

Archived Information

U.S. Department of Education

Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities

Advisory Committee Meeting

Barnard Auditorium
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

October 23-24, 2006

AGENDA

Monday, October 23:

- 8:30 – 9:00 Breakfast and Registration
- 9:00 – 9:05 Opening Statement and Announcements
- 9:05 – 9:10 Introduction of Panel I: *Association and Organization Perspective*
- 9:10 – 10:20 Panelist Presentations
Vera Institute of Justice, Annie Salsich, Sr. Program Associate

National Association of School Safety and Law Enforcement
Officers – Peter Pochowski, Midwest Director

National Association of Secondary School Principals – Bill
Bond, School Safety Specialist

New York State Comptroller’s Office – Jerry Barber, Assistant
Comptroller
- 10:20 – 11:00 Questions & Answers: Committee to Panelists
- 11:00 – 11:15 Break
- 11:15 – 11:20 Introduction of Panel II: *Department of Education: Two Perspectives*
- 11:20 – 12:30 Panelist Presentations
Office of Inspector General, U.S. Department of Education –
Richard Rasa, Director, State and Local Advisory and Assistance
Services, and Bernard Tadley, Regional Inspector General

Office of Safe and Drug-Free School, U.S. Department of
Education – Paul Kesner, Director, State Grant Program
- 12:30 -- 1:10 Questions and Answers
- 1:10 – 1:55 Lunch

Agenda, continued:

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| 1:55 – 2:00 | Introductions of Panel III: <i>State Education Agency Perspective</i> |
| 2:00 – 3:10 | Panelists Presentations
New Jersey Department of Education – Susan Martz,
Director of the Office of Program Support Services

Texas State Education Agency – Cory Green, Senior
Director of the NCLB Program Coordination Division

California Department of Education – Meredith Rolfe,
Administrator of the Safe and Healthy Kids Program
Office

Colorado Department of Education – Janelle Krueger,
Principal Consultant for the Safe and Drug-Free Schools
Program |
| 3:10 – 3:50 | Questions & Answers |
| 3:50 – 4:05 | Break |
| 4:05 – 4:40 | Public Comment |
| 4:40- 5:00 | Summary and Closing Remarks |

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 24:

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| 8:00 – 8:30 | Breakfast |
| 8:30 – 8:40 | Opening Statement |
| 8:40 – 10:15 | Discussion of Advisory Committee Members |
| 10:15 – 10:45 | Remarks from Secretary Margaret Spellings (tentative) |
| 10:45 – 11:25 | Discussion by Members |
| 11:25 – 11:30 | Closing Comments |
| 11:30 | Adjournment |

Monday, October 23, 2006

The session convened at 9 a.m.

David Long, chair, welcomed attendees, and noted that the day's panel presentations with focus on the 'persistently dangerous schools' [PDS] component of the No Child Left Behind [NCLB] Act. He introduced the first panel.

First Panel: Association and Organization Perspective

Annie Salsich, Senior Program Associate, Vera Institute of Justice

Peter Pochowski, Midwest Director, National Association of School Safety and Law Enforcement Officers – Peter

Bill Bond, School Safety Specialist, National Association of Secondary School Principals

Jerry Barber, Assistant Comptroller, New York State Comptroller's Office

[Panelists made written submissions; a summary of comments follows]

Annie Salsich noted that the PDS initiative had received considerable attention from the press, but little formal analysis. She noted that while states had similar approaches, outcomes varied: most states had not identified any persistently dangerous schools. Many states had set designation standards that were difficult, if not impossible, to meet. The phrase 'persistently dangerous school' was politically unpalatable to education officials; further, the legislation provided no help to schools so designated. Salsich listed five conditions as characteristic of unsafe schools: serious violence; bullying, intimidation and harassment; disorderly common areas; lack of connectedness to the school; and inconsistent disciplinary practices.

Salsich said most strategies used to monitor school safety were limited and inconsistent: the key student statement associated with safe schools was: 'I feel welcome when I am at school.' Salsich urged, first, that multiple data sources, including school climate surveys, be used to assess school safety and, second, that a 'watch list' be created to identify schools that were struggling with safety issues before they were labeled 'persistently unsafe.'

Bill Bond stated that statistics on acts of overt violence, while a simple criteria, were not the most accurate. Most students were more concerned with intimidation and bullying than with fistfights. He noted that if a student struck another, the likelihood of consequence was high: this was not true with lesser offenses. He believed likelihood of consequence was more important than severity of consequence; with bullying and

intimidation, the likelihood of consequence was low. He believed each state should mandate use of a school climate survey, with results maintained within the school for administrative guidance, though not passed up to the state level. School administrators were ‘data-driven;’ they would act if confronted with school survey results.

Peter Pochowski said the term ‘persistently dangerous school’ was stigmatizing and caused an undue hardship for already challenged principals; the stigma made principals reluctant to gather data: this legislation asked principals to collect data that could be used against them in personnel decisions. Pochowski said he believed states had too much leeway to define standards for persistently dangerous; he recommended the federal government mandate use of some of the criteria each state used in its determinations. Pochowski noted serious under-reporting of school incidents: one school studied had reported 144 incidents, while student records showed 924 – the number of assaults, reported at 20, was actually 126. He urged the Department to undertake more aggressive oversight of reporting; those engaged in reporting might need additional training.

Questions and Discussion:

Fred Ellis noted that ‘bullying’ was Annie Salsich’s second criteria; had she received any feedback on gang activity. Salsich said gang activity had not been cited in student interviews; generally, students focused on daily concerns of feeling scared or uneasy in school. Peter Pochowski said that while gangs were a problem, he thought them less of a problem than media reports suggested.

Russell Jones asked if questions about ‘trauma’ had been asked in the surveys; he believed trauma was universal and drove much of the behavior that was of concern in schools. Annie Salsich said the interview protocol did not involve asking direct questions. Jones said that while people tended to focus on finite events – e.g. a school shooting – it was essential to examine trauma generally; he believed an effort was needed to seek information on trauma.

Sheppard Kellam noted that as a public health psychiatrist he had done numerous field studies. Considerable research showed that children can be identified as high risk in the first grade. This, he said, needed to be addressed developmentally: ‘problem’ students in high school were typically those who failed to learn to read at a young age or to become socialized into the role of student. He believed intervention should be started early, a task made more difficult by the circumstance that teacher training did not adequately prepare new teachers for classroom management.

