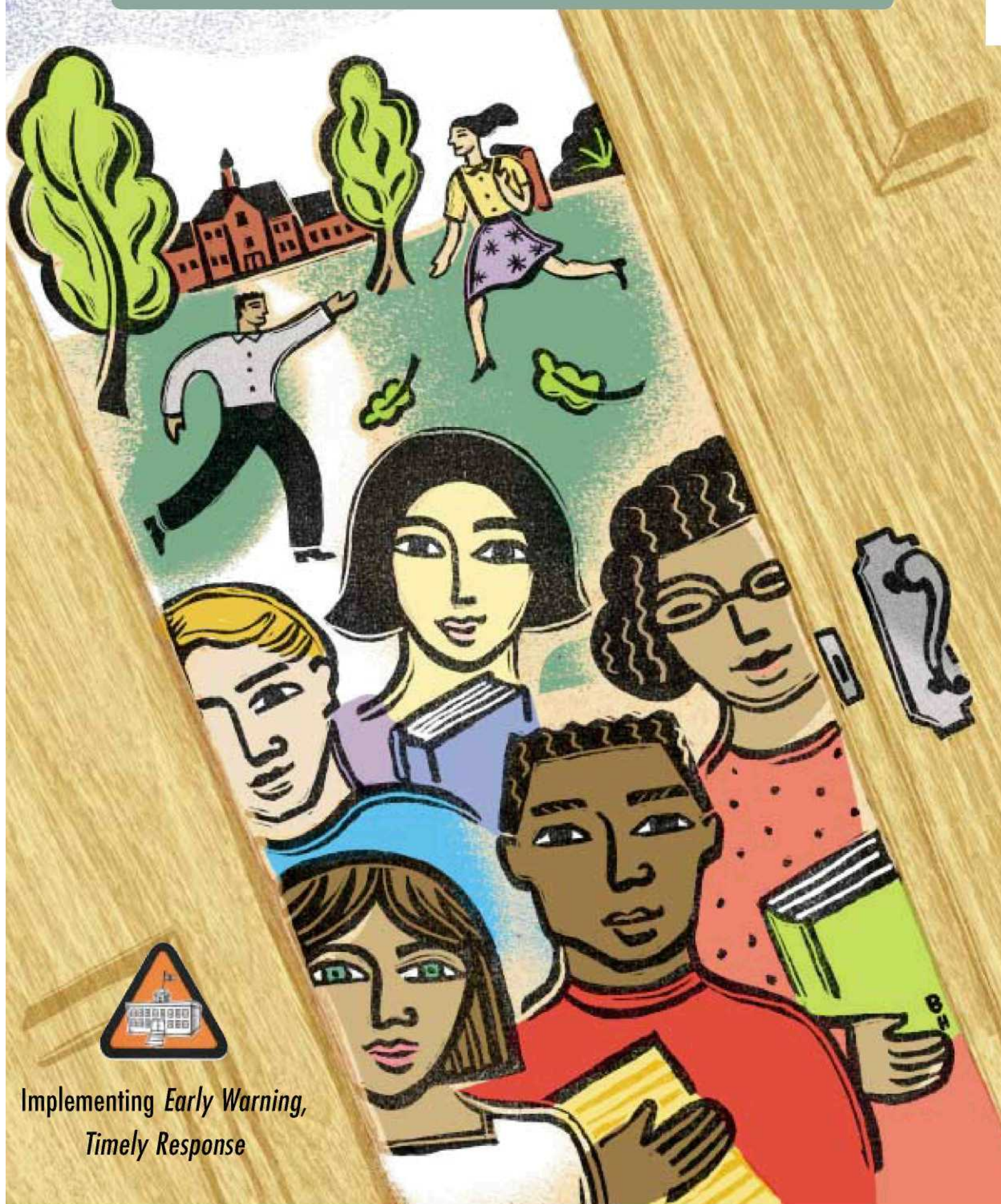


# SAFEGUARDING OUR CHILDREN: AN ACTION GUIDE



*Implementing Early Warning,  
Timely Response*

## Organizations Supporting This Guide

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American Academy of Pediatrics  
American Association of School Administrators  
American Counseling Association  
American Federation of Teachers  
American Psychiatric Association  
American Psychological Association  
American School Counselor Association  
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William Modzeleski, Director  
**U.S. Department of Justice**  
Janet Reno, Attorney General  
Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention  
John C. Wilson, Acting Administrator

### April 2000

This guide was produced by the Center for Effective Collaboration and Practice of the American Institutes for Research, and the National Association for School Psychologists under a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, Office of Special Education Programs (Grant # H327T60005), under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, and Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program provided additional support under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and the Gun-Free Schools Act.

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20202-\_\_\_\_\_

April 21, 2000

Dear Principals, Teachers, Mental Health Professionals, and Families:

In 1998, at the request of President Clinton, the U.S. Department of Education and the Department of Justice produced *Early Warning, Timely Response: A Guide to Safe Schools* (the Early Warning Guide) to help communities make schools even safer in the future than they are today. The Early Warning Guide was designed to provide research-based, practical help needed to "keep every child in your school out of harm's way."

We are pleased by the positive feedback on the Early Warning Guide and by the many schools already implementing recommendations included in the guide. Since releasing the Early Warning Guide, we have received numerous requests for a follow-up resource that provides additional information about the "how to" of developing school safety plans. In response, we have developed *Safeguarding Our Children: An Action Guide*. The Action Guide provides practical steps schools can take to design and implement school safety plans to reduce violence in our schools and help children get access to the services they need. It stresses the importance of a three-stage, comprehensive model that includes prevention, early intervention, and intensive services to address school safety issues. The guide also emphasizes the importance of strategic planning, capacity building, comprehensive approaches, teamwork, and community involvement in successful schools.

The strategies presented in the Action Guide are based on research that has demonstrated the value of prevention and of comprehensive approaches to school safety that involve the entire education community—principals, teachers, counselors, parents, and students. We hope that you will find the examples of programs and practices provided throughout this Action Guide useful as you examine the needs of your school and community. However, we caution you that using this guide in a cursory way to stigmatize children will be counterproductive and harmful.

We are grateful to the many experts, agencies, and associations in education, law enforcement, juvenile justice, mental health, and other social services that reviewed drafts, provided examples, and otherwise contributed to the quality of this publication. We hope that your school and community will benefit from the information provided in this Action Guide.




Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Richard W. Riley in black ink.

Richard W. Riley W  
Secretary of Education

Handwritten signature of Janet Reno in black ink.

Janet Reno  
Attorney General

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# △ CHAPTER 1: Introduction

Schools are almost always safe places. Even so, recent school shootings created a widespread demand to improve school safety. In 1998, President Clinton directed the departments of Education and Justice to develop a guide to help "adults reach out to troubled children, quickly and effectively." The result was *Early Warning, Timely Response: A Guide to Safe Schools*<sup>1</sup>" (also called the *Early Warning Guide*). Attorney General Janet Reno and Secretary of Education Richard Riley said the guide "should be seen as part of an overall effort to make sure that every school in this nation has a comprehensive violence prevention plan in place."

The *Early Warning Guide* has been copied, downloaded, reprinted, and distributed to agencies, organizations, and every school across the nation. The *Early Warning Guide* is a good example of effective collaboration between federal agencies, national associations, and researchers from various disciplines, as well as practitioners, family members, and youth. Hundreds of people worked together to design, develop, review, and disseminate the research-based and practice-validated *Early Warning Guide*. In fact, the *Early Warning Guide* was so well-received that the departments of Education and Justice decided to develop a companion piece—*Safeguarding Our Children: An Action Guide* (or the *Action Guide*).

The purpose of this *Action Guide* is to help schools develop and implement a comprehensive violence prevention plan grounded in the principles of the *Early Warning Guide*. This *Action Guide* is based on evidence-based practices. Effective action plans are strategic, coordinated, and comprehensive. They involve schoolwide prevention, early intervention, and intensive services for students with significant emotional or behavioral needs, including those with disruptive, destructive, or violent behaviors.

Prevention, early intervention, and intensive services can reduce violence and other troubling behaviors in schools. Understanding the causes of violence and knowledge of evidence-based practices can help schools identify and address warning signs early so children can get the help they need before it is too late. The most promising prevention and intervention strategies extend beyond the schoolhouse door; they include administrators, teachers, families, students, support staff, and community agency staff. Everyone's support is important to safeguard our children.

\* Dwyer, K., Osher, D., and Warger, C. (1998). *Early Warning, Timely Response: A Guide to Safe Schools*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education. Quotations on this page are from page i of the *Early Warning Guide*. English, Spanish, and referenced versions of the *Early Warning Guide* are available at <http://cecp.air.org/guide>.

## Qualities of Safe and Responsible Schools

- The school has strong leadership, caring faculty, family and community involvement, including law enforcement officials and representatives of community-based organizations and student participation in the design of programs and policies.
- The physical environment of the school is safe and schoolwide policies are in place to promote and support responsible behaviors.
- Prevention and intervention programs are sustained, coordinated, and comprehensive.
- Interventions are based on careful assessment of student needs.
- Evidence-based approaches are used.
- Staff are provided with training and support to help them implement programs and approaches.
- Interventions are monitored and evaluations are conducted to ensure that the programs are meeting measurable goals and objectives.

Schools that have comprehensive violence prevention and response plans in place, plus teams to design and implement those plans, report the following positive results:

A Improved academics.

A Reduced disciplinary referrals and suspensions.

- Improved school climate that is more conducive to learning.

A Better staff morale.

- More efficient use of human and financial resources.

- Enhanced safety.

