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*Superintendent of Schools*

SERVICE

EXCELLENCE

INNOVATION

TEAMWORK

September 15, 2020

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Dear Members of the Grand Jury:

I apologize for the tardy response. Like many organizations, our operations have been interrupted by the pandemic. I have bolded both the findings and recommendations pertinent to the Mendocino County Office of Education (MCOE) and shared our responses in red.

## **FINDINGS**

**F1. School safety is a high priority for MCOE and the school districts. MCOE agrees.**

F2. Standard operating procedures for emergency services personnel is an “All Hands-on Deck” response.

**F3. Links of communication and resources are shared between MCOE and the districts. MCOE agrees.**

F4. Due to the County’s geographic challenges, including cities and remote rural areas, there is no optimum incident response time by emergency services personnel. According to a 2013 FBI study, almost 70% of gun related active assailant events, last just five minutes. A third of those last fewer than two minutes.

F5. Response time to an incident of five minutes or more is not acceptable. According to a 2013 FBI study, almost 70% of gun related active assailant events, last just five minutes. A third of those last fewer than two minutes.

**F6. According to superintendents interviewed, the Average Daily Attendance (ADA) has been and is negatively impacted by mental health pressures on students.**

**F7. The MCOE does not track the County school districts’ compliance with the Education Code directive. MCOE agrees but notes that a requirement to track this compliance is not clearly stated in the code.**

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The Grand Jury recommends that:

R1. the BOS work with the County Sheriff's Department to develop a plan inclusive of law enforcement agencies (city, county, state) to place an officer in a locale where the average campus incident response time should be no greater than five minutes, (F1 – F2, F4 – F5)

**R2. the MCOE work with the BOS to develop a strategic plan for the most expeditious response time to any school site incident, (F1– F5) MCOE is always willing to work collaboratively with the BOS and law enforcement agencies to improve school safety.**

**R3. ongoing lines of communication among MCOE, school districts and first responders be maintained, (F2 – F4) MCOE agrees.**

**R4. the MCOE consider providing support for enhanced crisis intervention for mental health counselors to be available to school districts at a reasonable ratio of one counselor per 500 students. This action would address the need for post incident counseling and proactive intervention with student issues, (F6) MCOE has maintained a crisis response team for years and makes counselors available in response to incidents. MCOE maintains a listing of mental health resources on our web page so they are always available to students, parents, and staff.**

**R5. school districts be encouraged to provide staff and IT to monitor student and staffs' online communications, (F1, F6) MCOE supports districts developing their own policies regarding student communication that could enhance the internet filtering already provided by MCOE.**

**R6. the MCOE annually maintain a master copy and track the submittal of school safety plans to ensure compliance with the California Education Code. (F7) Schools are required to post their plans and updates on their websites. MCOE will poll each district at the beginning of the school year to confirm compliance with the requirements.**

Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have additional questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



Michelle Hutchins  
*Mendocino County Superintendent of Schools*