



Guide for Preventing and Responding to School Violence 2nd Edition



BJA
Bureau of Justice Assistance
U.S. Department of Justice

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INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CHIEFS OF POLICE

Founded in 1893, the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) is the world's oldest and largest association of law enforcement executives, representing over 22,000 members in 100 countries.

The goals of the IACP are to advance the science and art of police services; to develop and disseminate improved administrative, technical and operational practices and promote their use in police work; to foster police cooperation and the exchange of information and experience among police administrators throughout the world; to bring about recruitment and training in the police profession of qualified persons; and to encourage adherence of all police officers to high professional standards of performance and conduct.

A core strength of the IACP is the unity with which it speaks on behalf of its members and the law enforcement profession. In an effort towards inclusiveness and brevity in addressing the broad scope of the police family, the following demographics are implied and considered when the phrase, "state, local and tribal" or "law enforcement" is employed. University and college; state and provincial; municipal; county; federal; Indian Country; public transit; marine; railroad; environmental; military; park police; capitol police; the various special investigative branches of prosecutorial agencies; and any legislatively authorized duly sworn and certified law enforcement agency.

Since 1893, the International Association of Chiefs of Police has been serving the needs of the law enforcement community. Throughout those past 100-plus years, the IACP has been launching historically acclaimed programs, conducting groundbreaking research and providing exemplary programs and services to our membership around the globe.

Professionally recognized programs such as the FBI Identification Division and the Uniform Crime Reporting Program can trace their origins back to the IACP. From spearheading national use of fingerprint identification to partnering in a consortium on community policing to gathering top experts in criminal justice, the government, and education for summits on violence, homicide, and youth violence, the IACP has realized its responsibility to achieve the goals of law enforcement.

BUREAU OF JUSTICE ASSISTANCE

The Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and the Office for Victims of Crime.

BJA supports law enforcement, courts, corrections, treatment, victim services, technology, and prevention initiatives that strengthen the nation's criminal justice system. BJA provides leadership, services, and funding to America's communities by:

- Emphasizing local control
- Building relationships in the field
- Providing training and technical assistance in support of efforts to prevent crime, drug abuse, and violence at the national, state, and local levels
- Developing collaborations and partnerships
- Promoting capacity building through planning
- Streamlining the administration of grants
- Increasing training and technical assistance
- Creating accountability of projects
- Encouraging innovation
- Communicating the value of justice efforts to decision makers at every level

BJA has three primary components: Policy, Programs, and Planning. The Policy Office provides national leadership in criminal justice policy, training, and technical assistance to further the administration of justice. It also acts as a liaison to national organizations that partner with BJA to set policy and help disseminate information on best and promising practices. The Programs Office coordinates and administers all state and local grant programs and acts as BJA's direct line of communication to states, territories, and tribal governments by providing assistance and coordinating resources. The Planning Office coordinates the planning, communications, and budget formulation and execution; provides overall BJA-wide coordination; and supports streamlining efforts.

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SECTION 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to present different strategies and approaches for members of school communities to consider when creating safer learning environments. No two schools are exactly alike, so it is impossible to establish one plan that will work well in all schools. Violence prevention programs work best when they incorporate multiple strategies and address the full range of possible acts of violence in schools. For any set of policies to work, it must be established and implemented with the full participation and support of school board members, administrators, parents, students, community members, emergency response personnel, and law enforcement. Without such shared responsibility, the chances of safe school policies being successfully implemented and accepted are low.

All involved in working to prevent or respond to school violence should be aware that no strategies in this or any other publication provide any guarantees against violence. Recognition of the rarity of school shootings and the complexity and unpredictability of human behavior should temper community initiatives as well as expectations. Most of the interventions presented in this document, however, have the potential to yield

benefits beyond just reducing hazards associated with school shootings. Additional benefits include the following:

- Lowering rates of delinquency, disruptive behaviors, harassment, bullying, suicide, and all other forms of violence and antisocial behavior
- Increasing the likelihood troubled youth will be identified and receive treatment
- Improving the learning environment by reducing intimidating, disruptive, and disrespectful behavior
- Preparing communities for responding to not only shootings at schools, but also all other human-made and natural disasters

Background

School violence has come into the public eye after deadly multiple shootings in such places as Littleton, Colorado; Jonesboro, Arkansas; Santee, California; Red Lake, Minnesota; Nickel Mines, Pennsylvania; and Cleveland, Ohio. The possibility of school shootings has become an issue for urban, rural, and suburban communities alike. Since 1992, more than 40 schools have experienced multiple victim homicides, many in communities where people previously believed “it couldn’t happen here.” Given the number of students and schools in the United States, multiple-victim homicides are still extremely rare, and in recent years, the overall rate of violence in schools has actually declined. Physical conflicts, threats, and harassment are, however, still common. Many students

Selected School and Campus Shootings Since 1999

- Mount Morris, Michigan, February 29, 2000: Six-year-old Derrick Owens found a .32-caliber handgun in his uncle’s home and took it to school and shot a classmate.
- Santee, California, March 5, 2001: Fifteen-year-old Andy Williams entered a boys’ bathroom at Santana High School and opened fire, killing one student. Williams then left the bathroom and began firing indiscriminately, killing one more and wounding 13 others, before two off-duty officers who were visiting the school arrested him.
- Red Lion, Pennsylvania, April 24, 2003: Fourteen-year-old James Sheets armed himself with three handguns, two revolvers, and one semiautomatic gun. He shot and killed the principal before shooting himself.
- Cold Springs, Minnesota, September 24, 2003: Fifteen-year-old Jason McLaughlin shot and killed two classmates before surrendering to the gym teacher. McLaughlin claimed one of the victims had been teasing him.
- Red Lake, Minnesota, March 21, 2005: Sixteen-year-old Jeffrey Wise shot and killed seven people on his school campus, including five students, one teacher, and an unarmed security guard. He had shot and killed his paternal grandfather and his grandfather’s girlfriend earlier that day. After exchanging fire with police, Wise shot himself.
- Jacksboro, Tennessee, November 8, 2005: Fifteen-year-old Kenneth Bartley Jr. shot and killed assistant principal Ken Bruce and shot at two other school officials. Bruce died of the injuries. Bruce had confronted Bartley about carrying a gun at school.
- Bailey, Colorado, September 27, 2006: Fifty-three-year-old Duane Morrison entered the Platte Canyon High School claiming to be carrying a bomb. He took six female students hostage, sexually assaulted them, and later released four of the hostages. He shot and killed one as SWAT entered the room before killing himself.

Selected School and Campus Shootings Since 1999 (continued)

- Cazenovia, Wisconsin, September 29, 2006: Fifteen-year-old Eric Hainstock, armed with a handgun and a shotgun, aimed the shotgun at a social studies teacher. A school custodian, Dave Thompson, wrestled the gun away from Hainstock. The principal, John Klang, also confronted Hainstock, who was still armed with the handgun. Klang was shot but was still able to wrestle Hainstock to the floor and hold him until officers arrived. Klang later died of his injuries.
- Nickel Mines, Pennsylvania, October 2, 2006: Charles Roberts IV took hostages at an Amish schoolhouse and eventually shot and killed five girls before taking his own life.
- Blacksburg, Virginia, April 16, 2007: Seung-Hui Cho shot and killed 32 people before committing suicide on the campus of Virginia Tech.
- Dekalb, Illinois, February 14, 2008: A 27-year-old former student opened fire in a lecture hall at Northern Illinois University, killing six and injuring at least 15 others, before killing himself.
- Fresno, California, April 16, 2008: A 17-year-old student attacked a school police officer with a modified bat, seriously injuring him. The police officer, who had no previous interaction with the student, shot and killed him.
- Kauhajokki, Finland, September 23, 2008: A 22-year-old male student shot and killed 10 people and wounded several others before shooting himself in the head. A week before the attack, the gunman had posted a video of himself on YouTube firing a gun. It was titled "Jokela High School Massacre 11/7/2007," identifying the date and location of the attack. Police interviewed him after learning of the video but decided they did not have enough evidence to revoke his firearms license.
- Conway, Arkansas, October 26, 2008: Four men, ages 19-20, shot and killed two students and wounded a third person. The men appear to have driven up on a group of students near a dormitory at the University of Central Arkansas and fired at least eight rounds from a semiautomatic pistol. Police believe the victims were not the intended targets but rather innocent bystanders.
- Winnenden, Germany, March 11, 2009: A 17-year-old male dressed in military gear went to his former high school and killed nine students and three teachers as well as one person at a nearby clinic. In a police shootout, two additional passersby were killed and two officers seriously injured, bringing the death toll to 16, including the gunman.
- Dearborn, Michigan, April 3, 2009: A murder-suicide at a campus occurred when a 28-year-old male snuck in a crudely shortened shotgun, killed a fellow student, and then turned the gun on himself. The shooter was notorious on the Internet, drawing condemnation for videos on YouTube denigrating African American women and atheists.

and teachers are more fearful than ever before when they enter the doors of their school. This climate of fear makes it more difficult for schools to provide positive learning environments.

The causes of school violence are subject to much speculation. Violence does not stand alone; there are usually multiple indicators. Possible contributors to school violence mentioned in the literature include the following:

- Exposure to violence in the family and the community
- Child abuse and neglect
- Poor parenting practices and lack of interest in children's activities
- Peer pressure to engage in harassment of other students, violent behavior, drug or alcohol use, and truancy
- Prejudices based on race, religion, ethnicity, physical appearance, social class, sexual orientation, disability, gender, and other traits
- Access to information on how to make explosive devices and unsupervised access to firearms
- Excessive exposure to violence in television programming, movies, and video games
- Drug or alcohol abuse
- Lack of conflict resolution skills
- Lack of quality role models and the availability of inappropriate role models
- Perceived lack of opportunity to be successful through legitimate means
- Failure to detect and treat children exhibiting warning signs of being troubled including a written or verbal behavior that indicates the child has perceived injustice, revenge fantasy, obsession with revenge, desire to be notorious, preoccupation with previous school shootings or shooters, suicidal or homicidal ideation, feelings of insignificance, feelings of dehumanization, or a desensitization to violence
- Lack of adult supervision of, and positive interaction with, children after school
- Negative self-image

Selected Recent Success Stories

- Dove Creek, Colorado, April 9, 2009: A plan to shoot the high school principal and others at a school was discovered when two boys, ages 16 and 19, were arrested in New Mexico on suspicion of burglary and theft. The 19-year-old told his family about the plot after the arrest.
- Drexel Hill, Pennsylvania, March 17, 2009: An eighth-grade boy at a Catholic school was arrested for trying to recruit fellow students to carry out a plot at the school. His plan was thwarted when one of the students revealed that he'd been recruited to take hostages at the school and shoot anyone who resisted. The instigator had two plastic pellet guns that looked like real firearms.
- Bells, Tennessee, October 2008: Two young men, ages 18 and 20, were charged with planning a killing spree to shoot and decapitate African-American people at a predominantly black school and top it off by killing Sen. Barack Obama. The men were apprehended after they shot out a church window and drew racially motivated words on the sidewalk. They were charged with possessing an unregistered firearm, conspiring to steal firearms, and threatening a candidate for president.
- Norristown, Pennsylvania, September 24, 2008: A woman admitted she helped her troubled, bullied 14-year-old son build a cache of weapons by buying a rifle with a laser scope and gunpowder, which investigators said he was using to build grenades. He also had knives, swords, and BB guns. The overweight teenager had been bullied at school and was being home-schooled. He apparently idolized the Columbine shooters, and violent Internet sites fueled his revenge fantasies.
- Columbia, South Carolina, April 19, 2008: A high school senior collected enough supplies to carry out a bomb attack on his school and detailed the plot in a hate-filled diary that included maps of the building and admiring notations about the Columbine killers. The student was arrested after his parents called police when 10 pounds of ammonium nitrate was delivered to their home and they discovered the journal.

Approach

Guidance for school violence prevention and response is offered in each of the following areas:

- Ways to prevent student violence
- Threat assessment
- Planning and training for what to do during an actual crisis
- How to respond during a crisis
- How to handle the aftermath of a crisis
- Legal considerations
- Recommendations for the media

The roles of school administrators, teachers, and staff are discussed. In addition, student, parent, law enforcement, and community roles are addressed. Throughout the report, text boxes provide more in-depth information or illustrate the potential value of the suggestions using actual cases of school violence.

How to Use this Document

The table of contents provides a way to identify the sections of greatest interest. The entire document

should be reviewed, however, to gain an understanding of the different roles and elements needed to achieve an integrated approach for addressing the problem of violence in schools. Among the ways the document can be used are as follows:

- To help communities audit their schools' existing policies, procedures, and plans. Not every suggestion contained in this document is appropriate for every school. All schools and communities could benefit, though, from checking to see that they have considered and, where appropriate, implemented the recommendations likely to enhance school safety.
- To serve as a basis for strengthening collaborative school violence policies, procedures, and plans. School safety planning committees can delete, revise, and add to recommendations in this document as needed to address their unique needs and circumstances.
- To help public safety and other crisis response agencies assess their school safety plans.
- To provide guidance to members of the school community.

SECTION 2 PREVENTION

The Role of School Administrators, Teachers, and Staff

To be effective, violence prevention programs require community-wide collaborative efforts that include students, families, teachers, administrators, staff, social and mental health professionals, law enforcement, emergency response personnel, security professionals, school board members, parents, the business community, and others. School administrators should bring together all of the above constituencies to develop strategies appropriate for their own particular school and community environments.

While school boards and administrators create a climate of safety in schools, teachers, especially, must be directly involved and supported in all stages of developing and implementing programs to achieve safer schools. Teachers establish the first line of school safety, because they have the most direct contact with students. Often, they also have great insight into the potential problems and realistic solutions applicable to their school.

School Security

The level of physical security may need to be modified in order to lower schools' vulnerability to violent behaviors. Different strategies will be required to address needs specific to individual elementary, middle, and high schools.

Administrators should initiate a comprehensive security assessment survey of their school's physical design, safety policies, and emergency procedures. The assessment should be conducted in cooperation with law enforcement, school security staff, physical facilities personnel, fire and other emergency service personnel, teachers, staff, students, and other school community members. Using the conclusions of that survey, administrators should assign a safety and violence prevention committee composed of all of the above representatives to develop a comprehensive security plan (School Site Safety Plan). Based on each school's needs, school safety plans may include some or all of the following suggestions:

1. Use school resource officers (SROs) who may be provided by local law enforcement. SROs often provide law enforcement, law-related counseling, and law-related education to students, faculty, and staff. Continuity of officers in individual schools should be encouraged, so that students and SROs develop a rapport.
2. Consider seeking one or more probation officers for use on campus to help supervise and counsel students.

This would be especially appropriate for high schools with a significant caseload of juveniles on probation.

3. Use trained personnel—paid or volunteer—selected specifically to assist teachers and administrators in monitoring student behavior and activities. Continuity of monitors within schools should be encouraged to facilitate good rapport with students. Monitors should be trained on the different types of violence likely to occur in the school; what behavior to look for in potential perpetrators; and how to document and report concerning behaviors. The number of monitors used should be based on the number of students, the extent of problems at the school, and the space and layout of school grounds.
4. Develop and enforce restrictions about student loitering in parking lots, hallways, bathrooms, and other areas. Publish restrictions in the student handbook or code of conduct.
5. Consider the use of metal detectors in special circumstances to deter weapons on campus.
6. Adopt policies for conducting searches for weapons and drugs.
7. Require visitors to sign in and sign out at the school office and to wear visible visitors' passes. Designate a staff member or volunteer monitor for each entrance and provide each with a radio. The monitor should notify all visitors that they must sign in, direct them to the office, and radio the office to confirm that the visitor checks in. The monitors should be trained on what concerning behaviors to look for in a potential perpetrator. Escort any visitor that may be suspicious to the office.
8. Encourage school personnel to greet strangers on campus and direct them to sign in if they have not. Also instruct school personnel to report visitors who have not signed in.
9. Require students and staff to carry with them or wear their school photo IDs during school and at all school-related activities.
10. Establish a closed campus policy that prohibits students from leaving campus during lunch.
11. Establish a cooperative relationship with law enforcement and owners of adjacent properties to the school that allow for joint monitoring of student conduct during school hours. Encourage neighboring residents and businesses to report all criminal activity and unusual incidents. Establish a protocol at the school to handle calls from the neighborhood.
12. Establish a professional relationship with a forensic psychologist who specializes in violence assessment, interruption, and prevention.
13. Consider providing and making use of alarm, intercom, cell phone, building paging, two-way radio, and mounted and handheld camera monitoring systems on buses and school campuses.

