

3A V.S.A. § 20-55

Current through Act Nos. 104 and M-21 of the 2023 Adjourned Session of the 2023-2024 Vermont General Assembly

Vermont Statutes Annotated > *TITLE 3A Executive Orders (Chs. 1 — 33)* > *Chapter 20. Internal Security and Public Safety (§§ 20-1 — 20-64)*

Executive Order No. 20-55 (No. 03-18) [Governor's Community Violence Prevention Task Force]

WHEREAS, we need a forum for honest, respectful and fact-based discussions about how all Vermonters can play a role to reduce the risk of violence in our communities, including identifying root causes and developing avenues for open conversations about behavior, mental health, firearm safety, the breakdown of civil discourse and personal responsibility; and

WHEREAS, there is no single solution and Vermonters themselves must be part of any effort to ensure supportive communities, healthy families and positive school climate that are based on inclusion and promoting resiliency and acknowledging these contribute to positive social and emotional development in children; and

WHEREAS, Vermont is not immune to the risk of extreme violence in our schools and communities as evidenced by the recent events in Fair Haven, Vermont which resulted in criminal charges being brought against an 18-year-old former student in connection with what court records show to be a detailed plan to conduct a mass shooting at his former high school in Fair Haven, Vermont; and

WHEREAS, Vermont is currently one of the healthiest and safest states in America with many of the best - and safest - schools in the country; and

WHEREAS, we are also reminded, while we can plan for the eventuality of these horrific events, this is an opportunity to focus our efforts on understanding and addressing the root causes of violent behavior.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that I, Philip B. Scott, by virtue of the authority vested in me as Governor, do hereby create the Governor's Community Violence Prevention Task Force as follows:

I. Composition and Appointments.

The Governor's Community Violence Prevention Task Force shall consist of not more than 14 members to be appointed by the Governor from inside and outside of State government. The State members shall include the Governor's Commissioner of Public Safety, the Secretary of the Agency of Health and Human Services, the Commissioner of the Department of Mental Health,

the Agency of Education School Security Liaison Officer and the Secretary of the Agency of Digital Services or designees.

The remaining appointees to the Task Force will be broadly representative of stakeholders and may include, but not be limited to, mental health care professionals, teachers, students, school officials, sportsmen and/r licensed gun dealers, veterans, security consultants, health care providers, first responders, states attorneys and cybersecurity professionals.

The Task Force will be co-chaired by no more than three members designated by the Governor.

The Task Force may, in its discretion, establish interagency working groups to support its mission, drawing membership from any agency or department of the executive branch of State government, including, but not limited to the Department of Health, Department of Children and Families and the Agency of Education.

The Task Force may also, in its discretion, consult with private sector professionals outside of the Task Force for information and advice on best practices.

II. Community Violence Prevention Task Force Charge and Process.

The mission of the Task Force will be to identify the primary root causes of behavior that leads to violence against others in schools and communities and lead the State's response to address these issues by ensuring full interagency and intra-agency coordination among state and local governments and schools. The Task Force will identify strategies and lessons learned, relying on credible research and successful community-based violence prevention programs.

The Community Violence Prevention Task Force will be advisory to the Governor. The Task Force shall meet at the call of the Chair(s), but not less frequently than monthly. The Task Force shall:

1. Assess high-quality primary research, including evidence-based Vermont data to the extent it is available regarding the underlying causes of violent behavior in communities. At the request of the House of Representatives by way of Resolution, this review will also consider the connection between excessive video game playing and the propensity to engage in gun violence;
2. Identify best practices for schools and communities to prevent violent behavior including, but not limited to, identifying warning signs and how to report them, recommending ways to improve prevention and reporting of bullying and harassment and closing the operational gaps among the Department of Children and Families, the Department of Mental Health, the Agency of Education, law enforcement and our schools;
3. Identify opportunities to strengthen existing support systems to ensure every school and community has a local rapid reaction/early intervention team involving educators, mental health/social service professionals and law enforcement when concerning behavioral issues are identified;
4. Review opportunities for expanding school safety prevention and preparedness capacity in the Agency of Education and the Department of Public Safety and supporting the work of the Vermont School Safety Center;
5. Evaluate the adequacy of protections for individuals (students and adults) reporting threats, including consideration of shield laws;

6. Explore the feasibility of stronger open source intelligence gathering by the Vermont Intelligence Center and the cybersecurity center with Norwich University once established; and
7. Review existing State health, mental health, education and criminal laws, regulations, policies, and programs and propose appropriate legislative changes, including changes to eliminate redundancy and break down barriers faced by communities and schools in coordinating action with State government.

The Task Force will report to the Governor and make recommendations December 1, 2018, June 1, 2019 and December 1, 2019.

In consultation with the Vermont School Safety Center, the Task Force will do all things necessary to carry out the purpose of this Executive Order.

Meetings of the Task Force will be public. The Task Force will hold at least one (1) meeting in each region of the State. The Task Force shall invite public comment and participation to the greatest extent practicable.

The Community Violence Prevention Task Force shall receive administrative and staff support from the Office of the Governor, and public health data support from the Vermont Departments of Health and Mental Health.

III. Effective Date.

This Executive Order shall take effect upon execution and shall expire December 31, 2019.

Dated April 19, 2018.