

# Issue Brief



Employment and Social Services Policy Studies Division  
Contact: Thomas M. MacLellan, 202/624-5427 or  
Tmaclellan@nga.org  
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## Making Schools Safe<sup>1</sup>

### Summary

The ultimate goal of any school violence prevention program is to create safe and orderly schools. However, school violence is not and should not be viewed solely as a school-based problem, nor will any single intervention be effective in combating school violence. Rather, any strategy to combat school violence must be a multimodal, comprehensive, and coordinated effort that involves schools, communities, businesses, public and private agencies, parents, and elected officials.

Incidents of school violence and in-school weapon violations actually have decreased significantly during the last several years. Despite the occurrence of crime in schools, they remain one of the safest places for youth today. Linked to this decline are advances in understanding what works in planning and implementing school violence prevention strategies.

Although school violence is, in many respects, a local problem, Governors can significantly impact the preparedness of schools to combat school violence. Through leadership, the bully pulpit, legislative agendas, and the forging of interagency partnerships, Governors can develop a statewide capacity to effectively and proactively respond to this issue. Likewise, there are many strategies that schools can adopt, including incorporating codes of conduct, increasing student involvement, promoting positive adult interaction, using basic security measures, and developing crisis response plans.

However, some of the best advances in combating school violence come through the early identification of those youth most at risk of perpetrating it. While by no means definitive, researchers have identified risk factors and early and imminent warning signs for troubled youth. Understanding these signs within the proper context can help avoid further incidents of school violence. Although research is relatively new, within the last several years there has been a tremendous growth in research, information, and funding for school violence prevention efforts. As understanding increases about the causes of school violence, policymakers will be able to create and implement more effective policy.

## **Introduction**

There is a paradox within America's schools today. Despite research indicating that incidences of school violence and in-school weapon violations have dropped, students, teachers, and administrators feel less safe within their own schools<sup>2</sup> and more worried about attacks.<sup>3</sup> One of the causes for this heightened sense of fear is the high-profile cases of the last several years.<sup>4</sup> The tragedies of Jonesboro, Arkansas; Conyers, Georgia; West Paducah, Kentucky; Pearl, Mississippi; Springfield, Oregon; Edinboro, Pennsylvania; and, perhaps most striking, Littleton, Colorado, are grim reminders that, despite progress in reducing crime and violence within schools, this fear is not ungrounded.

Students and teachers are susceptible to violence and crime within a school. Recent data indicate, however, that students, while in school, are much less likely to be victims of violent crime—including rape, sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault.<sup>5</sup> While any crime within schools is too much, such data challenge widely held notions about the safety of schools.

In February 1999, the National Governors' Association (NGA) Center for Best Practices and the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), in conjunction with the Governor's Office of North Carolina and the Center for the Prevention of School Violence, cosponsored an executive policy forum in Raleigh, North Carolina, on combating school violence. The forum was the first of a series sponsored by NGA and NIJ. The second forum, held on May 1999 in Dearborn, Michigan, focused on dealing with violent juvenile offenders, and the third forum, which will be held Fall 1999, will focus on family violence. These forums are informing Governors' executive policymakers about issues related to juvenile and criminal justice. Representatives from twenty states, including North Carolina Governor James B. Hunt Jr. attended the Raleigh forum. Representatives from private and federal agencies also were in attendance, including representatives from NIJ, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the Safe and Drug Free Schools Program, the Office of Victims of Crime, the Vera Institute of Justice, the Center for the Prevention of School Violence, the National Association of School Psychologists, and the Hamilton Fish National Institute on School and Community Violence. Also present were representatives from several education departments and school districts from across the nation.

The issues related to preventing school violence are complex. This *Issue Brief* highlights some of the more salient issues identified during the February forum, including an overview of the recent trends of school violence throughout the United States; an overview of early warning signs and potential risk factors; an examination of some of the best-practices and strategies that schools, states, and communities can adopt to address this crisis; and, finally, some areas where Governors can accomplish positive change.

## **Recent Trends**

### ***What is School Violence?***

Because of the recent high-profile cases, school violence has become a widely discussed topic in the media, among policymakers, within communities, and in day-to-day discussion. But what does school violence mean? Is school violence a special type of violence? Dr. Pamela L. Riley, executive director of the Center for the Prevention of School Violence, argues that school violence is not a special genre of violence, rather "school violence is youth violence that happens at school"<sup>6</sup> and is a much wider-ranging issue than simply what goes on between 8:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.

Clearly, any examination of the trends of school violence is inexplicably linked to how school violence is defined, how it is reported, and how that information is captured. Moreover, from a policymaker's perspective, *how* school violence is defined delimits *where* solutions are sought. For example, defining school violence in narrow, limiting terms—focusing only on violence that occurs on school property—restricts the issue almost exclusively to schools and, ultimately, principals. By broadening the understanding of these issues, more comprehensive communitywide solutions can be sought.

This broader understanding of school violence is important to remember while reviewing the following statistics. Most of the included incidents occurred either in school, on the way to school, or at a school-sponsored event.

### ***School Violence and Crime***

Overall, while crime clearly is occurring within schools, the rates of violent crime and weapons violations within schools are declining. However, the impact of the recent high-profile incidents has increased levels of fear. Despite this increase, youth actually are much less likely to be victims of violent crime while in school than out.