Peter Pochowski said programs having the most success were those dealing with younger students; people in the DARE program had told him that targeting middle school students was ‘too late.’ He noted that his gang intelligence unit was directing attention at fifth, sixth and seventh grade students and their parents.

Sheppard Kellam said research emphasized the need to intervene in kindergarten, first and second grade, the age at which flexibility was the greatest. Bill Bond said he thought the legislation was political and directed against high schools; the legislation should become more proactive. At present, he added, there was no push for principals to use the data. He believed dangerous schools could likely be predicted from reading

scores. Annie Salsich seconded the call for early intervention: it was often difficult to work within high schools when there no longer appeared to be hope for particular students.

Fred Ellis said the legislation recognized that education cannot take place in an unsafe environment; further, one purpose of the legislation was to force school districts to gather and to share data on school safety and to provide options to students who have been harmed. He endorsed measuring school culture and climate, but suggested this might prove difficult: could the federal government intercede? He believed parameters for school safety needed to be established. He took issue with Bill Bond's suggestion that school safety data be retained within the school: why should it not be shared? Bill Bond said data on school climate would motivate principals and staff members to make changes. One could, he said, create a system that emphasized accountability; however, he doubted one could have both accountability and improvement. Ellis commented that many might believe it important to make data available to parents. Bond replied that parents should be able to see safety data on request; still, if data was gathered with the intention of passing it on, he believed the integrity of the data would suffer. Bond noted a case in point: in 1997, three students had been killed and five wounded at a school with 486 students; three years later, attendance had risen to 639. Parents choosing to send their children to that school, he said, were not reacting to the incidents but to how they students treated by teachers and staff. Peter Pochowski noted that the school leadership provided by the principal needed to be the focus of efforts.

Tommie Ledbetter said he was seeking to clarify the problem. Many comments made during the committee's meeting on the State Grants Program were being repeated. He noted one panelist's declaration that the flexibility the law gave to states was a strength; he believed it might be a weakness. Standards appeared greatly different from state to state: perhaps this was the first matter to address. Annie Salsich noted that a school found 'persistently dangerous' by one state's standards may well not be so found in another; in her investigation, this had been a point of considerable controversy: some wanted clearer parameters; others preferred greater flexibility but more central guidance. Ledbetter asked if giving specific definitions would 'fix' the legislation; Salsich thought not.

Peter Pochowski said the legislation was good, but needed 'tweaking.' He had, he said, never met a principal who had falsified records to make themselves or their schools look good. More likely, he added, principals did not know what to report: for example, they did not identify 'stealing the milk money' as an identifiable criminal act. Many principals, he said, were unaware of the gradations within state laws.

Bill Bond said that, in many places, the law was having little impact: for example, California did not report a single persistently dangerous school. To the extent the data said anything, it said: 'Stay away from Pennsylvania.' The phrase 'persistently dangerous school' was, he said, a 'death sentence' to its enactment. Annie Salsich said she was hesitant to create structured federal requirements; she agreed with Peter Pochowski's suggestion that there be federal input into measurement devices. She believed states wanted guidance on how to be 'intelligently independent.'

Susan Keys, noting the stigmatizing nature of the legislation, asked if it was possible to have both change and accountability. She sought the panelists' advice on how

the committee could satisfy the legislative mandate while being supportive, rather than punitive, of schools.

Bill Bond said the term ‘persistently dangerous school’ was a major problem. Individual states, he added, needed flexibility because legal standards varied from state to state. He noted that the program was geared to the high school level, even though most agreed that problems generally traced to the elementary level. The committee needed to clarify whether it was attempting to offer help or to enforce accountability.

Annie Salsich recommended, as follows: first, the term ‘persistently dangerous’ should be changed; second, schools should be given guidance on how to identify problems; and third – ‘and critical’ – schools should be given technical assistance on how to respond to poor school environments. Finally, she suggested ‘flipping’ the definition: how did one identify a safe school?

Russell Jones asked, given what was known about the negative effects of labeling, what thinking lay behind the phrase ‘persistently dangerous.’ Deborah Price said that required looking at the legislative history behind NCLB to see what the thinking of Congress had been: she said this portion of the law reflected the desire to allow parents to move children out of dangerous settings. She noted that NCLB would come up for reauthorization in 2007; the committee could have significant impact on various elements of the law.

Seth Norman said the issue of drugs had not been raised: did the panel see a connection between safety and drugs? Bill Bond said he believed drugs had little to do with school safety; however, drugs had a negative effect on school achievement, dropout rates and various other things. Norman asked if, therefore, funds should be moved from drug prevention efforts to safety concerns; Bond said no, as drugs had the negative effects he had noted. Peter Pochowski said drugs led to unsafe conditions outside schools. He noted that the legislation had been very popular when passed: the country realized something needed to be done about school safety. He urged attention to prevention efforts: he had once attended a school with 2000 students; it had one principal and one assistant principal. Today, that school had four assistant principals and ten security guards. He said students today were not receiving sufficient parental support: 40 percent of his students came from fatherless homes; often, students were being raised by grandparents, who might lack the necessary energy.

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Second Panel: *Department of Education: Two Perspectives*

Richard Rasa, Director, State and Local Advisory and Assistance Services,
Office of Inspector General, U.S. Department of Education, and Bernard
Tadley, Regional Inspector General

Paul Kesner, Director, State Grant Program, Office of Safe and Drug-Free
School, U.S. Department of Education

Summary of Comments:

Richard Rasa reported on audits of five states to determine compliance with the Unsafe School Choice Option [USCO]; audit reports had been issued, carrying recommended actions. In four states, he said, incident reporting was based on disciplinary actions taken; therefore, some violent acts were not being reported; data being used was generally not sufficiently reliable to make a PDS determination. He reported that districts generally could not demonstrate they had offered victims the opportunity to transfer to another school. Rasa made three recommendations: first, that states be required to report all criminal offenses; second, that states verify that data collection was full; and third, that transfer policies be put in place, with effected students having the opportunity to transfer within 14 days.

Bernard Tadley noted that some standards made it virtually impossible for a school to be designated PDS; in one state, a school could experience four homicides and 19 weapons seizures without being designated. In a second state, designation criteria were discarded when it appeared they would identify 36 as PDS. Tadley said it was 'imperative' that statutory changes be made to require school to follow these basic requirements: all violent incidents must be reported; reasonable benchmarks must be set; and PDS designations must be made on the basis of the most current year's data.

