



HARRIS COUNTY  
**SAFE SCHOOLS  
COMMISSION**



**2022-2023  
RECOMMENDATIONS**

AUGUST 2022



HARRIS COUNTY  
**SAFE SCHOOLS  
COMMISSION**



# INTRODUCTION

---

On June 14, 2022, Harris County Commissioners Court unanimously approved Precinct 3 Commissioner Tom Ramsey's proposal to create the Harris County Safe Schools Commission. Each Commissioners Court member appointed one representative to create the five-member committee, which coincidentally resulted in a diverse group of perspectives on school safety including a parent, student, teacher, superintendent, and a board trustee.

The goal of the Safe Schools Commission was to compile recommendations by August 2022 on how Harris County can support all 25 independent school districts, charter, and private schools safety with strategies for the 2022-2023 school year.

As their work progressed, the Safe Schools Commission expanded their recommendations beyond the county to include school districts and first responders to address school safety as a whole. This document shows the final result of their recommendations.

AUGUST 2022



HARRIS COUNTY  
**SAFE SCHOOLS  
COMMISSION**

# THE COMMISSION

---



**Lisa Alpe**

Spring Branch ISD Board of Trustees Vice-President

Lisa Alpe serves on the Board of Trustees for Spring Branch ISD. Lisa was a Harris County Assistant District Attorney for 11 years and is now in private practice. Her priorities for school safety are changing “safety culture” in schools including increased, focused training for teachers, staff and students and hardening physical access to school entrances.

Alpe was appointed by Precinct 4 Commissioner R. Jack Cagle.



**Saami Baig**

Student

Saami Baig is a high school junior and part of the March for Our Lives Houston legislation team. His focus for school safety include firearm accessibility amongst youth to ensure that preventable deaths stop happening, and that resources are available for students showing signs of mental distress.

Baig was appointed by Judge Lina Hidalgo.





HARRIS COUNTY  
**SAFE SCHOOLS  
COMMISSION**

# THE COMMISSION



**Dr. Elizabeth Fagen**

Humble ISD  
Superintendent

Dr. Elizabeth Fagen is the Superintendent of Humble ISD, one of the fastest-growing school districts in Texas. She brings experience from serving as an educator in four states to the table. Her focus on school safety is around hardening campus infrastructure, improving radio interoperability, providing additional mental health resources, and proactively orienting community first responders to campuses.

Dr. Fagen was appointed by Precinct 3 Commissioner Tom Ramsey.



**Min. Calandrian Kemp**

Parent

Minister Calandrian Simpson Kemp is the Founder of No Weapon #1Life Empowerment Foundation supporting families impacted by child loss with an emphasis on gun violence, and the City Gun Violence Lead Volunteer with the Texas chapter of Moms Demand Action. Her focus on school safety is addressing accessibility to firearms, understanding school safety protocols for accountability, and protecting parents from child loss due to violence.

Min. Kemp was appointed by Precinct 2 Commissioner Adrian Garcia.



**Traci Latson**

Teacher

Traci Latson is a Houston ISD Career Pathways Teacher Leader who teaches 7th and 8th-grade Career Education at Meyerland Performing and Visual Arts Middle School. Her focus for school safety emphasizes improved collaboration and education on preventative and response protocols between all school staff and first responders to cultivate a safe school culture.

Latson was appointed by Precinct 1 Commissioner Rodney Ellis.



HARRIS COUNTY  
**SAFE SCHOOLS  
COMMISSION**

# RESOURCES

---

The Commission leaned on subject matter experts to understand school safety procedures and how to complement or improve the processes. The resources were Harris County Fire Marshal Laurie L. Christensen and Julia Andrews, Director of Center for Safe & Secure Schools, a division of Harris County Department of Education.



**Laurie L. Christensen**

Harris County  
Fire Marshal



**Julia Andrews**

Director of the Center for  
Safe & Secure Schools, a  
division of Harris County  
Department of Education



HARRIS COUNTY  
**SAFE SCHOOLS  
COMMISSION**



# ROOM TO IMPROVE

---

After reviewing Uvalde school shooting reports, previous atrocities, and experiences they've encountered among their peers, the Commission identified the following major issues that need attention:

- Lack of mental health resources for students and ways to anonymously raise awareness on those who need assistance
- Old or inadequate infrastructure around schools, such as doors, locks, etc.
- Siloed approaches to emergency preparedness and response between faculty and first responders.
- Limited knowledge on school safety protocols for parents/guardians and faculty for accountability purposes
- Lack of credible auditing to ensure safety protocols are being adhered to or addressed
- Insufficient knowledge on safe firearm storage
- Lack of prioritization of school safety





HARRIS COUNTY  
**SAFE SCHOOLS  
COMMISSION**

# STANDARD LEVEL OF CARE

To address the issues previously mentioned, the Commission created a standard level of care, the base level of recommendations to build upon, for a safer school environment. The members met weekly to brainstorm strategies from collected data and what works based off their expertise gained from personal and professional experiences. Below are the priorities identified by the Commission that should reach a standard level of care.