Following are a few of the more notable trends of violence and crime within schools.

- **Fear.** The overall level of school violence is both low and stable, but fear of in-school violence has increased.<sup>7</sup> For example, one particular measure indicates that between 1989 and 1995, the percentage of students reported fearing attack in school rose from 6 percent to 9 percent, and students who reported fearing attack on the way to or from school rose from 4 percent to 7 percent.<sup>8</sup> Additionally, a recent survey of high school students found that fear of school violence kept 5 percent of students home at least once in the month prior to being surveyed.<sup>9</sup>
- **Threats and injuries.** Closely linked to this increase in fear, the percentage of students who have been threatened also has increased.<sup>10</sup> While not enough is known about threats of violence to students while in school,<sup>11</sup> in 1996, 13 percent of all twelfth-grade students reported that someone had threatened them with a weapon and 22 percent reported that they were threatened by someone without a weapon.<sup>12</sup>
- **Serious violent crime.** Youth are much less likely to be victims of nonfatal serious violent crime (rape, sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault) while in school than in their community. Despite this, for the 1996–97 school year, 10 percent of all public schools reported one or more incidents of rape, sexual assault, robbery, or aggravated assault.<sup>13</sup> There are, however, significant differences in the amount and seriousness of violence occurring in elementary, middle, and high schools. Forty-five percent of elementary schools reported one or more violent incident compared with 74 percent of middle schools and 77 percent of high schools during the 1996–97 school year.<sup>14</sup>
- **Theft.** The most common school-related crime is theft, which accounts for approximately 62 percent of all crimes against students. Students are more likely to be victims of theft while at school than while away from school.<sup>15</sup>
- **Weapons in schools.** During the 1997–98 school year, nearly a million students carried a gun to school.<sup>16</sup> Despite this, the number of youth bringing guns into schools has dropped. Between 1993 and 1996, male high school seniors who reported carrying a weapon to school within a four-week

period dropped from 14 percent in 1993 to 9 percent in 1996. During the 1996–97 school year, 6,093 students were expelled for bringing firearms or explosives to school.<sup>17</sup> For females carrying guns, this percentage remained fairly consistent at 2 percent to 3 percent.

- **Violence and threats against teachers.** Teachers are victims of approximately 18,000 serious violent crimes per year. While these rates fluctuate with the race and sex of the teacher as well as the location of the school, male teachers are more often the target of crime and violence. Additionally, in terms of threats, during the 1993–94 school year, 12 percent of teachers, or 341,000, were threatened and 4 percent, or 120,000, were physically attacked by a student.<sup>18</sup>

## **Responses**

This section highlights some of the different strategies available to states, localities, and schools. It also outlines several facets related to early identification of potential perpetrators of school violence and provides a framework of various programs and strategies for combating school violence.

### ***State Responses***

Efforts to combat school violence occur at many different levels. Although largely a local issue, states can play an important role in reducing school violence. Nevada, South Dakota, and Vermont have each been recognized by the National Education Goals Panel for making positive strides in three indicators—student victimization, physical fights, and teacher victimization. Nevada, the only state that has reduced the percentage of physical fights, attributes its success to a variety of statewide programs that are designed to reach the entire population of students in a school. The program models Nevada has adopted come from a variety of sources—some are commercial, some are locally developed, and some are general program models.<sup>19</sup>

South Dakota, a top performer in each of the three indicators, credits its success to fostering an environment where violence is not accepted and where there are very strong ties between communities and schools. State officials report that, although there's no special initiative within the state, there is a pervasive culture that violence is unacceptable and that accounts for its success.

Vermont credits much of its success in reducing student victimization and physical fights through its use of the Building Effective Supports for Teaching (BEST) program. BEST is designed to help schools develop effective strategies and interventions to anticipate, prevent, and respond to the challenging behaviors of students, benefiting the entire school community. The BEST strategy is designed to build regional and local school capacity to deal with students with a range of emotional and behavioral challenges. The program implements effective, early intervention practices to reduce the number of students with emotional and behavior issues.

### ***The Role of the Governor***

Governors can have a significant impact on preventing school violence. By providing leadership and guidance, they can set the standard of school violence prevention efforts by seizing the bully pulpit through town meetings, parent panels, press conferences, press releases, and speeches and by making school visits. Governors can use the legislative agenda to introduce violence prevention legislation and to establish an independent commission, including school representatives and criminal justice professionals, whose goal is criminal justice reform. Governors can forge partnerships within and

between agencies to help develop comprehensive prevention plans and immediate response capabilities to incidents of school violence. Finally, they can propose legislation on a variety of issues aimed at preventing school violence, including parental responsibility laws, mandated drug and weapon searches within schools, reform of youth court systems, mandated incident-reporting procedures for principals, and automatic expulsion laws.

### ***State School Safety Centers***

Currently, thirteen states have state school safety centers: California, Connecticut, Kentucky, Missouri, New Hampshire, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and Washington. State school safety centers represent directed statewide efforts to deal specifically with school violence. These centers offer a wide range of services, including information dissemination, research, program development and support, grantmaking, training of teachers and administrators, capacity building, conferences, and crisis management and response. The administrative and organizational structures of these centers vary widely: some are private nonprofits, some are public/private ventures, some are associated with institutions of higher education, and others exist within state governmental organizations. More information about these programs can be found at <http://www.nssc1.org/home2.htm> and in the appendix of this *brief*.