### Overview of the *Action Guide*

School violence occurs in a unique context in every school, making a one-size-fits-all approach ineffective. This *Action Guide* helps schools develop and carry out a violence prevention and response plan that can be customized to fit each school's particular strengths. The plan includes the following:

A Identifying and understanding the problem of school violence and its relationship to school climate.

A Building a schoolwide foundation that prevents most problems from occurring.

A Recognizing, reporting, and using the early warning signs effectively.

A Developing interventions to respond to students with troubling behaviors.

Building a comprehensive plan takes time and requires input from students, staff, agencies, families, and other community members. This *Action Guide* presents strategies that schools have used successfully to create and implement these plans. The *Action Guide* provides examples of sound practices and programs and offers suggestions on what to look for and what to do.

### A Comprehensive Three-Level Approach to Prevention

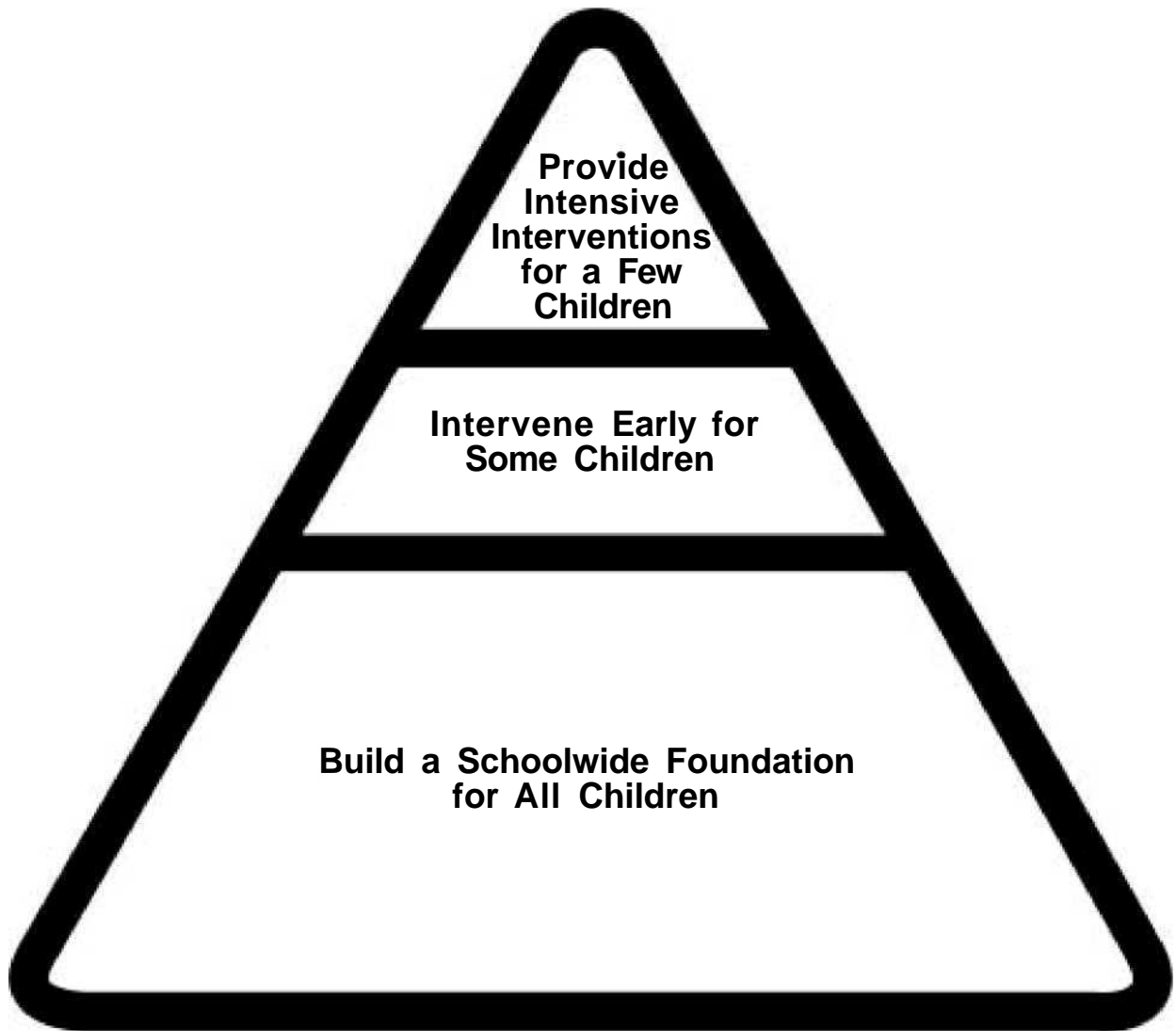
Research on safe schools demonstrates that a comprehensive three-level approach to prevention is the most efficient and cost-effective way to reduce the risk of violence. These three levels are shown in the triangle on page 3.

#### Schoolwide Foundation

An effective schoolwide foundation is designed to improve the academic performance and behavior of all children. The schoolwide foundation includes the following:

(continued on page 4)

## A Three-Level Approach to Preventing Violence



## A

### **Build a Schoolwide Foundation**

Support positive discipline, academic success, and mental and emotional wellness through a caring school environment, teaching appropriate behaviors and problem solving skills, positive behavioral support and appropriate academic instruction.

### **Intervene Early**

Create services and supports that address risk factors and build protective factors for students at risk for severe academic or behavioral difficulties.

### **Provide Intensive Interventions**

Provide coordinated, comprehensive, intensive, sustained, culturally appropriate, child-and family-focused services and supports.



No plan will make a school immune to violence. Nevertheless, having a violence prevention and response plan in place *reduces* the likelihood of violence and helps schools respond quickly and effectively to violent incidents that may occur.

- \* Compassionate, caring, respectful staff who model appropriate behaviors, create a climate of emotional support, and are committed to working with all students.
- \* Developmentally appropriate programs for *all* children that teach and reinforce social and problem-solving skills.
- \* Teachers and staff who are trained to support positive school and classroom behaviors.
- \* Engaging curricula and effective teaching practices.
- \* Child- and family-focused, culturally competent approaches.
- \* Collaborative relationships with families, agencies, and community organizations.

These approaches alone are sufficient for most students' needs, but they will not address fully the needs of all students. However, an effective foundation makes it easier to identify students who require additional interventions and increases the effectiveness of all interventions—both early and intensive. Chapter 2 describes the schoolwide foundation.

### **Early Intervention**

Early intervention is necessary for those students who are at risk of academic failure or behavior problems. Early intervention, along with an appropriate foundation, is sufficient for almost all students. Chapter 3 describes early intervention and how it can be used to respond to early warning signs.

### **Intensive Interventions**

Intensive interventions are necessary for those students whose needs cannot be fully addressed by early intervention. Intensive interventions should always be individualized to a student's needs *and* strengths. These interventions often involve multiple coordinated services, such as individualized special education services or interagency wraparound supports. Chapter 4 describes intensive interventions.

### **Safe Schools Combine All Three Levels**

For a school to be safe for *all* children, all three levels must be in place. A school that builds a schoolwide foundation will still fail if it ignores the needs of children at risk of severe academic or behavioral problems or children who are seriously troubled. In most schools, a schoolwide foundation will meet the needs of most students, while early intervention will address the needs of most of the other students. Individualized intensive interventions will be needed for a relatively small number of students.

## Safe Schools Employ Teams Efficiently and Effectively

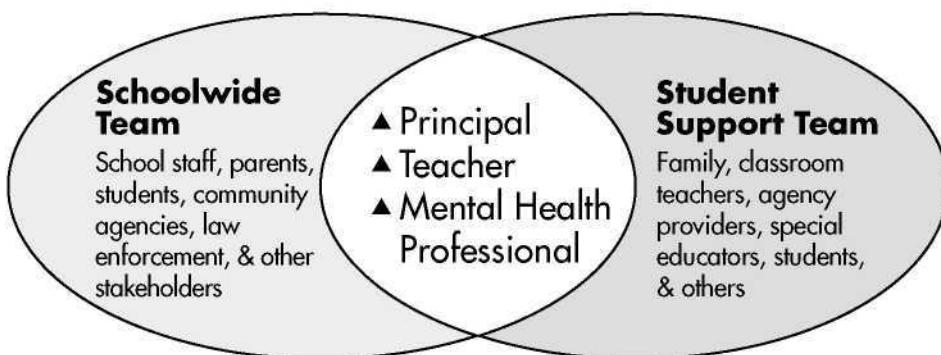
Each day, school personnel make important decisions about how to implement the best educational program for the entire school and how to provide the best education possible for specific students who may be experiencing difficulties.

Effective schools usually form a small number of teams composed of professionals and support personnel who are responsible for these decisions. This *Action Guide* recommends that schools employ two teams: one that addresses overall school performance and another that addresses individual student problems. These teams are integral to creating and implementing a comprehensive plan for safe and effective schools. A minimum of three people—the principal, a teacher, and a mental health specialist—should serve on both teams. This *Action Guide* will refer to the first team as the *Schoolwide Team*, and the second as the *Student Support Team*.

Although schools may use other titles for their teams, almost every school has them. The Schoolwide Team is sometimes called the School Management Team or School Improvement Team. The Student Support Team may be known as The Child Study Team or the Student Assistance Team. While the primary functions of these two teams are different, both teams are necessary to create safe, educationally sound learning environments.

The teams have different responsibilities, but coordination is necessary. To facilitate this coordination, the teams should have a number of members in common, such as the principal, a teacher, and the school's mental health professional. A dynamic, collaborative relationship, in which knowledge and information are continuously shared, will help ensure that the schoolwide, early, and intensive interventions are aligned to meet the goals of a safe and effective school.