14. Ensure that people in each classroom have a way to contact the office in case of emergencies and train staff on what type of information should be reported and how it should be reported during emergencies. Do not use codes or code words.
15. Develop a school bus rider attendance checklist for each bus and use it daily.
16. Consider employing outside security personnel during school functions. The school district must outline the roles, responsibilities, and limits of such personnel, including whether they are armed and if they are supposed to respond to an active shooter. The decision to use security officers and any contract with an outside security firm should be reviewed by legal counsel.
17. Patrol school grounds, especially in areas where students tend to congregate, such as parking lots, hallways, stairs, bathrooms, cafeterias, and schoolyards.
18. Develop threat and crisis management plans and provisions as outlined in Sections 3 and 4.
19. Develop a comprehensive set of violence prevention strategies based on the guidance provided in this document and ensure that it is fully implemented.
20. Publish all policies and restrictions in the student handbook or code of conduct.

Reporting

Establish a climate that encourages and enables students, teachers, and parents and/or guardians to report threats and acts of violence.

1. Within the limits of legal guidelines and statutes, maintain confidentiality.
2. Develop and adequately communicate reporting procedures with input from school district officials and local public safety agencies. Standard procedures should include definitions of pertinent information and how and where information should be distributed.
3. Consider establishing a properly staffed, confidential hotline for reporting issues of harassment, safety, vandalism, and so on. If answering machines are used, calls need to be retrieved in time to effectively address threats of violence. Aggressively advertise the hotline number to students and parents and/or guardians in student handbooks, on posters throughout the school, on pencils, on student IDs, on lockers, and so on. Parents and students should also be advised when to use 9-1-1 rather than the hotline.
4. Ensure that students understand that when reporting a fellow classmate's concerning behavior, the goal is intervention, not punishment. Communicate to students that all threats of violence should be reported even if they feel it is not a "real" threat.
5. Obtain training to recognize whether reports of threats or acts of violence are false or malicious.

Student Rules

Student rules must be communicated, understood, and consistently enforced. They also must comply with constitutionally guaranteed due process.

1. Establish rules of conduct pertaining to improper student behavior using input from students, parents and/or guardians, staff, public safety officials, mental health agencies, and legal counsel.
2. Annually review and, if needed, revise rules of student conduct.
3. Ensure that all rules have a purpose that is clearly understood. They should be clear and communicated to all students in both written and verbal formats. Students' comprehension of the rules should be assessed.
4. Post summaries of rules of student conduct in classrooms and throughout the school.
5. Send rules home to be read by students and parents and/or guardians. Include an acknowledgment form for students, parents and/or guardians to sign and return to the school.
6. Hold meetings to communicate rules to parents and/or guardians and, to the extent practicable, make sure they understand them. Invite parents and/or guardians to call if they have questions about the rules.
7. Communicate rules in as many languages as needed.
8. Apply rules consistently. Establish consequences for rule violations and apply them consistently and without delay.
9. Develop a consistent, timely, and effective means to notify parents and/or guardians of rule violations and consequences.
10. Establish clearly defined rules and appropriate consequences for all types of harassment, intimidation, and disrespect. Rules should cover adult and student behavior at all school events. Parents and/or guardians and teachers need to act as positive role models for students.
11. Develop a specific policy and procedure to deal with disturbed writing and threat making. Ensure students and parents are aware of what the policy is and what steps will be taken if a student makes a threat or writes something disturbing. If unsure, school districts should consult with an individual who specializes in analyzing disturbing writing.
12. Suspend and recommend expulsion of students and dismiss or discipline staff for serious rule violations. Serious rule violations include the following:
 - a. Possession of a firearm on school property or at school events. The 1994 Gun-Free Schools Act mandates a one-year expulsion for students who bring a firearm to school. The chief administrating officer of the local education agency can modify the expulsion requirement on a case-by-case basis. All local education agencies that receive funding from

programs established through the Elementary and Secondary Education Act must require all students found carrying a firearm to be referred to the criminal justice or juvenile justice system.

- b. Possession or use of a weapon on school grounds or at school events that is capable of inflicting serious bodily harm.
 - c. Physical assault of a teacher, an administrator, a staff member, or a student.
13. Suspend and consider the appropriateness of expulsion for the following:
- a. A verbal threat to a teacher, an administrator, a staff member, or a student.
 - b. Possession, sale, or use of illegal drugs on campus.
 - c. Actual or threatened retaliation against persons who report threats or acts of violence.
 - d. Communicated threats (e.g., bomb threats).

Support for Teachers and Other Staff

Working in collaboration with faculty, the school administration has the responsibility to enforce school rules.

1. Take quick, consistent, and appropriate actions toward students who are reported by teachers and other staff for rule violations.
2. Provide times and locations for teachers to meet and discuss ways to maintain classrooms that are conducive to learning. Group teachers and other personnel who work with the same troubled student into teams to enable them to discuss that student and strategies for managing him or her.

Programs for Suspended or Expelled Students

For students who have been suspended or expelled, the school should do the following:

1. Provide an alternative educational program in a separate environment. Appropriate programs should be available for elementary, middle, and high school grade levels.
2. Provide a low student-to-staff ratio in the alternative educational program.
3. Consider requiring suspended or expelled students to participate in community-based programs so that they would learn while helping others. Possibilities include working with neighborhood beautification efforts or with victims of violence where they would directly witness the effects of causing injury to others.
4. Consider reducing the length of suspensions in exchange for successful completion of community service.
5. Consider providing extra counseling in areas such as anger management, conflict management and resolution, respecting the rights of others, and

social skills. Use behavior modification or other applications of rewards and punishments to reduce delinquency.

6. Consider providing parents and/or guardians with counseling or training in parenting skills oriented toward reducing problematic behavior by students in school and at home.
7. Recognize the risk involved in putting troubled students together. Take appropriate security measures in light of that risk.
8. Provide students of the appropriate age with career counseling and information about employment opportunities.

Student Court

For noncriminal offenses, consider use of peer courts. Be aware that the use of student courts to address other students' noncriminal offenses can have unintended consequences, such as lack of confidentiality, feelings of being judged by fellow classmates, and increased feelings of group differences.

1. Consider having qualified adults oversee peer courts.
2. Provide adequate training to peer court participants.
3. Tell the student(s) that they must abide by the peer court's decision and tell them about the consequences for not complying.

Positive Incentives

Instead of focusing only on punishment of negative behaviors, find ways to encourage positive behaviors.

1. Create rewards for students who perform acts of good citizenship.
2. Invite community leaders to tell students about different ways they can achieve success.
3. Consider the potential value of school-wide assemblies in which effective motivational speakers deliver anti-drug, -alcohol, and -violence messages.
4. Invite responsible adults to mentor and serve as positive role models for students.
5. Promote press coverage of all types of students who have done well.
6. Create programs that promote positive values, incorporate building blocks for developing character, and recognize students who exhibit positive traits.
7. Promote partnerships between schools and law enforcement, community businesses, and service organizations to recognize and reward positive student behavior.

Employee Screening

Teachers, staff, and volunteers can have a profound effect on children's development. Investigations should be conducted to avoid selecting potentially harmful or

abusive teachers, staff, and volunteers. Some states have laws about screening people who work with children.

Use one or more of the following means in a manner consistent with applicable law to screen potential teachers, staff, and other non-students who are regularly on site:

- State sex offender registry check
- Criminal background check
- Fingerprint check
- Employment, personal, and education reference checks
- Personal interviews
- On-the-job observation
- Students' evaluations of teacher performance
- Professional disciplinary board background check
- Alcohol and drug testing
- Psychological testing
- Mental illness and psychiatric history check

Class and School Size

1. Work toward creating and maintaining optimal student-to-teacher ratios. This allows teachers to better identify warning signs demonstrated by students who may be prone to violence.
2. Organize community-wide efforts to determine the most appropriate size of schools in each district. Schools where students are more connected to their school environment (including the people, the facility, the operations, and the activities) tend to have lower rates of violence.

Parent Outreach

1. Encourage faculty to solicit as much parental involvement as possible. Among the ways this can be achieved are school and class newsletters, classroom activities, Web sites, personalized phone calls, local newspapers, voice mail direct to teachers, and opportunities for participation in school clubs, organizations, and other extracurricular activities.
2. Seek and promote innovative ways to help students and parents and/or guardians connect with their school, faculty, and staff. Examples include having parent advisory meetings, using parents and/or guardians as mentors or guest speakers, providing parents and/or guardians with child care for their children during school functions, establishing a parent lounge, and offering parenting classes.
3. Offer training to parents and/or guardians on what behaviors to look for, what those behaviors can lead to, and what parents and/or guardians can do if they are concerned about their child. Section 7 addresses the legal implications of failing to take action.
4. Make it known to parents and/or guardians that the goal is intervention before a violent incident

occurs, not punishment. Encourage parents and/or guardians to report their concerns.

Use of the School

1. Serve as an advocate for Head Start and other on site quality preschool programs for younger children.
2. Promote free and attractive after-school activities for all students. Examples include sporting activities, assistance with schoolwork, and social events. Try to have at least one activity that would be of interest to every type of student. The After-Schools Enrichment Grant Program can be used to help provide funding for such activities. (More information on after-school programs is provided in the text box on page 14. Addresses of Web sites with information about funding are provided in Section 9.)
3. Seek and promote partnerships with external programs to provide supervised after-school on site activities. Programs selected should contribute to students' safety and to their physical, moral, academic, emotional, or social development, such as 4-H, Scouts, Boys & Girls Clubs, YMCA, and community youth sports programs.

School Physical Environment

A safe and secure physical environment promotes and enhances the learning process.

1. Keep schools clean and in good repair to discourage vandalism and violence.
2. Employ Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) techniques to reduce problems. These measures use interior and exterior facility designs to increase the likelihood that acts of misconduct on school premises will either be physically discouraged or observed and acted upon. CPTED can also yield designs that facilitate more effective emergency response to critical incidents.
3. Establish and enforce a dress code for students, faculty, and staff with input from all constituents. Consideration also should be given to requiring school uniforms. Dress codes can simplify recognition of intruders, improve discipline, decrease violence and other forms of misconduct, and minimize the impact of gangs and other fringe groups on school property.

Counseling Services

Schools should provide or refer students to counseling services, including emotional (such as grief, anger management, depression), social development, exceptional student (such as gifted or disabled), academic, vocational, prenatal and reproductive, gang, psychological, family, and substance abuse. Each area requires different knowledge, skills, and abilities.

Schools should ensure that students in need have access to counselors qualified to treat their respective problems. Counseling services should be of adequate duration and provide continuity of treatment. When student needs exceed the counseling resources of the school, recommendations for community assistance should be provided. Cooperative arrangements may be possible with neighboring school districts or with other city, county, or state organizations that provide or use these services.

1. Provide counseling services in a manner consistent with national professional standards (such as those of the National Association of School Psychologists, the American Counseling Association, and the National Association of School Social Workers) regarding appropriate treatment and student-to-counselor ratios.
2. Establish training programs under the supervision of a trained counselor in which students can be taught to help other students. Match students with peers who can relate to the student receiving advice and to his or her problems.
3. Ensure that counselors have adequate information about and access to community resources.
4. Ensure parents and/or guardians and students are informed of the different types of counseling services available and know how they can obtain them.
5. Identify at-risk students and provide counseling.

Conflict Resolution Programs

Conflict resolution and management programs teach people to find peaceful solutions to conflict. These programs use negotiation, mediation, and consensus decision-making to find solutions that are positive for all parties. They attempt to create win-win situations.

1. Conduct a needs assessment to determine the types of conflicts that tend to occur and how they are best resolved.

2. Select which conflict resolution programs would be most appropriate for the school.
3. Find trainers to implement the program.
4. Commence training at the earliest age-appropriate school level. Continue the training throughout students' education.
5. Obtain support and involvement from faculty and parents and/or guardians.
6. Teach conflict resolution to students by using activities incorporated into the curriculum and by having teachers and staff model appropriate behaviors.
7. Evaluate the success of the program against goals.

Social Skills Training

Social skills training enables students to have positive and respectful interactions with other students, parents, faculty, and staff. Positive relationships can reduce tendencies toward violent behavior.

1. Encourage faculty to teach and model positive social skills.
2. Implement life skills training throughout the curriculum to teach students how to recognize problem situations, manage stress, achieve self-control, and demonstrate emotional maturity.

Cognitive Skills Training

Encourage faculty and staff to challenge the way students think about problem solving. Violence in school settings often erupts as impulsive or irrational reactions to immediate problems.

1. Teach means-ends thinking, in which students learn how to reach a goal by step-by-step planning, identifying potential obstacles, and accepting that problem solving often takes time.

Examples of Conflict Resolution and Management Approaches

The process curriculum approach devotes a specific time to teaching problem-solving skills in a separate course or curriculum.

The mediation program approach trains people in conflict resolution to provide third-party mediation to others trying to resolve a dispute. Peer mediation has been found to work well for many but not all problems. For example, peer mediation counseling should not be used for responding to serious or persistent

delinquency problems. Peer mediation also must be made available when it is needed, not just when it is convenient for peer counselors and staff.

The peaceable classroom approach brings conflict resolution into core subject areas and uses the techniques to help manage the classroom.

The peaceable schools approach builds on the former approaches by using conflict resolution as a tool for helping to manage the entire school.

2. Teach analytical thinking, in which students learn how to weigh the appropriate pros and cons when deciding whether to carry out an act.
3. Teach alternative solution thinking, in which students learn to find new solutions to a problem.
4. Teach consequential thinking, in which students learn to consider different outcomes that might result from a given action.

Diversity Issues

Intolerance often leads to conflict, interferes with the learning process, and has been a factor in violence in the schools. The purpose of diversity training is to try to reduce intolerance.

1. Design and distribute a diversity acceptance policy to students, parents and/or guardians, teachers, and staff. Include a description of forbidden behaviors, responsibilities of students and staff, consequences of engaging in prohibited behaviors, and locations of pertinent school and community resources.
2. Provide diversity acceptance training to all staff and faculty.
3. Give all students diversity acceptance training in the classroom and in assemblies, incorporating small group discussions to augment awareness and sensitivity. Consider activities that celebrate the school's cultural diversity. Make sure that all activities are appropriate for the particular age and cultural groups with and for whom they are being implemented.
4. Use progressive discipline for acts of intolerance. Use nondisciplinary actions (such as counseling, parent conferences, community service, or awareness training) for minor, first-time infractions. Progressively increase discipline (from detention to suspension to expulsion, for instance) for recurring or more serious violations.
5. Recognize that certain types of graffiti, literature, and actions may be indicators of a hate crime or a case of harassment. Collect, store, and monitor data on these types of occurrences and share this information with police. Consider photographing graffiti.

Anti-bullying Programs

Bullying is a range of behaviors, both verbal and physical, that intimidate others and often lead to antisocial and unlawful acts. Staff, students, and parents and/or guardians need to understand that bullying is a pervasive problem that leads to violence. Bullying should neither be thought of as a kids-will-be-kids occurrence nor be accepted as a way of life. Implement anti-bullying programs that include the following school-wide, classroom, and individual tactics:

1. Clearly define what constitutes bullying activity with input and involvement from the school community

(students, staff, parents and/or guardians, teachers, volunteers, and law enforcement). Communicate that definition to students, teachers, parents and/or guardians, and staff. The definition should include physical, verbal, and psychological aspects of bullying.

