

Communities and Schools in Action

A publication of the Safe Communities ~ Safe Schools Initiative



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Homeland Security

The creation of the national Homeland Security department and the Colorado Office of Preparedness, Security and Fire Safety during the past two years is generating new resources for schools to help better prepare for a crisis.

New considerations for such things as terrorist attacks and threats to national security are being added to guidelines. Schools are encouraged to prepare in ways they may not have done before - such as offering students food and shelter for an extended period or medical attention in the aftermath of a biological attack. While it is impossible to prepare for every scenario, we are finding our attention being drawn to new details and putting new contingencies into place.

Coordination between schools, law enforcement, mental health and first responders is more important than ever. Having crisis response plans that are frequently reviewed and updated is also a critical step in preparedness. Equally important is practicing these plans. Practice drills help everyone to familiarize themselves with the procedures and find flaws or oversights in a plan. Each school should have its own specific plan as well as a district-wide plan for assuring the most calm, safe, and thorough response to a crisis.

Schools also can turn to the US Department of Education and the National School Safety Center for access to information on safety, preparedness, managing a crisis situation, and recovering from a crisis. A few key considerations they suggest include communications disruptions, medical supplies, access to emergency services, campus security, public access to the campus, and local resources for supplies. It is also important to have a plan for contacting parents and reuniting them with their children. Additionally, it's imperative to have contingency plans in place and make certain that the crisis response team is familiar with the plans. In the case of the September 11 attacks, some schools in the area had an evacuation point that, in fact, turned out to be near ground zero.

For complete guidelines, visit the US Department of Education website at www.ed.gov or the National School Safety Center at www.nssc1.org.

CSPV will be working with the Office of Preparedness, Security and Fire Safety and the Colorado Department of Education to develop and disseminate state guidelines for preparedness.

CSPV staff are available to help schools update crisis response plans and locate reliable information on preparedness, threat assessment and more. Please contact the Center at 303-492-1032 for information.

Threat Assessment

Key elements of threat assessment can be beneficial to schools trying to prevent acts of violence on campus. The US Secret Service and the US Department of Education have conducted research in an effort to help schools prepare for student violence. From the *Threat Assessment in Schools: A Guide to Managing Threatening Situations and to Creating Safe School Climates*, six principles are identified for the basis of threat assessments:

- Targeted violence is the end result of an understandable, and oftentimes discernible, process of thinking and behavior.
- Targeted violence stems from an interaction among the individual, the situation, the setting, and the target.
- An investigative, skeptical, inquisitive mindset is critical to successful threat assessment.
- Effective threat assessment is based upon facts, rather than on characteristics or "traits."
- An "integrated systems approach" should guide threat assessment inquiries and investigations.
- The central question in a threat assessment inquiry or investigation is whether a student *poses* a threat, not whether the student has *made* a threat.

When developing a threat assessment/social support team, additional findings

from the guide should be considered:

Incidents of targeted violence at school are rarely sudden, impulsive acts.

- Prior to most incidents, other people knew of the idea or plan.
- Most attackers did not threaten their targets directly prior to the attack.
- There is no accurate or useful "profile" of students who engage in targeted school violence.
- Most attackers engaged in some behavior, prior to the incident, that caused others concern or indicated a need for help.
- Most attackers had difficulty coping with significant losses or personal failures and many had considered or attempted suicide.
- Many attackers felt bullied, persecuted, or injured by others prior to the attack.
- Most attackers had access to and had used weapons prior to the attack.
- In many cases, other students were involved in the attack in some capacity.
- Despite prompt law enforcement responses, most attacks were stopped by means other than law enforcement intervention and most were brief in duration.



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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.

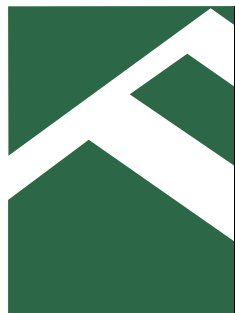
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Safe Communities ~ Safe Schools Annual Conference

CSPV staff would like to thank The Colorado Trust and the Colorado Division of Criminal Justice and those of you who attended our third annual conference on May 1 and 2. We were fortunate to have Del Elliott, Ken Salazar, David Hawkins and Jon DeStefano join us to give keynote addresses during the two-day event.



Safe
Communities
Safe
Schools
Annual Conference
2003

Workshop sessions included threat assessment, bullying prevention, homeland security, juvenile sex offenders, Colorado PTA, Greater Littleton Youth Awareness program, SROs and school safety, team building and strategic planning, gang awareness, funding opportunities, Blueprints programs and more.