### Linkage Between Schoolwide and Student Support Teams



## Safe Schools Have the Capacity to Plan, Implement, Monitor, and Evaluate a Prevention and Intervention Plan

Safe schools are strategic and smart. They identify and assess their needs and strengths, determine their safe school goals and objectives, align their efforts with other school reform and community initiatives, select and implement evidence-based approaches to realize these goals and objec-

## Employing Teams Efficiently

Schools are often burdened by too many teams, committees, or workgroups that affect staff time and result in fragmented efforts. When possible, the Schoolwide Team and the Student Support Team should be an expansion or refinement of existing teams. Also, these two teams should coordinate their efforts with all teams addressing similar issues. While this coordination may increase the workload of some teams at first, it will improve their long-term effectiveness.

tives, coordinate and monitor their implementation, and evaluate the effect of their interventions. These responsibilities require team members who have the appropriate expertise, credibility with relevant stakeholders, access to resources, and authority to act.

The Schoolwide Team should have expertise and credibility in the following seven areas:

- Prevention, early intervention, and intensive intervention.
- School reform.
- Community resources.
- Family concerns.
- Student concerns.
- Staff concerns.
- Administrative concerns.

Chapter 5 describes the role of this team.

### Safe Schools Have the Capacity to Identify and to Respond to Individual Needs

Safe schools have Student Support Teams to assess the needs of children who exhibit early warning signs. Members of this team should have the professional, cultural, and linguistic competence to identify the students' needs and strengths. These teams should have expertise in the following six areas:

- Diagnosing mental health problems.
- Evaluating academic difficulties.
- Conducting a functional assessment of student behavior to determine the "why" behind a behavioral problem or incident.
- Consulting with and supporting school staff, students, and families.
- Coordinating school and community services.
- Collaborating with students and families.

To be most effective, the Student Support Team should involve the student and his or her family in its deliberations. If the student is being considered or is eligible for special education services, requirements for individualized planning under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) must be met. Also, the team is more effective when regular and special educators collaborate. If the student receives services from other community agencies, the team should coordinate with those agencies (e.g., child welfare, juvenile justice, mental health, vocational rehabilitation, and substance abuse). The role of the Student Support Team is described further in Chapter 3.

## **CHAPTER 2:** **Building a Schoolwide Foundation**

Some students will learn and behave appropriately in almost any school environment. Other students, however, require some level of support to help them realize high academic and behavioral standards. A schoolwide foundation provides all students with the supports and skills they need to become effective learners and problem solvers. In addition, the foundation provides students and staff with the supports and skills they need to develop and foster appropriate behaviors and healthy emotional adjustment. Research at the University of Oregon's Institute on Violent and Destructive Behavior suggests that most schools with effective schoolwide systems that focus on learning and behavior can prevent at least 80 percent of problematic student behaviors.

A comprehensive schoolwide foundation should help ensure that a school is safe and responsive to all children. The *Early Warning Guide* identified 13 characteristics as being essential to such a safe and responsive school.

This chapter describes the following four key components of a comprehensive, effective schoolwide plan that can be used to prevent school violence:

- Creating a caring school community in which all members feel connected, safe, and supported.
- Teaching appropriate behaviors and social problem-solving skills.
- Implementing positive behavior support systems.
- Providing appropriate academic instruction.

### **Creating a Caring School Community in Which All Members Feel Connected, Safe, and Supported**

Safe schools support caring relationships between students and staff. Establishing these relationships reduces the causes of interpersonal conflicts (e.g., prejudice) and allows students to gain a sense of belonging, pride, and attachment to the school. These feelings are an important part of keeping students engaged in the educational process and sensitive to the needs of others with whom they interact in school. Establishing these relationships between students and staff makes it more likely that students can share their safety concerns with staff and enhances the opportunities for adults to coach, mentor, and even discipline students, if necessary.

Creating caring relationships is not easy—particularly in large and diverse schools. Schools can create and nurture caring environments by organizing the environment to support positive relationships (e.g., by creating small learning communities within schools). In addition, schools

### **Characteristics of a School That Is Safe and Responsive to All Children**

- Focus on academic achievement.
- Involve families in meaningful ways.
- Develop links to the community.
- Emphasize positive relationships among students and staff.
- Discuss safety issues openly.
- Treat students with equal respect.
- Create ways for students to share their concerns.
- Help children feel safe expressing their feelings.
- Have in place a system for referring children who are suspected of being abused or neglected.
- Offer extended day programs for children.
- Promote good citizenship and character.
- Identify problems and assess progress toward solutions.
- Support students in making the transition to adult life and the workplace.

## Program Evaluation Criteria

There are a variety of evidence-based programs that schools can adopt to improve their schoolwide foundation, as well as to develop early and intensive interventions. A number of factors should be considered when selecting appropriate programs for your school. The program evaluation criteria below will help determine which program is best for a particular setting.

- **Outcome Evidence:** Is there evidence that this program has worked in other school communities similar to yours? How widely used is this intervention?
- **Fiscal Costs:** Is training required? Will materials need to be purchased separately?
- **Personnel and Staffing Implications:** Will additional staff be required or will duties need to be expanded?
- **Program Outcomes with Diverse Populations:** Has the program been effective with students similar to the students in your school community?
- **Flexibility:** Can the intervention be altered to meet your unique needs? What is the likely effect of modifying the intervention?
- **External Support:** Is it available? How much will it cost?

can develop effective programs to prevent harassment, bullying, and conflict between groups. These programs will be most effective when they align with social skills instruction, the schoolwide discipline system, and the school's curriculum.

There are a variety of evidence-based programs that schools can adopt to improve their schoolwide foundation as well as to develop early and intensive interventions.

Activities to build a school community are varied, but in general, successful community building ensures that students associate positive experiences with their interpersonal interactions in the school environment. In other words, students who are accepted, are respected, and experience interpersonal and academic success will feel good about their school experience. Numerous schoolwide activities can be developed to build a strong sense of community within the school. These activities range from the schoolwide use of an anti-bias curriculum that teaches children tolerance and to deal with prejudice to the fair and equal treatment of all students within the school building.

### Teaching Appropriate Behaviors and Social Problem-Solving Skills

Just as students learn how to read, write, and calculate math equations, they must also learn how to interact appropriately with peers and adults and how to solve interpersonal conflicts nonviolently. A school will have an increased risk of having students who solve problems with violence if the students are not encouraged and taught to interact appropriately and to use problem-solving skills. Thus, safe schools develop interpersonal, problem-solving, and conflict resolution skills in all students.

Social skills instruction is an effective way to teach appropriate behaviors and problem-solving skills to all students. Social skills can be taught either directly through structured lessons or indirectly by integrating problem-solving themes into other curricula such as social studies or reading. In either case, social skills and problem-solving activities should become a part of the daily school routine. Numerous social skills programs are available; the school should select a program that fits the culture of the school best.

Many successful social skills programs teach students to develop a problem-solving language that will assist in guiding and monitoring their behavior when they encounter a difficult situation. This language and the corresponding behaviors are taught by providing students with an opportunity to see other people using good social skills successfully, practice these skills themselves, receive feedback from the teacher and others on the use of the skills, and then try them out in real situations.

*(continued on page 10)*

# Developing Social and Emotional Competence and Problem-Solving Skills

## Resolving Conflict Creatively Program\*

The Resolving Conflict Creatively Program (RCCP) is a school-based, primary prevention program that begins in kindergarten and continues through the 12th grade. It is one of the largest and longest-running conflict resolution initiatives in the country that is designed to promote constructive conflict resolution and positive intergroup relations.

The specific objectives of the program include making children aware of the different choices they have for dealing with conflicts; helping children develop skills for making those choices; encouraging children's respect for their own cultural backgrounds and those of others; teaching children how to identify and stand against prejudice; and making children aware of their role in creating a more peaceful world.

These objectives are achieved primarily through a curriculum taught by trained teachers and designed around several core skills, including communicating and listening effectively, expressing feelings and managing anger, resolving conflicts, fostering cooperation, appreciating diversity, and countering bias. The 30- to 60-minute lessons are organized into units based on these core skills and are delivered in a manner that facilitates student-directed discussions and learning. Separate curricula for lower and upper elementary school grades as well as high school enable concepts to be conveyed to children in age-appropriate ways.

In addition to the classroom curriculum component, RCCP also incorporates the training of student-based peer mediation groups and administrators. The program aims to create environments in classrooms and across entire schools where opportunities for social-emotional learning are provided along with opportunities for traditional academic learning.

Formal evaluation of the impact of RCCP found significant reductions in the frequency of aggressive behaviors and in the types of thinking and cognitive processing leading to aggression (e.g., hostile attributions, aggressive fantasies, and aggressive problem-solving strategies). When trained teachers employed the curriculum regularly, RCCP was found to benefit all children regardless of grade, gender, and classroom or neighborhood context.

## Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies

Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS) is a classroom-based curriculum for kindergarten through fifth-grade students designed to prevent violence, aggression, and other problem behaviors by developing students' social and emotional competence and problem-solving skills.

The objectives of PATHS are met by teaching cognitive problem-solving skills, which improve critical thinking skills, develop effective interpersonal skills, and enhance the classroom climate. The PATHS curriculum, delivered by the classroom teacher, is divided into three separate units: self-control, feelings and relationships, and interpersonal cognitive problem-solving. The cognitive problem-solving skills that students learn in the third unit build upon and expand the skills students developed in the first two units. Students learn to understand, regulate, and express emotions. PATHS teaches students to recognize the feelings of others, to relate the experiences of others to themselves, to develop empathy for others, and to understand how the behaviors of others can affect their own emotions.

The techniques used to teach these lessons include group discussion, role-playing, art activities, stories, and educational games. The PATHS curriculum provides students with extensive opportunities to practice their new skills and assistance with applying the skills in their daily life.

