



Partnership Alliance for Safer Schools

WHITE PAPER: Funding for School Security

The volunteers who make up the Partnership Alliance for Safer Schools (PASS) bring together their research and expertise from the education, public safety and industry communities to develop and support a coordinated approach to make effective use of proven security practices for schools. The PASS team is also dedicated to developing white papers on specific, school-safety topics.

The content in these white papers may point to specific products, brands, or organizations as illustrations of how certain safety and security measures are implemented. PASS does not endorse specific products or brands. Together, the volunteers and partners of the PASS share a single vision: making all schools safer is both achievable and urgently needed.

AUTHORS

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KEY TOPIC

Resources to find funding sources for school safety and security

PROBLEM SOLVED

School districts and private schools are constantly dealing with safety mandates and expectations that are, many times, unfunded. While there are many funding opportunities for school safety and security, finding and working through the funding process can be extremely challenging. This paper offers resources and best practice recommendations from practitioners to assist schools in finding and obtaining funding to promote a safe and secure school environment.

RELEVANT PASS GUIDELINES SECTIONS

Recommended Uses:

- Grant Proposal Development.....p. 11
- Risk Assessment.....pp. 12-13
- Formulating a Security Plan.....pp. 18-19

MOST RELEVANT FOR:

- School administrators and safety officers.
- Grant writers.
- Government safety administrators.
- Public safety personnel.
- School board members and other governance stakeholders.
- Systems integrators and consultants.
- School stakeholder organizations (e.g., PTA, PTO, PTSA).

TIME TO READ

14 minutes

Introduction

Lawmakers enact mandates and laws to combat the threats to schools. Although well intentioned, these mandates and laws do not always prescribe the means or methods for satisfying them, nor any measure of success. Likewise, school safety grants and other funding opportunities do not always specify what the funding can be spent on. This problem actually creates the opportunity for a district or private school to both address tactical safety issues and also lay the groundwork for long range strategic safety and security.

Protecting K-12 students and staff from acts of extreme violence requires more than being reactive—it requires visionary thinking, planning, and persistence to get there. However, this cannot be achieved without significant funding now and into the future. Often the first thing that comes to mind for improving school safety and security is **physical improvements** of schools that were built before today's threats were universally understood. A 2023 survey conducted by the National Center for Educational Statistics found that only 21% of U.S. school buildings were constructed after the year 2000, while almost 40% were constructed in the 1960s or earlier, decades before today's threats were anticipated.

In addition to physical improvements to buildings and campuses, schools also need better systems to improve and expand **daily safety operational processes**, such as managing drills and safety exercises; safety training for staff; case management software for student threat assessments, bullying, and sexual

misconduct; and maintaining a unified dashboard to track a district or individual school's current status and continuous improvement toward specific safety objectives. Finally, districts and schools need one or more **dedicated personnel** tasked with leading the district or school's drive to continuous safety improvement, recognizing emerging threats and helping overcome organizational complacency. This is a function apart from that of the law enforcement officer who may serve as a full- or part-time school resource officer.

Clearly, to advance in all areas of school safety and security, what is needed is a safety and security master plan to identify your district or school's long term goals and objectives over multiple years. By having a written, multiyear safety and security master plan, you can advance school safety based on the opportunity.



Finding Funding

Funding for school safety and security improvements could come through the local community (mill levies, bond issues, and capital campaigns), grants (federal and state agencies), or private foundations. One thing all funding sources have in common is that they are opportunity and topic driven; that is to say that both the timing and the message about the need must fit the opportunity at hand.

Sources include:

- Mill levies.
- Bond issues.
- Capital campaigns.
- Current federal grants.
- State grants.
- State and national foundations.

Organizing and presenting your safety initiatives through particular funding themes can help increase your chances of success:

- Launch culture initiatives to begin a new aspect of safety and protection.
- Introduce technology initiatives to expand or integrate new and existing technology.
- Establish infrastructure initiatives to make old facilities safer.
- Initiate general operations initiatives to expand safety management and staff training.

A quick web search for funding opportunities for school safety and security provides a litany of information that runs from federal and state government sites and safety and security nonprofits to manufacturers promoting this grant or that grant. Where to even start can be a challenge.

