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DR. KIMBERLY SHEEHAN
SUPERINTENDENT

July 8, 2026

The Honorable Patricia Kelly
Santa Barbara County Superior Court
1100 Anacapa Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
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FILED
SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA
COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

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Angela Braun, Executive Officer
By M. Hanson
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Stacy Mezzetta de Cossio, Foreperson
Santa Barbara County Grand Jury
sbcgj@sbcourts.org

Re: 2025-26 Santa Barbara County Grand Jury Report on School Shootings in Santa Barbara County Schools

Dear Judge Kelly, Foreperson Mezzetta de Cossio, and Grand Jury Members:

Finding 1

The Santa Barbara County Education Office (SBCEO) provides County school districts training in identifying pathways to targeted violence, although attendance by employees of the various Santa Barbara County school districts in the SBCEO's School Safety Symposium is limited.

SYVUHSD Response to Finding 1: Disagree partially with explanation

The SYVUHSD supports the Grand Jury's efforts to promote school safety and agrees that professional development regarding targeted violence prevention is an important component of maintaining safe schools.

However, the SYVUHSD can neither confirm nor dispute the Grand Jury's characterization regarding attendance by employees of other Santa Barbara County school districts, as those attendance records are outside the District's knowledge and control.

With respect to the SYVUHSD, the District has consistently demonstrated its commitment to this training by sending a multi-disciplinary team of employees to the Santa Barbara County Education Office School Safety Symposium for at least the past three consecutive years. SYVUHSD personnel also participate in numerous additional school safety trainings throughout the year, consistent with the District's obligations to maintain comprehensive school safety plans and emergency preparedness under California Education Code sections 32280 through 32289.5.

Recommendation 1b

The Grand Jury recommends that all Santa Barbara County school districts require administrative leaders to attend the School Safety Symposium in person at least once every two years.

SYVUHSD Response to Recommendation 1b – Already Implemented

The SYVUHSD supports the Grand Jury's emphasis on school safety and shares the goal of ensuring that district leadership remains informed regarding current school safety practices, emergency preparedness, and targeted violence prevention.

This recommendation has already been implemented in practice. The District regularly sends a multi-disciplinary team of administrative leaders and key emergency response personnel to the Santa Barbara County Education Office School Safety Symposium. Participants have included the Superintendent, Assistant Principals, the School Resource Deputy, and designated classified and certificated staff members with responsibilities for school safety, emergency operations, and crisis response.

The SYVUHSD believes this collaborative approach provides broad institutional knowledge and enhances the effectiveness of its Comprehensive School Safety Plan, consistent with California Education Code sections 32280 through 32289.5. The SYVUHSD will continue determining attendance based on operational needs while ensuring that administrative leadership receives ongoing school safety training through the School Safety Symposium and other appropriate professional development opportunities.

Recommendation 1c

The Grand Jury recommends that all Santa Barbara County school districts encourage teachers and staff to attend the School Safety Symposium in-person, and if not in-person, access the online seminar annually.

SYVUHSD Response to Recommendation 1c – Already implemented

The SYVUHSD supports the Grand Jury's objective of promoting school safety through professional development and ongoing training opportunities.

This recommendation has already been implemented through the SYVUHSD's targeted approach to school safety training. Each year, the SYVUHSD sends a multi-disciplinary team to the Santa Barbara County Education Office School Safety Symposium, including the Assistant Principals, Superintendent, School Resource Deputy, and rotating classified and certificated staff members whose job responsibilities directly involve emergency preparedness, student safety, crisis response, and campus operations. Participants have included, but are not limited to, the Lead Student Services Technician, Attendance Technician, Business Office Technician, and Campus Supervisors.

Upon returning from the Symposium, attendees share relevant information and best practices with other SYVUHSD personnel through established administrative meetings, safety planning activities, and site-level trainings as appropriate. The SYVUHSD believes this model maximizes the benefit of the Symposium while ensuring that employees receive training that is directly aligned with their assigned responsibilities and supports implementation of the District's Comprehensive School Safety Plan.

Finding 2

Santa Barbara County school districts are compliant in creating Comprehensive School Safety Plans for their schools, but some staff require more information and training on safety protocols.

