approaches to discipline, including dialogue, as opposed to traditional punitive measures.</li> </ul> <p>Sent school safety information on upcoming trainings, grant opportunities, and emerging issues to more than 5,000 individuals and organizations through its monthly e-updates and social media platforms.</p> <p>Replied to inquiries from schools and school districts.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To conduct regular research and assessment projects to determine the efficacy of statewide and local policies and programming.</li> </ul>	<p>Analyzed threat assessment protocols used by schools in and out of Colorado to update the threat assessment materials it provides to schools.</p> <p>Facilitated working group of school health professionals to generate recommendations for school districts in creating suicide strategies.</p> <p><i>As noted in CHAPTER 2, while the efforts outlined above provide resources for schools in improving their school safety policies, they do not provide an assessment of the efficacy of the State's overall approach, as required by statute.</i></p>
SOURCE: Office of the State Auditor analysis of Colorado Revised Statutes and School Safety Resource Center's annual legislative report covering Calendar Year 2018.	

## SCHOOL SAFETY RESOURCE CENTER CONSULTATION AND COLLABORATION DUTIES

DUTIES	REPORTED ACTIVITIES FOR CALENDAR YEAR 2018
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To consult with school districts, schools, charter schools, and the Department of Education on evidence based practices for bullying prevention, and to consult with the Department of Education on the School Bullying Prevention and Education Grant Program.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provided input on the Department of Education's model bullying prevention policies draft and consults with bullying grant staff consistently through the Resource Center advisory board.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To work collaboratively with the Office of Suicide Prevention in the Department of Public Health and Environment (Public Health) concerning the Crisis and Suicide Prevention Training Grant Program.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Evaluated grant applications and helped select grant recipients.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To provide information and resources relating to school safety, school emergency response planning and training, development and maintenance of school resource officer programs and interoperable communications in schools, to the Division of Fire Prevention and Control in the Department of Public Safety to be distributed to school districts and schools.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Worked in collaboration with all offices of Public Safety (Division of Fire Prevention and Control, Colorado Information Analysis Center, and State Patrol) to create a brochure for distribution to all schools and other community entities about the services the Resource Center has available to all schools.</li> <li>▪ Collaborated with Public Safety offices to conduct half-day trainings on services to schools and emergency responders on standards for responding to active threats.</li> </ul>

SOURCE: Office of the State Auditor analysis of Colorado Revised Statutes and interviews with staff at the Departments of Education, Public Health and Environment, and Public Safety.

The Resource Center also reports that it engages in many other activities that are not statutorily required, but that it views as part of its responsibilities as a resource center. The 2018 annual report outlines several of these activities including facilitating working groups, presenting at conferences, collaborating with professional organizations, and helping other states with threat assessments.

The following exhibit shows the settings of the 67 school districts where the Resource Center provided on-site trainings in Calendar Year 2017 and the 82 school districts where the Resource Center provided on-site trainings in Calendar Year 2018. Some districts received a training from the Resource Center in both years. On-site trainings can include threat assessment training, identifying adult sexual misconduct or child sexual abuse, bullying prevention, social and emotional well-being or school climate best practices, and facility safety reviews. The information is reported in calendar years because the Resource Center summarizes its

activities on a calendar year basis in its annual legislative report; it does not track and document its activities by fiscal year.

SCHOOL SAFETY RESOURCE CENTER SCHOOL DISTRICTS TRAINED CALENDAR YEARS 2017 AND 2018		
SCHOOL DISTRICT BY SETTING	2017	2018
Denver Metro	9	11
Urban-Suburban	8	8
Outlying City	7	8
Outlying Town	14	24
Remote	29	31
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>82</b>
SOURCE: Office of the State Auditor analysis of Calendar Years 2017 and 2018 School Safety Resource Center annual legislative reports and school district setting information provided by the Department of Education.		

School districts may have also received training or support from the Resource Center through regional trainings, online trainings, or contacting the Resource Center for consultation; these ways that districts may have received training or support are not captured in the exhibit. The Resource Center only tracks the number of attendees at regional conferences and the number of times an online training was accessed; it does not capture the school districts that send individuals for training. As discussed in the AUDITOR OBSERVATIONS section of CHAPTER 2, we have concerns with the validity and reliability of data about the Resource Center's contacts for consultations and technical assistance.

#### HOW IS THE PROGRAM FUNDED AND HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?

The Resource Center is funded largely with General Funds appropriated to Public Safety for the program. In 2010, the General Assembly passed House Bill 10-1336, establishing the School Safety Resource Center Cash Fund, and gave the Resource Center authority to charge fees to cover costs of its trainings and conferences, and to accept gifts, grants, and donations [Section 24-33.5-1807, C.R.S.]. In Fiscal Years 2018 and 2019, the Resource Center charged some regional training conference fees to attendees to cover the costs of the conferences. The Resource

Center received a \$6,000 grant in Fiscal Year 2018, but did not receive any grants, gifts, or donations in Fiscal Year 2019.

In June 2019, Public Safety requested, and the Joint Budget Committee approved, an emergency supplemental appropriation for the authority to spend \$327,549 from the School Safety Resource Center Cash Fund to hire four new FTE as regional school safety trainers. The emergency supplemental appropriation comes from the \$3.85 million remaining in the School Safety Resource Center Cash Fund, after the General Assembly appropriated \$35 million to the fund for Fiscal Year 2019 for school safety purposes. Most of the \$35 million appropriation was used in Fiscal Year 2019 for two of the grant and disbursement programs administered by Public Safety: the Enhance School Safety Incident Response Grant Program and the School Security Disbursement program; these programs are discussed later in APPENDIX A.

SCHOOL SAFETY RESOURCE CENTER SOURCES OF EXPENDED FUNDS FISCAL YEARS 2018 THROUGH 2020			
FUNDING SOURCE	2018	2019	2020 (BUDGETED)
General Funds appropriated to the Department of Public Safety for the Resource Center	\$602,953	\$646,955	\$650,999
School Safety Resource Center Cash Fund	\$37,549	\$87,523	\$144,000 <sup>1</sup>
General Funds appropriated to the School Safety Resource Center Cash Fund and used for an emergency supplemental appropriation for Fiscal Year 2020	N/A	N/A	\$327,549
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$640,502</b>	<b>\$734,478</b>	<b>\$1,122,548</b>
SOURCE: Office of the State Auditor analysis of Fiscal Years 2018 and 2019 expense data from the Colorado Operations Reporting Engine (CORE) and Fiscal Year 2020 budget information from the Long Bill, emergency supplemental appropriation request, and information provided by the Department of Public Safety.			
<sup>1</sup> Cash revenue from conference fees and possible grants, gifts, or donations, have not been estimated by the School Safety Resource Center for Fiscal Year 2020; however, the Resource Center was appropriated up to \$144,000 from the Cash Fund for Fiscal Year 2020.			

The Resource Center's main expense is personnel, which was about \$518,000 in Fiscal Year 2018 and about \$594,000 in Fiscal Year 2019; the Resource Center estimates personnel costs to be about \$855,000 in Fiscal Year 2020. The Resource Center's operational expenses were about \$122,000 in Fiscal Year 2018, about \$140,000 in Fiscal Year 2019, and are projected to be about \$250,000 in Fiscal Year 2020.

Operational expenses include travel; conference costs such as event space rental, and catering; and general operating and office administration.

#### WHAT DOES THE DEPARTMENT REPORT ABOUT THE PROGRAM?

Statute does not require the Resource Center to report on its activities. However, the Resource Center provides an annual report to the General Assembly on all of its activities for the previous calendar year and posts it on its website. The report includes information on its trainings, outreach, consultation and collaboration, workgroups, and available resources.



# TRAINING AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT

## POSITIVE BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTIONS AND SUPPORTS (PBIS)

### DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

A program to provide training to schools on an evidence-based framework for improving school safety.

#### WHAT IS THE PROGRAM AND WHAT SERVICE DOES IT PROVIDE?

In 2002, the Office of Learning Supports, within the Department of Education, started training Colorado schools on an evidence-based framework to improve school safety and promote positive behavior called Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS).

The PBIS prevention based framework emphasizes (1) teaching students social, emotional, and behavioral competence, and (2) training school officials on developing positive, predictable, and safe environments that promote strong interpersonal relationships.

The Department of Education's Office of Learning Supports has five staff available to train school officials on the development and implementation of the PBIS framework, offer awareness days to schools interested in learning about PBIS, host informational webinars on PBIS, and assess the effectiveness of school implementation. The Department of Education provides 8-day trainings and 2-day follow-up trainings for schools implementing a general school-wide PBIS framework and 4-day trainings, typically delivered in small group settings, to help schools implement more targeted and intensive PBIS framework for students with specific behavior challenges.

In Fiscal Year 2018, the Department of Education provided PBIS training to 93 schools and 18 districts, representing 52 unique school districts, and in Fiscal Year 2019, the Department of Education provided training to 53 schools, representing 26 school districts. The

Office of Learning Supports staff reported that schools are served on a first come, first served basis. While the Office of Learning Supports keeps a waitlist of schools, it has used large venues for training multiple schools and school districts simultaneously, and therefore staff report that to date, no school has been turned away from training.

POSITIVE BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTIONS AND SUPPORTS (PBIS) SCHOOL DISTRICTS THAT RECEIVED PBIS TRAINING FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION FISCAL YEARS 2018 AND 2019		
SCHOOL DISTRICT BY SETTING	2018	2019
Denver Metro	11	8
Urban-Suburban	9	7
Outlying City	6	2
Outlying Town	13	9
Remote	13	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>26</b>
SOURCE: Office of the State Auditor analysis of data provided by the Department of Education.		

The Department of Education also provides an implementation consultant for those schools that are using School Bullying Prevention and Education Grant Program funds to implement PBIS. The implementation consultant provides professional development and technical expertise to school personnel and district leaders. School districts that receive PBIS training and support through the state-funded implementation coach are counted in the School Bullying Prevention and Education Grant Program, discussed later in APPENDIX A; these school districts are not counted in the exhibit above.

#### HOW IS THE PROGRAM FUNDED AND HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?

The Department of Education's training on PBIS is funded with:

- **FEDERAL FUNDS** allocated as part of Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. These funds are allocated to the Department of Education under a specific funding formula and are intended to assist states in providing special education and related services to children with disabilities. Assisting schools in providing

PBIS is an allowable expense for these funds and the Department of Education uses part of these funds for PBIS.

