



# Bruised Inside

**What Our Children Say About Youth Violence,  
What Causes It,  
and  
What We Need to Do About It**

A Project of  
Washington Attorney General Christine Gregoire's  
Presidential Initiative on Our Children in the New Millennium



A Report of the  
**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION  
OF ATTORNEYS GENERAL**

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**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION  
OF ATTORNEYS GENERAL  
(NAAG)**

April 2000

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The **National Association of Attorneys General (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, and facilitates communication between the states' chief legal officers and all levels of government.

The Association's members are the Attorneys General of the 50 states and the chief legal officers of the District of Columbia (Corporation Counsel), the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and the Northern Mariana Islands, and the territories of American Samoa, Guam, and the Virgin Islands. The U.S. Attorney General is an honorary member.

Opinions expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of each and every member of NAAG.

“The violent kids are the ones who come from homes with anger. They’re angry about what goes on in their home . . . They’re angry to start with. They’re angry when they walk in the schoolhouse door.”

—an elementary school teacher

“There is another kind of violence, and that is violence by talking. It can leave you hurting more than a cut with a knife. It can leave you bruised inside.”

—a middle school girl



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# I. INTRODUCTION

Last year, under the leadership of Mississippi Attorney General Mike Moore, then President of the National Association of Attorneys General (NAAG), the state Attorneys General from all over the United States met and listened to professionals on school safety and youth violence. They told us how children who witness domestic violence are far more likely to become violent adults. They told us about the nurturing a child needs in his or her early childhood. They told us about the dire consequences of not receiving that nurturing. That information helped us begin to understand youth violence in our country, and laid the groundwork for our efforts over the past year.

This year, under the leadership of NAAG President Christine Gregoire from Washington State, we turned to the experts on the ground, the students, teachers, administrators and parents who live everyday with the fear of unthinkable violence, and work hard everyday to overcome it. Overwhelmingly, students from across the country told the Attorneys General during our listening conferences that the primary cause of youth violence lies in the home. The second cause, nearly all of them said, was the way students treat each other, and they cited bullying, “dissing,” harassing and outcasting as major contributors to youth violence. Parents, teachers and administrators generally confirmed the students’ observations.

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*Juveniles and young adults (12-24) are five times as likely to be victims of violent crime as are adults over 35.<sup>1</sup>*

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Turning to solutions, while the students usually welcomed whatever physical security measures their own schools had already enacted and discouraged any that were not already present at their schools, they also said youth violence would not be solved or significantly reduced until its root causes were addressed. Recognizing there is no one solution to the problem, the people who came to our listening conferences spoke highly of such efforts as peer mediation, after-school programs, and training to prevent bullying.

In this report, we chronicle these meetings with our youth, and with their parents, teachers, and school administrators, and describe our findings based on these meetings. We recommend steps that can be taken by parents, youth, schools, communities of faith and others to help prevent youth violence. Finally, we describe state by state the efforts that Attorneys General are already making to curb youth violence.

We hope this report will contribute to the national conversation about youth violence. We hope, in particular, that it will strike some as significant that the chief law enforcers of the states find that law enforcement by itself cannot possibly solve or prevent youth violence. Instead, we as a society need to get at the root causes of youth violence. We need to pay far more attention to how we raise and nurture our children, how we listen to them and what we hear, how we teach them to deal with problems, how we act as role models for them, and how we make them feel part of a community of people who care for and support one another. We hope the efforts of the NAAG, including this report and all the good work it describes, will further that goal.

## II. RECOMMENDATIONS: WHAT WE CAN DO TO HELP

As many have said, youth violence is not a problem that the government can solve. Although there is much that Attorneys General, schools, and others can do to help, the answer lies ultimately with the parents and students who make choices everyday whether to participate in the culture of violence, to take steps to overcome it or just to let it be. And while the primary responsibility lies with parents and students, the rest of us can surely help to keep our children safe and secure.

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*Every year more than 7 percent of high school students are injured or threatened with a weapon on school property.<sup>2</sup>*

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What follow are our recommendations for steps all of us can take to help solve the problem of youth violence in America today. It is our belief that many policymakers have missed the mark by focusing on seemingly simplistic solutions that ignore the realities of what our children and their parents are dealing with in the year 2000. What we offer are practical solutions for parents, students, schools, communities of faith, and other interested members of the community—and, yes, government officials—who want to take steps to make our children safer.

### A. What Parents Can Do

Parents can make the biggest difference. Most Attorneys General are parents, and we understand the unique challenges of being a parent in this new century. We recommend that parents do the following:

- (1) First, accept responsibility for raising one's children.
- (2) Listen to and hear our children.
- (3) Spend time with them.
- (4) Set boundaries.
- (5) Instill values including respect for others.
- (6) Acknowledge that all parents may sometimes need help, and take the initiative to get that help, such as by taking parenting classes.

- (7) Meet regularly for advice, information and support with other mothers and fathers, especially the parents of one's own children's classmates and friends.
  - (8) **Get to know and keep in touch with the children's teachers** - to learn valuable information about one's children's behavior in school, as well as make it easier for teachers to understand situations and issues with which the children may be struggling.
  - (9) **Be supportive of teachers and school officials** when they find it necessary to discipline your child. If you disagree with the discipline, express that disagreement directly to the teacher instead of undermining your child's respect for the teacher.
  - (10) **Pay attention to the movies and television** shows your children watch, the video games they play, and the music they listen to. Set aside a week and watch television together, noting what shows the children watch, then talk with them about the shows' content and the messages they send about behavior and values.
- ✓ In October 1999, for Tune Out the Violence Day, NAAG together with the YWCA released a Media Violence Inventory ([www.wa.gov/ago/pubs/violence\\_brochure.pdf](http://www.wa.gov/ago/pubs/violence_brochure.pdf)) that allows parents to work with their children to evaluate the level of violent content in the television programs, movies and video games their children watch during a given week.
- ✓ At the same time, NAAG with the Federal Trade Commission issued a wallet-sized card containing information on video game and movie rating systems. The card is designed to be carried by parents and others to use while shopping for games and movies for young people.
- (11) **Create a whole community of support for the child**, working with friends, one's own immediate and extended family, schools, community organizations, and communities of faith.
  - (12) **Try to find the time to serve as mentors**, coaches and after-school supervisors of others' children. Many parents not only find the experience rewarding, but learn they can make an enormous difference in the lives of the children they work with.

If all parents took these steps, most of our other recommendations would be unnecessary. We endorse the primacy of the family but we also recognize that our schools are over-flowing with children who do not get the love, support, guidance and acceptance they need from

their families. We have no intention of trying to replace families with government programs, but we also believe it is important, at a minimum, to provide a safe atmosphere for all of our children. This cannot be accomplished without attacking head on the root causes of violence. To that end, we must do our best as a community to provide some support, some structure, and a place to go for the lost, lonely, unguided youth in our midst.

## B. What Our Youth Can Do



Again and again in our listening conferences, young people said, "It's up to us." Indeed, youth violence is a problem that teens themselves can go a long way toward solving. To our youth, we make the following recommendations:

- (1) First, **take responsibility** for your own behavior.
- (2) **Respect others.** As one student told us, "make acceptance cool."
- (3) Break the vicious cycle of bullying and dissing. Make a decision **not to participate in outcasting**, bullying, intolerance or acts of violence.
- (4) Do all you can to **influence your peers and younger children against violence.**

✓ In New Jersey, students can participate in New Jersey Peer-to-Peer, a peer leadership program co-sponsored by Attorney General John J. Farmer, Jr. Now in its third year, this middle school program is designed to use the power of peer leaders and students' peer relationships to curtail drug use and school violence.

- (5) **Volunteer to be peer mediators** to resolve disputes in your own schools.

✓ Students in Indiana can participate in Project PEACE, a peer mediation program co-sponsored by Attorney General Karen Freeman-

Wilson and the Indiana State Bar Association. Parents, teachers, principals, and attorneys in more than 100 Indiana schools have received Project PEACE training.

- (6) **Serve as mentors** to younger children, many of whom respect, revere and follow the example set by teenagers.
  - (7) In some places, you can **serve as a civil rights worker** in your own school.
- ✓ Maine Attorney General Andrew Ketterer designates Civil Rights Teams in each grade at more than 100 schools. These teams of students and faculty advisers provide non-violence education and awareness for students and invite students to report incidents of harassment directly to them.
- (8) Finally, **break the deadly code of silence**. To protect yourselves, your peers and everyone else present in the school environment, you can recognize that the mature response to peers and others who bring weapons to school, participate in acts of violence or other crimes, or threaten to do so is to report them to school authorities.

## C. What Our Schools Can Do

While it is clear from our listening conferences that schools are not the cause of youth violence, it is equally clear that schools can do much to help solve the problem. We make the following recommendations for schools:

- (1) **Take responsibility** for making your school safe.
  - (2) Post **school resource officers** on campus.
- ✓ New Jersey Attorney General John J. Farmer, Jr.'s office has published a *Guide to Establishing a Safe Schools Resource Officer Program* to help educators and communities establish school-based police programs to decrease violence and increase security. It can be found at [www.state.nj.us/lps/dcj/agree.pdf](http://www.state.nj.us/lps/dcj/agree.pdf).
- ✓ In Florida, Attorney General Robert Butterworth sponsors and conducts trainings for School Resource Officers. Those officers who attend 130 hours of juvenile-related courses are eligible to be designated School Resource Office Practitioners.
- (3) **Train your teachers** to recognize early warning signs of violent youth.

- ✓ Attorney General Richard Ieyoub, together with the Louisiana Community Policing Institute, has provided school safety/violence prevention training in all 64 parishes in his state. Also, see *Early Warning, Timely Response: A Guide to Safe Schools*, published by the U.S. Dept. of Education and the U.S. Dept. of Justice (1998), [www.air-dc.org/cecp/guide/annotated.htm](http://www.air-dc.org/cecp/guide/annotated.htm).
  - (4) Beef up **physical security measures**—including some combination of ID badges, uniforms or dress codes, closed campuses, security cameras and metal detectors.
  - (5) Recognize and **attack head-on the root causes** of this violence, including intolerance, bullying, and unresolved conflict.
  - (6) Provide **constructive outlets** for the anger that many students inevitably bring from home, whether they be athletics, the arts, or other programs. Among other things, these programs recognize that every child has a need to belong and be accepted, and that for many this need is not fulfilled at home or in their neighborhood.
  - (7) Offer **full-day kindergarten**.
  - (8) Provide **after-school programs** where children can play and work together on worthy projects.
  - (9) Encourage **peer mediation and mentoring**.
  
- ✓ In Louisiana, Attorney General Richard Ieyoub is sponsoring a week-long camp to train middle and high school students in peer mediation and conflict resolution techniques.
  - (10) **Intervene** in high-risk or volatile situations in the schools.
  
- ✓ Massachusetts Attorney General Tom Reilly's office coordinates the development and implementation of Conflict Intervention Teams, experienced mediators who respond to school emergencies by helping resolve the underlying conflicts.
  - (11) **Identify early** the elementary students who are likely to cause future trouble and work with them to head off violence.
  
- ✓ Project O.A.S.I.S. (**O**hio's **A**ccelerated **S**chool-Based **I**ntervention **S**olution), an alternative school pilot program developed by Ohio Attorney General Betty D. Montgomery's office, identifies and assists youth in grades 4-7 who are at risk for increased delinquent behavior. The program incorporates in-school case management and an out-of-school suspension program.
  - (12) Institute **policies and procedures to deal with hate-based violence**.

- ✓ Attorney General Mike Hatch published a guide that outlines both short-term and long-term steps schools should take when they have experienced a hate incident. See “Not in Our Schools, Not in Our Towns, Not in Our State: Hate and Bias Crimes, A Rapid Response Guide for Minnesota Schools.”

(13) **Teach your students** not to engage in bullying but rather to **respect their peers’ differences**.

- ✓ West Virginia Attorney General Darrell McGraw, Jr. has worked with 12 high schools and middle schools in a year-long partnership initiative to prevent bias-motivated harassment and violence. Students receive training and support from faculty advisors, community advisors, and the Civil Rights Division, and conduct programs at each school. See also *Protecting Students from Harassment and Hate Crime: A Guide for Schools*, NAAG and the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights (1999), available at NAAG’s Web site, [www.naag.org](http://www.naag.org).

(14) **Provide protection** to teachers and other school officials for taking legitimate disciplinary actions.

(15) **Foster a sense of community** and a sense of trust so strong as to overcome the culture of bullying and even the code of silence.

(16) Teach students how to **set personal and career goals** and develop strategies to accomplish those goals.

(17) Provide more **counseling and mental health services** in school. Several teachers and administrators with whom we spoke said counseling needs to be available **beginning in elementary school**. They recommended identifying the troubled youth early on—experienced teachers all say they know who most of them will be—and offering services to them in partnership with parents and community organizations.





- (18) **Make a safety plan** encompassing all these elements, taking care to include parents, teachers, students, police, fire fighters, emergency managers, communities of faith, and interested members of the community in making and executing the plan.
- 

*“A safe school is in place when students can learn and teachers can teach in a welcoming environment, free of intimidation and fear. It is a setting where the educational climate fosters a spirit of acceptance and care for every child; where behavior expectations are clearly communicated, consistently enforced and fairly applied. Unlimited options and potential exist for safe school planning. It requires only the ability to get started.”*

*-Ron Stephens, Director,  
National School Safety Center<sup>3</sup>*

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- ✓ Colorado Attorney General Ken Salazar partnered with the University of Colorado Center for the Study and Prevention of Youth Violence in a one million dollar initiative to provide safe school planning assistance to Colorado’s 1500 schools and select 16 communities for a three-year in-depth review of causes and solutions in those communities.
- ✓ California Attorney General Bill Lockyer’s office, in partnership with the State Department of Education, provides schools with “Safe Schools: A Planning Guide for Action,” regional training on development of the plan, and volunteer technical assistance. Attorney General Lockyer also developed the “Crisis Response Box: Partnering for Safe Schools” Guide to preparing for a critical incident. See [www.caag.state.ca.us/cvpc](http://www.caag.state.ca.us/cvpc).
- ✓ NAAG makes available a number of materials designed to assist communities that wish to make safety plans for their schools. See NAAG’s Web site, [www.naag.org](http://www.naag.org). See also, It’s Our School: Some Practical Tools for School Safety, Washington State Attorney General Christine Gregoire and Superintendent of Public Instruction Dr. Terry Bergeson (1999), [www.wa.gov/ago/ourschool](http://www.wa.gov/ago/ourschool).

## **D. What Communities of Faith Can Do**

Communities of faith can be marvelous sources of people, energy, role models and values. For communities of faith that choose to join us in this endeavor, we recommend as follows:

- (1) **Take responsibility** to provide our youth with a connection to a community of caring individuals and families. As preexisting communities that include networks of friends and families and are typically centered around values of altruism, mutual support and community service, faith communities are particularly well set up to provide young people with the connection to a larger community that so many of them crave.
- (2) Communities of faith can also provide a ready supply of **positive adult and peer role models**.
- (3) They sometimes offer an array of **after-school, athletic, arts, community service and other programs** that not only occupy young people's time, but also inculcate good values, teach valuable interaction skills, and expose them, again, to positive, caring adult role models.
- (4) By their very nature, communities of faith also offer ongoing, inclusive programs for **instilling positive values of altruism and responsibility**.

We encourage communities of faith to join us in our efforts. We also encourage individuals and families who belong to a community of faith to turn that community's attention toward this effort to reach out to our youth.

## **E. What Community Organizations Can Do To Provide Resources to Youth**

Members of the community who care about children but are not parents, teachers, or administrators can nonetheless help solve the problem. We recommend that they:

- (1) **Volunteer to help with after-school programs**, which help reduce youth violence in a number of ways. They provide a relatively safe place for a child to go. They often provide harmless enjoyment and beneficial physical exercise. They keep young people occupied. And of course they provide sustained attention from positive adult role models.

- ✓ To their credit, a number of national organizations with a record of working well with children and teens have, over the past decade or so, launched initiatives to reach out to urban youth. These include the Boys and Girls Clubs of America, the Boy Scouts of America, Girls Incorporated, the Girl Scouts of the U.S.A., the National Association of Police Athletic Leagues, the National 4-H Council, and the YMCA of the U.S.A.