SYVUHSD Response to Finding 2: Disagree partially with explanation

The SYVUHSD supports the Grand Jury's recognition that Santa Barbara County school districts are compliant with the requirement to develop and maintain Comprehensive School Safety Plans. The SYVUHSD cannot speak to the training practices or needs of other school districts.

However, with respect to the SYVUHSD the district believes its staff receive comprehensive and ongoing training regarding school safety protocols. Consistent with California Education Code sections 32280 through 32289.5, the District annually reviews and updates its Comprehensive School Safety Plan through a collaborative process involving multiple departments and public safety partners, as appropriate. The plan is reviewed with SB County Fire, SB County Sheriff, as well as SYVUHSD staff during regular staff meetings, and the SYVUHSD conducts routine emergency preparedness drills throughout the school year to ensure that employees understand their respective roles and responsibilities during a variety of emergency scenarios.

In addition to annual plan development and staff training, the SYVUHSD maintains a Crisis Management Team that meets regularly to review emergency procedures, evaluate lessons learned, update communication protocols, and strengthen the SYVUHSD's overall emergency preparedness. The SYVUHSD continually evaluates its safety practices and remains committed to providing additional training opportunities whenever identified as beneficial or appropriate.

Recommendation 2a

The Grand Jury recommends that the Santa Barbara County school districts train and drill all fulltime campus personnel and students for campus safety at least once per semester.

SYVUHSD Response to Recommendation 2a – Already Implemented

The SYVUHSD exceeds this recommendation with quarterly drills for all full-time campus personnel and students for campus safety. The District conducts campus safety drills involving students and appropriate campus personnel on a quarterly basis, thereby exceeding the recommended minimum frequency of once per semester.

These drills are conducted in accordance with the District's Comprehensive School Safety Plan and applicable provisions of California Education Code § 32001, 32001.5, and 32280 through 32289.5. The District will continue to evaluate and refine its emergency preparedness activities to promote the safety and well-being of students, staff, and visitors.

Recommendation 2b

The Grand Jury recommends that the Santa Barbara County school districts provide written and verbal instruction to all temporary personnel, including substitute teachers, prior to their entering a new classroom location.

SYVUHSD Response to Recommendation 2b – Already Implemented

Temporary personnel, including substitute teachers, are provided with written emergency procedures and safety information prior to assuming classroom responsibilities. In addition, emergency procedures are prominently

posted in every classroom, office, and common area throughout the SYVUHSD. These materials are also made available electronically to both permanent and temporary employees as part of the District's onboarding and annual safety communications, as applicable.

During emergency events, verbal instructions are communicated through the SYVUHSD's campus-wide public address system in both English and Spanish and are supplemented by visual notification through integrated strobe lighting to assist individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing.

The SYVUHSD's emergency communication systems, together with its posted safety procedures and ongoing staff training, support implementation of the District's Comprehensive School Safety Plan in accordance with California Education Code § 32280 through 32289.5.

The SYVUHSD will continue to review and enhance its orientation and emergency preparedness practices to ensure that both permanent and temporary personnel are prepared to respond appropriately in the event of an emergency.

Recommendation 2c

The Grand Jury recommends that the Santa Barbara County school districts provide quick reference situational cards and/or information posters conveying simple instructions for emergency response procedures in every classroom and in public rooms.

SYVUHSD Response to Recommendation 2c – Already Implemented

The SYVUHSD The District supports the Grand Jury's recommendation and has already implemented this practice.

The SYVUHSD prominently posts quick-reference emergency response procedures in every classroom, office, and common area throughout its campuses. These materials provide staff and students with readily accessible instructions for responding to emergency situations and are designed to support immediate action during a crisis.

In addition to the posted emergency reference materials, the SYVUHSD makes its emergency procedures available electronically to permanent and temporary employees and reinforces these procedures through regular safety training and emergency drills conducted throughout the school year.

The SYVUHSD will continue to review and update its emergency reference materials as needed to ensure they remain clear, accessible, and consistent with current best practices in school safety.

Finding 3

While many Santa Barbara County school districts have a watch, listen, and report culture for enhancement of threat detection in their schools, not all schools have anonymous pathways for reporting threats or potential threats online or on campus.

