



COLORADO
Office of School Safety
Department of Public Safety



CONFLUENCE
POLICY & STRATEGY
GROUP

EDUCATOR SAFETY TASK FORCE



Roadmap for Preparation & Training Providers



Educator Safety Task Force: *Roadmap for Preparation & Training Providers*

The **Colorado Educator Safety Task Force** (ESTF) was formed by the state legislature to explore system level issues relating to educator safety. [HB24-1320](#) directed the ESTF to examine issues of aggressive or violent behavior by a student directed toward an educator or any member of school staff.. To support the ESTF's work, four subcommittees were formed that met monthly and included dozens more individuals with a diversity of subject matter expertise, lived experience and direct professional knowledge.

ESTF Subcommittees



Incident Response
Models



School Culture and
Community Relations



Alternative
Placements



Educator Perspectives,
Supports & Training

With input of the subcommittees, the data from a survey of over 1,100 educators and the insights gained through the robust discussions at each Task Force meeting, the ESTF members aligned on a four category framework for action developed with several key guiding beliefs:



Action is needed at multiple levels including the individual staff member, building, district, state and educator preparation programs with communities and key partners having a role in each;



School climate and culture are critical to reducing, managing and post-incident response. This includes a culture of belonging for all students and a trauma-informed culture in the school;



Training, particularly de-escalation and crisis response, should be provided on a continuous basis beginning during preparation or role-specific training and should be part of both onboarding and annual continuous education or development;



School funding and resource allocation has a direct effect on educator safety including the adult to student ration in classrooms, number of mental or behavioral health experts available and the options available for alternative placement within or outside of the home school;



Additional funding is needed and while the greatest and ideal impact will be achieved with substantial funding, **actions can be taken on all identified levers with limited new resources.**

The ESTF members and contributors aligned on a guide for action addressing needs and opportunities at four levels or points along a continuum with the goals of:

1. Reducing the number of incidents of aggressive or violent behavior by a student toward an educator or staff member; and
2. Minimizing the disruption, harm and effect of any incidents; and
3. Ensuring the wellness of all involved with or affected by such incidents.

Throughout their discussions, the ESTF members agreed that every person in the education ecosystem has a role to play increasing educator safety as do state and local leaders. While every person, office or agency may not have a role in every element, there are important actions each should take along the pre-incident, incident response and post-incident continuum. These roles and actions are further detailed in Roadmaps for Action specific to each role that can be found on the Office of School Safety website.

Each educator or administrator preparation program and provider of professional development should work closely with schools to ensure the inclusion of critical skills such as de-escalation training, crisis response, trauma training, restorative practices) and broader issues like promoting a culture of belonging in the school.

While recognizing that no efforts can completely eliminate all incidents of aggressive student behavior toward educators and staff, the ESTF has developed a Roadmap for Action that includes steps to be taken at three points along a continuum:

- **Pre Incident** Actions and Systems to Reduce and Prepare for Incidents;
- Actions and Systems for **Incident Response** and Management;
- **Post Incident** Actions, Systems and Restorative Practices to Support All Involved.

Pre-Incident Incident Reduction



- **Training:** De-escalation, incident response, clarity of staff roles;
- **Identify & Define:** Classroom crisis response team
- **Staffing:** Mental health, class size/ratios
- Space to re-regulate & recharge
- Setting the conditions

Incident Response Managing Incidents



- Technical & Communications
- Response Team
- Immediate Response Protocols
- Physical Space Management
- School Community Management

Post Incident Recovery & Return



- Educator Supports
- Processes to Support All Affected
- Restorative Processes
- Reporting System & Standards
- Communications;

Other System & Partners



- Public Awareness
- Alternative Placements
- Affective Needs Centers
- Educator & Administrator Training
- Continuous Learning & Improvement

As is further detailed on the following pages of this Roadmap for Preparation and Training Providers and in each role specific guide, there are actions to be taken in each of these verticals or categories by individuals at each level but no one individual is or should be responsible for every action. The broadest effects and improvements will occur through a comprehensive approach and continuous cycle of monitoring, training, reinforcing, examining and improving practices and policies at each level.

