

# North Branch Area Schools

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James D. Fish  
Superintendent

August 30, 2018

Dear North Branch Community and Parents,

Earlier this week, North Branch Area Schools received a letter from Michael Sharkey, Lapeer County Prosecuting Attorney. The letter is addressed to parents and it details the legal ramifications for an individual making threats against our schools. Most, if not all, of Lapeer County schools are posting the letter on their school websites and sharing the information on social media. I want to be clear that we have not had any threats made against North Branch Area Schools. We have had a great start to the 2018-19 school year.

Additionally, I want to emphasize that our school district continues to place school safety as our top priority. Our staff have received extensive training over the past two years relative to school safety for our students. We have a safety committee that meets monthly to review safety measures and procedures district wide. North Branch Schools has entered into a partnership with our Village to provide increased police presence in our buildings as well.

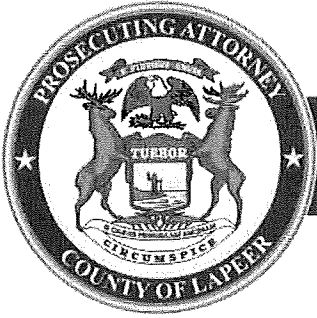
I encourage you to have a frank discussion with your child about the ramifications of "joking" regarding threats made against our children and our schools.

Please contact me if you have any questions regarding this communication.

Sincerely,



Jim Fish  
North Branch Superintendent  
[jfish@nbbrncos.net](mailto:jfish@nbbrncos.net)  
810-688-3570



*Michael J. Sharkey*  
*Lapeer County Prosecuting Attorney*

*Larence R. Kozma*  
*Chief Assistant Prosecuting Attorney*

*Assistant Prosecuting Attorney*  
*Thomas H. Sparrow*  
*David L. Campbell*  
*Robert L. Hinojosa*  
*Joseph D. Shopp*

August 28, 2018

Dear Parents:

Recent tragic events involving school shootings have heightened all of our awareness. When students learn of these events on television or on social media, it is natural for them to worry about their own schools and their own safety. Unfortunately, some students see these tragedies as an open opportunity to gain notoriety and make threats against their schools, teachers and classmates. These same students then later claim their threats were simply a joke and that they were only playing a prank.

In the last year, my office has received multiple reports from law enforcement agencies of students using social media and other means to make threats against our schools. I want to be very clear that: **these threats are *not* jokes -- they are crimes.** The Lapeer County Prosecutor's office will hold individuals accountable who commit these crimes. Threats or false reports of terrorism are separately defined as 20-year felonies. To be convicted, a person must simply threaten an act of terrorism and communicate that threat to another. Most importantly, MCL 750.543m(2) provides that, "[i]t is *not* a defense that the [student] did not have the intent or capability of carrying out the threat of terrorism."

Still too many of us want to think that this kind of crime could never happen in our hometown(s), but it is real and any threat to "shoot up" our schools must be taken seriously. I urge you to talk to your children about the appropriate use of social media and the *real* consequences of making threats against our children in our schools. Please stress that there is nothing humorous about threatening to "shoot up" our schools and killing our children. By working together, we can provide our children with the safe schools they deserve.

Sincerely,

MICHAEL J. SHARKEY  
Lapeer County Prosecuting Attorney