



Episode 3: Oklahoma's State School Safety Model

#REMSontheAir Podcast Intro (Recorded): [00:00:00] Welcome to the #REMSontheAir Podcast, hosted by your partners at the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Safe and Supportive Schools and its Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools Technical Assistance Center. If you're an old friend, you know us as the REMS TA Center, your national school safety center.

Join us as we chat about key topics in school and campus safety, security, and emergency management with experts and partners from the field.

Amanda Everett: Hello and welcome back. I'm Amanda Everett, Training Manager of the REMS TA Center. I'm joined by our Director of Information and Product Management, Alison Curtis. And in today's episode of #REMSontheAir, we will be continuing our discussion on state-level school safety partnerships. [00:01:00] If you would like to hear our introduction to this topic, you can always go back and listen to our State School Safety Models series.

Alison Curtis: Thanks, Amanda. I'm really excited to continue this conversation. Today, we'll discuss the importance of state-level partnerships and hear from representatives from the Oklahoma State Department of Education and the Oklahoma City Office for the Federal Bureau of Investigation on the value and benefits of their collaboration to support school safety and emergency preparedness in Oklahoma.

We'll also talk about behavioral threat assessment and how these state-level partnerships can strengthen behavioral threat assessment programs.

Amanda Everett: Sounds great. Let's dive in.

Alison Curtis: For the first portion of our discussion today, I'd like to highlight the general importance of state-level partnerships and collaborations.

If you're familiar with emergency management planning basics [00:02:00] and principles, you'll know that collaboration is fundamentally important at both state and local levels for developing emergency operations plans that effectively address the five preparedness mission areas—prevention, protection, mitigation, response, and recovery—and encompass a range of threats and hazards.

At the state level, these partnerships can have a wide scale and impact.

Amanda Everett: That's right, Alison. Partnerships can strengthen emergency preparedness and management every step of the way. A brief example that I'll share to demonstrate the importance of state-level partnerships is one we mentioned in our Recovery series, where we heard about how the Georgia Department of Education coordinated recovery efforts with the Department of Agriculture in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

Episode 3: Oklahoma's State School Safety Model

In this example, Georgia's Department of Education was able to leverage this existing partnership to increase their capacity to respond to and recover from [00:03:00] a large-scale natural hazard. The effects of these partnerships at the state level are that they impact and can support schools at the local level, as well.

Alison Curtis: That's a great example. Not only can partnerships strengthen preparedness mission areas like recovery, but they're also critical to EOP [emergency operations plan] development, as well. In fact, the very first step of EOP development is to assemble a core planning team that is multidisciplinary and includes a range of community partners, including, but not limited to, first responders, such as EMS [emergency medical services], fire departments, and law enforcement agencies, as well as local emergency managers and public health departments, to name a few. Beyond that step, partnerships also play a role in helping schools and institutions of higher education exercise, review, and update their EOPs—part of which involves continually assessing the risks posed [00:04:00] by a variety of hazards and threats to each school community.

Amanda Everett: Exactly. Collaboration with key partners can make all the difference in conducting assessments to update EOPs, which can include site assessments, climate assessments, capacity assessments, and behavioral threat assessments. For now, let's focus on the value of state-level partnerships to support behavioral threat assessments.

Alison Curtis: As described in a report by the U.S. Secret Service and the U.S. Department of Education, behavioral threat assessment is an investigative approach to preventing and reducing targeted school violence, where information about student communication and behavior is collected and analyzed to determine whether a student may pose a risk to themselves or others and to prevent potential plans for school-based violence.

It's important to note that behavioral threat assessment processes can also support students, helping to identify additional [00:05:00] needs that students may have and potentially playing a role in improving overall school climate.

Amanda Everett: That's such a good point, Alison. As you can imagine, partnerships play a vital role in behavioral threat assessment.

In fact, it's often required that emergency management planning teams work with key community partners to conduct assessments and, in the context of behavioral threat assessment, to share information with community partners, such as law enforcement, when a credible threat is identified. This information sharing can be achieved through the creation of a memorandum of understanding and agreement.

Episode 3: Oklahoma's State School Safety Model

Alison Curtis: Absolutely, Amanda. Behavioral threat assessment can be greatly enhanced when states, districts, and schools actively collaborate with their school safety partners.

Amanda Everett: Alison, let's put this subject into another real-world context. We have another great example of a successful state-level [00:06:00] partnership here that we are excited to showcase: the Oklahoma State Department of Education and the Oklahoma City office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. These agencies have collaborated to strengthen behavioral threat assessment processes in Oklahoma, and those partnerships have had a ripple effect at the local level, as well. First, let's hear from Shanti McAninley, Special Agent with the Oklahoma City office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, on how she and her agency support the Oklahoma State Department of Education.

