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# Town and School Safety and Wellness Task Force

Update 1-26-21

# Key Findings and Actions To Date

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- Task Force Established August 28<sup>th</sup>, 2018, in the wake of the Parkland tragedy to evaluate town safety
- Focus dedicated to both physical safety and threats to our safety based on wellness – domestic violence, substance abuse, self harm
- Physical safety effort relied on study performed by Guidepost and has resulted in a wide range of facilities upgrades and improvements
- Wellness effort informed by Health Management Associates study and our current area of focus
- Work performed so far is summarized on the TSSTF Executive Summary

# Identified Areas of Greatest Need

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- Social and Emotional Well Being among Students, Families, Staff, Elders and Community Members
- Resources for domestic violence, substance abuse and self harm for Westford elders, adults and families
- Training and preparedness in our schools and town buildings for an external threat

# Summary of Options Being Considered

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- Increase Cultural Competence at all levels
- Consider adjustment counselors for mental health support in elementary schools
- Consider a Community Wellness Coordinator role
- Assess unmet safety needs at elementary and middle schools, consider SRO expansion

# Potential Approach: Emotional Wellness Support in Schools

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- Discussion: Place a mental health professional at each of the six elementary and primary schools in Westford
- Goals:
  - Provide a broader safety net for all children.
  - Intervene early to give students coping skills before they require more intensive support.
  - Incorporate coping skills into curriculum at every level.
  - Increase access to trusted adults across diverse populations

# Potential Approach: Town-wide Coordination and Communication of Resources

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- Discussion: Creation of a Community Wellness Coordinator Position
- Goals:
  - Increase coordination between existing resources
  - Opportunity to ensure our first responders, library personnel, town and school staff are trained and educated on all resources
  - Increase opportunities for continuous improvement and best practice
  - Increase awareness of how different communities seek help

# Issue to Explore: Are there unmet needs in physical safety that might need more SROs?

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- Targeting study group has been formed to:
  - Ensure any recommendation we may make is in partnership with and after detailed input from our schools team
  - Base any recommendations on specific unmet needs we may identify based on study of other schools, best practice and input from our public safety and schools team
  - Review any recommendations in concert with diverse groups to be aware of how any additional programs or resources can be most effective for all of us

# Next Steps

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- Complete physical safety needs study
- Bring committee work to a broader community audience for input
  - SB, School Committee, DEI Committee, Public Sessions
- Bring Committee Recommendations forward in the April/May timeframe