## PRIORITIES



### MAINTENANCE

Prioritize facility maintenance and enhancements



### COMMUNICATIONS

Cultivate faculty & first responder relationships for preparedness and response needs



### TRAINING

Standardize emergency training for first responders, faculty, & students



### RESOURCES

Ensure resources and tools are available



### ACCOUNTABILITY

Measure and follow-through with responsibilities at all levels



HARRIS COUNTY  
**SAFE SCHOOLS  
COMMISSION**

# TOP RECOMMENDATIONS

To make a significant, real impact on school safety, the Commission broadened their scope of recommendations to include action items for Harris County, schools, and first responders. Here are their recommendations:

RECOMMENDATION	SCHOOLS	LOCAL FIRST RESPONDERS	HARRIS COUNTY
Reprogram all Harris County law enforcement radios for efficient dispatch and response operations		✓	✓
Involve all staff members of schools, including substitutes, to review the emergency operations plan for each campus	✓	✓	
Annually verify locks are operable and reviewed for code by the Fire Marshal	✓	✓	
Hire a countywide "Incident Coordinator" to focus on implementing & sustaining Commission recommendations			✓





HARRIS COUNTY  
**SAFE SCHOOLS  
COMMISSION**

# TOP RECOMMENDATIONS

## CONTINUED

RECOMMENDATION	SCHOOLS	LOCAL FIRST RESPONDERS	HARRIS COUNTY
Increase the number of counselors, psychologists, and social workers in schools	✓		
Provide mental health distress training and resources to parents and students.	✓	✓	
Increase firearm safety and storage education taught through curriculum/school assemblies supported by law enforcement	✓	✓	✓
Conduct conflict resolution training for students	✓		
Trustees and central office leadership verify completion of mandatory school audit findings	✓		
"CPR" - Coffee with the Principal & Responders to tour facilities, review plans, etc., to improve emergency response	✓	✓	



HARRIS COUNTY  
**SAFE SCHOOLS  
COMMISSION**

# TOP RECOMMENDATIONS EXPLAINED

## RECOMMENDATION

## WHY/HOW IT HELPS

Reprogram all Harris County law enforcement radios for efficient dispatch and response operations

Change all law enforcement radios in Harris County to put HC-MAI in Zone A, Channel 16 position on portable radios. This will allow for incident command to listen to dispatch, resulting in a more organized and tactical response, rather than each agency being on their own frequency and trying to piece together the situation - unify communications.

Involve all staff members of schools, including substitutes, to review the emergency operations plan for each campus

Ensuring all staff members, especially substitute teachers, are knowledgeable and trained on the campus emergency plan helps for improved response. The goal is to get everyone on the same page regardless of their permanent or temporary status with the facility. These are developed as part of the Texas School Safety Center's EOP toolkit.

Annually verify locks are operable and reviewed for code by the Fire Marshal

Yearly check-ins with the Fire Marshal will ensure locks are reviewed for code and accessibility during times of an emergency.

Hire a countywide "Incident Coordinator" to focus on implementing & sustaining Commission recommendations

Harris County can facilitate cohesive planning between all stakeholders including law enforcement, first responders, and school staff for improved emergency preparedness and response operations.

Increase the number of counselors, psychologists, and social workers in schools

The standard ratio is 1 to 250 students and as high as 1 to 500. Risk Indicator Reports should determine the location, and the number of counselors, psychologists, and social workers each campus receives.



HARRIS COUNTY  
**SAFE SCHOOLS  
COMMISSION**

# TOP RECOMMENDATIONS EXPLAINED

## RECOMMENDATION

## WHY/HOW IT HELPS

Provide mental health distress training and resources to parents and students

Parent University courses can be offered and resources can be posted on school websites, social media sites, and included in podcasts formats for easy access.

Firearm safety and storage education taught through curriculum/school assemblies supported by law enforcement

Educating students, staff, and parents about responsible firearm ownership and safe storage can help mitigate access by those who intend to do harm to themselves or others. Schools can partner with local law enforcement to issue free gun locks.

Conflict resolution training for students

Teaching students to de-escalate a situation and feel comfortable in asking for help for themselves or others can help reduce acts of violence.

Trustees and central office leadership verify completion of mandatory school audit findings

Holding staff accountable to follow protocols, prioritize safety, and prevent complacency will be key to cultivating a culture of safety for schools.

