

News Release: PGCPS Announces Student Safety Task Force

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For Immediate Release

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Today, Prince George's County Public Schools Chief Executive Officer Dr. Kevin M. Maxwell announced the formation of the Student Safety Task Force. In response to the ongoing criminal investigation of child sex abuse at Judge Sylvania Woods Elementary School, the Task Force will conduct a thorough review of the school district's current policies, procedures, processes, and practices and make recommendations to further safeguard children from harm. Chaired by Dr. Charlene M. Dukes, President of Prince George's Community College, the Task Force is comprised of representatives from colleges and universities, non-profit, private sector, local government, public safety, and the school district.

The Student Safety Task Force is convened to ensure that Prince George's County Public Schools undertakes an independent review of its current policies, procedures, processes, and practices designed to safeguard and protect students. Within 60 days of its convening, the Task Force will review current policy, procedures, and practices and make recommendations that substantiate and enhance the use of best practices to proactively safeguard children from harm.

The Task Force shall have access to all policies, procedures, and current practices currently utilized within the system. It shall have the authority to meet with non-school based and school based personnel as well as invite internal and external experts to glean best practices and contemporary approaches to ensure student safety. It shall have access to all the resources necessary to fulfill its obligation.

Members of the Task Force:

- Dr. Charlene M. Dukes, President of Prince George's Community College & Chair of the Prince George's County Public Schools Student Safety Task Force
- Dr. Joshua Sharfstein, Associate Dean for Public Health Practice and Training and faculty in Health Policy and Management at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health
- Ms. Gloria Brown, Director of Social Services, Prince George's County Government
- Ms. Renee Battle Brooks, Assistant State's Attorney, Office of the State's Attorney
- Judy Bresler, Esq., Attorney at Law, Carney, Kelehan, Bresler, Bennett & Scherr, LLP
- Dr. Kristina Kyles-Smith, Assistant State Superintendent, Division of Student, Family and School Support, Maryland State Department of Education
- Dr. Brenda Jones Harden, Associate Professor, Department of Human Development and Quantitative Methodology, University of Maryland College Park
- Ms. Michelle Booth Cole, Executive Director, Safe Shores - District of Columbia Children's Advocacy Center

- Ms. Blanca Abrico, Parent of a student at Robert R. Gray Elementary School

The Task Force will be supported by the following staff from PGcps and Prince George's County Government:

- Mr. George Margolies, Chief of Staff and Staff Lead for the Student Safety Task Force
- Dr. Monique W. Davis, Deputy Superintendent
- Dr. Shawn Joseph, Deputy Superintendent of Teaching and Learning
- Dr. Adrian Talley, Executive Director, Office of Student Services
- Ms. Erica Berry, Executive Director, Office of the Board of Education
- Dr. Tehani Collazo, Education Policy Advisor, Office of the County Executive

"It is our absolute duty to do everything we can to be sure that such heinous crimes against children should not and will not happen in our school district again. I have formed this Task Force to carefully scrutinize every single policy and procedure we have in place. We will leave no stone unturned, but we will also act quickly," said Dr. Kevin M. Maxwell.

"I want parents, students, and all who care deeply about the welfare of children to know that the Student Safety Task Force will be methodical, exhaustive, and swift in our work. We will focus on bringing forth recommendations that keep our children safe," said Dr. Charlene M. Dukes.

Work Plan:

Phase 1 (March 1 – March 11): Background and Policy Review

1. Hear from experts on key strategies for protecting children.
2. Review policy on background checks, individual screenings, and required clearances for all employees and vendors/contractors.
3. Review policy on curriculum and age-appropriate student programming.
4. Review policy on reporting of child abuse and neglect.
5. Review the current policy that supports volunteers in schools or school-related activities to include screenings, clearances, training, and supervision by authorized school system personnel.

Phase 2 (March 14 – March 25): Process and Practice Reviews 1 of 2

1. Review the process and practice for background checks, screenings, and required clearances.
2. Review the current state of curriculum and age-appropriate student programming at each school level, regarding sexual harassment behaviors, awareness, and identification to include sexual, abuse and assault, and the safe use of social media and other technologies.

Phase 3 (March 28 – April 8): Process and Practice Reviews 2 of 2

1. Review the initial on-boarding process for new employees and ongoing training requirements for all employees to ensure accurate and direct understanding of the responsibility and timelines to report suspected child abuse, neglect, and suspicious behavior to the appropriate authorities.
2. Review existing process and practice related to the reporting of child abuse and neglect, background checks (criminal and otherwise).

Phase 4 (April 11 – 29)

1. Make recommendations to strengthen, enhance, and amend current policies, procedures, processes, and practices.
2. Review and submit final draft recommendations to Dr. Maxwell for consideration on or before May 2, 2016.

The Task Force will convene by March 1, 2016 and begin Phase 1 of its work plan, which includes reviewing the background, screening, and clearances process for employees and vendors/contractors. It will also begin examining the process for volunteers and how they are screened and cleared to work in schools. The Student Safety Task Force will bring its first report and recommendations to the PGcps CEO no later than May 2, 2016.

To see the Student Safety Task Force work plan and learn more about its members go to: pgcps.org/studentsafety/

(<http://www1.pgcps.org/studentsafety/>). To read the Task Force members' biographies, [click here](#)

(<http://www1.pgcps.org/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=222489>).