Paul Kesner reviewed the Department's support efforts: non-regulatory guidance; workshops and meetings; data grants, and monitoring and technical assistance. Kesner recommended, first, that PDS designations be made on a single year's data; second, that data collection issues be addressed. Data problems included the aggregating of data by districts, which made assessment of individual schools difficult, and variations in definitions used from state to state. He recommended objective data standards be created that would include such things as: instances of firearms brought to school; student survey data on fighting on school grounds; and data on gang presence. Kesner said the term 'persistently dangerous' was pejorative; that a 'watch list' of schools with safety concerns should be created; that training be supplied on data collection; that clear thresholds be established for PDS designation; and that a clear policy exist for what data sources would be used and who was responsible for collection and interpretation.

Questions and Discussion:

Sheppard Kellam noted there had been no discussion of how the program's data effort would tie into existing school information systems. Kellam urged the focus be placed on development issues: children who persistently shove in kindergarten are those who do not intuitively understand 'how to be a student.' Data collected on early behavior should be integrated into existing systems; otherwise, data systems will be created that can't be effectively used. The focus on development needed to be extended to schools of education which, Kellam felt, do an inadequate job of preparing teachers for classroom management.

Paul Kesner noted that 75 to 80 percent of schools identified as PDS were also school that were failing to make adequate yearly progress; he thought it surprising the

correlation wasn't stronger. Richard Rasa said his office would endorse data integration: he noted the Department of Education lacked the internal controls to tie data systems together. He called attention to two circumstances: first, a recent report on New York State showed that a large number of school safety incidents were not being reported; second, a significant number of New York district superintendents had been unwilling to certify as accurate the data they were submitting: this occurred even though superintendents had the option to attach qualifications to their reports.

Fred Ellis said it appeared from Paul Kesner's statement that schools were doing a poor job of student transfer. Kesner said states needed to look at their options: transferring the victim or transferring the perpetrator. Richard Rasa made reference to a 2003 hearing in Denver: there, a theme emerged that it was important for parents to receive information and to receive it in a timely way. He noted a case in which harassment of a female student led eventually to her beating: apparently, school administrators had been aware of the problem, but it was not clear the parents had been informed.

Kim Dude said she regarded the legislation as ironic: schools that set higher accountability standards for their students were more likely to be designated. Her own work suggested that the more students knew about fellow students being held accountable, the better they behaved: e.g. when arrests for DUI went up, drunken driving declined. She felt that schools which under-reported data were encouraging increased problems; this she regarded as 'foolish and unproductive.'

Russell Jones commented that basic to the behavioral sciences was the view that behavior was a function of its consequences: he was curious to what extent states, schools, teachers and students had 'bought in' to this program. What incentives were they being offered? Paul Kesner said a motivator was required; while simply 'doing the right thing' was a motivation for some, it was not for all. He believed the title 'persistently dangerous school' was a disincentive to school cooperation. Richard Rasa said schools had few incentives to 'get into the game and report the right numbers.' At the Denver hearing mentioned above, he said, the question had been posed: 'who is the customer for this?' He believed the ultimate customer was the parent of the children attending a given school; unless parents were adequately informed, they could not act effectively.

Russell Jones said parent and student involvement could accomplish a great deal. He noted that after Hurricane Katrina, many focus groups had been held to discover what people needed; he did not see a similar effort in this setting. Further, he had heard no discussion of cultural competence. Deborah Price said that one reason the law had accorded states the authority to define terms was that this would make it easier for a given community to identify which issues concerned it most. She acknowledged that the results of this were mixed, and suggested states might be the Department to supply baseline definitions.

Belinda Sims noted that the number of schools designated PDS in some states had declined: what actions had been taken to accomplish this? Bernard Tadley said that as much of the decline had occurred in Pennsylvania, a state that had not been audited, he could not adequately address the question. Richard Rasa said he hoped the decline meant that improvements had taken place; in some cases, schools had been removed from the

list following appeal, and, he added, data may have been manipulated or simply disappeared.

Mike Heermann said the committee faced the challenge of determining what level of improvement was acceptable given available resources: were there two or three indicators that were reasonably consistent across state lines that could serve as a starting point? Paul Kesner suggested the following: first, suspensions or expulsions for physical fighting; second, number of firearms brought to school and expulsions or suspensions related to this; third, victims of violent crimes. He added that many LEAs have a form a student uses to report being victimized; the form documents that the student and family have been informed of the transfer option.

Dennis Romero urged the committee to consider information presented from a development perspective: 'it is easier to work with children than to fix adults.' Second, he believed parents were 'out of the loop' – what could be done to increase their involvement? Third, he believed the question of trauma was not receiving sufficient attention; in particular, the stigma that follows from being bullied or singled out. Romero asked Paul Kesner about data grants the Department made to states. Kesner said the data grants were to improve data collection at the state level for all NCLB-related activities; he estimated that 17-18 states had received grants. Romero asked if that grant program continued; Kesner said it did.

Kim Dude asked whether non-PDS schools had been surveyed to determine students' perception of their school's safety. Do people in PDS schools, she asked, actually feel less safe than those in other schools? Paul Kesner said he was unaware of any comparative studies on this. Seth Norman asked whether creating standard definitions would be of assistance; Paul Kesner said it would be help in managing the data. Bernard Talley said that in the audit work, definitions were not consistent even between individual schools in the same district.

Susan Keys suggested that school data on fighting within the schools could be used: if the program required data integrity, then the committee needed to address the question of how a network of data sources could be created. She warned against putting 'all our tricks in one toolbox,' and asked what the feasibility was of developing multiple sources.

Russell Jones identified two needs: first, an agreed upon glossary of terms; second, a consistent data core.

Richard Rasa endorsed undertaking school climate surveys and using multiple data sources: the big question, he said, was 'how do we know what we have' and 'how does it come to us.' He and Bernard Tadley were agreed that all violent incident behavior should be in the report; it would be useful to parents if they could be assured that reporting was complete.