- **FEDERAL GRANT FUNDS** awarded to the Department of Education as part of the State Personnel Development Grants Program from the U.S. Department of Education for improving systems of providing early intervention, educational, and transition services for children with disabilities. The Department of Education was awarded a 5-year grant of approximately \$6.5 million (about \$1.3 million each year from October 2016 through September 2021); it uses some of the funds for PBIS.
- **MARIJUANA TAX CASH FUNDS** appropriated to the Governor's Office for evidence-based policymaking evaluation and support. The Governor's Office of State Planning and Budgeting granted these funds to the Department of Education to staff a bullying prevention consultant for schools and districts implementing bullying prevention techniques.

**POSITIVE BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTIONS AND SUPPORTS  
(PBIS)**

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION EXPENSES FOR TRAINING  
SCHOOLS ON PBIS SOURCES OF EXPENDED FUNDS  
FISCAL YEARS 2018 THROUGH 2020**

FUNDING SOURCE	2018	2019	2020 (BUDGETED)
Federal Individuals with Disabilities Act Part B funds allocated to the Department of Education (includes estimate of personnel costs)	\$115,000	\$135,000	\$140,000
Federal grant funds awarded to the Department of Education (includes estimate of personnel costs)	\$60,000	\$60,000	\$60,000
Marijuana Tax Cash Funds appropriated to the Governor's Office and granted to the Department of Education	\$134,322	\$130,822	\$130,822
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$309,322</b>	<b>\$325,822</b>	<b>\$330,822</b>

SOURCE: Office of the State Auditor analysis of Fiscal Years 2018 and 2019 expense data from the Colorado Operations Resource Engine and information provided by the Department of Education on program expenses, the costs of the program implementation consultant, and Fiscal Year 2020 budget information.

Program expenses include personnel and operating costs. The Office of Learning Supports estimates that out of the four staff available to

conduct PBIS-specific training and provide technical assistance, about 1.8 FTE are used specifically for PBIS training and implementation. As such, based on the estimated salaries of the Office of Learning Supports' four training staff, we estimate that personnel costs to support PBIS are about \$145,000 annually. In addition, the costs for the implementation consultant, funded from Marijuana Tax Cash Funds, are about \$130,000 per year. Program operating expenses include travel, materials, and event costs, and totaled \$30,820 in Fiscal Year 2018 and \$50,840 in Fiscal Year 2019.

#### WHAT DOES THE DEPARTMENT REPORT ABOUT THE PROGRAM?

Statute does not require the Department of Education to report on its training of PBIS. The Department of Education uses the national PBIS fidelity tool to report to the PBIS national Technical Assistance Center on the number of schools that are actively implementing PBIS. The Department of Education also requests discipline data from schools that are implementing the program to measure program effectiveness. The Department of Education does not provide any specific reporting on this program to the General Assembly.

# TRAINING AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT

## PROJECT AWARE

### DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

A pilot program to support student mental and behavioral health in schools.

#### WHAT IS THE PROGRAM AND WHAT SERVICE DOES IT PROVIDE?

In 2014, the Department of Education was awarded nearly \$10 million in federal grant funds, to be dispersed over a 5-year period (about \$2 million each federal fiscal year) to address student mental and behavioral health in schools through Project AWARE (Advancing Wellness and Resiliency in Education).

The Department of Education's administration of Project AWARE involves addressing gaps in school-based behavioral health systems on both the local and state level. Project AWARE is administered by simultaneously:

- Piloting projects with three partner school districts.
- Observing project implementation and outcomes to inform evidence-based practices that can be applied across the state's school districts.
- Partnering with other state agencies, national groups, and community mental health centers to identify and address areas of policy and funding and to increase awareness around youth mental and behavioral health.

The grant requires that at least 65 percent, or about \$1.3 million of the funds allocated each federal fiscal year, be spent supporting schools that are part of the pilot program portion of Project AWARE. The Department of Education and a group of stakeholders identified three school districts to participate in the pilot program based on their (1) diverse populations and geographic locations, (2) number of discipline

incidents and the percentage of those incidents that were referred to law enforcement, (3) experiences with violence or community trauma and subsequent rises in student suicide threat, and (4) current systems that could support behavioral health. The following exhibit shows the number of districts by setting where the program is being implemented.

PROJECT AWARE PILOT SCHOOL DISTRICTS STATE FISCAL YEARS 2018 AND 2019		
SCHOOL DISTRICT BY SETTING	2018	2019
Denver Metro	1	1
Urban-Suburban	2	2
Outlying City	0	0
Outlying Town	0	0
Remote	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>
SOURCE: Office of the State Auditor analysis of data provided by the Department of Education.		

### HOW IS THE PROGRAM FUNDED AND HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?

The Department of Education received federal grant funds from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, to implement Project AWARE from October 2014 through September 2019. The following exhibit shows Project AWARE expenses in Fiscal Years 2018 and 2019, and budgeted expenses for Fiscal Year 2020. Because the program ends in September 2019, the Fiscal Year 2020 expenses are expected to be lower as the program spends its remaining budget.

PROJECT AWARE SOURCES OF EXPENDED FUNDS FISCAL YEARS 2018 THROUGH 2020			
FUNDING SOURCE	2018	2019	2020 (BUDGETED)
Federal grant funds	\$ 1,343,016	\$1,984,640	\$700,000
SOURCE: Office of the State Auditor analysis of Fiscal Years 2018 and 2019 expense data from the Colorado Operations Resource Engine, and Fiscal Year 2020 budget information provided by the Department of Education.			

The program's main expenses are funds spent by the partner schools – about \$878,000 in Fiscal Year 2018 and about \$1.26 million in Fiscal Year 2019. The remainder is spent on (1) Department of Education staff

(about 2.7 FTE) who consult on program implementation and conduct research on program outcomes at the partner schools, and (2) implementing Youth Mental Health First Aid curricula.

#### WHAT DOES THE DEPARTMENT REPORT ABOUT THE PROGRAM?

Statute does not require the Department of Education to report on its administration of Project AWARE. The federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration requires the Department of Education to submit an annual progress and evaluation report on grant funds used and progress in meeting the program objectives. The report includes qualitative and quantitative accomplishments and challenges in implementing program activities for the prior year. To develop the annual progress and evaluation report, the Department of Education collects data from the pilot school districts annually on:

- The number of school-aged youth served as a result of implementing AWARE strategies.
- The total number of school-aged youth who received school-based mental health services.
- The percentage of mental health service referrals for school-aged youth which resulted in mental health services being provided in the community.

The Department of Education also uses this data from the pilot school districts to measure outcomes from implementation, such as changes in the number of discipline incidents. This data is intended to assist the pilot schools in managing project progress, and identifying and solving problems that arise during program implementation. The data collection at the pilot schools will also assist Project AWARE in developing evidence-based programs that can be applied across school districts.

In addition to the annual report, the Department of Education is required to submit information to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration quarterly on infrastructure

development, prevention, and mental health promotion activities. These activities include quantitative measures on training, mental health workforce development, and mental health referrals. These data are intended to manage performance on statewide infrastructure and capacity building and mental and behavioral health awareness.



# FUNDING FOR CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

## BUILDING EXCELLENT SCHOOLS TODAY (BEST)

### DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

A matching grant program to address schools' health, safety, security, and technology capital construction needs.

#### WHAT IS THE PROGRAM AND WHAT SERVICE DOES IT PROVIDE?

The General Assembly enacted the Building Excellent Schools Today (BEST) Act in 2008, which established the Public School Capital Construction Assistance Program in the Department of Education. The program provides grants to Colorado school districts to help them build new public schools and renovate or maintain existing public schools “so that unsafe, deteriorating, or overcrowded facilities do not impair students’ abilities to learn” [Section 22-43.7-102(1)(a), C.R.S.]. The program is commonly known as the BEST program. Sections 22-43.7-109(9) and 10(b), C.R.S., generally require matching funds from school districts that receive grants.

Statute established the BEST board to “ensure the most equitable, efficient, and effective use of state revenues dedicated to provide financial assistance for capital construction projects...by assessing public school capital construction needs throughout the state and providing expert recommendations based on objective criteria to [the State Board of Education] regarding the appropriate prioritization and allocation of such financial assistance” [Section 22-43.7-106(2), C.R.S.]. The BEST board’s duties also include reviewing grant applications and submitting funding recommendations to the State Board of Education [Sections 22-43.7-107, 108, and 111, C.R.S.].

Section 22-43.7-109(5), C.R.S., requires the BEST board to prioritize project funding in the following order:

- 1 Projects addressing health, safety, security, and technology. Examples of health, safety, and security projects include those to improve ventilation and fire alarm systems and install video monitoring systems [1 CCR 301-1, Article 4.1]. Examples of technology projects include installation of internet connectivity hardware necessary for instruction and student learning [1 CCR 303-1, Article 4.2].
- 2 Projects to relieve overcrowding. Examples of projects to address overcrowding may include projects that allow students to move from temporary facilities into permanent facilities [1 CCR 303-3, 6.2.3].
- 3 Projects to address other capital needs. Examples of projects to address other capital needs may include building aesthetics such as painting, though rules do not include examples.

School districts annually apply for grants that are awarded in the spring and distributed over 3 years. BEST board members evaluate the applications and send a list of recommended grant projects to the State Board of Education for approval.

The Department of Education's Division of Public School Capital Construction Assistance provides professional and technical support to the BEST board, including conducting the priority assessments of public schools throughout the state based on criteria listed in statute [Section 22-43.7-105 and 108, C.R.S.]. The division employs eight assessors who work from home offices around the state to evaluate schools and create reports on the status of the buildings' physical conditions on an ongoing basis.

BEST's funding priority that relates most directly to this audit's topic of school safety are projects relating to school security. The BEST board's guidelines outline several models and techniques that can be used to improve school security, including the installation of video management systems and controlled access mechanisms such as automated door locks and clear lines of sight for main entry points to school buildings,

among others [1 CCR 303-1, Article 4.1.11]. Examples of Fiscal Year 2019 security projects include installing intercom systems at main school entryways, replacing hardware on doors with electronic card access, installing impact resistant glazing film on windows, reconfiguring the structure of entryways to limit access, installing public announcement systems, installing video surveillance, reconfiguring exit routes so people can exit the building safely from all locations, and replacing window locks.

According to information provided by the division, about \$7.2 million of the \$172 million awarded in BEST grants in Fiscal Year 2018 and about \$6 million of the \$255 million awarded in BEST grants in Fiscal Year 2019 were for security. The exhibit below outlines the number of school districts by setting that were reimbursed with BEST grant funds for security projects in Fiscal Years 2018 and 2019.

