



# CSPV SCHOOL VIOLENCE FACT SHEET

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## Safe School Planning

- Schools can no longer be seen as islands of safety because violence has invaded far too many of the nation's schools.
- Nearly 3 million index crimes occur on or around American school campuses which is 16,000 crimes per school day or about 1 every 6 seconds when schools are in session.
- Violence in schools has been affected by the changing climate for public education including more children of teenage parents; more latch key children and more developmentally delayed children requiring more special education classes. The varied cultural and ethnic makeup of inner city student populations has also created social stress within schools.
- Alcohol, drugs and gangs all contribute to school violence.
- Fear of violence in schools affects attendance of students and causes attrition of staff.
- Courts have notified schools to either create safe school campuses or be prepared to compensate victims for their losses.
- The goal of safe school planning is to create and maintain a positive and welcoming school climate, free of drugs, violence, intimidation and fear - an environment in which teachers can teach and students can learn in a climate which promotes the success and development of all children.
- The best safe school plans involve the entire community.
- Safe schools plans must be complemented by plans for reducing violence in neighborhoods.
- By developing a safe school plan, administrators **can prevent** many crises, help reduce violence and promote a positive educational climate.
- The first step in safe school planning is to place school safety on the education agenda, which involves making a personal and collective commitment toward creating a safe and welcoming school climate.
- All safe school plans share some of the same features; no two will be exactly alike.
- Each school needs to develop a plan that meets the unique needs and circumstances that the local school is facing.
- Schools need to conduct a site assessment before developing a safe school plan. Determining the specific issues and concerns the local community believes are most important begins the process of customizing a relevant and meaningful safe school plan.

- Every important school safety issue is embedded in existing law. The school district's lawyer should conduct a review of federal, state and local statutes pertaining to student management and school order. This review identifies what the law requires and what the law allows for safe school plans.
- After a site assessment is conducted each school needs to develop a plan which involves articulating what the school wants to accomplish and the processes by which these goals will be achieved.
- Essentially, the three components of safe school planning include: 1) identifying where you are as a district and community specifying top concern and issues, 2) asking where you want to be and 3) calling for the development of a plan to deal with the difference between where you are where you want to be.
- There are six overall subjects that should be covered in a safe school plan: 1) the physical environment, 2) the social environment, 3) the cultural environment, 4) the economic environment, 5) the personal characteristics of individual students and staff members, and 6) the local political environment.
- Safe school plans need to include crisis response plans, which can save time and energy and can maintain commitment when unforeseen problems arise.
- The safe school planning team is the driving force behind the planning process and the team should include teachers, counselors, the principal, the vice principal, school security, maintenance and the school secretary. Students should be at the heart of the process and, if age appropriate, part of the planning team.
- Safe school planning initiatives are best established by community coalitions of school, law enforcement and community leaders.
- For any plan to succeed, the safe school planning team must draw upon the cultural diversity of the community it represents.
- Making the planning team work effectively is difficult. One of the biggest challenges is to allay the fears and resentments that may arise when formerly independent agencies are suddenly asked to share the same "turf." However, diverse efforts from a multi-organizational and cultural planning team sends an important message to the community that school safety is not merely a school problem, but rather a community problem.
- To have an effective safe school plan there is a compelling need to identify what works and what does not work so that limited resources can be applied with a maximum return.
- Every school should conduct an annual school safety assessment, which can be used as an evaluation and planning tool to determine the extent of school safety problems and the safety plan addressing them.

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