### **School-Based Responses**

The object of any school plan is to create and foster safe and orderly schools where youth can learn and grow in an environment free from fear. Since the causes of school violence are complex, no one strategy will be completely effective. Instead, prevention plans must be multimodal, incorporating different strategies.

During the last several years, there has been a tremendous growth in the number and availability of different strategies to address school violence. These strategies generally fall into several overlapping categories, including disciplinary codes of conduct, positive adult interaction, student-directed responses, and general school policies. Some of these strategies are briefly discussed below.

#### ***Disciplinary Codes of Conduct***

**Zero-tolerance policies.** Zero-tolerance policies are designed to set the tone of conduct within schools towards weapons, fighting, gangs, drugs, alcohol, tobacco, and violence. Zero-tolerance policies have been widely implemented throughout the states, in part as a condition of the 1994 Gun-Free Schools Act. The act requires that all states receiving funding from the Elementary and Secondary Education Act implement a zero-tolerance policy towards weapons and expel students for one year if they bring a weapon to school.

**Dress codes.** Although sometimes controversial, dress codes offer another strategy that schools can employ to reduce violence. Although there has been little evaluation of their effectiveness, certain school administrators, policymakers, and parents believe these codes can help maintain order within schools. More research needs to be conducted to determine the effectiveness of this strategy.

### ***Positive Adult Interaction***

Positive adult interaction, while more a key quality of an effective school than a strategy, allows youth to have sustained relationships and positive experiences with adults and to replicate that behavior. Such interactions help create the atmosphere of a safe and secure school where students can approach adults if they feel the need to.

**Mentoring.** Mentoring programs are effective. Students involved in mentoring programs are 46 percent less likely to experiment with drugs and alcohol, 33 percent less likely to act violently, and 50 percent less likely to skip school. However, despite a \$30 million increase in funding for mentoring efforts across the country and a growth of mentoring programs to 160 sites in forty states, only 5 percent of youth who need mentors have them.<sup>20</sup>

**School Resource Officers (SROs).** School resource officers have become an extremely important feature in many schools' violence prevention plans; for many schools, the SRO is the cornerstone of their safety plan. Three main functions define the role of the SRO: law enforcement, law-related counselor, and law-related education teacher. SROs not only provide police visibility, they also provide a positive role model for youth.

**Reduced teacher/counselor loads.** The majority of school-related incidents are caused by a minority of students. Teachers and counselors, however, often are faced with classes and caseloads that make attention to or sustained relationships with high-need and/or troubled youth difficult. Strategies that address this issue allow teachers and counselors the necessary and crucial opportunity to work with troubled or at-risk students.

### ***Student-Directed Responses***

**Conflict resolution training.** As with any new approach, training and skill development is paramount. Training students and teachers in the specific skills and techniques of conflict resolution is crucial to any school violence prevention plan.

**Peer mediation.** Peer mediation programs allow students to actively participate in dispute resolution and use many of the skills learned in conflict resolution training. Peer mediation programs empower students by directly involving them in ensuring the safety of their own schools.

**Law-related education.** Law-related education is directed at teaching students to be successful citizens.<sup>21</sup> Students are educated on a variety of topics, including the legal process, the law, and concepts of justice.

**Teen/student courts.** Similar in some respects to peer mediation and conflict resolution, teen and student courts, in which youth assume the roles of prosecutors, defenders, judges, and jurors, provide a more formal setting in which youth can actively resolve disputes and apply their law-related education.

### ***Alternative Schools***

As the number of suspensions and expulsions have increased, so has the need for alternative schools. These schools provide educational opportunities for expelled youth in a much more tightly controlled environment and have become a necessity with zero-tolerance policies. There is concern, however, about the insufficient number of educational sites and the poor quality of some of the existing ones.

### ***Environmental Design***

Physical plant and technological improvements are important components to any school safety plan, and there have been significant advancements in this area. Metal detectors, security cameras, proper lighting, and building design have significantly helped reduce crime and violence and create safe school environments. Staggering class schedules and dismissal times to avoid hallway congestion also can have a significant positive impact on a school's environment.

### ***Crisis Response***

Incidents can occur at any school and at any time. Crisis response plans should be readily available and comprehensive. They should detail the steps that can be taken prior to a crisis (i.e., staff training, action protocols, references, involvement of state and local officials); the steps that can be taken during a crisis (i.e., evacuation, communication, responsibilities of crisis team members); and the steps that can be taken immediately following a crisis (i.e., debriefing, counseling, followup with parents and officials).

### **State and Local Planning Processes**

While there are many different strategies that states and schools can adopt to reduce school violence, any best-practice strategy begins with the planning process itself. A generic best-practice planning model was recently developed by the Hamilton Fish National Institute on School and Community Violence. This framework can be used as a guide to help ensure a planning process that is comprehensive, effective, and dynamic and that draws strength from many different resources. This planning process is designed to be both sequential and iterative in nature.