BUILDING EXCELLENT SCHOOLS TODAY (BEST) SCHOOL DISTRICTS REIMBURSED FOR SECURITY PROJECTS FISCAL YEARS 2018 AND 2019		
SCHOOL DISTRICT BY SETTING	2018	2019
Denver Metro	1	0
Urban-Suburban	0	0
Outlying City	2	3
Outlying Town	0	1
Remote	4	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>
SOURCE: Office of the State Auditor analysis of expense data from the Colorado Operations Reporting Engine and data provided by the Department of Education.		

## HOW IS THE PROGRAM FUNDED AND HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?

The BEST program is funded from the Public School Capital Construction Assistance Fund [Section 22-43.7-104, C.R.S.], which, since the legalization of marijuana in 2014, consists of revenues from:

- **STATE TRUST LAND PROCEEDS**, which are primarily from leasing state-owned trust lands for agriculture and oil, gas, and mineral extractions. These proceeds accounted for about 62 percent of the revenue over the last 5 years.

- **MARIJUANA EXCISE TAXES**, which are paid by marijuana cultivators on the retail marijuana they provide to retailers. These excise taxes accounted for about 31 percent of the revenue over the last 5 years.
- **COLORADO LOTTERY SPILLOVER PROCEEDS**. These spillover proceeds accounted for about 4 percent of the revenue over the last 5 years.
- **INTEREST INCOME** on the fund, which accounts for about 3 percent of the revenue over the last 5 years.

Fund revenue totaled about \$145.9 million in Fiscal Year 2018 and \$127.8 million in Fiscal Year 2019. The exhibit below outlines the Fiscal Years 2018 and 2019 expenses associated with security projects including grant reimbursements for school security projects and estimated administrative expenses. The exhibit also shows the anticipated Fiscal Year 2020 expenses associated with security projects.

BUILDING EXCELLENT SCHOOLS TODAY (BEST) SOURCES OF EXPENDED FUNDS FOR SECURITY PROJECTS <sup>1</sup> FISCAL YEARS 2018 THROUGH 2020			
FUNDING SOURCE	2018	2019	2020 (BUDGETED)
Public School Capital Construction Assistance Fund	\$1,414,013	\$1,485,535	\$1,449,774
SOURCE: Office of the State Auditor analysis of Fiscal Years 2018 and 2019 data about awards for security projects provided by the Department of Education and administrative and reimbursement expense data from the Colorado Operations Reporting Engine, and Fiscal Year 2020 estimates projected with information provided by the Department of Education.			

Program expenses include:

- **GRANT REIMBURSEMENT**. Amounts awarded can be paid out to grantees over 3 years. The exhibit above represents the amounts reimbursed for security projects in Fiscal Years 2018 and 2019; these projects may have been awarded in earlier years.
- **ADMINISTRATION**, which includes a portion of the personnel costs for the division staff who conduct school assessments and for regional program managers, as well as costs for travel; operations; and overhead. Based on the percentage of grant funds that were distributed as reimbursements for security projects (2 percent of all

reimbursements in both Fiscal Year 2018 and Fiscal Year 2019), we estimated the amount of administrative costs associated with security related projects as \$30,146 for Fiscal Year 2018 and \$31,538 for Fiscal Year 2019.

#### WHAT DOES THE DEPARTMENT REPORT ABOUT THE PROGRAM?

Section 22-43.7-111, C.R.S., requires the BEST board to present a written report to the General Assembly each year that outlines several elements including:

- Amounts awarded and paid out for school district projects.
- Descriptions of the awarded projects.
- Amount of matching funds from school districts.
- Summary of the school building inspections from the assessors who evaluate schools and create reports on the status of the buildings' physical conditions on an ongoing basis.
- Estimates, to the extent possible, on the amount of grant money to be awarded the following year.

The next report is expected February 2020.

In addition to the report provided to the General Assembly, the division posts other information about the program on its website. For example, in Fiscal Year 2019, a total of 43 school districts applied for grants, of which eight included security projects, as reported in the Fiscal Year 2019 BEST grant application list posted on the Department of Education's website. The program's May 2018 fact sheet states that BEST's top accomplishments are improving the health, safety, and security 524 Colorado schools and that this improved the learning environment for nearly 225,000 students. The May 2018 fact sheet for BEST includes a pie chart of projects by type that shows that 10 percent of the projects since the start of the program have been focused on school security.



# FUNDING FOR CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

## FUNDING FOR EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

### SCHOOL SECURITY DISBURSEMENT PROGRAM

#### DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY

A disbursement program to provide local education providers (e.g., schools, school districts, and charter schools) with funds to improve security within public schools.

#### WHAT IS THE PROGRAM AND WHAT SERVICE DOES IT PROVIDE?

The General Assembly created the School Security Disbursement Program with Senate Bill 18-269. The program provides a one-time, \$29.5 million disbursement to schools in Fiscal Year 2019 to make school security related improvements. Awardees can spend the funds over a 3-year period and the program is set to repeal July 1, 2021, [Section 24-33.5-1810(8), C.R.S.]. Statute [Section 24-33.5-1810(3), C.R.S.], allows the funds to be used for:

- Capital construction to improve the security of a school facility or vehicle, such as secure entryways, alarms, cameras, or communication devices.
- Training in student threat assessment.
- Training for on-site school resource officers.
- Training for building staff on school emergency response.

Statute charges the Department of Public Safety (Public Safety) with administering the program. Public Safety is responsible for

promulgating rules to establish application time frames, reviewing applications, giving priority to applicants that commit to providing matching funds, disbursing funds “as quickly as practicable,” and receiving reports from awarded local education providers about how the funds were used [Section 24-33.5-1810, C.R.S.].

The Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (DHSEM), within Public Safety, has assigned two staff to administer a number of school safety funding programs, including this program, as well as the Enhance School Safety Incident Response Grant Program and the School Access for Emergency Response Grant Program, both of which are described in other sections of APPENDIX A. Staff reported that in Fiscal Year 2019, they established an application and criteria for the disbursements, posted notice of the application, held information sessions with potential applicants, reviewed and scored 95 applications totaling nearly \$60 million in requested funding, awarded disbursements, and negotiated contracts with the 95 awardees for a total of \$29,205,500. Public Safety noted that the types of projects applied for and approved likely do not reflect the breadth of school needs for security improvements. Applicants only had 1 month to submit applications after Public Safety posted notice of the disbursement program. Public Safety reported that only school districts that had projects that were fully planned and ready to start were able to submit applications in that short timeframe.

Both schools and school districts applied for and were awarded funding for the 95 projects, which represented a total of 79 unique school districts. Out of the 95 awards, 64 were only for emergency response, seven were only for capital improvements, and the remaining 24 contained both emergency response and capital improvements.

The exhibit below outlines the settings of the schools districts that received funding.



SCHOOL SECURITY DISBURSEMENT PROGRAM SCHOOL DISTRICTS THAT RECEIVED DISBURSEMENTS FISCAL YEAR 2019	
SCHOOL DISTRICT BY SETTING	2019
Denver Metro	11
Urban-Suburban	11
Outlying City	7
Outlying Town	21
Remote	29
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>79</b>
SOURCE: Office of the State Auditor analysis of data provided by the Department of Public Safety and school district setting information provided by the Department of Education.	

### HOW IS THE PROGRAM FUNDED AND HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?

The program is funded with \$29.5 million in General Funds that are maintained in the School Safety Resource Center Cash Fund created in statute [Section 24-33.5-1807(1), C.R.S.] and continuously appropriated to Public Safety to implement the program [Section 24-33.5-1807(6)(a)(I), C.R.S.]. In addition, in Fiscal Year 2019, program administration was supported by General Funds appropriated for DHSEM's operations, as outlined in the exhibit below.

SCHOOL SECURITY DISBURSEMENT PROGRAM SOURCES OF EXPENDED FUNDS FISCAL YEARS 2019 AND 2020		
FUNDING SOURCE	2019	2020 (BUDGETED)
General Funds maintained in the School Safety Resource Center Cash Fund	\$29,205,500	\$0
General Funds appropriated to the Department of Public Safety for the Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management and used for administration of the program (estimate)	\$18,000	\$18,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$29,223,500</b>	<b>\$18,000</b>
SOURCE: Office of the State Auditor analysis of Fiscal Year 2019 expense data from the Colorado Operations Resource Engine and documentation provided by the Department of Public Safety.		

Program expenses include:

- **DISBURSEMENTS** (Fiscal Year 2019 only). DHSEM disbursed \$29,205,500 in Fiscal Year 2019. Examples of projects include upgrading internal and external door and lock sets with card

operated locks across a district and migrating several buildings to newer access card systems.

- **ADMINISTRATION.** In Fiscal Year 2019, administrative costs included staff time for setting up the application process, reviewing and scoring 95 applications, monitoring disbursements, and reporting to the General Assembly. Although statute [Section 24-33.5-1807(6)(a)(I), C.R.S.] states that Public Safety may expend up to 1 percent of the amount appropriated for the administrative expenses incurred in implementing the program (a total of \$295,000), it did not use program funds to cover these costs. Instead, Public Safety shifted these administrative costs to its other school safety grant programs and the division's operating budget. Specifically, Public Safety used funds allowed for administration for the Enhance School Safety Incident Response Grant Program (\$32,112) and the School Access for Security Response Grant Program (\$142,646) to cover most of the estimated \$192,400 in personnel costs for the two staff who administered the three school safety grant programs in Fiscal Year 2019. The remaining estimated \$18,000 in personnel costs for Fiscal Year 2019 were shifted to DHSEM's general personnel expenses, which are paid by DHSEM's General Fund appropriation. This \$18,000 estimate of administrative costs for this program is included in the exhibit above.

Future administrative costs will include staff time for monitoring projects and reporting to the General Assembly. Public Safety reported it does not anticipate using the \$294,500 remaining for administration under this program until Fiscal Year 2021 when other grant administrative cost fund sources expire. As such, the estimate for administrative expenses we have provided in the exhibit for Fiscal Year 2020 assumes that Public Safety will use the same approach to covering administrative expenses as it did in Fiscal Year 2019.

