



PolicyTalk

July 2017

National Institute of Justice Grant Awarded

Project will examine rural school safety and security

[A two-year grant](#) from the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, National Institute of Justice has been awarded to the University of Nebraska Public Policy Center (NUPPC) in partnership with the Nebraska Department of Education. Led by NUPPC director, [Dr. Mario Scalora](#), the team will look at how perceptions of school safety and security are associated with local law enforcement engagement with rural K-12 public schools. According to Dr. Scalora, "These rural schools face many of the same safety issues as their urban and suburban counterparts with fewer resources, and sometimes their own distinct challenges. That's why this grant is so important. This work will result in giving rural schools more strategies to partner with police in order to best manage their safety."

Researchers on this project, including NUPPC senior research director [Dr. Denise Bulling](#) and Dr. Lisa Sample from University of Nebraska-Omaha, will use data from the Nebraska Department of Education, crime statistics, census data, and survey results from law enforcement and personnel from over 150 schools statewide to study how law enforcement works with rural schools and how emergency preparedness is linked with these collaborations. "Working with the University of Nebraska Public Policy Center is a win-win. It's great for Nebraska schools, it's great for the Nebraska Department of Education, and great for the University of Nebraska. These partnerships are critical to move forward with safety and security in Nebraska schools," said Jolene Palmer, School Safety and Security Director for the Nebraska Department of Education.

The team will link rural school safety and security preparedness directly with law enforcement engagement with schools. This will lead to a better understanding of how rural law enforcement work within schools even when not formally assigned school resources officers. "The vast majority of school safety research is performed in urban and suburban areas.

Since both rural educators and law enforcement personnel must work together with limited financial resources, it is important to study how they best maximize their efforts to keep schools safe," said Dr. Scalora.

The University of Nebraska featured this project in a recent issue of [Nebraska Today](#). That story was picked up by the Associated Press and featured in a number of local Nebraska newspapers as well as the [Houston Chronicle](#) (Texas), [Marshall Independent](#) (Minnesota), and the [Alva Review-Courier](#) (Oklahoma). Additionally, the story was featured on the [Education Week](#) website.

Center Director Cited in National News Stories

Two stories and six different media outlets

As a leading national expert in threat assessment, Public Policy Center director and professor of psychology, [Dr. Mario Scalora](#), was contacted regarding a year-long Associated Press investigation into student sexual assault that was picked up by multiple newspapers (including [The Seattle Times](#), [The Press of Atlantic City](#), [The Oregonian](#), [The Durango Herald](#), and [USnews.com](#)). Additionally, Dr. Scalora was quoted in a [Communities Digital News report](#) on how to fight anxiety about terrorism.



A Visit With Mandela Washington Fellows

Discussing the Lincoln Vital Signs project

[Dr. Nancy Shank](#), Center associate director, was invited and had the privilege of presenting information about the [Lincoln Vital Signs](#) project to visiting [Mandela Washington Fellows](#).

She discussed details with the 25 emerging leaders from 20 African countries chosen to attend the Civic Leadership Institute at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. They were able to ask her questions and brainstorm ideas of how to apply concepts similar to the project within their own hometowns.



Public Policy Center Researcher Serves On Panel

Focusing on communication and trust in science policy

Public Policy Center senior research manager, [Dr. Lisa PytlikZillig](#), sat on a panel as part of a communication training workshop organized by the American Institute of Biological Sciences for graduate students in the biological sciences at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Because of Lisa's work and expertise in the area of public [trust and confidence](#) she was an ideal panelist to further the discussion as well as share her knowledge and research findings about engaging the public in science policy with up-and-coming professionals.



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