Tommie Ledbetter seconded the need for workable definitions; phrases like 'violent incident' were unclear. At his school of 1100 students, most fighting was between girls – generally, it related to somebody's boyfriend. Commonly, the underlying issue was transferred into the school from an out-of-school setting; did this make the school a dangerous environment? He thought only 10 percent of in-school fighting stemmed from an incident that had occurred in school.

David Long noted that comment that behavior was changed more by the certainty of consequence than the severity of consequence: he asked what the consequences had

been of superintendents' refusal to certify their reports. Richard Rasa said the example cited came from the New York State report, which he did not have. He suggested that if a superintendent refused to sign a report, that should be a 'red flag' and someone should investigate it.

Sheppard Kellam said the committee's conversation worried him: he did not think it could get 'from here to there.' He did not see data gathering as the central concern; rather, the problem was that the program did not address developmental issues. To be useful, any data gathered had to be tied into the data system that tracked student progress through school. If data systems were created in isolation, they tended to become pejorative, with punishments worse than their positive consequences. Kellam added that efforts were needed to identify what criteria were important for establishing acceptable behavior early on.

Russell Jones said the solving the problems required partnering, bringing in organizations and social workers and others; to extent that partnering occurred, he added, 'we will move this train along the track.'

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Third Panel: *State Education Agency Perspective*

Panelists:

Susan Martz, Director of the Office of Program Support Services, New Jersey Department of Education

Cory Green, Senior Director of the NCLB, Program Coordination Division, Texas State Education Agency

Meredith Rolfe, Administrator of the Safe and Healthy Kids Program Office, California Department of Education

Janelle Krueger, Principal Consultant for the Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program, Colorado Department of Education

Summary of Comments:

Susan Martz [New Jersey] described implementation of the law in New Jersey, which, she said, had designated persistently dangerous schools; had been audited and had received a data grant. In New Jersey, a school was designated if for three consecutive years it had either 7 or more category A offenses [firearms offense, aggravated assault on a student, weapons assault on a student, or assault on any school staff member], or produced a particular score on Category B offenses. She noted that the number of schools designated had declined, but was not certain of the reason. She noted that a school could not appeal a designation if it had been made on the basis of data the school had supplied. She noted the audit had been very time consuming. Martz recommended that the USCO provision be repealed: supporting scientific research was lacking; public

labeling was unnecessary and state-to-state variability undermined assessment. If retained, she urged that all states use uniform criteria; that PDS be clearly defined; and that dedicated funding exist for program administration and to provide transportation to transferred students.

Cory Green [Texas] said Texas had defined ‘persistently dangerous’ as any school that for three consecutive years had three or more selected mandatory expulsion incidents per 1,000 students. He reported that in 2005-2006, two Texas schools had been designated; four in 2006-2007. He noted that Texas, unlike many states, included felony drug and alcohol offenses in its determination. He noted that the criteria would be reviewed beginning November 2006. He noted that, in cases of sexual assault, a district was required to transfer the perpetrator if the victim did not wish to transfer. He reported that in 2005-2006, 96 students had been transferred for all reasons combined. Green believed that requiring a school district to do things to which no funding was attached placed a burden on the district. He said his state needed strong guidance from the Department on what definitions were preferred and what requirements were mandatory. He urged the committee to continue to permit states to be flexible and use their existing data systems.

Meredith Rolfe [California] said the ‘whole point’ of the law was not to catch schools, but to make them safer; this was why California allowed a three-year period before determining a school was persistently dangerous: that period gave schools the opportunity to make needed improvements. Rolfe identified lessons learned from the experience – first, ‘hard’ data wasn’t hard; schools with high rates can be safe; schools with low rates can be dangerous. She noted the view that what indicated a school was unsafe was not statistics, but the absence of a good safe school plan. California schools were required to have such a plan, and update it annually. She believed the term ‘persistently dangerous’ was so emotionally laden that it defeated the program’s purpose. She believed that if program funding was eliminated, the number of ‘persistently unsafe’ schools would greatly increase.

Janelle Krueger [Colorado] addressed the reasons for resistance to passage of the Unsafe School Choice Option [USCO]; the approach Colorado had taken to addressing implementation; and pertinent recommendations. Krueger suggested that resistance to the law should not be confused with being uncaring: educators were ‘bending over backwards’ to protect students. Colorado, she noted, was a ‘public choice’ state: prior to NCLB, parents could enroll their children outside their district of residence. She recommended adoption of Colorado’s practice that the perpetrator of an incident – not the victim – should suffer the inconvenience of being transferred. More generally, Krueger questioned the motives behind the law: the law was about school safety, but did nothing to promote safety. Many people in Colorado, she said, objected to the law’s approach: they thought they should be shaping student behavior, not reacting to it. She believed that since criminal statutes and education law were unique to each state, mandatory reporting items should also be unique to each state.

Questions and Discussion:

Deborah Price asked the state education agency representatives whether, from their perspective, this aspect of NCLB had made any positive impact. Susan Martz questioned if benefits were real; she would prefer to take the time and energy the law's implementation required and direct them to improving school safety. She noted that various aspects of the law had already been in place in New Jersey. Corey Green seconded this comment; Texas had already established many analogous requirements at the state level. Meredith Rolfe said she did not believe California was better off because of this law. Janelle Krueger said state law in Colorado already met the intent of the law; she said the 'persistently dangerous' label had created considerable anxiety about reporting the data.

As follow up, Deborah Price asked if other states shared this view. Susan Martz said the question was difficult to address: she suggested the law be rewritten so that states that could demonstrate they were meeting its intent could receive a waiver of its requirements. Meredith Rolfe said she believed the panel was representative. Janelle Krueger noted that Colorado received \$700,000 for Safe and Drug-Free Schools; she urged the committee not to take steps that would create additional work for the states.

Russell Jones commended the panelists for their efforts; he asked if they shared insights and resources with other states: were particular partnerships helpful in moving things forward? Meredith Rolfe outlined the various partnership arrangements in which her office was engaged. Cary Greene said Texas was similar: statewide committees brought together personnel from various programs. Susan Martz said her office was responsible for a range of services; fortunately, she added, New Jersey's state legislature had made school safety a priority; meetings were regularly held with the governor's office, the attorney general's office and law enforcement.

