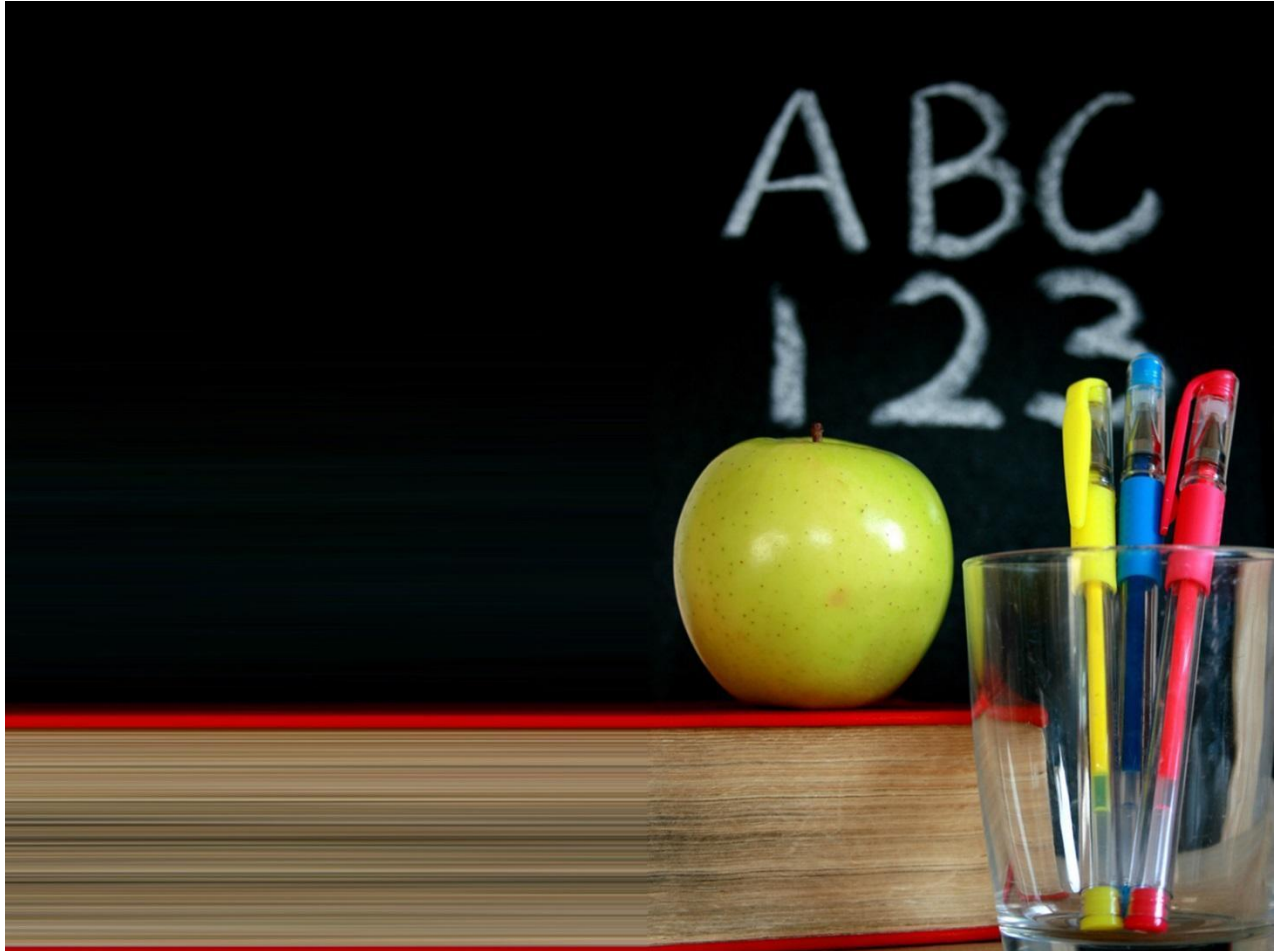


# SAFETY COUNTS



## Warren County Public Schools Student/Parent Handbook

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Warren County Public Schools is committed to providing a safe environment for students, staff and visitors. We work closely with local safety officials – Sheriff, Police, Fire, Emergency Medical Services and Public Health – in order to ensure our schools are well prepared for an emergency. Together, we have developed a comprehensive Crisis Management and Emergency Response Plan covering a wide variety of emergencies that serves as a guide to help staff and our public safety partners respond swiftly should a crisis occur in our schools.