2. Establish specific rules prohibiting, and consequences for, bullying activity as part of a comprehensive school code of conduct.
3. Seek information about the motivations behind specific incidents of bullying.
4. Establish a reporting mechanism by which incidents of bullying can be reported and recorded immediately after they occur.
5. Ensure reporting procedures address with whom and under which circumstances information will and will not be shared. Care should be taken to do the following:
 - a. Protect witnesses and victims from retaliation.
 - b. Meet applicable standards for confidentiality.
 - c. Ensure that personnel involved with victims and bullies have the information they need to effectively work with them.
 - d. Protect the accused from false allegations.
6. Notify the parents and/or guardians of both the victims and the perpetrators whenever a report of bullying is filed. Establish a policy regarding the circumstances under which parents and/or guardians of bullies and their victims should be called in for an on site conference.
7. Continually monitor the number of reported incidents of bullying, and for each incident document what action was taken to disrupt the behavior.
8. Regularly conduct a survey assessing the prevalence, location, and kind of bullying activities that are occurring. Include students, parents and/or guardians, teachers, and staff. Also address bullying activities that occur on the way to and from school. Work with community policing efforts to help make students' journeys to and from school safe and free from acts of intimidation. For surveys requiring student input, follow administration guidelines regarding the possible need for parental approval.
9. Consider holding focus groups to discuss the nature of the problem of bullying and ways to solve it.
10. Identify community resources that can be used to intervene immediately as well as those that can be used to develop additional intervention and prevention programs. Ensure that adequate social service and mental health resources are both available and being used.
11. Take actions to identify bullies and victims and to promote intervention at the classroom level and at other student contact points in schools. Develop a program that provides victims with immediate support services and referrals and teaches avoidance

techniques and coping skills. Refer offenders to available support services.

12. Advise teachers and staff to record events as well as the interventions and strategies that are implemented to address different instances of bullying.

Programs to Reduce Isolation and Alienation and to Promote Respect

School administrators and teachers should identify and implement programs that increase self-respect and respect for others. In general, these programs should do the following:

1. Establish standards for how people should treat each other.
2. Ensure that classroom standards are consistent with school and district policies.
3. Ensure that classroom standards are reviewed in class and that a copy of them is sent to the parents and/or guardians.
4. Coordinate a cooperative effort to create and disseminate statements of values that all affiliates of the school will be expected to follow. All members should be able to state their school's values. For examples of school values statements, see the text box on page 15.
5. Establish better lines of communication with students who may feel alienated or isolated or have low self-esteem.
6. Increase the number and diversity of positive extracurricular activities available to students.
7. Help students become more successful in achieving desirable short- and long-term goals and increase the likelihood that their progress is recognized and rewarded.
8. Teach students how to resist others' efforts to intimidate or isolate them.
9. Initiate a community service requirement for middle and high school graduation.
10. Model and reinforce values such as learning, respect, character, and cooperation.
11. Encourage students to work together through the use of cooperative learning techniques such as team projects.
12. Encourage the contemplation of core values (respect, responsibility, trust, sharing, and so on) through the use of age- and curriculum-appropriate writing assignments and class discussions.
13. Encourage students to become actively involved in the school community.
14. Recognize and reward students who exhibit positive and responsible behavior.
15. Offer troubled and withdrawn students, including victims, help outside of class with schoolwork and personal problems.

16. Develop a climate that encourages open communication between students and adults. It should maximize the options by which students can transmit their concerns about violence to school personnel, foster an environment of trust, and be sensitive to their fears of retaliation.

Drug and Alcohol Education

The use of drugs and alcohol is often associated with violence and other forms of delinquent behavior.

1. Educate students about the dangers and illegality of drug and alcohol use.
2. Identify and implement age-appropriate programs that include discussions about how students can resist negative peer pressure. Use role playing and other types of activities to supplement discussions.
3. Educate parents and/or guardians and enlist their support in addressing the dangers of drug and alcohol abuse. Parents and/or guardians and teachers need to realize that their own behaviors in these areas influence children.
4. Avoid programs that are based predominantly on fear arousal, moral appeal, or the simple distribution of information.
5. Establish a contract requiring students who participate in extracurricular activities to agree not to use alcohol or drugs.
6. Identify community resources to which parents and/or guardians and students with alcohol- or substance-abuse problems can be referred for information or intervention.

Anti-gang Programs

Gang membership is destructive to a healthy school environment. Members of gangs are more likely than other students to carry weapons and engage in acts of violence.

1. Establish partnerships with law enforcement to exchange information and educate teachers and staff about the presence of gangs and their activities.
2. Establish and fund gang resistance and violence prevention teams to implement community, family, and youth education programs and to provide alternative activities in which children can participate. Teams should include educators, law enforcement, probation officers, community leaders, students, school resource officers, gang specialists, mental health professionals, and parents and/or guardians.
3. Become aware of gang-related clothing, paraphernalia, and behavior. Establish a school dress code that would exclude outward manifestations of gang membership.

4. Inform parents and/or guardians if their children are suspected of involvement in gangs and give them relevant information, counseling, and access to available pertinent resources.

Suicide Prevention

Suicide is a far more common form of violence involving students than school homicide. In some cases, perpetrators of school shootings felt their actions would lead to their being killed by police, which also could be considered a form of suicide. It is hoped that effective suicide prevention will decrease the occurrence of both suicide and violence by students who believe their acts will result in their being killed by others.

1. Develop a plan that specifies how to identify students at risk, how to handle threats, and what actions to take in the event of a suicide.
2. Ensure that students have, and are aware of, easy ways to get help, such as access to suicide hotlines, counselors, and written and visual materials.
3. Educate students, parents and/or guardians, teachers, and other school personnel on how to

identify and get help for troubled students before they become victims of suicide. Include how to get immediate help to prevent or respond to suicide attempts.

4. Develop a detailed crisis plan to address the aftermath of a suicide to avoid any copycat suicides.

Training and Technical Assistance for Teachers and Staff

Because teachers and staff establish the first line of school safety, they should be supported in creating safe classroom atmospheres. Schools should provide training and technical assistance to teachers and staff in the following areas:

1. Conflict resolution and management.
2. Hostility and anger management.
3. Victim sensitivity and support.
4. Crisis and critical incident management.
5. Bullying and harassment recognition, prevention, and intervention.
6. Who should, how to, and where to refer students and families to social service agencies.
7. Classroom management.

Identifying Warning Signs of Potential Violence

Learn to identify characteristics of persons who exhibit warning signs of potential violence. Schools tend to single out students who are bullied or who exhibit mental health problems as potential violent perpetrators. The key is focusing on the behaviors the individual is engaging in, not personal characteristics. Those who display these signs should be referred to appropriate agencies or individuals such as counselors, parents, law enforcement, and social, medical, and mental health services. When deciding whether and where to make referrals, one should consider applicable regulations concerning parental consent, confidentiality, and mandatory reporting requirements.

These signs simply mean that a child appears to be troubled, and violence might be one of the possible outcomes of this distress. Identifying signs neither stigmatizes children or assumes that they will be violent just because they are at risk for such behavior. Other warning signs may also exist. Consequently, this list should not be considered all-inclusive, and certain items and combinations may be far more indicative of a potential problem than others. The signs include the following:

- Has engaged in violent behavior in the past
- Has tantrums and uncontrollable angry outbursts abnormal for someone that age

- Continues exhibiting antisocial behaviors that began at an early age
- Forms or maintains friendships with others who have repeatedly engaged in problem behaviors
- Often engages in name calling, cursing, or abusive language
- Has brought a weapon or has threatened to bring a weapon to school
- Consistently makes violent threats when angry
- Has a substance abuse problem
- Is frequently truant or has been suspended from school on multiple occasions
- Seems preoccupied with weapons or violence, especially weapons associated more with killing humans than with target practice or hunting
- Has few or no close friends despite having lived in the area for some time
- Has a sudden decrease in academic performance or interest in school activities
- Is abusive to animals
- Has too little parental supervision, given the student's age and level of maturity
- Has been a victim of abuse or been neglected by parents and/or guardians
- Has repeatedly witnessed domestic abuse or other forms of violence
- Has experienced trauma or loss in the home or the community

Identifying Warning Signs of Potential Violence (continued)

- Pays no attention to the feelings or rights of others
- Intimidates others
- Has been a victim of intimidation by others
- Dwells on perceived slights, rejection, or mistreatment by others; blames others for problems and appears vengeful
- Seems to be preoccupied with TV shows, movies, video games, reading material, or music that express violence
- Reflects excessive anger in writing projects
- Is involved in a gang or antisocial group
- Seems depressed or withdrawn or has exhibited severe mood or behavioral swings, which appear greater in magnitude, duration, or frequency than those typically experienced by students that age
- Expresses sadistic, violent, prejudicial, or intolerant attitudes

- Has threatened or attempted suicide or acts of self-mutilation
- Written or verbal evidence that indicates a fixation on a perceived injustice, a revenge fantasy, an obsession with revenge, a desire to be notorious, a preoccupation with previous school shooters or shootings, suicidal or homicidal ideation, feelings of insignificance, dehumanization, and insensitivity to violence

When characteristics in the last category are identified along with any of the behaviors in the other categories, the threat and violence team needs to be notified immediately.

When an individual exhibits any of the warning signs the district should consider referring the student to an individual violence risk assessment specialist. Simply referring the individual to a mental health professional is seldom sufficient; few mental health professionals are trained in violence risk assessments.

8. How to identify and defuse potentially violent situations.
9. How teachers' and other staff members' own behavior may diffuse or escalate conflict.
10. How to identify troubled students. Examples of warning signs are provided in the text box on page 11.
11. How to communicate and work with parents and/or guardians to intervene in the behavior of troubled students.
12. How to most effectively work with classes that have ethnic and economic diversity.

Evaluation

1. Routinely monitor and evaluate the steps taken to improve school safety.
2. Conduct surveys of the school community to determine perceptions of safety, areas for improvement, and the effectiveness of school safety programs.
3. Maintain statistics on discipline cases, suspensions, expulsions, students found with weapons, and incidents of verbal or physical harassment.
4. Organize a committee of students, teachers, staff, emergency response personnel, law enforcement, and parents and/or guardians to periodically review and analyze the collected information and to suggest new or modified violence prevention strategies.

The Role of Students

The majority of students recognize they share in the responsibility to prevent school violence. Not only do they suffer the consequences when it occurs but they also provide an essential perspective on how to promote school safety. Therefore, students should be included in all efforts to create safer schools. The following are steps students can take to help reduce violence in their schools.

1. Know and follow their school's violence prevention policies.
2. Work with teachers and administrators to create a safe way to report threats.
3. Learn about who they can go to with information and concerns about violence and harassment.
4. Listen to friends who share upsetting thoughts or display troubling, harmful, or dangerous behavior, and encourage them to seek help from a parent or guardian, teacher, school counselor, or other trusted adult.
5. Confide in a parent or guardian, teacher, or other trusted adult if they persistently feel so down, sad, or empty that they don't want to go out and do things, are not able to sleep, have difficulty concentrating, feel helpless or angry, or feel like they are losing control over their thoughts or emotions.
6. Immediately report suspicious behavior and threats of violence or suicide to a school official or another responsible adult. Students who do not

feel comfortable speaking directly to school officials or adults should use another means, such as anonymous hotlines or notes.

7. Help organize and participate in after-school activities with responsible members of the community. Encourage peers to do the same.
8. Participate in ongoing activities that promote school safety. Actively participate in programs such as conflict resolution, problem solving teams, mentoring programs, peer courts, community service, and peer mediation.
9. Act as positive role models for peers and younger students. Accept responsibility for their actions and consider the impact their actions have on others.
10. Refrain from belittling, harassing, and bullying other students. Be tolerant of other students and their differences.
11. Learn techniques to avoid and cope with negative peer pressure.
12. Speak out and refuse to join in when members of groups or cliques with whom they are involved engage in negative behaviors toward others, such as acts of harassment or vandalism.

The Role of Parents and/or Guardians

Parents and/or guardians are an essential part of school violence prevention. Demonstrating an interest in their children's lives is one of the most important steps parents and/or guardians can take to help prevent youth violence. Open communication between children and their parents or guardians is critical.

Parents and/or guardians should be invited to help design and implement safety plans. Information and training sessions should be provided on school safety policies and programs. Parents and/or guardians should be informed of other steps they can take to contribute to a safe school environment.

Ways Parents and/or Guardians Can Supervise Children's Use of the Internet

- Consider placing computers in locations where parents and/or guardians can observe what their children are seeing.
- Establish family rules for Internet use and inform children that their use of it will be monitored.
- Use filtering or blocking software to restrict their children's access to inappropriate sites and material.
- Search their home computer files to see what sites their children have visited.

Topics to Discuss with Children

1. The school's discipline policy. Parents and/or guardians should know the policy, communicate their support for it, discuss the reasons behind it, and expect their children to comply.
2. Their school's safety and security procedures. Parents and/or guardians should know the procedures, make certain their children know them, and communicate why they expect their children to follow them.
3. Their own positive household rules, family values and traditions, behavior expectations, and the reasons behind them.
4. Violence in television shows, video games, movies, and books. Talk about the impact of violence in the media and its real-life consequences.
5. How to solve problems peacefully.
6. The value of individual differences.
7. Their children's concerns about friends and other people who may be exhibiting threatening or violent behavior. Parents and/or guardians should share this information with the friends' parents or guardians, a trusted adult at the school, or other appropriate authorities in a way that protects the confidentiality of their own children as needed and possible.
8. Personal safety issues and appropriate responses to them.
9. Their children's day-to-day activities, accomplishments, concerns, and problems.

Actions Parents and/or Guardians Can Take with Children

1. Model appropriate behaviors. Demonstrate healthy ways to express anger and relieve stress. Do not show anger in verbally or physically abusive ways.
2. Watch their children carefully for any troubling behaviors. Parents and/or guardians should learn the warning signs for at-risk children and how to get help

- Look for signs that their children may be involved with online criminal activity or be interacting with potentially dangerous people.
- If training is needed, attend classes.
- If training classes are not available, ask school administrators, law enforcement, or the local parent-teacher association to consider offering them. Resources are available through the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children's NetSmartz Program at www.netsmartz.org.

from school or community professionals. For a list of warning signs, refer to the text box on page 11.

3. Take an active role in their children's education. Visit and volunteer at their school, monitor their schoolwork, and get to know their teachers.
4. If asked, participate in school safety planning sessions.
5. Initiate or participate in violence prevention groups in their community, such as Communities that Care and Mothers Against Violence in America.
6. Get to know their children's friends and families. Establish a network to exchange information with other parents.
7. Monitor and supervise their children's reading material, television, video games, and music for inappropriately violent content.
8. Monitor and supervise their children's use of the Internet. For more information, see the text box on page 13.
9. Check a child's bedroom and other rooms for signs of violence ideation.
10. Talk to employers about having special considerations for parents and/or guardians who want to participate in school activities.
11. If needed, attend anger management, parenting skill, or conflict resolution classes offered by the school or other organizations.

After-School Programs

An Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) report to Congress issued in July 1999 reported that juvenile violence frequently occurs in the context of unsupervised groups of adolescents. The report also noted that youth who are in a supervised setting after every school day tend to be less delinquent than those with fewer after-school hours supervised by adults. Among the possible reasons for their lower delinquency rate are the following:

- It is more difficult to avoid being caught and punished for engaging in bad behaviors while under close adult supervision.
- Participants have additional exposure to positive adult and student role models.
- After participating in their programs, they have reduced time and energy to get in trouble.
- During program hours participants are more likely to associate with and develop friendships with children who are less likely to promote or accept negative behaviors.
- Program participation may increase self-esteem or perceptions of having a positive future, which would give them less to gain, and more to lose, from engaging in negative behaviors.