PASS has compiled the following resources that schools can use to easily find the basic information on what is available for their school or district:

- School Safety Government <https://www.schoolsafety.gov/>
 - School Safety offers a great place to get started in seeing up-to-date information on school safety, as well their grant finder tool:
<https://www.schoolsafety.gov/grants-finder-tool>.
- COPS <https://cops.usdoj.gov/svpp>
 - The COPS program is a collaborative effort between local law enforcement and schools to provide funding for school security.
- NSCA <https://www.nasca.org/track-legislation/>
 - NSCA provides an easy way to track what legislation is being done by state. This can assist in understanding what is pending and what funding opportunities may arise from the legislation.
- FEMA <https://www.fema.gov/grants/preparedness/homeland-security>
 - FEMA offers grants for school safety and for the private school sector as well.

In addition to the federal opportunities for funding, it is extremely important that districts look into programs that the state is offering. Some examples of state funding that are available are:

- Nebraska:
<https://www.education.ne.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/School-Safety-and-Security-Related-Infrastructure-Grants-Guide.pdf>
- Colorado: <https://oss.colorado.gov/school-security-disbursement-program>
- Georgia: <https://www.gadoe.org/wholechild/Pages/School-Safety.aspx>

These resources are a way to get started in finding opportunities for your district.

Applying for Grants

Once the school has found opportunities, applying for a grant may seem a daunting process. The application can appear confusing and seem to ask for a lot more information than what is actually required. The PASS Guidelines provide a plan that will fulfill most of the information requested by grants. Most grants will request what the plan is for school safety and security, what the funding will be used for, as well as why the funding is being requested. The questions can be easily answered in using the layered and tiered approach to school safety provided by PASS.

There are some details that schools should confirm before applying for a grant:

- All federal grants require the school to have a Federal SAM (System for Award Management) number. If the school/district does not know its SAM number or does not have one, the school/district can create one at https://usfcr.com/register-renew/?utm_medium=ppc&utm_term=sam%20number&utm_campaign=SAM&utm_source=adwords&hsa_tgt=kwd-300203963229&hsa_ad=476102798537&hsa_src=g&hsa_mt=b&hsa_ver=3&hsa_cam=122161541&hsa_acc=1449812725&hsa_kw=sam%20number&hsa_grp=5341822301&hsa_net=adwords&gad_source=1&gclid=Cj0KCQjw_qexBhCoARIsAFgBleuMF5h93VPQeL8sa4RDE84T8p63vMXPjxB_as8_yv6gLKrRCronLbMaAliPEALw_wcB
- Applicants should understand what the grant is intended to provide: Some grants are very specific in what can be funded and what cannot. For example, the COPS program has two specific grant opportunities; one is for technology and program funding, and one is for training and personnel funding. Be aware of what the grant can be used on when making a decision to apply.
- Some grants, such as COPS, recognize PASS as a recommended plan for school safety and security.
- Schools should find out if their state has a “state contract” that is used for public entities to purchase security products and services. State contracts are adopted by the state to allow public entities to purchase products and services directly off the contract. Some grants want to know if you have a state contract and whether the contract has products and services that can be purchased from that contract.
- Information can be attached to the grant that provides additional facts on the safety and security of the school/district. This can include the team you have focused on safety and security, programs already in place, using the PASS Guidelines to show how your safety and security is progressing, and any other security and safety information available.

The Plan

These core safety and security needs – physical improvements, operational systems, and leadership – are not automatically understood by stakeholders or potential funders. Finding funds, competing for funds, and succeeding at winning the funds hinges on marketing the message about safety and security. The heart of funding is the “ask” – effectively and efficiently making the case for why the funds are necessary and how they will be used.

First, schools need to fund safety leadership. Reliable school safety and security is not a static condition but one that is built upon a mindset of continuous improvement, counteracting the all-too-human tendency toward complacency. Experience shows that overcoming organizational security complacency requires that at least one person be tasked with continuously challenging the organization to stay awake and alert to possible or actual threats, know how to respond to the threats, and make physical and operational changes to further deter the threats. For small school districts, this may be a single person influencing the entire organization, while large districts might require a team. Further, although the presence of a law enforcement officer is a valuable addition to any campus, it does not fully satisfy the organizational leadership function of a full-time school safety director.