#### WHAT DOES THE DEPARTMENT REPORT ABOUT THE PROGRAM?

Statute requires awardees to submit a report to Public Safety on (1) the amount of funds received; (2) the amount and source of matching

money provided, if applicable; (3) the purpose(s) and use(s) of the money expended; and (4) an itemized accounting of how the money was expended [Section 24-33.5-1810(6)(a), C.R.S.]. The first reports were due August 2019. Public Safety is required to submit a summary of the reports to the General Assembly beginning January 2020 [Section 24-33.5-1810(6)(b), C.R.S.].



# FUNDING FOR EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

## ENHANCE SCHOOL SAFETY INCIDENT RESPONSE GRANT PROGRAM

### DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY

A grant program to provide one or more non-profits with funding for research, program development, and training to improve emergency responses to school safety incidents such as an active shooter or bomb threat situation.

### WHAT IS THE PROGRAM AND WHAT SERVICE DOES IT PROVIDE?

The General Assembly created the Enhance School Safety Incident Response Grant Program with House Bill 18-1413. According to statute, applicants must be non-profits with experience (1) providing training for school safety incident response; and (2) working with law enforcement, other first responders, schools, school districts, school personnel, and students on issues related to school safety response [Section 24-33.5-2204, C.R.S.]. The program runs for a 3-year period and is set to repeal June 30, 2021, [Section 24-33.5-2207, C.R.S.].

As characterized by bill sponsors in House and Senate committee hearings when the bill was being considered, the eligibility requirements established in statute were intended to direct the funds towards a highly specialized non-profit with school specific incident response training experience. At the time, the Frank DeAngelis Center for Community Safety was the only organization that met the grant eligibility criteria. The Frank DeAngelis Center for Community Safety is an emergency response training center located at a former Jefferson County elementary school and provides tactical training to law enforcement, emergency responders, school officials, and other entities, through simulated emergency events and curriculum.

Section 24-33.5-2203(2), C.R.S., allows the non-profit to use the funding to:

- Develop and provide training programs, curriculum, and seminars related to school safety incident response.
- Develop best practices and protocols related to school safety incident response.
- Conduct research and development related to school safety response.
- Upgrade technology infrastructure used to provide training and education related to school safety incident response.

Statute charges the Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (DHSEM) within the Department of Public Safety with administering the program [Section 24-33.5-2201, et seq., C.R.S.]. DHSEM is responsible for reviewing applications and awarding grant funds based on criteria outlined in statute [Section 24-33.5-2204(2), C.R.S.]. DHSEM has two staff who administer a number of school safety related programs, including this grant program as well as the School Security Disbursement Program and the School Access for Emergency Response Grant Program, both of which are described in other sections of APPENDIX A. In Fiscal Year 2019, these staff established an application for the grant with award criteria, posted notice of the application, reviewed and scored the only application submitted, awarded the grant, and negotiated a contract with the Frank DeAngelis Center for Community Safety for \$467,888.

According to DHSEM, program funds will be used to (1) expand the Frank DeAngelis Center for Community Safety's technology capabilities for simulated emergency response training for law enforcement, school officials, and emergency response personnel; and (2) provide school safety symposiums on incident response to schools, districts, and first responders across Colorado. DHSEM does not have information on which school districts may have used the training services of the Frank DeAngelis Center for Community Safety.

## HOW IS THE PROGRAM FUNDED AND HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?

The program is funded with General Funds that are maintained in the School Safety Resource Center Cash Fund created in statute [Section 24-33.5-1807(1), C.R.S.]. With the Fiscal Year 2019 Long Bill [House Bill 18-1322], the General Assembly appropriated \$35 million in General Funds into the School Safety Resource Center Cash Fund to be used to improve school safety. With House Bill 18-1413, the General Assembly appropriated \$500,000 of those funds for the program for Fiscal Year 2019. With Senate Bill 19-179, the General Assembly appropriated an additional \$1.15 million from the School Safety Resource Center Cash Fund for the program for Fiscal Year 2020. As of July 2019, the grant application process for the \$1.15 million appropriated for Fiscal Year 2020 has not begun.

ENHANCE SCHOOL SAFETY INCIDENT RESPONSE GRANT PROGRAM SOURCES OF EXPENDED FUNDS FISCAL YEARS 2019 AND 2020		
FUNDING SOURCE	2019	2020 (BUDGETED)
General Funds appropriated to the School Safety Resource Center Cash Fund for the program	\$500,000	\$1,150,000
SOURCE: Office of the State Auditor analysis of Fiscal Year 2019 expense data from the Colorado Operations Resource Engine and the Joint Budget Committee Appropriations Report for Fiscal Year 2020.		

Program expenses include grant awards and administrative expenses, including personnel costs for the two DHSEM staff who administer the grant program. Statute allows DHSEM to use part of the appropriation to cover administrative costs, but does not specify an amount or maximum percentage [Section 24-33.5-2206, C.R.S.]. In Fiscal Year 2019, administrative costs totaled \$32,112, or about 6.4 percent of the \$500,000 appropriation.

## WHAT DOES THE DEPARTMENT REPORT ABOUT THE PROGRAM?

Statute requires the grantee to submit a report to DHSEM on or before December 1, 2019, on activities conducted, services or trainings

provided, tools or protocols developed, and such other information as the division may request to monitor the effectiveness of the grant [Section 24-33.5-2205, C.R.S.]. Public Safety's contract with the grantee also requires quarterly reporting on financial status and project progress, and a final report on financial status and project accomplishments at the end of the grant period. Statute does not specifically require DHSEM to report on this program.



# FUNDING FOR EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

## SCHOOL ACCESS FOR EMERGENCY RESPONSE GRANT PROGRAM

### DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY

A grant program to provide schools and public safety communication systems owners (e.g., local entities responsible for emergency communications, such as local law enforcement or 911 dispatch centers) with funding for needed interoperable communication hardware, software, equipment maintenance, and training.

### WHAT IS THE PROGRAM AND WHAT SERVICE DOES IT PROVIDE?

The General Assembly created the School Access for Emergency Response Grant Program with Senate Bill 18-158 “to allow for seamless communications between new or existing school communications systems and first responder communications systems” [Section 24-33.5-2104(1), C.R.S.]. Statute [Section 24-33.5-2104(2), C.R.S.], allows funds to be used to:

- Deliver training programs to teach school district-based security personnel and appropriate school personnel basic procedures for effective communications with first responders in an emergency.
- Implement or upgrade interoperable technology solutions such as a system that can be activated and deactivated by the public safety 911 answering point to help mitigate the potential overloading of a radio network if activated by an untrained user.
- Maintain or improve a school’s existing interoperable communication hardware or software, or provide such hardware and software to a school that does not yet have it.

- Expand radio system capacity where school use has been determined to have a significant usage impact on public safety communication systems.

The program provides up to \$5 million in grants annually to schools and public safety communication system owners over a 6-year period, through Fiscal Year 2024 [Section 24-33.5-2017(1)(b), C.R.S.].

Statute charges the Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (DHSEM) within the Department of Public Safety (Public Safety) with administering the grant. DHSEM is responsible for promulgating rules establishing time frames for the grant program, working with a grant selection committee created in statute to review and award grants, receiving reports from awarded schools about how the funds were used and the number of students enrolled, and reporting to the General Assembly [Section 24-33.5-2104, et seq., C.R.S.].

DHSEM has two staff who administer a number of school safety funding programs, including this program as well as the Enhance School Safety Incident Response Grant Program and the School Security Disbursement Program, both of which are described in other sections of APPENDIX A. In Fiscal Year 2019, these staff established an application for the grant with award criteria, posted notice of the application, held information sessions with potential applicants, worked with the grant selection committee to review and score 39 applications totaling about \$12.5 million in requested funding, awarded grants, and negotiated contracts for 12 projects for a total of \$4,857,354, representing 12 unique school districts. Public Safety noted that the types of projects applied for and approved likely do not reflect the breadth of school needs for security improvements. Applicants only had 1 month to submit applications after Public Safety posted notice of the grant program. Public Safety reported that only school districts that had projects that were fully planned and ready to start were able to submit applications in that short timeframe.

Examples of funded projects include the purchase and installation of mobile radio units, as well as replacing or upgrading existing

interoperable technology such as communication tech towers and digital radios, communication system software and licensing, and training for school safety teams on the systems.

The exhibit below outlines the number of school districts that received funding in Fiscal Years 2019; no public safety communication system owners received awards.

SCHOOL ACCESS FOR EMERGENCY RESPONSE GRANT PROGRAM SCHOOL DISTRICTS THAT RECEIVED GRANT FUNDS FISCAL YEAR 2019	
SCHOOL DISTRICT BY SETTING	2019
Denver Metro	3
Urban-Suburban	1
Outlying City	4
Outlying Town	2
Remote	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>12</b>
SOURCE: Office of the State Auditor analysis of data provided by the Department of Public Safety and school district setting information provided by the Department of Education.	

## HOW IS THE PROGRAM FUNDED AND HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?

The program is funded with an appropriation from the State Public School Fund to the School Access for Emergency Response Grant Program Cash Fund [Section 24-33.5-2107, C.R.S.]. The State Public School Fund is established in Section 22-54-114, C.R.S., and consists primarily of federal mineral lease revenue and a portion of rent and royalties from state school trust lands. In Fiscal Year 2019, the State Public School Fund contributed about \$142.7 million to the state share of school finance.

The program began in Fiscal Year 2019, when the General Assembly, through Senate Bill 18-158, provided authority for the appropriation of \$5,000,000 annually from the State Public School Fund.

SCHOOL ACCESS FOR EMERGENCY RESPONSE GRANT PROGRAM SOURCES OF EXPENDED FUNDS FISCAL YEARS 2019 AND 2020		
FUNDING SOURCE	2019	2020 (BUDGETED)
State Public School Fund	\$5,000,000	\$5,000,000
SOURCE: Office of the State Auditor analysis of Fiscal Year 2019 expense data from the Colorado Operations Resource Engine and the Joint Budget Committee Appropriations Report for Fiscal Year 2020.		

Program expenses include:

- **GRANT AWARDS.** DHSEM awarded 12 grants worth about \$4.86 million for Fiscal Year 2019 and another eight grants worth about \$4.86 million for Fiscal Year 2020.
- **ADMINISTRATION,** including personnel costs for the two DHSEM staff who administer the grant program. Statute allows Public Safety to use up to 3 percent of the money annually appropriated for the program to pay the direct and indirect costs that it incurs to administer the program [Section 24-33.5-2107(3), C.R.S.]. The program's annual appropriation of \$5 million means that the Public Safety can use no more than \$150,000 for administration. In Fiscal Year 2019, DHSEM used \$142,646 for administration. DHSEM staff reported that future grant awards and monitoring is expected to be extensive, as the grant application, award review, contracting and grant monitoring process will occur with new applicants annually through the end of the program in 2024.