Despite these potential benefits, after-school programs do not always result in localized decreases in juvenile violence rates. Among the possible reasons are the following:

- Not everyone participates. Children who need supervision the most may be the least likely to participate. If this is the case, after-school programs could widen the gap between those less likely and those more likely to engage in negative behaviors.
- Some of the participants' delinquent friends and acquaintances who do not participate may pressure those who do to engage in negative behaviors in

order to demonstrate and reinforce the participants' social bonds to them.

To increase the effectiveness of these programs in preventing youth violence, consider the following:

- Offering as many positive after-school options as possible, so they attract the broadest range of students.
- Eliminating roadblocks to student participation by taking steps like offering the programs free, providing scholarships, scheduling activities at times and locations convenient for parents and/or guardians and students, and providing transportation.
- Helping to increase the consistency and longevity of each positive after-school activity. Working parents and/or guardians need to be able to depend on consistent drop-off and pick-up times and locations. The success of programs is also often dependent on after-school activities' obtaining a good reputation among students and on the same students signing up for those activities year after year. Continuity also provides participants with an opportunity to improve their proficiency in those activities over a longer period of time.
- Ensuring each after-school activity supports academic advancement. This can be accomplished by making sure participants have sufficient time to study; providing student or program staff tutors; and encouraging participants to study, not drop out of school, and do as well as possible in their classes. After-school activities may be one of the few positive school-related experiences that some students have each day and may be their primary reason for not dropping out. These programs need to be designed to complement academic achievement, not compete with it.
- Ensuring each after-school activity contributes to participants' social and moral development. This can be accomplished by stressing concepts such as good sportsmanship, being a team player, helping others, sharing, and cooperation.

Sample Values Statements

Statements of values should be broad in reach but short in length. If properly used in both award and disciplinary settings they can take on real meaning as a cornerstone of student, teacher, and staff commitment to the school and the larger community. Knowledge of school values can be reinforced by listing them on posters throughout the school, on ID holders, on stickers, and on other promotional items.

The following is the statement of values for Green Run Elementary School in Virginia Beach, Virginia. We believe:

- All children can learn if given the opportunity to do so.
- Children will consistently strive to meet high expectations.
- The school should provide a safe and positive environment in which each student can achieve success.
- Students learn best when they have the support and encouragement of parents, community, teachers, and peers.

- Each student should share a common body of knowledge which enables them to act in an ethical manner (responsible, functional, independent member of society).
- The school should strive to meet the individual student's learning style.
- The school should be able to adapt to the changing community.

The statement of values below is from West Decatur Elementary School in Decatur, Alabama. At West Decatur, we believe:

- Every individual deserves to be treated with dignity and respect.
- Every individual is entitled to a quality education in a safe, nurturing, and orderly environment.
- Every individual needs to believe in the worth of themselves and others.
- Every individual needs to accept consequences for chosen behavior.

12. Establish and consistently enforce household rules and reward positive behavior.
13. Provide quality child care for their children.
14. Promote a healthy and safe lifestyle by prohibiting the illegal or irresponsible use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs in their home.
15. If needed, seek out support groups to improve parenting skills or to manage anger and frustration.
16. Provide a quality after-school environment for their children. See the text box on after-school programs on page 14.
17. Monitor and supervise their children's whereabouts (where they are, how they can be reached, and how to reach their children's friends' parents). Encourage and facilitate their association with friends who seem to reinforce good behavior. Make their home a place where children and their well-behaved friends are welcome, comfortable, adequately supervised, and safe.

Firearms and Ammunition

1. Keep firearms and ammunition locked up and in separate locations. Secure the keys in a location unknown to children. Many children who bring firearms to school obtain them from their own households.
2. Monitor children's environments for indications of weapons and destructive devices.
3. Teach children about the dangers of firearms.
4. Be aware of and concerned about easily accessible firearms or ammunition at the homes of friends, relatives, and neighbors.

The Role of the Community

For any safe schools program to be effective, it is necessary to obtain the active participation of the community in planning and implementation. School officials should make an effort to recruit individual members of the community, local businesses, community service organizations, attorneys, clergy, mental health and child welfare personnel, local officials, family agency staff, and recreational organizations. The following are additional specific suggestions for members of the community.

Individual Community Member Actions

1. Volunteer for mentoring programs such as Big Brothers Big Sisters of America.
2. Take the initiative to help create, run, or volunteer for an after-school recreation program.
3. If qualified, consider volunteering to provide care for troubled youth and their families.
4. Provide community-based services that care for children in need and their families.

Businesses and Community Organization Actions

1. Adopt and support a local school.
2. Hire high school students as part-time employees. Actively seek out student volunteers and interns.
3. Allow employees who are students enough time off to study. Provide extra time off during final exams.
4. Be considerate of employees who want to attend their children's school activities.

5. Give basic job skills training to students.
6. Develop a scholarship program.
7. Offer support to schools by providing needed services, facilities, equipment, and so on.
8. Work with school administrators to create positive community service learning experiences for young people.
9. Work with school administrators to provide career information.

The Role of Law Enforcement

Law enforcement should work with schools to formulate district-wide and school-specific violence prevention programs and crisis response plans.

Police Training

1. Address the conditions that contribute to school violence.
2. Include in-service training that addresses factors influencing school violence, conflict resolution, school violence scenarios, and response guidelines.
3. Train officers how to handle interactions with school administrators, teachers, and students.
4. Train selected officers how to conduct school security assessments.

Police Activities

1. Patrol school grounds and develop a school resource officer (SRO) program. SROs can deter violence and other forms of misconduct by being a visible presence at the school and by helping the school develop and implement violence prevention programs.
2. Develop and maintain working partnerships with area schools.
3. Work with schools, parents and/or guardians, and truants to lower truancy. Bring students found outside of school during school hours either back to school or to a truancy center. Visit the homes of these children to help determine whether their parents or guardians have been neglectful or abusive.
4. Consult with school administrators, teachers, and parents and/or guardians about school security.
5. In concert with school and police department legal counsel, provide guidance to school personnel on

how to spot concealed weapons and what steps they should and should not take when they suspect students are carrying them.

6. Provide schools, students, and parents and/or guardians with information about police department resources.
7. Provide schools with guidelines and examples of when to call the police.
8. Assist school officials with the screening of employees and volunteers, including checking criminal history files and sex offender registries.
9. Serve on school threat and disciplinary action assessment teams, along with teachers, administrators, and counselors.
10. Try to maintain a constructive relationship with students, parents, and school employees. This allows law enforcement officials to be seen as problem solvers and positive role models, rather than just enforcers. A constructive relationship can help foster respect for authority. Ways to establish such a relationship include the following:
 - a. Bicycle registration drives
 - b. Sponsored recreational activities
 - c. Explorer or cadet programs
 - d. Parent, student, and teacher in-service training programs
11. Initiate and participate in programs for juvenile offenders using interventions that are appropriate for their risk factors and violations.
12. When appropriate, make follow-up visits to the homes of juvenile offenders. Consider also the appropriateness of conducting consent or warrant searches in cases involving students who made threats or brought weapons to school.
13. Develop task forces aimed at enforcing laws among minors.
14. Develop a plan for cracking down on illegal gun sales and work to educate parents and/or guardians on firearm safety, including the proper storage of weapons in the home.
15. Enforce existing truancy laws.
16. Use other federal, state, and local criminal justice agencies and law enforcement departments as resources to help determine the best possible safe school strategies for the community.

SECTION 3

THREAT ASSESSMENT

It is important to prepare a threat assessment strategy so that when a threat occurs, everyone will know there is a policy and understand what actions to take. Threats are alarming statements or behaviors that give rise to concern about subsequent violence. Among the possible components of threat assessment strategies are the following:

1. Establish a threat assessment team that would be called in to assess the credibility of, and needed response for, serious threats. The team should include school and school district administrators, legal counsel, and representatives from law enforcement. It might also include security personnel, mental health professionals, threat assessment experts, and any other person who could contribute in a meaningful way. Normally, the permanent members of the threat assessment team would also serve on the school site safety and violence prevention committee, the crisis planning team, and the crisis management team.
2. Define the nature and scope of threats that should and should not invoke the involvement of the threat assessment team. The types of threats include bomb threats, threats against children by parents and/or guardians in custody battles, personal vendettas between students or gangs, threats against teachers or staff involved in domestic conflict, threats of retaliation, efforts to intimidate, and any other type of alarming behavior that involves members of the school community or its property. Focus on threatening behavior, not just verbalized or written threats.
3. Establish a policy to ensure that reports of threats submitted from both inside and outside the school are routed to the appropriate administrator and investigated.
4. Establish procedures for recording and monitoring threats. Document threatening behavior, what interventions are put in place, and the individual's behavior after the intervention. If the threatening behavior continues, a more significant intervention needs to be put in place. Guidelines pertaining to what information should be included in threat incident reports are presented in the text box below.

Threat Incident Report

School and school district policy should require students and employees to report all threats or incidents of violent behavior they observe or are informed about to the designated administration representative (DAR). The DAR should take the steps necessary to complete a threat incident report as quickly as possible, including private interviews of the victims and witnesses. The report will be used by the threat assessment team to assess the safety of the school and to decide on a plan of action. The threat assessment should include behavioral data, rather than personal characteristics. It should include the following:

- The name of the threat-maker and his or her relationship to the school and to the recipient
- The names of the victims or potential victims
- When and where the incident occurred
- What happened before the incident
- The specific language of the threat
- Physical conduct that would indicate plans to follow through on the threat
- How the threat-maker appeared (physically and emotionally)
- The names of others who were directly involved and any actions they took
- How the incident ended

- The names of witnesses
- What happened to the threat-maker after the incident
- What happened to the other students or employees directly involved after the incident
- The names of any administrators, teachers, or staff and how they responded.
- What events triggered the incident
- Any history leading up to the incident
- The steps that have been taken to ensure the threat will not be carried out, including what interventions are put into place
- Suggestions for preventing school violence in the future

Elements of the threat incident report and any subsequent actions relating to the incident, such as the individual's behavior after the intervention is put into place, should be recorded in a tracking system for use by the DAR and the threat assessment team. Such systems range from simple card files to commercially available relational databases. The tracking system, as well as all investigative files, should be kept secure and maintained separately from other records. If a situation is concerning, consult with someone who specializes in violence risk assessments.

5. Ensure cooperation between law enforcement and school authorities in collecting and preserving evidence of threats.
6. If a situation is concerning, consult with someone who specializes in violence risk assessments. Identify that specialist now, before you need his or her services.
7. Evaluate situations when a threat has been made and, if warranted, notify the potential victims. Some threat assessment suggestions developed by the U.S. Secret Service appear in the text box below.
8. Consider the costs and benefits of providing increased protection to threatened persons. Possible actions include transferring potential victims to another school or providing them with additional ways to signal distress, such as cell phones or emergency transmitters.
9. Determine what additional security measures, if any, should be put in place after a threat. Changes might include requesting additional police patrols, hiring security guards, locking doors (in compliance with fire regulations), and adding video monitors.

U.S. Secret Service Threat Assessment Suggestions

School and law enforcement officials are frequently placed in the difficult position of having to assess specific people (students, staff, teachers, and others) who may be likely to engage in targeted violence in which there is a known or knowable target or potential assailant. The following suggestions for threat assessment investigations are based on guidelines developed by the U.S. Secret Service's National Threat Assessment Center (NTAC). They were developed primarily for preventing the assassination of public officials, so they may not be applicable to all school situations.

To identify threats, school officials are advised to take the following steps:

1. Focus on individuals' thinking and behavior as indicators of their progress on a pathway to violent actions. Avoid profiling or basing assumptions on socio-psychological characteristics. In reality, accurate profiles for those likely to commit acts of targeted violence do not exist. School shootings are infrequent and most people who happen to match a particular profile do not commit violent acts. In addition, many individuals who commit violent acts do not match profiles.
2. Focus on individuals who pose a threat, not only on those who explicitly communicate a threat. Many individuals who make direct threats do not pose an actual risk, while many people who ultimately commit acts of targeted violence never communicate threats to their targets. Before making an attack, potential aggressors may provide evidence they have engaged in thinking, planning, and logistical preparations. They may communicate their intentions to family, friends, or colleagues, or write about their plans in a diary or journal. They may have engaged in attack-related behaviors: deciding on a victim or set of victims, determining a time and approach to attack, and selecting a means of attack. They

may have collected information about their intended targets and the setting of the attack as well as information about similar attacks that have previously occurred.

Once individuals who may pose a threat have been identified, 10 key questions should guide the assessment of the threat:

1. What motivated the individual to make the statement or take the action that caused him or her to come to attention?
2. What has the individual communicated to anyone concerning his or her intentions?
3. Has the individual shown an interest in targeted violence, perpetrators of targeted violence, weapons, extremist groups, or murder?
4. Has the individual engaged in attack-related behavior, including any menacing, harassing, or stalking-type behavior?
5. Does the individual have a history of mental illness involving command hallucinations, delusional ideas, feelings of persecution, and so on, with indications that the individual has acted on those beliefs?
6. How organized is the individual? Is he or she capable of developing and carrying out a plan?
7. Has the individual experienced a recent loss or loss of status, and has this led to feelings of desperation and despair?
8. Corroboration: What is the individual saying, and is it consistent with his or her actions?
9. Is there concern among those who know the individual that he or she might take action based on inappropriate ideas?
10. What factors in the individual's life and environment might increase or decrease the likelihood of the individual attempting to attack a target?

Source: R. Fein and B. Vossekuil, National Threat Assessment Center, U.S. Secret Service.

10. Counsel potential victims about the various civil and criminal options available to them, such as obtaining a restraining order. The potential reactions of the offender should be considered in whether or not to seek a restraining order. Additional security precautions should be taken if the offender is likely to respond negatively to the intervention chosen, especially during the period immediately following the initial application of that intervention.
11. Learn what procedures should be taken to screen mail and packages left on school sites after a threat has been made. Contact the U.S. Postal Service, the local police, or the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives for guidance.
12. Establish policies for releasing any threat-related information to either the school community or the media, giving consideration to the potential consequences of choosing whether or not to disseminate information pertaining to serious threats.

SECTION 4

CRISIS PLANNING AND PREPARATION

Responses for different types of crises should be planned in advance and reviewed, updated, and practiced periodically. The chaos and panic created by these situations cannot be effectively handled without a plan of action.

Teachers and staff play critical roles in implementing planned responses both before and after emergency response personnel arrive. Therefore, their participation in, and understanding of, the planning is essential.

The Role of School Administrators, Teachers, and Staff

Planning

1. Establish a crisis planning team that includes representation from faculty and staff, as well as safety, security, and emergency response providers who are knowledgeable about crisis planning or would help intervene in a school safety crisis. The primary duty of these teams is to develop and periodically refine crisis management plans.
2. Establish school crisis management teams at district and site levels using the nationally recognized Incident Command System (ICS). The ICS provides a comprehensive organizational structure, role assignment, and decision-making process to prepare for and respond to all types of crises. Schools should get in touch with emergency management agencies (such as fire departments) for information about ICS.
3. Have a working knowledge of all available and needed resources for handling and responding to a crisis situation. During planning, use school personnel to determine resources available in the building and in the district. Use emergency response personnel from the community to help determine availability of resources in the community.
4. Include off site school activities such as stadium events, field trips, and so on, in crisis planning.
5. Assign all faculty and staff to clearly defined roles under the ICS system. Critical assignments must be staffed three deep to ensure coverage at all times.
6. Identify and make arrangements now with the mental health professionals who would provide the critical incident stress debriefing immediately after a crisis. Be sure that mental health professionals are trained in crisis response and trauma issues so that they do not unintentionally cause more emotional harm. See the text box on page 26.
7. Identify and train on-site building maintenance staff (primary and backup) and off site personnel who will take responsibility for dealing with fire alarms, sprinkler systems, gas, and so on. These personnel should immediately be available at the command post.
8. Identify personnel who will have master keys, codes, and access to secured areas at the site.
9. Classrooms should have locks that can be locked from the inside in the case of a crisis that requires students to lock down rather than evacuate. In an active shooting scenario, locked doors can save lives.
10. Establish and publicize the chain of command so that if the appointed crisis director as specified in the ICS is unavailable, the next designated crisis management team member will take charge.