The steps are as follows.<sup>22</sup>

- **Unite schools with their communities in the effort to prevent violence.** Schools are not islands. They exist within a larger community and need strong links with community leaders, businesses, social service agencies, police, faith-based organizations, juvenile justice authorities, and parents to design an effective violence prevention plan. Such networking introduces additional resources, ideas, and supports. Examples of this type of networking include roundtable discussions, task-specific workgroups, and joint sponsorship of community events.
- **Identify and measure the problem.** As mentioned earlier in this *brief*, there are many definitions and understandings of what constitutes school violence. Prior to moving ahead with a plan, communities and schools must reach consensus on what exactly the problem is and how it is to be measured. Reliable information on victimization, perpetration, substance abuse, and related issues is key. Doing this early in the process builds cohesion and clarifies the issues under consideration.
- **Set goals and objectives.** Goals and objectives should reflect the broad aim of an effort and the specific steps to achieve results. Well-defined, specific goals and objectives provide a strategic blueprint and are crucial to the successful implementation of any plan.
- **Identify appropriate strategies.** Given the complexity of school violence, it is highly unlikely that any one solution will completely address the issue. Planners must recognize that no one solution will be sufficient. Strategies should be multimodal and use various approaches. Existing

research on effectiveness, cultural and developmental appropriateness, and other factors must be considered to identify appropriate strategies.

- **Implement a comprehensive plan.** Successful implementation is tailored to each school and should occur through progressive stages. It is crucial that all participants be kept informed of progress and planning stages. During this phase, issues of staff development, barriers, and budget goals should be considered and addressed.
- **Measure the success of the effort.** Evaluation is central to any successful program. Data collection and analysis should begin immediately to help determine the effectiveness of the strategy.
- **Revise strategies based on the evaluation.** Based on the evaluation's results, programs may need to be adjusted or even scrapped if the results are not promising.

### **Early Identification**

Perhaps the best strategy for preventing school violence and crime is early identification. Three main subtopics are featured here: risk factors for delinquency and violence, early warning signs for violence, and imminent warning signs of violence.

#### ***Risk Factors for Delinquency and Violence***

Identifying what factors place a youth at risk for violent behavior is difficult. Although research is relatively new and is not necessarily definitive, it can provide a guide for policymakers, school officials, and community leaders in understanding at-risk youth.

Delinquency and violence are closely associated. Identifying factors that place a youth at risk of delinquency will guide understanding in what places a youth at risk of violence. It is essential to note, however, that risk factors are not predictive in nature. They indicate an increase in risk, not a causal relationship.

In a multiyear, longitudinal study of recidivism rates among juvenile offenders in Oregon, the Oregon Social Learning Center (OSLC) found that youth with a combination of any three of the six risk factors listed below had an 80 percent chance of reoffending and being detained. Race and type of arrest were not related to future detainment. These factors are:

- arrest of father,
- arrest of mother,
- documented involvement with child protective services,
- major family transition (one parent within home either left or returned since birth),
- special education services received by child, and
- early history of delinquent/criminal activity (child arrested before the age of fourteen).

OSLC found that while individual indicators did not necessarily indicate risk of arrest, a combination of factors had a significant impact on risk. While these factors do not directly translate into risk factors for school violence, they do offer some guidance for identifying troubled youth.

More general research in identifying risk factors associated with youth violence also has been conducted and can be found in the resources listed in the appendix of this *brief*.

### ***Early Warning Signs for Violence***

*Early Warning, Timely Response: A Guide to Safe Schools*<sup>23</sup> highlights sixteen early warning signs that help to identify youth who may be prone to violence. Exceptional caution must be taken when considering these signs, however. The guide warns that “there is a real danger that early warning signs will be misinterpreted.”<sup>24</sup> Doing so risks stigmatizing youth. These signs need to be taken and interpreted in the larger context of each student’s situation.

They are briefly outlined here.

- **Social withdrawal.** This occurs when youth withdraw partially or totally from social contacts.
- **Excessive feelings of isolation and being alone.** Although the majority of youth who appear isolated and friendless are not violent, research also shows that violent youth often exhibit these same characteristics.
- **Excessive feelings of rejection.** While rejection is often a painful part of growing up, troubled children may experience rejection in a way that may cause them to act out violently and to seek acceptance from other, more aggressive friends.
- **Being a victim of violence.** Victimization, either through sexual or physical abuse, is often a factor for a youth becoming violent.
- **Feelings of being picked on and persecuted.** Youth who feel they have been picked on and/or bullied may withdraw socially and act out inappropriately, including through violence.
- **Low interest and poor academic performance.** While many children do not perform well academically, troubled children’s academic performance may undergo a dramatic change. It is crucial to assess the reasons for a student’s poor academic performance. For violent youth, feelings of frustration and inadequacy may lead to violent acting-out behaviors.
- **Expression of violence in writing and drawings.** Although many children may make drawings or write stories that are violent in nature, this does not necessarily mean they are troubled. However, a child whose work shows a preponderance of violence over time and is specific in detail may be at risk. In such an instance, a qualified professional should be consulted.
- **Uncontrolled anger.** Anger is a natural emotion. However, youth whose anger is excessively disproportionate to the precipitating cause may be at risk.
- **Patterns of impulsive and chronic hitting, intimidating, and bullying behaviors.** These types of behavior, if allowed to continue unchecked, could pave the way for further violence.
- **History of discipline problems.** Consistently inappropriate behavior at school and within the home may be indicative that a youth’s needs are not being met. Becoming accustomed to violating norms and standards of conduct may place these children at higher risk of further, more aggressive violence.
- **Past history of violent and aggressive behavior.** Youth with a history of violent and aggressive behavior, especially if left unaddressed, pose a higher risk. Age of onset is a crucial consideration.
- **Intolerance for differences and prejudicial attitudes.** Exceptional prejudice against certain groups by a youth should be viewed as an early warning sign for violence.
- **Drug use and alcohol use.** Drug and alcohol use increases the likelihood of becoming violent and of being victimized.
- **Affiliation with gangs.** Gang involvement fosters antisocial activities and should be viewed as an early warning sign.