#### WHAT DOES THE DEPARTMENT REPORT ABOUT THE PROGRAM?

Statute requires the following annual reporting for this program:

- Grantees are required to submit a report to DHSEM on (1) the number of schools that used grant money to provide training, (2) the number of schools that used grant money to provide or upgrade interoperate technology, and (3) the total number of students enrolled in the schools that received the grant money [Section 24-33.5-2106(1), C.R.S.]. The first reports are due January 2020.

- Public Safety is required to include in its annual report to the General Assembly a summary of the activities of the grant program [Section 24-33.5-2106(2), C.R.S.]. In its January 2019 report, Public Safety reported a summary of its work to date administering the grant, including the districts and amounts awarded. The next report is due January 2020.



# FUNDING TO ADDRESS SCHOOL CLIMATE

## CRISIS AND SUICIDE PREVENTION TRAINING GRANT PROGRAM

### DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT

A grant program to assist schools in providing crisis and suicide prevention training for teachers and staff.

#### WHAT IS THE PROGRAM AND WHAT SERVICE DOES IT PROVIDE?

The General Assembly created the Crisis and Suicide Prevention Training Grant Program in 2018 [Senate Bill 18-272] “to provide financial assistance for the provision of comprehensive crisis and suicide prevention training annually, if grant funding is available, for all teachers and staff at public schools and school districts in Colorado who work directly or indirectly with students” [Section 25-1.5-113(2)(a), C.R.S.]. Grants can be awarded to school districts or directly to schools.

While statute does not outline the specific ways in which grant funds shall be used, it does specify that schools or school districts applying for funds describe how they will use the grant award to provide comprehensive crisis and suicide prevention training to all educators and staff who have not yet received such training [Section 25-1.5-113(3)(a)(II)(C), C.R.S.]. Schools or school districts may use grant funds to pay for implementing the Sources of Strength program, discussed later in APPENDIX A. School districts that use funds to implement Sources of Strength are counted in this section; they are not also counted in the Sources of Strength section of APPENDIX A.

Section 25-1.5-113(2)(c), C.R.S., charges the Department of Public Health and Environment (Public Health), in consultation with the Office of Suicide Prevention within Public Health, and the Colorado School Safety Resource Center (Resource Center) within the Department of Public Safety, with administering the program. The Office of Suicide Prevention administers the program by reviewing

applications; recommending which public schools and schools districts get funding, giving priority to those that have not previously received such training; and acting as a resource for grantees [Section 25-1.5-113(3), C.R.S.]. The Resource Center was consulted when Public Health was setting up the program by providing guidance on application procedures and criteria to be used, as well as in scoring the applications and making funding recommendations.

Public Health is authorized to award up to \$400,000 per year in varying amounts based on the size and need of the public school or school district [Section 25-1.5-113(2)(a), C.R.S.].

Staff set up a stakeholder team to review applications to find candidates that (1) provide crisis prevention and response training so that all school personnel can look for warning signs and work collaboratively and successfully through a crisis situation in the school; (2) educate all school personnel to increase their knowledge on the warning signs of suicidal thoughts and behaviors and how to connect individuals in crisis with assistance; and (3) implement programs and policies that discourage bullying, violence, and social exclusion and build social connectedness and promote positive mental and emotional health.

In Fiscal Year 2019, Public Health awarded its first round of 17 grants, representing 18 school districts in total, for a 3-year grant cycle, so the same school districts are expected to receive funds for Fiscal Year 2020.

CRISIS AND SUICIDE PREVENTION TRAINING GRANT SCHOOL DISTRICTS THAT RECEIVED GRANT FUNDS FISCAL YEAR 2019	
SCHOOL DISTRICT BY SETTING	2019
Denver Metro	2
Urban-Suburban	4
Outlying City	1
Outlying Town	3
Remote	8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>18</b>
SOURCE: Office of the State Auditor analysis of information provided by the Department of Public Health and Environment and school district setting information provided by the Department of Education.	



## HOW IS THE PROGRAM FUNDED AND HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?

The program is funded with General Funds. The General Assembly appropriated \$400,000 in General Funds for the program in Fiscal Years 2019 and 2020. Statute [Section 25-1.5-113(5)(a), C.R.S.] created the Crisis and Suicide Prevention Training Grant Program Fund to consist of funds transferred or appropriated to it; these funds are continuously appropriated to Public Health for the direct and indirect costs associated with implementing the program. However, the Crisis and Suicide Prevention Training Grant Program Fund does not exist because the General Assembly appropriated the program's funds to Public Health "for use by the prevention services division" generally [Senate Bill 18-272] and not specifically to the program's fund. This was the case for both Fiscal Years 2019 and 2020. Public Health reported that it does not have the legal authority to establish or transfer the program's appropriation to the Crisis and Suicide Prevention Training Grant Program Fund; therefore, there is no distinct fund where Public Health accounts for the program's expenses. Public Health also reported that it does not associate the program's expenses in the State's accounting system (CORE) with a specific appropriation or fund code, so it is difficult to isolate the program's expenses in CORE. As a result, the exhibit below reflects information and estimates Public Health provided to us about the program's expenses.

CRISIS AND SUICIDE PREVENTION TRAINING GRANT SOURCES OF EXPENDED FUNDS FISCAL YEARS 2019 AND 2020		
FUNDING SOURCE	2019	2020 (BUDGETED)
General Funds appropriated to the Department of Public Health and Environment, Prevention Services Division, for the Crisis and Suicide Prevention Training Grant Program	\$328,157	\$387,810
General Funds appropriated to the Department of Public Health and Environment and used for administering the Crisis and Suicide Prevention Training Grant Program (estimate)	\$6,000	\$0
Federal Funds appropriated to the Department of Public Health and Environment and used for administering the Crisis and Suicide Prevention Training Grant Program (estimate)	\$24,000	\$32,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$358,157</b>	<b>\$419,810</b>
SOURCE: Office of the State Auditor analysis of information provided by the Department of Public Health and Environment.		

Program expenses comprise:

- **GRANT AWARDS.** In Fiscal Year 2019, Public Health initially awarded 20 grants, but three grantees declined the award. Public Health was not able to award the funds from the three grantees that declined to other applicants because the application and award period had passed, so the amount expended in Fiscal Year 2019 was lower than Public Health anticipates it will be over the next 2 years. For Fiscal Years 2020 and 2021, Public Health plans to spread out the appropriation among the 17 grantees.
- **ADMINISTRATION,** including an estimate of personnel costs for staff who spend part of their time administering the grant program. Public Health estimates that the time spent by staff on this program is about \$40,000, the equivalent of .5 FTE, and that 60 percent of these administrative costs were covered by federal funding sources in Fiscal Year 2019 (about \$24,000) and 80 percent will be covered by federal funding sources in Fiscal Year 2020 (about \$32,000). Public Health reports that it uses the federal Maternal and Child Health Services Block Grant and a youth suicide prevention grant to help fund administration of this program.

Statute allows Public Health to retain no more than 3 percent of the money annually expended from the Crisis and Suicide Prevention Training Grant Program Fund for the expenses incurred by Public Health in administering the program [Section 25-1.5-113(5)(b), C.R.S.]. These are General Funds used for program administration. Since there is no Crisis and Suicide Prevention Training Grant Program Fund, we estimate that the 3 percent allowed for administration would be about \$10,000 in Fiscal Year 2019 based on the \$318,000 Public Health reports was spent on grants, and about \$12,000 in Fiscal Year 2020 based on the \$380,000 that Public Health reports is encumbered for that year. After using federal funds, Public Health used all of the allowable program funds on administration (about \$10,000) in Fiscal Year 2019, plus some additional non-program General Funds (about \$6,000). For Fiscal Year 2020, Public Health is projected to use less than the allowable program funds on administration (about \$8,000 of the approximately \$12,000 allowed).

#### WHAT DOES THE DEPARTMENT REPORT ABOUT THE PROGRAM?

As part of its annual reporting to the General Assembly on the Office of Suicide Prevention, Section 25-1.5-113(4)(b), C.R.S., requires Public Health to report on the following with respect to the grant program:

- The number of public schools and school districts that received a grant.
- The amount of each grant.
- The number of students enrolled at the schools or school districts that received grants.
- The number of educators and non-educator school staff who received training as a result of the grant.
- A copy of the grant recipients' crisis and suicide prevention plans.

In its annual report from November 2018, the Office of Suicide Prevention reported that it met with stakeholders from the Department of Education, the Resource Center, the Colorado Parent Teacher Association, and the Colorado Youth Advisory Council to gather input for the program. The Office of Suicide Prevention also reported that it released a Request for Applications for the grant in September 2018 and anticipated awarding grant funds in January 2019. The Office of Suicide Prevention's next annual report is expected November 2019.

In addition, Section 25-1.5-113(4)(a), C.R.S., requires each grantee to submit a written report to Public Health not later than 6 months after the expiration of the grant providing a summary of the activities made possible by the grant. The first reports are expected in 2021, after the first 3-year grants have expired. Statute does not require Public Health to report out the information provided by the grantees.

# FUNDING TO ADDRESS SCHOOL CLIMATE

## SCHOOL BULLYING PREVENTION AND EDUCATION GRANT PROGRAM

### DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

A grant program to reduce instances of bullying in Colorado schools.

#### WHAT IS THE PROGRAM AND WHAT SERVICE DOES IT PROVIDE?

The General Assembly created the School Bullying Prevention and Education Grant Program as a measure “to reduce the frequency of bullying in schools,” according to the title for House Bill 11-1254, the implementing legislation. The program “provides support to help schools implement evidence-based bullying prevention practices, strategies for involving family and community in school bullying prevention, and adoption of effective policies concerning bullying education and prevention,” according to the program’s 2018 legislative report.

Section 22-93-104, C.R.S., requires the State Board of Education to establish rules for the program, including grant criteria requiring each grantees to:

- Use grant funds for an evidence-based bullying prevention program. Grantees can use grant funds for Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), which was discussed earlier in APPENDIX A. Grantees that use PBIS can get support from a state-funded implementation consultant. The Department of Education reports that 24 percent of the grantees used grant funds for PBIS in Fiscal Year 2019.
- Use at least a portion of the awarded grant funds for educating parents and legal guardians about bullying prevention efforts.
- Adopt a specific policy that the bullying education and prevention will include:
  - Conducting a survey of students’ impressions of the severity of bullying at their school.