Critical Incident Stress Debriefing

After a serious act of violence in the schools, employees, counselors, students, police and other emergency responders, witnesses, and the families of each often suffer from stress-related ailments such as insomnia, depression, anger, headaches, and ulcers. These conditions translate into higher rates of absenteeism and turnover, as well as lower school and job performance. Much of this suffering and loss can be reduced if the affected individuals receive debriefings from experienced counselors 24 to 72 hours after the traumatic incident.

The purpose of such a debriefing is to provide students, school employees, and others affected by the event with the opportunity to express their thoughts and feelings about what happened and how

it was handled. It also gives the debriefing team a chance to educate employees about the symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder and to identify individuals who might need further counseling.

Depending on their developmental level, children have different coping skills for dealing with traumatic events and memories of them. Counseling interventions for younger children often require involvement and use of nonverbal material and very directive ways to elicit and reflect feelings. Frequently, facts and fantasy are intermingled, and young children have a difficult time acknowledging a crisis. With adolescents, however, a discussion format can be used as a possible means to activate and enhance their problem-solving and crisis-coping skills.

11. Establish and practice how to protect students with physical, cognitive, or developmental disabilities.
12. Prepare a dismissal plan in the event students need to be sent home early. Establish procedures for notifying parents and/or guardians and media. Make arrangements for transportation of special needs students.
13. Establish and practice lockdown and evacuation procedures, including where students should go during different types of crises. Consider various adverse weather conditions and ways to transport evacuees. Determine specific locations of safe havens where students could gather a safe distance away from the school in the event of an evacuation.
14. Publicize locations to students, parents, school teachers and staff, crisis team members, and emergency response personnel.
15. Develop an emergency traffic plan capable of protecting emergency response routes and accommodating the likely traffic and parking needs of parents and/or guardians and media.
16. Designate places, depending on the nature of the crisis, for personnel to perform their roles. Places include the following:
 - a. A designated media contact location
 - b. A designated place for parents and/or guardians to congregate
 - c. A designated place for clergy
 - d. A designated place for mental health professionals
 - e. Staging areas for transportation
17. Establish a calling tree or phone tree that allows the crisis management team to be notified immediately. Post calling tree lists in strategic locations, such as the offices of superintendents, principals, assistant principals, nurses, counselors, custodians, crisis team representatives, and school departments offices as well as at the local police department, the school district office, and other designated off-site locations.
18. Make alternative response plans known to key personnel who would communicate the nature of the crisis and the appropriate level of response. Information about some aspects of response plans may need to be restricted as a security measure.
19. Create crisis and evacuation kits and place them at strategic locations inside and outside schools. For a list of items to include in crisis kits and types of places to locate them, refer to the text box on page 22.
20. Consider using digital technology and computer databases to store photographs and demographic information that would enable easy and accurate identification of students, teachers, and staff. Always have hard copy versions in the event computers are inaccessible.
21. Provide copies of all emergency and evacuation plans to local law enforcement, fire, and other emergency response agencies.
22. Provide law enforcement, fire, and other emergency response personnel with blueprints, layouts and floor plans of school buildings and grounds, including information about main leads for water, gas, electricity, cable, telephone, HVAC, alarm and sprinkler systems, and locations of hazardous materials, elevators, and entrances. These should be reviewed annually and include both officials' and students' names for each location on the property. Schedule walkthroughs by emergency responders, including city public works personnel. Consider color coding interiors of buildings and numbering doors to assist responders.
23. Consider creating a system of Knox-Boxes® outside school buildings. Knox-Boxes® are storage devices that provide staff and emergency response personnel with access to keys at any time of the day or night.

Planning for Donations and Memorials

1. Establish a school policy for memorializing students and other school personnel. For types of considerations, see "Memorials, Funerals, and Anniversaries" in section 6.
2. Designate responsibility for coordinating receipt and distribution of donations in the event of a crisis. Ensure proper accountability and receipt of funds and materials, and so on. Designate types of donations (such as clothes and money). Consider using the United Way or another charitable organization already in place.
3. Identify how media and community members will be informed of where donations should be sent.
4. Establish priorities and policies for distributing monetary donations.
5. Prepare in advance a link for donations on the school's Web site.

Training

1. Test crisis management plans with faculty and staff, and if appropriate with selected students, at the beginning of each school year and during in-service days throughout the year. Law enforcement and emergency service agencies in the community should be included.
2. Coordinate and regularly hold scenario-based training sessions that bring together law enforcement, other emergency response personnel, teachers, and other school staff.
3. Train teachers and staff on the types of information that emergency response personnel will need when they respond to different types of crises, such as when the event occurred, where it happened, how many are involved, and whether lockdown or evacuation has occurred.

Crisis and Evacuation Kits

The following items should be gathered together and located at strategic locations inside and outside of schools. Common locations include principals' offices, local fire and police departments, police car trunks, and specially designated places in schools. Information in the crisis kits should be updated periodically as appropriate.

- Name tags
- Notebooks
- Pens and markers
- Handheld radios
- Batteries
- First aid supplies
- Tape
- Blankets
- Megaphone
- Tools
- Separate placards with directional words such as PARENTS, COUNSELORS, MEDIA, CLERGY, VOLUNTEERS, KEEP OUT

- Caution tape
- Copies of student records, especially health and identification
- Attendance rosters
- Bus rosters and routes
- Emergency response telephone numbers
- Student, teacher, and staff home phone numbers and emergency contacts
- Telephone directory for school system
- List of teachers with cell phones and their cell phone numbers
- Current yearbook, class photos, student IDs, or if available, CD-ROM photo databases.
- Schedules of students, teachers, and staff available
- School sites' layouts, building floor plans, and aerial maps
- An easily readable copy of the crisis response plan

A laptop computer, printer, and access to a copier are required for immediate use.

4. Train teachers, staff, and students on personal survival strategies for different scenarios and on what physical reactions are possible in a traumatic situation. Consider using local emergency response personnel or district-wide crisis teams to provide training.
5. To the extent possible, provide cross-training to members of the crisis management team and to other school personnel.
6. Review the crisis response plan with teachers, principals, staff, volunteers, campus supervisors, and school resource officers.
7. Review the crisis response plan with students.
8. Provide training to teachers and school staff on their assigned roles and their backup roles during crisis situations.
9. Supplement verbal training with a written pamphlet to remind students and full-time, part-time, intern, and substitute teachers of their specified roles.
10. Provide ongoing training to staff; volunteers; full-time, part-time, intern, and substitute teachers; and other persons who are regularly on campus regarding how to respond to different types of crisis scenarios.
11. Develop written summaries of crisis response instructions to be disseminated to new substitutes along with their specific classroom materials.
12. Provide information to parents and/or guardians on their roles during crisis situations. Also tell them where they should go to meet with the designated spokespersons, where to retrieve their children and get information about the status of the crisis, and what they can do to help during and after the crisis.
13. Decide on an appropriate balance of crisis response information and crisis response drills for students that leave them feeling safe without causing undue fear.
14. Provide training in media relations for appointed media spokespersons during the planning phase. Invite media representatives to those training sessions to strengthen relationships and enhance understanding of their respective needs.
15. Provide information to local media representatives on how to receive and communicate information about crises to the community.
16. Teach students, teachers, and staff to recognize the physiological cues experienced in crisis situations. Rehearse constructive skills and behaviors instead of relying on impulsive actions during crisis situations.
17. Provide emergency first-aid training to teachers, staff, and students.
18. Provide staff, teachers, and students with instructions on personal safety awareness and survival skills, on how to report and respond to persons making threats or displaying weapons, and about locating and not giving up safe positions.
19. Incorporate crisis preparation training and requirements into teacher education programs at colleges and universities.

The Role of Law Enforcement and Emergency Response Personnel

1. Conduct meetings with representatives from the school community and from all local law enforcement, fire, and other emergency response agencies to obtain, develop, and coordinate school site safety plans.
2. Maintain information in vehicles of first responders about school sites' layouts, building floor plans, and aerial maps. Update as needed.
3. Create systems by which students, teachers, and staff hearing commands ("Open the door," for instance) may be better able to identify that they came from official law enforcement or school personnel, instead of from offenders. Consider the possibility that the offenders could be students, faculty, or staff when designing and communicating details about those systems to school personnel.
4. Work toward integrating disparate law enforcement and emergency response communication technologies to enable more effective communication between agencies during crises.
5. Develop and provide training on the Incident Command System, which coordinates supervision and direction of different school authorities, law enforcement personnel, and emergency responders from a central command post.

SECTION 5 DURING A MAJOR CRISIS

Sections 5 and 6 provide suggestions for responses during and after school crises in which one or more individuals have been victimized by violence.

The Role of School Administrators, Teachers, and Staff

Immediate Response

1. At the onset of a situation, the following things need to happen as close together as possible. Responding personnel will have to use individual judgment as to what they can and should do first, keeping in mind that their primary role is taking care of children at risk.
2. Get students out of harm's way. When possible, get in touch with the appropriate school authority or person on the crisis management team to determine whether evacuation or lockdown is the appropriate response. Teachers should make decisions about lockdown or evacuation on their own only in life-threatening situations, as specified in the school crisis management plan.
3. Use doors that lock from the inside only in cases where lockdown is the safest option. In an active shooter situation, only evacuate if the location of the shooter is known and an exit is easily accessible to students, such as a window that can be opened or broken.
4. Assess whether anyone is injured and the severity of injuries. Take appropriate measures.
5. Call 9-1-1 or have someone call 9-1-1 in immediate life-threatening situations. Then alert school authorities or the crisis management team.
6. If available, activate silent alarms to notify law enforcement.
7. In the event a teacher cannot call or leave the classroom, send students for help only if absolutely necessary and if it does not put them in more danger than they would be in by evacuating or remaining with their class.
8. Have designated personnel (the central administration or the crisis director) decide about the appropriate level of involvement of the crisis management team.
9. Have appointed staff begin the calling tree before phone lines get overloaded. If lines are immediately overloaded, then get in touch with the designated alternative phone service provider.
10. Remain with students until told by appropriate personnel what actions to take. Teachers and staff who are not with children should serve in designated roles and take assigned action.

Active Resistance

Active resistance is fighting back with any objects of opportunity, such as chairs, desk, and books. Active resistance is a last resort and should only be used if potential victims are trapped in a room with an active shooter, there are already victims, and all other personal survival recommendations are no longer an option. There have been cases where active resistance has been successfully used, such as a shooting in Springfield, Oregon.

Implementing the Crisis Management Plan

Depending on the nature of the emergency, either law enforcement or the fire department will be in charge of the incident.

1. Secure all areas for student and staff safety until the police arrive.
2. Be aware that the site may be a potential crime scene. Avoid unnecessarily tampering with or disturbing evidence. To the extent possible, leave all objects exactly as they are to protect evidence for law enforcement investigations. Discourage others from disturbing potential evidence.
3. Tell emergency responders where the school staff command post is located.
4. Direct arriving families to the designated place where they can receive information.
5. Do not dismiss students to unknown care.
6. In the case of a lockdown, have a sign-out sheet to monitor which students have been picked up by their parents or guardians. In the case of evacuation, have a place where parents and/or guardians go to sign out their children.
7. Never speculate. Be sure to understand the circumstances surrounding the situation before saying anything about it and before taking action. Follow all rules about repeating or giving out information.
8. As appropriate, keep students informed about what is happening. Ensure that the same information is communicated to all students. If at all possible, update students in individual classrooms, not in a large group setting.
9. As soon as possible, take a head count to determine which students, staff, and teachers are accounted for and which ones are not.
10. To the extent possible, shield students from disturbing scenes. But do not disturb crime scene evidence.

The Role of Students

Students should understand and follow all plans applicable to the given crisis situation. Students should not panic. They should be taught the following:

1. In the absence of adult direction, decide where it is safest to be and remain there.
 2. If a violent situation occurs, notify the first available adult.
 3. Share all relevant information with law enforcement, teachers, and school staff.
 4. During and after the crisis, to the extent that it is safe, keep with you what is on your person, do not pick anything up, and do not go back for anything until after receiving permission.
 5. Help teachers and staff quickly assess who is accounted for and who is not.
 6. If able, help injured persons.
 7. Calm and reassure fellow students.
 8. Follow school, law enforcement, or other emergency response personnel directions about where to go or remain.
 9. Do not speculate or perpetuate rumors.
 10. Do not retaliate or take unnecessary chances.
1. Respond to all reports of criminal activities in the school. Rapid response teams should be formed to help ensure immediate intervention in all emergency situations.
 2. Exercise appropriate rules of engagement when immediate intervention is needed, keeping in mind the safety of victims, bystanders, and first responders.
 3. Establish and adhere to direction from the Incident Command System.
 4. Establish appropriate security and response perimeters. Provide traffic control assistance to enable emergency services to get through to the school.
 5. Develop lines of communication with affected schools' administrations and district emergency operation centers or command posts.
 6. Protect relevant evidence from contamination. Follow approved collection procedures to facilitate effective prosecution of perpetrators.
 7. Help parents and/or guardians find their children.
 8. Be prepared to assist with many unforeseeable duties.

The Role of Law Enforcement

Law enforcement participation is necessary to develop and implement well-coordinated and effective responses to crisis situations.

SECTION 6 AFTER A CRISIS

The actions taken after severe acts of violence can have a major effect on the well-being of students and the community at large. It is difficult to respond in a timely and appropriate way without having an established, detailed plan.

The Role of School Administrators Support Systems

1. Implement plans for providing qualified counselors, especially for providing critical incident stress debriefing (see the text box on page 32). Students, faculty, and staff may require both short-term and long-term counseling.
2. When providing information and counseling, take into account multilingual needs.
3. Use only mental health professionals trained or experienced in crisis response and trauma interventions.
4. Maintain both an information line and special call-in line for victims and their families whenever large groups of students are affected.
5. Keep in close contact with injured victims and surviving family members.
6. Determine the need for additional health services and resources (such as nursing staff) to attend to increased physical needs of students.
7. Provide parents, staff, and students with information on their rights with the media, as most people are not aware of what they can and cannot do when approached by the media. See the text box on page 20.
8. Hold meetings to provide staff with information related to the crisis, eliminate rumors, advise them of next steps, and advise them on what to tell their students.
9. Arrange now to contract with an outside agency that would take care of the physical cleanup after a violent incident. Do not leave the cleanup to school district employees. Be sure that all evidence of violence is removed before allowing teachers, students, and staff back in.
10. Develop written statements for teachers to read in class. Send similar statements to parents.
11. Help students, faculty, and staff address their own reactions. Whenever possible, help teachers and staff address their reactions first, before they interact with their students.
12. Hold a special meeting with victims and their siblings.
13. Ensure that each school in the district supports siblings of victims by providing them with

Critical Incident Psychological Intervention

After a serious act of violence in the schools, employees, counselors, students, police and other emergency responders, witnesses, and the families of each often suffer from stress-related ailments such as insomnia, depression, anger, headaches, and ulcers. These conditions translate into higher rates of absenteeism and turnover as well as lower school and job performance.

In order to prevent a significant trauma reaction, psychological interventions are recommended. Some of the successful interventions have consisted of the following:

- The provision of psychological first aid
- Defusings
- Debriefings

Psychological first aid is best provided as soon as possible and is beneficial for both responders and victims. It focuses on assisting with basic needs.

Defusings are short-term interventions for responders who are finished with their shift but may need to

be reactivated. The defusing involves assisting the responder with the reactions they may experience once they leave the scene. It also involves providing them with specific coping skills.

The most common intervention for responders consists of the psychological debriefing. The purpose of such a debriefing is to provide students, school employees, and others affected by the event with the opportunity to express their thoughts and feelings about what happened and how it was handled. It also gives the debriefing team a chance to educate employees about the symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder and to identify individuals who might need further counseling.