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*Most violent juvenile crimes are committed  
between 2:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m.<sup>4</sup>*

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- (2) Volunteer for **peer mediation programs**, which survive and sometimes thrive on volunteer help from members of the community. Experts all say that whether a child becomes a productive, socialized adult turns largely on whether he or she has at least one adult who provides that child sustained, positive attention. Our listening conferences affirmed the value of these programs.
- ✓ In Pennsylvania, volunteer mediators can participate in Attorney General Mike Fisher's Project PEACE (Peaceful Endings Through Attorneys, Children and Educators), a program that trains professionals to help children in their formative years learn how to change their behavior, control their anger and become peer mediators.
- ✓ Mississippi Attorney General Mike Moore established the Mississippi Mentoring Network, a non-profit organization to further promising practices in the areas of after-school, mentoring, and early childhood programs through training, information, and public service scholarships.
- ✓ Washington Attorney General Christine Gregoire founded LASER (Lawyers and Students Engaging in Resolution). LASER sends volunteer attorneys into high schools across the state to train students in peer mediation as an alternative to violence. LASER is now an independent nonprofit, but Attorney General Gregoire's office continues to provide LASER with office space and a part-time executive director.
- (3) Volunteer to **tutor and mentor children**.
- ✓ In 1999, Virginia Attorney General Mark Earley launched a program known as "2000 by 2000," an effort to mobilize 2000 new

volunteers to serve as mentors, tutors, and coaches for children around Virginia.

- (4) **Coach** teams.
- (5) **Teach useful skills** that children might not otherwise learn.
- (6) **Supervise** arts programs.
- (7) **Raise funds**.
- (8) **Contribute** needed funds.
- (9) **Serve on boards** and committees.
- (10) Act as a **big brother or sister**.
- (11) Most of all, just **spend some time with kids** and provide a role model of an adult who cares about them in a positive way.

## **F. What Communities Can Do To Provide Resources for Parents**

One theme we heard was that communities should do more to help parents. We recommend the following for communities that want to help:

- (1) Come together to **address how you can do more for parents** who want to do the right thing but need help making decisions about their children.
- (2) Simply **bring parents of children the same age together regularly** to discuss their children and the issues they face.
- (3) Provide a **hotline to give information and advice to parents**.
- (4) Allow **schools to serve as centers for parents** to gather and help one another. In that regard, the school we visited where the YMCA had moved right into the school might serve as a model. Most parents' lives revolve around their children, and most children's lives revolve around school, so it makes sense to bring services for children into the schools.
- (5) Offer **early childhood care and education programs: pre-natal care, training** for at-risk mothers, quality **child care**, community-based **intervention** for troubled families, and expedited **permanency planning** for children removed from abusive homes.

## G. What Law Enforcement and the Justice System Can Do

As Attorneys General, we value those who work with us in law enforcement for their wealth of experience, their unique knowledge of the problem of youth violence, and their pragmatism. There are a myriad of ways law enforcement can help with the task of reducing youth violence. We recommend that law enforcement agencies:

- (1) Offer **anonymous tip lines** on which students and others with knowledge may report threats, harassment, bullying, display of weapons in school, and other suspicious activities under the cloak of anonymity.
- (2) **Educate young people** about youth violence and its prevention, and the importance of respecting others.

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*Risk factors for violence include low birth weight, oxygen deprivation, physical trauma to infants, minor physical abnormalities and brain damage.*<sup>5</sup>

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- ✓ Utah Attorney General Jan Graham created a curriculum within the schools that focuses on child abuse prevention and provides intervention resources for children who have been victimized.
  - ✓ New York Attorney General Eliot Spitzer's office works to educate young people regarding dating violence and how to spot an abusive relationship.
  - ✓ Texas Attorney General Cornyn leads Gangs 101, a training program for parents and law enforcement that teaches warning signs, gang identifiers, and emerging trends.
- (3) Recommend that policymakers **reform the juvenile justice system** in part to ensure that early acts of juvenile delinquency trigger meaningful consequences for the offender.
- ✓ Kansas Attorney General Carla Stovall has proposed 72-Hour-Hold legislation that would require psychological evaluations of juveniles who are taken into custody for bringing a weapon to school or to a school-sponsored event.

- (4) **Share important information on violent juvenile crimes** with the offenders' schools so the schools can protect their students and employees. To the extent the law bars such sharing, recommend to policymakers that laws be modified to permit the reasonable exchange of information.
  - (5) **Train police officers** in: school violence, how to handle interactions with school administrators, teachers and students, how to conduct school security assessments, and how to assess and respond to school-related threats.
  - (6) **Patrol school grounds** and develop a school resource officer (**SRO**) program.
  - (7) Develop working **partnerships** with area schools. Consult with school officials about **school safety** and help them make **safety plans**. Provide examples of when to call the police. Help **screen employees** and staff-like volunteers.
  - (8) **Reduce truancy** by working with schools, parents, and students who are truant. **Visit** the truants' homes to see if their parents have been abusive or neglectful. **Enforce** truancy laws.
  - (9) Provide **assistance to children who are victims of crime or witnesses to crime**.
- ✓ Utah Attorney General Jan Graham established Children's Justice Centers to work directly with child victims on investigation and prosecution and to provide services to families.
- (10) Work with schools and relevant social service agencies to ensure that a young offender is given **access to resources** and every opportunity to reform.
- ✓ Two of the programs offered by Arizona Attorney General Janet Napolitano's Civil Rights and Conflict Resolution Section are (1) Victim-Offender Mediation in cases referred by juvenile courts and probation departments, and (2) Youth Mediation for disputes between youth involved in gang, pre-gang or other at-risk activities. Both programs involve cooperation between law enforcement agencies and other service providers.
- ✓ Delaware Attorney General M. Jane Brady's office has developed two school diversion programs for first offenders, one for those 13 and under, in which they go before a community panel and are given individual assignments, and the other for those 14 and over, who attend anger management and other classes and perform community service.

- ✓ In Iowa, Attorney General Tom Miller helps administer the Juvenile Court School Liaisons program, in which schools collaborate with the juvenile courts to work with youth who are at-risk, on probation, truant, or disruptive.
  - (11) While the climate in each state will dictate what is possible on this point, law enforcers should recommend to policymakers that they do all they can to ensure that any access by juveniles to **knives, firearms and other deadly weapons** is supervised, age-appropriate and responsible.
  - (12) Law enforcement agencies should **enforce laws against illegal gun sales** and **educate parents on firearm safety**, including the proper storage of weapons in the home.





### III. LISTENING TO OUR YOUTH

#### A. Introduction: Listening Conferences

In 1999, NAAG sponsored four national listening conferences. At the first, hosted by Mississippi Attorney General Mike Moore in Jackson in May, we heard from a cross-section of students including some from a school that had suffered a tragic shooting, and from experts in child development. The second, hosted by Tennessee Attorney General Paul Summers in Nashville last June, brought us in touch with once-troubled students whose lives had been turned around by



the Boys and Girls Clubs and their volunteers. At a third conference, this one hosted by Massachusetts Attorney General Tom Reilly in Boston in October, we heard from students and school administrators about an impressive array of programs in Massachusetts that had proven effective in preventing youth violence. At the final national listening conference, hosted by Arizona Attorney General Janet Napolitano in

Scottsdale in December, we heard from a diverse group of students about the causes of youth violence: their troubled home lives, the bullying they faced at school, and how those courageous young people had coped with all the adversity they had endured.

In addition to these national listening conferences, which were attended by state Attorneys General, Attorneys General held their own so-called listening conferences. Attorney General Gregoire's listening conferences were typical. At each conference, the Attorney General met separately with groups of students and administrators, and at most of the conferences she also met with teachers and parents. At the beginning of each of her conversations with students, Attorney General Gregoire told them we were listening first to the students, and that

what they said would be included in the report she and the other state Attorneys General would make to Congress, the President and the public. She went on to tell them she wanted to hear from them about the causes of youth violence and its solutions.

Attorney General Gregoire began most discussions of the causes of violence by asking what the students thought of the idea that violent video games, music and movies cause youth violence. Then, after the students had consistently dismissed that cause, she went on to ask, well, then, what are the real causes of youth violence? Time was reserved for a discussion of what solutions the students thought would make sense, and at the very end the Attorney General usually asked for comments and a show of hands on a list of about a dozen proposed solutions to youth violence.

The next section of this report focuses on what all the Attorneys General heard at these listening conferences—mostly from the students, but also from their teachers, parents and school administrators—about youth violence, its causes and its solutions. Despite their profound racial, economic and geographic diversity, the students were remarkably consistent in the views they expressed.

## **B. Causes of Youth Violence**

Students, parents, teachers and administrators consistently told us the main cause of youth violence is found in a child's home. Second, they said, is the way students treat each other—bullying, dissing, and harassing being major contributors to youth violence. Other causes of youth violence were cited: drugs and alcohol, access to weapons, lax disciplinary and juvenile justice systems, and, at least according to teachers and parents, violent video games and movies. However, students, parents, teachers and administrators spoke so overwhelmingly of parents and bullying that our report focuses on those two main causes. What follows is our account of what we heard—on those subjects and others—at our listening conferences.

### **1. "It All Starts in the Home:" How Parents Treat Their Children**

"It all starts in the home," said one middle school boy in Washington when asked about the causes of youth violence. "It begins in our homes," said a high school student from Colorado. "We need to have parents teaching us the right morals and the right values." Another teen added, "The thing that molds us the most is our family, or lack thereof." And in Arkansas, one boy said, "It starts at home. If you get knocked in the head at home, it's nothing to come to school and knock somebody in the head."

As it turned out, nearly every person who attended our listening conferences agreed with that view. While agreeing that most kids turn out just fine, and expressing admiration and sometimes sympathy for the majority of parents who do their best, nearly everyone agreed that the main cause of youth violence is found in the home of a child. "The problems of some students go back to their home life," said a parent in Louisiana. "Moms and dads need to teach their children right from wrong," said one youth. "I don't think it is a school's responsibility to pick up the pieces of what's gone wrong at home." A middle school boy put it plainly when he said, "If you come from a loving home, you're not going to go out and shoot people and stuff."

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*In homes where domestic violence occurs, children are physically abused and neglected at a rate 15 times higher than the national average.<sup>6</sup> In 60 to 75% of families in which a woman is battered, children are also battered.<sup>7</sup> "More than 3.3 million children witness physical and verbal spousal abuse each year," ranging "from insults and hitting to fatal assaults with guns and knives."<sup>8</sup> In some areas of the United States, more than half the calls for police assistance are for domestic disturbances."<sup>9</sup>*

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We heard from too many kids who live with violence in the home. In one group of students, only four of 27 had not seen violence in the home. "The kids are used to violence at home," said a middle-school teacher. "They're relieved to come here and get away from it." Some students said school was the only place they ever felt safe. One teacher agreed, saying, "The younger kids cry when school gets out for the summer. They feel safe here but at home they're afraid all the time."

People repeatedly commented that violence in the home teaches kids that the only way to solve their problems is through violence. That prompted numerous teachers and administrators and one police chief to observe that they knew which first, second and third graders

were going to land in jail years later for acts of violence. “The violent kids are the ones who come from homes with anger,” one elementary school teacher told us. “They’re angry about what goes on in their home. . . . They’re angry to start with. They’re angry when they walk in the door.”

Comments from students made it clear the problem may go far beyond parents merely neglecting to spend time with their children or set appropriate boundaries. “The only thing I knew growing up was to throw something, or to hurt myself—so I just wondered what the other solution could be,” said a high school girl. “My parents taught me violence.” In Arizona, another girl said, “My dad taught me to just fight them back. He’d get mad, and—well, there’s a lot of holes in the walls. I left home to live with my mom. I couldn’t live with my dad. It was too violent there.”

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*Early stimulation and nurturing is necessary to proper development of the human brain. Trauma during the early years impedes brain development and makes it more difficult for individuals in later years to establish positive relationships with others.* <sup>10</sup>

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Violence in the home and neighborhood can carry over to the school. “When a child doesn’t feel safe, they bring that unsafeness to school” according to one high school boy in Massachusetts. “One kid brings a gun, another kid feels unsafe and then he brings a knife. Adults don’t understand that. Some kids aren’t safe at home.” Talking about the impact of home life on youth violence, a middle school girl said, “It starts in the home. People make fun of their own kids, their families abuse them. It’s not the only cause of youth violence, but. . . . It’s like a tributary to a river. It just feeds it.”

But it is not enough just to have a nonviolent home. A common theme was that kids need parents or other adults who will teach them life skills, listen to them, accept them, take an interest in their lives, and give them a sense of belonging. “Many of the problems we have are happening with kids who are not being parented,” one school official said.

Kids reminded us how difficult it is to grow up, especially today. “When you have a lot of questions you need people around who can give you good answers,” one student said. “It’s not just that

there's someone to talk to," said one girl, "it's that there's someone who hears what you say." Even if there are other negative influences, one middle school girl said, "It comes back to the home. If you don't have the attention and support, you're going to have a lot of anger." One school official put it simply: "If every child had one person to talk to, there would be a lot less problems in the world."

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*Children aged 9 to 12 who were previously known to the child welfare system—due to at least one investigation of child abuse or neglect within their families—were 67 times more likely to be arrested than other children the same age.*

*—from a study in Sacramento County in 1994*<sup>11</sup>

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The importance of a sense of belonging was repeatedly mentioned. "The main thing is belonging and acceptance," an administrator in Washington told us. "If you don't feel you're accepted, you're going to strike out. . . . The main thing is for there to be someplace for all of us to belong."

Another person noted that for most kids, the need for a sense of belonging comes from the family, "but today, more than ever, that need is not being met in too many families."

We heard often that a sense of belonging or "being connected" is critical because it helps establish values, gives a child an important place to turn when they encounter problems, and helps kids accept themselves for what they are. "We see too many kids who aren't connected," one school official said. "They don't have a family or someone to help them establish values, and when they get disconnected, they become outcasts."

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*Adolescents spend only 4.8% of their time with their parents and 2% with adults who are not their parents.*<sup>12</sup>

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Another common theme was the lack of involvement by some parents in their children's lives. "Parents have to get involved in their

kids' lives," one frustrated teacher told us. A high school student who is now a peer mediator said, "My life encompasses all that's been said. It started out as crap. . . . My mom started out with a bad effect on me. She worked swing shift, I didn't see her a lot, just saw babysitters, so I didn't have anyone to talk to, and I had to bottle it up."

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*40% of adolescents' time is spent in "discretionary activities"—that is, time spent doing something other than eating, working, going to school or doing homework—and many young people spend almost all that time "without companionship or supervision by responsible adults." 13*

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Another high school boy spoke of how he and his father have become closer, but he still regrets his father's distance during the boy's early childhood. "My dad and I never had a close relationship when I was little. Now he's trying to talk to us, because he's scared that he's losing his family because we're getting older and starting to move out. And even though the conversations are pointless, I cherish those conversations with my dad. I'll listen to whatever he wants to talk about." But, he added wistfully, he wished his father had paid more attention to him when he was little. "I envy families who have that, who know how important conversations are."

The discussion of parents neglecting their children was punctuated by references to loneliness. "The number one problem kids have is that they're lonely," said a high school teacher. "We try to personalize, so every kid has some connection to some adult." His principal added, "I don't think kids will do good work for you until they know how much you care about them."

The connection between youth violence and the lack of love at



home was demonstrated in heartbreaking terms by the 15-year old boy who described how he had joined a gang. At his initiation he was forced to stand and endure a vicious, two-minute beating from other gang members. Asked later why he submitted to that treatment, the boy said, "I knew this was going to hurt really bad, but I felt that if I could take it for just a couple of minutes, I'd be surrounded by people who loved me."

Several of the children (described in the next section of this report) who related past experiences of being bullied in school dwelled in particular on the loneliness of the experience—no friends, no one to talk to, nowhere to turn. And the young man who said his early life had been "crap" attributed it mostly to the fact that because of his mother's work schedule, he rarely saw her and had no one to talk to.

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*Risk factors for violence by children include "parents' failure to set clear expectations for their children, failure to supervise and monitor children's behavior, and excessively severe, harsh, or inconsistent parenting." 14*

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It is not enough for parents to listen and be available to their kids, people repeatedly told us. They also have to set boundaries. One boy appealed to parents to set more boundaries. "What's in is in, and your parents should limit that," he said. "If you're going to make the wrong decisions with tattoos all over your body, that's just going to bring you down. If you're out hanging out with friends who are smoking dope and doing drugs, that's going to bring you down." "We don't teach ethics to our children," complained one teacher. "My son gets it in Tae Kwon Do. Nowhere else." Another teacher, speaking of children who arrive at school angry about their home life, said, "We *try* to help those kids. But some come from families with *no* boundaries or values. No restrictions on what games they play, what they watch on TV, when they go to bed, where they go, how much money they spend."