Howell Wechsler asked panelists what they individually thought of the alternative approaches Meredith Rolfe had presented. Cory Green said Texas wanted flexibility within the state. Susan Martz endorsed identifying schools with high priority concerns and providing resources to them. Janelle Krueger commented that as Colorado districts had been allowed to select their survey instrument, participating in an additional national survey would not 'cause great excitement.' She thought targeting schools in highest need was a good idea, but asked where funds would come from and how it would be implemented. Meredith Rolfe suggested that if Deborah Price's office could identify five key school safety-related questions, these could be plugged into other surveys; she did not believe a 20-page survey instrument was required. Hope Taft said there were limits to what statistics could capture; describing the world through statistics, she said, 'is like describing the ocean floor one pebble at a time.'

Meredith Rolfe called attention to data supplied by the San Diego program coordinator: it showed that as funding for drug education declined, drug use increased. She added she believed drug use was without question connected to school safety.

Sheppard Kellam said program operation required an enormous amount of staff time; further, funds spent on it could not be spent elsewhere, where he believed they would be put to better use. He did not believe reliable data on the program's effectiveness existed, though there was effectiveness data on other programs. The question was not simply: Was this program helping? The question was: 'Relative to what was it helping?'

Mike Herrmann commended the panel's work in laying out the problems; he asked panelists if the process was rightly identifying which schools should be the focus of concern. Susan Martz said she thought not: she believed her office could identify New Jersey schools that were more dangerous; further, she thought that schools which were aggressive about reporting were likely to be identified.

Russell Jones asked if information existed on the quality of life or quality of mental health of victims and perpetrators. Janelle Krueger said the education community did not collect such data; some studies may have been done on the local level, but no data had trickled up. Susan Martz said that only in the past two years had her office in New Jersey collected data on whether student victims were given the option to transfer and, if so, whether they exercised that option. Russell Jones asked how the program could be effective if it had no information on the individuals most affected by school violence. Jones asked Deborah Price if tracking of victims was part of the legislation. Price said the pertinent legislative passage consisted of two short paragraphs; the Department of Education was restricted in this area to giving non-regulatory guidance.

Drawing discussion to a close, David Long thanked panel members for their candor and contributions.

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Public comment:

David Long, chair, invited public comment.

Linda Mohammed, a parent leader from Baltimore, said she believed parents and citizens were undervalued in education and were not communicated with clearly. Her organization was working with local officials to encourage a greater valuing of parents. Part of the problem, she said, was that parents and school administrators did not speak the same language. Noting Sheppard Kellam comments, she said her group stressed the importance of early intervention; parents of children in Head Start and kindergarten were eager to engage with their children's education. She said those dealing with parents should emphasize honesty in communication; this was important as there was too often a lack of trust between school officials and parents. She noted that when she had been a child, teachers had visited her home and talked with her mother: this had helped to development trust; she was concerned that such things no longer seemed common. She commended the committee for its efforts.

Janelle Krueger [member, Panel 3] urged the committee to 'stay the course' with Principles of Effectiveness, which she believed served the field well. Second, she said the absence of statewide data did not mean local data did not exist: she believed teachers would consistently state that the Safe and Drug-Free schools initiative had made things happen. Third, she expressed concern that substance abuse prevention was becoming a lower priority: this appeared to follow from the greater attention given to discipline problems and to school safety whenever a high profile shooting occurs. Fourth, she noted that the community advisory committees that had been a part of the effort had been

largely eliminated; while consultation was required, there was no formal requirement. Finally, she noted that, if schools did not receive additional funds to address '9/11' concerns, they were inclined to view Safe and Drug-Free Schools as a source of funds, further reducing support for the effort.

David Long thanks the panels, committee members and those making public comments for their contributions; the information presented, he said, would help frame the following day's discussion.

The Monday session adjourned at 5 p.m.

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Tuesday, October 24:

The session convened at 8:30 a.m.

David Long opened the meeting, noting that the purpose of the discussion was to identify recommended changes in the Persistently Dangerous School [PDS] section of the No Child Left Behind [NCLB] Act. He urged members to be candid and creative in their comments. He noted that all members of the three presenting panels had agreed that the term 'Persistently Dangerous School' was a hurdle to achieving the legislation's objectives. He urged that, prior to the group's next conference call, committee members identify the specific name change they would recommend.

Deborah Price noted that after its meeting on the State Grants program, the committee had prepared an interim report to the Secretary of Education; she suggested doing something similar now. NCLB, she added, would be up for reauthorization in 2008; the Department, in considering what it would put forward at that time, would benefit from the committee's input. The committee would continue to work toward presenting its final report in June.

Discussion:

Sheppard Kellam said he thought resources were being directed at the wrong end of the problem. He advocated use of a new conceptual framework oriented toward prevention: the focus should be on how children were adapting to school, rather than on later felonious behavior. Doing this, he said, would require an information system that was so focused from the beginning. He urged that a public health assessment be made early on assessing how classrooms were doing: too many teachers, he believed, lacked the requisite tools. First-graders, he said, are highly malleable – they have not yet experienced sustained failure – and attention should be addressed to them.

Deborah Price noted that members of the state panel had said they did not believe the program helped their efforts: this had not surprised her, she said, as the states in question had already acted on the issues involved. However, many other states were floundering. She agreed that prevention was important; still, what was to be done about

students currently in persistently dangerous schools? While prevention could be married to the current effort, she said, the current effort could not be dropped.

Sheppard Kellam said intervention should not occur at a single point, but involved tracking students over time. It was not an either/or situation, but it required understanding that the task of education was the life course of young people and socializing them was the way to self-esteem.

Susan Keys said the question was how to shift to a prevention agenda over the long term, yet still remedy situations that exist. She opposed labeling individual schools; preferably, the system should provide additional resources and technical assistance to schools that were identified as struggling. The committee should remain focused on the goal of creating healthy, safe school environments.

David Long noted that state level presenters had stated that students had the option to transfer out of a dangerous school prior to NCLB: was this the case and, if so, should the group recommend that 'choice' be taken off the table?

Hope Taft said little scientific support for the PDS program had been presented; this was at odds with other aspects of Title IV, which emphasize evidence-based programs. This exception might set a bad example. She welcomed making a positive rather than negative declaration: designation as a Blue Ribbon school was highly sought; perhaps guidelines could define what constituted a safe school with awards to those who succeeded. The current approach, she said, told schools they were failing without giving them any assistance on how to improve. Commenting on 'choice,' Taft said that while it was absolutely correct to provide victims with the option to move to another school, this did not improve problems at the school in question. She added that it might be preferable to relocate the person causing the trouble; otherwise, they might regard their behavior as successful. Deborah Price commented that if the victim liked their current school, transferring them might constitute a second injury. She noted that the many districts with only one high or middle school did not have this option. Taft said Ohio had a system of alternate schools; districts banded together to form the critical mass needed: this gave smaller districts more options.

