

Targeted Violence Prevention Resources

Prevent and mitigate targeted violence incidents.

Targeted violence refers to violence that is premeditated and directed at specific individuals, groups, or locations. Perpetrators often select their targets as a result of grievances. Targeted violence is distinct from violence that is spontaneous, random, or impulsive crime emanating from a person's immediate anger or fear and is often distinguished by pre-attack behaviors that suggest violence as a possible outcome.

Targeted violence incidents do not simply disrupt the learning environment of affected campuses. These tragic events threaten the physical and psychological safety of those involved, undermine public confidence, and emotionally devastate communities, oftentimes with wide-ranging impacts that extend far beyond the events of the day. They can have lasting effects on student mental and emotional health, well-being, and development, and the psychological impacts of such tragedies may cause widespread increases in fear and anxiety in school environments.



The factors that lead to targeted violence can be wide-ranging, complex, and occur over a period of time. In many instances, however, targeted violence incidents are preventable. Addressing targeted violence requires a community-based, comprehensive, and holistic approach, and many members of the school community – including district administrators, principals, school-based law enforcement, emergency managers, teachers, school mental health professionals, parents, and students themselves – can play a role. Schools that employ comprehensive approaches to addressing violence are not immune from it, but by doing so, they can minimize the chances of serious violence and better respond to incidents that may occur.



Schools can actively work to address the threat of targeted violence through a variety of prevention, protection, and mitigation measures, including:

Fostering a Positive School Climate

Addressing targeted violence should be part of a school's larger prevention system that begins with issues such as school climate. In the absence of a safe and positive learning environment, a student may feel disconnected, disregard consequences, and engage in destructive behaviors – conditions that can foreshadow acts of violence or criminality. A supportive learning environment can also help prevent bullying, which in some instances can play a contributing role in school violence.

A positive school climate promotes respectful, trusting, and caring relationships and opens lines of communication, and students may feel more comfortable asking for help or reporting concerns about their peers. Schools can take action to build school connectedness through well-managed classrooms that incorporate positive behavior management strategies, school-based practices that promote inclusion, and positive youth development programs.

Schools also play a critical role in promoting students' health and development and can support children and adolescents by providing access to proper mental health services and resources. These supports can reduce mental, emotional, and behavioral difficulties and lead to better outcomes for students at risk.

Intervening to Lessen Harms and Prevent Future Risk

Schools can also work to prevent and prepare for potential acts of targeted violence by implementing other violence prevention strategies and by involving school personnel who are trained to prevent, recognize, and respond to threats of violence. One practice schools may 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. Schools may also establish a reporting system that is continually monitored and allows anonymous reporting to help members of the school community provide information on concerning behaviors or suspicious activities.

Some school districts may decide to use school-based law enforcement, including school resource officers (SROs) and other security personnel, to help prevent or mitigate school violence. Implementing an SRO program is a local decision that should be made with significant community input, and school districts should consider the range of options available that best fit their needs.

Implementing Physical Safety and Security Measures

Schools can also protect against and mitigate targeted violence threats by taking proactive measures to improve the physical security of school grounds, buildings, and classrooms. Physical security should be viewed as part of the broader school safety and security enterprise, with measures that support prevention, response, and recovery efforts and that do not impede upon the educational mission or school climate.

Physical security measures can also mitigate external threats and reduce the amount of harm inflicted if incidents occur. These efforts include the physical design of schools and campuses and the development and ongoing maintenance of preparedness plans. Conducting a site assessment can help schools identify existing vulnerabilities, integrate future security practices, and inform the development of building security plans. Schools can also bolster physical security and safety efforts by working with district and community partners to share information about best practices, potential threats, and mitigation strategies.



Resources

SchoolSafety.gov offers a variety of resources, guides, and tools that school communities can use to help prevent, protect against, and mitigate targeted violence incidents, including:

Guides, Reports, and Informational Materials

- [Addressing the Risk of Violent Behavior in Youth](#): This presentation helps teachers and school personnel identify common risk factors and warning signs associated with violent behaviors as well as strategies to effectively respond to situations of concern.
- [Building Peer-to-Peer Engagements](#): This briefing paper describes how peer-to-peer engagements can help communities build resilience against violence and terrorism and provide critical protective factors for youth.
- [Enhancing School Safety Using a Threat Assessment Model](#): 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.
- [K-12 School Security Guide Suite](#): This set of products is designed to inform safety and physical security planning for K-12 schools. It includes the K-12 School Security Guide (3rd ed.), which provides a comprehensive doctrine and systems-based methodology for vulnerability assessment and planning, and the School Security Assessment Tool, a web-based assessment that walks users through a tailorable vulnerability analysis.

