

School Safety and Reporting Resources for the K-12 Community

Reduce the threat of violence and enhance student safety by creating a reliable reporting program and school environment where anyone can seek help or report concerns.

Reporting programs for K-12 schools and school districts can serve as vital channels for students and school community members to report concerns regarding student wellness and safety. According to research conducted by the U.S. Secret Service National Threat Assessment Center, in approximately [three-quarters of completed school attacks](#) examined, the attacker had communicated with others about their intent. Establishing a reliable reporting system can facilitate early intervention and administration of support for students in need, as well as help prevent potential incidents of targeted violence.

[School officials also find](#) that reporting systems can make them more aware and effective in addressing other school safety issues such as bullying, drug use, and incidents of self-harm or suicide risk among students. When concerns are identified early, schools can work to ensure positive outcomes for the student, offering various resources and supports such as mentoring and counseling, mental health services, or social and family services.

Despite the presence of reporting platforms and programs, some students may still hesitate to share information. Every member of the school community can play an important role in helping students feel more comfortable with speaking up. Once such an environment is established, it is crucial for school officials to actively listen to students and handle any information they receive fairly and responsibly.

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Reporting programs should be part of a community-based, comprehensive, and holistic approach to school safety that involves a range of other prevention, protection, and mitigation measures.



Strategies to Enhance Student and School Safety Through Reporting Programs

There are several actions schools and districts can take to enable, improve, and sustain reporting systems and create an environment that empowers students to share concerns. Some of these actions include:



Create and promote a safe and supportive school environment

Establishing a school climate characterized by support and inclusivity can help enhance safety and create an environment that is more conducive in engaging and empowering students to report concerns. One way to do this is by cultivating positive and trusting relationships between teachers/school staff and students. A trusted adult at school in whom the student can confide can help direct a student toward resources, supports, and interventions.

Teachers and other school staff can build trusted relationships with students by making themselves accessible to students, being active and conscious listeners, engaging in proactive outreach to create positive connections, and facilitating a sense of belonging through class activities, school programs, and non-instructional time. These activities can help students feel encouraged, empowered, and safe in sharing concerns or issues. Identifying and implementing protective factors and trusted relationships can also help restore hope to a student who feels defeated or desperate.



Establish an accessible and centralized reporting system

Schools can consider establishing a centralized reporting system that is continually monitored and allows for anonymous reporting to help members of the school community provide information on concerns for wellness or safety. Allowing for diverse reporting avenues, such as through direct communication with trusted adults, phone tip lines, email or online forms, and/or text or mobile applications, can also enhance accessibility for students and other members of the school community and foster a system where individuals are more willing and able to report.

As part of this process, school authorities should put in place a centralized process for identifying, evaluating, and handling submitted reports from across these various channels. Implementing an option for anonymous or confidential reporting can also enable students to submit reports without revealing their identity, reducing the fear of potential retaliation.



Evaluate and address reports accordingly

To enhance confidence and credibility in the reporting process, it is essential to follow through on reported concerns or incidents with transparent protocols for receiving reports, communicating with those reporting, and triaging reports to support a timely and effective response.

One practice schools may also consider is the use of well-trained and diverse multidisciplinary school threat assessment teams. These teams should include certified mental health professionals and the approach should include providing the supports and interventions students need when they need them.



Provide training and generate awareness for all stakeholders

School safety is a collective responsibility, and all school personnel should be trained on violence prevention strategies and policies. Training may include protocols for notifying relevant parties upon encountering concerning information, guidelines for sharing pertinent details, and strategies for safely intervening in such situations to help an individual and/or prevent a situation from escalating.

Schools should also build a culture of safety where reporting is a trusted avenue and easily recognized as part of a broader violence prevention program. As part of this, school leaders should ensure students, educators, and school personnel are educated and reminded about their options to report concerns for wellness and safety.



Resources

SchoolSafety.gov features a range of resources schools and districts can use to implement reporting programs and enhance student and school safety. These include:

- ✓ [Addressing the Risk of Violent Behavior in Youth](#)
This presentation helps teachers and school personnel identify behaviors and other signs that could result in youth violence. It is intended as a general guide regarding what is known about risk and protective factors and the warning signs that are associated with a risk of violent behavior.
- ✓ [Averting Targeted School Violence: A U.S. Secret Service Analysis of Plots Against Schools](#)
This report examines 67 disrupted plots against K-12 schools from 2006-2018 and highlights the importance of proactive reporting and intervention. The report is accompanied by a [video](#) that further describes the thinking and behavior of the plotters, as well as their attack plans, how the plots were discovered, and how this information can be utilized to prevent violence in schools.
- ✓ [Enhancing School Safety Using a Threat Assessment Model: An Operational Guide for Preventing Targeted School Violence](#)
This guide provides actionable steps that schools can take to develop comprehensive targeted violence prevention plans and create processes and procedures for conducting threat assessments.
- ✓ [Improving School Safety Through Bystander Reporting: A Toolkit for Strengthening K-12 Reporting Programs](#)
This toolkit offers simple strategies and guidance K-12 schools and school districts can use to implement and enhance safety reporting programs and encourage bystander reporting among students and other members of the school community.
- ✓ [Protecting America's Schools: A U.S. Secret Service Analysis of Targeted School Violence](#)
This report studies 41 incidents of targeted school violence against K-12 schools from 2008-2017, providing an analysis of the motives, behaviors, and situational factors of the attackers, as well as the tactics, resolutions, and other operationally-relevant details.
- ✓ [Relationships First: Creating Connections That Help Young People Thrive](#)
This report highlights the importance of healthy, supportive relationships to positive youth outcomes. It articulates the Developmental Relationships Framework and includes sections on why developmental relationships matter; how developmental relationships grow; and ideas for deepening one-on-one relationships (for parents, teachers, and youth workers).
- ✓ [School Connectedness Helps Students Thrive](#)
This webpage describes school connectedness, the benefits of school connectedness, and the ways schools can take action to promote school connectedness.
- ✓ [School Safety: Research on Gathering Tips and Addressing Threats](#)
This article summarizes research on the implementation of a systematic and coordinated approach to gather and process information on threats, respond appropriately, and document the response.
- ✓ [School Tip Line Toolkit: A Blueprint for Implementation and Sustainability](#)
This guide is designed to help educators, law enforcement professionals, community leaders, and school safety experts navigate key decisions and consider the factors necessary to support successful and efficient tip line implementation as part of an overall school safety strategy.



Learn more and find additional reporting and school safety resources on [SchoolSafety.gov's threat assessment and reporting page](#) and [targeted violence page](#).

Sources: [Averting Targeted School Violence: A U.S. Secret Service Analysis of Plots Against Schools](#) | [Addressing the Risk of Violent Behavior in Youth](#) | [Improving School Safety Through Bystander Reporting: A Toolkit for Strengthening K-12 Reporting Programs](#) | [Enhancing School Safety Using a Threat Assessment Model: An Operational Guide for Preventing Targeted School Violence](#) | [Critical Incident Review: Active Shooter at Robb Elementary School](#) | [Report: Safety Tip Lines Flag Bullying, Drug Use, Suicide Risk](#)



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