Several administrators said it is more and more difficult to discipline students because the parents increasingly challenge any discipline that is imposed. "Parents won't take responsibility," one vice-principal complained. "You discipline their children and they come in with their lawyers." One middle-school teacher said, "I'm more afraid of the parents than the students. One father barged into my classroom in the middle of class and started yelling at me, 'How dare you punish my child?'"

School officials responsible for discipline were frustrated by

some parents' failure to teach values, set boundaries, and instill a respect for civility. "Too many families have a litany of excuses and a real lack of responsibility for a child's behavior," one school official said. Another added, "Far too many parents want to be friends with their kids and they don't realize it takes time and effort to apply discipline."

Some administrators also were bothered by parents not taking an interest in their children's academic success. One middle school assistant principal commented, "Many of the discipline problems that I come in contact with daily are directly related to frustration and lack of success in school. . . . It is rare for a student who is actively involved in school activities, and successful in academics, to have discipline problems."

While agreeing that parents are uniquely influential, several students argued that parental influences can be overcome, and that the ultimate responsibility for how a young person acts rests with that young person alone. Some teens said they had learned from the mistakes their parents had made. "My mother had me at 18, and told me later how tough it was for her," said a high school girl. "So I won't do that." Others said they had decided on their own to go a different way. "Lots of crazy parents produce good kids," said one high school boy. "You can decide not to be like your parents. But," he conceded, "there's more opportunity for things to go wrong if the parents are bad." A high school boy added, "My parents influence me, my friends, and I mix that all together and bake a cake of my own making. It's their influence and my ideas."

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*"Young adolescents do not want to be left to their own devices. In national surveys and focus groups, America's youth have given voice to serious longing. They want more regular contact with adults who care about and respect them." 15*

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Many students spoke of the counseling and friendship they offered to their peers who were struggling at home. Others talked of how much the support of their peers or adults other than their parents had meant to them when they were dealing with a difficult home life. One high school senior said, "I've learned most of my being a man from counselors." Still others described their own homes as a refuge from the harsh world outside. "Peers matter," said a high school student, "but you can still go home and talk to your parents. And they can guide you through choices you think you can make."



## 2. “Bruised Inside”: How Our Youth Treat Each Other

Nearly everyone from whom we heard cited bullying and the way peers treat each other as the second major cause of youth violence. “I know someone said that sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me,” said a middle school student in Arizona, “but that’s a lie.” Whatever the bully’s motivations, the links between bullying and violence were clear to the students we heard from. They said verbal bullying encourages physical violence toward those who are bullied. And, students told us, young people who have been bullied and tormented but have no one to talk to about it, no way to express their feelings, and no way to escape the harassment, are sometimes the ones who explode.

The point that bullying can be a precursor to physical violence was made by a student whose parents had emigrated from another country. The girl told us she had been harassed and “dissed” daily by her peers. She reported the bullying to school officials, who did nothing. She told her parents, who “listened but did not hear.” One day her classmates threw tampons at her on the school bus and told her they were going to beat her up. She reported the threats to the bus driver, who laughed it off. The other girls then followed her off the school bus and beat her as the bus driver watched approvingly, giving a “Rocky Five victory sign” when they had finished battering the girl. “One of [them] held me from behind while the other pummeled me, while 20 of my friends watched, and no one did anything,” the girl said. “I didn’t hit her once. It went on three or four minutes.” Finally a woman driving by, a neighbor of the girl, got out of her car and made them stop. “My shirt was covered with blood. . . . My life changed, I was in counseling for a while. I depended on the adult to protect me, and I made a mistake by doing that. So what does that say? I was in the hospital, my eyes were swollen shut for days.”

Incidents of bullying, like the ridiculing that the girl on the bus endured for years before her beating, were described as pervasive. At some of our schools, nearly every student said he or she had been bullied or harassed at some point. “Kids spend half their lives in a setting where they are bullied,” one administrator told us. Students at some schools said bullying occurs constantly and is a major cause of violence. Elementary school teachers said bullying occurs there in every grade but becomes more brutal and more violent in the later grades.

The immigrant girl who was beaten after leaving the school bus illustrates the violent harassment that we heard was often aimed at students because of their race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. A high school student said, “I have a friend who’s gay who was beaten up many times last year, and threatened.” Another girl at the same school

said her boyfriend, who she said was bisexual and gothic, “was followed down the hall from one class to the other by jocks calling him ‘faggot, faggot, faggot.’” She said they “got his schedule” and would meet him at one classroom and follow him all the way to the next one, repeating “faggot, faggot, faggot. . . . He finally dropped out.”

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*“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/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 accepted as a way of life.”*

*—International Association of Chiefs of Police, Guide for Preventing and Responding to School Violence (1999)*

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An African-American girl, now in high school, related how all through middle school she was harassed because of her race. A high school boy originally from Turkey said that when he first moved to the United States, he wore the same clothes he’d worn back home and found that he was taunted as “gay, because my pants were tight.”

A number of people linked bullying to what they saw as an atmosphere of intolerance in our society. “Hatred and racism are rampant in the United States,” said a teacher from a racially diverse high school. “I took a swastika flag from a quiet kid who sat alone and bothered no one,” added one of her colleagues. At one high school that reported a high level of violence, students told us the bulk of the violence was inspired by antipathy toward either gays or Native Americans. Complaining about their community’s reputation for hurling racial epithets at sporting events, one student said, “Other schools don’t want to come here to play us. Even their cheerleaders get taunted.”

One high school boy offered, “The only people I fear are the Indians. . . . They all stick together.” “They all dress alike, too,” added a classmate. Some of the girls said when they go to a big city to go

shopping, "it's hard not to stare at the black people. We have almost none of them here." A classmate said that at a gathering of student leaders from many high schools, they discussed each school's reputation. He was told that his school was known primarily for its racism.

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*Maine Attorney General Andrew Ketterer's Civil Rights Division noticed that half of all hate crimes reported to that office were committed by juveniles. They studied these incidents and found that the most severe, violent hate crimes were nearly always preceded by years of bullying.* <sup>16</sup>

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Students and their teachers spoke eloquently about the advantages of learning and teaching in a culturally diverse environment. One teacher said the effect of diversity "is that it creates a more open dialogue about everything. Also, your stereotypes get shattered overnight." A colleague agreed, "The dialogue is allowed to be as vibrant as the cultures." Another teacher said it is difficult to teach tolerance in the absence of diversity. "You can read the lines in the book," he said, "but until you go out there, you're not going to understand."

While the worst and most violent tales of harassment and bullying focused on persons of disability or those whose race, sexual orientation, nationality, or religion was outside the "mainstream," many students, teachers and administrators agreed that bullying can be based on almost any characteristic. In our listening conferences, we heard from students who were bullied not only because they were African-American, gay, Turkish or Ethiopian, but also because of their weight, their height, their gender, their religion, their appearance, their glasses, their hair, their accent, or the fact that they were new in town. Some seemed to have been bullied simply because they appeared unlikely to fight back, or because they happened not to belong to whatever group was doing the bullying. One high school boy reported that in grade school, he had been taunted and ostracized because he was "skinny."

In addition to other cultural biases, several adults and some students decried what one called, "jock culture," saying it contributed to bullying, and to feelings of inferiority by those without athletic talent. "Our heroes are athletes," lamented one teacher. Some said star athletes received special treatment from certain teachers, and felt this double standard contributed to bullying of non-athletes by "the jocks."

A high school girl from Massachusetts said popular athletes get away with sexual harassment completely, good students get a “slap on the wrist,” and those who are neither athletes nor good students are disciplined more severely. One parent said athletic programs do a lot of good but the schedule of holiday practices, team dinners and other events seriously interfered with her family’s attempts to spend time together. A middle school administrator, describing her school’s effort to refrain from glorifying athletes, said, “It’s about breaking down the hierarchy.” She said her daughter attended a school where “there’s this whole aura around athletes.” One of the schools we visited displayed large photographs of current athletic stars in a prominent place near the school entrance, but students whose achievements lay in other areas were not shown.

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*California Attorney General Bill  
Lockyer’s report, 1998 Hate Crime in  
California, states that 89% of hate crimes  
against individuals were motivated by  
race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation.*<sup>17</sup>

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Some school leaders said they made a conscious effort to reduce the role of athletes in the culture of their schools. “There are jocks here but it’s not us versus them,” one high school teacher told us. “Lots of our kids are in sports; very few of our teams cut anyone. A lot depends on the coaches’ attitude—ours are not ‘red meat’ kind of people.” School leaders made it clear they were not questioning the importance of athletic programs, which they said serve a valuable purpose especially for disadvantaged or troubled youth.

Students everywhere spoke eloquently of the tremendous harm done by harassment. A high school girl was in tears as she described the outcasting and bullying she had suffered—in third grade, eight years earlier. “They wouldn’t leave me alone,” she said. “I was in third grade and I had no friends. I came home crying every day. I’m still angry with the people who did it....If my parents hadn’t been there, I would have done something. I contemplated death.”

“I was known as ‘elephant girl’ in grade school,” a high school girl in Washington reported. “A teacher called me that. I had almost no friends. It’s really damaging. At seven, I was calling up my dad and saying I felt like killing myself.”

“There is another kind of violence,” said one middle school girl, “and that is violence by talking. It can leave you hurting more than a cut with a knife. It can leave you bruised inside.” A teacher cautioned that “We can’t forget the emotional safety of our kids.”

Bullies “don’t know how much they’re hurting the people they’re putting down,” one middle school boy told us. “It either makes you stronger or it breaks you,” a high school student said. “If you treat people like dirt, like nothing, that’s how you’re going to feel,” one youth admitted. “When you get teased constantly it doesn’t help your state of mind and it can get to you, especially if you don’t have someone to turn to,” another student said. Added another, “You weaken a student’s spirit when you talk to him or her negatively.”

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*Experts agree that “[b]ullying is a precursor to antisocial or aggressive behavior. . . . When rough and tumble play persists in pursuit of domination, it becomes bullying.”*<sup>18</sup>

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Even kids from the strongest homes have difficulty dealing with the teasing and ridicule. “Students don’t know how to deal with the pain and discomfort,” one student said. Students differed on how they deal with bullying. One reported he had been bullied all through school. “You either let that make you or break you,” the boy said deliberately. “. . . I’ve chosen to make something of myself and reach my goals. It’s all about being somebody.”

An African-American girl who had been harassed all through middle school said, “I tried to motivate myself to say, ‘They don’t know me.’” A boy said, “Whoever came up with the phrase, sticks and stones will break my bones but words will never hurt me—was VERY wrong. I got teased a lot. My strong Christian faith is what kept me going.”

At one middle school, nearly all the students said they had been picked on and harassed. Most said they usually chose to walk away, while others would pull a knife or fight. All of them acknowledged there is tremendous “peer pressure to fight back.” Compounding the problem is that kids from violent homes often don’t know how to solve their problems without violence. One teacher reported, “Most of my kids react aggressively when dissed, but some respond differently. The ones who react negatively, that’s how their parents are too.”

Most of the students said that when they were bullied, it helped them to have a friend or parent they could talk to about it—preferably a friend. “They want that comforting from their peers,” said one middle school girl. “It’s easier to talk to your friends,” another said. “Parents are way older, and just say, ‘that wouldn’t have happened when I was your age.’” The mother of the girl who was beaten by her classmates after getting off the school bus said, “She told me about the

bullying, and I did listen to her. I listened but I didn't hear."

Compounding the effects of bullying is the overwhelming fear of retaliation if incidents of bullying are reported to the authorities.

"Fear of retaliation is huge," one teacher told us. "These kids are so scared of the kids who are already bullying them." Several others mentioned this fear. A public health coordinator said, "We have to create a culture where kids don't feel like they're tattling, but where kids feel they're helping to create a safer school."

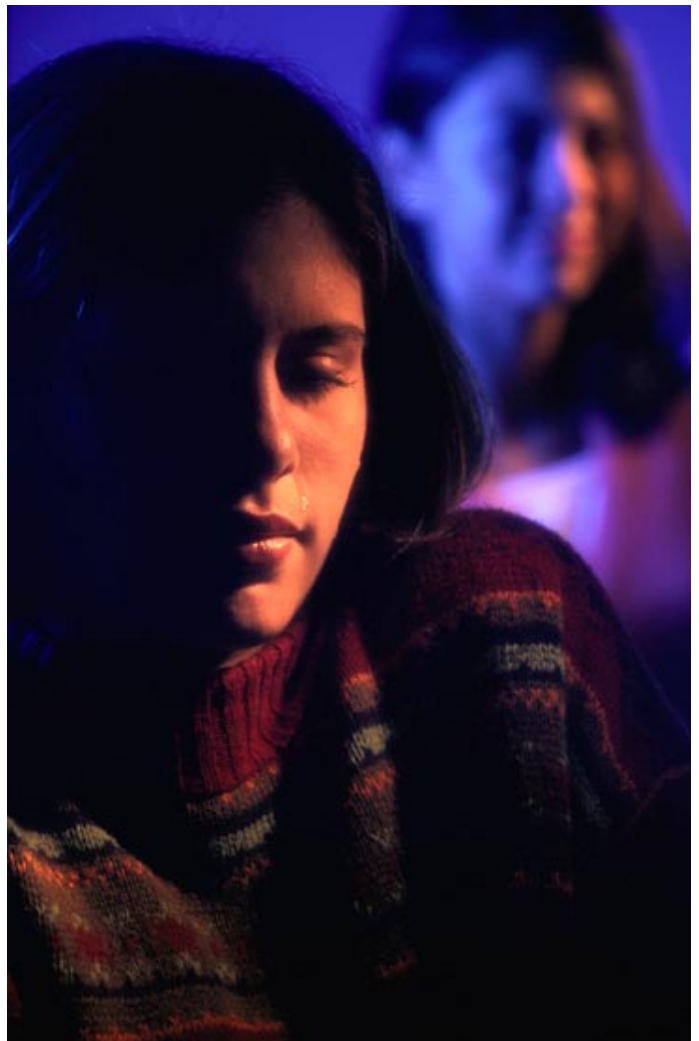
One group of students after another admitted that for the most part they would be unwilling to report incidents of bullying and even violence that they were aware of. In part they attributed this to fear of retaliation, but they also said it was because of a strong bias against reporting their peers to adults: their own "code of silence." At one middle school, a student called in a bomb threat. It turned out he had told several classmates in advance but none had reported him. "They don't want to be a snitch," said a student at that school. "They don't want to tell on anyone. That's sort of a code we have." This "code of silence" was lamented again and again by teachers, and sometimes by administrators who seemed completely unaware of the widespread bullying and harassment their students had just finished telling us about.

Nearly everyone agreed more needs to be done to prevent bullying and to help kids cope with it. One teacher asked, "We discipline the bullies, but what do we do for the victims?" Added another school official, "We need to help, educate and empower those who don't fit in."

### **3. "It Puts the Idea in Your Head:" Video Games, TV, Movies and Music**

A clear generational split emerged on the issue of video games, television, movies and music. Nearly all the students disagreed with the view that video games and movies cause youth violence, but the ensuing discussion revealed that many of them felt the media play some role in promoting violence and desensitizing them to violence.

In dismissing the notion that video games cause youth violence,



at least one student at each school argued that, as one put it, "I've played the games. I'm not going to go out and chop somebody's head off." Another said, "I've never beat somebody up or shot somebody." They said acting violently was the individual's own choice, not forced upon them by the media, and that "if you come from a loving home, you're not going to go out and shoot people and stuff." A girl who had lived in Japan for a year said television there is more violent, but the society is far less violent.

While they disagree that videos, music and games cause violence, students do concede that the media are not completely irrelevant. Some agree that video games, movies and television can desensitize them to violence. "I came from a split home," said one. "That made me angry and violent, not videos. But they do desensitize."

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*By 18, the typical American child has seen 200,000 acts of violence including 16,000 simulated murders.*<sup>19</sup>

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In addition, a larger group felt video games, movies and television might provide the method to those already predisposed to acts of violence. "If I decide to do something, TV and movies might tell me *how* to do it," one student admitted. "It puts the idea in your head," another said. Several students felt movies and video games could inspire kids to violence if they were already "unstable," or simply more "vulnerable." Some said students who are "outcast" are among those who are more vulnerable to the media's effects. "They're turning to the TV for the friend or parent they don't have," said one. Students at two different schools pointed to violence portrayed in the news as a big problem, in part because it made heroes of students who had acted violently. "They want to be part of history," said one girl, "like Hitler. He wasn't a hero, but he is in the history books."

