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White House to provide free cybersecurity software for schools

SANTA FE — Today, the New Mexico Department of Information Technology hosted a roundtable discussion with White House National Cyber Director Harry Coker, Jr., the New Mexico Public Education and Higher Education Departments, staff from the Governor’s Office, and members of the K-12 education community to promote cybersecurity and discuss ways to beef up protections for schools’ digital environments.

At the forum, Coker announced no-cost tools available to local and intermediate school districts to improve their cybersecurity posture, particularly [Protective Domain Name Service \(PDNS\)](#), a critical and easy to use cybersecurity service.

“We understand the unique threat on K-12 school districts and that’s why it was tremendously valuable to hear from those on the front lines here in New Mexico about their challenges and share the many resources available to schools from the federal government and our partners,” said **Coker**. “It is absolutely necessary that we shift the responsibility of defending cyberspace off the shoulders of schools and school administrators and onto organizations that are best positioned to reduce risk and we are here to help – help schools with resources that can provide protection in the short-term, and help alleviate the larger challenges that put them at risk in the long-term.”

During the forum, Coker heard from K-12 representatives about schools’ cybersecurity challenges and learned about their efforts to keep New Mexico school and student data safe.

"Schools are prime targets for cyber threats, endangering student data. The Office of Cybersecurity is working to secure state funds to combat these threats," said **Chief Information Security Officer Raja Sambandam**. "It's crucial that we

work with stakeholders to protect systems and data. That's why we're raising awareness of this vital federal resource for local schools."

"Today's roundtable discussion with Director Coker demonstrates the critical importance of cybersecurity in our schools. As we continue to navigate an increasingly digital world, it is imperative that we safeguard our students' data and educational resources," said **Secretary of Public Education Dr. Arsenio Romero**. "The insights shared, and the resources highlighted during this event will empower our schools to enhance their cybersecurity measures. We are collaborating with federal partners and leveraging these tools to ensure a safe and secure learning environment for every student in New Mexico."

Additional resources currently available to K-12 schools:

- **PDNS from the MS-ISAC:** [Malicious Domain Blocking and Reporting \(MDBR\)](#) is the MS-ISAC's no-cost PDNS offering. It is a cybersecurity service made available at no cost to U.S. state, local, tribal, and territorial (SLTT) government organizations, including public K-12 schools, that is highly effective in preventing computers from connecting to known malicious sites online. MDBR can be implemented in an organization's IT environment in less than 15 minutes.
- **Cybersecurity services offered by the MS-ISAC** – The MS-ISAC offers free membership to public K-12 schools and districts, which allows members access to numerous other no- and low-cost services to assist in securing their IT environments. Learn more about joining the MS-ISAC .
- **Cyber Advisory Services Program (CASP)** – CIS is offering a new program, [CASP](#), for under-resourced SLTT organizations, including K-12 schools, that provides access to cybersecurity experts for the purpose of helping these organizations navigate the challenges of cybersecurity and enhance their cyber posture.
- **CIS industry page for educational institutions** – CIS has launched a new page on [cisecurity.org](#) to guide educational institutions, including K-12 schools, in meeting the various challenges they face—aligning common pain points with available solutions and cybersecurity best practices.

The New Mexico Department of Information Technology is the go-to technology partner serving and supporting state agencies with innovative solutions to advance the delivery of their core missions and create progress for all New Mexicans.

Photos and video courtesy of The New Mexico Department of Information Technology:

B-roll available: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H1Ohk5U-yVw>.



Photo White House Cyber 1: Cybersecurity/ K-12 Roundtable event, Santa Fe, New Mexico, May 31, 2024.



Photo White House Cyber 2: Left to right: Megan Incerto MS-ISAC, Brendon Montagne MS-ISAC, Acting Cabinet Secretary CIO CISO Raja Sambandam, Director Harry Coker Jr., Jeff Rothblum (White House), Andy Buschbom CISA.



Photo White House Cyber 3: Left to right: Acting Cabinet Secretary, CIO, CISO Raja Sambandam, Director Harry Coker Jr., Jeff Rothblum (White House), Andy Buschbom CISA, Mariana Padilla Office of the Governor, PED Cabinet Secretary Arsenio Romero, HED Cabinet Secretary Stephanie Rodriguez, HED CIO Isaac Bush.

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