Second, most K-12 school buildings and campuses need funding to upgrade their buildings and infrastructure to be more secure. As noted earlier in this white paper, the majority of school buildings are ill equipped to deal with today's security threats. Likewise, schools need to have better control and surveillance over who enters a campus and who enters or leaves the buildings. This may require remodeling entries; improving electronic access control systems; adding cameras to offset blind spots; and integrating "legacy" security hardware into newer, more sophisticated management platforms, better fencing, vehicular ramming barriers, roof access barriers, or any of a long list of architectural or electronic systems improvements.

Third, schools need to purchase and maintain improved organizational processes for managing possible threats and responding to known threats:

- Visitor management systems are needed to control and document who is given access into school buildings and on school campuses.
- Emergency preparedness can be managed through specially designed software platforms that track when and how well drills are performed.
- Student threat assessment processes can be aligned with national models and managed through specially designed software that helps schools ensure potentially threatening behaviors are correctly evaluated and resolved.
- Staff safety capacity and confidence can be improved through in-service training, such as verbal de-escalation and non-violent intervention, and self-directed, online safety modules.

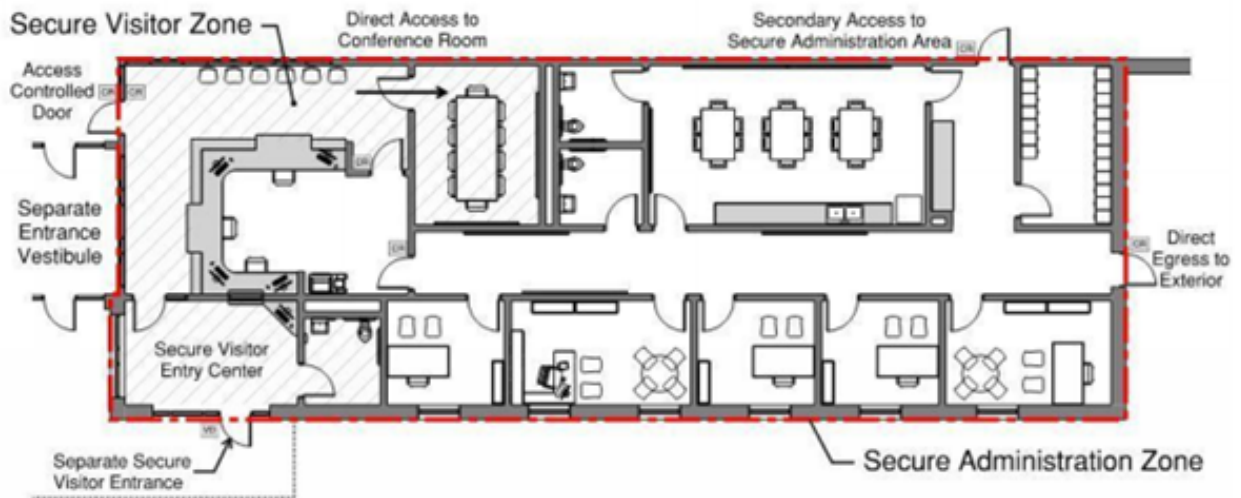
The next step in the plan is to identify what the funding will be used for. For example, the Juul Settlement that was awarded to schools is intended to provide funding for vaping prevention (<https://www.publichealthlawcenter.org/resources/juul-settlement-state-map>). While this settlement is directly related to vaping, the fund can be used for more than just vape prevention and detection. For more information on how this funding can be used, please visit the webinar conducted by Guy Grace at <https://bit.ly/K12Security-Webinar>.

The tiered approach allows the school to show what it has accomplished to date and what the next step is to continue to promote a safe and secure culture in the school. The reason why the school needs the funds is to continue to progress in creating a multiple layer and tiered approach to school safety.

Architectural Plans (Visitors Center)