"CPR" - Coffee with the Principal & Responders to tour facilities, review plans, etc. to improve emergency response

Invite responders to visit and get familiar with the campuses, so they're already aware of the facility features before an emergency arises. Responders can provide school staff an overview of who the first responders are and what mutual aid responders will arrive.





# ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commission also identified other recommendations that can be tackled throughout the school year and in the future that all tie back to the priorities attributed to school safety. See their additional recommendations below:

RECOMMENDATION	SCHOOLS	LOCAL FIRST RESPONDERS	HARRIS COUNTY
Secure vestibule at every campus	✓		
Single point of entry (all visitors enter through main door)	✓		
Prioritize non-working lock work orders	✓		
Install Knox Box at each campus and keep a master key, maps, and emergency contacts inside	✓	✓	
All 24 dispatch centers meet bi/annually to verify compliance with mutual aid systems		✓	✓



HARRIS COUNTY  
**SAFE SCHOOLS  
COMMISSION**

# ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION	SCHOOLS	LOCAL FIRST RESPONDERS	HARRIS COUNTY
Recommend schools post a link for parents to access proof of assessment(s) and AHJ inspection of life safety, security, and emergency action plans compliance	✓		
Create a School Safety Badge indicating that a school or district's safety audit has been completed, passed, and verified by a third party	✓		✓
Conduct a "crosswalk" of first responders, law enforcement, fire, EMS, and Fire Marshal for better coordination between all agencies	✓	✓	✓
Ensure PSAP Ops talk-group is installed in all dispatch centers to assist in enhanced situational awareness for all communication centers		✓	✓



HARRIS COUNTY  
**SAFE SCHOOLS  
COMMISSION**

# ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION	SCHOOLS	LOCAL FIRST RESPONDERS	HARRIS COUNTY
Require all staff members of schools, including substitutes, to review the emergency operations plan for each campus	✓		
Increase emergency training offerings to staff such as Stop the Bleed Training (SERTEC provides free training), NIMS & ICS (FEMA provides free training)	✓		
Provide social media toolkits for parents and students on how to be safe and smart when using social media	✓		
Create and promote a campaign around anonymous tipping for students and staff to report suspicious activity such as iHelp, See Something, Say Something, etc.	✓	✓	✓





HARRIS COUNTY  
**SAFE SCHOOLS  
COMMISSION**

# ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION	SCHOOLS	LOCAL FIRST RESPONDERS	HARRIS COUNTY
Require ISD law enforcement personnel to attend Active Attack Integrated Response Course (AAIR), a 16-hour performance level direct delivery course for active attack/shooter events	✓	✓	
Provide gun violence prevention/safety resources for parents such as Be Smart and free gun locks by request	✓	✓	
Host a "Meet Your Responders" Open House, similar to National Night Out, first responders to meet parents and build relationships for school safety	✓	✓	

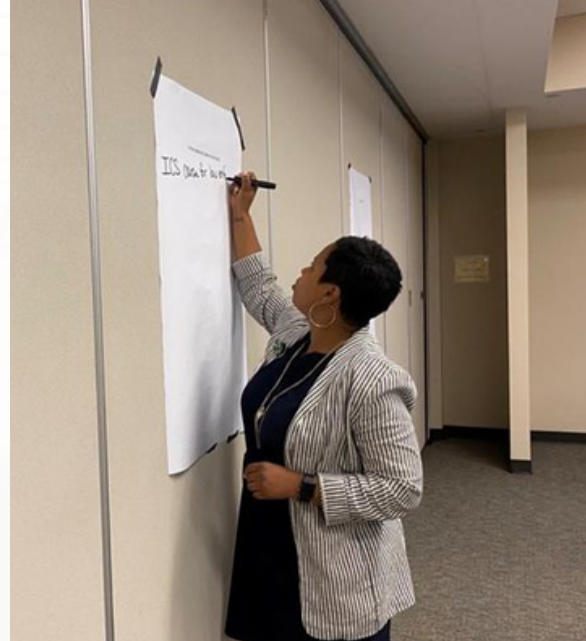


HARRIS COUNTY  
**SAFE SCHOOLS  
COMMISSION**

---

# NEXT STEPS

---



The Safe Schools Commission is requesting approval from Commissioners Court to continue their work to see longer-term recommendations come to fruition. The ball is already rolling on various recommendations including securing mental health resources for schools through American Rescue Plan Act funds and reprogramming radio systems for unified emergency response.

Harris County is home to the state's largest school district, Houston ISD, and the sixth-fastest-growing district, Humble ISD. The Commission plans to work with Commissioners Court and other stakeholders to make Harris County a national example of how all agencies can work together to achieve school safety.

*A formal presentation from the Safe Schools Commission was presented at Commissioners Court on Tuesday, August 23, 2022.*

AUGUST 2022