A formal evaluation of the PATHS curriculum found significant reductions in students' hyperactivity, peer aggression, and noncompliance with teacher and staff directions. Specifically, first-grade students receiving PATHS were found to have significantly lower levels of aggression and disruptive behaviors compared with their same-age peers who did not receive the curriculum.

\* A variety of evidence-based programs that schools and communities can use to implement the *Action Guide* are listed in the "Additional Resources" section of this guide. Inclusion in the *Action Guide* does not represent endorsement of these programs by the U.S. Department of Education or the U.S. Department of Justice.

## Second Step Curriculum

Second Step is a violence prevention social skills curriculum developed by the Committee for Children. The curriculum is designed to enable children—preschool through junior high—to change the attitudes and behaviors that contribute to violence.

Students make such changes through an in-class social skills curriculum that teaches students specific skills to reduce impulsive and aggressive behaviors and to increase their level of social competence.

Three primary skill areas are emphasized: empathy, impulse control, and anger management. Each social skill lesson is integrated into the regular curriculum in 35-minute sessions that are conducted once or twice a week. Teachers lead a discussion, model skills, and have students role-play.

The curriculum also incorporates a family-based component that employs a video-based parent program and a series of parent group meetings.

Formal evaluation of the impact of the Second Step Curriculum indicated moderate decreases in aggression and moderate increases in prosocial and neutral interactions over the period of one school year for students receiving the curriculum. Furthermore, the evaluation indicated that the control group of peers who did not receive the curriculum increased their physical and verbal aggression over the same school year.

It is important to develop an infrastructure to support the ongoing use of social skills programs. This infrastructure should include at least three main components:

- Training all school staff in the instruction and reinforcement of social skills.
- Designating school support leaders.
- Monitoring and supporting the teaching of social skills.

### Staff Training

Programs designed to teach children new skills are most beneficial if all staff—including non-teaching staff such as custodians, cafeteria workers, and bus drivers—are involved. When new staff are hired, they also will require training. Training should be conducted by someone who is skilled in in-service training and consultation and who is familiar with social skills programs. Staff must be comfortable with and committed to teaching problem-solving skills, encouraging and reinforcing their use, and holding students responsible for using these skills. Most programs that are designed to teach students problem-solving skills are adaptable to the needs of teachers. Acquiring good teaching skills may be more difficult for non-teaching staff and, therefore, these individuals should receive adequate initial training and responsive follow-up support.

### Staff Support and Coordination

The degree to which a new program is implemented successfully depends largely upon the support provided to those implementing the program. Someone in the school should have the skills, time, and authority to assist staff in their initial and ongoing efforts to teach and help students to use appropriate social problem-solving skills. In addition, because students may have several teachers, some coordination is necessary to ensure that teachers are consistently teaching these skills, and that all staff members are modeling and reinforcing the students' use of these skills.

### Monitoring the Program

Support leaders should check frequently with teachers to ensure that skills are being taught consistently. Over time it will be important for the school to determine whether the program is working. Most teachers will be able to tell quickly whether students are using the social skills in class. It is important, however, to observe whether these skills are also being used outside of class and school. Community agency staff and families can often provide this information.

## Positive Behavior Support Systems

Safe schools provide a social and physical environment that fosters appropriate behavior. The social environment includes the norms, rules and their enforcement, and any support necessary to enable students and adults to behave appropriately. The physical environment includes the way in which the building and the school's routines are managed to prevent problems (e.g., supervision during class changes).

### Establishing Schoolwide Systems to Manage and Support Behavior

Effective discipline systems must be simple, schoolwide, proactive, and positive. Simplicity is important so that all members of the school—administrators, teachers, staff, students, and their families—understand the rules and what happens when people violate the rules.

These rules should be schoolwide so that expectations and behavioral supports for students are consistent throughout the school. The behavioral management systems should be proactive and positive, as research demonstrates that proactive approaches (e.g., intervening *before* a verbal dispute escalates into a physical fight) and positive support (teaching expected behaviors) are more effective than reactive approaches that emphasize punishment.

A critical component of a safe school environment is the establishment of clear guidelines for student behavior. Such guidelines should enable students to understand what behaviors adhere to or violate the school's expectations. Early in the school year, the Schoolwide Team, with input from the entire school community, should meet to establish behavior guidelines. Ideally, these basic rules of behavior should be as follows:

- Stated simply and positively (e.g., "Walk" instead of "Do not run").
- Few in number so they can be memorized.
- Reinforced, modeled, and enforced by the adults in the school.
- Consistent with the social skills that all school staff are teaching and reinforcing.

After establishing schoolwide behavioral expectations, the team should determine incentives for appropriate behavior and consequences for inappropriate behavior. These actions should be agreeable to all or most members of the school and be easy to use. An effective schoolwide management system is one in which all students know and can explain the school's expectations for behavior, as well as the incentives and consequences associated with adhering to or violating the expectations.

Despite ongoing and structured encouragement of appropriate behavior, some students may commit minor infractions or exhibit major disruptive behaviors. Caring schools use positive disciplinary measures to address



these instances. Positive discipline has, at a minimum, the following three important characteristics:

- An explanation of why the behavior is a problem.
- An explanation of which rule was violated.
- The provision of opportunities to learn appropriate behaviors and to correct mistakes.

Students need to understand that not all inappropriate behavior is the same and that different consequences are associated with different levels of inappropriate behavior. Safe schools should build their capacity to deal with multiple violations of the rules by developing multiple levels of consequences. These levels should be systematically followed and never short-circuited. That is, steps on the consequences ladder should not be skipped to expedite a child's removal from the school building. The exception is any major violation of school rules that endangers the life of the child or the lives of others. It is also critical that parents understand the school conduct codes and the consequences for violations.

The consistent use of incentives and consequences is critical to successful management of behavior at the school level. When staff fail to adopt and implement agreed-upon procedures to encourage student use of positive behaviors, students learn that sometimes it is okay not to solve problems this way. As a result, their use of problem-solving strategies will be erratic at best. *Consistency does not just happen.* It is usually due to school-level strategic planning, team building, professional development, and ongoing discussion and evaluation. Consistency is further strengthened when a school's positive behavioral strategies and discipline system extend to families, support agencies, and other community groups.

The important components of schoolwide management strategies also apply at the classroom level. Expectations for behavior, the use of incentives and consequences, and the consistency with which they are implemented are just as important in the classroom as anywhere else in the school building. Students should understand classroom rules, have the skills to demonstrate behaviors that will allow them to meet the rules, and understand the incentives and consequences for appropriate and inappropriate behavior. In general, classrooms that are well managed are characterized by the following conditions:

- Classroom routines are well-established and understood by all.
- Teachers spend a great majority of time on academic instruction and only a minimal amount of time is required to redirect disruptive behavior.
- Teacher feedback to students regarding their behavior is overwhelmingly positive.
- Mechanisms are in place for students to cool off and generate solutions to problems.

(continued on page 14)

# **Comprehensive Schoolwide Prevention and Intervention Programs that Provide Positive Support**

## **Project ACHIEVE**

Project ACHIEVE is a schoolwide, comprehensive prevention and early intervention program for students in elementary and middle schools. It emphasizes increasing student performance in social skills and conflict resolution, improving student achievement and academic progress, facilitating positive school climates, and increasing parental involvement and support.

Project ACHIEVE is an integrated process that involves organizational and resource development, comprehensive in-service training, and follow-up. Project ACHIEVE begins with strategic planning which requires teachers, staff, school-based mental health professionals, students, and families to work together to adopt schoolwide systems of effective behavior management and positive skills-oriented student discipline, as well as to improve instructional practices and academic support for students.

These schoolwide systems focus on teaching students prosocial skills, problem-solving methods, and anger management techniques while simultaneously training teachers, staff, and families to intervene positively when problems occur. Typically, students are taught one new skill each week that faculty and staff help them practice by prompting them at every reasonable opportunity with key phrases, such as Stop and think, Make a good choice, What are my choices, and How did I do? Project ACHIEVE is designed to reduce acts of aggression, violence, and disruptive behavior that often lead to suspensions, academic failure, and special education referral.

Project ACHIEVE has a strong evaluation component that considers student outcomes, teacher outcomes, school outcomes, and direct and indirect outcomes. A formal evaluation of the impact of Project ACHIEVE found the following: a decrease in disciplinary referrals to the principal's office; a decrease in out-of-school suspensions; a significant decrease in the retention of students; and a significant increase in the number of students who scored above the 50th percentile on end-of-year achievement tests.

## **Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports**

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is a comprehensive schoolwide prevention and intervention program that provides behavioral support to students, including those with chronic behavioral problems, and consultation support to teachers.

PBIS has four major components that provide prevention and intervention for problematic behavior, including schoolwide behavior support systems, specific setting support systems, classroom behavior support systems, and individual behavior support systems. The schoolwide support involves procedures and processes that are intended for all students, all staff, and all settings. Schoolwide efforts clarify expectations, simplify rules for student behavior, and build in a continuum of procedures to encourage students to display expected behaviors and discourage students from violating rules. The most important element of support at the schoolwide level is a building-based team that oversees all development, implementation, modification, and evaluation of prevention efforts.

The setting-specific support component uses a team-based mechanism to monitor specific settings and to develop intervention strategies for settings within the building where problem behaviors occur regularly. The classroom support component involves procedures and processes for individual classrooms that parallel the strategies and procedures used schoolwide. The individual support component provides intensive, immediate, and effective intervention to students whose behavior presents the most significant or chronic challenge to staff. For these students, PBIS provides teachers and staff with a set of functional suggestions as well as additional resources to help them manage the student's behavior more effectively and deter placement of the student out of the neighborhood school.

