

Health and Safety Committee Report April 2010

Chair: Laurie Halverson

EFOs and Health Room Aide Hours May be Cut

County Executive Ike Leggett has proposed that the number of EFOs (Educational Facility Officers) at MCPS schools be cut from 33 to 16 positions. The budget for EFOs comes out of the Police Department budget, not from the MCPS budget. Mr. Leggett's proposal also includes cuts to the hours of Health Room Aides from 7 to 6 hours. In 2006, MCCPTA passed a resolution on increasing the hours of Health Room Aides so that the schools were covered a half hour before the beginning of school and a half hour after the school day ends. These efforts were successful when the county increased the hours for the position, but unfortunately, measures to improve the safety of our students are now in jeopardy of being cut.

The MCCPTA Health/ Safety Committee announced these proposed cuts in a MCCPTA Bulletin announcement and encouraged advocacy to the County Council. Laurie also mentioned cuts to EFOs at the Drawing the Line Under 21 nonprofit meeting to reach other county leaders.

The County Council will make a decision in May on whether these cuts will be made. The Police Department and MCPS will work together to decide how to allocate the remaining EFOs. Given the recent announcement of a much deeper deficit than expected at the County Council Education committee meeting on April 13, it is possible that the County Council could eliminate all EFOs from our schools.

To advocate against these cuts at MCPS schools, contact your county council members.

To advocate for your EFO at your own school (since MCPS and the Police will need to decide how to make the cuts), contact Chief Manger and Bob Hellmuth, MCPS Director of Safety and Security, and try to give specific examples of why your EFO is important.

Follow up on Serious Incident Resolution

Kay Romero, Emily Sudbrink, and Laurie Halverson met with the Director of the Office of School Performance, Frank Stetson and Steve Zagami, Director of the Department of Student Services on March 3 to discuss the resolution. Steve and Frank were very receptive to our suggestions and are planning to improve the Safety and Security at a Glance Report. We also discussed the bully policy. Frank and Steve are increasing their training and emphasis on bullying with staff as well as improving efforts to communicate the existence of the bully report with parents, students and staff.

Bullying Regulations are being Drafted

A draft of the regulations to accompany policy JHF Bullying, Harassment and Intimidation was sent out to members for feedback through a MCCPTA Bulletin Announcement. Laurie will compile the comments and email them to MCPS on Friday, April 23.

Drawing the Line Under 21 Alcohol Prevention Meeting

Laurie attended a meeting with the nonprofit group on March 17, which meets about 5 times a month. We learned that, because of budget constraints, there will be no adolescent survey given out to schools state-wide this year. This could have a detrimental affect on grant approvals, since many grant awards require supporting data. Other prevention programs have been cut or are in jeopardy of being cut. The Department of Liquor Control is getting severe cuts and the situation is "bleak."

Other discussion at this meeting included:

- It takes 96 hours for a child to eliminate alcohol from the liver, and 24 hours for an adult

- Target is selling bottle openers in hats that are targeted to kids-promoting alcohol drinking, so we should complain the manager when we shop there.
- The alcohol tax will be increasing, which will lead to fewer purchases
- The alcohol enforcement unit might disband because of budget cuts.
- There haven't been any advertisements against drug usage lately. Kids care a lot about the welfare of other kids (ie. their response to the children in Haiti) so we discussed how a new marketing message could focus on how a drug purchases lead to kids being killed in drug cartels. The brain and fried egg message from years ago isn't very effective.
- One community leader is visiting parents in their business for brown bag lunches to teach them about underage drug prevention.
- The officer passed around samples of a flavored blunt-a hollow "cigar" that kids put marijuana inside and smoke. He talked about Hookahs (kind of like bong for multiple users) that kids are putting herbs in and smoking for social reasons. In our county, kids have easier access to marijuana than alcohol.
- Magruder has a stress busters program that is successful.

Last Health/ Safety Committee Meeting - Monday, May 10 at 7:00 p.m. in room 223 at Carver Educational Center (850 Hungerford Dr., Rockville.)

We will have a speaker, Bob Hellmuth, who is the MCPS Director of Safety and Security. He will explain the CCTV system and Visitor Management System, the new security technology that is being installed in our schools over a six year period. He can also answer other safety related questions. All PTA members are welcome to attend.