SYVUHSD Response to Funding 3 – Disagree partially with explanation

SYVUHSD supports the Grand Jury's emphasis on fostering a culture in which students, staff, parents, and community members are encouraged to promptly report safety concerns and potential threats.

SYVUHSD cannot speak to the reporting practices of other Santa Barbara County school districts. However, with respect to SYVUHSD, the district believes it has established a strong "See Something, Say Something" culture supported by multiple reporting and threat detection mechanisms.

In addition to encouraging direct reporting to school administrators, counselors, teachers, classified staff, and law enforcement, SYVUHSD maintains the *STOPit* anonymous reporting system, which allows students, staff, parents, and community members to anonymously report safety concerns, threats, bullying, or other issues at any time. Information regarding the STOPit reporting platform is prominently displayed on the District's website and throughout campus to encourage awareness and accessibility.

Beyond anonymous reporting, SYVUHSD utilizes *Securly Aware*, a student safety and web activity monitoring platform that proactively identifies online behaviors which may indicate risks of self-harm, violence, bullying, or other threats to school or community safety. When appropriate, alerts are immediately transmitted to designated administrators and counseling personnel so that timely intervention and support may be provided.

Together, these reporting and monitoring systems, combined with staff training and implementation of the District's Comprehensive School Safety Plan, demonstrate SYVUHSD's ongoing commitment to identifying, assessing, and responding to potential threats before they escalate. SYVUHSD continually evaluates its safety practices and technologies to ensure they remain effective and consistent with evolving best practices in school safety.

Recommendation 3a

The Grand Jury recommends that all Santa Barbara County school districts train school personnel on how to gain trust, understand healthy boundaries, and engage in strategic partnerships with community service groups to support student needs.

SYVUHSD Response to Recommendation 3a – Already Implemented

The SYVUHSD supports the Grand Jury's recommendation and has already implemented this practice.

The SYVUHSD provides regular professional development to school personnel through scheduled monthly staff meetings and other training opportunities throughout the school year. These trainings focus on building positive relationships with students, recognizing and responding to student needs, establishing healthy professional boundaries, identifying students who may require additional support, and collaborating effectively with community partners to provide appropriate services.

Training is delivered by both community partner organizations and qualified district personnel, including credentialed Pupil Personnel Services (PPS) professionals, the District's Health & Wellness Coordinator, who is a licensed School Psychologist, and other appropriately trained and credentialed staff members with expertise in student services, mental health, school safety, and crisis intervention.

The SYVUHSD maintains strong collaborative relationships with local mental health providers, law enforcement, county agencies, and other community organizations to ensure students and families have access to appropriate resources and coordinated support. The SYVUHSD will continue to evaluate and expand these partnerships and professional development opportunities as appropriate to meet the evolving needs of its students and school community.

Recommendation 3b

The Grand Jury recommends that all Santa Barbara County school districts provide an anonymous reporting mechanism on school-provided devices, in addition to a drop box available on campus.

SYVUHSD Response to Recommendation 3b – Already implemented

SYVUHSD supports the Grand Jury's objective of ensuring that students, staff, and community members have accessible and anonymous methods to report safety concerns.

This recommendation has already been implemented through multiple reporting mechanisms available to the SYVUHSD community. SYVUHSD utilizes the *STOPit* anonymous reporting platform, which is accessible from school-provided devices as well as personal devices, cell phones, or home phones allowing students, staff, parents, and community members to anonymously report safety concerns, bullying, threats, or other issues at any time. Information regarding the *STOPit* reporting system is prominently displayed on the District's website and throughout District campuses.

Rather than utilizing a physical drop box, SYVUHSD has intentionally implemented an electronic anonymous reporting system that better protects the identity of individuals making reports. Unlike a physical drop box, which may create concerns that a student or staff member could be observed submitting a report due to the fact that cameras record all these locations, the *STOPit* platform allows reports to be submitted completely anonymously, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, from virtually any location. SYVUHSD believes this approach reduces barriers to reporting and encourages individuals to report safety concerns without fear of being identified.

In addition to anonymous reporting through *STOPit*, SYVUHSD utilizes *Securly Aware*, which proactively identifies online activity that may indicate risks of self-harm, violence, bullying, or other threats to school or community safety and immediately notifies designated administrators and counseling personnel for timely assessment and intervention.

Students and staff are also encouraged to report concerns directly to teachers, counselors, administrators, classified staff, school resource personnel, or law enforcement. Through these complementary reporting pathways, SYVUHSD believes it meets—and, in several respects, exceeds—the intent of the Grand Jury's recommendation by providing reporting methods that are accessible, anonymous, continuously available, and responsive to student concerns.

Finding 4

School Resource Officers or Deputies are valuable in preventing or addressing potentially dangerous situations on campus, but many schools do not employ them.

SYVUHSD Response to Finding 4: Disagree partially with explanation

The SYVUHSD agrees that School Resource Officers (SROs) and School Resource Deputies (SRDs) can play a valuable role in helping prevent, identify, and respond to potentially dangerous situations on school campuses. However, SYVUHSD cannot confirm or dispute the Grand Jury's characterization regarding the prevalence of School Resource Officers or Deputies employed by other Santa Barbara County school districts, as that information is outside the District's knowledge and control.

With respect to SYVUHSD, the district has maintained a dedicated full-time (including summer school session) School Resource Deputy assigned to its campuses since the 2022–2023 school year. The School Resource Deputy

serves as an integral member of the SYVUHSD's comprehensive school safety program by collaborating with administrators, counseling staff, students, and community partners to enhance campus safety, provide preventative education, assist with emergency preparedness, and respond to incidents as appropriate.

The SYVUHSD values its continued partnership with local law enforcement and believes that maintaining a School Resource Deputy on campus strengthens its overall commitment to providing a safe and secure learning environment for students, staff, and visitors.

Recommendation 4

The Grand Jury recommends that all Santa Barbara County school districts have School Resource Officers (SRO) or Deputies (SRD).

SYVUHSD Response to Recommendation 4: More information is necessary

The SYVUHSD supports the Grand Jury's objective of promoting safe school environments and recognizes that School Resource Officers (SROs) and School Resource Deputies (SRDs) can provide significant benefits when implemented in a manner that reflects the needs of the local school community.

The SYVUHSD currently maintains a dedicated School Resource Deputy and has found this partnership to be highly beneficial for its student body. The School Resource Deputy works collaboratively with SYVUHSD administration, counseling staff, students, and community partners to promote school safety, build positive relationships with students, assist with emergency preparedness, and respond to incidents when appropriate. Based upon SYVUHSD's experience and community demographics, the presence of a School Resource Deputy has been well received by students, staff, and families and has enhanced the SYVUHSD's overall school safety program.

However, additional information is necessary before concluding that this model should be universally adopted by every Santa Barbara County school district. School districts differ significantly in enrollment, grade levels served, geographic characteristics, community expectations, available resources, and student demographics. Research and professional literature have identified both potential benefits and potential challenges associated with placing law enforcement personnel on school campuses, including concerns that, in some settings, the presence of law enforcement may affect students' perceptions of safety or result in student conduct issues being addressed through the juvenile justice system rather than through school-based disciplinary or restorative practices.

California law requires school districts to maintain Comprehensive School Safety Plans and implement appropriate emergency preparedness measures, but it does not require every school district to employ a School Resource Officer or School Resource Deputy. Accordingly, SYVUHSD believes each local educational agency should retain the flexibility to determine, in collaboration with its governing board, law enforcement partners, and school community, whether an SRO, an SRD, or another evidence-based school safety model best meets its unique needs.

While SYVUHSD intends to continue utilizing its School Resource Deputy because the program has proven successful within the District, it cannot conclude that the same approach is necessarily appropriate or effective for every school district.

Finding 5

Some schools in Santa Barbara County school districts lack adequate controls for visitor access.

SYVUHSD Response to Finding 5: Disagree partially with explanation

The SYVUHSD supports the Grand Jury's emphasis on maintaining secure school campuses through effective visitor management and access control procedures.

SYVUHSD cannot confirm or dispute the Grand Jury's characterization regarding visitor access controls implemented by other Santa Barbara County school districts, as those practices are outside the District's knowledge and control.

With respect to SYVUHSD, the district has maintained comprehensive visitor management and campus access control procedures for many years. For more than five years, SYVUHSD utilized the Raptor Technologies visitor management system to screen visitors, manage campus access, and enhance student safety. Building upon that foundation, the District has since transitioned to the Verkada security platform, which provides enhanced visitor management, campus access control, video surveillance, and security monitoring capabilities.