Several students, especially those in high school, said that while they and their peers are mostly impervious to the influence of video games, they are concerned about the effects on their younger brothers and sisters. "My ten-year old brother is inside playing video games, not outside playing basketball like he used to," said one student. Another complained that his little brother "acts out video games." One young man reported that his little brother had cut his lip while imitating a Ninja, requiring stitches at the emergency room. "Parents need to censor the television shows their children are watching," said a student in Louisiana. The opposite view was expressed by a high school student who said that playing video games was "a stage I went through" with no effect. "An average person would screen it out," he said.

Overall, students felt the role of video games, television and movies in causing youth violence had been greatly exaggerated, but might influence younger children to act out, and might play some role in providing ideas and motives to those whose personal problems caused them to be predisposed to commit acts of violence.

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*“The debate is over. Over the last three decades, the one overriding factor on the mass media is that exposure to media portrayals of violence increases aggressive behavior in children.”<sup>20</sup>*

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School administrators and teachers, however, felt strongly that violent movies and video games have created and exacerbated all sorts of problems. They said violent media make it more difficult to establish an atmosphere of nonviolent civility in school, encouraged children who already have problems to act out their antisocial instincts, and make it harder to establish appropriate boundaries in school. Those who have devoted substantial time and energy to reducing the level of violence and bullying in school were particularly frustrated, saying they felt they were always having to struggle against the power of the media.

Most students either were unaware of video game rating systems or said they used them to buy the games that were meant for older children. Students, parents and teachers agreed the ratings are somewhat useful to parents but that for students, the ratings either are not useful or they backfire by providing incentive for teens to purchase the most violent games and movies.

Although students strongly disagreed, many parents and teachers said some of the music young people listen to is a contributing factor to youth violence. Teachers in particular were upset about music that directly advocates killing and rape, demeans women, and glorifies violence, particularly violence against women, police or minorities. One parent said, “Of course music is a cause of youth violence. It makes dissing ok. It makes violence ok.” School administrators lamented the effects of popular music on their efforts to create a civil atmosphere in their schools.

#### **4. Other Causes of Youth Violence**

Beyond home life, bullying, and violence in the media, participants in our listening conferences pointed to a number of additional causes for youth violence.



**Drugs and alcohol** came up several times, especially in the context of substance abuse by parents and its effects on their children. While it is not surprising that students did not raise the issue of their parents' substance abuse in front of their peers, teachers suggested that children of alcoholics and those with other drug problems seem more angry and out of control. One community member who works with children said the children who come from drug-abusing homes do not develop emotionally as well, do not become socialized as easily, and are themselves more likely to start using drugs and alcohol at an early age.

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*“Alcohol is implicated in over half of all homicides and of assaults in the home. Parents who abuse alcohol (and illicit drugs) are more prone to be physically abusive and neglectful of their children.”*<sup>21</sup>

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Second, a number of teachers said they were intimidated by their students' easy **access to weapons**. “Kindergartners bring knives to school,” said one. Another added, “I have a student who received a gun for his eighth birthday.” Yet another reported that when he asked his middle school students how long it would take them to locate and acquire a gun, one said “about half an hour” and the rest agreed. The easy access to weapons seemed to contribute to teachers' fears of their students, and to students' fears of each other. “I had a student tell me he did not expect to reach his 20<sup>th</sup> birthday,” said one middle school teacher. “He expected that he would die violently while he was still a teenager.

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*Every day, 5,000 teachers are threatened with physical assault and 200 are actually attacked.*<sup>22</sup> *Middle and junior high school teachers are more likely to be victims of violent crime than senior high teachers.*<sup>23</sup>

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Third, administrators and especially teachers complained about the inadequacy of **school disciplinary systems**. They felt this way all the more acutely because of their perception that parents are increasingly unwilling to impose boundaries and to discipline their children.

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When the school does impose discipline, teachers at several schools said, the parents don't support them and frequently take the side of their students in appealing the discipline. One teacher said it's difficult to stop "dissing" because of "the due process thing. Kids are getting more rights, and the rights are moving in the direction of the harasser." He concluded it is very difficult to take action in a case of student-to-student harassment.

Fourth, compounding the perceived weaknesses in the student discipline system, we heard that the **juvenile justice** system in some states is regarded as "a joke," easily manipulated, and far too tolerant of first and relatively minor offenses committed by younger children. "Kids *want* to go to (the local juvenile detention facility)," said one middle school teacher. "It's warm and the food is good. It has cable tv and ping pong and video games." Teachers at two schools said the ankle bracelet that some juvenile offenders wear for monitoring is "a badge of honor. They brag and show them off," she said.

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*"Juvenile justice is still a largely self-contained system. Once in the system, youths are unlikely to be put in contact with other agencies."* <sup>24</sup>

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Other speakers attributed youth violence to a myriad of causes. **Mental illness** was mentioned several times, especially as it relates to children joining gangs, and the shortage of mental health counselors in the schools, especially at the elementary level, was cited. Other parents and some teachers mentioned "taking God out of the schools," a lack of arts programs and other activities for non-athletes, the two-parent working family, and poor nutrition ("some kids eat six candy bars and an espresso for lunch") as additional causes of youth violence.

And summarizing all the comments about parents, children and families, one community leader who attended a listening conference said, "Society is broken. We expect the schools to fix that." His local school superintendent added, "The schools have a part to play, but we won't solve it."

## **5. "I Know They'll Take a Bullet For Me:" Feeling Unsafe in School**

We asked students and teachers from several schools a simple question: Do you feel safe in school? At most of the schools, all but one or two of the students said, "yes." "Once I got to high school, it

was like heaven to me,” said one student. “Everybody treats you with respect, and no one makes fun of you.” A girl at the same school said that there, students are “pretty tolerant. The future is in our hands, and it’s up to us to take it. We have to make it clear tolerance is critical.”

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*Less than one percent of homicides of school-age children occur at or near school or while the child is going to or from school.*<sup>25</sup>

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Experts tell us that even though the rate of school violence has declined, and students are far less likely to be injured or killed at school than they are at home or on the streets, the percentage of students who feel unsafe in school has held steady. Four percent of students say they have missed at least one day of school during the preceding month because they felt unsafe there.<sup>26</sup> And studies of young people with pre-existing academic or discipline problems show that those who feel a high degree of vulnerability to physical attack are, in turn, more likely to commit acts of violence.<sup>27</sup> In other words, feeling unsafe is itself a cause of youth violence.<sup>28</sup>

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*While school-associated violent deaths have decreased steadily since 1992-93, the number of “multiple-victim events” has increased from an average of one per year to five per year.*<sup>29</sup>

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At the schools we visited in high-crime areas, nearly all the students agreed they felt safer in school than in the surrounding neighborhood. Several students attributed their feelings of safety to their trust in those around them. One smaller than average middle school student said, “You never know if someone will be upset and threaten you.” But, he continued, “teachers walk around, guards walk around.” And, he added, “I have friends I feel good about. . . . I have friends, I know they’ll take a bullet for me and they know I’ll take a bullet for them.” Young people who felt unsafe also tended to express that feeling in terms of their trust—or lack of trust—in the people around them. “I didn’t trust the principal or the teachers,” said a high school student in Colorado. “I didn’t trust anybody.”

The one high school where students said they did not feel safe was one where they reported a high rate of fighting and ethnic tension in the school. There, half the students said they felt unsafe.

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*Nationally, one in 12 high school students surveyed—including one in 8 boys—had carried a gun, knife or club at school during the month preceding the survey.*<sup>30</sup>

*In New Haven, 41% of sixth-, eighth-, and tenth-grade students reported seeing someone shot or stabbed in the preceding year.*<sup>31</sup>

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Parents in some cases also expressed fear for their children's safety. "My son never used the restroom in four years in high school," one mother told us. "He was afraid of what would happen to him if he went in there." Her daughter, now a college student, added, "High school is violent. Everything about high school is violent." "A change in society is what would make me feel safe," one anxious middle school teacher told us.

A school superintendent maintained, "Eighty percent of our students feeling safe isn't enough. We need 100 percent to feel safe. . . . We need to listen to our kids. Some of them live in our building. They're there for 6 a.m. swimming, then again after school. We need for them to be open with us. I wouldn't want to be a teenager at this time. The things they are going through are phenomenal." He said school safety is "a three-pronged effort" involving parents, students, and members of the community. "You should feel there's somebody in that building that you can talk with," he added. "If students feel there's not one adult in that building that you can relate to, then we're not doing our job."

## **6. Our Findings**

The hundreds of participants at our listening conferences identified two primary factors contributing to youth violence: inadequate home lives and the teasing, bullying and disrespect that many of our children have to endure each day. Children who witness violence or who face physical, sexual, mental, or emotional abuse at home are more likely to become violent. Children who do not receive love, attention, and guidance at home, children who are lonely and left to

fend for themselves, are less able to deal with the strains of growing up and are more likely to act out in aggressive or violent ways.

Bullying is pervasive and terribly harmful. It is a precursor to physical violence by its perpetrators and can trigger violence in its victims. It seems especially severe and frequent when based on race, ethnicity or sexual orientation, but can be based on any characteristic. The youth code of silence deters teens from reporting bullying. Young people at our listening conferences talked at length about the hurt, damage, and frustration bullying can cause and they cautioned that many children today are ill-equipped to deal with the torment.

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*Young people are significantly more likely to become violent if they have been exposed to multiple risk factors in different venues.* <sup>32</sup>

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Combining these two causes, the effect of bullying on a child from a troubled home can be particularly devastating. The link to home life was clear. Students told us that young people subjected to bullying are better able to withstand it if they have support from parents or friends, and if they feel connected to some kind of community. But if victims of bullying are not supported at home, the bullying harms them all the more, even provoking some to act out violently.

## **C. Solutions: What Students, Teachers and Administrators Say Will Work**

In addition to asking about causes of youth violence, we also solicited comments on what solutions we should focus on—not just the schools or the Attorneys General, but society as a whole. Here are the ideas we heard from the participants in our listening conferences.

### **1. “We Can Help the Parents”**

“A bad parent isn’t a bad parent inside,” said a high school boy in Seattle. “A bad parent is someone who doesn’t know how to teach their children and guide them.”

“So many parents are totally lost,” said a high school teacher. “We need more forums where parents can come together and reach out. . . .” A middle school parent complained that “parents bond at preschool, but it seems to stop when the kids hit grade school.” A teacher added, “I don’t think our culture does value parenting.”

Teachers felt particularly strongly about this, since many of them felt they were forced to make up for parents who were not doing their jobs. "I've always felt it's my role to be a surrogate parent to some of our students," said one Kansas middle school teacher. A teacher in Colorado said, "You give me your money so I'll give your kids what you are not—time."

The consensus at our listening conferences was that although parents are trying hard, and most are doing a good job, some need information and guidance on what to do. The consensus was also that right now we do a terrible job of providing resources, education and assistance for struggling parents. "Lots of parents need help," said one high school teacher, "but there is no help—either nothing, or juvie."

Parenting classes were applauded but several observers, including some who teach parenting classes, criticized the system of offering these classes only to parents who have made bad mistakes. Some observed that calling them "parenting classes" carried a negative connotation. "We presuppose if you need the class, you're a bad parent," said one teacher.

One principal said a high school can and should be—and used to be—"the focus of the community. Parents should be able to see," he went on, "that the school can help the parents." A teacher at a different school suggested using the school building "for a community center: nightcare, daycare, public library, community meetings of parents of 8 year olds, and so on. Parents can go there and make friends."

Thus there was a consensus that we can and should do more to help parents. Among the suggestions were (1) providing more forums for parents of K-12 children to meet, get to know one another and share advice and information, (2) providing classes to help parents that are described and marketed positively, and (3) using local schools as community centers and meeting places for parents.

## **2. "We Need to Make Acceptance Cool:" Policies, Procedures and Training to Prevent Bullying**

Bullies "don't know how much they're hurting the people they're putting down," one middle school boy told us. A girl in Delaware said, "Some of the bullies don't know what they are doing. You have to educate them." "It starts with us," said one boy. "It's too late for our age group," said a 15-year-old girl at another high school, "and. . . I don't know how you do this, but we need to make acceptance cool."

We asked most groups of students, teachers, parents and administrators whether it was a good idea to train students to refrain from bullying and harassing their peers. The response from all groups was an enthusiastic and nearly unanimous "yes." One middle school

reported it already had a “bullying curriculum,” and the administrators there said, “We showed it to the parents and they liked it and asked us to do it again.”

We also received substantial input on how this training ought to be conducted. Several commented that it needed to start early in grade school, and the grade school teachers with whom we spoke emphatically agreed. In addition, several students suggested that having high school students train the younger children might be the most effective approach. Referring to an existing training program, one teacher said, “The nonviolence training by older kids is *very* powerful.” One high school student reported, “I work with little kids. They don’t look up to old people; they look up to teenagers.” At another school, the students felt that most bullying could be stopped if the student leaders and other popular kids would take a stand against it.

Students in particular felt it was important for the training to include respect for diversity and respect for everyone no matter what their characteristics. And both students and teachers said they thought it was critical to include teaching respect for all regardless of sexual orientation. “Lots of kids are afraid of saying anything about the pressure on gay and lesbian kids in school,” one teacher said. “But that’s the worst thing you can be called if you’re a little boy.” Another teacher commented, “The key is to stand up to homophobia. Even some teachers are afraid to do that. That sends a message that it’s ok to be intolerant.” Finally, several people commented that it is far easier to establish respect for diversity in a school that already features a diverse population of students.

### **3. “We Moved A YMCA Into Our School:” After-School Programs**

Along with training to prevent bullying, the proposal that drew the most support from students, teachers, administrators and parents alike was after-school programs.

At one school that was used for after-school activities, we were told that the crime rate shot up while the building was closed for renovations. An administrator in Mississippi said she ran several after-school programs, and that “they work. . . . They provide different outlets for everyone. It’s a huge job, but it’s something you have to do.”

Several participants said coaches and other after-school supervisors provide a valuable influence. “I’ve been a coach for twenty years,” said one parent in Nevada, “and I’d tell kids things that they needed to hear. They didn’t like it at the time but appreciated it later. They said it was stuff their parents wouldn’t talk to them about.”

One parent said after-school activities need to start in elementary school. Examples of after-school activities that were mentioned

included Boys and Girls Clubs, Gay-Straight Alliances, and YMCA/YWCA. "We moved a YMCA into one of our schools," said one administrator. "Just moved it in."

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*Youth who are in a supervised setting after every school day tend to be less delinquent than those who spend less time after school being supervised by adults.* <sup>33</sup>

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#### **4. "It's Up to Us:" Peer Mediation**

Peer mediation programs, in which students mediate disputes between their classmates, were almost universally endorsed. When we asked for a show of hands on this concept, students especially were enthused about it. One of the themes we heard echoed throughout our conferences, no matter what the topic, was the idea that "It's up to us"—that students should take more responsibility to solve the problems they see around them.

One high school boy in Boston described the mediation program that sent high school students into middle and elementary schools to mediate disputes. "We ask what's behind the fights they were having," he said. "We explained to them what mediation was. It shows there are other ways to solve problems besides fighting. It's a big thing to have high school students there to talk to them. They're happy to see us, they learn from us." He went on to say it helps to teach younger kids to solve their problems. "You don't just stand them up against the wall and say no more play time," he added. "We don't take sides, we don't judge them," said another peer mediator. "They look for their own solutions. Kids thank me for that." A fellow mediator added, "Kids don't want to talk to adults. That's why we have peer mediation, so kids can talk to each other."

The coordinator of student conflict resolution in the Worcester, Massachusetts public schools reported that the first year of the program, they had 87 referrals. "Now we have 230 of them," she said. "It's amazing to watch them learn. They learn not to listen to rumors . . . We walk them through the process, show them there's no right and wrong. We hear each side of the story." Then, she said, "we come up with some kind of resolution." She reported the mediations have a 97 percent success rate.

Beyond peer mediation, students were understandably keen on programs that would give them license to intervene when they saw trouble. One middle school student suggested, "Kids should make a committee. . . . Make a committee to spot kids being put down, and go



to them and say 'hi' and bring them up."

A girl in his class agreed, "If you see someone, talk to them. If you see someone who's bruised—I mean, bruised inside—you have to talk to them."

## 5. "We Learn By Example:" Mentor Programs



"A kid can never have too many mentors, too many people investing in their lives," said a high school student in Colorado. A Colorado parent said, "Giving money shows that you have money. But giving your time to an individual child shows that child that he or she is important."