Russell Jones said he believed the research methodology being employed was fundamentally flawed: the committee did not know whether assessments were consistent or whether intervention strategies were producing results. He noted that no discussion had occurred of interventions directed at the perpetrators; or how students did following a given incident. Jones said 'the elephant in the room' was that trauma was universal: numerous studies had shown some level of post-traumatic stress disorder follows from violent incidents. Further, no attention had been paid to the fact that many adolescents who behave violently come from violent families; he believed precursor factors needed to be considered.

Martha Shirley said that she had been struck by the low base rate for objectionable behaviors; in Texas, she noted, it was less than one percent. The state panel had stressed the need for a name change; it had also stressed the need for flexibility of criteria. Shirley said the name change was important; further, the spectrum should be broadened to look at positive behaviors: focusing, for example, on what schools were doing on test scores and graduation rates. Shirley called attention to the numbers presented on actual v. reported offenses. She noted there that definitions appeared to be consistent for sexual offenses and use of a weapon; however, 'disruptive incidents' was

substantially a matter of the observer's judgment. Given this, she recommended that multiple informants be used.

Kim Dude said changing the name 'persistently dangerous school' was a given. She questioned the PDS criteria: the number of people caught, she said, had little to do with the number breaking a given policy. She did not see a cause and effect relationship between the number of students written up and whether a school is dangerous. Additionally, she urged creation of a tool that would allow students to declare how safe they felt their school was; a survey containing 10-15 core questions should achieve this. Teachers should also be surveyed on their own sense of security.

Fred Ellis said the law's intent was fairly simple: in part, it addressed the education culture that had historically done a poor job of data collecting and, particularly, of sharing data with parents. The school community had had a paternalistic attitude on data sharing; the legislation would force schools to address this and give parents an option. Ellis said the legislation had not accomplished its full purpose: data collection was poor; schools still attempted to sit on the data that he believed should be transparent. The legislative intent on data had been a good one. He felt the USCO component had been well intended; he was not sure it was fulfilling its purpose, in part because of the small number of schools designated. He believed school culture and climate were key; that these should be measured by survey, and that such information would be useful to demonstrating how a school saw itself and was seen by its community. Ellis added that while he agreed that prevention was the ultimate goal, not everything could be prevented. He described a three-legged stool: prevention, deterrence and enforcement/consequence. What you can't prevent, you deter; what you can't deter, you address through enforcement. He recommended that, first, some standardization of the data elements occur, including a school climate survey; and, second, that all data be published, both aggregated and disaggregated. He believed parents were competent to review the data and act accordingly. Regarding the USCO component, he believed a student who had been a victim also had the right to stay put.

Michael Pimentel noted that, in his community, victims had the option to move: doing so was an individual decision.

Mary Ann Solberg seconded Hope Taft's suggestion to emphasize the positive; the goal, she stated, was to have consistently safe schools. She noted that the previous day's presentations had indicated that data was not being collected and that no settled definition existed of what constituted an unsafe school: for the problem to be dealt with, its nature and extent must be known. She believed the federal government needed to have core measurements of school safety. Numerous federal and state programs existed, but did not achieve synergy, because a poor job was done of sharing data: data sharing would itself create power. She was aware this was an unfunded mandate; however, the power such data could create would attract money and achieve solutions.

Mike Herrmann agreed there were difficulties collecting and sharing data: he worked with multiple programs; each was asked to collect data that was similar but not identical; this was time consuming. School, he said, did not generally welcome surveys; they should be kept to a minimum. He suggested that as a survey tool became more complicated, it was prone to prompting local interpretations of the questions, which tended to make the data soft. He noted that definitions differed, but added that all states had definitions of what constituted violent crime. He believed USCO should be focused

on the most serious instances; he favored the idea of recognizing schools for achieving safe school status.

Tommy Ledbetter said that, as a high school principal, he was aware of the mix of available programs: some, like Title I, addressed some of the concerns Sheppard Kellam had raised. He made reference to problems with funding and accountability for both this and the State Grants Program; any common problems should be addressed. Funds might be shrinking because there was insufficient accountability. The state panel coordinator had each reported that their own staffs were so small they could not account for the reliability of those reports that came in. What was the advisability of aggregating the funds, sending them to the states, and then having district within each state apply for their use: he believed the individual states knew where the problems were. He identified funds and accountability as the two biggest problems: Alabama, he noted, had 100 LEAs; no program coordinator could do 100 site visits in a year. If they were given larger lumps of money with which to administer programs in areas of known problems there would be a higher degree of accountability.

Dennis Romero noted the committee's role as a venue in which vitally important issues could be addressed. He urged that issues of drug and alcohol abuse not be set aside; he disagreed strongly with the panelist's statement that drugs and alcohol were not a primary cause of school violence. He agreed that data should be transparent: he had not known that he could go to his child's school and obtain data on school violence. In general, he believed prevention entailed collaboration; a better mechanism for collaboration was needed: a great deal was not shared on the programmatic level. Further, he believed agreement was needed on definitions, on what was meant by all the phrases employed.

Hope Taft called attention, first, to the California survey distributed the previous day correlating funding reductions with a rise in drug and alcohol use; second, to a survey that showed a significant correlate between violence and drug use; and, third, a book from NIAA addressing the developmental consequences of alcohol use. She recommended that the committee should encourage all concerned to look 'further upstream' at those things that precede violent behavior. Second, she urged that the duration between the time a bill is passed and the date by which things needed to be in place at the state level be expanded: it appeared that states had been asked to supply their definitions prior to the issuance of the appropriate guidelines at the federal level. Deborah Price noted that state responsibility begins with the passage of a given law.

Russell Jones said the committee 'did not know what we do not know': clearer definitions were needed if change was to be measured. He believed the lack of funds could be addressed through partnering: 'many smart people and initiatives' had yet to be brought into the discussion; for example, Child Traumatic Network, which had core information about what changes behavior in traumatized children and adults.