- Designating a team at each school that will advise administration on the severity and frequency of bullying incidents. The team may include law enforcement officials, social workers, prosecutors, health professionals, mental health professionals, counselors, teachers, administrators, parents, and students.

Statute requires the Department of Education to administer the program in consultation with the School Safety Resource Center (Resource Center) at the Department of Public Safety [Section 22-93-102(1), C.R.S.]. Statute charges the Department of Education with soliciting and reviewing applications; selecting grant recipients “in a variety of geographic areas of the state,” to the extent possible; soliciting and reviewing evidenced-based practices in bullying prevention and making the information available on its public website; and submitting reports to the General Assembly about the program [Section 22-93-103 and 106, C.R.S.].

The Department of Education has one staff who manages the grants, which includes organizing an annual conference for the grantees and providing support to grantees as they implement their grant plans.

According to the board’s rules, the Department of Education will award grants every 1 or 3 years when funds are available [1 CCR 301-99, 3.01]. The Department of Education set the grant cycle at 3 years and determined that schools may receive up to \$40,000 per year in Fiscal Years 2017, 2018 and 2019, and up to \$25,000 in Fiscal Year 2020.

Although the program was established in statute in 2011, the General Assembly did not appropriate funds for it until Fiscal Year 2016. After the State Board of Education created rules, the Department of Education awarded the first 3-year grants to 16 school districts. The following exhibit outlines the number of school districts that received funding in the first round by fiscal year. Since the grant award is for 3 years of funding, the same school districts received funding for Fiscal Years 2017 through 2019.

SCHOOL BULLYING PREVENTION AND EDUCATION GRANT PROGRAM SCHOOL DISTRICTS THAT RECEIVED GRANT FUNDS FISCAL YEARS 2018 AND 2019		
SCHOOL DISTRICTS BY SETTING	2018	2019
Denver Metro	5	5
Urban-Suburban	5	5
Outlying City	3	3
Outlying Town	2	2
Remote	1	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>16</b>
SOURCE: Office of the State Auditor analysis of data provided by the Department of Education.		

With regard to its charge for soliciting and reviewing evidenced-based practices in bullying prevention and making the information available on its public website, the Department of Education reported that it contracted with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in August 2016 to create a report on the bullying prevention programs that were evidence-based. The Department of Education reports that the contract allowed it to have experts in the field of bullying prevention research provide an external review of available programs. The Department of Education spent \$1,000 for the report.

In 2018, the General Assembly enacted Ashawnty's Law [Senate Bill 18-151] requiring the Department of Education to “research approaches, policies, and practices related to bullying prevention and education used by education providers in other states” and, in consultation with the Resource Center “develop a model bullying prevention and education policy” by July 1, 2019, to be updated every 3 years [Section 22-2-144, C.R.S.]. The fiscal note for the bill indicated that this additional work would be performed by grant program staff within existing resources. Staff report that they have developed a model policy that is evidence-based and research informed and can be immediately adoptable by a large number of districts. The Resource Center provided input to the model policy, which the Department of Education posted in July 2019.

## HOW IS THE PROGRAM FUNDED AND HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?

The program is funded with the School Bullying Prevention and Education Cash Fund established in Section 22-93-105(1), C.R.S., which is funded with appropriations from the Marijuana Tax Cash Fund. The General Assembly appropriated \$2 million each year for Fiscal Years 2018, 2019, and 2020 from the Marijuana Tax Cash Fund for the program. Funds remaining in the program's cash fund are continuously appropriated and any amount remaining in the cash fund at the end of fiscal years must remain in the fund and not transferred to general or other funds [Section 22-93-105(1), C.R.S.].

SCHOOL BULLYING PREVENTION AND EDUCATION GRANT PROGRAM SOURCES OF EXPENDED FUNDS FISCAL YEARS 2018 THROUGH 2020			
FUNDING SOURCE	2018	2019	2020 (BUDGETED)
Marijuana Tax Cash Funds appropriated to the School Bullying Prevention and Education Cash Fund	\$2,206,156	\$2,377,739	\$2,000,000
SOURCE: Office of the State Auditor analysis of Fiscal Years 2018 and 2019 expense data from the Colorado Operations Resource Engine, and the Fiscal Year 2020 Long Bill.			

Program expenses include:

- **GRANT AWARDS.** In Fiscal Years 2018 and 2019, the Department of Education paid grantees that were part of the first 3-year grant cycle. In Fiscal Year 2020, the Department of Education will award its second round of grants.
- **ADMINISTRATION,** including personnel, operating, travel, information technology, and overhead. Statute states that no more than 5 percent of the money annually expended from the Bullying Prevention and Education Cash Fund may be used for the expenses incurred by the Department of Education in administering the program [Section 22-93-105(2), C.R.S.]. Based on the grant amounts expended in Fiscal Years 2018 and 2019, the statutory cap on administrative expenses was \$110,159 in Fiscal Year 2018 and



\$119,117 in Fiscal Year 2019. The Department of Education spent \$113,130 for administration of the program in Fiscal Year 2018, or \$2,971 over the cap, and \$114,519 in Fiscal Year 2019, which is \$4,598 under the cap. The Department of Education reported that the excess costs in Fiscal Year 2018 were paid from the \$2 million annually appropriated for the program. For Fiscal Year 2020, the Department of Education received additional Marijuana Tax Cash Funds for centralized costs, such as group health and life insurance and worker's compensation, of which the Department of Education reports about \$19,000 is intended to cover centralized costs of this program. However, the Department of Education also reports that it lacks a mechanism to transfer those additional funds into the program's cash fund to cover the program's centralized costs; it is working with the Joint Budget Committee on the issue.

#### WHAT DOES THE DEPARTMENT REPORT ABOUT THE PROGRAM?

Section 22-93-103(4), C.R.S., requires the Department of Education to annually submit specific information about the program to the State Board of Education and the General Assembly. The May 2019 report produced the required data, including:

- The number of grantees, 14. These 14 awards were granted to 13 school districts and another three school districts combined into one application and award, for a total of 16 unique school districts receiving grant funds.
- The amount awarded in each grant, a low of \$75,399 and a high of \$2,264,568 for the 3-year grant.
- The average amount of each grant awarded, \$436,535 for the 3-year grant.
- The number of students enrolled at each school of each grantee, a low of 65 and a high of 1,208 for a total of 33,908.

State Board of Education rules [1 CCR 301-99, Rule 5] require reporting

on grantees' progress in reducing the frequency of bullying, which grantees measure through anonymous student-reported school surveys. The Department of Education includes this information in its legislative report. The 2019 legislative report shows that since the 2016-2017 baseline school year, the number of students in grantee schools who reported to be a target of bullying dropped from 37 percent to 30 percent.

# FUNDING TO ADDRESS SCHOOL CLIMATE

## SCHOOL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL GRANT PROGRAM

### DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

A matching grant program to enhance the presence of school health professionals in schools throughout the state.

#### WHAT IS THE PROGRAM AND WHAT SERVICE DOES IT PROVIDE?

The General Assembly created the Behavioral Health Care Professional Matching Grant Program, also known as the School Health Professional Grant Program, in 2014 to “facilitate better screening, education, and referral care coordination for students with substance abuse and other behavioral health needs,” according to the legislative declaration [Section 22-96-101(2), C.R.S.]. In the 2019 legislative session [Senate Bill 19-010], the General Assembly expanded the program to allow funds to be used for implementing programming and connecting students to services that support behavioral health generally in place of services addressing substance abuse only. Section 22-96-103(1)(a), C.R.S., outlines the four purposes for which grant funds can be used:

- 1 Increase the presence of school health professionals in schools to provide behavioral health care to students who have mental health, substance use or misuse, or other behavioral health needs.
- 2 Provide training and resources for school staff on the implementation of evidence-based programming on behavioral health education for all students.
- 3 Allow school health professionals to connect students with services that are provided by community-based organizations for treatment and counseling for students who need behavioral health care.
- 4 Provide behavioral health care services at recipient schools,

including but not limited to screenings, counseling, therapy, referrals to community organizations, and training for students and staff on behavioral health issues.

Section 22-96-104(2)(g), C.R.S., requires matching funds from school districts. Grantees are required to specify in their grant applications their plan for continuing to fund the increase in school health professional services following expiration of the grant [Section 22-96-104(2)(h), C.R.S.].

The Department of Education administers the program with two staff by:

- Reviewing applications based on a set of priorities in statute and making a recommendation to the State Board of Education on which school districts should get grant funds [Section 22-96-104(3), C.R.S.].
- Providing technical support and training to grantees through site visits, the program’s annual conference, trainings, and workshops.

In 2016, the board approved awards for the third round of grants to 20 school districts. Beginning with this round, the Department of Education provided funding for 3 years—Fiscal Years 2017, 2018, and 2019—rather than awarding grants for a single year, as it had done in prior grant rounds. In 2017, the board awarded the fourth round of grants to 44 school districts that will receive funding for 3 years—Fiscal Years 2018, 2019, and 2020—which includes 13 school districts that were in both the third and fourth groups. This means that the same 51 school districts received grant funding for the 2 years we reviewed. The board awarded the next round of 42 grants for Fiscal Year 2020. The following exhibit shows the settings of the unique count of school districts that received grant funds in Fiscal Years 2018 and 2019.

SCHOOL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL GRANT PROGRAM SCHOOL DISTRICTS THAT RECEIVED GRANTS FISCAL YEARS 2018 AND 2019		
SCHOOL DISTRICTS BY SETTING	2018	2019
Denver Metro	8	8
Urban-Suburban	7	7
Outlying City	8	8
Outlying Town	10	10
Remote	18	18
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>51</b>
SOURCE: Office of the State Auditor analysis of information provided by the Department of Education.		

## HOW IS THE PROGRAM FUNDED AND HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?

The General Assembly funds the program using Marijuana Tax Cash Funds. In the 2019 session, the General Assembly increased the appropriation by \$3 million with Senate Bill 19-010.

SCHOOL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL GRANT PROGRAM SOURCES OF EXPENDED FUNDS FISCAL YEARS 2018 THROUGH 2020			
FUNDING SOURCE	2018	2019	2020 (BUDGETED)
Marijuana Tax Cash Funds appropriated to the Department of Education for the program	\$11,921,833	\$11,830,950	\$14,937,032
SOURCE: Office of the State Auditor analysis of Fiscal Years 2018 and 2019 expense data from the Colorado Operations Reporting Engine, and the Fiscal Year 2020 Long Bill and fiscal notes for Senate Bill 19-010 for Fiscal Year 2020 budgeted expenses.			