Some schools reported success with mentor programs, matching older students with younger ones. The middle school students we asked supported such programs unanimously. A majority of high school students also supported them. One Washington student reported that the mentor program at his school "helps build kids' self-esteem." "We learn by example," said a Tennessee high school student. "We need role models."

## 6. "We Can Change the Community:" Teaching Values

"You have until age eight to teach values," one elementary school teacher told us. "We need to be more deliberate about it. We need to teach it like we teach reading."

"We have fundamental core values we've developed in our school," reported a high school principal. "Respect is one. Listening is another. It requires consistent implementation over time, not just one year or two years. . . . All the contributors to violence are addressed. . . . Are cultural, racial issues being addressed? All those things that can trigger violence."

One administrator said, "We're trying to set a different standard, of civility, or manners. Some kids feel unsafe in the classroom. Threats can be subtle. We as staff CAN create a climate in which threats are not tolerated, and all kids feel safe." A teacher added, "We need to show kids how to deal with pain, and discomfort. If you have a conflict, what are some of the ways we deal with it besides violence?"

At a high school in Washington, a father whose son had been killed in a gang shooting spoke to us in Spanish. He said that in

Mexico, church was a part of school, and teachers came to speak to the parents in their homes. "The family, the school, the church were all part of one community," he said. "Here there is no community, no communication, no respect for the family. No respect even for older people. . . . But we as parents can change the community if we get together and do it."

"There's a basic human need to be connected to something beyond one's self," said a high school vice-principal. "Kids need a connection to some social group: a family, a church, a gang, a clique." A teacher at the school said, "So many kids have inappropriate values."

One high school teacher cautioned, "I don't want to teach religion." But most students and teachers who addressed the issue agreed that programs to teach values could help significantly in reducing youth violence.

## **7. "We don't have enough time...:" School Counselors**

Several participants in our listening conferences suggested that schools would be much better equipped to head off acts of violence by students if they had more school counselors. They agreed that the troubled children can easily be spotted by first or second grade. And several people, including elementary school teachers, complained that some kids need counseling long before they get to junior high or middle school. "There should be a counselor in every school, even in elementary," said one parent.

Counselors agreed but noted they are called upon to perform a wide range of tasks and don't necessarily have time to do more. "As counselors we don't have enough time to spend on emotional counseling," said a school counselor in Louisiana. "We spend the majority of our time processing paperwork or advising students on academic issues."

## **8. "Keep Me Safe:" Officers on Campus**

Some of the schools we visited reported a dramatic reduction in fights and other on-campus violence after they brought in a police officer or other security guard on campus during the school day. The one exception was a high school where the students reported that the officer spent most of the day alone in his office and was rarely seen around the school.

We asked most of the groups we heard from for a show of hands on whether they thought having an officer on campus was a useful solution to the problem of violence at school. All of them endorsed the concept, some

unanimously, with the exception of teachers at some elementary schools who felt it was unnecessary. One principal said part of what he liked was that it simply added to the number of adults on campus. And some students pointed out that having an officer on campus did not guarantee peace. “The guards are out front and the others are in the office,” said one boy in Boston, “and if you want to jump someone you can do it there.”

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*In 1996-97, only ten percent of public schools regularly stationed police or other law enforcement representatives on campus. This figure is believed to have increased substantially.* <sup>34</sup>

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## **9. “If That’s What it Takes:” I.D. Badges**

One of the safest—and most high-security—schools we saw was one where every person on campus was required to wear an identification badge at all times. The idea was to identify more easily the unauthorized visitors to the school and to keep them out. Students there generally did not object to wearing the ID badges, and administrators said the badges helped them keep out the non-students, including drug dealers and gang members. “It’s annoying to have to wear this ID badge and tuck in my shirt,” said a high school girl in Washington. “But if that’s what it takes to keep my school safe, I’m willing to do it.”

By contrast, at the schools where ID badges were not already in place, nearly everyone thought requiring them would be a bad idea.

## **10. “Take the Focus Off Clothes:” Uniforms and Dress Codes**

A number of schools use uniforms or dress codes to reduce the influence of gangs within the school and in some cases to instill a greater sense of order.

At schools that had neither uniforms nor a dress code in place, all or nearly all of the students and teachers opposed requiring students to wear uniforms. At one high school with a dress code that teachers complained about having to enforce, most of the teachers and administrators said they would prefer uniforms, while nearly all the students opposed uniforms. “The clothes don’t make the person,” said one girl in Arkansas. “The person makes the clothes.”

In one school we visited that did require a uniform, a middle school filled with children wearing black pants and white shirts or blouses, 20 of 31 students we asked did not like having to wear the uniforms. "I think it's ridiculous you can't wear blue jeans," said one student. Another complained about the cost of the clothes. A classmate, however, said he liked the uniforms because they cut down on theft of clothes, which starts fights, and because it "takes the focus off clothes."

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*Four percent of public elementary schools  
require students to wear uniforms.* <sup>35</sup>

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The administrators there said they liked uniforms because they had cut down on the level of violence at school and made it difficult to display gang colors. But one student quietly said to us, "Just look at the shoes." Some students were wearing sneakers with red or blue stripes or logos on them.

Dress codes, under which students can choose their own clothing within boundaries set by the school, were somewhat more palatable to students, teachers and administrators. We visited one school with an elaborate dress code—no black, no red, no shirts or caps from certain designated college or professional teams, no colors or logos associated or thought to be associated with gangs—and shirts tucked in at all times. Three-quarters of the teachers there said they approved of having a dress code, as did most administrators even though one complained about how much time it takes to enforce the code. (An administrator stood in a hallway between classes repeatedly saying, "Tuck in that shirt, hello, hey, tuck in that shirt. . . ." During our day at the school we saw numerous students being instructed to tuck in their shirts. It seemed to be a challenge to the students to see how far they could un-tuck their shirts without them being considered officially un-tucked.) About half the students at that school supported the dress code; this was out of a large randomly selected sample of the student body.

At schools with no current uniform or dress code, anywhere from zero to 20 percent of the students favored adopting a dress code. But at the one school we visited that required uniforms, all but one of the students said they favored dress codes. Two-thirds of them also favored keeping their required uniforms.

## 11. Breaking the “Code of Silence:” Anonymous Tip Lines

About half of the students, teachers and administrators we asked said they thought an anonymous tip line for reporting violence, planned violence, or suspicious activity would be a good idea. Some officials were aware of such programs that were working well. The only group in which most opposed the tip line was a room full of teachers one of whom said he had taught at a school in another state where “39 of 40 calls were hoaxes.”

One school reported it had such a line, which disguised the caller’s voice, but it was too new to evaluate yet. Some teachers said to make sure it was anonymous, and others urged that such a line be toll-free.

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*One percent of public schools use metal detectors daily, and another four percent perform random metal detector checks on students.*<sup>36</sup>

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## 12. “I’m Not Planning to Go to a Correctional Facility:” Security Cameras and Metal Detectors

“When I wake up in the morning to go to school, I’m not planning to go to a correctional facility,” said one boy in Massachusetts. “I’m going to school.” Another student said, “When you have too much security, it’ll be on my mind. Always thinking something bad is happening. . . . You’re not gonna be able to concentrate and do your work.”

Consistent with this view, most teachers and students disliked the idea of security cameras mounted about their schools. The glaring exception to this was the one school that had such cameras seemingly everywhere—28 of them, monitored constantly from a control room by a security guard. At that high school, all of the administrators, nearly all the teachers, and almost all the students approved of the security cameras. Another school had tried installing security cameras, but found they had repeatedly been stolen.

Similarly, at most of the schools we visited, virtually no one who was asked thought metal detectors provided a solution to vio-

lence in schools. The exceptions were students and teachers at schools that had experienced violence or the threat of violence. At one school where students complained about a large number of fights motivated by racism and prejudice, about a quarter of the students favored using metal detectors. And at a middle school that had experienced a bomb threat the year before, half the students favored installing metal detectors.

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*In a school setting, the effects of exposure to violence may spread like a “contagion” even to those who have not directly faced it.* <sup>37</sup>

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### **13. Conclusion: What We Heard About Solutions**

Participants felt that increasing after-school programs, training students to respect, not bully their peers, and offering advice and support to parents were the primary programs that would help prevent youth violence. Peer mediation, mentor programs, and teaching values were cited as preventive steps the schools themselves could take. Anonymous tip lines were endorsed as a means for students to report danger or wrongdoing without fear of retaliation or disapproval for violating the student code of silence. For the physical security of schools, maintaining an officer on campus was by far the most popular suggestion. Other physical security measures—ID badges, uniforms and dress codes, security cameras and metal detectors—were generally accepted, if anywhere, only where they were already in place, but not where they were as yet unknown.

## **IV. CONCLUSION: SOLVING THE PROBLEM**

Youth violence is a problem that can be solved—not by government, but by people—especially our parents and our young people. But to help them, all of us must pitch in: teachers, students, school administrators, community organizations, communities of faith, state Attorneys General and others, leaders and followers, professionals and volunteers.

The steps outlined here are not a panacea, but we believe and hope that if followed, they will help prevent youth violence. Our long list of programs and activities should not detract from our primary recommendation: that parents spend more time guiding and nurturing their children, and that schools, parents and our youth themselves resolve to stop the mistreatment of students by bullies.

While we hope and work for a better day when every child will be loved and cared for, we must in the meantime provide some semblance of structure and support for those who are abused, neglected, and bullied, the ones who are driven away from their families and communities and the ones who are just left out. To that end we hope this report represents one small step toward a better and more peaceful society.





## **APPENDIX: WHAT ATTORNEYS GENERAL ARE ALREADY DOING**

The attorneys general of most states have already undertaken a number of programs to combat and prevent youth violence. The information below provides a state-by-state summary of such programs. For more information about a particular state attorney general's office and its activities, readers may link to any state attorney general's Web site via NAAG's own Web site, [www.naag.org](http://www.naag.org).

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### **Alabama**

In October 1998, Attorney General Bill Pryor hosted 2,000 community leaders, school professionals, and law enforcement officers at a conference to teach school personnel how to create an integrated crisis management plan. In 1999, General Pryor joined with Governor Don Siegelman to implement standardized crisis management plans for all public schools in Alabama.

General Pryor's office has taken the lead in coordinating the Alabama Safe School Initiative which, along with the Governor, the Department of Public Safety, and the Department of Education, has proposed legislation to allow more effective communication among juvenile courts, law enforcement agencies, and schools; established a statewide toll-free school safety hotline (1-888-SAV-KIDS); produced a standardized Alabama School Emergency Notebook that provides each of the state's public and private schools with the tools to produce uniform emergency plans for schools and law enforcement; created an Alabama Safe Schools Initiative Web site, accessible from [www.ago.state.al.us](http://www.ago.state.al.us); designed a "Law Enforcement Response Packet;" created public service announcements promoting school safety; and implemented the Family, Career and Community Leaders of America's "Stop The Violence" peer-to-peer outreach (peer mentoring) initiative.

General Pryor's office also hosted the National School Safety Center (NSSC) School Safety Leadership Training, a three-day train-the-trainer conference focusing on creating and maintaining safe school environments.

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### **Alaska**

As a member of Governor Tony Knowles' Children's Cabinet since 1995, Attorney General Bruce Botelho has been active in promoting a myriad of initiatives aimed at improving the lives of Alaska's children.

Abused and neglected children are twice as likely to be chronic juvenile offenders. Over 82 percent of Alaska's adult prison inmates were abused and neglected as children. Since the fall of 1997, the members of the Children's Cabinet have worked to promote a comprehensive, multidisciplinary approach, dubbed "Smart Start," which is aimed at protecting children, investing in prevention programs to break the cycle of family violence, and ultimately saving money by reducing costs associated with crime, health care, and welfare. (See materials found at [http://www.gov.state.ak.us/protecting\\_children/index.html](http://www.gov.state.ak.us/protecting_children/index.html) for more information on Alaska's children's initiatives.)

In 1995 and 1996, General Botelho co-chaired the Governor's Conference on Youth and Justice, whose 100-plus recommendations to respond to and prevent juvenile crime have nearly all been implemented. In 1998 and 1999, General Botelho chaired the Governor's Task Force on Confidentiality of Children's Matters. This group of child advocates, media representatives, and other members of the Children's Cabinet has proposed legislation to open to make agency records and court proceedings in child protection matters more open to the public. The goal of the legislation is to shed more light on our child protection system and, by doing so, improve the system.

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### **Arizona**

Attorney General Janet Napolitano's Civil Rights and Conflict Resolution Section offers conflict resolution services statewide, including mediation, facilitation, conciliation, fact-finding conferences, and training. Programs include Intervention Mediation, a rapid-response mechanism for schools in crisis or near-crisis situations; Peer Mediation training for student mediators who serve as neutral facilitators to help their peers resolve conflicts on their own; Truancy Conciliation Assessment in which the truant child, parents and school officials work out school attendance plans; Victim-Offender Mediation in cases referred by juvenile courts and probation departments; Youth Mediation for disputes between youth involved in gang, pre-gang or other at-risk activities; Child Welfare Mediation; and Civil Rights and Conflict Resolution assemblies, seminars trainings, and investigations. In 1999, Attorney General Napolitano held several Town Hall forums around Arizona on topics including youth violence.

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### **Arkansas**

Attorney General Mark Pryor's Outreach Division is dedicated to providing assistance to our state's school children and families. The most popular program is the Smart Choices, Better Chances (SCBC) law education programs. The goal of SCBC is to educate young Arkansans about laws, crime, and consequences, with the hope that they will develop a better understanding of the criminal justice system and

how it affects their lives. The program's staff studied the state's laws and worked with educators, attorneys, and law-enforcement in understanding juvenile crime and its consequences to put this curriculum together.

General Pryor also operates the Arkansas Missing Children Services Program, which serves as the main point of contact between the State of Arkansas and the National Center of Missing and Exploited Children – which serves as a national clearinghouse. This program is designed to assist law enforcement agencies with their investigations, provide training to investigatory agencies, and distribute safety materials to parents, schools and communities. A newly developed curriculum provides child safety information to Arkansas's youth about child abduction, runaway issues, and online computer safety.

Youth gangs, youth suicide, and juvenile violence continue to be the focus of attention for many Arkansas communities. Educational materials distributed by General Pryor's office can help parents, teachers, and other adults recognize some warning signs of potentially troubled youth, perhaps allowing intervention to take place before real trouble begins.

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### **California**

Attorney General Bill Lockyer is a leader in school safety planning and youth violence prevention. He supports the integration of numerous school-based programs such as conflict resolution training, cultural awareness and diversity training, after school academic enrichment activities, and counseling services. Through the School/Law Enforcement Partnership, administered by the Attorney General and the State Superintendent, schools are provided local assistance grant funding for school community policing partnerships and implementation of safe school plans. California school communities are also encouraged to participate in other grant funding opportunities such as the High Risk Youth Education and Public Safety Program, the After School Learning and Safe Neighborhoods Partnership Program, the Targeted Truancy and Public Safety Program, and the Attorney General's Gang, Crime, and Violence Prevention Partnership Program.

Attorney General Lockyer and the State Superintendent formed a 23-person Safe Schools Task Force in February, 1999 to identify ways to strengthen partnerships between educators and law enforcement. Under the direction of Attorney General Lockyer, the Task Force developed the "*Crisis Response Box: Partnering for Safe Schools*" Guide to assist school communities in preparing for a critical incident. Additionally, the Task Force Report, identifying ten recommendations and strategies, will be sent to the Attorney General this spring.

Attorney General Lockyer recognizes the importance of high quality early childhood experiences as a critical path to the reduction

of youth violence. He believes that since children spend a majority of their day in school, it is important to continue to enhance and increase school-based services for children and families. As noted in the March 2000, U.S. House of Representatives Bipartisan Working Group on Youth Violence, *"Early childhood development is vital and probably the most important thing that we can do to prevent school violence."* To this end, the Attorney General is taking a lead role in a major collaborative symposium this spring, convening leaders from the health, education, law enforcement, and business community to discuss the latest research on the effects of children exposed to violence, promising practices for intervention and funding for local efforts. For more information, contact the Attorney General's Crime and Violence Prevention Center at [www.caag.state.ca.us/cvpc](http://www.caag.state.ca.us/cvpc).