Howell Wechsler [by speakerphone] said he was pleased with the consensus that not 'all our eggs' should be put in the basket of violent crime data; he believed such data was commonly misreported not only in schools but also in civil society. He noted that just one of the five factors characteristic of an unsafe school put forward by Annie Salsich concerned violence: he thought this an appropriate proportion. He believed the factors on the list could be measured in surveys such as were being discussed.

Sheppard Kellam said he believed the discussion was enormously important. He identified two problems: first, much was known from research that was not available to the group. He made reference to the three-legged chair described by Fred Ellis and said that all three legs were about prevention. The second issue was: what did people feel about a 30-50 percent reduction in drug use, or a 25-50 percent reduction in social personality disorder, violence and imprisonment. One needed to begin with early intervention and build on it over time; this was not an either/or situation. Further, he believed the many unconnected data systems needed to be integrated; otherwise they are useless. Finally, he thought 'branding' schools was a bad practice, based on a bad data system.

Montean Jackson said considerable data collected on the local level was not rolled up; guidance was needed from the federal government on what information should be moved along. Local surveys might well already exist on school climate and other matters the committee thought important. She noted that issues from outside the schools may come to the schools with the consequences that that school was categorized as persistently dangerous. Further, she said a common language was needed on what constitutes a safe school and related matters.

Fred Ellis, responding to Sheppard Kellam, said his central point was that considerable time was spent on prevention programs and character development; these efforts, however, will not always be successful, in part because many factors outside a school's control effect student behavior. Sheppard Kellam responded that the committee was a group that, starting from diverse perspectives, was in search of a shared vision. Prevention was a very broad category: one of the largest prevention programs in the world was the police force, which is in the business of preventing events; a teacher stepping into the hallway was a prevention measure. He believed the effort should orient toward prevention; crisis response was done when prevention failed.

* * *

Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings:

Secretary Spellings thanked committee members for their service and efforts on behalf of school safety. She noted the effort to use the recent shooting event in Pennsylvania as a 'teaching moment.' As part of this, President George Bush had convened a summit of educators, law enforcement officials, community organizations and others on school safety. Though held on relatively short notice, she believed the summit had been very worthwhile. Persons at that gathering had identified the need for a venue in which educational policy issues could be discussed and vetted; in response, Secretary Spellings had called attention to this committee and stated her intention to place before it questions being raised at the summit.

Secretary Spellings identified four issues, as follows:

First: dissemination of information on best practices and information. At the summit, she said, as individuals spoke of efforts they were undertaking, others expressed

the wish to have heard the information previously. She noted that ‘the constantly changing cast of characters’ in education, law enforcement and elsewhere meant there was a constant need to refresh others on what was being done. What, she asked, were the most effective ways to do this?

Second: the issue of data sharing between law enforcement, educators, social service providers and others. There had been frustration at the summit with the lack of data sharing. Was this an accurate perception? At what level does the problem exist? Secretary Spellings added that all involved needed to be mindful of student privacy issues; she noted some sentiment that things had become ‘tipped’ in the direction of privacy over community safety.

Third: the question of how to ensure that school staff would remain attentive to warning signs. In part, Secretary Spellings said, this too followed from the rapid turnover common within schools. She believed many teachers and other educators did not believe they were armed with the latest information on how to determine if a problem existed.

Fourth: Secretary Spellings made reference to the previous day’s comments from Linda Mohammed of Baltimore. She affirmed the need to remain sensitive to the differences between school settings and types of school, of urban v. rural needs, the needs of families, and of the uniqueness of individual communities.

Secretary Spellings said she wished the committee to be aware of various Department of Education actions. The Department was continuing to work closely with other agencies, including the Secret Service, the Department of Justice, and the Department of Homeland Security. She believed that effective collaboration required addressing the question of what constituted the ‘right calibration’ of each agency engaged. She noted the Department’s efforts to distribute DVDs and to update crisis planning guides and get them ‘out the door.’ The Department was making broad efforts to make people aware of the resources that existed. She noted that a 60-minute Web cast on crisis planning would air on November 15, and would be subsequently repeated. Secretary Spellings noted that following the events in Pennsylvania, the Department experienced a five-fold increase in the number of calls received on school safety topics; there was, she added, ‘a hunger for information out there.’

Discussion:

David Long noted the consensus that the name ‘persistently dangerous school’ sent the wrong message, and should be changed. Secretary Spellings noted that No Child Left Behind [NCLB] would be heading into reauthorization; the President had informed her that he intended to push reauthorization aggressively; she added that the committee should be prompt with its recommendations.

Russell Jones thanked Secretary Spellings for the Department’s post-Katrina activities in New Orleans and elsewhere.

Hope Taft said many committee recommendations dovetailed with the issues the Secretary had voiced. The committee, Taft added, had identified a need to focus on school culture and climate; the belief that early identification should be emphasized; and that many of the safety issues a given school faced came from the community outside.

That being the case, Taft added, schools needed better connections with their communities.

Secretary Spellings asked how complicated was data sharing? Did the committee have specific recommendations? Were complaints about data sharing real or rhetorical?

Hope Taft said the information received by the committee was that state-level school coordinators and others hoped a common data set could be developed that all could work with; further, she was aware of federal efforts to identify a core data set. She expressed the wish that these two could be 'married' into a single instrument.

Susan Keys noted that several large national data sets are used to collect information on a regular basis, e.g. CDC, SAMSA. She suggested these might be amended to carry questions related to school safety and school climate.

Mike Heermann noted that a year had passed since the school shooting incident in his state, Tennessee. He thanked the Secretary for the support received from the Department at that time. On the topic of information sharing, he suggested that information was often not shared because those with the information believed that it was not to be shared; he suggested federal guidance might be helpful.

Dennis Romero reported that the committee had been grappling with the USCO choice option; among other things, he believed there was need to focus attention on the trauma experienced by all involved in an incident, not only on the victim. The committee, he added, was agreed on the importance of involving parents and the community; regarding community collaboration, he thought the strategic prevention framework had been quite successful and might be used to bring together different community stakeholders.

Robert Flores that the Department of Labor had funds for job training; the Department of Justice had various funding strategies. He believed schools rarely considered these as possible sources for support, and urged they be made aware. He suggested the Secretary might suggest to other cabinet members that they be receptive to such collaboration.