A formal evaluation of PBIS found a significant reduction in discipline referrals to the principal's office, especially in the time period prior to school vacations. In addition, evaluation findings indicated that teachers favor the PBIS program because they feel more effective in their teaching and management of student problem behavior.

Expectations for student behavior should be posted throughout the school and should be frequently reinforced by all staff. Also, the use of pictures or symbols to illustrate each expectation can be helpful for younger children and for some students with cognitive disabilities.

- Students have opportunities to practice and use the solutions that they generate.
- Academic tasks match students' instructional levels.
- Academic tasks are presented at an engaging and appropriate pace.
- Rules and consequences are followed and applied consistently.
- High expectations exist for student behavior.
- Transition periods are highly structured with increased adult monitoring.

In addition to developing expectations for appropriate behavior and reinforcing that behavior throughout the school, an effective schoolwide violence prevention plan includes environmental interventions designed to prevent unsafe behavior. These interventions are discussed next.

### **Creating a Safe Physical Environment**

Inevitably, there will be special situations and special places in schools where problems are more likely to occur. To prevent such problems, changing the school environment may be necessary. These interventions alter the use of school space and supervision routines so that opportunities for violent or disruptive behavior are minimized or eliminated.

An analysis of the school environment can determine if hot spots exist in the school. For example, the back hallway leading from the locker commons to the band room may be an area where many fights or disruptions occur due to minimal supervision and poor lighting. Perhaps an analysis also will show that these problems are most likely to occur in the mornings at a time when student traffic increases through the back hallway. A thorough understanding of when and where problems occur should prove invaluable to the Schoolwide Team. Some of the environmental characteristics that a school may examine include the following:

- Number and types of exits.
- Location and design of bathrooms.
- Design of the cafeteria, common areas, and the playground.
- Patterns of supervision.
- Density of traffic patterns throughout parts of the school during various times of the day.
- Lighting.
- Isolated areas.
- Bell and class schedules and the mixing of students from different grades.
- Length of time students stand in line to wait for a bus or to wait for lunch.

Equipped with the above information, the Schoolwide Team will be in a position to change the environment to minimize opportunities for inap-

appropriate behavior. By continuing to monitor and supervise all areas of the school regularly, the team can maximize environmental safety.

## Providing Appropriate Academic Instruction

Disruptive, antisocial, or violent behavior can result from ongoing academic frustration and failure. Schools and teachers face tremendous pressures to cover all of the required curricula while ensuring that every child performs at least at grade level. In their zeal to accomplish both goals, teachers sometimes provide instruction that is not tailored to meet the learning needs of every child. The experience of success—whether through academic or vocational instruction, or a combination of both—is important to minimize students' feelings of frustration. Of course, without extra support, success is virtually impossible.

Numerous interventions exist to address the individual needs of struggling students, but far fewer schoolwide interventions have been fully developed. However, at least three schoolwide interventions are both effective and feasible for teachers to implement. They are Class-Wide Peer Tutoring, cooperative learning, and direct instruction. These strategies are particularly powerful because they enable children to experience a high rate of success on meaningful academic tasks and to practice their new skills. To use these techniques successfully, teachers and other staff must receive ongoing training to master instructional techniques.

### **Class-Wide Peer Tutoring—An Example of an Academic Intervention**

Class-Wide Peer Tutoring (CWPT) is a method of same-age, intra-class, reciprocal peer tutoring that many schools around the country have found useful in adapting general education classroom instruction to meet the individual needs of diverse students with diverse skills.

In addition to peer tutors, teachers divide the text into short passages that can be introduced on Monday each week, tutored during daily sessions throughout the week, and tested for progress on Friday. Because the basic academic skills units (e.g., reading comprehension, math, spelling) are short by design, each student can practice them several times each day—leading to mastery, fluency, or automaticity. The units also may be organized by difficulty level to accommodate skill level differences represented in the classroom. For upper-grade, content-level instruction (e.g., social studies, science), the peer tutoring materials are organized around study guides that are coordinated with text book units within chapters.

CWPT incorporates a game structure. Students earn points for themselves and for their team. They learn that winning the game is a matter of how well they and their partner respond to the task. Because of this arrangement, tutors learn to help, prompt, and really care about how their partner performs. Since teams and partners change each week, CWPT students learn from the very beginning that they are expected to work with every student in the classroom, so they learn to accept a variety of individual learning styles and different personalities.

More than 35 studies have shown CWPT's superiority compared with other instructional strategies. Studies have shown increased engagement, mastery, and fluency with the subject matter. Further, students' weekly test scores and grades have improved.

# CHAPTER 3: Responding to Children Exhibiting Early Warning Signs: Early Intervention

With an effective foundation in place, most schools can look forward to a significant reduction in student behavioral problems. Preventing and greatly reducing such problems schoolwide makes it easier for staff to focus attention on specific students whose behaviors signal a need for early intervention. Students who continue to experience behavioral problems, despite schoolwide prevention activities, *may* be exhibiting early warning signs of violence.

This chapter focuses on the 10 to 15 percent of students whose problem behaviors indicate a need for early intervention. The chapter reviews the early warning signs of violence, lists effective practices used by a number of schools to teach individuals to recognize the early warning signs, outlines a process for receiving and responding to concerns about individual children, and discusses how to develop early individualized interventions.

## Review of the Early Warning Signs of Violence

The list on the right presents the early warning signs, which were introduced in the *Early Warning Guide*. Safe and effective schools ensure that teachers, administrators, school support staff, parents, students, and the larger school community become familiar with the early warning signs and the principles for taking appropriate actions. Understanding is the first step in the process of early intervention because it gives people the knowledge to recognize when a student may need help.

An important balance must be found between responding to the signs of a child who may need help and being harmful by labeling or overreacting to a situation. The ability to recognize the warning signs and to interpret them as indicators that a child may need assistance reduces the risk that parents, educators, and community members will misinterpret student behavior and react inappropriately.

This balance between responding and overreacting is more likely achieved when the efforts to identify and respond to students are guided by the five principles for using the early warning signs of violence, which are listed on page 18. Further elaboration on these five principles can be found in the *Early Warning Guide*.

Furthermore, the importance of building relationships with children and youth—part of the schoolwide foundation—cannot be overemphasized. When teachers, administrators, support staff, pupil services staff, and parents build close, caring, and supportive relationships with children and youth, they increase the likelihood that a child or youth who is in

## Early Warning Signs

- Social withdrawal.
- Excessive feelings of isolation or being alone.
- Excessive feelings of rejection.
- Being a victim of violence.
- Feelings of being picked on and persecuted.
- Low school interest and poor academic performance.
- Expression of violence in writing and drawings.
- Uncontrolled anger.
- Patterns of impulsive and chronic hitting, intimidating, and bullying behaviors.
- History of discipline problems.
- History of violent and aggressive behavior.
- Intolerance for differences and prejudicial attitudes.
- Drug use and alcohol use.
- Affiliation with gangs.
- Inappropriate access to, possession of, and use of firearms.
- Serious threats of violence (also an imminent warning sign).

It's okay to be concerned about a child, but it's not okay to overreact and jump to conclusions. There are early warning signs in most cases of violence to self and others—certain behavioral and emotional signs that, when viewed in context, can signal a troubled child. But early warning signs are just that—indicators that a student may need help.

*Early Warning, Timely Response*, p. 5.

## Principles for Using the Early Warning Signs of Violence

- Do no harm.
- Understand violence and aggression within a context.
- Avoid stereotypes.
- View warning signs within a developmental context.
- Understand that children typically exhibit multiple warning signs.

trouble will reach out to them. Teachers, due to their vast experiences with many same-age children, are uniquely positioned to identify students who may be exhibiting early warning signs. Teachers have frequent interactions and conversations with students, and are responsible for monitoring student academic performance and behavior. The depth and frequency of this contact often places teachers in a position in which students may disclose something personal or critically important to them, such as their feelings of isolation, reports of bullying behavior, situations of abuse or neglect, suicidal ideation, or threats that peers are making toward others or the school. Similarly, close and caring relationships between teachers and students can increase the chances that a student holding critical knowledge about another child or a potentially violent situation will disclose that information sooner rather than later. By getting to know children and youth, teachers, support staff, and parents are more likely to recognize a pattern or a change in behavior that may be an early warning sign and then seek assistance for the child.

## Building the Capacity to Identify Early Warning Signs

Teachers, administrators, and support staff are bombarded each school year by in-service training and new initiatives. Information overload and time demands can be overwhelming. Yet, the responsibility to protect the safety of children and to meet the needs of children at risk for violence cannot be left to one person or group of people. Rather, *all* school staff must be familiar with the early warning signs and possess a sense of urgency to respond appropriately on the behalf of children. The following policies, procedures, and practices build the capacity of a school and community to identify the early warning signs exhibited by children:

**Policies that sanction and promote the identification of early warning signs and are backed by adequate resources.** District and school policies should ensure that all members of the school community understand the importance of early warning signs and employ them appropriately. School boards and school-based policy-makers should be provided with evaluation data so that they can modify policies when necessary and allocate resources.

## Caution

Simplistic or mechanical use of lists of warning signs can harm children and waste resources. Using the *Early Warning Guide*, educators, staff, and families can increase their ability to recognize early warning signs and discuss their concerns with the Student Support Team. Schools using the early warning signs should, at a minimum, use the descriptions of the early warning signs in the *Early Warning Guide*.



## Immediate Interventions for Dangerous Situations

Immediate intervention by school authorities and possibly law enforcement officers is needed in the following circumstances:

- A student has presented a detailed plan (time, place, and method) to harm himself or herself or others—particularly if the student has a history of aggression or has attempted to carry out threats in the past.
- A student has a weapon, particularly a firearm, and has threatened to use it.