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### **Colorado**

In April 1999, Attorney General Ken Salazar issued preliminary safe schools guides and resource information to all of Colorado's school districts. In May, General Salazar participated in a White House bipartisan strategy conference on children, violence and responsibility. In June, Attorney General Salazar and Governor Bill Owens convened a "Summit on School Safety and the Prevention of Youth Violence." Attorney General Mike Moore of Mississippi joined General Salazar at the Summit and they led a student panel discussion on youth violence. In August, General Salazar and Governor Owens issued a summit report containing 26 recommendations concerning (1) gangs and guns, (2) parental responsibility and community involvement, and (3) safe and orderly schools. See [www.ago.state.co.us](http://www.ago.state.co.us).

In September, General Salazar issued a 35-page "Colorado School Violence Prevention and Student Discipline Manual" to provide a practical guide and checklist to school attorneys, school administrators, teachers and parents describing the law on student discipline, school-zone crimes, and school searches. In December, a \$1 million nationally unique initiative called Safe Communities-Safe Schools was launched by the University of Colorado Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence in partnership with Attorney General Salazar. The initiative is designed to assist Colorado's 1500 schools in safe school planning through a general education and outreach program and selection of 16 pilot schools to receive in-depth training to further develop comprehensive plans tailored to each school and community. Beginning in April 2000, General Salazar and the Center are conducting community forums on youth violence prevention throughout the state, beginning with 20 counties in April and May.

Attorney General Salazar has also initiated a gang prosecution unit in his office and established a Youth Violence and Gang Prevention Task Force with local, state and federal law enforcement officials. Finally, General Salazar's office is working with Colorado crime stop-

pers boards to institute school crime stoppers programs in all Colorado school districts, to include a single statewide hotline as well as local hotlines where resources allow.

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### **Connecticut**

Attorney General Richard Blumenthal has launched a campaign to crack down on the sale of illegal facsimile guns. The Attorney General is coordinating with the Chief State's Attorney's Office and local police departments to stop the sale of realistic-looking fake firearms and to educate children, parents, and school officials about the dangers and legal ramifications of possessing fake guns. The Attorney General's efforts were sparked, in part, by the fatal police shooting of a 14-year-old robbery suspect who was seen brandishing what turned out to be a fake firearm.

Prior to the start of the school year, Attorney General Blumenthal sent copies of "Protecting Students from Harassment and Hate Crime: A Guide for Schools" and NAAG's "School Search Checklists" to all Superintendents of Schools in Connecticut. He is currently in the process of planning a statewide conference on youth violence to take place in Fall 2000.

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### **Delaware**

Attorney General Jane Brady has focused on preventing school violence by educating students, faculty, and the public of the importance of treating bullying seriously, and the importance of reporting incidents in schools. In January of 1999 Attorney General Brady sponsored a seminar entitled "Bully-Proofing your School Before It's Too Late" which combined training on Bully-Proofing with a presentation by Stanton Samenow. Assemblies that use skits based on real incidents in Delaware are presented throughout the state for students starting in the 4<sup>th</sup> Grade. Students are given pledges to sign, in which they agree to report school crimes, threats, or bullying behavior, and agree not to engage in bullying. In addition, a School Crime Reporting Hotline was established by Attorney General Brady in 1996.

Attorney General Brady has sponsored several seminars relating to the issue of school violence, including two public forums entitled "Safe and Sound" in May and June of 1999. The students agreed that the failure of people to treat others with respect in our society is the root of the problem of violence in our schools. They also recommended some censorship of the production of movies that are violent and do not serve any redeeming purpose.

Currently, a Web site on bully-proofing and school violence and a brochure for students and parents are being developed by the Attorney General's office. Efforts are also being made to improve the exchange of information between agencies that deal with juveniles at risk.

## **Florida**

Attorney General Robert Butterworth sponsors and conducts trainings for School Resource Officers. The curriculum is regularly reviewed with the Department of Law Enforcement to ensure instruction is up to date. Those officers who attend 130 hours of juvenile-related courses are eligible to be designated School Resource Office Practitioners. New courses are developed at the request of law enforcement. When Miami officers requested instruction on student-officer relationship strategies, General Butterworth's office developed a course to meet their needs.

General Butterworth's office has found that the use of properly trained School Resource Officers is the single most productive way to deter campus violence and provide positive role models.

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## **Georgia**

In order to address the cycle of violence that resulted when children are exposed to domestic abuse, Attorney General Thurbert Baker pushed the Georgia General Assembly to enact a bill that makes it a crime under Georgia's cruelty to children statute to commit acts of domestic violence in the presence of children. The bill also contained a provision that increased significantly the penalties for committing the crimes of assault, battery, aggravated assault and aggravated battery against family members, including children.

As Attorney General and previously as a member of the General Assembly, Baker has sponsored and supported legislation that created school safety zones. It is illegal to carry weapons into these zones and persons who possess illegal drugs within them face enhanced penalties. He also sponsored legislation to reform the juvenile justice system, including a requirement that the most violent juvenile offenders be tried as adults.

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## **Hawaii**

Attorney General Earl Anzai's office developed the framework and key components of the violence prevention program section of the Hawaii School-Based Violence Prevention Plan. The Department of Attorney General also conducts local Community Action Seminars concerning prevention of drugs, gangs, violence and other crime. The office publishes a newsletter compiling community-based action plans from teams throughout the state, and has published a document compiling the teams' action plans from 1994 through 1998. The Office is also on the Youth and Gang Response System committee, coordinated by the Office of Youth Services. The Department's Web site, [www.cpja.ag.state.hi.us](http://www.cpja.ag.state.hi.us), highlights crime prevention tips and re-

sources. The Department is responsible for disseminating McGruff educational materials on crime prevention.

“Choices” is a partnership program with the State Department of Education. It includes school presentations on McGruff’s crime prevention messages such as peer relationships and true friends, and a television show that addresses the impact of crystal methamphetamine and bullying. Other future show topics will include gangs and respecting differences.

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## **Idaho**

Attorney General Al Lance led a panel discussion on school violence at the Idaho Criminal Justice Conference in Boise. Leaders in education and law enforcement frankly discussed the risks of violence in Idaho schools and strategies to prevent violence. General Lance reviewed the recommendations of the NAAG Summit on Youth Violence and School Safety and provided copies of the report to all attendees. General Lance also forwarded “It’s Our School - Some Practical Tools for School Safety,” prepared by the Washington Attorney General and Superintendent of Public Instruction, to Idaho Superintendent of Public Instruction Dr. Marilyn Howard, the constitutional officer responsible for public education in Idaho.

General Lance addressed the Superintendent of Public Instruction’s “Youth Violence Prevention Summit” in Nampa. Educators from throughout Idaho attended the conference.

General Lance proposed amendments to the Idaho Juvenile Corrections Act to allow a juvenile, age 14 or older, to be tried as an adult for kidnapping, and supported the Idaho Prosecuting Attorneys Association’s legislation to allow a juvenile, age 12 or over, to be tried as an adult for murder. In addition, General Lance’s office drafted legislation to empower the Department of Correction and the Department of Juvenile Correction to participate in programs designed to help at-risk youth. General Lance’s office also developed a model joint powers agreement for state correctional agencies and local government to use to form partnerships.

General Lance has provided a link to the “Keep Schools Safe” Web site from his homepage, [www.state.id.us/ag](http://www.state.id.us/ag).

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## **Illinois**

Attorney General Jim Ryan’s School Violence Task Force held hearings throughout the state in 1998 to examine ways of preventing violence in the schools. The hearings led to Attorney General Ryan’s 14-point Safe to Learn Program, a package of programs and requested legislation including funding for school safety and violence prevention programs, stiffer penalties for using guns at school or delivering guns to minors, a telephone tip line, an educational campaign to prevent

violence in the schools, and mandatory trigger locks.

Attorney General Ryan's office now collaborates with the State Police and the PTA to offer the School Violence Tipline, an anonymous toll-free 800 number for junior and senior high school students. State police telecommunicators have been specially trained to answer the line and if necessary transfer any student in crisis to a mental health crisis worker. Based on information provided by the student, the telecommunicators will contact the local police who in turn will communicate the situation to school officials.

Attorney General Ryan's office also offers a simple, one-page "Agreement to Abide by the Rules" for children and parents to sign. It establishes guidelines regarding the children's use of the Internet and can be viewed at <http://www.ag.state.il.us/program/school/agree.pdf>.<sup>38</sup>

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## **Indiana**

Attorney General Karen Freeman-Wilson's office sponsors Project PEACE, a peer mediation program co-sponsored by the Indiana State Bar Association. Parents, teachers, principals, and attorneys in more than 100 Indiana schools have received Project PEACE training. In addition, General Freeman-Wilson's office published an Protecting Hoosier Children, a school search manual including legal guidelines, forms, and tips.

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## **Iowa**

Attorney General Tom Miller advocates a comprehensive approach to youth violence, including a continuum of prevention, early intervention and punishment alternatives to deal with youth at different stages of development and different levels of risk to the community.

Attorney General Miller expanded the use of Juvenile Court School Liaisons in Iowa schools. Schools collaborate with the Juvenile Courts to work with youth who are at-risk, on probation, truant, or disruptive. The Attorney General assists in training the Liaisons and administering the program.

Attorney General Miller also worked with the Departments of Education and Public Safety to convene a School Violence Crisis Intervention Task Force. Building upon work already done by Attorney General Miller, the Task Force gathered information from around the state to address school preparedness, crisis planning, collaboration, recognition of student behavior, prevention and technical assistance needs.



### **Kansas**

Attorney General Carla J. Stovall has taken several different approaches to prevent violence in Kansas schools. In June 1998, General Stovall formed the Kids In Safe Schools Task Force. During its 1999 session, the Kansas Legislature passed a Resolution urging all public and private elementary and secondary schools to develop, update and practice crisis plans. After visiting several Kansas schools and meeting with students and staff to learn more about their concerns regarding school violence in May 1999, General Stovall and the Task Force developed School Safety Planning manuals and sent them to approximately 1,900 principals and superintendents in Kansas. The purpose of the manuals is to serve as a resource for schools in developing school crisis plans. The manual is available on the Internet at [www.ink.org/public/ksag](http://www.ink.org/public/ksag).

During the 2000 Legislative session, Attorney General Stovall and the Task Force have proposed 72-Hour-Hold legislation that would require psychological evaluations of juveniles who are taken into custody for bringing a weapon to school or to a school-sponsored event. Law enforcement officials would take the juvenile into custody for up to 72 hours while a determination is made as to whether the juvenile is a danger to self or to others. If the juvenile is not found to be a danger, he or she may be released pending adjudication. However, if the juvenile is found to be a danger, the court could order further detention pending adjudication and also order treatment or counseling for the juvenile.

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### **Kentucky**

In 1998, Attorney General Ben Chandler sponsored a School Safety Summit for school safety professionals representing education, law enforcement and social service organizations. The summit was an information-sharing forum to discuss each organization's immediate school safety needs and to share available resources. This served as an interim measure to encourage communication between school safety professionals before Kentucky's new Center for School Safety began operation that fall. Also in 1998, General Chandler worked with Kentucky's General Assembly to pass legislation that strengthens communication between law enforcement agencies and school officials. Over the past two years, General Chandler has provided training on youth violence prevention at several conferences sponsored by his office. Currently General Chandler supports a Joint Resolution urging that local school districts promote better student discipline by requiring school uniforms.

General Chandler has established a school safety Web page on his office's Web site to facilitate information exchange and public education about school safety issues.

## **Louisiana**

Attorney General Richard Ieyoub conducted six listening tours on youth violence/school safety during the 1999-2000 school year. With the Louisiana Community Policing Institute, Attorney General Ieyoub has provided school safety/violence prevention training to all 64 parishes. He has also retained a school safety expert to provide technical assistance to school districts as they develop their individual school safety plans.

The Attorney General is sponsoring a week-long peer mediation/conflict resolution camp for middle and high schools during June 2000. This camp will train five students and a faculty sponsor in peer mediation and conflict resolution techniques and Attorney General Ieyoub hopes to be able to offer this program annually. He will also partner with the Louisiana Community Policing Institute to offer 200 trainings in Louisiana on domestic violence with a grant from the US Department of Justice.

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## **Maine**

Attorney General Andrew Ketterer designates Civil Rights Teams in each grade at more than 100 schools across Maine. These teams of students and faculty advisers provide non-violence education and awareness for students and invite students to report incidents of harassment directly to them.

The Civil Rights Team Project, founded by General Ketterer in 1996, is a response to his office's experience. His Civil Rights Division, which files civil actions to obtain restraining orders against perpetrators of hate crimes, found that one-half of all hate crimes in Maine were committed by teenagers. The office found that seriously violent incidents were usually preceded by years of low-level harassment, and that school officials were rarely aware of the harassment.

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## **Maryland**

In his Report to the General Assembly on strategies for winning the war on crime in Maryland, Attorney General Joseph Curran identified saving our youth from becoming the next generation of violent offenders as the first and most vital battleground of all. Since then, he has led efforts to increase funding for early education and home intervention programs targeting at-risk children, to expand school and community-based programs, and to create graduated sanctions for juvenile offenders triggered at the first sign of delinquency. And he has worked with other agencies to make it easier for certain parents with children in the home, who are experiencing domestic violence, to obtain civil protective orders.

Following his state-wide "Spotlight on Prevention" campaign which involved local educators, law enforcement officials and parents in increasing programs at the city and county level, Attorney General Curran issued a resource guide to successful juvenile prevention programs in Maryland. In addition, he will promote mentoring for at-risk youth through a Public Awareness Campaign to be launched later this Spring.

Attorney General Curran has worked during the 2000 legislative session to have gun control bills and the Governor's Smart Gun bill passed in the Maryland Legislature. He also produced a special report, "A Farewell to Arms, The Solution to Gun Violence in America."

Finally, Attorney General Curran has sought to create partnerships with children through annual state-wide campaigns that began in 1996 to "Tune Out the Violence," in which he asked parents and children to view and discuss television together for a week. In partnership with Sherwin-Williams, he also spearheaded efforts to have school children join community residents to clean up the graffiti and save community centers from the effects of vandalism.

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### **Massachusetts**

The safety of children has long been the top priority for Attorney General Tom Reilly. In a recent move to protect children from handgun violence, he announced that he will begin enforcing the strictest handgun safety regulations in the nation. On his first day in office last year, Attorney General Reilly established the Children's Protection Project to promote the safety, health and welfare of children in homes, schools and neighborhoods by working in partnership with other public and private agencies throughout the state. Attorney General Reilly's program works to meet the needs of the state's children through legal advocacy, training, prevention, mediation, and other early intervention methods; producing educational materials; working with schools and children's advocates; and drafting or supporting protective legislation. Attorney General Reilly is also currently in federal court defending the state's racial imbalance law that promotes school choice and diversity.

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### **Michigan**

Noting that the imitation is the highest form of flattery, Attorney General Jennifer Granholm announced her "2000 for 2000: Michigan's Mentoring Initiative" program early in the year. Based on the success of a similar program introduced by Attorney General Early of Virginia, Granholm partnered with former Detroit Piston Isiah Thomas, Michigan First Lady Michelle Engler, and the Prosecuting Attorneys Association of Michigan to recruit 2,000 adult mentors for 2,000 kids in the

year 2000. The program's objective is to curb crime long before it starts by steering children who have had one, non-violent contact with the courts — such as truancy or a curfew violation — away from the justice system and back into successful young lives in their communities. Once mentors are recruited they are screened, trained and evaluated by “partner” organizations in each of the program's four pilot counties. Juvenile court judges may consider dismissing charges filed against a child who has successfully participated in the program for a year. The program is funded privately through grants from the Hudson Webber Foundation and the Isiah Thomas Foundation.

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### **Minnesota**

Attorney General Mike Hatch published “Not in Our Schools, Not in Our Towns, Not in Our State: Hate and Bias Crimes, A Rapid Response Guide for Minnesota Schools.” The guide outlines both short-term and long-term steps schools should take when they have experienced a hate incident.

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### **Mississippi**

Attorney General Mike Moore initiated a campaign to recruit adults and students as mentors, coaches and tutors. He made a commitment to double the number of Boys & Girls Clubs in Mississippi. He is working with the Big Brother Big Sister national program to put a statewide structure in place in Mississippi. General Moore promotes and provides training for the Youth Crime Watch program. He works with Parents as Teachers, Communities in Schools, the YMCA, and early childhood development programs.

General Moore has established the Mississippi Mentoring Network, a non-profit organization to further promising practices in the areas of after school, mentoring, and early childhood programs through training, information, and public service scholarships.

In 1998, General Mike Moore visited eleven communities and invited separate groups of public officials, business and community leaders, school officials, students, and law enforcement to offer their theories about why the problem of youth violence exists, and what can be done to help. General Moore then issued recommendations for steps communities can take to address youth violence, with information about local resources.