Depending on their developmental level, children have different coping skills for dealing with traumatic events and memories of them. Counseling interventions for younger children often require involvement and use of nonverbal material or very directive ways to elicit and reflect feelings. Frequently, facts and fantasy are intermingled, and young children have a difficult time acknowledging a crisis. With adolescents, however, a discussion format can be used as a way to activate and enhance their problem-solving and crisis-coping skills.

additional reassurances of safety and academic support as appropriate.

14. Provide places and times for members of peer groups to meet and counsel each other.
15. Designate space for safe rooms where at any time students, teachers, and staff can receive comfort and counseling and talk about events during the crisis.
16. Provide information to parents and/or guardians who want to know how to help their children cope with feelings about the crisis.
17. Hold special workshops where students who feel angry about the crisis can express their feelings.
18. Keep parents and/or guardians informed of the support services being made available to their children.
19. Provide a place after the crisis where parents and/or guardians can meet with counselors and other adults to discuss ways to help their children transition back into school.
20. Provide a list of suggested readings to teachers, parents, and students.
21. Only after persons who have been directly affected by the crisis have received needed attention, evaluate whether community forums should be initiated for people to air their concerns about the tragedy or other issues pertaining to school safety.
22. Fund additional time for teachers to work with students who need additional academic support because of such problems as grief, stress, difficulty concentrating, and anxiety.
23. Hire a volunteer coordinator to ensure the meaningful participation of parents and/or guardians and community members in a way that does not use additional administrative time.
24. Provide for the orientation of families who enroll their children in schools where violent events have occurred. Include younger students who graduate into these schools and students who transfer from other schools.

Managing the School Environment after Violence

1. Maintain close cooperation with investigating authorities to facilitate completing investigations and minimizing complications.
2. Deal with problems of deceased students' desks and lockers. Have a counselor or other qualified adult provide therapy while sitting at an empty assigned desk, bus seat, or locker. In the case of an empty desk, one strategy is to move the desk, over time, to the back of the row and all other desks forward; then eventually remove the desk.
3. When appropriate, remove deceased students' names from forms, posters, rosters, absence reporting logs, and anywhere else they occur in reporting systems.
4. In collaboration with families of victims and the school community, evaluate how affected areas in

the school site where school violence took place should be handled when students return to school.

Memorials, Funerals, and Incident Anniversaries

1. Allow excused absences and time off for all students, teachers, and staff who wish to attend funerals and memorials.
2. Allow for and cooperate with families who are planning memorials and activities to honor victims.
3. Arrange to have a quiet area for staff and students who do not wish to attend memorials and activities.
4. If possible, avoid conducting funerals at the school.
5. Assess the appropriateness of creating memorials to victims on school premises, particularly in the case of religious memorials. If establishing memorials on site would not be appropriate, identify alternative sites, and consider living memorials such as trees.
6. Include students, families of victims, and community members in planning for memorials.
7. Establish a policy for how school administration should handle student or community members' independently establishing memorials.
8. Assess whether families want recognition of victims at graduation ceremonies, at assemblies, in year-books, and on anniversaries of the crisis. Particularly at graduations, chairs for those students could be left empty and their names read.
9. Invite family members of victims to all ceremonies and memorials.
10. Plan ahead for the attention the school will receive on the one-year anniversary of the incident.
11. Plan ahead for the emotional needs of the school community on anniversaries.
12. Consider the special needs of families of offenders.
13. Ensure someone is at the home of the deceased victims and perpetrators during funerals and memorial services to prevent theft, vandalism, and so on.

Closure of Mourning Period and Moving Forward

1. Consult with counselors, teachers, students, and staff on when would be the most appropriate time to signal closure of the mourning period.
2. Conduct a public ceremony to symbolize closure of the mourning period, and control media access to it.
3. Hold a parents' night to bring closure to the crisis.
4. Get school in session and moving forward as soon as possible.

Lessons Learned

1. Conduct meetings with school site and district personnel to review lessons learned from the experience.
2. Reevaluate the adequacy of crisis and safety planning based on lessons learned, and make modifications as necessary.

- Write thank-you notes to out-of-building district and community resource people who provided (or are still providing) support during the crisis.

The Role of Teachers and Staff

- Cooperate with law enforcement to maximize investigative effectiveness.
- Help victims and other students reenter the school environment. Classmates of victims may need help in knowing how to act.
- Provide accurate information to students and dispel rumors.
- Provide activities to reduce stress and trauma, such as artwork, music, and writing.
- Alter curricula and postpone testing as needed.
- Ensure that librarians have books available that deal with managing grief and other reactions to crisis situations.
- Train teachers to be aware of warning signs of grief and depression.
- Train teachers to implement techniques to handle the range of students' emotions related to crisis situations.
- Have class discussions about the incident and how to cope with the aftermath.
- Be careful of the use of TV broadcasts in the classroom. Live newscasts can be traumatizing.
- Lower classroom and school flags to half-staff.
- Discuss funeral procedures when appropriate.
- Volunteer to help victims and their families.
- Organize and participate in memorials and other activities.
- Seek counseling for help in dealing with personal feelings about the incident.

The Role of School Counselors, Psychologists, and Social Workers

- Stay in close contact with the counseling director of the crisis management team.
- Be available by canceling other activities.
- Obtain the schedule of any seriously injured or deceased students and visit their classes. Also visit classes attended by their close friends.
- Organize and provide individual and group counseling as needed to students, teachers, and staff.
- Contact parents and/or guardians of affected students with suggestions for counseling support and referrals.
- Locate counseling assistance throughout the community, including counselors from other nearby schools.
- Establish a self-referral procedure. Make referral forms available.

- Provide and recommend counseling for the crisis team and emergency response personnel.
- Keep records of affected students and provide follow-up services.
- Accept other responsibilities as designated by the crisis management team director.

The Role of Parents and/or Guardians

- Learn to recognize and help children with their reactions. Common reactions include unrealistic fears of the future, insomnia, physical illness, and becoming easily distracted.
- Encourage children to receive counseling or to speak to a trusted adult about their feelings surrounding the incident.
- Consider attending school as needed with children who are very fearful of returning to their classes.
- Obtain counseling as needed in order to be able to remain physically and emotionally healthy and be available for one's children.

The Role of the Community

- Volunteer time and resources to victims.
- Provide services to meet the needs of victims.
- Provide a central location where other members of the community can go to receive information about the types of assistance needed and available.

The Role of Law Enforcement

- After a crisis, conduct a thorough investigation, including a debriefing of all persons present at the time of the incident.
- Encourage the development and use of regional critical incident stress debriefing teams for involved emergency personnel. (See the text box on page 20 for more information).
- Coordinate with affected schools and other agencies to help victims' families find survivors.
- Encourage schools to support their employees and students in the prosecution of people who commit acts of violent crime.
- Encourage law enforcement and schools to coordinate their news releases.
- Provide schools with a central point of contact in the police department who will answer questions and address concerns.
- Encourage students and school employees to participate in aftermath debriefings.
- Facilitate meetings in which teachers, staff, students, and parents and/or guardians can express their thoughts on how police handled the incident.
- Undertake and coordinate critique of the department's response after a serious incident of school violence. Identify areas in need of improvement.

SECTION 7

LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

The liability, rights, and responsibilities of school personnel in maintaining a safe school environment are affected by a variety of local, state, and federal statutes, regulations, constitutional requirements, and judicial decisions. School policies also may play a key role in establishing liability and affecting the responsibilities of school personnel. Schools seeking to avoid liability for acts related to school violence, including the steps taken to prevent it, should become familiar with the legal requirements. The following pages offer a foundation to begin a legal audit of schools' policies and practices for reducing school violence.

The following list of legal considerations is not comprehensive. Before acting on any of these issues, consult with legal counsel.

Liability of Schools When Students Are Harmed *Failure to Adhere to Law or Policy*

In some instances, liability may be premised on failure to adhere to current local, state, and federal school safety laws and regulations on school district safety policy. School officials should do the following:

1. Ensure compliance with all current applicable local, state, and federal statutes addressing safety and harassment issues.
2. Ensure that school districts' safety and harassment policies are fully implemented.
3. Ensure compliance with the school's safety and harassment policy.
4. Evaluate any existing school campus access policy to determine its adequacy and ensure that it is being followed.
5. Train school employees on these issues.

Failure to Use Reasonable Care in Selecting Personnel

In some instances, liability may be premised on failing to use reasonable care in screening, hiring, training, supervising, and retaining personnel who are regularly on site and who commit acts of violence. School officials should do the following:

1. Implement appropriate screening and hiring standards to minimize the likelihood of hiring personnel with propensities toward violence, consistent with applicable law.
2. Ensure proper training of teachers and school staff in the recognition of warning signs for violent behavior, on steps to take to minimize violence, and on appropriate responses if violence occurs.

Negligent Responses to Threats

In some instances, liability may be premised on negligent responses to threats and acts of violence falling within the school's jurisdiction and sphere of duty. School officials should do the following:

1. Provide reasonable supervision for students, especially in specific areas where prior threats or instances of violence have occurred.
2. Take swift and consistent action when addressing personnel or students who threaten or engage in violent actions.
3. Exercise due caution when placing potentially or known violent individuals in school populations, consistent with applicable law.
4. Determine when they have a duty to warn students, faculty, or other personnel about a potential danger, including providing any (and only) legally authorized and appropriate information about the violent propensities of individuals to the appropriate personnel.
5. Determine the applicable mandatory reporting requirements concerning a threat or legal action.

Liability of Schools for Wrongful Accusations and Discharge

School personnel must respond to threats of violence in a way that protects suspected individuals from defamation of character and other tortious liability if suspicions about them are mistaken. Liability can be minimized by conducting prompt investigations of all allegations and by notifying only those individuals with a need to know about them. Such actions, however, must be balanced by the need to protect students and staff whenever there are threats of serious violence. School officials should do the following:

1. Conduct thorough investigations of complaints before removing suspected individuals from the school, if there is sufficient time. Removal of employees or students must be consistent with applicable laws. It may be appropriate to remove individuals from school without expulsion or termination pending their investigations. If students or employees are wrongfully terminated or expelled, school officials may be subjected to wrongful termination or expulsion suits.
2. Respect the privacy rights and confidentiality rights of all individuals during investigations.

Liability of Schools for Violating Students' Rights *Reasonable Searches and Seizures*

Develop and apply policies for conducting searches and seizures of student property consistent with the Fourth Amendment to the Constitution and applicable state and local statutes.

1. Seek the advice of an attorney before implementing any policy on the search or seizure of students' property.
2. While a warrant may not be required, school officials must justify any search or seizure based on the following:
 - a. Reasonable suspicion that the law or a school rule has been violated.
 - b. Information, facts, or circumstances that would lead a reasonable person to conclude that evidence of a crime or rule violation would be found in the search.
 - c. The relationship between the extensiveness of the search and the evidence being sought.
 - d. The relationship between the severity of the threat and the degree of intrusiveness in conducting the search.
 - e. The presence of any special legal considerations, such as whether the student did not have a reasonable expectation of privacy; the objects seized fell within the plain view of an official who had a right to be at that location; the person who seized the object was not affiliated with, or directed to do so by, the government; or the student voluntarily consented to the search.
3. Take into consideration the legal liability related to any type of non-consensual search of students or students' property, including but not limited to the following:
 - Locker searches
 - Vehicle searches
 - Use of metal detectors
 - Use of drug- or weapon-sniffing dogs
 - Drug testing
 - Body searches
 - Use of cameras
 - Police-assisted searches
 - Searches of abandoned articles
 - Book bag, purse, and backpack searches
 - Searches of outer clothing
 - Strip searches
3. Before suspending or expelling a student, school officials should provide the student due process rights as required by state and federal law. These rights include the following:
 - a. Provision of a written and specific statement of the charges that justify suspension or expulsion.
 - b. Opportunity for a full hearing after adequate notification.
 - c. Use of impartial adjudicators.
 - d. Opportunity for students and his or her parents or guardians to examine evidence against the student.
 - e. Opportunity for students and his or her parents or guardians to present evidence favorable to the student.
 - f. Opportunity to be represented by counsel.
 - g. Opportunity to confront and examine witnesses.
4. Ensure that expulsion hearings are fully and formally recorded.
5. Ensure that adjudicators' decisions in hearings are based on a full and fair review of the evidence.

Use of Dress Codes and Uniforms

As required by law, accommodate students whose religious beliefs would be compromised by their compliance with school dress code provisions.

Rights to Privacy in Matters of Record Keeping and Information Sharing between Agencies

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) protects the confidentiality of all student records information. Ensure compliance also with applicable laws pertaining to divulging information about peer court or formal juvenile court proceedings with the school and community or service providers. Issues may include the following:

- Whether or not peer or juvenile court hearings should be open to the public
- Release or publication of juveniles' names
- Release or publication of juveniles' pictures
- Confidentiality of peer or juvenile court records
- Admissibility of student records
- Prohibition of sealing or expunging records
- Parental access to children's records
- Parental consent for release of information in children's records

In many school-shooting cases, FERPA has been cited as a reason that the school did not disclose information regarding a student of concern. Government reports on school shootings have also cited widespread misunderstanding of FERPA as impeding open communication between school staff, school officials, and outside professionals. School staff and officials

Student Suspension and Expulsion for Violent Actions and Threats

Students are entitled to due process before being suspended or expelled. Usually, more due process rights are required for expulsion than suspension.

1. Ensure that the process established by schools and the standards used for suspending or expelling students are consistent with applicable local, state, and federal laws and applied consistently.
2. Ensure that the nature and adequacy of public education alternatives for those either suspended or expelled from their usual public school programs are consistent with applicable laws.

FERPA FAQ

What is FERPA? The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is the federal law that dictates what information school officials are allowed to disclose regarding individual students. Schools are expected to balance the privacy of individual students with the safety of fellow students and staff. FERPA requires written consent before disclosing information about a student, except in certain situations.

What information is protected by FERPA? School records and personally identifiable information are all protected under FERPA.

What information is not protected by FERPA?

Information obtained through a school official's personal knowledge or observation, and not from the student's educational records, is not protected by FERPA and can be disclosed to appropriate authorities or professionals without consent.

When is it OK to disclose information about a student without parental consent? FERPA allows disclosure

of information without consent to outside individuals in cases of emergencies or to protect the health and safety of other individuals. In addition, FERPA does not prohibit school staff or officials from disclosing information that is obtained through personal knowledge or observation (see above). For example, if a teacher overhears a student making a threat, the teacher can disclose that information to appropriate authorities. It is recommended that any disclosure regarding concerns about a student should be made to appropriate professionals who are trained to evaluate and handle such concerns.

Where can I find more information about FERPA?

Brochures summarizing FERPA can be ordered at no charge from the Department of Education's Publications Center by calling 877-433-7827. A copy of the brochure can also be found at the Department of Education's Web site, www.ed.gov. For quick, informal responses to questions about FERPA, school officials can e-mail the Family Policy Compliance Office at ferpa@ed.gov. Additional information and guidance may be found at www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/index.html.

need to be trained on the details of FERPA so that the appropriate balance between protecting an individual student's privacy and sharing necessary information in critical situations is maintained. FERPA expressly permits appropriate disclosures in times of actual or potential emergency and in various less drastic circumstances in which an individual seeks to communicate sincere concerns for a student's well-being. When a student is at risk to be harmed, FERPA allows disclosure to appropriate parties if the knowledge of the information is necessary to protect the health and safety of other individuals. This would include consulting with a threat assessment professional. See the text box above for more information regarding FERPA.

After the shootings at Virginia Tech, the Department of Education made brochures available summarizing when it is justified to share information when teachers or staff members become concerned about a student's behaviors.

Liability of Parents and/or Guardians

Parents are the first line of action when addressing a student of concern. In several school shooting cases, parents have been civilly sued by families of victims and

in some cases even faced criminal charges for violating gun safety laws. It is in the parents' best interest to communicate with the school if they become concerned about their child's behavior.