Sheppard Kellam said a major issue was bringing research into practice. He identified two questions: first, how can partnerships be made to work? He believed that to be useful, research needed to be done in the real world; this required the forming of partnerships with public and private entities and foundations. He hoped these could create a new structure of science and practice that was needed to implement research efforts. Second, what information systems were needed to monitor progress? Information systems might be easy or inexpensive to invent, yet the committee's discussion of the 'persistently dangerous school' designation showed that such systems were of little use if few people were willing to report the data.

Secretary Spellings asked if Kellam was optimistic that something 'as hairy' as his first point could be carried out. Kellam said he regarded it as possible; further, he believed people were looking for 'some kind of coming together.' Secretary Spellings asked if Kellam could frame for her which parties needed to be engaged in the conversation about collaboration. Kellam said he would do so.

Secretary Spellings asked if there were state models that could be cited. Robert Flores made reference to work on JXML. The effort was necessary because the courts and police departments now share considerable data, he said, though there remained issue

of privacy and control. Flores added that he would give pertinent information on the effort to Deborah Price.

David Long noted the general sentiment that ‘persistently dangerous school’ was negative; the committee, he added, thought it would be preferable to accentuate the positive. Several committee members had drawn a comparison with the national Blue Ribbon School effort; the suggestion was that a parallel program might be used to address school safety.

Susan Keys noted that discussions were proceeding in Connecticut on how grant recipients could use part of their funding to create the infrastructure needed to come up with reliable data. Similarly, Hope Taft cited Ohio’s Partnership for Success communities, in which a single survey has been used to identify those things a community wished to work on; this, she said, had been helpful in gaining ‘buy in’ from funders and others.

Secretary of Education Spellings departed at this point.

David Long noted this earlier comment that Secretary Spelling’s remarks might prompt the committee to alter its course; he now believed the Secretary and the committee were on the same page.

Deborah Price recalled her comment that the committee should submit another interim report on its discussions at this session. She noted there was still no clear definition of what it meant for a school to be safe, healthy and secure. She suggested an additional conference call might be needed; in preparation for which, a summary could be drafted in which those points that had arisen in discussion and that had the general support of the committee would be presented as recommendations.

Hope Taft expressed concern that unless there was a budget marker for Title IV, the whole safe schools program could disappear. She hoped the Department would undertake such a marker to keep the program alive.

Sheppard Kellam suggested Deborah Price include in her draft the view that a separate data system for assessing school hazards should not be created; rather, existing data records should be integrated with criteria that would allow the identification to occur. He believed school records were a very important tool from which to build; he thought it was possible to build an integrated data model, and that the success of the safe and drug-free schools effort depended on it.

Michael Pimentel referred to shrinking budgets. In his police department, shrinking budgets had been addressed by a command group that met to determine what core values existed. That discussion, he said, produced the conclusion that the safety of children in school was the highest priority; in consequence, while cuts were made elsewhere, no funds were withdrawn from school safety programs. How, he asked, could the importance of school safety be communicated to elected officials, so that funds were not taken away from Title IV?

Montean Jackson suggested use should be made of data that has been being collected on the local level by the National Student Assistance Program, and others.

Dennis Romero called attention to the need for better methods of collaboration; as part of that, he urged efforts to help schools make better use of the various areas of

expertise the federal government had to offer. Further, he felt the committee should not lose track of the issue of bullying and its impact on student trauma.

Belinda Sims suggested that as the group worked to summarize its recommendations, it should maintain a broad view; should seek to integrate issues; and should remain aware that communities and LEAs face major implementation issues. It was important, she said, to identify evidence-based programs; at the same time, attention needed to be directed to implementation and monitoring. Sims asked, given the stigma associated with ‘persistently dangerous schools,’ would changing the name constitute a sufficient step? Perhaps some base-building would be required at the grassroots level to gain acceptance for whatever new name the committee might recommend. She thought it was regrettable that data gathering on school safety had been put under a cloud, as it was information schools should be utilizing.

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Close:

David Long said a conference call would be scheduled for within the next 14 days. He noted that committee members had received a great deal of information; he urged members, while they were traveling home, to make notes on what saw as the major points of discussion. Long asked Deborah Price if the upcoming conference call would provide the basis for the interim report. Price said it would. In closing, Long expressed his thanks to committee members for the quality of their questioning of panelists and for their contributions to the children of the United States.

The meeting adjourned at 11:05 a.m.

Appendix A:

Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Advisory Committee Members in Attendance

David Long (Chairman)

Superintendent
Riverside County Public Schools

Kim Dude

Director of the Wellness Resource Center
University of Missouri-Columbia

Frederick E. Ellis

Director
Office of Safety and Security
Fairfax County Public Schools

Montean Jackson

Safe and Drug Free Schools Coordinator
Fairbanks North Star Borough School District

Russell T. Jones

Professor of Psychology
Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University
Department of Psychology

Sheppard Kellam

Director
Center for Integration Education
and Prevention Research in Schools
American Institutes for Research

Tommy Ledbetter

Principal
Buckhorn High School

Seth Norman (*Monday's meeting only*)

Judge of the Division IV Criminal Court
Davidson County Drug Court

Michael Pimentel

Chief
San Antonio Independent School District Police

Hope Taft

First Lady of the State of Ohio

Deborah A. Price

Assistant Deputy Secretary
Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools
U.S. Department of Education

J. Robert Flores (*Tuesday's meeting only*)

Administrator
Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention
US Department of Justice

Michael Herrmann

Executive Director
Office of School Health, Safety and Learning Support
Tennessee Department of Education

Ralph Hingson (*Dr. Mariela Shirley, surrogate for Monday and Tuesday's meeting*)

Director
Division of Epidemiology and Prevention Research Branch
National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism

Susan Keys

Chief
Prevention Initiatives and Priority Programs Branch
Division of Prevention, Traumatic Stress and Special Programs
Center for Mental Health Services
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
Health and Human Service

Dennis Romero

Acting Center Director
Center for Substance Abuse and Prevention
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
Health and Human Service

Belinda E. Sims

Prevention Research Branch
Division of Epidemiology, Services and Prevention Research
National Institute on Drug Abuse
National Institute of Health

Mary Ann Solberg

Deputy Director

Executive Office of the President
Office of National Drug Control Policy

Howell Wechsler

Director of Division of Adolescent and School Health
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention