



March 23, 2023

Dear FCS Families:

The letter below contains information we received from Mr. David Fornshell, who serves as the Warren County Prosecutor. This information relates specifically to school-related threats. Please read this information carefully, and use it as a tool to have intentional conversations with your children about the seriousness of school-related threats.

Letter from Warren County Prosecutor, David Fornshell:

The Warren County Prosecutor's Office has prosecuted over 50 cases over the past four years involving school-related threats towards teachers, students, and school facilities themselves. These threats have come in various forms including verbal, notes, writings on restroom walls, social media postings, and actual possession of weapons on school grounds. Fortunately, law enforcement determined that most of these threats had not developed beyond the making of the threatening statements. However, in all of these incidents, a significant amount of law enforcement resources was expended to investigate the seriousness of each threat. Neither the school districts nor law enforcement has a clear way of distinguishing between a credible threat, a troubled student simply acting out, or a "bad joke." As the recent shooting at Richneck Elementary in Virginia (where a 6-year-old boy shot his teacher) demonstrates, these incidents can happen anywhere, at any time, with any age student. Therefore, the school districts and law enforcement must treat each threat as if the safety of all students is at risk. In doing so, the education of our students is put on hold, and law enforcement personnel are pulled away from their daily efforts to keep our community safe.

For these reasons, our office treats threats of school-related violence very seriously. Charges against the aforementioned juveniles have included inducing panic (school grounds), illegal conveyance of weapons (school grounds), making false alarms, which are misdemeanor and felony-level offenses. The protocol that our office has recommended to all Warren County law enforcement agencies is that a juvenile who is discovered engaging in this type of conduct will be charged with a felony-level offense. The juvenile will be immediately arrested and taken to Warren County Juvenile Detention Center, where the Court will hold the child until mental health professionals are able to conduct a risk assessment on the juvenile.



*Additionally, if found guilty of the offense(s), our office is recommending a sentence of at least 90 days in the Juvenile Detention Center, in addition to whatever discipline the school district issues. **This policy will be enforced regardless of whether the threat is subsequently determined to be credible, or simply a bad joke.***

Finally, I would like to express my appreciation for our local school districts, their administration, teachers, and staff for their efforts to address situations involving threats against schools. In these cases, our school districts' personnel really are the "first responders."

As a parent myself of school-aged children, I understand each parent's apprehension when these types of incidents occur, and their desire to quickly obtain information from the school district. With today's technology, students are able to relay to their parents in real-time that "something" is happening, without knowing the complete facts. Parents are always going to receive these communications more quickly than they will receive communication from the school districts, and that information is typically relayed via social media instantaneously.

Please note that in the few minutes after a threat is received, the school districts' first priorities are (1) ensuring the safety of all students; and (2) assisting law enforcement with our investigative efforts to ascertain the culprit and eliminate any ongoing safety issues. As soon thereafter as possible, the school districts will then notify parents with current, accurate information as to what is occurring. Quick communication with parents is a goal, but it cannot come at the expense of the first priority in those few moments after a threat is made, which is to protect the children who might be at risk.

Thank you in advance for having these intentional conversations with your family and your ongoing support in helping to keep Franklin City Schools a safe place for children to learn.

Sincerely,

Michael D. Sander, Ed.D.
Superintendent
Franklin City Schools