1. In some instances, parents and/or guardians may be held criminally or civilly liable for negligent storage of a firearm or for negligently providing their children with a firearm. Sixteen states have child access prevention (CAP) laws requiring gun owners to keep their guns locked out of reach of children.
2. In some instances, parents and/or guardians may be held criminally or civilly liable for failure to do the following:
 - a. Adequately supervise their children.
 - b. Take corrective action with problematic behavior displayed by their children.
 - c. Notify others about a foreseeable threat to the safety of others that their own children pose.

The list of legal considerations addressed in this section is not comprehensive. Before acting on any of these issues, consult with legal counsel.

SECTION 8

WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

All forms of communication media (print, television, radio, computer, and film) can play an important role in helping to prevent violence in the schools. They can also help limit the harm that results when violence does occur.

Unfortunately, the media can also contribute to the problem. Exposure to excessive violence can have the following effects:

- It can increase the chances that at least some of those exposed to the media will try to mimic the violent acts. Copycat suicides, shootings, and bomb threats sometimes follow extensive media coverage or depictions of those events.
- It can desensitize viewers to the horrors of violence and may increase their likelihood of committing it. Many of the same types of shooting simulation exercises used by law enforcement and the military to train people for situations where they may have to kill are being sold to children as video games. Some of the electronic media games available to children award extra points to players for engaging in simulated antisocial acts.
- It can exaggerate the magnitude of the real threat. This could result in people fearing for their own or their children's safety in situations where little danger is actually present.

Rights and Obligations of the Media

Journalists have the right and the obligation to gather and report school-violence information that is of interest or importance to the public. Creators and producers of all forms of media have the right to make and sell their

products as long as they do not break the law. The exercise of those rights, however, needs to be balanced against the rights of parents and/or guardians and society to protect children from unnecessary harm. The recommendations in this section are intended to help better achieve that balance. Additional sets of recommendations are provided in text boxes to address how the media should handle violence-related crises, bomb threats, and breaking news (see the text boxes on pages 33, 34, and 35).

Recommendations for Executives in Television, Radio, Internet, Recording, Electronic Game, and Film Industries

1. Establish a code of ethics and social responsibility for their organization that includes guidelines on the type of content it will refrain from producing or airing.
2. Encourage their professional and trade associations to hold seminars pertaining to their industry's ethical and social responsibilities.
3. Refrain from producing and airing advertisements, lyrics, films, games, or programs likely to contribute to the commission of youth violence or other antisocial acts.
4. Address the actual consequences of violence when it is depicted, instead of trivializing or glorifying it.
5. During time slots when children are likely to be viewing, avoid showing programs that may contribute to their committing violence or other antisocial acts.
6. Develop and support television programs, recordings, movies, and video games that promote positive social interactions and values for children of all ages.
7. Promote, use, display, and enforce rating systems that help parents and/or guardians select media appropriate for their children.
8. Support efforts to make sure that media rating systems address messages conveyed and the choice of words and images presented.

Your Rights with the Media

The school community has certain rights when dealing with the media. While they may not all be granted, they should be requested to protect the school and victims.

- The right to grieve and recover in private
- The right to say no to an interview
- The right to request a specific reporter
- The right to refuse an interview with a specific reporter even if the interviewee has granted interviews to other reporters
- The right to avoid a press conference atmosphere and speak only to one reporter at a time

- The right to refrain from answering any questions with which the interviewee is uncomfortable or feels is inappropriate
- The right to ask to review quotations in a story before publication
- The right to demand retraction when inaccurate information is reported
- The right to ask that offensive photographs or visuals be omitted from airing or publication

Source: Adapted from C. Slover and D. Tasci, *Trauma Recovery Handbook* (Nicoletti-Flater Associates, 1999).

9. Support efforts to make V-chip technology a successful way for parents and/or guardians to help prevent their children from being exposed to inappropriate violence.
10. Initiate antiviolence programs. For example, MTV and the American Psychological Association joined forces to create "Fight for Your Rights: Take a Stand against Violence."

Guidelines for Breaking News Events

The Radio-Television News Directors Association suggests the following standards be applied to covering breaking news events:

- Determine your criteria for running special reports, including news crawls. Stations should make decisions based on journalistic merit, what community action may be required, and in the interest of public safety. What is the standard for interrupting programming? Does it change from one time period to another? Once you interrupt programming, how can you avoid speculation and repetition during the early moments when details are likely to be few and sketchy?
- Determine how your coverage can inform and alert the public without causing panic or unnecessary alarm. Be factual and resist speculation. Television stations should remember that FCC rules require that you caption emergency information. Have you created a system for quickly serving hearing-impaired viewers with vital information they may not be able to hear?
- News managers should carefully consider that broadcasting select information could potentially cause harm. For example, if a SWAT team member is in a specific position during a hostage situation, do you have procedures to avoid putting him/her at risk while broadcasting live?
- FCC regulations prohibit information transmitted on emergency frequencies from being broadcast without independent confirmation. Is your staff aware of this regulation?
- Journalists should avoid presenting the names of victims of injury or death until relatives have been properly notified. When conducting live interviews with witnesses during a major event, reporters should caution those being interviewed in advance not to mention specific names of dead or injured.
- One of the greatest challenges is providing context during the opening moments of a breaking story. Prepare names and contact information for experts in a number of fields who can be placed on the air quickly to discuss emergencies.
- Anchors and reporters should remain calm. One of the great lessons from 9/11 coverage is that the public trusted the information they received at least in part because of the reassuring manner in which the information was reported during the crisis.
- When in doubt, don't go live with a telephone call from someone who claims to have urgent

information in a breaking news event. If you are not sure about the authenticity of the caller, get the information, return telephone number, and ask questions that could help verify the telephone caller's proximity to the breaking news. Find someone in the newsroom that can further research the validity of the telephone call. If you decide to go live with a call, remind the caller not to use names of individuals on the air and not to implicate anyone as a suspect or victim during the course of the conversation.

Aside from the details of coverage, stations should think about the operational decisions necessary to ensure information reaches the audience in a rapid and useful fashion. These organizational guidelines can help meet that goal:

- Create a breaking news plan in advance. Be prepared by creating contingencies for disasters. Make the plans as thorough as possible and involve all departments when creating the plans. Communicate your plans in writing to all those who would play a role in your coverage.
- Does your station have a safety plan for employees covering events where they might be exposed to hazards such as toxic waste releases? What can you do to minimize potential dangers to your employees who might be caught in an unsafe situation such as police activity or a riot? Discuss with employees working in the field the need to stay safe and avoid personal injury and that no story is worth risking one's life.
- Standards for breaking news coverage should apply to all types of distribution including but not limited to radio, television, online, personal communications devices, and cell phone data.
- Citizens can provide valuable assistance by providing helpful information to news organizations. But news managers must be cautious when accepting information, video and pictures and verify the information is correct and images are authentic. There are people who try to fool news organizations with bad information or fake pictures. Remember the damage that can be caused to the entire community and to your professional reputation if you present material that turns out later to be false.

Source: Radio-Television News Directors Association, www.rtnda.org/pages/media_items/guidelines-for-breaking-news-events400.php.

Planning for Media Coverage of School Violence

Executives in the print, electronic, and broadcast news and information media should take the following steps now:

1. Establish at each newsroom and station codes of conduct for reporting and broadcasting incidents like school violence.
2. Encourage their professional and trade associations to hold sessions on the media's ethical responsibilities in this area.

3. Provide in-depth coverage of the steps school communities can take to reduce hazards of school violence. Make copies of the articles and programs available free of charge to schools and nonprofit organizations.
4. Provide local coverage, public service announcements, and features that provide points of contact for youth counselors, substance abuse treatment, suicide prevention, and other social or mental health programs, and encourage friends

Guidelines for Covering Hostage-Taking Crises, Prison Uprisings, Terrorist Actions

- Always assume that the hostage taker, gunman, or terrorist has access to the reporting.
- Avoid describing with words or showing with still photography and video any information that could divulge the tactics or positions of SWAT team members.
- Fight the urge to become a player in any standoff, hostage situation, or terrorist incident. Journalists should become personally involved only as a last resort and with the explicit approval of top news management and the consultation of trained hostage negotiators on the scene.
- Be forthright with viewers, listeners, or readers about why certain information is being withheld if security reasons are involved.
- Seriously weigh the benefits to the public of sharing information and the potential harm that information might cause. This is especially important in live reporting of an ongoing situation.
- Strongly resist the temptation to telephone a gunman or hostage taker. Journalists generally are not trained in negotiation techniques, and one wrong question or inappropriate word could jeopardize someone's life. Furthermore, just calling in could tie up phone lines or otherwise complicate communication efforts of the negotiators.
- Notify authorities immediately if a hostage taker or terrorist calls the newsroom. Have a plan ready for how to respond.
- Challenge any gut reaction to go live from the scene of a hostage crisis unless there are strong journalistic reasons for a live, on-the-scene report. Things can go wrong very quickly in a live report, endangering lives or damaging negotiations. Furthermore, ask if the value of a live, on-the-scene report is really justifiable compared with the harm that could occur.
- Give no information, factual or speculative, about a hostage taker's mental condition, state of mind, or reasons for actions while a standoff is in progress. The value of such information to the audience is limited, and the possibility of such characterizations exacerbating an already dangerous situation is quite real.
- Give no analyses or comments on a hostage taker's or terrorist's demands. As bizarre or ridiculous (or even legitimate) as such demands may be, it is important that negotiators take all demands seriously.
- Keep news helicopters out of the area where the standoff is happening, as their noise can create communication problems for negotiators and their presence could scare a gunman to deadly action.
- Do not report information obtained from police scanners. If law enforcement personnel and negotiators are compromised in their communications, their attempts to resolve a crisis are greatly complicated.
- Be cautious in any reporting on the medical condition of hostages until after a crisis is concluded. Be cautious when interviewing hostages or released hostages while a crisis continues.
- Exercise care when interviewing family members or friends of those involved in standoff situations. Make sure the interview legitimately advances the story for the public and is not simply conducted for the shock value of the emotions conveyed or as a conduit for the interviewee to transmit messages to specific individuals.
- Go beyond the basic story of the hostage taking or standoff to report on the larger issues behind the story, be it the how and why of what happened, the preparation and execution of the SWAT team, or the issues related to the incident.

In covering a pending raid or law enforcement action, journalists are advised to do the following:

- Be careful not to compromise the secrecy of officials' planning and execution. If staking out a location where a raid will occur or if accompanying officers, reporters and photographers should demonstrate great caution in how they act, where they go, and what clues they might inadvertently give that might compromise the execution of the raid. They should check and double-check planning efforts.

Source: B. Steele, Poynter Institute for Media Studies, 1999, www.poynter.org/content/content_view.asp?id=4640.

and family to refer to those programs anyone who appears troubled.

5. Encourage investigative reporting that identifies people or situations contributing to the risk of school violence. Examples of possible stories include the following:
 - School administrators and local government officials who fail to take adequate protection measures.
 - Legislators who have taken positions related to school violence against the public interest.
 - Individuals or businesses in their community who knowingly sell weapons illegally either to children or to adults purchasing weapons for children.
6. Provide law enforcement or school officials with timely information acquired from media contacts

that might prevent an incident of school violence.

7. Report on, and influence, public support for taking needed corrective actions.
8. Establish win-win partnerships with police for covering crises like school violence. In Boston, television stations have voluntarily agreed to share footage supplied by media pool on-ground and helicopter cameras in certain hostage situations. This way competing camera crews do not add to the confusion. The stations also agreed not to air live coverage while incidents were occurring that could aid offenders, endanger deployed police personnel, or harm people trapped on the premises. In return, police provide better locations for media pool cameras and more frequent updates.

Guidelines for Journalists and Reporters Covering Bomb Threat Stories

- Ask: what is my journalistic duty in reporting this story? What do our viewers need to know? What is the threat to life or property? What are the consequences of the event itself? How significant is the evacuation and the interruption to normal life in your community? What is the impact this event has on law enforcement or emergency crews ability to respond to other calls? What else is this story about? What is the story behind the story? (In some cases, racial slurs and threats have been sprayed on school walls.)
- What are the possible consequences of my actions and decisions? Reporting a false threat could lead to copycat threats. Reporting arrests might discourage such threats by showing the consequences for threatening others. Other consequences might include raising the public's level of insecurity even when it is not warranted. Repeated broadcasting of bomb hoaxes can have the effect of crying wolf with the public becoming less responsive when actual danger arises. But the reporting on the volume and range of threats could inform our viewers and listeners about the pressures our police and schools officials are under. It could be important for the public to understand why officials react as they do.
- How could you justify your decisions about where and how you play stories about bomb threats in your newscasts? How do you explain your decisions to your staff and to your viewers? How much discussion have you had in your newsroom about your coverage? What experts or persons outside your newsroom could you contact for their perspectives about how you should treat this story?
- Be careful about the tone of your coverage. Avoid words like chaos, terror, and mayhem; they are subjective words. Play it straight. Tone down your teases, leads,

and graphics. The tone of what you report should not contradict the careful reporting of facts you include in your stories. Think carefully before going live in covering these stories. You have less editorial control in live situations. The emphasis on live may warp the attention these stories deserve. A lead story carries different weight from a story that is deeper in the newscast. How can you justify the positioning of your coverage?

- Cover the process more than the events. What thought are you giving to the bigger issues involved in this story? How easy is it for schools, the phone company or law enforcement to track down a threatening caller? How seriously are violators treated? Have you ever followed one of these cases through the legal system to find out what happens? How many bomb threats did police handle last year? How many resulted in prosecution? How many of those prosecuted went to jail or were actually punished? What was the extent of the punishment? Do your schools have caller ID systems in place? Do they or should they record incoming phone calls?
- Minimize harm. We sometimes cause harm in the process of performing our journalistic duty, but it should only be harm we can justify. Special care should be given when covering juveniles. You should carefully consider whether placing a prank phone call warrants naming a juvenile. What harm do we cause by sending a news photographer to a school that has been threatened by a caller?
- Thoughtful stations hold these conversations about coverage before they are faced with a crisis. Front-end decision-making that includes many voices in the conversation results in fuller and more thoughtful coverage.

Source: Radio-Television News Directors Association, www.rtnda.org/pages/media_items/guidelines-for-covering-bomb-threats149.php?id=149.

During and after School Violence Crises

During and after incidents of school violence, individuals working in the print, electronic, and broadcast news and information media should take the following steps:

1. Present coverage of school violence that is factual and balanced, including information about its prevalence compared with other crimes and whether it is on the rise or the decline.
2. Address the larger context of school violence, such as how students, schools, and communities have been affected.
3. Tell the public what steps are being taken to help people handle the crisis.
4. Consider the possible motivations of people who engage in violence in the schools and refrain from rewarding those actions. For example, frequent displays of offender names and pictures may convey to potential copycat offenders that this is one way to quickly and easily achieve fame. Depicting offenders as victims who were out to right a wrong might falsely convey that school shootings are an effective way for students to redress grievances.
5. Communicate helpful information to victims and concerned citizens. Examples include the following:
 - Helping law enforcement acquire information from the public needed to identify or locate offenders.
 - Telling parents and/or guardians where victim information can be obtained.
 - Letting the public know how they can help (by donating blood, money, services, and so on).
 - Informing victims about the importance and locations of grief counseling and other post-event services.
 - Informing students, parents and/or guardians, teachers and staff about any alterations to school schedules.
6. Use designated public information officers as the sole source of official information about crisis incidents, instead of seeking it from other personnel at crisis locations.
7. Be careful not to distract law enforcement or other emergency response personnel or impede them or their equipment. This includes use of the airspace above the location.
8. Respect the privacy rights of victims and the people connected to them.
9. Offer to supply helicopters and other equipment or services that might aid police or other emergency providers.
10. Promptly provide law enforcement with information acquired from media contacts that might lead to the arrest of an offender before either that person or someone else is also harmed.

