



**Santa Maria Joint Union
HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT**

Where greatness grows.

August 4, 2026

The Honorable Patricia Kelly
Santa Barbara County Superior Court
Anacapa Street Santa Barbara, CA 93101
pkelly@sbcourts.org

Stacy Mezzetta de Cossio, Foreperson
Santa Barbara County Grand Jury
sbcgi@sbcourts.org

Re: Santa Maria Joint Union High School District Response to the 2025–2026 Santa Barbara County Grand Jury Report: *Preparing for the Unthinkable: How are Santa Barbara County Schools Preparing to Prevent or Minimize the Effects of a Potential Mass Shooting?*

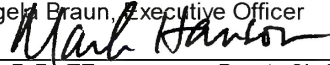
Prepared pursuant to California Penal Code sections 933 and 933.05

Introduction

The Santa Maria Joint Union High School District appreciates the opportunity to respond to the 2025–2026 Santa Barbara County Grand Jury report concerning school safety and preparation for potential acts of targeted violence. The District shares the Grand Jury’s commitment to maintaining safe, secure, and supportive learning environments for students, staff, families, and the broader school community.

SMJUHSD recognizes that school safety requires both prevention and preparedness. The District’s work includes Comprehensive School Safety Plans, Standard Response Protocols, staff and student drills, School Resource Officer partnerships, visitor management practices, campus supervision, security infrastructure, student wellness supports, Securly Tipline anonymous reporting, Securly Aware digital safety alerts, threat assessment and intervention practices, and ongoing coordination with law enforcement and emergency response partners.

At the same time, the District recognizes that recommendations directed broadly to school districts throughout Santa Barbara County may not apply uniformly to every district or campus. SMJUHSD will respond to each finding and recommendation based on District operations, high school campus conditions, legal requirements, student needs, available resources, and practical implementation considerations.

FILED
SUPERIOR COURT of CALIFORNIA
COUNTY of SANTA BARBARA
08/11/2026
Angela Braun, Executive Officer
BY 
M. Hanson Deputy Clerk

District Framework

The District approaches school safety through a layered model that combines physical security, emergency preparedness, adult supervision, law enforcement coordination, student wellness, staff training, clear communication, and positive school climate. No single measure can prevent every possible safety threat; effective preparedness depends on multiple systems working together.

Each comprehensive high school has a full administrative team, campus security staff, and a full-time School Resource Officer. Santa Maria High School and Pioneer Valley High School each have a Santa Maria Police Department officer assigned to campus, and Ernest Righetti High School has a Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office deputy assigned to campus. These officers are present on campus daily, maintain office space within or near the site discipline office, and work closely with site administrators on school safety, bullying, gang-related concerns, threat information, investigations, and day-to-day student safety matters. District campuses are closed campuses during the school day, and students may not leave campus except through appropriate checkout procedures. Comprehensive campuses are fenced and use controlled access practices that help direct non-student visitors to designated entry points after school has begun. Delta High School receives administrative, security, and School Resource Officer support appropriate to its size and program. District schools maintain visitor management procedures, emergency response materials, regular safety drills, camera systems, communication systems, and annual safety review processes.

SMJUHSD also recognizes that school safety is connected to student wellness and early intervention. Counselors, Wellness Center staff, school psychologists, administrators, teachers, School Resource Officers, campus security staff, and community partners all play a role in identifying concerns, supporting students, responding to threats, and connecting students with appropriate resources.

Response Methodology

This response is submitted pursuant to California Penal Code sections 933 and 933.05. The District has reviewed the findings and recommendations directed to the Santa Maria Joint Union High School District Governing Board and responds below to those findings and recommendations applicable to county school districts.

Each finding is quoted from the Grand Jury report and is followed by the District's response. Each recommendation is likewise quoted and followed by one of the statutory response categories required by California Penal Code section 933.05, together with a summary of the District's rationale and implementation actions.

Finding 1 and Recommendations 1b-1c

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.”

District Response: Agree in part.

The District agrees that the Santa Barbara County Education Office provides school safety training opportunities, including the School Safety Symposium, and that such training can be valuable. SMJUHSD also recognizes that in-person attendance at countywide trainings may be limited by space, scheduling, staffing, substitute availability, operational demands, and the need to prioritize essential campus coverage.

SMJUHSD supports ongoing professional learning related to school safety, threat awareness, emergency response, and student wellness. The District may use a combination of direct attendance, administrator participation, information sharing, staff meetings, local training, and internal communication to ensure relevant safety information reaches appropriate personnel.

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.”

District Response: Will not be implemented as written.

The District supports administrative participation in meaningful school safety training, including the School Safety Symposium when appropriate and available. However, SMJUHSD does not believe a mandatory two-year attendance cycle for every administrative leader is necessary or the most practical method for ensuring safety information reaches site teams.