Visitors are required to report through established entry points and comply with District visitor management procedures before accessing school campuses during the instructional day. These procedures are integrated with the District's Comprehensive School Safety Plan and are supported by ongoing collaboration among SYVUHSD staff and local law enforcement.

SYVUHSD believes that its longstanding investment in visitor screening and campus access control demonstrates its commitment to providing a safe and secure learning environment. The District continually evaluates its security technologies and operational practices to ensure they remain effective and consistent with evolving school safety best practices.

Recommendation 5a

The Grand Jury recommends that Santa Barbara County school districts improve visitor access control during school hours by requiring valid government-issued photo identification verified by school personnel, utilizing a system that checks for restraining orders or other legal restrictions.

SYVUHSD Response to Recommendation 5a: Already Implemented

The SYVUHSD supports the Grand Jury's recommendation and has already implemented this practice.

For more than seven years, SYVUHSD has required visitors seeking access to school campuses during the instructional day to present valid government-issued photo identification, which is verified by authorized school personnel through the District's visitor management system. For more than five years, the District utilized the Raptor Technologies visitor management system, which screened visitors against applicable databases and assisted the District in identifying individuals subject to legal restrictions or other safety concerns before campus access was granted. SYVUHSD has since transitioned to the Verkada visitor management platform, which continues to provide secure visitor management and campus access control while supporting the District's overall school safety program.

These visitor management procedures are integrated into the District's Comprehensive School Safety Plan. SYVUHSD remains committed to continually evaluating and enhancing its visitor management practices to ensure the safety and security of students, staff, and visitors.

Recommendation 5b

The Grand Jury recommends that Santa Barbara County school districts require all schools to issue visitors a badge and require its visibility on the visitor while on campus during school hours.

SYVUHSD Response to Recommendation 5b: Already Implemented

The SYVUHSD

Finding 6

Not all schools in Santa Barbara County have adequate safety infrastructure, including fences, cameras, classrooms that lock from the inside, restricted access points, and instantaneous communication devices.

SYVUHSD Response to Finding 6: Disagree Partially with Explanation

The SYVUHSD supports the Grand Jury's recommendation and has already implemented this practice.

As part of its established visitor management procedures, SYVUHSD requires visitors who are authorized to access school campuses during the instructional day to check in through the SYVUHSD's visitor management system and be issued a visitor badge. Visitors are expected to wear the badge in a visible location while on campus so that staff can readily identify authorized visitors and distinguish them from students and employees.

This practice has been in place for many years through the District's visitor management systems, including the former Raptor Technologies platform and the SYVUHSD's current Verkada visitor management system. These procedures are an integral component of SYVUHSD's campus security program and Comprehensive School Safety Plan.

SYVUHSD will continue to evaluate and enhance its visitor management practices to support a safe and secure learning environment for students, staff, and visitors.

Recommendation 6

The Grand Jury recommends that all Santa Barbara County school districts have each school conduct an annual security review with respect to video security cameras at key points across school grounds, two-way communications on campus, and innovations, such as artificial intelligence-aided technologies or drones, and make improvements based on those reviews.

SYVUHSD Response to Recommendation 6: Already Implemented

The SYVUHSD supports the Grand Jury's recommendation and has already implemented this practice.

SYVUHSD conducts regular security assessments of its campuses in collaboration with the District's School Resource Deputy, District administration, and other appropriate personnel. These reviews occur multiple times throughout the school year, exceeding the recommendation for an annual review, and include evaluations of campus security cameras, access control systems, emergency communications, physical security measures, and other technologies that support student and staff safety.

As part of its ongoing commitment to continuous improvement, SYVUHSD regularly evaluates existing security systems and emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence-assisted security tools and other innovations,

to determine whether they are appropriate, effective, and fiscally responsible for implementation within the District.

The results of these reviews are incorporated into the District's Comprehensive School Safety Plan and campus security practices. SYVUHSD will continue working collaboratively with its School Resource Deputy and other public safety partners to assess security needs and implement improvements that enhance the safety of students, staff, and visitors.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "K. Sheehan", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dr. Kimberly Sheehan
Superintendent