Training, Exercises, and Tools

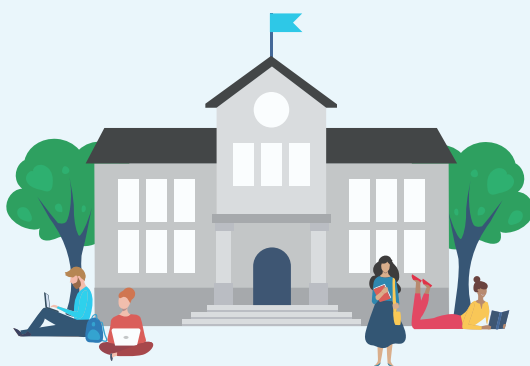
- [Active Shooter Preparedness](#): This webpage offers a comprehensive set of courses, materials, and workshops to better prepare individuals and organizations to deal with an active shooter situation, focusing on behaviors that represent pre-incident indicators and characteristics of active shooters, potential attack methods, how to develop emergency action plans, and the actions that may be taken during an incident.
- [Best Practice Considerations for Armed Assailant Drills in Schools](#): This document provides guidance on factors schools must take into account when conducting armed assailant drills and reflects unique considerations within the school environment, including protecting both the physical and psychological safety of students and staff.
- [Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design \(CPTED\) School Assessment](#): This tool assesses the use of CPTED principles in three areas of schools: grounds, buildings, and interiors. It includes the principles of natural surveillance, access management, territoriality, physical maintenance, and order maintenance.
- [Critical Resources for Handling Bomb Threats](#): This video details an array of tools and tips to help members of the public effectively respond to bomb threats and discusses basic steps individuals can take to handle bomb threats and make informed risk management decisions to protect people and property.
- [Exercise Starter Kits and Tabletop Exercises](#): These self-conducted tabletop exercises, tailored for the academic community, include a set of scalable tools aimed to test existing emergency plans, protocols, and procedures, while also strengthening preparedness, response, and recovery capabilities in the event of an active shooter situation. [Tabletop exercise packages](#) are also available on a variety of physical security scenarios geared towards specific facilities, including schools.
- [SITE ASSESS](#): This mobile app, designed specifically for education agencies, allows personnel to walk around buildings and grounds and examine their safety, security, accessibility, and emergency preparedness.



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Programs, Websites, and Other Resources

- [National School Mental Health Best Practices: Implementation Guidance Modules](#): These resources – which include modules containing trainer and participant manuals, slide decks, and recorded virtual learning sessions – are designed to help states, districts, and schools advance comprehensive school mental health, as well as engage in a planning process around implementation of services.
- [School Climate Improvement Resource Package](#): This resource package includes a variety of items to meet a range of needs among public schools and districts interested in improving school climate, including a reference manual, action guides, data resources, and online modules.
- [StopBullying.gov](#): This interagency website provides information from various government agencies on what bullying is, what cyberbullying is, who is at risk, and how schools and individuals can prevent and respond to bullying.
- [Supporting Child and Student Social, Emotional, Behavioral, and Mental Health Needs](#): This guide provides focused information and resources to enhance the promotion of mental health and social and emotional well-being among students. It highlights seven key challenges to providing school- or program-based mental health support across early childhood, K–12 schools, and higher education settings, and presents seven corresponding recommendations.
- [Toolkit for Schools: Engaging Parents to Support Student Mental Health and Emotional Well-being](#): This toolkit is designed to help education leaders and schools raise parent awareness about school connectedness and its role in supporting student mental health and emotional well-being, and why family engagement both in and out of school is important. It includes background information, sample social media posts, social media graphics, and newsletter text.
- [988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline](#): This program offers 24/7 call, text and chat access to trained crisis counselors who can help people experiencing suicidal, substance use, and/or mental health crisis, or any other kind of emotional distress. The corresponding webpage provides additional resources and information for strengthening suicide prevention and mental health crisis services.



Sources: schoolsafety.gov/targeted-violence | dhs.gov/school-and-workplace-violence | secretsservice.gov/reports | ed.gov/policy/elsec | cdc.gov/healthyyouth/protective/school_connectedness | mhttnetwork.org/after-school-tragedyreadiness-response-recovery | cdc.gov/healthyyouth | cops.usdoj.gov/RIC/Publications/cops-w0900-pub.pdf | cops.usdoj.gov/RIC/Publications/cops-p460-pub.pdf | cisa.gov/k-12-school-security-guide-product-suite | dhs.gov/foundations-targeted-violence-prevention

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