- **Inappropriate access to, possession of, and use of firearms.** Youth with inappropriate access to firearms can have an increased risk for violence. Furthermore, research shows that these youth also have a higher probability of becoming victims of violence.
- **Serious threats of violence.** Unfortunately, threats of violence by students are not uncommon. They should not be treated lightly. Attention to the nature of such threats is crucial to properly reading the signals of potential aggressors.

### ***Imminent Warning Signs of Violence***

Related to these early warning signs are imminent warning signs—signs that a youth is decompensating and is moving toward violence. Violent youth typically will exhibit more than one of the preceding signs repeatedly and with increasing severity as they become more unstable and the risk of violence increases. Imminent warning signs are very clear indicators that a youth is in distress and needs immediate attention. They include:

- serious physical fighting with peers or family members;
- severe destruction of property;
- severe rage for seemingly minor reasons;
- detailed threats of lethal violence;
- possession and/or use of a firearm or weapon; and
- self-injurious behaviors or threats of suicide.

### **Sources for Information and Funding**

The information listed here and in the appendix also can be found on NGA's web site at <<http://www.nga.org>>.

#### ***Federal Sources for Information***

In light of the recent tragedies, preventing school violence has become a national cause. Efforts to compile information on trends and strategies have begun at many different levels. For example, the U.S. Department of Education (DOEd) and the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) have developed *Early Warning, Timely Response: A Guide to Safe Schools* to help schools, parents, and communities initiate comprehensive violence prevention plans.<sup>25</sup> The guide is available online at <<http://www.ed.gov>>. They also have prepared an annual report on school safety that provides parents, schools, and communities with an overview of the scope of school crime, and describes actions schools and communities can take to address this critical issue.<sup>26</sup> The annual report is available at <<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/SDFS>>.

DOEd and DOJ also produced a report entitled *Indicators of School Crime and Safety, 1998*. Divided into five sections, the report uses seventeen indicators of school safety to provide an overall snapshot of school violence and crime across the nation. The sections are: Nonfatal Student Victimization—Student Reports; Violence and Crime at School—Public School Principal/Disciplinarian Reports; Violent Deaths at School; Nonfatal Teacher Victimization at School—Teacher Reports; and School Reports. This report is available at <<http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=98251>>.

#### ***Statewide Information***

Information on school violence varies by state. As of February 1998, according to a research brief from the Center for the Prevention of School Violence, a review of state reporting standards found that eight states—Alabama, California, Delaware, Florida, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Virginia—had either detailed reports of incidents of school violence or were in the process of creating these reports. The emphasis of each of these reports varies by state, and the range of titles includes a focus on violence, crime, and differing concepts of school safety. Another eight states were creating less detailed reports and thirty-four states did not have reporting systems except those required by the Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994.<sup>27</sup>

Any discussion on the availability of information on school violence should include the question of underreporting. While the definition of school violence is clearly important in understanding the issue, much of the available information on school crime statistics is based, in part, on reported incidents. Since these incidents are often used to indicate the overall quality of a school, the question of underreporting of incidents by schools also must be considered.

### ***Federal Funding Sources***

**Safe and Drug-Free Schools (SDFS) Program.** SDFS is funded through DOEd and is designed to reduce substance abuse and violence through education and prevention activities. States and localities are eligible to apply for SDFS funding, which includes state formula grants aimed at education and prevention and other funds with which states can carry out a variety of discretionary initiatives. SDFS's web site is: <<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/SDFS/>>.

**Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative.** The Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative is designed to help schools and communities with planning and implementing comprehensive communitywide strategies. This program is funded by DOJ's Offices of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) and Community Oriented Policing Services; DOEd's Office of Elementary and Secondary Education; and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Center of Mental Health Services. Eligible recipients must demonstrate a comprehensive communitywide strategy that has been developed by a partnership of schools, law officials, providers, families, and representatives of the juvenile justice system and must consist of six elements: school safety; drug and violence prevention and early intervention programs; school and community mental health prevention and intervention services; early childhood psychosocial and emotional development programs; education reform; and safe school policies. The initiative's web site is <<http://165.224.220.66/inits/FY99/sdfshapp.html>>.

**21st Century Community Learning Centers.** These centers fund programs in inner-city and rural schools and districts to reduce drug use and violence. While there are statutorily defined categories of services that must be provided under this program, there also is flexibility to fund a wide array of activities. This program is administered through DOEd's Office of Education Research and Improvement. Its web site is <<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OERI/21stCCLC/>>.