In cases such as these, the school staff should immediately inform parents and other caregivers of these concerns. Schools are also responsible for seeking assistance from appropriate agencies, such as the police, child and family services, and community mental health services. These responses should reflect school board policies; federal, state, and local laws; and the school's violence prevention and response plan.

having quick access to trained professionals who will determine how to help these students.

In the majority of schools, a team of trained professionals already exists that provides consultation, evaluation, and intervention for students who are struggling academically, behaviorally, and socially. Safe schools will typically expand the focus of this team to include responding to individual students who exhibit early warning signs or, if necessary, create such a team. When a child or youth exhibits early warning signs, the school can no longer rely on schoolwide interventions alone. Rather, a Student Support Team, working with the teacher, child, and parents, must develop interventions that specifically address the child's behaviors of concern. Early intervention requires a referral process that can respond in a timely, coordinated, and effective manner.

### Referral

It is important for all staff and families to understand the role and function of the Student Support Team and to be informed that the team is the authority to whom they bring their concerns regarding a child who may be exhibiting early warning signs. Staff training, parent question-and-answer sessions, classroom visits to inform students, and a public relations campaign within the community are needed to explain the team's membership, purpose, and approach and to disseminate information about how to request the team's assistance. Some schools create a brochure on ways to access the Student Support Team formally and include names and telephone numbers of team members to encourage informal consultations.

All those involved with the student—including administrators, teachers, support staff, families, and students—may find it difficult to admit that a child close to them needs help. To encourage people to share their concerns about individual children, the referral process must be easy, and it must result in immediate attention by the Student Support Team. Schoolwide referral systems should enable teachers, staff, and parents to access the Student Support Team in a timely, respectful, supportive, and confidential manner. A school should consider several principles when developing a referral process. These principles are listed on page 21.

### Involving Students in the Referral Process

Students must be partners in identifying early warning signs and providing information about potentially dangerous situations. Just as schools should make the referral process comfortable for adults, safe schools should tailor the referral process to the needs of students. Students who have information about a peer or a potentially dangerous situation may be fearful and hesitant to share their concerns. Both the Schoolwide Team and the

*(continued on page 22)*





## Handling Referral Questions

One effective model that combines problem-solving, consultation, and preliminary planning processes is Referral Question Consultation. This component of Project ACHIEVE was developed to specifically investigate referral concerns of teachers, parents, or others working with a student. This model focuses on developing specific referral questions that, when answered, have obvious implications for intervention.

These referral questions are based on the development of hypotheses regarding a particular referral concern. Referral questions and individualized assessment plans are collaboratively developed through ongoing, data-based consultation with the student's teachers and parents. Once the assessment is completed, specific answers to the referral questions are generated. These answers lead directly to developing interventions that alleviate the conditions causing the troubling behavior.

Student Support Team should work with students to develop ideas and approaches for students to share their concerns about peers and situations without the fear of reprisal. Some schools have created a telephone hotline or a safe school box for written concerns; others have designated a set of students at each grade level who are "safe school liaisons," because they are available to hear concerns from their peers. Techniques like these enable students to share their concerns or information more comfortably, trusting that their information will remain confidential. Acknowledging to students that they are partners with the staff in keeping their school safe will create a sense of shared responsibility and ally students with the staff and community. Ensuring students of confidentiality will increase their use of the reporting system.

### Responding to Referrals

The Student Support Team must have the capacity to respond to referrals in a timely, coordinated, and effective manner. Adopting a procedure to guide *how* the team provides individualized interventions and supports will improve both the efficiency and the effectiveness of the team's response to children and youth who need early intervention. Effective procedures incorporate problem-solving, consultation, preliminary planning, and developing and implementing interventions. Teams repeatedly cycle through these activities as they develop, implement, monitor, and modify individualized interventions and supports for particular students.

Safe schools understand that families are central to children's educational success and their social and emotional adjustment. To involve the family at each step—from referral through the implementation of individualized interventions—requires that families feel valued and supported and that they experience parity with other members of the team.

Families should be viewed as members of the team who can provide a comprehensive picture of their children from birth to the present. Families can help the team identify children's strengths and interests, as well as validate observed needs. The information provided by families informs decisions the Student Support Team will make with families regarding children's needs for individualized early intervention and assessment. Maintaining a collaborative relationship between the school and family will lay the groundwork for the successful implementation of early intervention plans.

### The Initial Meeting

Once the Student Support Team receives a referral for a child who may be exhibiting early warning signs, the response process begins with a meeting. The agenda for the initial meeting will likely include problem-solving, consultation, and preliminary planning.







# Early Interventions

## First Step to Success

First Step to Success is an early intervention program designed to address the needs of kindergarten children identified as having antisocial or aggressive behavioral problems. The model includes three components: a kindergarten screening process, a classroom-based skills training curriculum called CLASS, and a family intervention program called HomeBase.

First Step to Success uses trained consultants who work directly with students, teachers, and parents to help coordinate the intervention efforts between the home and the school. Consultants provide teachers and parents strategies to teach students alternative replacement behaviors and to effectively reward students when those behaviors are used appropriately and consistently. Students learn specific skills and behaviors to use that are more effective and adaptive than the behaviors they have used in the past.

To provide practice and reinforcement for the new skills the child has learned, the consultant, teacher, or classroom aide provides the student with visual cues (i.e., a green or red card) during the school day that indicate whether he or she is on-task and using appropriate behaviors. Over the course of a school day, the student accrues points toward his or her behavioral goal. If the student makes the daily goal, he or she gets to select a fun activity for the entire class to participate in and appreciate.

Every evening, teachers provide parents with feedback about how the student's day went. Parents are trained and encouraged to reward the child's positive behavior by spending extra time with their child in a fun child-directed activity. Once the classroom teacher feels comfortable taking full responsibility for implementing the CLASS curriculum, the consultant begins working more directly with the student's parents to assist the family with implementing the HomeBase intervention program.

A formal evaluation of First Step to Success found effective and lasting improvements in the students' behavior and social adjustment, even three years after the initial intervention. Significant reductions were observed in the students' aggressive and maladaptive behaviors, while significant increases were observed in the student's adaptive behaviors and academic engaged time. In addition, teachers implementing the CLASS curriculum expressed high levels of satisfaction with the program, noting that it is easy to learn and implement and leads to favorable results with their students.

## Positive Adolescent Choices Training

Positive Adolescent Choices Training (PACT) is a violence prevention curriculum designed to be implemented in an intensive, small group setting with African American middle and high school students who are at risk for becoming victims or perpetrators of violence. The PACT curriculum is a culturally sensitive training program developed specifically for African American adolescents.

PACT uses a cognitive-behavioral group training method that equips adolescents with specific knowledge, as well as social and anger management skills to use in situations of interpersonal conflict. The curriculum involves teaching in three primary areas: violence-risk education, anger management, and prosocial skills. Individual lessons concentrate on dispelling myths, educating students about violence, building alternative social and self-management skills, and changing cognitive beliefs that lead to physical contact, aggression, and violent acts.

The violence-risk education component dispels myths about what constitutes a threat and counters belief systems that perpetuate hostility and the capacity for violence (e.g., thinking that violence is acceptable, victims don't suffer, victims deserve what they get, and quick assumptions that others intend harm). Emphasis is placed on developing the student's capacity to generate alternative solutions to conflict, including skills such as giving positive and negative feedback, accepting feedback from others, negotiating and problem-solving, and resisting peer pressure.

PACT uses videotaped vignettes with African American role models as well as student-directed role-playing skits to teach skills and provide multiple opportunities to practice alternative anger management skills. A formal evaluation of PACT found a significant reduction in the physical aggression displayed at school by students participating in the intensive curriculum, as well as fewer violence-related juvenile court charges than a comparable group of students who had not participated in the PACT curriculum.

## Early Intervention Strategies

The table on the next two pages lists strategies that may be used for early interventions. These strategies differ in their complexity. Although each strategy listed may work for some students, no one strategy works for all students. In addition, some strategies have been evaluated *extensively* through research studies, while others have less research to document their effectiveness. These strategies are provided to assist Student Support Teams who are developing intervention plans for students whose behavioral problems have been resistant to universal or schoolwide interventions. It is important to note that these strategies could also be integrated with the schoolwide foundation as well as incorporated in intensive interventions.

There are three keys to designing early interventions for particular students. The first is to assess (as completely as possible) the reasons for the child's behavior so that selection of strategies is highly informed and targeted. The second key is to match the intensity of the intervention to the severity of the need. The third key is to look at the student's strengths and interests, including his or her cultural background. Effective interventions should be culturally appropriate.

### Developing an Early Intervention Plan—An Example

Darren, an eighth-grade student with a learning disability, made a threat under his breath that he was going to beat up his teacher. The teacher recognized the threat as an early warning sign. The teacher then made a referral to the Student Support Team.

The team included the child's mother, a special education case manager, the general education referring teacher, the principal, a speech-language clinician, a school psychologist, and a school social worker. The team discussed the referral and the academic, behavioral, and language goals currently included on Darren's IER. The referring teacher explained that Darren made the threat after she prompted him for a third time to begin his work. The teacher also commented that Darren's reading skills were very poor.

The team developed a preliminary hypothesis regarding the problem behavior and developed an action plan for a follow-up assessment. After observing Darren in large group instructional settings, the hypothesis was confirmed: Darren was having difficulty comprehending material presented orally, comprehending eighth-grade reading material, and communicating these problems to his teacher.

As a result of the assessment, the speech and language clinician worked with Darren to script ways that he could communicate his confusion and need for assistance. At the same time, the special education and general education teachers collaborated on ways to adapt his textbooks and use cooperative learning groups to reduce the frequency of large-group oral presentation of content.

## Early Intervention Strategies

INTERVENTION STRATEGY	BRIEF DESCRIPTIONS
<b>Accommodations and modifications</b>	Changing instructional practices, the ways students demonstrate mastery, and the way students input information to help students with disabilities or learning differences achieve and demonstrate academic mastery (e.g., oral responses versus written essays, tape recordings of text and information).
<b>Alternative educational strategies</b>	Alternative strategies provided for students who for some reason are not succeeding in the traditional setting.
<b>Alternative times—day and night school</b>	Flexible schedules for students who, for various reasons, may not be able to attend school during traditional school hours.
<b>Anger management training</b>	Methods for teaching socially appropriate ways to deal with anger.
<b>Behavioral intervention</b>	A group of strategies designed to increase positive behaviors and decrease maladaptive behaviors by manipulating environmental conditions that either precede or follow the student's behavior.
<b>Behavioral support plan</b>	A plan designed to teach alternative replacement behaviors in environments and through adult interactions that are adapted and made more responsive to the student's individual needs.
<b>Contingency contracting</b>	A behavioral contract between a student and all involved adults. The contract specifies the expected behaviors and the consequences for performing or not performing them.
<b>Cognitive behavioral interventions and training</b>	An approach to behavior change that includes changing the way a person thinks or feels about a situation. For example, teaching children that they have the problem-solving skills necessary to resolve social problems in a nonaggressive way will usually prevent them from dealing inappropriately with others in social situations (i.e., using aggression).
<b>Differential reinforcement</b>	A method for decreasing inappropriate behaviors by rewarding alternative behaviors (e.g., decreasing out-of-seat behavior by rewarding the student for remaining in his or her seat).
<b>Drop-out prevention</b>	Interventions designed to identify students at risk for dropping out of school and to provide them with the services and supports necessary to help them successfully complete school.
<b>Drop-out reentry program</b>	Interventions and transition planning to ensure a student's success when returning to school after dropping out.
<b>Environmental modifications</b>	Modifying the class and school environment to respond to unique learning, behavioral, or emotional needs of students.
<b>Extended day programs</b>	Structured after-school programs designed to offer student supervision. These programs can focus on athletics, academics, hobbies, or other interests.
<b>Extinction procedures</b>	Ignoring a behavior that is reinforced by attention. For example, if a student talks out to get the teacher's attention, an extinction procedure would call for ignoring inappropriate talk-outs and reinforcing appropriate contributions to the group discussion (i.e., raising a hand and waiting for a turn to speak).
<b>Functional communication training</b>	Teaching students alternative, adaptive ways to communicate their needs to others, such as through a brief verbalization, hand gesture, or signal (e.g., flipping a card over, which signals to the teacher the student's need for assistance).
<b>Goal-oriented therapeutic counseling</b>	Services provided by trained school counselors, social workers, or psychologists to help a student or group of students address behaviors and personal or social problems.
<b>Group and family counseling</b>	Counseling provided by a trained individual to help a person or persons work through a problem.
<b>Mentoring</b>	An individualized approach to providing a caring connection and a positive role model for a child. Mentors spend time with children, usually doing nonacademic-type tasks.



**INTERVENTION STRATEGY****BRIEF DESCRIPTIONS**

<b>Positive behavioral interventions</b>	Interventions designed to build on a student's strengths and increase the frequency of his or her adaptive responses while modifying the environment and adult responses to support the student's learning and use of adaptive responses.
<b>Response cost</b>	Taking away something positive for inappropriate behavior. Staying in during recess to complete a missed homework assignment is an example of response cost.
<b>Reward system</b>	Rewarding students for appropriate behavior. Rewards can be social (a smile), an activity (time to read a novel), or tangible (candy or points on a token system). Students can earn rewards for themselves or for a group, and the rewards can be delivered by an adult, peer, or others.
<b>Self-management</b>	Teaching students to be aware of their behavior in such a way that they are able to identify its occurrence or nonoccurrence, measure its occurrence, and evaluate whether the behavior is improving, remaining the same, or getting worse.
<b>Shadowing older students</b>	A plan where a student "shadows" a more senior student. Learning through modeling is often effective for transitions from one school to another.
<b>Social problem-solving instruction</b>	Teaching students to use an effective process to solve social problems fairly and without aggression.
<b>Time-away</b>	Giving the student permission to briefly leave a learning activity or take a break. This is a coping strategy reinforced and encouraged by the teacher.
<b>Time-out</b>	Removing the student from a situation that is rewarding inappropriate behavior. For example, if a student's anger seems to be fueled by the cheers of his or her peers, the adult may ask the student to go to a place where peer attention is not available.
<b>Token economies</b>	A system by which students earn points (tokens) for appropriate behavior. Points can later be exchanged for reinforcement (social rewards, activities, or something more tangible).
<b>Transition programs</b>	Interventions specifically designed to identify transition needs, teach skills, and provide the support necessary for a child's success in a new environment.
<b>Tutoring</b>	Intensive academic instruction provided by a teacher or other skilled person.



## The Kids in Community Schools

The Kids in Community Schools (KICS) program is a school-based mental health program at the Martin Luther King School in Yonkers, New York. It is funded through the New York State Office of Mental Health and administered through Westchester Jewish Community Services. The goals of the program are to maintain students with emotional disabilities or children at risk in the least restrictive environment; to develop preventative mental health services through collaboration with families, school, and the community; and to enhance community mental health services for children. The program provides on-site, direct mental health services, including child and family treatment, crisis intervention, individual and family respite, and psychological, psychiatric, and psycho-educational services.

The success of comprehensive school-based mental health programs depends on the ability of administrators, teachers, school-based mental health professionals, and other school staff to integrate mental health priorities and educational priorities into one vision that affects the everyday practices and decision-making of school professionals. Successful school-based mental health programs are woven into the fabric of the school including its classroom and instructional priorities. To accomplish this integration successfully, schools must combine the development of their comprehensive school-based mental health program with systematic schoolwide reform efforts. By joining schoolwide reform efforts, school-based mental health professionals can emphasize the benefits of building collaborative efforts within and between schools and community mental health providers, social services, juvenile justice agencies, and families.

## Special Education and Related Services

Special education eligibility under IDEA includes the designation of emotional disturbance. In general, under the federal definition, this designation includes children and youth demonstrating unsatisfactory personal relationships with peers and teachers and who have inappropriate types of behaviors or feelings under normal circumstances.

For children who are eligible under IDEA, and whose behavior interferes with their learning or the learning of others, the IEP Team must consider, if appropriate, "positive behavioral interventions, strategies, and supports to address that behavior." These interventions, strategies, and supports must be incorporated into the student's IEP. It is also important to point out that the positive behavioral interventions, strategies, and supports available under IDEA are not limited to students with emotional disturbance. Such interventions can help any student whose behavior interferes with his or her social and emotional development and learning.

The 1997 reauthorization of IDEA emphasized in both spirit and letter that special education is an array of services and supports rather than a place. Under its Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) requirements, IDEA specifies that special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment should occur only if the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily. It is important to note that positive behavioral interventions and supports, like other services provided to students with disabilities, can be implemented in the regular education classroom.















a crisis/safety plan, and identifies measurable outcomes that can be monitored regularly.

Since a critical element of the Wraparound approach is that services and supports are provided in the child's and family's community, the involvement of school professionals from the child's neighborhood school can be extensive. School-based Wraparound planning builds upon the individualized nature of special education planning and includes the teacher and other relevant school personnel as part of the planning team. Given that Wraparound services and supports are usually paid for through flexible, noncategorical funding, the Wraparound team can often provide additional supports for the child that are implemented during the school day to aid teachers and other school staff.

## **School-Based Wraparound in LaGrange, Illinois**

Since the LaGrange Area Department of Special Education began applying the Wraparound process, the number of self-contained K-8 classes for children with emotional and behavioral disorders has dropped from eight to zero as students with emotional and behavioral disorders, their families, and their teachers now receive comprehensive supports and services in a variety of settings. Although an option for self-contained classrooms is available, these programs have evolved into classrooms that serve multi-needs children such as those with autism, pervasive developmental delay, and multiple disabilities. Children who traditionally had been placed in self-contained emotional and behavioral disorders classrooms are now served through the Wraparound approach in their home schools with Wraparound teams, family service facilitators, and team teachers.







## Logistics for the Schoolwide Team

Once the team has been established or expanded and has reviewed its charge, it should then consider logistics. Critical logistical tasks include obtaining administrative support, securing a planning budget, designing a communication process, and scheduling meetings and setting timelines.

### **Obtaining Approval and Buy-Ins**

The first order of business is to obtain district or school approval and buy-in for the Schoolwide Team vision. Approval enables the team to obtain resources to support its efforts and to secure modifications in policies and procedures. Buy-in secures the ongoing, active, and usually visible support of key administrators.

### **Getting Buy-In**

"Before we went any further with training and planning, we had a unanimous agreement that this was what the school wanted to do. We had to make sure we had a strong buy-in; there was no other way."

Glen Carolton, school psychologist in South West School District, Ohio.

Schools differ in the ways they develop and implement plans. Every member of the team should know in advance the administration's expectations for the team's work and any relevant restrictions or policy guidelines, such as reporting procedures and decision-making authority. If possible, the team should include someone who has the authority to approve procedures and allocate funds. If the team encounters resistance to one of its suggestions, it should document the need and demonstrate the connections between its concerns—such as improved academics or community support—and school safety.

Communities also differ in their understanding of the need for the team's work. Providing communities with information early will help them understand and support the need for a comprehensive prevention, intervention, and crisis response program. The team should determine the information needs of the community and tailor its communication strategy to address these needs.

### **Securing a Planning Budget**

Resources and funding may be necessary for the work of the Schoolwide Team. School officials will need to know the anticipated costs. For example, will teaching staff require substitutes while they conduct team duties?

The team may need to prepare a budget for the administration to approve. Examples of budgetary considerations include release time or compensation for team meetings, secretarial assistance, meeting space, support for family participation, and reimbursement for incidentals.

### **Designing a Communication Process**

One of the team's responsibilities throughout the planning and implementation process is to communicate its findings to the larger school community. The team may elect to prepare a formal report or









## CONCLUSION

Although most schools are safe, they all can be safer. Improving school safety requires the strategic investment of time and dollars—scarce resources for which there are competing demands. Fortunately, schools that strategically coordinate schoolwide efforts are more likely to improve academic performance as well as reduce behavior problems.

This *Action Guide* builds upon the *Early Warning Guide*. It provides a comprehensive model that can lead to safer schools. The model incorporates prevention, early intervention, and intensive interventions in a manner that will help schools improve long-term academic, behavioral, social, and emotional outcomes for all students and their families. The *Action Guide* identifies mechanisms for implementing the plan (the Schoolwide Team and the Student Support Team) and also describes the processes that these teams can employ to improve school safety.

Finally, the guide provides information about technical assistance centers and evidence-based resources that schools can draw upon to develop a comprehensive plan that addresses the particular needs and builds upon the strengths of their school and their community.

# RESOURCES

## Online Resources

The resources in this *Action Guide* were designed to provide schools and communities with links to useful information. These are just some examples of programs, organizations, and centers that have been identified by the Center for Effective Collaboration and Practice, an organization operating under a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of Education.

While the Internet gives schools and communities an amazing opportunity to access information, at the same time the content of the Internet is difficult to control. It is therefore important to note that the U.S. Departments of Education and Justice do not endorse these Web sites, nor the programs listed here.

### School Safety-Related Sites

#### **Center for Effective Collaboration and Practice**

<http://cecp.air.org>

#### **Hamilton Fish Institute for School and Community Violence**

<http://hamfish.org>

#### **National Association of School Psychologists**

<http://www.naspweb.org>

#### **National Mental Health Association**

<http://www.nmha.org>

#### **Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory**

[http://www. nwr el. or g](http://www.nwr el. or g)

#### **National Resource Center for Safe Schools**

<http://www.safetyzone.org>

#### **School Safety and Violence Prevention**

<http://cecp.air.org/guide>

### Student Support and Classroom Management Sites

#### **The Behavior Home Page**

<http://www.state.ky.us/agencies/behave/homepage.html>

**Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support**

<http://www.pbis.org>

**Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders**

<http://www.ccbd.net>

**Prevention and Early Intervention: Collaboration and Practice**

<http://cecp.air.org/prev-ei>

**Prevention Strategies That Work**

<http://cecp.air.org/preventionstrategies/Default.htm>

**Wraparound Planning**

<http://cecp.air.org/wraparound/default.htm>

**Federal Sites**

**U.S. Department of Education**

<http://www.ed.gov>

**Office for Civil Rights**

<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OCR>

**Office of Special Education Programs**

<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/OSEP>

**Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program**

<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/SDFS>

**U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**

<http://www.hhs.gov>

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention,  
Division of Violence Prevention**

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/dvp/dvp.htm>

**Center for Mental Health Services**

<http://www.mentalhealth.org/cmhs>

**National Institute of Mental Health**

<http://www.nimh.nih.gov>

**U.S. Department of Justice**

<http://www.usdoj.gov>

**Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention**

<http://ojjdp.ncjrs.org>

**Justice for Kids and Youth Homepage**

<http://www.usdoj.gov/kidspage>

## Organization Sites

### **American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry**

<http://www.aacap.org>

### **American Academy of Pediatrics**

<http://www.aap.org>

### **American Association of School Administrators**

<http://www.aasa.org>

### **American Counseling Association**

<http://www.counseling.org>

### **American Federation of Teachers**

<http://www.aft.org>

### **American Psychiatric Association**

<http://www.psych.org>

### **American Psychological Association**

<http://www.apa.org>

### **American School Counselor Association**

<http://www.schoolcounselor.org>

### **Council of Administrators of Special Education**

<http://members.aol.com/casecec>

### **Council of the Great City Schools**

<http://www.cgcs.org>

### **Council for Exceptional Children**

<http://www.cec.sped.org>

### **National Association of Elementary School Principals**

<http://www.naesp.org>

### **National Association of School Nurses**

<http://www.nasn.org>

### **National Association of Secondary School Principals**

<http://www.nassp.org>

### **National Association of State Boards of Education**

<http://www.nasbe.org>

### **National Education Association**

<http://www.nea.org>

### **National Middle School Association**

<http://www.nmsa.org>

**National School Boards Association**

**<http://www.nsba.org>**

**National School Public Relations Association**

**<http://www.nspra.org/entry.htm>**

**Police Executive Research Forum**

**<http://www.policeforum.org>**

**School Social Work Association of America**

**<http://www.sswaa.org>**

**Family Information Sites**

**The Beach Center on Families and Disability**

**<http://www.lsi.ukans.edu/beach/center>**

**Boys Town USA**

**<http://www.boystown.org>**

**Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health**

**<http://www.ffcmh.org/enhome.htm>**

**National Parent Network on Disabilities**

**<http://www.npnd.org>**

**National PTA**

**<http://www.pta.org/index.stm>**

**Parent Advocacy Coalition for Educational Rights (PACER) Center**

**<http://www.pacer.org>**

**Project for Parents of Children with Emotional/Behavioral Disorders**

**<http://www.pacer.org/parent/ebd.htm>**

## **Additional Resources**

The programs in this *Action Guide* are examples of many results-based programs that have been favorably reviewed by agencies or federally sponsored technical assistance centers.

The programs cited here in the *Action Guide* were identified under a U.S. Department of Justice grant to the Hamilton Fish National Institute on School and Community Violence with assistance from the Vanderbilt Institute for Public Policy. The programs were also identified under a U.S. Department of Education cooperative agreement with the Center for Effective Collaboration and Practice.

### **Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports**

5262 University of Oregon  
Eugene, OR 97403-5262  
Phone: (541) 346-3560  
Fax: (541) 346-5689  
E-mail: [PBIS@oregon.uoregon.edu](mailto:PBIS@oregon.uoregon.edu)  
Web site: <http://www.pbis.org/english/index.html>

### **First Step to Success**

Published by Sopris West, Inc.  
4093 Specialty Place  
Longmont, CO 80504  
Phone: (800) 547-6747  
Fax: (303) 651-2829  
Created by the Institute on Violence and Destructive Behavior  
1265 University of Oregon  
Eugene, OR 97403

### **Kennedy Middle School**

2200 Bailey Hill Road  
Eugene, OR 97405  
Phone: (541) 687-3241  
Fax: (541) 686-2379  
E-mail: [mehas@4j.lane.edu](mailto:mehas@4j.lane.edu)  
Web site: <http://www.4j.lane.edu/schools/middle/kennedy.html>

### **Kids in Community Schools**

Martin Luther King Elementary School  
Westchester Jewish Community Services  
Kids in Community Schools Program  
135 Locust Hill  
Yonkers, NY 10701  
Phone: (914) 376-0723

**Lafourche Parish School-Based Mental Health Program**

110 Bowie Road  
Thibodaux, LA 70301  
Phone: (504)447-8181  
Fax: (504) 446-1577  
E-mail: cwilmoth.pac@lafourche.k12.la.us

**Lane School**

1200 Highway 99 North  
P.O. Box 2680  
Eugene, OR 97402  
Phone: (541) 334-4796  
Web site: <http://www.lane.k12.or.us>

**Positive Adolescent Choices Training**

Center for Child and Adolescent Violence Prevention  
Wright State University, School of Professional Psychology  
9 North Edwin C. Moses Blvd.  
Dayton, OH 45407  
Phone: (937) 775-4300  
Fax: (937) 775-4323  
E-mail: [betty.yung@wright.edu](mailto:betty.yung@wright.edu)

**The Positive Education Program's Day Treatment Programs**

Positive Education Program  
3100 Euclid Avenue  
Cleveland, OH 44115  
Phone: (216) 361-4400  
Fax: (216) 361-8600  
E-mail: [infopep@pepcleve.org](mailto:infopep@pepcleve.org)  
Web site: <http://www.pepcleve.org>

**Project ACHIEVE**

Institute for School Reform, Integrated Services, and Child Mental  
Health and Education Policy  
School Psychology Program  
The University of South Florida  
4202 E Fowler Ave.  
Tampa, FL 33620-7750  
Phone: (813) 974-3246  
Fax: (813) 974-5814



**Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies**

Pennsylvania State University  
University Park, PA 16802  
Phone: (814) 865-2618  
E-mail: mxg47@psu.edu  
<http://www.psu.edu/dept/prevention>  
Publisher: Developmental Research and Programs  
Phone: (800) 736-2630  
E-mail: drpmain@drp.org  
Web site: <http://www.drp.org/paths.html>

**Resolving Conflict Creatively Program**

RCCP National Center  
40 Exchange Place, Suite 1111  
New York, NY 10005  
Phone: (212) 509-0022  
Fax: (212) 509-1095  
E-mail: rccp@rccp.org  
Web site: <http://esrnational.org>

**School-Based Wraparound in LaGrange, Illinois**

LaGrange Area Department of Special Education  
1301 West Cossitt Avenue  
LaGrange, IL 60525  
Phone: (708) 354-5730  
Fax: (708) 482-2665

**Second Step Curriculum: A Violence Prevention Curriculum**

Committee for Children  
2203 Airport Way South  
Suite 500  
Seattle, WA 98134  
Phone: (800) 634-4449 or (206) 343-1223  
Fax: (206) 343-1445  
Web site: <http://www.cfchildren.org>

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