Program expenses comprise:

- **GRANT AWARDS**, as described above.
- **ADMINISTRATION**, including personnel, operating, travel, information technology, and overhead. Statute states that the Department of Education may expend no more than 3 percent of the money annually appropriated for the program to offset the costs incurred in implementing the program [Section 22-96-104(6), C.R.S.]. The General Assembly appropriated \$11,970,783 for the program in Fiscal Year 2018 and \$11,930,434 in Fiscal Year 2019, meaning the statutory cap on administrative expenses would be \$359,123 for Fiscal Year 2018 and \$357,913 for Fiscal Year 2019.

The Department of Education spent \$421,207 for program administration in Fiscal Year 2018, or \$62,084 over the cap, and \$424,324 in Fiscal Year 2019, or \$66,411 over the cap. The Department of Education reported that these excess costs were paid from Marijuana Tax Cash Funds that were appropriated to the Department of Education for centralized costs, such as group health and life insurance and worker's compensation. However, in CORE, the total administrative expenses for this program are paid out of the program appropriation.

#### WHAT DOES THE DEPARTMENT REPORT ABOUT THE PROGRAM?

Statute requires grantees to report information to the Department of Education for each year, including the number of school health professionals hired using grant money and a list of services provided using the grant money [Section 22-96-105(1), C.R.S.]. The Department of Education is required to produce an annual report for the General Assembly summarizing information it received from grantees [Section 22-96-105(2), C.R.S.]. The May 2019 legislative report stated that the grant funds were used to fund 148 school health professional positions.

# FUNDING TO ADDRESS SCHOOL CLIMATE

## SOURCES OF STRENGTH

DEPARTMENT OF LAW

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT

A program to fund Colorado schools' implementation of the Sources of Strength suicide prevention program.

### WHAT IS THE PROGRAM AND WHAT SERVICE DOES IT PROVIDE?

The Department of Public Health and Environment (Public Health) coordinates funding for schools to implement a suicide prevention program called Sources of Strength. Both the Office of Suicide Prevention and the Sexual Violence Prevention Unit within Public Health have contracts with Sources of Strength, Inc., to provide training for Colorado schools. The Department of Law also had a contract with Sources of Strength, Inc., to provide training to Colorado schools that ended in December 2018. In addition, the Office of Suicide Prevention awards grants that can be used for Sources of Strength training.

Sources of Strength, Inc., is a Colorado-based company that trains students as peer leaders, connecting them with adult advisors at school and in the community. According to the Sources of Strength website, the program is a “universal suicide prevention program designed to build socioecological protective influences around youth and to reduce the likelihood that vulnerable youth/young adults will become suicidal.” It uses a team of peer leaders, mentored by adult advisors, to change peer social norms about seeking help and encourage students to individually assess and develop strengths. Public Health reports that it costs up to \$5,000 for a school to implement the program. These costs cover two trainings conducted by Sources of Strength, Inc., which covers adult advisors and peer leaders, technical assistance, and materials. If a school or district has access to a certified Sources of Strength trainer on staff, those annual costs can drop to between \$500 and \$750.

School districts can access state-funded Sources of Strength in the following ways:

- **SCHOOLS AND SCHOOLS DISTRICTS CAN BE RECRUITED FOR TRAINING PROVIDED THROUGH THREE STATE CONTRACTS.** The Department of Law had a \$200,000 contract with Sources of Strength, Inc., from December 2017 through December 2018, which provided training for 40 schools, representing 21 unique school districts. The Department of Law then entered into an interagency agreement with Public Health to provide funding for Sources of Strength training. The Office of Suicide Prevention uses funding from the Department of Law, as well as federal funds, for a \$525,000 contract with Sources of Strength, Inc. This contract runs from March 2018 through September 2019 and has funded training for a total of 28 unique school districts through Fiscal Year 2019. The Sexual Violence Prevention Unit also has a contract with Sources of Strength, Inc., for \$180,000, to recruit schools to participate in evaluating Sources of Strength programs in schools for sexual violence outcomes. This contract runs from July 2017 through June 2020. As of August 2019, a total of 10 unique school districts received Sources of Strength training through this contract.
- **SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL DISTRICTS CAN ACCESS STATE-FUNDED TRAINING FROM ORGANIZATIONS THAT RECEIVE COMMUNITY GRANTS.** Public Health awarded 5-year grants (Fiscal Years 2018 through 2022) to three “community-based suicide prevention partners” to bring Sources of Strength training to schools and school districts in their communities. A total of five unique school districts were funded for Sources of Strength training through community grants in Fiscal Years 2018 and 2019. Public Health reports that for Fiscal Year 2020, it will also award small grants that can be used to offset meeting expenses, substitute teacher costs, and campaign materials for Sources of Strength.
- **SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL DISTRICTS CAN USE CRISIS AND SUICIDE PREVENTION TRAINING GRANT FUNDS.** School districts that receive Crisis and Suicide Prevention Training Grant Program funds from



Public Health, discussed earlier in APPENDIX A, can use those funds for Sources of Strength. School districts that use this grant for Sources of Strength are not counted in the exhibit below. Rather, they are counted in the Crisis and Suicide Prevention Training Grant section.

SOURCES OF STRENGTH SCHOOL DISTRICTS RECEIVING TRAINING FUNDED THROUGH THE STATE FISCAL YEARS 2018 AND 2019		
SCHOOL DISTRICT BY SETTING	2018	2019
Denver Metro	7	6
Urban-Suburban	12	12
Outlying City	5	5
Outlying Town	5	6
Remote	8	9
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>38</b>
SOURCE: Office of the State Auditor analysis of data provided by the Department of Public Health and Environment and the Department of Law, and school district setting information provided by the Department of Education.		

## HOW IS THE PROGRAM FUNDED AND HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?

The funds used for Sources of Strength training and evaluation funded through the State come from a combination of sources, as follows:

- **FEDERAL FUNDS**, including youth suicide prevention grant funds awarded to the Office of Suicide Prevention from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration; grant funds awarded to the Sexual Violence Prevention Unit from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for the study of the impact of Sources of Strength on sexual violence instances among Colorado high school students; substance abuse block grant funds awarded to the Office of Behavioral Health within the Department of Human Services and transferred to Public Health to provide Sources of Strength to schools; and Maternal and Child Health Services Block Grant funds awarded to Public Health and used to fund staff that help administer Sources of Strength contracts.
- **CUSTODIAL FUNDS** managed by the Department of Law. Custodial funds are accounts that the Department of Law holds custody over

for a specific purpose, as established by a court order. The authority for these funds is established in Section 24-31-108, C.R.S. The Department of Law has used funds that it holds for consumer protection purposes to fund Sources of Strength training.

- **GENERAL FUNDS** appropriated to the Department of Public Health and Environment for the Office of Suicide Prevention to cover community grants, small grants, and operations.
- **MARIJUANA TAX CASH FUNDS** appropriated to Public Health for substance abuse prevention.

<b>SOURCES OF STRENGTH TRAINING FUNDED THROUGH THE STATE SOURCES OF EXPENDED FUNDS FISCAL YEARS 2018 THROUGH 2020</b>			
<b>FUNDING SOURCE</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020 (BUDGETED)</b>
Federal funds awarded or transferred to the Department of Public Health and Environment (includes estimate of federal funds used to administer Sources of Strength contracts)	\$132,000	\$258,000	\$282,675
Custodial funds managed by the Department of Law	\$125,000	\$165,000	\$145,000
General Funds appropriated to the Department of Public Health and Environment (includes estimate of General Funds used to administer Sources of Strength contracts)	\$91,513	\$103,783	\$110,825
Marijuana Tax Cash Funds appropriated to the Department of Public Health and Environment for substance abuse	\$60,000	\$50,000	\$45,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$408,513</b>	<b>\$576,783</b>	<b>\$583,500</b>
SOURCE: Office of the State Auditor analysis of Fiscal Years 2018 and 2019 expense data from the Colorado Operations Resource Engine and information provided by the Departments of Law and Public Health and Environment, and Fiscal Year 2020 budget information provided by the Departments of Law and Public Health and Environment.			

Program expenses include:

- **PAYMENTS TO SOURCES OF STRENGTH, INC.**, pursuant to the three state contracts totaling \$195,000 in Fiscal Year 2018, \$375,000 in Fiscal Year 2019, and currently budgeted for \$400,000 in Fiscal Year 2020.

- **PAYMENTS FOR COMMUNITY GRANTS AND SMALL GRANTS.** Community grants totaling \$67,513 in Fiscal Year 2018 and \$67,783 in Fiscal Year 2019, and budgeted for \$80,000 in Fiscal Year 2020. For Fiscal Year 2020, Public Health plans to provide a total of \$34,500 in small grants to schools to help offset meeting expenses, substitute teacher costs, and campaign materials related to Sources of Strength training.
- **ADMINISTRATION,** including an estimate of personnel costs for staff who spend part of their time administering and monitoring contracts associated with Sources of Strength. Public Health estimates that time spent by staff on this program was equivalent to about 1.8 FTE in Fiscal Year 2018, 1.65 FTE in Fiscal Year 2019, and 0.85 FTE in Fiscal Year 2020, and provided us with a breakout of how much of that time is associated with General Funds and federal funds (i.e., a grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Maternal and Child Health Services Block Grant, and youth suicide prevention grant funds). Public Health provided estimates of FTE and staff salary and benefit costs used to administer program operations, contract monitoring, and budgeting. Using this information, we estimate personnel costs for administering the program were about \$146,000 for Fiscal Year 2018 and \$134,000 for Fiscal Year 2019, and will be \$69,000 for Fiscal Year 2020. These estimates are included in the exhibit above.

#### WHAT DOES THE DEPARTMENT REPORT ABOUT THE PROGRAM?

Statute does not require specific reporting on funding of Sources of Strength provided through the State. The agencies involved in coordinating state funding of Sources of Strength report the following:

- Statute requires the Office of Suicide Prevention to annually report to the General Assembly by November 1 [Section 25-1.5-101(1)(w)(III), C.R.S.]. The report includes a list and description of suicide prevention programs, the effectiveness of the office as prevention program coordinator, and any findings and recommendations to

improve suicide prevention in Colorado. In the 2018 legislative report, Public Health reported that expanding funding to school districts was a priority. According to Public Health, the Office of Suicide Prevention expanded funding to school districts through federal grants, which supported the sustainability of the program.