The District may instead use a combination of administrator attendance, training-of-trainers models, site leadership meetings, District safety communications, staff meetings, and local drills to disseminate relevant information. SMJUHSD will continue determining attendance and training expectations based on available symposium capacity, site needs, staffing coverage, role responsibilities, and District safety priorities.

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.”

District Response: Will not be implemented as written.

The District supports providing teachers and staff with relevant school safety information and training. However, SMJUHSD does not believe it is practical or necessary to encourage annual in-person attendance by teachers and staff at the School Safety Symposium as the primary means of training all personnel. In-person symposium attendance may be limited by space, role relevance, scheduling, substitute availability, staffing coverage, and operational demands.

The recommendation also refers to accessing an online seminar annually; however, if the symposium is not made available online by the sponsoring agency, the District cannot require or rely upon online access as an annual training method. Instead, SMJUHSD will continue using staff meetings, site-based training, Standard Response Protocol materials, drill preparation communications, emergency reference materials, administrator briefings, and other District safety communications to ensure appropriate safety information is shared with teachers and staff.

Finding 2 and Recommendations 2a-2c

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.”

District Response: Agree in part.

The District agrees that Comprehensive School Safety Plans must be supported by training, communication, drills, and ongoing reinforcement. SMJUHSD does not agree that the finding should be read as a conclusion that District staff generally lack safety information; however, the District recognizes that safety training is an ongoing responsibility and that information must be refreshed, practiced, and communicated in multiple ways.

District sites conduct regular safety drills and use Standard Response Protocol materials, emergency folders, posters, staff communications, and site-based procedures to reinforce expectations. The District will continue reviewing training practices to ensure that employees and students understand how to respond during emergency situations.

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.”

District Response: Has been implemented.

SMJUHSD sites train and drill campus personnel and students on emergency response procedures at least once per semester. Drills and training are based on Standard Response Protocol concepts, including responses such as Hold, Secure, Lockdown, Evacuate, and Shelter, as appropriate to the situation and drill schedule.

Site administrators and safety personnel communicate expectations before drills, provide reminders and follow-up as needed, and use drill practice to reinforce staff and student understanding of emergency procedures. Because these training and drill practices are already in place, Recommendation 2a has been implemented.

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.”

District Response: Will be implemented.

SMJUHSD provides substitute teachers and temporary personnel with emergency information through site materials, classroom emergency folders, and teacher-provided notes. The District also uses the countywide Standard Response Protocol framework adopted across Santa Barbara County, which provides common emergency response language and supports coordination among school personnel, law enforcement, fire, and emergency response partners.

Because specific emergency procedures may vary by campus layout, classroom location, evacuation route, and incident circumstances, substitute safety information must include both general District expectations and site-specific information. Beginning with the 2026–2027 school year, SMJUHSD is working with its contracted substitute services provider to support consistent substitute onboarding and communication across District sites, including safety-related expectations.

In addition, site administrators maintain awareness of which substitute teachers and temporary personnel are on campus each day and will prioritize direct communication with those individuals during emergencies when immediate guidance is needed. The district will continue refining written and verbal safety instructions for substitute teachers and temporary personnel during the 2026–2027 school year, with the goal of improving consistency while recognizing that classroom-specific emergency directions cannot be fully standardized across all sites and locations.

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.”

District Response: Has been implemented.

SMJUHSD provides Standard Response Protocol and emergency quick-reference information through classroom materials, emergency folders, posters, and other site-based resources. These materials are intended to provide simple, accessible instructions for common emergency response actions and to reinforce the shared emergency language used across the countywide Standard Response Protocol framework.

The District will continue reviewing the placement and consistency of emergency reference materials across classrooms and public areas as part of its ongoing safety planning and site review processes. Because emergency quick-reference materials and postings are already in use throughout District campuses, Recommendation 2c has been implemented.

Finding 3 and Recommendations 3a–3b

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.”

District Response: Agree in part.

The District agrees that a strong watch, listen, and report culture is important to school safety and early threat identification. SMJUHSD maintains multiple pathways for reporting safety concerns, including direct reporting to trusted adults and electronic anonymous reporting through Securly Tipline, which is accessible through links on District and school websites.

When a Tipline report is submitted, notification is routed to appropriate site administrators and District leaders so the concern can be reviewed promptly, assessed for available facts, and investigated as needed. This process is not dependent solely on an individual site administrator; District-level notification provides an additional layer of oversight and follow-up to help ensure reports are addressed and reduce the likelihood that concerns fall through the cracks. Anonymous reports are not ignored or discounted because they are anonymous; however, they are reviewed carefully because reports may be incomplete, inaccurate, or require verification.

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.”

District Response: Has been implemented.