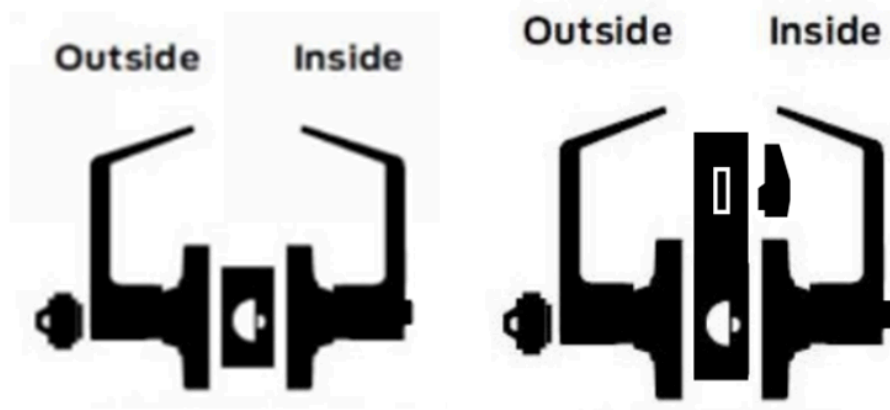
Specific funding for increasing the safety and security of the entrances to schools is available as well. This initiative to better segment how visitors enter the school is one key component to mitigating risks from outside the school community.

PASS provides recommendations on ways to increase security with the Visitor Entry Center model. This model provides ideas on how to modify existing main entrances and create new entrances, as well as create an area that is dedicated to visitors in a safe and welcoming environment while not allowing access to the entire building. PASS recommends reading the white paper on Secure Visitor Entry Center (<https://passk12.org/access-control/pass-secure-visitor-entry-center-white-paper/>). Included in the white paper are some thoughts on window glazing and security films.



Interior Security Enhancements

Legislation such as Alyssa’s Law and others has prompted schools to focus on how they can better provide security and safety inside the school during an active threat event. While this focus is important, there are few details on how and what to provide to meet these initiatives. PASS has a few recommendations on ways for schools to increase safety and security in a cost effective, strategic approach.



Classroom Doors:

There is still much debate and misinformation on how to properly secure classrooms and common areas within a school. To date, there has not been a casualty incident in which a classroom door was closed and locked. While many “barricade” type devices have been marketed to schools, the fact remains that for safety of all threats (including fire), having the appropriate door hardware as required by International Building Code and NFPA is the most secure option available.

To assist in reviewing and deciding on what door locks should be installed on classroom doors, PASS has created a matrix and revised tiered approach to assist in this decision. It is ultimately up to the individual school to decide what fits best for that school's environment.

	Tier I	Tier II	Tier III	Tier IV
CLASSROOM/PERIMETER LAYER				
ACCESS CONTROL				
Classroom and Shelter in Place Doors must have the ability to be locked from the inside by all occupants, and be keyed or otherwise accessible on the corridor side for quick access by authorized personnel.	X	X	X	X
Classroom Doors Closed and Locked When Occupied	X	X	X	X
Locks with Visual Indicator		X	X	X
Standalone Electronic Locks			X	X
Networked Electronic Locks				X

Door Lock Matrix:

K-12 Interior Door Lock Types And Functions

- 1 All code compliant models feature single motion exiting from interior at all times, regardless of locking status of exterior.
- 2 All mechanical locks feature an exterior keyed cylinder for entry
- 3 Most electronic locks include a mechanical key override
- 4 Category 2-5 locks should include a door visual indicator on the inside

