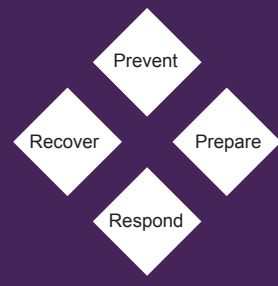


Colorado Safe Schools

A joint publication of the Colorado School Safety Resource Center and the CU-Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence
Colorado Department of Public Safety and the University of Colorado-Boulder



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Prevention: Links to the Future

The next four issues of Colorado Safe Schools will focus on the four quadrants of safe school planning: prevention, preparedness, response and recovery. Beginning with prevention, we look at sobering statistics related to youth violence and how one Colorado community is making a difference. District Attorney for the 17th Judicial District Don Quick spoke at a Colorado Safe Schools training held recently in Grand Junction. He discussed some of the reasons prevention is a sound investment and how the Adams County Youth Initiative is making futures better for its young people.

The problem of youth violence is complex. We know that prevention must begin early. According to the Surgeon General's report on youth violence, the age range with the highest risk of initiating serious violence is 12 to 20 — the peak occurring at age 16.

The two most powerful early risk factors for violence are involvement in general offenses and substance use before the age of 12. The most powerful late risk factors, for ages 12 to 14, include weak social ties, antisocial or delinquent peers, and gang membership.

In Colorado, recent data show that of those youth who have tried marijuana, 12 percent tried it for the first time at age 12 or younger and almost 23 percent had used it at least once during the past 30 days (YRBS-Unweighted Data 2007). And the high school dropout rate was ranked third in the nation (NCES 2008). Risk factors for violence and data suggest that keeping children who are at risk in school, involved in pro-social activities, and free from drugs and alcohol is good not only for them, it has serious implications for our state, our society.

Just as youth violence is a complex problem for society, the solutions to it are equally complex and varied. *The Productivity Argument for Investing in Young Children* (2007) points out that early intervention, before children come to school, is a key piece in solving this problem. The authors recognize that "schools work with what parents give them" and yet failure in school is linked to such great peril in later life – both to the individual and to society as a whole. Safe schools are just as vital to the solution.

Promoting safe schools creates a climate for children in which some risk factors and disadvantages can be mitigated. The U.S. Department of Education finds that safe schools share the following characteristics:

- High academic standards
- Clear rules and policies that are enforced fairly
- High levels of parent involvement
- Effective community-school partnerships
- Extended day/after school programs
- Promotion of good citizenship and character

Schools operate in dual capacities – as individual entities with contained objectives and influence. They also operate as powerful players in the larger community objectives and outcomes. The Adams County Youth Initiative (ACYI) is a successful example of schools playing a key role in the larger context of a community approach to violence prevention.

Created in 2005, the ACYI is a consortium of partner agencies that includes school districts, law enforcement, mental health, social services, juvenile justice, work force development and providers of early childhood services that is committed to work together in the coordination of resources in Adams County. Its goals are to increase high school graduation rates and decrease delinquency and substance abuse. Working through this consortium, Adams County secured early funding with a 5-year Safe Schools/Healthy Students grant and is building momentum toward institutionalization for sustainability. For more information on the Adams County Youth Initiative, visit acyi.org.

Some prevention activities can be done with little funding, but many simply cannot. Prevention dollars can be very challenging to secure but continue to be made available from public agencies, private organizations, and businesses. The Colorado School Safety Resource Center lists grant announcements online at www.safeschools.state.co.us. Federal grant resources include:

- Safe Schools/Healthy Students - www.sshs.samhsa.gov
- Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools at the US Department of Education - www.ed.gov
- Violence prevention and related grants from all federal agencies - www.grants.gov

Prevention Activities

- Develop safe school planning and crisis response teams.
- Assess the school climate.
- Assess the school site for vulnerability and risk.
- Establish interagency information sharing agreements.
- Listen to those in the school. Provide a method for anonymous reporting.
- Take a strong, caring stance against the code of silence.
- Enforce fair and consistent policies and procedures.
- Address bullying through prevention and intervention.
- Provide evidence-based violence prevention programs and strategies to address needs.
- Plan for, create and sustain a culture of safety and respect.
- Promote trusting relationships.
- Provide comprehensive school health and psychological services.
- Find mechanism for sustaining safe climate.

For assistance with these activities, please contact us:

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Colorado Safe Schools Training Held in September

Over 200 participants attended the Safe Schools Regional Training on September 29-30 in Grand Junction. Sessions included: Cyber Bullying, Technology and Legal Issues, Managing Gangs in Schools, Suicide Prevention and Intervention, Interagency Teams and Information Sharing, Safe2Tell: Emerging Trends, US Secret Service: The Safe School Initiative, Bystander Studies & Threat Assessment, IS-100S.Ca: Intro to ICS for Schools, Best Practice Use of the Threat Assessment Process, and NIMS Implementation for Schools.

Save the Date! Colorado Safe Schools Training: Metro Denver, February 25-26

The Colorado School Safety Resource Center and the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence present a Safe Schools Regional Training in the metro Denver area. The training will be held at the Adams 12 Conference Center, 1500 E. 128th Ave., Thornton, CO 80241.

AT A GLANCE:

- Designed for school safety team members: administrators, faculty, counselors and mental health staff, SRO/law enforcement, fire safety and other community partners that are part of your team.
- No charge to Colorado participants, and continental breakfast and lunch are included.
- Registration is required, and space is limited.

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS:

- William Modzeleski, Associate Assistant Deputy Secretary of the US Department of Education's Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools
- Sameer Hinduja, Ph.D., Co-Director of the Cyberbullying Research Center and Associate Professor at Florida Atlantic University. Co-author of *Bullying: Beyond the Schoolyard*.

SAMPLE OF SESSIONS:

Cyberbullying and Social Networking

Legal Issues for the Use of Technology in Schools

Avoiding Criminal Liability

Creating Crisis Drills for Your School

Using Data for School Safety Planning

Psychological First Aid for Recovery in Schools

Interagency Information Sharing

Suicide Prevention and Postvention Issues

REGISTRATION: Opens December 7 for School Safety Teams - Opens January 4, 2010 for Individuals

Register online at www.co.train.org (Course ID 1019539) and find further information at www.safeschools.state.co.us or call Mike Lythgoe at 303.239.4532.

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Newsletter is
Going Green!**

Please sign up to receive this newsletter by email to help us conserve paper and continue to keep you updated on school safety issues in Colorado.

To register your email address, visit www.safeschools.state.co.us