Be honest, when was the last time you looked at your school crisis plan? Have you ever used it? To get the most out of your crisis plan, it needs to be practiced and revised on a yearly basis. As staff members come and go, emergency contacts need to be updated and crisis team assignments should be adjusted. Meeting with your local fire and police departments on a yearly basis is also an important part of the process. Does your crisis plan include a current list of all individuals in the school who are first aid and CPR trained? Now is the time to update your plan if you have not already done so.

When designing or revising your crisis plan, consider the role of parents. Does your district or school have an open approach to sharing information with parents? In a recent report of The America Prepared Campaign, researchers found that parents were often unaware of the school districts’ emergency plans.¹ Has your school or district involved parents in the crisis planning process? Do parents know how they will be notified in the case of an emergency? In Fairfax County, Virginia, the school system has an e-mail “keep-in-touch” system whereby parents can get messages from their school and the entire school district in the event of an emergency. In Hillsborough, Florida, the student handbook includes information for both parents and students on the district’s comprehensive emergency plans. According to one Hillsborough principal, “in the beginning of the year, we really blitz parents with information about reunification sites and pick-up procedures so we don’t have parents coming to the school, getting in the way of emergency vehicles.”²

Involving parents in the planning process before a crisis occurs is a critical component of an effective crisis plan. For help with this process, please review the U.S. Department of Education’s Practical Information on Crisis Planning: A Guide for Schools and Communities available at www.ed.gov/emergencyplan. You are also encouraged to contact Dr. Grace Taylor with CSPV at 303-492-1032 for additional information and assistance.

²Ibid.

The recent terrorist attack against a school in Beslan, Russia caused many to wonder whether a similar event could happen in the United States. In response to this concern, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the FBI analyzed the situation in Beslan and made the following recommendations:

- Review your school crisis plan. If you need help developing or evaluating a crisis plan, please review the guidelines at www.ed.gov/emergencyplan.
- Raise awareness among local law enforcement officers and school officials by conducting exercises at the school relating to school emergency and crisis plans.
- Prepare your staff and students to act in a crisis situation.
- Consider a closed-campus approach to limit visitors.
- Consider a single entry point for all students, staff and visitors.
- Ensure that school officials will always be able to contact school buses.
- Ensure that emergency communications from and to schools are working.
- Install secure locks for all external and internal doors and windows.

While designed with a terrorist attack in mind, these guidelines will help to create a safer environment on a daily basis.

Source: www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/secletter/041006.html
Safe Communities ~ Safe Schools

PARTNERS
The following organizations have contributed their support, expertise and/or financial assistance to this initiative...

THE COLORADO TRUST
COLORADO ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL BOARDS
COLORADO ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL EXECUTIVES
COLORADO ATTORNEY GENERAL
COLORADO CRIME STOPPERS
COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY, DIVISION OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE
COLORADO EDUCATION ASSOCIATION
COLORADO FEDERATION OF TEACHERS
COORS BREWING COMPANY
METRO-DENVER & FRONT RANGE SAFE AND DRUG FREE SCHOOLS
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO AT BOULDER

SCSS INITIATIVE
CSPV, in partnership with The Colorado Trust, developed the Safe Communities~Safe Schools (SCSS) Initiative in response to requests from the Colorado education community. The goal of the Initiative is to help schools and communities create and maintain a positive and welcoming school climate free of drugs, violence, intimidation and fear - an environment which is strongly supported by the community, and where teachers can teach and students can learn. To achieve this goal, CSPV is assisting schools in Colorado in designing individualized safe school plans based on the five components of the Safe Communities ~ Safe Schools Model:

SCSS Planning Team
Site Assessments
Prevention Programming
Social Support Team
Crisis Planning.

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School Safety Audit

The level of safety at each school should be assessed according to multiple indicators that apply to the school facility, school climate, and the school’s partnership with parents and the community. A school safety audit addresses the following indicators among others:

Safety and Security of Buildings and Grounds
Risk and Threat Assessment Protocols
Intervention and Prevention Plans
Emergency Crisis Management Plans

If your school is interested in completing a SCHOOL SAFETY AUDIT AT NO COST or would like to request additional information, please contact Jane Grady or Bill Woodward at the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence at the University of Colorado-Boulder at 303-492-1032.