- Public Health reports that the Sexual Violence Prevention Unit will report on the results of the evaluation for the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; its report is expected fall of 2019.
- The Department of Law does not report publicly on its funding of Sources of Sources training.

# APPENDIX B



Senator Nancy Todd  
Legislative Audit Committee Chair  
Office of the State Auditor  
1525 Sherman Street, 7<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Denver, Colorado 80203

August 28, 2019

Dear Senator Todd,

The Colorado Department of Education (CDE) has completed its review of the School Safety Performance Audit. School Safety is such a critically important issue and CDE stands ready to discuss anything we can do to improve our support of school districts across our state. CDE appreciates that the views, perspectives and conclusions of the audit are clearly articulated in the report. We believe that the audit captures the key state programs for K-12 public schools that address human-caused threats to safety and adequately explains their key activities and areas of focus.

The State's decentralized approach for school safety in a local control State does have the potential to allow the relative strengths of designated state agencies to support schools within the particular component of expertise within these agencies. For example, much of the support needed by districts is related to technical assistance and CDE views the work of the Colorado School Safety Resource Center as paramount to meeting the needs of school districts in the school safety arena.

The audit report does an adequate job of summarizing which state agency performs which duty related to school safety. Given the importance of targeting resource allocations, this summarization can play a key role in determining the optimum flow of resources toward particular objectives specific to school safety. CDE believes the audit provides information to policymakers and the public about the State's programs for improving school safety and can lead to constructive and collaborative discussions on this critically important topic. It is our belief that the audit meets its key stated objectives.

Sincerely,



Katy Anthes, Ph.D.  
Commissioner





**PHILIP J. WEISER**  
Attorney General

**NATALIE HANLON LEH**  
Chief Deputy Attorney General

**ERIC R. OLSON**  
Solicitor General



**STATE OF COLORADO**  
**DEPARTMENT OF LAW**

**RALPH L. CARR**  
**COLORADO JUDICIAL CENTER**  
1300 Broadway, 10th Floor  
Denver, Colorado 80203  
Phone (720) 508-6000

Office of the Attorney General

August 28, 2019

Ms. Dianne E. Ray  
State Auditor  
Office of the State Auditor  
1525 Sherman St., 7<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Denver, Colorado 80203

**Re: School Safety Performance Audit**

Dear State Auditor Ray:

It would be impossible to overstate the importance of the work being done in Colorado to maintain and improve the safety of our schools, students, and teachers. I am proud to be part of this collaborative, dedicated effort through the operation of our Safe2Tell program, and I am thankful to you and the Office of the State Auditor (“OSA”) for your thoughtful evaluation and thorough analysis on this subject.

The challenges we face together are substantial, as we experienced again in May of this year with the shooting at STEM School Highlands Ranch. Nothing we can say or do after such a tragic event can repair the lives hurt and the lives lost—but it is with victims foremost in our minds that we work to stop the next attack before it happens. While we are in the midst of a crisis, I am heartened by the thoughtful leadership of all those with whom Safe2Tell collaborates, from law enforcement agencies and schools across the state, to parents, to advocates like the family of Kendrick Castillo who never chose this battle but have nonetheless taken up the cause of saving lives.

I am proud of Colorado students for the brave leadership when submitting tips to Safe2Tell every day. In the 2018-19 school year, Safe2Tell received 19,861 actionable tips, a 28 percent increase over the 2017-18 school year. While recent incidents of school violence certainly contribute to this rise, I also believe the increase in tips reflects our work together to break the code of silence and provide a safe place for students to come forward.

On the subject of collaboration, we make every effort to collaborate effectively and avoid duplication, as discussed in the Auditor Observations section of the School Safety Performance Audit. The Safe2Tell team and I certainly acknowledge in the past that Safe2Tell has given substantive trainings and presentations, which could theoretically have overlapped with other such trainings. Today, in contrast, we focus our trainings exclusively on the use of Safe2Tell as a tool—how to promote it and deploy it to keep our schools safe.

We appreciate the OSA staff's acknowledgement of this point, as we strive to increase collaboration with other State departments.

Once again, thank you for your work and sound analysis of this important topic. We look forward to continuing to collaborate to adapt and improve Safe2Tell and, most importantly, to keep our schools safe.

Sincerely,



Phillip J. Weiser  
Attorney General

cc: Senator Nancy Todd, Chair, Legislative Audit Committee, General Assembly  
Ms. Monica Bowers, Deputy State Auditor, Office of the State Auditor  
Ms. Nina Frant, Legislative Audit Manager, Office of the State Auditor  
Ms. Heidi Wagner, Legislative Auditor, Office of the State Auditor  
Ms. Laura Russell, Senior Legislative Auditor, Office of the State Auditor  
Ms. Natalie Hanlon-Leh, Chief Deputy Attorney General, Department of Law  
Mr. Kurtis Morrison, Deputy Attorney General for Intergovt. Affairs, Department of Law  
Mr. Matt Baca, Director of Community Engagement, Department of Law  
Ms. Essi Ellis, Safe2Tell Director, Department of Law  
Mr. Jon Reitan, Budget Director, Department of Law  
Ms. Melissa Moynham, Controller, Department of Law

Dianne Ray, State Auditor  
Office of the State Auditor  
1525 Sherman Street, 7th Floor  
Denver, Colorado 80203

August 28, 2019

The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) has completed its review of the School Safety Performance Audit. Thank you for the opportunity to provide a response. We view school climate as a critical element of school safety as well as a key prevention strategy for the reduction of youth suicide, bullying, sexual violence, interpersonal violence, and substance use. CDPHE and the Office of Suicide Prevention are pleased to partner with other state agencies and stakeholders on the Colorado Suicide Prevention Commission and specifically with regard to student safety and wellness.

The audit report highlights that current constraints of structure and funding do not permit every school district to access all school safety resources and funding streams. For example, the *Crisis and Suicide Prevention Training Grant Program* has a total appropriation of \$400,000, which alone will not provide funding for each school or school district. Additionally, while CDPHE is tasked as the “coordinator for crisis and suicide prevention programs throughout the state” in accord with section 25-1.5-101(1)(w)(I), C.R.S., we are limited in administrative expenditures for both this and other suicide prevention program state funds. CDPHE is currently able to leverage a variety of funding streams and staff for this work. For all positions contributing to administration of these efforts, tasks are aligned with position descriptions and funding sources. The Maternal Child Health block grant position works on school climate initiatives to prevent youth suicide and bullying; the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention grant supports evaluation of Sources of Strength across shared protective factors for outcomes related to suicide, substance use, interpersonal violence, and sexual violence; and the federal youth suicide prevention grant supports comprehensive youth suicide prevention. Unfortunately, these funding streams are time-limited and will not be available to the department indefinitely. With additional FTE and funding, the Office of Suicide Prevention would be able to provide greater resources and technical assistance to stakeholders, as well as conduct formal evaluation efforts across these grantees.

The informational review included one observation related to the establishment of a Crisis and Suicide Prevention Training Grant Program Fund. The observation is correct that appropriations have not been transferred to the fund, as the manner in which the appropriation was made does not allow it. Although CDPHE has not transferred the \$400,000 appropriation into a separate cash fund for the school grant project, all expenses of these grantees are tracked in CORE through regular accounting procedures. However, the department agrees that adjusting the appropriation to allow it to be transferred to the fund would more clearly delineate the program's expenditures in future fiscal years and possibly help avoid potential confusion about how the grant program funds were spent.

CDPHE believes that this audit report provides valuable information to the public and to the legislature about the State's various programs for improving school safety and that this information can lead to further enhancements in Colorado's school safety efforts.

Sincerely,



Jill Hunsaker Ryan, MPH  
Executive Director





# COLORADO

## Department of Public Safety

Executive Director's Office

28 August 2019

Dianne Ray, State Auditor.  
Office of the State Auditor  
1525 Sherman Street, 7th Floor  
Denver, CO 80203-2211

Dear Ms. Ray:

The Colorado Department of Public Safety appreciates the opportunity to contribute to this informational review of school safety programs in Colorado and looks forward to working with our state, local, and legislative partners to continuously improve the services we deliver to students, teachers, parents, and schools in our state.

The Department houses several operations that are included in this review: the Colorado School Safety Resource Center (CSSRC) provides training and technical assistance to schools on all aspects of school safety; the Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (DHSEM) administers three grant programs that direct state funding to school safety enhancements, and in partnership with the Attorney General's Office, receives, analyzes and distributes Safe2Tell submissions through its Colorado Information Analysis Center.

The CDPS programs included in this review are administered by small teams that rely heavily on partnerships with stakeholders and customers. We value and incorporate feedback from the entities that we serve to improve our work. We believe that the inclusion of the customer and stakeholder perspective would have been a valuable addition to this report.

The informational review contains three observations about the CSSRC that require additional context and response.

1. The report cites concerns about the reliability and validity of data reported by the CSSRC. The Center was established by SB 08-001, which required a one-time report to the House and Senate Judiciary Committees in January 2010. The Center has continued submitting this report annually with no mandate to do so to ensure transparency and keep policymakers and interested parties informed about its activities. One component of this report is the number of contacts made by the Center annually, not limited to contacts with schools. Collecting data about contacts with vendors, stakeholders, and other state agencies provides important workload data, however, in future reports, we will distinguish between the number of contacts made with schools and other contacts for maximum clarity about the Center's reach.



2. The report also cites a lack of research and information about the effectiveness of the state's overall approach to school safety. In accordance with its statutory mandate, the Center has evaluated threat and suicide assessment tools using various protocols and data from other states, and provided information for schools on best practices. Additionally, the Center is conducting a study to determine a baseline number of schools with an exercised emergency operations plan. We agree that there is not an assessment of statewide program efficacy, and would offer that this type of review is not possible within the Center's existing resources or statutory authority.
3. Finally, the report indicates a lack of coordination between programs and specifically cites confusion about the suicide prevention trainings offered by Safe2Tell and CSSRC. It is our understanding that this issue will be resolved by Safe2Tell's policy decision to no longer provide training on subjects unrelated to the tip line.

The informational review underscores the breadth of important school safety-related work being done in Colorado through four agencies and multiple programs. Each brings a unique and necessary expertise that reflects the complexity of school safety issues. We look forward to continuing the conversation with partners and policymakers about how to make Colorado's schools the safest they can be.

Sincerely,



Stan Hilkey  
Executive Director