The information on these pages provide an overview of the many safety measures Warren County Public Schools has implemented. Please report any safety concerns you may have to your building principal.

## What security measures are provided in our schools?

We strive to be proactive rather than reactive where safety and security are concerned. The following safety measures are in place for the safety of every student.

Each school has a Crisis Response Team with selected members that have participated in training to ensure appropriate responses to a variety of potential school emergencies.

- All exterior doors at the elementary and secondary level schools are locked. All visitors must enter through the office.
- Elementary and secondary level entryways are outfitted with a video/buzzer entry system.
- Interior and exterior video surveillance installed at all schools.
- As a condition of entry, visitors must sign in and wear a visitor's ID badge.
- All principals and key administrators have cell phones with text messaging capability.
- Each school is equipped with two-way radios to assist in emergency communications.
- After-hours security monitoring is done by the Sheriff's office.
- The school division's parent notification system "School Messenger" is used to call and email parents during an emergency situation in order to provide the most current information about the emergency situation.
- Each school has an emergency response plan that serves as a guide for a variety of school emergencies.
- Students are reminded to share any information with their SRO or school staff that could be potentially harmful to a school.

## How can parents be assured that our schools remain safe?

One of the top priorities in the school division is to create a learning environment free from disruption. Testimony to this is the security measures we have in place. This is echoed in the Student Code of Conduct and supported by School Board Policies and Regulations.

The Central office, with guidance from the Division Level Threat Assessment Team, continuously review and update security measures to include new technologies and procedures in order to provide the safest environment possible for our students and staff. We consult and coordinate with local and state safety officials to gain knowledge of best practices on the subject of school safety. In addition, quarterly meetings are held with the County Local Emergency Planning Committee made up of multiple community partners.

Unfortunately, we live in a day and time when guarantees are no longer feasible. What we guarantee is this: An absolute commitment to staying continually vigilant and aware while working with law enforcement on an ongoing basis, because effective communication is the key to proactive success.



## What is the role of the School Resource Officer (SRO)?

School Resource Officers (SRO) help create a safe and positive learning environment by building and maintaining successful working relationships between police, school administrators, students, parents and staff. There are resource officers placed in every school building.



## What is the procedure if a student or community member reports a suspected threat?

All threats are taken seriously by the school administration. The Sheriff's Office is immediately notified and officers and school personnel work together to thoroughly investigate any threat, whether it's made verbally, in writing, or electronically. Most importantly, if a student, parent or community member has knowledge of a threat, we encourage them to immediately report it to the Sheriff's Office and school administration instead of spreading rumors. The sooner we know about a potential threat – the sooner the investigation can begin.

## What training is available for staff?

Our School Resource Officers have state-mandated certification training. The Mandt System crisis de-escalation training is also provided for all staff in WCPS. In addition to the important training opportunities, basic first aid, CPR-AED, diabetes, albuterol, blood-borne pathogens, and Epi-pen training is also provided on an annual basis.

WCPS also collaborates with the Virginia Department of Juvenile Criminal Justice (DJCJ) and provides periodic threat assessment training to all administrators and crisis response team members. WCPS works with the (DJCJ) to provide the school system a “safe, structured and efficient way to respond to student threats of violence. The school social workers in the Special Services department ensure that all schools are proficient in the VDOE Threat Assessment Model.



## What kind of “safe schools” training occurs in WCPS?

Each school and school staff works closely with the Central Office, Sheriff’s Office and Fire and Rescue personnel to access ongoing training and support. The training/support includes a quarterly Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) meeting, monthly school-based threat assessment/crisis team meetings and regular division

level threat assessment team meetings. There are also regular fire drills, lock-down drills, earthquake and tornado drills, as well as coordinated K9 walk-throughs. The level of communication between WCPS and its community partners is high, and regular collaboration occurs. In addition, there are regional disaster tabletop exercises and “hands-on” shelter preparedness drills in case of a natural disaster or emergency.



## Do teachers know what signs to watch for with regard to suicide or potential violence?

Each school has a Crisis Management Manual which provides several warning signs of potential violence that students may display and directions of how to handle the situation. Staff members are encouraged to talk to these students, notify their parents about their concerns and refer them to the school counselor, Special Services department, or to outside mental health providers if necessary. Schools are encouraged to review these procedures on a regular basis. Staff training on suicide awareness, prevention, and the identification of risk factors is also offered on an annual basis and on request of the Special Services office. A parent handout is also available at each school counseling office.