In 1999, Attorney General Mike Moore hosted additional conferences on youth violence, including a religious leaders' conference and a NAAG summit. In January 2000, General Moore and other state officials held a statewide conference on After School and Mentoring programs. General Moore's school safety materials may be found at [www.ago.state.ms.us/safeschools.htm](http://www.ago.state.ms.us/safeschools.htm).

### **Missouri**

Attorney General Jay Nixon advocates alternative schools, fast-track drug courts, and alternative schools as means to reduce youth violence. He has urged schools to detain students found with guns for the full 72 hours permitted by Missouri law, and has provided a Web site with information on school safety planning and helping parents spot potential problems. General Nixon has recommended a basic ten-point safe school plan for all schools in Missouri.

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### **Montana**

Attorney General Joe Mazurek with the Montana School Boards Association prepared a ten-point safe school plan that was sent to Montana schools and distributed at the 1998 Montana Conference of Education Leadership.

In 1995, Attorney General Mazurek appointed a task force to study youth violence and recommend ways to prevent it. The group's report, "For Our Children's Sake: A Call to Community Action Against Youth Violence," provided an overview of youth crime trends in Montana and nationwide and also contained the task force's suggestions for steps that could be taken by families, schools, communities and the

criminal justice system. Last year, Attorney General Mazurek proposed legislation to ban weapons from all school property, not just the interior of school buildings.

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### **Nevada**

As part of her Juvenile Justice Initiative, Attorney General Frankie Sue Del Papa began the Attorney General's Class Act Program. Under this program, volunteers

from the Attorney General's Office and other organizations mentor small groups of youth to help them understand the judicial system. The kids learn respect for the rule and reason of law and law enforcement, and gain a better understanding of the tragic consequences that result from violent actions.

At the urging of Attorney General Del Papa and many others, the 1999 Nevada State Legislature passed into law AB 686 that established a Commission on School Safety and Violence. The 11-member commission is charged with developing and adopting a statewide plan of emergency response to incidents of school violence.

Attorney General Del Papa advocates allowing students to report incidents of violence, alcohol or drug use on campus anonymously. In cooperation with the Attorney General, Nevada Bell has set up an anonymous toll-free line for students in Northern Nevada to report potential crimes.

Attorney General Del Papa also participated in several television and community forums that brought together students, teachers, administrators, parents and law enforcement personnel to discuss youth violence and the code of silence. She found that fear of retribution caused many students to remain silent. The attorney general has also established an in-house ad-hoc committee on juvenile justice and school violence prevention initiatives.

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### **New Hampshire**

Attorney General Philip McLaughlin sponsored a statewide conference on school resource officers and provided funding for SRO programs in host school districts throughout the state. In addition, the Attorney General initiated a partnership with the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation and the state's privately funded youth substance abuse initiative, the New Hampshire's New Futures program, to create a state-wide mentoring infrastructure modeled on the University of Colorado's blueprint program. The purpose of the initiative is to create statewide resources to recruit, train, monitor and evaluate a cadre of adult mentors and affiliating them with New Hampshire's most at-risk children.

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### **New Jersey**

Attorney General John J. Farmer, Jr. co-sponsors a peer leadership program called New Jersey Peer-to-Peer. Now in its third year, this middle school program is designed to use the power of peer leaders and students' peer relationships to curtail drug use and school violence. General Farmer's office has also begun training school personnel in use of *The New Jersey School Search Policy Manual*, a practical guide to search and seizure law applied to a school setting that the office published in 1998. The Manual is available on the Web at [www.state.nj.us/lps/dcj/school.htm](http://www.state.nj.us/lps/dcj/school.htm). The office has also published a *Guide to Establishing a Safe Schools Resource Officer Program* to help educators and communities establish school-based police programs to decrease violence and increase security. It can be found at

[www.state.nj.us/lps/dcj/agree.pdf](http://www.state.nj.us/lps/dcj/agree.pdf).

Attorney General Farmer's Office has revived the Commission to Deter Criminal Activity, a public-private partnership currently working with the National Ad Council to develop an advertising campaign to deter youth violence. In June 1999 he signed an updated Memorandum of Agreement Between Education and Law Enforcement Officials ([www.state.nj.us/lps/dcj/agree.pdf](http://www.state.nj.us/lps/dcj/agree.pdf)), spelling out how school officials can work cooperatively with police and prosecutors to share information, stop incidents of planned or threatened violence, and help deal with incidents when they occur. The revised MOA also encourages law enforcement and education officials to discuss the need for specific bomb threat, gunfire, hostage or drive-by shooting response plans.

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### **New Mexico**

Attorney General Patricia Madrid organized "Responding to Youth Violence," a juvenile justice workshop for the State Bar Conference in the fall of 1999. Presentations included sex offender treatment programs, residential programs, and alternative educational curriculum for offenders. A panel of middle school students participated in the workshop, most saying they felt relatively safe in school. Many of the students indicated they knew of weapons being brought to school, but none was inclined to notify school authorities. Students also expressed their desire to have a more active voice in juvenile justice issues, and voiced their concerns about efforts to decriminalize drugs, saying they felt that these efforts undermined programs designed to keep kids away from drugs.

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### **New York**

Attorney General Eliot Spitzer administers the Reach and Teach Program, a course taught in high schools around the state by assistant attorneys general. The course consists of topics ranging from criminal law and the effect of crime on society to consumer and environmental law, civil rights and the Internet. Attorney General Spitzer's office also works to educate young people regarding dating violence and how to spot an abusive relationship, and to educate the public about protecting children who use the Internet and combating intolerance.

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### **North Carolina**

Attorney General Mike Easley co-chaired the Governor's Task Force on Youth Violence and School Safety, which issued recommendations in 1999. Among the steps advocated were: establish a statewide toll-free anonymous tip line to report threats to school safety, send

early-warning brochures to every parent in the state, establish a conflict management project for the schools, and ask schools to study their school safety plans.

General Easley also held a series of six seminars for school personnel and local law enforcement officers to develop Safe School Plans. Titled "Are You Prepared? Multi-Agency Planning for Response and Containment of School Violence," the workshops were presented by the State Bureau of Investigation (SBI) in August 1999. Among the topics addressed were armed subject response plans, bomb threat planning, and initial contact with armed persons.

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### **North Dakota**

In August 1999, Attorney General Heidi Heitkamp co-hosted two Safe School Summits along with other state and federal agencies. The summits addressed key components necessary in planning for safer schools and generated ideas for further discussion and planning in local communities. Summit topics included creating a spirit of community; curtailing violence; preventing bullying, substance use and other juvenile issues; planning for crisis response; and engaging youth in policy making and crime prevention.

In addition to the summit, Attorney General Heitkamp has joined with other agencies in a statewide initiative to ensure that every North Dakota community is engaged in a safe school planning process by the fall of 2000. The agencies continue to promote Safe School Basics, ten points for a Successful Safe School Plan, prepare a resource guide for use by communities, promote district trainings on school safety planning, and hold community roundtable discussions on legal issues faced by school districts.

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### **Ohio**

As a former county and juvenile prosecutor, Ohio Attorney General Betty D. Montgomery takes youth violence very seriously.

Project O.A.S.I.S. (Ohio's Accelerated School-Based Intervention Solution), an alternative school pilot program developed by Attorney General Montgomery, identifies and assists youth in grades 4-7 who are at risk for increased delinquent behavior. The program incorporates in-school case management and an out-of-school suspension program, and now serves as a model for the state's \$40 million alternative school program.

Her Anti-Gang Unit acts as Ohio's central resource on gangs. The Unit trains law enforcement officers on the state's new criminal gang law, which Montgomery wrote. The Attorney General's Office has created the first statewide gang prevention and suppression effort called "Ohio Against Gangs."



Attorney General Montgomery's office is providing the funds to expand statewide Children Who Witness Violence, a program that breaks the cycle of emotional trauma by providing early intervention services for children who have witnessed some type of violence.

In August 1999, General Montgomery co-sponsored the Ohio Safe Schools Summit, which explored conflict resolution and other innovative violence prevention programs.

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### **Oklahoma**

The impact of domestic violence on children was one topic of a two-day domestic violence seminar Attorney General Drew Edmondson hosted in December 1999 for state law enforcement officers, judges and prosecutors. Dale Woody, noted expert on violence's effect on children, brought to light the significant psychological effects witnessing violence can have on children, including raising a child's risk of substance abuse and increasing the probability of arrests for violent crimes. Conferees learned that childhood development is cognitively and psychologically arrested in an environment of domestic abuse, and that even infants and toddlers may suffer symptoms in response to domestic violence. Woody also presented recommendations for improving victim safety and offender accountability.

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### **Oregon**

In the aftermath of Oregon's tragic shooting at Thurston High School in Springfield, Oregon Attorney General Hardy Myers started a School/Community Safety Coalition comprised of a wide variety of people from education, law enforcement, mental health, student leaders, alternative dispute resolution professionals and many others. The Coalition's mission is (1) to conduct a statewide assessment of the state of school safety in Oregon, focusing on model programs and partnerships between schools and communities that work to ensure a safe school environment; (2) to compile a resource manual of written materials produced by various law enforcement and school entities that could be reproduced at low cost for school districts and local law enforcement; and (3) to provide an ongoing forum to discuss issues of mutual concern to school officials and law enforcement and to develop and circulate proposed legislation. In the Spring of 2000, the Coalition will hear from a panel of students, age 13-20, regarding how kids can be made to feel safer, how to break the code of silence around bullying, harassment and intimidation; and what tools kids need to resist violence as the only answer to what's bothering them.

Attorney General Myers will also be a presenter in July 2000 at Oregon's School Safety Conference on "Safety on the Internet: A Guide for Parents and School Leaders."

## **Pennsylvania**

In the summer of 1998, Attorney General Mike Fisher held a series of six forums on school violence. He led discussions on how communities should respond to the rash of school shootings that occurred during 1997-98, including the March 1998 fatal shooting of a teacher by a student during a school dance in Edinboro. At the conclusion of the forums, Attorney General Fisher announced a fourteen-point plan to prevent school violence through education, prevention and intervention. Among other proposals, Fisher recommended making it a felony to possess a gun on school grounds, holding parents civilly liable if their child uses a parent's gun to commit a violent act and having police include schools in their patrol areas. Several of these proposals are being considered by the General Assembly.

In the summer of 1999, Attorney General Fisher called together leaders in education, government and law enforcement to serve on a Task Force on School Safety. The goal is to assist schools in developing policy, program and other solutions to school violence. The Task Force's Summit in September 1999 was attended by over 300 participants. Over two days, teams of educators, parents and administrators from 71 school districts were trained in School Management and Crisis Preparation, Professional Development and Instructional Issues, Community Outreach and Involvement and Law and Judiciary. Teams wrote Community Team Action Plans, which they are now implementing in their home school districts. The Task Force will hold a second Summit in Harrisburg on September 15 and 16, 2000, to model some of the promising school safety plans.

The Task Force is also writing a statewide School Safety Action Plan that will include recommendations from within the same four topics addressed at the Summit, and will hold at least four public hearings this summer. The final statewide School Safety Action Plan will be unveiled in September 2000.

In January 1999, Attorney General Mike Fisher, together with the Pennsylvania Bar Association, brought the peer mediation program, Project PEACE, to Pennsylvania. During that conference, national experts trained teams of educators, parents and lawyers representing 11 elementary schools on how to implement Project Peace. Project Peace incorporates student-administered peer mediation and conflict resolution programs into the elementary school curriculum. Participating schools will kick-off their programs in coordination with Law Day during the first week of May 2000.

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## **Rhode Island**

Attorney Sheldon Whitehouse's Juvenile Subcommittee of the Domestic Violence Task Force is sponsoring a conference on "Children

Exposed to Domestic Violence” at Salve Regina University on May 25, 2000. National and local speakers will address this issue and the need to intervene in the lives of these forgotten victims.

In September 1999, the Attorney General’s Juvenile Justice Task Force along with the Governor’s Justice Commission and the United Way of South Eastern New England produced a video entitled “Love Shouldn’t Hurt” which illustrates the warning signs, dangers and effects of teenage dating violence. This video was distributed to middle and senior high schools, public and private, and to other social service organizations and public libraries. A panel discussion with law enforcement and social service providers accompanied the premier presentation of the video at a local high school.

Also in September 1999, Attorney General Whitehouse and federal law enforcement agencies sponsored a conference entitled, “School Violence – the Need for An Emergency Response System.” Local and state law enforcement personnel, school administrators, and emergency management personnel gathered to educate each other and to coordinate an emergency response network in case of a school violence situation.

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### **South Carolina**

Attorney General Charlie Condon has made youth violence a priority. In 1999 General Condon introduced new initiatives designed to further the fight against youth violence. 2001 by 2001, a youth mentoring initiative, aims to assist already existing mentoring programs by recruiting and placing at least 2001 new volunteers in programs by the year 2001. This effort is based on a program originated by Attorney General Mark Earley of Virginia. General Condon’s office is currently working on a legal manual to help school officials navigate the legal issues involved in search and seizure on school property and other legal matters. General Condon also implemented the operation of a new toll free hotline. 1-877-SEE-A-GUN, operated in conjunction with CrimeStoppers, offers a reward to students for anonymous tips that lead to the confiscation of a gun in school. Students can also report gun tips on-line at [www.seeagun.com](http://www.seeagun.com). In addition, General Condon also announced the establishment of a gang database as a resource for law enforcement.

These efforts work together with already existing programs General Condon initiated. In 1996 General Condon started the School Violence Awareness Program, staffed with a full time coordinator and attorney. The goal is to provide a primary point of contact for school violence information, violence prevention program information, support and technical assistance, and training opportunities. 1-888-NO-BULLY is a toll-free school violence information line. In 1997 General Condon started the Attorney General Youth Mentoring Program which teams up caring community members with the judicial system to help

turn non-violent juvenile offenders around before they become violent. General Condon organized a statewide Gang Task Force in 1998, bringing together state and local law enforcement to attack the problem of gangs. General Condon serves as co-chair on the SC Governor's Safe School Task Force. For more information on youth violence: [www.scattorneygeneral.org](http://www.scattorneygeneral.org).

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### **South Dakota**

Attorney General Mark Barnett is currently in the process of developing a School Safety Web site to serve as a resource for all South Dakota schools. As part of this process, he is accumulating information on dozens of school safety subjects. This information will be available on the Web site and from a library in his office.

In addition, General Barnett hosted a Safe Schools Conference in the summer of 1999, drawing more than 500 teachers, school administrators, policy makers, and law enforcement personnel. Speakers included local and national experts on school safety. Plans are now underway for a second conference in the summer of 2000.

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### **Tennessee**

Tennessee Attorney General Paul G. Summers is busy speaking to high school students across the state to educate them on the "consequences of their action." As a former district attorney and judge on the Tennessee Court of Criminal Appeals, General Summers shares first hand experiences of juveniles he has dealt with in the courtroom and criminal justice system. General Summers plans to continue speaking to students across the state to help educate them about the consequences of their actions.

The Attorney General's Office is also supporting The Jason Foundation in their mission to eradicate the silent epidemic of teen suicide.

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### **Texas**

Attorney General John Cornyn's office participates in the Tattoo Removal Program, a multi-agency collaboration to help former gang members turn their lives around. Attorney General Cornyn also leads Gangs 101, a training program for parents and law enforcement that teaches warning signs, gang identifiers, and emerging trends.

In July 1999, Attorney General Cornyn formed the School Violence Prevention Task Force. Four meetings have taken place, and Attorney General Cornyn's goal is to release the task force report this spring.

## **Utah**

Attorney General Jan Graham has made Utah a leader in attacking youth violence through prevention of child abuse. She established Children's Justice Centers to work directly with child victims on investigation and prosecution and to provide services to families. She created a specialized child abuse prosecution unit to handle complex cases and provide training and assistance to local prosecutors. General Graham also has a specialized division to handle all court and administrative proceedings associated with the removal of a child from a home in case of abuse and neglect.

To teach children that abuse is never acceptable, General Graham created a curriculum within the schools that focuses on child abuse prevention and provides intervention resources for children who have been victimized. Her office created community education programs designed for workplaces, churches, hospitals, and other organizations to teach people how to recognize signs of abuse and where to get help if abuse is occurring in their home. General Graham has been involved in toughening sentences for child abuse offenders and expanding the protections and services offered to child victims.