Throughout this Roadmap for Action, the term incident is used to refer to an act of physical violence by a student against an educator or staff member at a school or school facility. While cases of verbal assaults, outbursts or events involving a parent or other adult are critical for schools to address, these Roadmaps and the work of the ESTF are narrowly focused on aggressive behavior involving an act of assault or physical violence directed toward an educator or staff member.



A Roadmap For Educator Preparation, Administrator Training Programs and Providers of Professional Development

As is discussed here and in the ESTF Roadmap for Action, there are critical roles, responsibilities and opportunities for all involved in the education system at each level to take actions that will improve educator safety. The role of preparation and professional development programs is two-fold:

1. To ensure our educators and administrators have the information, knowledge and skills to perform the duties that will be expected of them when they enter the classroom or administrative position;
2. To work collaboratively with educators and leaders to design and deliver ongoing professional development that is responsive to the evolving needs of educators and leaders.

Because of the unique role these providers serve, the vast majority of the contributions needed of them are in the pre-incident segment of the incident continuum. There are likely additional, ancillary roles for these providers to play in supporting educators or staff after an incident which should be a continuing topic of discussion between the providers and their partner schools.

The following tables describe the role, responsibility or opportunity for educators identified by the ESTF along the continuum from pre-incident to post-incident.





PRE-INCIDENT

Incident Reduction & Preparation



Pre-Incident

Element	Preparation & Training Provider Roles & Responsibilities
Training	<p>Educator preparation providers including traditional, university based programs, alternative programs, grow-your-own, residencies and apprenticeship programs should all work with their partner districts and state leaders to ensure they are providing the training educators and administrators need to be prepared to enter the classroom and administrative roles.</p> <p>At a minimum:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. All educator preparation and administrator training programs should include de-escalation training;2. All administrator programs should include work on setting a vision and fostering a healthy, welcoming and positive school climate. <p>Where possible, these programs and professional development providers should explore opportunities to offer courses or modules in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understanding trauma;• Behavior as a language or expression;• Psychological Emergency Preparedness for Educators;• Restorative practices and processes for students;• Neurobiology of stress and behavioral redirection.
Classroom Incident Response Team (CIRT)	<p>Preparation programs should provide a base-level understanding to their candidates of different structures of response teams and their roles in responding to incidents including aggressive student behavior toward an educator or staff member.</p>



Pre-Incident

Element

Preparation & Training Provider Roles & Responsibilities

Staffing

Educators and administrators should have access to learning opportunities about the research on staffing models, staffing ratios, national recommendations and alternative approaches to addressing high student to adult ratios.

Space to Recalibrate and Recharge

Educators and administrators should learn about the benefits, conditions necessary and structures or systems for providing both adults and student space and time to recalibrate and recharge as part of de-escalation and recovery from any high stress incident.

Conditions

School leaders are responsible for both the physical conditions of a school and the school's culture, climate and environment. Every school leader should receive training in how to create and support a healthy and welcoming school climate. These leaders should be trained in how to solicit the input and support of school staff, students and parents to create a positive school climate and culture in which every student feels welcome, safe and has at least one adult with whom they feel comfortable engaging.

Among the strategies that should be taught to all building leaders are:

- Time for building relationships and connections among staff and students;
- Mentoring programs for new staff;
- Ensuring students have time to be outside or decompress;
- Prioritizing physical space for students or staff to re-regulate.