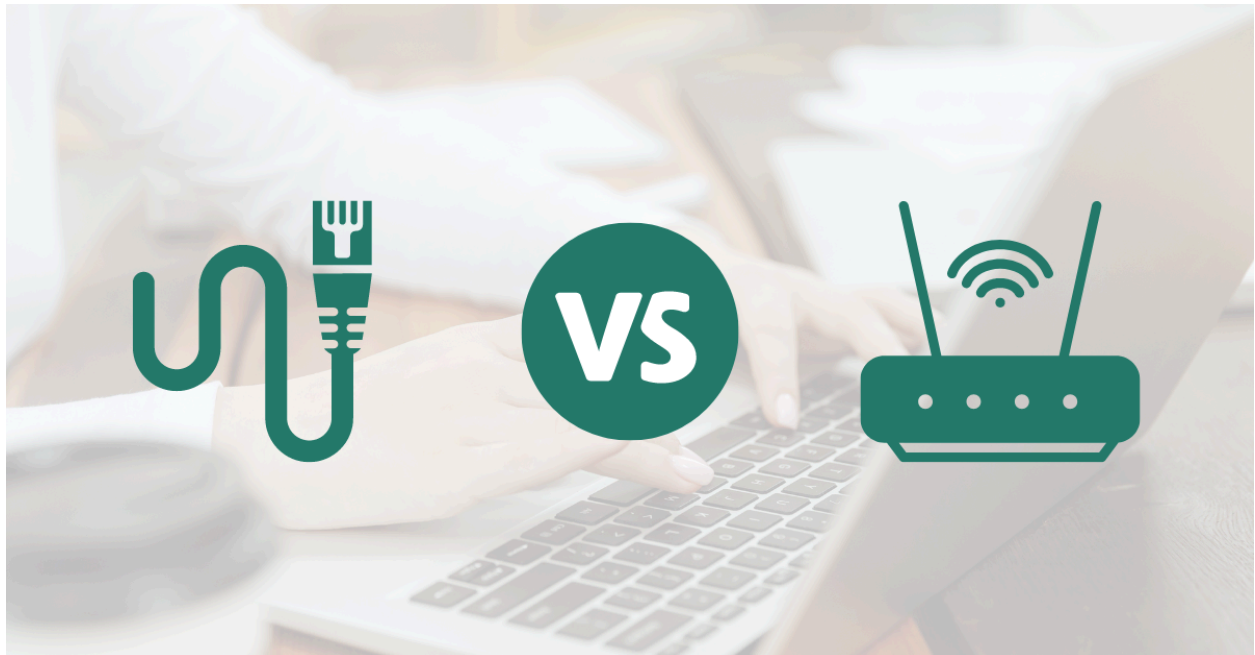


Groups	Description	Category 1	Category 2	Category 3	Category 4	Category 5
A	Traditional Classroom Locksets (Unlocked in the morning, Locked At End Of Day)	Blank Inside	Inside Cylinder	Inside Activator	Electronic Hybrid 1	Electronic Hybrid 2
	Lock/Unlock Method	Key	Key	Key	Key, Card or Keypad	Key, Card or Keypad
	Lock Initiation	No interior capability Locks exterior lever	Key on inside Locks exterior lever	Inside turnpiece or button Locks exterior lever, deadbolt projected on some models	Remote - No other inside method Locks exterior lever	Remote or interior lock control Locks exterior lever, deadbolt projected on some models
	Forced Entry Protection	Latch	Latch	Generally a latch, some models with a deadbolt	Latch	Generally a latch, some models with a deadbolt
	Major Benefit	Teacher can lock the door without entering hallway	Anyone in room can lock the door quickly	Remote lock/unlock of door is possible	Remote lock/unlock of door possible and anyone in the room can quickly lock the door	
	Lock Initiation Discussion Points	1. Only person with key can lock the door 2. Key holder must enter hallway to lock door	1. Only person with key can lock door from inside or outside	1. Anyone in room can lock door from the inside	If teacher (or protocol) is to keep door unlocked during the day, door can be locked remotely (see concerns below)	Same as Type 4, but with inside activation button
	Areas of concern & discussion	1. Exposure to harm when entering hallway 2. Length of time to initiate lockdown procedures 3. Possibility that key may not be accessible 4. Room cannot be locked down if teacher is not in the room 5. Effect of stress on fine motor skills 6. No locking bolt	1. Length of time to initiate lockdown procedures 2. Possibility that key may not be accessible 3. Effect of stress on fine motor skills 4. Room cannot be locked down if teacher is not in the room 5. Confusion regarding which way to turn the key on locks without indicators 6. No locking bolt on most models 7. Cylindrical locks never have a locking bolt	1. Kids or an assailant may lock the door, restricting entry to anyone with a key 2. No locking bolt on most models 3. Cylindrical locks require an additional integrated auxiliary lock to have a locking bolt	1. Complexity of operation 2. Offers a variety of credential lockdown options 3. Same Concerns 2-6 of Category 1	Same Concerns as Category 3 & 4
B	Always Locked on Hall Side (No Free Entry)	Mechanical	Card Access	Keypad		
	Entry Method Options	Key	Key or Card	Key or code		
	Lock Initiation	Not required, exterior lever always locked	Not required, exterior lever always locked	Not required, exterior lever always locked		
	Forced Entry Protection	Latch	Latch	Latch		
	Major Benefit	Door is always locked	Door is always locked	Door is always locked		
	Areas of concern & discussion	1. Teacher needs to respond and go to door to allow entry 2. Teachers will prop door open to avoid having to continuously respond to entry requests 3. Classroom exiting restricted by teachers to minimize having to open the door 4. No locking bolt	1. Teacher needs to respond and go to door to allow entry 2. Teachers will prop door open to avoid having to continuously respond to entry requests 3. Classroom exiting restricted by teachers to minimize having to open the door 4. Software, programming to maintain system 5. No locking bolt on most models	1. Teacher needs to respond and go to door to allow entry 2. Teachers will prop door open to avoid having to continuously respond to entry requests 3. Classroom exiting restricted by teachers to minimize having to open the door 4. Software, programming to maintain system 5. Code can be observed by students and used for entry 6. No locking bolt on most models		
C	Electric Locking of Type A (Traditional Classroom)	Emergency locking station in room	Remote locking from central location (office)	External locking from (Central station, Police, etc.)		
	Entry Method Options	1. Pendant transmitter 2. Wall-mounted activation station	1. Wired or wireless signal and control	1. Different systems		
	Major Benefit	Can Lock door and/or initiate a lockdown without approaching the door	Can Lock door and/or initiate a lockdown from a remote location	Can Lock door and/or initiate a lockdown from a remote location		
	Areas of concern & discussion	1. Transmitter: Same as key-only one person can initiate 2. Wall station: Same as inside turnpiece 3. No locking bolt	1. Notification required to initiate 2. Same issues as key - no way to initiate from within room 3. Potential to lock assailant in room 4. Requires communication to be effective 5. No locking bolt on most models	1. Same as central location 2. Requires infrastructure 3. No locking bolt on most models		