In response to Utah's gang problem, General Graham also developed "Not My Kid," an awareness program for parents, and "Not This Kid," a prevention program for teens. Recently her office collaborated with the Boy Scouts Council to offer a Crime Prevention Merit Badge, which scout can earn by working on community projects to fight gang activity and fraud against senior citizens.

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## **Vermont**

Echoing experiences from other states, Attorney General Bill Sorrell has noted a high incidence of teenagers among the perpetrators of hate crimes. Last year, his office sought and obtained amendments to Vermont's Hate Crimes Law which added civil remedies, including injunctions and civil penalties, to the criminal sanctions of the law. His office has undertaken training programs for law enforcement officials statewide to acquaint them with the new law. Sorrell is currently implementing outreach programs to school boards, superintendents and principals to educate them about the law and the availability of the Attorney General's Office to help protect hate crimes victims both on and off school grounds.

Attorney General Sorrell recently initiated an investigation into another type of victimization of youth — this year's hazing scandal involving the University of Vermont's men's ice hockey team. In February, General Sorrell issued a public report that uncovered years of exploitative and physically dangerous hazing activities at the University. Publicity surrounding this investigation also brought to light

numerous allegations of hazing activities involving high school athletic teams. General Sorrell has, through testimony and lobbying, strongly supported anti-hazing legislation, which would provide both civil and criminal remedies to curb hazing at educational institutions.

Attorney General Sorrell has also targeted the influence that drugs and alcohol can play in violence by and among youth. He continues to assist in efforts to strengthen the state's DUI laws. He has most recently supported and participated in this spring's statewide Youth Summit on Underage Drinking, which brought together high school students from throughout the state to meet and propose solutions to a persistent and severe drinking problem among youth.

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### **Virginia**

Attorney General Mark Earley last year launched his Virginia's Future initiative, also known as "2000 in 2000." The initiative is designed to mobilize 2000 new volunteers to serve as mentors, tutors, and coaches for children around Virginia.

In April 1998, General Earley appointed a Task Force on Gangs and Youth Violence. In its final recommendations, the Task Force encouraged faith communities to offer parenting classes, encourage mentors, and allow their facilities to be used for after-school activities. It encouraged local schools to develop character education programs, adopt a crime prevention program called Class Action, permit anonymous reporting of crimes, make school safety plans, allow "zero tolerance," develop information sharing plans with the courts, and consider dress codes, school uniforms and closed campuses. The Task Force also recommended that business, higher education and law enforcement increase their involvement in mentoring and community policing, and urged local communities to establish mentoring and parenting programs, work with nonprofits to provide activities, and act to stop graffiti. Its recommendations may be viewed at [www.vaag.com](http://www.vaag.com).

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### **Washington**

When she became president of NAAG in June 1999, Attorney General Christine Gregoire declared that the theme of her presidency would be "Our Children in the New Millennium." In keeping with that theme, NAAG under her leadership has produced child-centered events for Tune Out the Violence Day, Consumer Protection Week, Earth Day and Law Day, sponsored two national listening conferences at which attorneys general from around the country have heard our youth talk about youth violence, and produced this report.

Within Washington, in September 1999 Attorney General Gregoire issued a compendium of school safety materials called "It's Our School: Some Practical Tools for School Safety" together with Superintendent of Public Instruction Terry Bergeson. The book was

sent in hard copy to the superintendent of every school district, and on CD-rom to every principal of a K-12 school in Washington. It is available on the Attorney General's Web site at [www.wa.gov/ago/ourschool](http://www.wa.gov/ago/ourschool). From September 1999 through January 2000, Attorney General Gregoire visited schools from a diverse range of communities around the state, listening to students, teachers, administrators and parents talk about youth violence, its causes and its solutions. The results of those listening conferences are included in this report.

Attorney General Gregoire's office also founded the LASER program (Lawyers and Students Engaging in Resolution). LASER sends volunteer attorneys into high schools across the state to train students in peer mediation as an alternative to violence. LASER is now an independent nonprofit but Attorney General Gregoire's office continues to provide LASER with office space and a part-time executive director.

Attorney General Gregoire cosponsored two domestic violence summits with the chief justice of the state Supreme Court.

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### **West Virginia**

Since September 1999, Attorney General Darrell McGraw, Jr.'s office has worked with 12 high schools and middle schools in a year long partnership initiative to prevent bias motivated harassment and violence. A student team will conduct programs at each school. Students receive training and support from faculty advisors, community advisors, and the Civil Rights Division. The program is not a substitute for an effective harassment reporting and investigation policy, which each school district is required by state regulation to maintain.

In May 1999, Attorney General McGraw's office cosponsored with the Center for Hate Crime Prevention a two-day program for trainers on Hate Crime Prevention Strategies. West Virginia now has approximately 30 trainers equipped to deliver hate crime prevention programs in various settings including schools.

The West Virginia Hate Crime Task Force, under the Attorney General's leadership, maintains a data base of hate crime and hate related incidents reported to the Task Force through the toll free information and referral line operated by the State Human Rights Commission. School-related incidents are among the events reported through this system. These reports are being used as a means for checking the efficacy of county policies and procedures, and as a double-check on the state-level reporting of incidents through the State Department of Education, Office of Health Schools.

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### **Wisconsin**

Attorney General James Doyle convened eight listening sessions at middle schools and high schools throughout the state during the

1999-2000 school year and heard student concerns about school and community safety, gangs and alcohol and drug use.

Since 1998, Doyle has held 14 regional one-day training conferences on school violence prevention for more than 2,000 educators and law enforcement officials. In addition, Doyle and the State Schools Superintendent hosted a three-day, statewide Safe Schools Conference attended by more than 300 school administrators and police officials.

The Attorney General prepared and distributed a Safe School Legal Resource Manual for use in all schools in Wisconsin. It offers advice on school violence prevention issues including locker searches, metal detectors and surveillance technology. Attorney General Doyle also joined with the State Schools Superintendent to appoint the Safe Schools Task Force, a panel of educators and law enforcement officials that convened hearings and developed recommendations.

Doyle has partnered with the State Bar since 1995 in a peer mediation project for local schools. PEACE (Peers in Education Addressing Conflict Effectively) is now in place in 67 schools, 17 of which were added in the 1999-2000 school year. Doyle's office conducts training for teachers, parents, school administrators and local attorneys each summer so they can implement the program. Attorney General Doyle visits local PEACE schools when his schedule permits.

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## **Wyoming**

Attorney General Gay Woodhouse unveiled an exhibit including selected student art, poems and essays about school violence. At a press conference in February, students and teachers from a junior high school that has reduced violent student episodes by 90% during the past year spoke about "bully proofing," safe hall programs and peer mediation. Students from a Wyoming high school talked about plans to address behavior that can result in school violence.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks go to the many people around the country who went the extra mile to make this report possible.

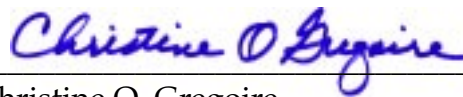
The NAAG Children's Committee, including Attorneys General Jan Graham of Utah, Ken Salazar of Colorado, Carla Stovall of Kansas and Mark Pryor of Arkansas, together with their staffs, helped plan and implement this entire project, and contributed to and commented on the report. Attorneys General Janet Napolitano of Arizona and Tom Reilly of Massachusetts and their staffs spent hundreds of hours planning and producing the excellent NAAG listening conferences in Scottsdale and Boston. Attorneys General Jane Brady of Delaware and Richard Ieyoub of Louisiana and their staffs also contributed extra time and effort to this report.

All State Attorneys General deserve recognition for tackling the problem of youth violence and for the steps they are taking in their home states to curb youth violence in America.

NAAG Executive Director Christine Milliken, Deputy Director Lynne Ross, and the entire NAAG team participated in planning and implementing the listening conferences and producing this document.

From my own fine staff at the Washington State Attorney General's Office, Assistant Attorney General Dave Horn drafted and edited the report, and Fred Olson and Brian Smith contributed significantly to both the listening conferences and this report. Geri Nelson, Jeff Aguilar, and Lantz Newberry edited, designed and printed the report.

Numerous school officials all over the country made our listening conferences possible. Thousands of teachers, administrators, parents, and especially young people participated in these conferences. Without their thoughtfulness and honesty, we would not have learned the lessons we share in this report. To all of them, and to the countless parents, teachers, young people, school administrators and community members who do their best every day to stop youth violence, I offer a special note of thanks.



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Christine O. Gregoire  
Attorney General of Washington  
President, National Association of Attorneys General

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> These figures, dating from 1992, are from the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence at the University of Colorado.
- <sup>2</sup> U.S. Centers for Disease Control Youth Risk Behavior Survey (1997).
- <sup>3</sup> Mr. Stephens made these comments at the Colorado Safe Schools Summit in 1999. See also, Ronald D. Stephens, “Ten Steps to Safe Schools; Security for Students and Staff Begins with Planning.” *The American School Board Journal* (March 1998).
- <sup>4</sup> “Urban After-School Programs,” a fact sheet issued by the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence.
- <sup>5</sup> Fact Sheet: “Reducing School Violence,” Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence.
- <sup>6</sup> Osofsky, J.D. “Children Who Witness Domestic Violence: The Invisible Victims.” *Social Policy Reports: Society For Research in Child Development* (1995) 9:3.
- <sup>7</sup> Osofsky, J.D., “The Impact of Violence on Children,” *Domestic Violence and Children* 9:3 (Winter 1999), citing: Fantuzzo, J., Boruch, R., Beriama, A., et al. Domestic violence and children: Prevalence and risk in five major U.S. cities. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry* (1997) 36:116-22; McKibben, L., DeVos, E., and Newberger, E. Victimization of mothers of abused children: A controlled study. *Pediatrics* (1989) 84:531-35; Bowker, L.H. On the relationship between wife beating and child abuse. In *Feminist perspectives on wife abuse*. K. Yllo and M. Bograd, eds. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications (1988); Straus, M. Measuring intrafamilial conflict and violence: The Conflict Tactics Scales, *Journal of Marriage and Family* (1979) 41:75-88; see note no. 7, Straus and Gelles.
- <sup>8</sup> Jaff, P.G. and Wolfe, D. and Wilson, S. “Children of Battered Women.” Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications (1990).
- <sup>9</sup> Osofsky, J.D. “Children Who Witness Domestic Violence: The Invisible Victims.” *Social Policy Reports: Society For Research in Child Development* (1995) 9:3.
- <sup>10</sup> Cathy Grace, “The Relationship of Early Child Development Programs and Reducing Youth Violence—A View From the Field.” (1997). Dr. Grace cites a number of scholarly publications which repeatedly make the same points about the link between early stimulation or trauma, brain development, and later behavior. These include Craig T. Ramey and Sharon I. Ramey, *Right From Birth—Building Your Child’s Foundation for Life*, Goddard Press (1999) (and other publications by the Rameys); Rima Shores, *Rethinking the Brain*, Families and Work Institute, New York (1997); and Stanley Greenspan, *The Growth of the Mind and the Endangered Origins of Intelligence*, Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Inc. (1997).
- <sup>11</sup> *Sacramento County Community Intervention Program: Findings from a comprehensive study by community partners in child welfare, law enforcement, juvenile justice, and the Child Welfare League of America*. Child Welfare League of America (1997).
- <sup>12</sup> Mihaly Csikszentmihaly and Reed Larson, *Being Adolescent*.
- <sup>13</sup> *A Matter of Time: Risk and Opportunity in the Nonschool Hours*, the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1992).
- <sup>14</sup> Fact Sheet: “Reducing School Violence,” Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence.
- <sup>15</sup> *A Matter of Time: Risk and Opportunity in the Nonschool Hours*, the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1992).
- <sup>16</sup> Maine Dept. of the Attorney General’s Civil Rights Team Project. See [www.state.me.us/ag/crt/description.htm](http://www.state.me.us/ag/crt/description.htm).
- <sup>17</sup> 1998 Hate Crime in California, Table 4. See <http://caag.state.ca.us/cjsc/hc98/tabs/hc98tb04.pdf>.
- <sup>18</sup> Fact Sheet on Social Contexts and Adolescent Violence, Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence.
- <sup>19</sup> American Psychiatric Association, Fact Sheet: “Psychiatric Effects of Media Violence,” [www.psych.org/public\\_info/media\\_violence.html](http://www.psych.org/public_info/media_violence.html).
- <sup>20</sup> Id.
- <sup>21</sup> Dr. Delbert Elliott, “Youth Violence: An Overview,” presented at the Aspen Institute’s

Children's Policy Forum, "Children and Violence Conference" (1994). Another authority writes, "... [E]ven when substance-abusing parents do have financial and family supports, and therefore may be "invisible" to child welfare systems, their alcohol and/or drug abuse problem still has a devastating impact on family functioning and their children's healthy development. . . . Many chemically involved parents are sincere in their desire to meet their children's needs, but they are limited in their physical, financial, social, and/or emotional abilities to do so. Substance abuse has a profound impact on a parent's capacity to provide the consistent nurturing and hands-on care that children require in order to thrive." Vickie Kropenske and Judy Howard, "Protecting Children in Substance-Abusing Families," National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect (1994), <http://childlaw.law.sc.edu/manuals/user/subabuse1/contents.htm>.

- <sup>22</sup> "Exposure to Urban Violence," a fact sheet published by the Center for the Study and Prevention of Youth Violence.
- <sup>23</sup> *Indicators of School Crime and Safety, 1998*, National Center for Education Statistics and Bureau of Justices Statistics.
- <sup>24</sup> "Community Policing, Schools, and Mental Health," a publication of the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence.
- <sup>25</sup> CDC Youth Risk Behavior Survey (1997). See also, Fact Sheet on Exposure to Urban Violence, Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, University of Colorado (2000) ("Most of the violence to which students are exposed occurs in their home neighborhood and in the neighborhood surrounding the school rather than in the school itself.")
- <sup>26</sup> CDC Youth Risk Behavior Survey (1997). Also, according to *Indicators of School Crime and Safety*, in 1992-94, 7,357 persons age 5-19 were murdered. During a comparable period, the number of murders and suicides of young people occurring at school was 76.
- <sup>27</sup> Study performed by S. Sussman, C. Dent, and W. McCullar, announced by the University of Southern California (June 11, 1999), and projected for publication in the American Journal of Health Behavior.
- <sup>28</sup> According to the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, "Exposure to violence is psychologically toxic. This exposure may produce: generalized emotional distress; disruptions in interpersonal relationships; problems with aggression, conduct disorder and truancy; cognitive, psychological, and physical issues related to learning and teaching; and physical symptoms, such as chronic fatigue." CSPV Fact Sheet: "Exposure to Urban Violence."
- <sup>29</sup> These statistics come from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) Youth Risk Behavior Survey (1997). There is no guarantee that the decline in school homicides will continue. See e.g. the California Safe Schools Assessment, released March 1, 2000, indicating that reports of violent crimes in California's public schools had increased 7 percent over the previous year. California Dept. of Education (2000).
- <sup>30</sup> U.S. Centers for Disease Control Youth Risk Behavior Survey (1997).
- <sup>31</sup> Steven Marans, Steven J. Berkowitz, and Donald J. Cohen, "Police and Mental Health Professionals: Collaborative Responses to the Impact of Violence on Children and Families," *The Child Psychiatrist in the Community*, vol. 7, no. 3 (July 1998), citing New Haven Public Schools: Report on the SAHA, Social Development Project Evaluation, Final Report 179-196. New Haven Public Schools (1992).
- <sup>32</sup> "Exposure to multiple risk factors during childhood in a number of domains (i.e., individual, family, peer group, community and school) appears to increase significantly the likelihood of later violence." Fact Sheet: "Reducing School Violence," Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence.
- <sup>33</sup> Report to Congress from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) (July 1999).
- <sup>34</sup> *1998 Annual Report on School Safety*, U.S. Dept. of Education and U.S. Dept. of Justice.
- <sup>35</sup> *Id.*
- <sup>36</sup> *Id.*
- <sup>37</sup> Not surprisingly, those who are exposed to violence or the threat of violence are motivated to "acts intended to reduce or control fear." The effects of exposure to violence may, in a school setting, spread like a "contagion" even to those who have not directly faced it. This

often “changes the school setting in ways that negatively alter school interactions and interfere with the students’ capacity to achieve its educational and social goals.” “Exposure to Urban Violence,” Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence.

<sup>38</sup> General Ryan’s Agreement is excerpted and reprinted from Child Safety on the Information Superhighway by Lawrence J. Magid and is reprinted by his office with permission of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. Copyright NCMEC 1994, all rights reserved.