**Juvenile Accountability Incentive Block Grant (JAIBG).** While JAIBG is designed to promote greater accountability within the juvenile justice system, there are two areas where JAIBG funds may be expended on issues related to schools and school violence: one allows funds to be used for interagency information sharing and the others allow funds to be used to establish and maintain programs aimed at protecting students and teachers from drugs, gangs, and youth violence. Eligible recipients of JAIBG funds are state agencies. However, 75 percent of JAIBG funds must be passed

through to local governments. Information on JAIBG can be found on OJJDP's web site at <<http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles1/95081.pdf>>.

**Title V Community Prevention Grants.** Community prevention grants also are administered by OJJDP. Although these funds are more restrictive, with their main purpose being the support of community-based crime prevention planning efforts, these activities could include the issue of preventing school violence. State advisory groups (SAGs) are eligible to apply for Title V funds. In turn, SAGs fund, through a competitive process, local units of government. Their web site is <<http://ojjdp.ncjrs.org/grants/grants.html>>.

**Project SERV.** \$12 million has been proposed to fund the School Emergency Response to Violence, or Project SERV. Similar to the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Project SERV is designed to give states and local communities access to federal funds in the event of a school violence-related crisis. Project SERV focuses on:

- providing immediate assistance for emergency response,
- establishing coordinated federal response to school crises,
- strengthening the ability of states and communities to respond to school crises, and
- supporting research evaluation.<sup>28</sup>

Further information about these programs is available in the appendix of this *brief* as well as on NGA's web site at <<http://www.nga.org/>>.

## **Conclusion**

While the overall decline in the number of incidents of school violence is heartening, the recent high-profile incidents are a wake-up call that more must be done to make schools safer. To promote safe and orderly schools, policymakers must adopt strategies that are multimodal, comprehensive, and coordinated with schools, communities, businesses, public and private agencies, parents, and elected officials. No one intervention will accomplish this, and schools cannot do this alone.

## Appendix

### Additional Reports on School Violence

*Violence in America's Public Schools: Five Years Later.* This document is a followup to a 1993 study of students' and teachers' incidents of school-related violence. The study surveyed 1,044 students (third through twelfth grades), 1,000 teachers, and 100 law enforcement officials. More information on this study is available by contacting MetLife, The American Teacher Survey, P.O. Box 807, Madison Square Station, New York, New York 10159-0807, or at <<http://www.metlife.com>>.

*School Safety: The Efforts of States and School Programs to Make Schools Safe.* Available by contacting the National Criminal Justice Association, 444 N. Capitol Street, N.W., Suite 618, Washington, D.C. 20001, 202/624-1440, or at <<http://www.sso.org/ncja>>.

*Comprehensive Framework for School Violence Prevention and Effective Programs and Strategies to Create Safe Schools.* Available through the Hamilton Fish National Institute on School and Community Violence, George Washington University, 1925 North Lynn Street, Suite 305, Rosslyn, Virginia 22209, 703/527-4217.

### Organizations

U.S. Department of Justice  
Office for Victims of Crime  
810 7th Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20531  
Phone: 202/307-5983  
<<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/>>

Oregon Social Learning Center  
160 E. 4th Ave.  
Eugene, Oregon 97401  
Phone: 541/485-2711  
Fax: 541/485-7087  
<<http://www.oslc.org/>>

U.S. Department of Justice  
Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency  
Prevention  
810 7th Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20531  
Phone: 202/307-5911  
Fax: 202/307-2093  
<<http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org>>  
E-mail: [askjj@ojp.usdoj.gov](mailto:askjj@ojp.usdoj.gov)

Vera Institute of Justice  
377 Broadway  
New York, New York 10013  
Phone: 212/334-1300  
Fax: 212/941-9407  
<<http://www.vera.org/>>

Juvenile Justice Clearinghouse  
P.O. Box 6000  
Rockville, Maryland 20849-6000  
Phone: 800/638-8736  
Fax: 301/519-5215  
E-mail: [askncjrs@ncjrs.org](mailto:askncjrs@ncjrs.org)

National Center for Education Statistics  
555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20208-5574  
Phone: 202/219-1828  
<<http://nces.ed.gov/>>

The National Education Goals Panel  
1255 22nd Street, N.W., Suite 502  
Washington, D.C. 20037  
Fax: 202/632-0957 or 202/632-1032  
E-mail: NEGP@ed.gov  
<<http://www.negp.gov/>>

National School Safety Center  
Ronald D. Stephens, Executive Director  
141 Duesenberg Drive, Suite 11  
Westlake Village, California 91362  
Phone: 805/373-9977  
<<http://www.nssc1.org>>

Center for the Prevention of School Violence  
Dr. Pamela L. Riley, Executive Director  
20 Enterprise Street, Suite 2  
Raleigh, North Carolina 27607-7375  
Phone: 800/299-6054  
<<http://www.ncsu.edu/cpsv/>>

National Resource Center for Safe Schools  
Carlos Sundermann, Program Director  
Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory  
101 S.W. Main, Suite 500  
Portland, Oregon 97204  
Phone: 800/547-6339 (ext.131)  
E-mail: safeschools@nwrel.org