Duress and Panic Systems:

In evaluating the implementation of a duress program, it is important to follow certain steps before implementing the technology. These steps can assist the school to know that not only does the program fit the specified legislation, but it also continues to fit in the holistic approach to a safe and secure culture:

1. Define the process: Schools should work with local law enforcement to establish what the process should be for a duress system. Key questions should be answered before implementation:
 - a. Who is able/authorized to enable the duress alert?
 - i. This answer could differ by the type (elementary, middle, high) of school building.
 - b. Where would be the best locations for a duress alert?
 - c. How will local law enforcement be notified?
 - d. What is the plan for a false alert?
 - e. How will the school use drills to practice the alert?
 - f. What will students and staff do in response to an alert, and where will this occur?



2. Choose a technology: There are a variety of technologies that address duress. Schools should look at the following items when deciding on a technology:
 - a. Hardwired versus wireless: There are advantages and disadvantages to each type of technology.
 - i. The advantage of hardwired systems is that they are generally designed to be monitored 24/7 and will alert the school if the system has a problem or event. The disadvantage is that devices are fixed.

- ii. The advantage to wireless systems is that devices can be installed and relocated fairly easily, and some offer wireless pendants that can be used. The disadvantage is that there is a requirement for maintaining these devices as well as ensuring the proper use of wireless devices that are worn.
 - b. Expansion of current technology: Schools should investigate whether the building already has technology in place to which duress could be added. Intrusion systems can easily accommodate duress alarms. Another example is adding devices to the fire alarm system.
 - c. Mobile duress applications: While it may seem that “having an app” on a mobile device would be the best application of duress, there is a reason why emergency systems utilize very simple techniques to activate. Under stress, the first function that is impaired is fine motor skills as well as logical step-by-step thinking. That is why appropriate door locking hardware requires a single motion for opening a door, and fire alarms have a simple pull station. PASS recommends NOT using mobile applications for alerting emergency events.
3. Train, drill, and evaluate: Just as with the response to a fire event, duress events should be handled in the same manner. It is important to train all persons who are responsible for activating a duress alert as well as practice the response to a duress alert with drills. PASS recommends that the process and drills be evaluated to see effectiveness as well as what situations can occur in which the training needs to be modified. Tabletop exercises with the school team and local law enforcement are strongly encouraged.

Summary

Finding, applying, and receiving grants as well as defining processes and plans for legislative initiatives can seem overwhelming, yet grants are available and the funding can be obtained with a little research and some work on gathering the necessary information for grant application. PASS has found that when a school gets the first grant, the ability to find and obtain additional grants becomes easier over time.

References

- Secure Visitor Entry Whitepaper: <https://passk12.org/access-control/pass-secure-visitor-entry-center-white-paper/>
- Vape Detection Funding Webinar: <https://bit.ly/K12Security-Webinar>
- Public Law Enforcement Center: www.publichealthlawcenter.org
- SchoolSafety.gov