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School Violence Resources

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DESCRIPTION OF SCHOOL VIOLENCE

In the United States, an estimated 50 million students are enrolled in pre-kindergarten through 12th grade. Another 15 million students attend colleges and universities across the country. While U.S. schools remain relatively safe, any amount of violence is unacceptable. Parents, teachers, and administrators expect schools to be safe havens of learning. Acts of violence can disrupt the learning process and have a negative effect on students, the school, and the broader community. Much of the information contained in this document can be located at <http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/youthviolence/schoolviolence/>

School violence is a subset of youth violence, and it is also a broader public health problem. Violence is the intentional use of physical force or power, against another person, group, or community, with the behavior likely to cause physical or psychological harm to others. Youth violence typically includes persons between the ages of 10 and 24 years, although pathways to youth violence can begin in early childhood. Examples of violent youth behaviors include bullying, fighting (e.g., punching, slapping, kicking), weapon use, electronic aggression, and gang violence. School violence occurs on school property, on the way to or from school, during a school-sponsored event, and/or on the way to or from a school-sponsored event. The following resources include additional information about school violence for counselors.

Journal of School Violence

This publication is a multi-disciplinary, quarterly journal that publishes peer-reviewed empirical studies related to school violence and victimization. Accepting a variety of social science methodologies, this international journal explores the broad range of contemporary issues centering on violence in the school environment. These issues often include, but are not limited to, the nature, extent, prevention, and consequences of school violence for students, teachers, and staff of all manner of educational systems.

Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS)

<http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/data/yrbs/index.htm>; The CDC monitors health-risk behaviors among youth, including physical fighting, bullying, weapon carrying, and suicide. Data are collected every two years and provide nationally representative information about youth in grades 9–12. This information helps with developing goals to improve youth's health and safety and to track progress.

Students Against Violence Everywhere

<http://nationalsave.org/>; The National Association of Students Against Violence Everywhere (SAVE), Inc. is a public nonprofit organization striving to decrease the potential for violence in our schools and communities by promoting meaningful student involvement, education and service opportunities in efforts to provide safer environments for youth.

School-Associated Violent Death Study (SAVD)

<http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/youthviolence/schoolviolence/savd.html>; The CDC, in collaboration with the Departments of Education and Justice, has been collecting data on school-associated violent deaths since 1992. SAVD presents the most recent data available on homicides and suicides that occur on school property, to and

from school, during school-sponsored events, or to and from school-sponsored events. Data obtained from this system plays an important role in monitoring and assessing national trends in school-associated violent deaths and can help inform efforts to prevent fatal school violence.

Academic Centers of Excellence on Youth Violence Prevention (ACEs)

<http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/ACE/index.html>; Through collaborations between researchers and local organizations (including the local health department and schools), the ACEs work with high-risk communities to carry out and evaluate a comprehensive, science-based approach for reducing youth violence.

Guide to Community Preventive Services

<http://www.thecommunityguide.org/violence/school.html>; The Community Guide is a resource for systematic reviews and recommendations about what works to improve public health, including what works to stop school and youth violence. Universal, school-based violence prevention programs are one of several violence prevention strategies that have been examined and are recommended because of their demonstrated effectiveness in decreasing rates of violence and aggressive behavior among school-age youth.

NEA Healthy Futures

<http://neahealthyfutures.org/about-us/our-mission-goals/>; NEA Healthy Futures is committed to student health and safety. Healthy students, educators, and learning environments are essential to great public schools. The organization supports the “whole child,” and believes that all students deserve the academic and nonacademic supports required to succeed in school and in life.

Treatment and Services Adaptation Center

<http://traumaawareschools.org/>; This center promotes trauma-informed school systems that provide prevention and early intervention strategies to create supportive and nurturing school environments.

STRYVE national initiative

<http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/STRYVE/index.html>; This initiative provides resources, training, and tools to help prevent youth violence with evidence-based approaches. The STRYVE Online connects schools and other community organizations to the latest resources that support the planning, implementation, and evaluation of a comprehensive youth violence prevention effort.

Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools

<http://cbitsprogram.org/>; The Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools (CBITS) program is a school-based, group, and individual intervention. It was designed to reduce symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and behavioral problems, and to improve functioning, grades and attendance, peer and parent support, and coping skills.

Electronic Aggression

<http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/youthviolence/electronicaggression/index.html>; Media technology, such as cell phones and the Internet, and electronic communication avenues, such as text messaging, chat rooms, and social networking websites, have many benefits as well as possible risks for students. The CDC summarizes for educators, researchers, and parents what is known about the possible risk of electronic aggression (cyber bullying) and potential prevention strategies.

IDENTIFICATION/ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES

The Virginia Student Threat Assessment Guidelines

<http://curry.virginia.edu/research/projects/threat-assessment/>; The Virginia Student Threat Assessment is the exemplary model of assessment strategies for counselors. This approach to violence prevention emphasizes early attention to problems such as bullying, teasing, and other forms of student conflict before they escalate into violent

behavior. School staff members are encouraged to adopt a flexible, problem-solving approach, as distinguished from a more punitive, zero tolerance approach to student misbehavior. The Virginia guidelines follow a seven-step decision-tree. In brief, the first three steps constitute a triage process in which the team leader (a school administrator such as the principal or assistant principal) investigates a reported threat and determines whether the threat can be readily resolved as a transient threat that is not a serious threat. Examples of transient threats are jokes or statements made in anger that include expressions of feeling or figures of speech, rather than expressions of a genuine intent to harm someone. The remaining four steps guide the team through more extensive assessment and response based on the seriousness of the threat. In the most serious cases, the team conducts a safety evaluation that includes both a law enforcement investigation and a mental health assessment of the student. The culmination of the threat assessment is the development of a safety plan that is designed to address the problem or conflict underlying the threat and prevent the act of violence from taking place.

INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

Counseling Services

Schools should provide or refer students to counseling services based upon each individual's needs. Topics for counseling that relate to school violence include emotional subjects, such as grief, anger management, or depression. Counselors can also focus on social development, exceptional students (e.g., gifted or disabled), academic endeavors, vocational needs, prenatal and reproductive information, gang awareness, general psychological difficulties, family health and wellness, and substance abuse. Each area requires different knowledge, skills, and abilities. The following resources can support counselor growth and learning when addressing potential issues of school violence.

Preventing and Responding to School Violence

- Provide counseling services in a manner consistent with national professional standards (e.g., National Association of School Psychologists, American Counseling Association, National Association of School Social Workers) regarding appropriate treatment and student-to-counselor ratios.
- 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 and to his or her problems.
- Ensure that counselors have adequate information about, and access to, community resources.
- Ensure parents, and/or guardians, and students are informed of the different types of counseling services available and know how they can obtain them.
- 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.

- Conduct a needs assessment to determine the types of conflicts that tend to occur and how they are best resolved.
- Select which conflict resolution programs would be most appropriate for the school (contact your school librarian or research options online)
- Find trainers to implement the program.
- Commence training at the earliest age-appropriate school level. Continue the training throughout students' education.
- Obtain support and involvement from faculty and parents and/or guardians.
- Teach conflict resolution to students by using activities incorporated into the curriculum and by having teachers and staff model appropriate behaviors.
- 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.

- Encourage faculty to teach and model positive social skills.
- 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.

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.

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