National Alliance for Safe Schools  
Peter D. Blauvelt, President and CEO  
P.O. Box 1068  
College Park, Maryland 20741  
Phone: 301/935-6063  
<<http://www.safeschools.org>>

Center for the Study and Prevention of  
Violence  
Delbert S. Elliott, Director  
University of Colorado  
Campus Box 442  
Boulder, Colorado 80309-0442  
Phone: 303/492-1032  
<<http://www.colorado.edu/UCB/Research/cspv>>

Institute on Violence and Destructive Behavior  
Hill M. Walker, Co-Director  
Jeffrey Sprague, Co-Director  
University of Oregon  
1265 University of Oregon  
Eugene, Oregon 97403-1265  
Phone: 800/824-2714  
<<http://www.darkwing.uoregon.edu/~ivdb/>>

National Association of School Psychologists  
4340 East West Highway, Suite 402  
Bethesda, Maryland 20814  
Phone: 301/657-0270  
Fax: 301/657-0275  
TDD: 301/657-4155  
<<http://www.naspsweb.org/>>

Safe and Drug Free Schools Program  
William Modzeleski, Director  
U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue, S.W., 3E314  
Washington, D.C. 20202-6123  
Phone: 202/260-3654  
<<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/SDFS/>>

Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative  
U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20202-0498  
Phone: 800/USA-LEARN (800/872-5327)  
<<http://165.224.220.66/inits/FY99/sdfshapp.html>>

21st Century Community Learning Centers  
U.S. Department of Education  
OERI  
555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20208  
Phone: 202/219-2204  
<<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OERI/21stCCLC/>>

Hamilton Fish National Institute on School and  
Community Violence

Paul Kingery, Director

1925 N. Lynn Street, Suite 305

Rosslyn, VA 22209

Phone: 703/527-4217 ext. 104

Fax: 703/527-8741

E-mail: [Kingery@gwu.edu](mailto:Kingery@gwu.edu)

*State School Safety Centers*

<b>State</b>	<b>Program Name/Address</b>	<b>Contact Person</b>	<b>Phone/Fax/E-mail</b>
California	Safe Schools and Violence Prevention Office California Department of Education 560 J Street, Suite 260 Sacramento, CA 95814	Ms. Mary Weaver Program Administrator	Phone: 916/323-2183 Fax: 916/323-6061
Connecticut	Drugs Don't Work Connecticut Safe Schools Coalition 30 Harbor Street Hartford, CT 06106	Ms. Kathy Boone	Phone: 860/231-8311
Kentucky	Kentucky Center for School Safety Eastern Kentucky University 300 Stratton Building 521 Lancaster Avenue Richmond, KY 40475	Dr. Bruce Wolford Dr. Lois Adams-Rogers Co-Directors	Phone: 606/622-1498 Fax: 606/622-6264 E-mail: bruce <trc@iclub.org </trc@iclub.org  <www.kysafeschools.org>
Missouri	Missouri Center for Safe Schools University of Missouri, Kansas City School of Education 340 Education Building 5100 Rockhill Road Kansas City, MO 64110	Dr. Pat Henley Director	Phone: 816/235-5657 Fax: 816/235-5270
New Hampshire	New Hampshire Department of Education State Office Park South 101 Pleasant Street Concord, NH 03301	Mr. Gerald P. Bourgeois Administrator for School Safety	Phone: 603/271-3828 Fax: 603/271-3830
New York	New York State School Safety Center New York State Education Department Comprehensive Health & Pupil Services 318 EB Albany, NY 12234	Ms. Arlene Sheffield Director	Phone: 518/486 6090

<b>State</b>	<b>Program Name/Address</b>	<b>Contact Person</b>	<b>Phone/Fax/E-mail</b>
North Carolina	Center for the Prevention of School Violence 20 Enterprise Street, Suite 2 Raleigh, NC 27609	Dr. Pamela Riley Director	Phone: 919/515-9397 Fax: 919/515-9561 E-mail: pamela_riley@ncsu.edu
Pennsylvania	Office for Safe Schools Pennsylvania Department of Education Bureau of Community & Student Services 333 Market Street, 5 <sup>th</sup> Floor Harrisburg, PA 17126	Ms. Charles Spanno Director	Phone: 717/783-3755 Fax: 717/783-6617
South Carolina	Safe and Drug Free Schools South Carolina State Department of Education Room 1108 1429 Senate Street Columbia, SC 29201	Ms. Bunny Mack Coordinator	Phone: 803/734-8573 Fax: 803/734-2983 E-mail: bmack@sde.state.sc.us
Tennessee	Center for Safe and Drug Free Schools 3782 Jackson Avenue Memphis, TN 38108	Mr. Ken Strong Supervising Psychologist	Phone: 901/385-4240 Fax: 901/385-4221
Texas	Safe Schools, Chapter 37 1701 North Congress Avenue Austin, TX 78701-1494	Mr. Billy G. Jacobs Program Director	Phone: 512/463-9073 Fax: 512/475-3638
Virginia	State Department of Education Commonwealth of Virginia P. O. Box. 2120 Richmond, VA 23218	Ms. Marsha Hubbard Safe School Specialist	Phone: 804/225-2928 Fax: 804/371-8796
Washington	Washington State School Safety Center Drug-Free Schools and Communities Programs, OSPI P. O. Box 47200 Olympia, WA 98504-7200	Ms. Denise Fitch Director	Phone: 360/753-5595 Fax: 360/664-3028

