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## Department of Emergency Services & Public Protection

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# AS SCHOOL YEAR BEGINS, DESPP CONTINUES TO PRIORITIZE WORK WITH DISTRICTS TO IMPROVE SECURITY

At the start of a new school year and in the aftermath of another deadly school shooting, the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection is sharing information on an array of ongoing initiatives to help schools improve security.

“This isn’t about just reacting to threats, but it’s about taking a comprehensive approach to create safe places where children learn,” said DESPP Commissioner Ronnell A. Higgins. “Within DESPP, the Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security works year-round with school districts to help them strengthen safety and security.”

“Our commitment is to equip school districts, administrators, and staff with the funding, planning, and training resources necessary to create safe and supportive environments.” Higgins said. “We want students to focus on what truly matters: learning, growing, and achieving in every aspect of school life, from the classroom to the lunchroom, on the field, and throughout their school community.”

Since the school shootings in Sandy Hook, school districts have been required by law to work with DESPP and the State Department of Education to develop school security and safety plan standards. The state also has provided a school security grant program to help fund infrastructure enhancements, such as camera systems, improved communications, and upgrading of doors and windows.

“Our goal is to coordinate resources to enhance school planning and preparedness,” said DESPP Deputy Commissioner Brenda Bergeron, who oversees DEMHS. “We help bring stakeholders and subject matter experts together.”

Bergeron said DEMHS initiatives include:

- School safety and security plan standards and templates for school safety security plans
- Security assessments for schools
- A new supervisor for the school security unit that, along with DEMHS regional coordinators, works directly with school districts and school security partners
- Grants for school security that have provided more than \$80 million for safety projects since 2014

■ School emergency preparedness training.

Addressing targeted violence is also high priority. In October, the agency will sponsor a targeted violence symposium in Hartford.

“Every new school year presents new opportunities. We are here to work with school districts to help them enhance their school safety and security initiatives,” said Terron Jones, Emergency Management Supervisor for the school security program.

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