



School Violence Resources

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DESCRIPTION OF SCHOOL VIOLENCE

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

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

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

INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

Counseling Services

Schools should provide or refer students to counseling services based upon each individual's needs. Topics

Social Skills Training

Social skills training enables students to have positive and respectful interactions with other students, parents, faculty, and staff. Positive relationships can reduce tendencies toward violent behavior.

- Encourage faculty to teach and model positive social skills.
- Implement life skills training throughout the curriculum to teach students how to recognize problem situations, manage stress, achieve self-control, and demonstrate emotional maturity.

Cognitive Skills Training

Encourage faculty and staff to challenge the way students think about problem solving. Violence in school settings often erupts as impulsive or irrational reactions to immediate problems.

Teach means-ends thinking, in which students learn how to reach a goal by step-by-step planning, identifying potential obstacles, and accepting that problem solving often takes time.

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