Building leaders should also expect and support their educators to be active contributors to the conditions in their building. Educator preparation programs should prepare educators to:

- Create a culture of collaboration around student success with assistants, teachers, administrators and district all owning the success of the student;
- Foster an environment in which every student feels welcome and has at least one adult they trust and will confide in about challenges;
- Create connections with families including parents, grandparents, guardians, siblings and others;
- Recognize behavior as communication and engaging appropriately;
- Model and teach healthy relationships and social media habits

ESTF Membership List

Legislatively Designated Appointees	
Chris Harms	Director, Colorado Office of School Safety, Department of Public Safety
Susana Córdova	Commissioner of Education
Brent Reckman	Administrator from a district charter school
Laura Carno	Individual that works for a nonprofit entity that focuses on school safety
Jamie Montoya-De Smidt	Educational support professional
Lisa Humbert	Representative of a statewide organization that represents students with disabilities
Rottwa Ivestor	Educational support professional
Darren Joiner	Administrator from a charter school
Elsa Bañuelos-Lindsay	Representative from an organization that receives Title I funding
Melissa Mahlke	Teacher from a rural district
Suzie McGhghy	Educational Support Professional
Jim Plott	Teacher from a charter school
Susan Rayburn	Teacher from an urban district
Marsia Ronyak	Teacher from a suburban district
Faith Schmeling	Student
Danette Smith	Commissioner of Behavioral Health Administration
Luke Yoder	Certified Restorative Justice Professional
Chris Zimmerman	Administrator from a public school



Honorary Members

<i>Margaret Ochoa</i>	<i>Manager, Colorado School Safety Resource Center, Office of School Safety</i>
<i>Ali DeCaro</i>	<i>Special education teacher, St. Vrain Valley Schools</i>
<i>Finessa Ferrell</i>	<i>Senior Learning and Engagement Strategist, Colorado Education Initiative</i>
<i>Dustin Geist</i>	<i>Board Certified Behavior Analyst</i>
<i>Christina Monaco</i>	<i>Executive Director, Field Services and Supports, Colorado Department of Education</i>
<i>Amy Schamberg</i>	<i>Mental health professional</i>
<i>Robin Singer</i>	<i>Supervisor of Student Services and Support, Office of Facility Schools</i>
<i>Chris Slobodnik Assistant</i>	<i>Director of Student Services, Pueblo County School District 70</i>
<i>Brandon Smith</i>	<i>LCSW, Elementary School Counselor, Senior CPI District Crisis Intervention Trainer, Brighton 27J</i>

Statement from ESTF Chair

Thanks to the legislative sponsors of SB24-1320 for recognizing the need for the Educator Safety Task Force (Task Force/ESTF). With both national and statewide research, along with the stories shared at task force meetings, the enormity of the issue became increasingly apparent.

The individual stories were heartbreaking both for the educators injured, the students who witnessed the attacks and also the student perpetrators. Tears were shed as committee members listened to school professionals recount their experiences. **As these roadmaps outline, changes are needed.**

Thanks to all the members of the Educator Safety Task Force for their dedication to this work. Many task force members joined one or more subcommittees necessitating their attendance at multiple meetings each month. These meetings were conducted after school hours and participants gave freely of their time.

Task force members also encouraged other colleagues to join the working committees, and it was obvious from the subsequent discussions that the issue of educator safety was a major concern for many in Colorado schools. We thank them all for their contributions.

Thanks to the Confluence staff whose sensitively and professionally facilitated the meetings and carefully consolidated the feedback and recommendations from all participants to create these roadmaps.

We challenge everyone invested in our schools to review these roadmaps and watch the brief video clips so that together we can acknowledge the problem of educator safety, and make changes to further protect, support and retain everyone in Colorado schools.

Thank you!

Christine R. Harms MS,

Director, Colorado Office of School Safety



**Companion Documents Available
on [Office of School Safety website](#)**

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ESTF Educator
Survey



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While the Educator Safety Task Force was managed by the Office of School Safety (OSS) in the Colorado Department of Public Safety (CDPS), this report is strictly representative of the Task Force's considerations and should not be construed as the recommendations or legislative priorities of OSS or CDPS. Furthermore, the recommendations have not been subject to legal or fiscal analysis.