



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Indian Education
1849 C Street NW, MIB-3610
Washington, DC 20240

MAR 09, 2022

Dear School Leaders,

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) issued a report, *GAO-16-313 – INDIAN AFFAIRS: Key Actions Needed to Ensure Safety and Health and Indian School Facilities (March, 2016)*, detailing a number of health and safety issues at Bureau of Indian Education (BIE)-funded schools. The BIE is committed to providing all students and staff at BIE-funded schools with a safe and secure learning and working environment. To that end, the BIE has been working diligently to address each of the GAO's outstanding recommendations.

Recommendation 4 in GAO-16-313 directs BIE to “[c]onsistently monitor whether [BIE-funded] schools have established required safety committees.” The BIE would like to remind all school leaders that **BIE-funded schools must establish a safety committee and must designate a Collateral Duty Safety Officer (CDSO)**. The BIE will work to ensure that each school's safety committee and CDSO have received the necessary education to ensure that schools are operated safely. School safety committees and CDSOs serve a critical role at BIE-funded schools. Committees and CDSOs assist with the communication of health and safety matters, provide schools with a means of focusing on the abatement of safety and health deficiencies, and generally raise awareness of safety issues among students and school staff.

To ensure that all BIE-funded schools have established their required safety committees and identified CDSOs, personnel from BIE's Occupational Health and Safety Office will engage in a comprehensive outreach to all schools regarding safety committees and CDSOs. This outreach will include a number of webinars and onsite training regarding the establishment of safety committees as well as follow-up safety committee and CDSO tracking. The BIE understands that some schools may face obstacles in establishing safety committees and identifying CDSOs. The BIE is your cooperative partner, and as such we wish to serve as a resource for you and your school. To that end please feel free to utilize the BIE Occupational Health and Safety Office as a resource in establishing your school safety committees and identifying your CDSOs. The BIE safety employees will be happy to assist you as your schools establish their safety committees and CDSOs and carry out their critical work.

Thank you for all of your hard work and dedication to students. I sincerely look forward to continuing to work with you all in improving the health and safety of our schools. Should you have any further questions or concerns please do not hesitate to contact either myself or Mr. Donald Dryer, BIE Safety Program Manager, at donald.dryer@bie.edu.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tony L. Dearman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Tony L. Dearman

Director