SECTION 9 RESOURCES

Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA)

www.ojp.usdoj.gov/BJA

BJA is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and the Office for Victims of Crime. BJA has three primary components: Policy, Programs, and Planning. The Policy Office provides national leadership in criminal justice policy, training, and technical assistance to further the administration of justice. The Programs Office coordinates and administers all state and local grant programs and acts as BJA's direct line of communication to states, territories, and tribal governments by providing assistance and coordinating resources. The Planning Office coordinates the planning, communications, and budget formulation and execution; provides overall BJA-wide coordination; and supports streamlining efforts.

Center for Effective Collaboration and Practice (CECP)

cecp.air.org/

It is the mission of the CECP to support and promote a reoriented national preparedness to foster the development and the adjustment of children with or at risk of developing serious emotional disturbance. To achieve that goal, the center is dedicated to a policy of collaboration at federal, state, and local levels that contributes to and facilitates the production, exchange, and use of knowledge about effective practices.

Resources

- *Youth Violence: A Report of the Surgeon General* reviews research on where, when, and how much youth violence occurs, what causes it, and which of today's preventive strategies are effective.
- *Best Practices of Youth Violence Prevention: A Sourcebook for Community Action* examines the effectiveness of specific violence prevention practices in four key areas: parents and families; home visiting; social and conflict resolution skills; and mentoring. This publication was developed by the American Institutes for Research's Prospect Institute.

Center for Mental Health Services: School Violence Prevention (CMHS)

mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/schoolviolence/

CMHS is the federal agency in the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) that

leads national efforts to improve prevention and mental health treatment services for all Americans. CMHS programs and activities include the Safe Schools/Healthy Students (SS/HS) Initiative, www.sshs.samhsa.gov, a collaborative grant program designed to prevent violence and substance abuse among youth, schools, and communities. Through grants made to local education authorities, the SS/HS Initiative provides schools and communities across the United States with the benefit of enhanced school- and community-based services to strengthen healthy child development, thus reducing violent behavior and substance use. The initiative is supported by three federal agencies—the Department of Health and Human Services (through SAMHSA's Center for Mental Health Services), the Department of Education, and the Department of Justice.

Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence: Violence in American Schools (CSPV)

www.colorado.edu/cspv/safeschools/index.html

CSPV, a research program of the Institute of Behavioral Science (IBS) at the University of Colorado at Boulder, was founded in 1992 to provide informed assistance to groups committed to understanding and preventing violence, particularly adolescent violence. To establish more complete and valuable information to affect violence-related policies, programs, and practices, CSPV works from a multidisciplinary platform on the subject of violence and facilitates the building of bridges between the research community and the practitioners and policy makers.

One such program is the Safe Communities-Safe Schools (SCSS) effort, which offers school safety research and prevention expertise by providing informational resources and technical assistance in violence prevention planning and evidenced-based programming. This model provides a comprehensive framework for improving school safety by creating a planning team to help understand the school's climate and safety strengths and needs. The results of the assessments allow schools to identify appropriate strategies and evidenced-based programs to address their needs.

Educational Resources Information Clearinghouse (ERIC): School Safety

www.eric.ed.gov

ERIC is sponsored by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) of the U.S. Department of Education. ERIC offers an online digital library of education research and information. The center provides ready access to education literature to support the use of educational research and information to improve practice in learning,

teaching, educational decision making, and research. ERIC provides unlimited access to more than 1.2 million bibliographic records of journal articles and other education-related materials, with hundreds of new records added twice weekly.

Resources

- *Creating Safe and Drug-Free Schools: An Action Guide* begins with action steps for schools, parents, students, and community and business groups. Next it provides information briefs on specific issues affecting school safety. Other sections contain research and evaluation findings, a list of resources, and additional readings. This information is all designed to help school and community leaders, parents, and students develop a strategy to ensure safe schools in their communities.
- *Early Warning, Timely Response: A Guide to Safe Schools* offers research-based practices designed to help school communities identify these warning signs early and develop prevention, intervention, and crisis response plans. The guide was based on the work of an independent panel of experts in the fields of education, law enforcement, and mental health.
- *Practical Information on Crisis Planning: A Guide for Schools and Communities* is designed to assist schools and communities in either situation. Although every school's needs and circumstances are different, these checklists provide general guidance that can be adapted as appropriate to each district's or school's circumstances.
- *Preventing Youth Hate Crime: A Manual for Schools and Communities* is intended to help more schools and communities confront and eliminate harassing, intimidating, violent, and other hate-motivated behavior among young people. It is intended to promote discussion, planning, immediate action, and long-term responses to hate crime.

International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP)

www.theiacp.org

The IACP is the world's oldest and largest nonprofit membership organization of police executives, with over 22,000 members in over 100 different countries. IACP's leadership consists of the operating chief executives of international, federal, state, and local agencies of all sizes. The IACP has assembled a set of materials that address school violence and youth crime prevention. These resources are present on the IACP Web site so that police leaders can become familiar with all of them and use them in an effective manner.

Resources

- *Digital Imaging for Safe Schools: A Public Safety Response to Critical Incidents* – In response to recent

school shootings, the IACP, in partnership with the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), has created a guide to the use of 360-degree digital cameras to create CDs that contain digital images of the interior of any school, allowing responding officers to determine best access to hostages and shooters for SWAT response.

- *Partnerships for Safe School Training* – This training, delivered in partnership with the Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency and Prevention (OJJDP), focuses on improving school safety: course topics include principles of school safety, model school safety programs, and critical incident management.
- *Developing an Anti-Bullying Program: Increasing Safety, Reducing Violence* – This Promising Practices Executive Brief is the first in a series produced in collaboration with Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency and Prevention (OJJDP). These periodic briefs deliver information to law enforcement and justice officials and address some of the gaps in contemporary juvenile justice policy and practices. Each brief highlights a promising program that addresses an important juvenile justice issue.
- *Youth Violence in America: Summit Report* – These final recommendations from the IACP summit on youth violence lay out a set of strategies to help law enforcement respond to gang violence and school violence and deal effectively with both youthful offenders and youthful victims.

National Association of Attorneys General (NAAG)

www.naag.org

NAAG was founded in 1907 to help attorneys general fulfill the responsibilities of their office and to assist in the delivery of high-quality legal services to the states and territorial jurisdictions. The association fosters interstate cooperation on legal and law enforcement issues, conducts policy research and analysis of issues, conducts training, and facilitates communication between the states' chief legal officers and all levels of government.

Resources

- *Task Force on School and Campus Safety: Report and Recommendations* – In 1999, NAAG created a Task Force on Youth Violence and School Safety. This 2007 report updates the 1999 National Association of Attorneys General report with recommendations regarding the prevention of, and response to, violence in schools and on college campuses and it includes specific recommendations to educators, administrators, law enforcement, mental health providers, and public policy makers.

National Association of School Psychologists (NASP)

www.nasponline.org

NASP is the premier source of knowledge, professional development, and resources, empowering school psychologists to ensure that all children and youth attain optimal learning and mental health. NASP represents school psychology and supports school psychologists to enhance the learning and mental health of all children and youth. NASP offers a myriad of school safety and crisis resources and has made these materials available free of charge to the public to promote the ability of children and youth to cope with traumatic or unsettling events.

National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO)

www.nasro.com/home.asp

NASRO is a not-for-profit organization for over 9,000 school-based law enforcement officers, school administrators, and school security and safety professionals working as partners to protect students, school faculty and staff, and the schools. The school resource officer program is a collaborative effort by certified law enforcement officers, educators, students, parents, and the community to offer law-related educational programs in the schools to reduce crime, drug abuse, and violence and provide a safe school environment.

National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC)

www.ncpc.org

The National Crime Prevention Council's (NCPC) mission is to enable people to create safer and more caring communities by addressing the causes of crime and violence and reducing the opportunities for crime to occur. NCPC produces tools that communities can use to learn crime prevention strategies, engage community members, and coordinate with local agencies. Be Safe and Sound in School (B3S) is an initiative of the National Crime Prevention Council conducted in collaboration with the Bureau of Justice Assistance, U.S. Department of Justice. The program seeks to raise awareness of school safety and security issues and provide the tools and resources needed to effectively address them.

Resources

- *School Safety and Security Toolkit: A Guide for Parents, Schools, and Communities* – This toolkit provides the guidelines and tools needed to form a comprehensive campaign to identify and address school safety and security issues.

- *Caregivers' Guide to School Safety and Security* – This pamphlet calls parents to act to improve school safety and security, outlines four specific ways they can get involved, and provides the tools needed to get started.
- *Tip Sheets: Stopping School Violence* – These tip sheets gives ideas on how parents, students, teachers, law enforcement, principals, and community members can stop school violence.
- *School Safety and Security Newsletter* – This resource for professionals and parents concerned about school safety and security includes best practices, new research findings, and topical articles. You can sign up for a subscription on the NCPC Web site.

National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS)

www.ncjrs.gov

NCJRS is a federally funded resource offering justice and substance abuse information to support research, policy, and program development worldwide. NCJRS offers a range of services and resources, balancing the information needs of the field with the technological means to receive and access support.

Resources

- *Appropriate and Effective Use of Security Technologies in U.S. Schools* – This guide helps school administrators and their colleagues in law enforcement analyze a school's vulnerability to violence, theft, and vandalism, and research possible technologies to effectively address these problems. This National Institute of Justice (NIJ) Research Report is based on a seven-year study of more than 100 schools and offers practical guidance on several aspects of security, including security concepts and operational issues, video surveillance, weapons detection devices, entry controls, and duress alarms.
- *Indicators of School Crime and Safety (2009)* – This Bureau of Justice Statistics report presents data on crime and safety at school from the perspectives of students, teachers, principals, and the general population. In addition, it examines crime occurring in school as well as on the way to and from school. It also provides the most current detailed statistical information on the nature of crime in schools, school environments, and responses to violence and crime at school.

National School Safety Center (NSSC)

www.schoolsafety.us

The National School Safety Center (NSSC) serves as an advocate for safe, secure, and peaceful schools worldwide and as a catalyst for the prevention of school

crime and violence. NSSC provides school communities and their school safety partners with quality information, resources, consultation, and training services. A variety of school safety-related resources can be found the NSSC Web site.

National Youth Gang Center

www.iir.com/nygc/

The proliferation of gang problems in large and small cities, suburbs, and even rural areas over the last two decades led to the development of a comprehensive, coordinated response to America's gang problem by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, www.ojjdp.ncjrs.gov. The OJJDP response involves five major components, one of which is the implementation and operation of the National Youth Gang Center (NYGC). The center conducts assessments of the scope and characteristics of youth gang activity in the United States, develops resources and makes them available to the field, and provides training and technical assistance in support of community-based prevention, intervention, and suppression efforts.

Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, U.S. Department of Justice (COPS)

www.cops.usdoj.gov

As a component of the Justice Department, the mission of the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) is to advance the practice of community policing as an effective strategy to improve public safety. The COPS Office awards grants to tribal, state, and local law enforcement agencies to hire and train community policing professionals, acquire and deploy cutting-edge crime-fighting technologies, and develop and test innovative policing strategies. Its online Resource Information Center offers publications, DVDs, CDs, and training materials on a wide range of law enforcement concerns and community policing topics.

Resources

- *Bomb Threats in Schools* (2006) – This guide addresses the problem of bomb threats in schools, public or private, kindergarten through 12th grade. The guide reviews the factors that increase the risk of bomb threats in schools and then identifies a series of questions that might assist law enforcement in analyzing their local problem. Finally, the guide reviews responses to the problem and what is known about these from evaluative research and police practice.
- *Bullying in Schools* (2006) – This guide provides police with information about the causes and extent of bullying in schools and recommendations for developing effective approaches and practices that contribute to student safety.

- *School Safety CD-ROM, Version 2.0* (2009) – This CD-ROM contains more than 60 COPS Office and other U.S. Department of Justice agency links and documents related to school violence and violence prevention, school safety technology, gangs, and youth disorder. It is a resource for local policy makers, school administrators, parents, and students.
- *A Guide to Developing, Maintaining, and Succeeding With Your School Resource Officer Program* (2005) – Many school resource officer (SRO) programs have experienced difficulty recruiting, screening, retaining, training, and supervising SROs. The information in the report is intended to enable SRO programs—and jurisdictions that are thinking of starting SRO programs—to benefit from the experiences of selected programs by adopting or adapting some of their approaches to establishing and maintaining a successful program.

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice (OJJDP)

www.ojjdp.ncjrs.gov

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, and accomplishes its mission by supporting states, local communities, and tribal jurisdictions in their efforts to develop and implement effective programs for juveniles. The office strives to strengthen the juvenile justice system's efforts to protect public safety, hold offenders accountable, and provide services that address the needs of youth and their families. Under the leadership of its administrator and through its components, OJJDP sponsors research, program, and training initiatives; develops priorities and goals and sets policies to guide federal juvenile justice issues; disseminates information about juvenile justice issues; and awards funds to states to support local programming.

Resources

- *Four-One-One Bullying* (2004) – This review of research on bullying presents statistics on the prevalence and frequency of bullying at various grade levels, the short-term and long-term adverse effects of being bullied and being a bully, and differences in bullying and its effects related to gender and age. The first section of this report distinguishes between normal conflict and bullying, provides examples of bullying, profiles bullies and their victims, and indicates where most bullying occurs. A separate section focuses on research related to the link between being bullied and suicide. In offering practical guidance based on research, this report advises that the role of teachers and school administrators is critical.

- *Truancy Reduction: Keeping Students in School* (2001) – The report describes the correlations of family, school, economic, and student factors with truancy; notes truancy’s role as a predictor of delinquency, including juvenile daytime crime; and examines the social and financial impacts of truancy. It also discusses two projects funded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP).
- *School Safety & Youth Violence: A Legal Primer* (2001) – This guidebook seeks to outline the major legal issues faced by schools, including school liability for violence, search and seizure, threats of violence, zero tolerance policies, and use of student records. The primer is not intended to substitute for legal advice.
- *Refining the Construct of School Safety: An Exploration of Correlates and Construct Validity of School Safety Measures* (2005) – This study evaluated the internal consistency of and relationships among four measures of school climate and safety: the Oregon School Safety Survey (OSSS), the Effective Behavior Support Survey 1.5 (EBS), the School-Wide Evaluation Tool (SET), and the Oregon School Climate and Safety Survey (OSCSS).
- Training on threat assessment and targeted violence to law enforcement officials and others with protective and public safety responsibilities
- Information-sharing among agencies with protective or public safety responsibilities
- Programs to promote the standardization of federal, state, and local threat assessment and investigations involving threats

In 2002, the Secret Service completed the Safe School Initiative (SSI), a study of school shootings and other school-based attacks. Conducted in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Education, the study examined school shootings in the United States from 1974 to 2000, analyzing a total of 37 incidents involving 41 student attackers. The study involved extensive review of police records, school records, court documents, and other source materials and interviews with 10 school shooters. The focus of the study was on developing information about the school shooters’ behaviors and communications before the attack. The goal was to identify information about school shootings that may be identifiable or noticeable before such shootings occur, to help inform efforts to prevent school-based attacks.

U.S. Secret Service National Threat Assessment Center (NTAC)

www.secretservice.gov/ntac.shtml

The mission of the National Threat Assessment Center (NTAC) is to provide guidance on threat assessment to the Secret Service and its law enforcement and public safety partners. Through the Presidential Protection Act of 2000, Congress formally authorized NTAC to provide assistance to federal, state, and local law enforcement and others with protective responsibilities in the following functional areas:

- Research on threat assessment and various types of targeted violence

Resources

- *The Final Report and Findings of the Safe School Initiative: Implications for the Prevention of School Attacks in the United States* (2002).
- *Threat Assessment in Schools: A Guide to Managing Threatening Situations and Creating Safe School Climates* (2002).
- *A Safe School and Threat Assessment Experience: Scenarios Exploring the Findings of the Safe School Initiative CD-ROM* (2006).
- *Prior Knowledge of Potential School-Based Violence: Information Students Learn May Prevent a Targeted Attack* (2008).

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