## What disciplinary action does the school take if a student makes a credible threat or otherwise?

First and foremost, anyone who makes a threat against a school could face criminal charges. A threat could be made verbally, in writing or by electronic methods. As appropriate to the situation, he/she will be disciplined as outlined in the “Student Code of Conduct”.

## How does the school division communicate with parents should there be a credible threat against a student or school?

Should there be a threat to cause harm against a student or school, the first call to action will be to investigate this threat in partnership with the Sheriff’s Office. Depending on the specifics of the threat, an individual parent could be contacted. If necessary, the school division also has access to a rapid notification system, “School Messenger”. This communication system allows the school administration to quickly send information out via phone, email or text. Letters are often sent home to parents and announcements can be posted on the school or school division website.... [www.wcps.k12.va.us](http://www.wcps.k12.va.us)





**With a large number of students using social media such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter or any other online source, does anyone from the school division monitor these outlets for threats that could potentially cause harm to a school, students or staff?**

The school division is not in a position to monitor social media accounts for well over 5,000 students in our schools. When we are made aware of a potential threat, school administration works in tandem with police to review the source of the threat and the method of communication such as phone, text or world-wide web.



**Often cases of student violence can be linked to reports of bullying against a fellow student. How is the school system approaching anti-bullying in its schools?**

Bullying is classified as prohibited conduct in any school or school activity. Students identified as being the source of bullying or making threats against a student will be disciplined according to the student code of conduct. To prevent and discourage this type of behavior the school division has implemented the following:

- A bullying prevention/intervention program coordinated through the Special Services office and the Warren Coalition.
- Division-wide character education is also coordinated with the Warren Coalition and other community agencies. This can take multiple forms such as community displays, assemblies and other pro-social activities.
- Teachers are trained to reinforce character and leadership skills to decrease discipline referrals associated with bullying.
- Some schools have research based programs such as “Too Good for Drugs and Violence” among others to assist in character development.



**What is the referral/examination process if a staff member has concerns about the emotional state or behavior of a student?**

If a staff member has concerns about the emotional state or behavior of a student, a verbal or written referral to a school administrator is made. The school administrator will then investigate the referral to determine the appropriate course of action. If deemed necessary, a threat assessment is done by the administrator, or a mental health referral/assessment request is sent to the Special Services department. If the building administrator determines that an immediate response is needed then the parent is notified and, with consent, the student is taken to the Warren Memorial Hospital Emergency room.

## What services does the school system offer for students who may have/or are suspected of having emotional problems or who may pose a danger/threat to others?

The school division, through the Special Services department, does offer direct mental health services for students who may have emotional problems or who may pose a danger/threat to others. Services are provided when these issues affect the student's educational performance or their relationships with others in school. The staff consists of licensed clinical social workers, school psychologists, a trauma coach and other qualified support personnel.

Individual and group counseling is provided to students, as well as consultation for staff and parents. These professionals can work with parents to discuss strategies that can be implemented during school. If these issues have no educational impact or are beyond the limitations of school personnel, then options for outside assistance can be given.

**Children's Mobile Crisis Response Program** - WCPS has partnered with Northwestern Community Services to provide certified pre-screener who are able to respond to any child 17 and under regardless of insurance status or disability that is experiencing a potential life threatening event. Staff will provide services in a variety of locations, including the school, home

and community. These supports include phone consultation, assessment and de-escalation of initial crisis, development of a safety plan, collaboration with the youth's natural supports and hospital pre-screening when necessary.



## As a parent or student how can we help keep our schools safe?

School safety is everyone's responsibility – staff, students, parents, and the entire community. Please report any safety concerns you may have to your school principal. Students and parents can be Crime Stoppers! If you have information about criminal activity in school, on school grounds, or in our community call your School Resource Officer or if an emergency, call 911.

## Up-to-date Information

Warren County Public Schools is committed to providing up-to-date information to parents. The school division website ([wcps.k12.va.us](http://wcps.k12.va.us)) is a great way to keep up with news and activities. If you have any questions or comments, call (540) 635-2725 or email: [smcdonald@wcps.k12.va.us](mailto:smcdonald@wcps.k12.va.us). The mailing address is Warren County Public Schools, 210 North Commerce Avenue, Front Royal, VA 22630.