The District agrees that trusted adult relationships, healthy boundaries, and strategic community partnerships are important components of student safety and early intervention. SMJUHSD personnel support students through multiple roles, including administrators, teachers, counselors, school psychologists, Wellness Center staff, campus security personnel, School Resource Officers, coaches, classified staff, and community partners.

School staff receive safety-related training and communication through District and site-based processes, including mandated trainings, emergency preparedness communications, staff meetings, student support discussions, referral procedures, and guidance on appropriate adult-student interactions and reporting obligations. While relationship-building occurs through many professional roles rather than through one single program, the District’s practices emphasize appropriate boundaries, timely referral, student support, and connection to trusted adults.

SMJUHSD also engages community partners to support student needs, including organizations and agencies that provide mental health services, conflict mediation, youth support, violence prevention, mentoring, internships, higher education access, and family engagement. These partnerships strengthen the District’s ability to connect students with appropriate supports beyond what schools can provide alone.

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.”

District Response: Will not be implemented as written.

SMJUHSD has implemented electronic anonymous reporting through Securly Tipline, which is accessible through links on District and school websites and available to students using District-provided devices. Reports may be submitted anonymously and are routed to appropriate site administrators and District leaders for prompt review, fact assessment, and investigation as needed.

The District will not implement the portion of the recommendation requiring physical anonymous drop boxes. The District’s comprehensive high schools are large campuses serving thousands of students, including approximately 3,100 students at Santa Maria High School, nearly 3,100 students at Pioneer Valley High School, and approximately 2,500 students at Ernest Righetti High School. Physical drop

boxes would create practical concerns regarding placement, visibility, access, monitoring responsibility, frequency of review, documentation, confidentiality, response timing, and follow-up.

Electronic reporting is more reliable, timely, accessible, and accountable. It allows reports to be routed immediately to appropriate personnel, reviewed more efficiently, and acted upon more quickly than information placed in a physical box. Students also have multiple in-person reporting pathways through administrators, counselors, teachers, coaches, campus security staff, School Resource Officers, Wellness Center personnel, and other trusted adults. For these reasons, the District has implemented digital anonymous reporting and multiple direct reporting pathways, but will not install physical drop boxes.

Finding 4 and Recommendation 4

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.”

District Response: Agree in part.

The District agrees that School Resource Officers and Deputies can be valuable partners in preventing, identifying, and responding to potentially dangerous situations on campus. SMJUHSD does not agree that the finding should be read to imply that the District lacks such support. The District’s comprehensive high schools each have a full-time School Resource Officer or Deputy assigned to campus.

Santa Maria High School and Pioneer Valley High School each have a Santa Maria Police Department officer assigned to campus, and Ernest Righetti High School has a Santa Barbara County Sheriff’s Office deputy assigned to campus. These officers are present daily, maintain office space within or near the discipline office, and work closely with site administrators, campus security, counselors, and other staff on school safety, bullying, gang-related concerns, threat information, investigations, and day-to-day student safety matters. Delta High School receives School Resource Officer support appropriate to its size and program.

Recommendation 4

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

District Response: Has been implemented.

SMJUHSD has implemented this recommendation at its comprehensive high schools. Each comprehensive campus has a full-time School Resource Officer or Deputy assigned to campus and

integrated into the daily school safety system. The District funds these law enforcement partnerships and works closely with the assigned officers and deputy to support campus safety, information sharing, threat response, student support, and coordination with law enforcement agencies.

Because these partnerships are already in place at the District's comprehensive high schools, and because Delta High School receives School Resource Officer support appropriate to its size and program, Recommendation 4 has been implemented.

Finding 5 and Recommendations 5a-5b

Finding 5

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

District Response: Disagree as to SMJUHSD.

The District recognizes that the Grand Jury report was directed broadly to school districts throughout Santa Barbara County and may reflect conditions at other schools or agencies. SMJUHSD does not agree that this finding accurately describes District practice. District sites maintain visitor access procedures that require visitors to check in, provide government-issued identification, and receive a visitor pass or badge before proceeding onto campus.

SMJUHSD uses a visitor management process to support campus safety, verify visitor information, and assist schools in managing access during the school day. Visitor badges or passes are expected to remain visible while visitors are on campus.

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."

District Response: Has been implemented.

SMJUHSD requires visitors to provide valid government-issued identification when checking in during the school day. District sites use the Visitor Aware system, which assists with visitor screening and supports identification of legal restrictions or other safety concerns before a visitor is issued access to campus.

Because the District already requires government-issued identification and uses a visitor management system to support screening and campus access control, Recommendation 5a has been implemented.

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.”

District Response: Has been implemented.

SMJUHSD sites issue visitors a pass or badge through the visitor check-in process and require visitors to display the pass or badge while on campus during school hours. This practice assists school personnel in identifying authorized visitors and supports campus access control.