## Model Programs

**The Blueprint Program.** Colorado and Pennsylvania initiated funding for a project through the Center for Study and Prevention of Violence (CSPV) to identify ten violence prevention programs “that met a very high scientific standard of program effectiveness—programs that could provide an initial nucleus for a national violence prevention initiative.”<sup>29</sup> Blueprints were “designed to be very practical descriptions of effective programs that would allow states, communities, and individual agencies to: (1) determine the appropriateness of this intervention for their state or community; (2) provide a realistic cost estimate for this intervention; (3) provide an assessment of the organizational capacity needed to ensure its successful start-up and operation over time; and (4) give some indication of the potential barriers and obstacles that might be encountered when attempting to implement this type of intervention.”<sup>30</sup>

The Blueprint Program identified ten model programs that met these rigorous standards and had been replicated at more than one site. They are:

Big Brothers Big Sisters	Multisystemic Therapy
Bullying Prevention Programs	Nurse Home Visitation
Functional Family Therapy	Quantum Opportunities
Life Skills Training	PATHS
Midwestern Prevention Program	Treatment Foster Care

More information on the Blueprint Program can be found at <<http://www.colorado.edu/cspv/>>.

## End Notes

- <sup>1</sup> This project was supported by Grant No. 98-IJ-CX-0054 awarded by the National Institute of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. Points of view in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.
- <sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Justice, *Annual Report on School Safety 1998* (Washington, D.C.: Authors), 1.
- <sup>3</sup> Louis Harris and Associates, Inc. (Conducted for Metropolitan Life Insurance Company), *The American Teacher 1999* (Louis Harris and Associates, Inc., 1998), 66.
- <sup>4</sup> This is supported both by the *Annual Report on School Safety 1998* and by comments made by Christopher Stone of the Vera Institute during the February 1999 Executive Forum on Combating School Violence.
- <sup>5</sup> U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Justice, *Annual Report on School Safety 1998* (Washington, D.C.: Authors), 3.
- <sup>6</sup> Comments from Dr. Pam Riley, *Washington Post* interactive chat interview, May 1999.
- <sup>7</sup> Comments made by Christopher Stone during the February 1999 Executive Forum on Combating School Violence.

- <sup>8</sup> Kaufman, P., Chen, X., Choy, S.P., Chandler, K.A. Chapman, C.D., Rand, M.R. and Ringel, C. *Indicators of School Crime and Safety, 1988*. (U.S. Departments of Education and Justice. NCES 98-251/NCJ-172215. Washington, D.C.: 1998), 30.
- <sup>9</sup> U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, *Juvenile Offenders and Victims: 1997 Update on Violence*. Cited in *National Safe Schools Week* (October 19–23, 1998), Center for the Prevention of School Violence, 1.
- <sup>10</sup> Kaufman et al., vi.
- <sup>11</sup> U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Justice, *Annual Report on School Safety 1998* (Washington, D.C.: Authors), 1.
- <sup>12</sup> Kaufman et al, 8.
- <sup>13</sup> National Center for Education Statistics, *Violence and Discipline Problems in U.S. Public Schools: 1996–1997*, 1998). Cited in *National Safe Schools Week: October 19–23, 1998*, Center for the Prevention of School Violence.
- <sup>14</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>15</sup> U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Justice, *Annual Report on School Safety 1998* (Washington, D.C.: Authors), 2.
- <sup>16</sup> 1997–1998 PRIDE Survey, Parent Resource Institute for Drug Education (PRIDE), 1998.
- <sup>17</sup> U.S. Department of Education, *Report on State Implementation of the Gun-Free Schools Act—School Year: 1996–1997*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, 1997). Cited in *National Safe Schools Week: October 19–23, 1998*, Center for the Prevention of School Violence, 1.
- <sup>18</sup> Kaufman et al., 26.
- <sup>19</sup> National Educational Goals Panel, *NEGP Weekly*. (Vol. 2, No. 3, April 28, 1999.)
- <sup>20</sup> Comments made by Shay Bilchik at February 1999 Executive Forum on Combating School Violence.
- <sup>21</sup> Information from the Center for the Prevention of School Violence, Internet document.
- <sup>22</sup> Hamilton Fish Institute on School and Community Violence, *Comprehensive Framework for School Violence Prevention*. (Rosslyn, Virginia: Author, 2/8/99.)
- <sup>23</sup> Dwyer, K., Osher, D., and Warger, C. *Early Warning, Timely Response: A Guide to Safe Schools*. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, 1998.)
- <sup>24</sup> Dwyer et al., 7.
- <sup>25</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>26</sup> U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Justice, *Annual Report on School Safety 1998* (Washington, D.C.: Authors), i.
- <sup>27</sup> Center for the Prevention of School Violence, *Center.Link Research, School Violence Incident Reporting in the United States*, Number 3, February 1998.

<sup>28</sup> White House Press Release, *Project SERV: School Emergency Response to Violence* (October 15, 1998).

<sup>29</sup> *About Blueprints*, Internet document.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*