Shanti McAninley (Recorded): My threat management program—we are all an internal program at the FBI, but we're molded to be able to work with our partners. I can go to any site and help them establish a team. I can help them with a tricky case that might just need to be escalated, and then I can bring the resources of the FBI if a case warrants us escalating that to the Behavioral Analysis Unit, you know, getting their big brains in on the puzzle.

Alison Curtis: Listening to Shanti speak about [00:07:00] how the Oklahoma City office of the FBI supports the Oklahoma State Department of Education, you can really get a sense for how helpful these partnerships can be and how they can help increase access to valuable resources to enhance behavioral threat assessment processes at schools throughout the state.

Amanda Everett: Absolutely. Now we mentioned earlier that information sharing between partners is an important part of behavioral threat assessment. There are federal laws that dictate when and how student information can be shared that should be upheld at all times throughout the behavioral threat assessment processes.

Let's hear from Shanti again about how these Oklahoma State partners handle information sharing.

Shanti McAninley: HIPAA [Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act] and FERPA [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act] both, and I know education deals a lot more with FERPA, but those are very important, right? We have to safeguard our most critical data. And I would just go one step further and say, in FERPA, you're talking about kids here. That's very, very important.

We've come together a lot on this [00:08:00] issue because information sharing can be a little scary. And the word FERPA sometimes gets tossed out there as a scary—as a scary thing no one wants to actually share. But when there's a matter of public safety at risk, it is appropriate to information share.

Episode 3: Oklahoma's State School Safety Model

We just have to make sure that that's done in a manner in which, you know, it doesn't get outside of the context of this conversation. So my Behavioral Analysis Unit has put together some wonderful products regarding appropriate information sharing regarding HIPAA and FERPA. And we just make sure that when we get in the room, it's the appropriate people in the room, we're discussing an active case, and we're doing it for the right reasons.

Alison Curtis: We are so lucky to be able to hear more about this partnership. Shanti really speaks to the importance of safeguarding student data and the ways in which her agency brings expertise and additional resources that can bolster behavioral threat assessment for the Oklahoma State Department of Education.

Amanda Everett: That's right. We also spoke a bit earlier about how behavioral threat assessment can support [00:09:00] students and how collaboration can improve those supports even further. Let's hear now from the education side of this conversation as Jon Parker, Executive Director for the Office of School Safety and Security at the Oklahoma State Department of Education, talks about how partnerships like this one can contribute to the prevention and early intervention framework of behavioral threat assessment.

Jon Parker (Recorded): That multidisciplinary team approach where we have school official, we've got a law enforcement representative, and a qualified mental health sitting at the table together, talking about how we're going to take someone off, and in this instance, a student, right? Take someone off the pathway to violence.

This is how we do it. The behavioral threat assessment and these—and this multidisciplinary team working together at the schoolhouse. This is the prevention model.

Amanda Everett: I just want to echo what Jon said about the power of behavioral threat assessment and [00:10:00] how a well-coordinated multidisciplinary approach to behavioral threat assessment can take a student off the pathway to school violence. That perspective grounds us in a student-centered mindset. It reminds us of the real impact that effective partnerships can have on students.

Alison Curtis: That's a wonderful reminder, Amanda. And I also want to add another reminder here about how the REMS TA Center can assist state education agencies, or SEAs, and their partners as they build their school safety and planning capacity in providing training and technical assistance to their schools and school communities.

We at the REMS TA Center have developed several resources and training opportunities with our federal partners to make federal guidance easier to learn, understand, and implement. In short, our goal is to make the work of SEAs and their partners easier. To this end, I want to highlight our state emergency management resources.

Episode 3: Oklahoma's State School Safety Model

This interactive [00:11:00] map on the REMS TA Center's Website provides school and higher ed emergency management staff with information on state-level information related to emergency preparedness, including the topics of safety, security, and emergency management. For example, you can use our state map to locate specific information on state emergency management resources, safety and security mandates and policies, and state and field offices of state and Federal partners.

Amanda Everett: Thank you for sharing that, Alison. I'd also like to mention two REMS webinars that can help further listeners' understanding of these topics. The first is titled *Building State-Level Relationships to Support Education Agencies With Disaster Response and Recovery Planning*.

And the second is a deep dive into forming a school behavioral threat assessment team. We also have a wealth of publications related to assessments and collaboration. We'll be [00:12:00] sure to include all these resources in the episode notes. Tweet us using the #REMSontheAir hashtag if you are addressing similar topics.

Alison Curtis: If you have any questions related to our discussion today or want to learn more, send us your questions by email or call us at 1-855-781-REMS, or 7367, to pose questions that can possibly be featured on the podcast.

Amanda Everett: Don't forget that you can also email us at any time at info@remstacenter.org to join our mailing list where you'll get up-to-date information on webinars, Web chats, and other virtual opportunities to learn and share.

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