Because visitor badge procedures are already in place at District sites, Recommendation 5b has been implemented.

Finding 6 and Recommendation 6

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.”

District Response: Disagree as to SMJUHSD.

The District recognizes that the Grand Jury report was directed broadly to schools throughout Santa Barbara County and may reflect conditions at other campuses or agencies. SMJUHSD does not agree that this finding accurately describes District practice. District campuses maintain layered safety infrastructure that includes closed-campus procedures, perimeter fencing, controlled visitor access, designated entry practices, extensive camera systems, campus supervision, communication systems, interior safety procedures, restricted access practices, and ongoing coordination with law enforcement and emergency response partners.

These measures are designed to reduce unauthorized access and to help school personnel identify individuals who do not belong on campus. While no physical security measure can eliminate every possible method of unauthorized entry, the District’s combination of fencing, controlled entry points, visitor management, camera coverage, campus security patrols, School Resource Officer presence, and staff supervision provides multiple layers of detection and response.

The District continually reviews its physical safety infrastructure as facilities, technology, student needs, and operational experience evolve. Site administrators, District safety personnel, campus security leadership, School Resource Officers, and law enforcement partners contribute to the review and improvement of campus safety systems.

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.”

District Response: Has been implemented.

SMJUHSD conducts annual safety and security reviews as part of its ongoing school safety planning and operations. These reviews include consideration of video security cameras, two-way communication systems, access points, fencing and gates, signage, classroom and facility security, visitor management, supervision practices, and other measures designed to support campus safety.

The review process includes site and District personnel and may involve campus security leadership, School Resource Officers, law enforcement partners, facilities staff, and other appropriate personnel. Resulting improvements may include adjustments to signage, gates, access practices, camera coverage, communication practices, and other safety measures based on site conditions and available resources.

The District will continue evaluating emerging safety technologies, including artificial intelligence-aided technologies or other tools, where appropriate. Any such technology must be reviewed for educational suitability, operational value, cost, privacy, legal compliance, student impact, and alignment with District safety priorities. Because annual safety review practices are already in place, Recommendation 6 has been implemented.

Conclusion

The Santa Maria Joint Union High School District appreciates the opportunity to respond to the 2025–2026 Santa Barbara County Grand Jury report concerning school safety and preparation for potential acts of targeted violence. The District shares the Grand Jury’s commitment to protecting students, staff, families, and the broader school community.

As described throughout this response, SMJUHSD approaches school safety through a layered system of prevention, preparedness, response, and continuous improvement. This system includes Comprehensive School Safety Plans, countywide Standard Response Protocols, staff and student drills, School Resource Officer partnerships, closed-campus procedures, visitor management, campus security, camera systems, emergency reference materials, Securly Tipline anonymous reporting, Securly Aware digital safety alerts, student wellness supports, and collaboration with law enforcement and emergency response partners.

The District recognizes that school safety is an ongoing responsibility and that no single practice can eliminate all risk. SMJUHSD will continue reviewing safety infrastructure, training practices,

communication systems, student-support services, and emergency preparedness procedures to ensure that District campuses remain safe, responsive, and aligned with evolving best practices and local conditions.

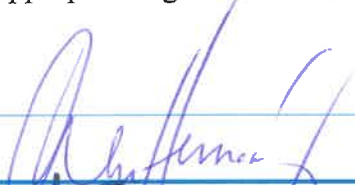
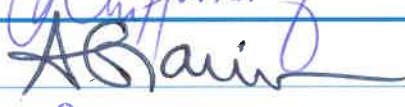
Summary of District Commitments

- Maintain Comprehensive School Safety Plans and countywide Standard Response Protocol practices.
- Train and drill students and staff on emergency response procedures at least once per semester.
- Continue strengthening substitute and temporary personnel safety communication during the 2026–2027 school year.
- Maintain full-time School Resource Officer or Deputy partnerships at comprehensive high schools and appropriate SRO support for Delta High School.
- Maintain closed-campus procedures, controlled visitor access, visitor identification, and visible visitor badges.
- Maintain Securly Tipline electronic anonymous reporting and Securly Aware digital safety alerts with site and District-level notification, review, and follow-up.
- Continue conducting annual safety and security reviews and evaluating appropriate improvements based on site needs, resources, and legal requirements.

Governing Board Action

The Governing Board of the Santa Maria Joint Union High School District approves this response to the 2025–2026 Santa Barbara County Grand Jury Report, *Preparing for the Unthinkable: How are Santa Barbara County Schools Preparing to Prevent or Minimize the Effects of a Potential Mass Shooting?*, pursuant to California Penal Code sections 933 and 933.05, and directs the Superintendent or designee to transmit the adopted response to the appropriate agencies within the statutory timelines.

Signature Page

President, Governing Board	
Superintendent	
Date	8-4-2026
Board Action	8-4-2026