

Joint Communication from Champlain Valley School District, Hinesburg Community School, the Town of Hinesburg, and the Hinesburg Police Department

Date: December 8, 2023

Strengthening Our Collaboration for a Safer and More Supportive Community

Dear Hinesburg Community,

We are writing to you jointly, as representatives of Champlain Valley School District, Hinesburg Community School, the Hinesburg Police Department, and the Town of Hinesburg, to address the incident at Hinesburg Community School on December 1st. We understand there was great concern and worry about the incident involving the discovery of a firearm and illicit drugs on HCS property. As a result, we have met to address our parts in how this incident played out in the community. We are committed to addressing these issues and working towards a robust and effective partnership in the future.

Acknowledgment of Differing Communication Regarding Friday's Event

First and foremost, we wish to acknowledge the need for better communication and collaboration between our school district and the police department. We understand that this has caused concern among parents, staff, and community members, and we apologize for any distress or confusion this may have caused. Over the last two days, we came together to build an understanding of the sequence of Friday's event. We reached an agreement for many of Friday's events and now recognize that misunderstandings in communications and authority impacted the response.

Commitment to Open Communication

Moving forward, we are dedicated to establishing open lines of communication. To facilitate this, we identified and agreed to these five commitments: frequent and regular communication; the need to repair; shared policy and procedures; memorandum of understanding; and monthly school safety meetings.

These commitments to one another ensure a path forward for the safety and security of schools and our community. Transparency and open dialogue are crucial, and we are committed to keeping you informed and involved in our decision-making processes.

(1) Frequent and regular communication:

Each of our organizations contributes to the safety and security of the Hinesburg community. We understand that effective communication — with you and between us as collaborators — helps build trust, which increases security.

(2) Need to repair:

Representatives from the school and police department were harmed by the media coverage, social media posts, and direct attacks on their reported actions. In addition, other members of the community, students, caregivers, teachers, and others were also impacted. For the community to believe we deserve their trust, we need to build trust among one another. To do that, we will demonstrate integrity, humility, and honesty towards each other.

(3) Shared Policy and Procedure:

As mentioned earlier, responsibilities overlap across all four organizations regarding the safety and security of the Hinesburg community. Creating a common policy and procedure will go beyond just emergency operations to include a description of regular interactions, communication protocols, and shared responsibilities.

(4) Memorandum of Understanding (MOU):

This is the written documentation of the shared policy and procedure.

(5) Monthly School Safety Meeting

All schools in the Champlain Valley School District hold regular safety and security meetings. The Hinesburg Police Department will serve as a regular member of the HCS Safety and Security Committee. At these meetings, any items from the shared policy and procedure MOU can be reviewed to ensure the continued collaboration between HCS and HPD. Act 29 requires all schools in Vermont to review and rewrite their Emergency Operations Plan after it goes into effect in July 2024. The Town and the Police Department are essential partners in this endeavor.

In closing, we thank the Williston Community Justice Center for its role in helping each party further understand the other so we can reach this point. We have learned from this experience and look forward to working alongside each of you to cultivate trust and shape an even more promising future for our community.

Sincerely,

Todd Odit

Rene Sanchez

Hinesburg Town Manager

CVSD Superintendent

Contact Information:

For further inquiries or to provide feedback, please feel free to contact us at:

School District Contact Information

Champlain Valley School District
5420 Shelburne Road
Shelburne, VT 05482
802 383-1234
<http://www.cvsdvt.org>
Let's Talk

Town Contact Information

Town Hall
10632 VT Route 116
Hinesburg, VT 05461
(802) 482-4206
<https://www.hinesburg.org/>