Task Force on Youth Violence and School Safety

Report and Recommendations to States

A project of Mississippi Attorney General Mike Moore's Presidential Initiative on Youth Violence and School Safety

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Prepared by
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With Special Thanks to
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“What we have today are towns and cities that up until a short time ago, we never really heard much about; Jonesboro, Springfield, Pearl and now Littleton. There’s no need to mention the state. Everybody knows where these places are now. There’s not a person at this summit who wants a town in his state to be next on that list. That is what we’re trying to prevent.”

Richard P. Levy
Louisiana Attorney General at the
NAAG Youth Violence and School Safety Summit

"Outcasting is caused by people not understanding other people. We need activities to bring kids together so they can form common bonds and see that there really aren’t differences."

Teenage Panelist
NAAG Youth Violence and School Safety Summit
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There is no simple cause for this senseless tragedy and there will be no simple solution to preventing further tragedies. But I recognize that the whole community must be involved in a search to help erode the culture of violence.

Ken Salazar
Colorado Attorney General
Referring to the tragedy at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado

...While everybody realizes the need to talk and let things out after a tragedy, what happened to trying that before? If teachers were truly open and the kids were really open to each other's emotions, it probably would never happen.

Teenage Panelist
NAAG Youth Violence and School Safety Summit
As the chief law enforcement officials in our states, we know that issues surrounding youth violence and school safety will be on the minds of school officials, parents, and our colleagues this summer as they reflect on how to prevent another tragedy like the one in Littleton, Colorado. Last summer, Mississippi Attorney General and NAAG President Mike Moore, whose own state had experienced a fatal shooting in a high school, began an inquiry focusing on reducing youth violence and making schools safer. The goal of this project was to spotlight effective preventative programs and to allow states to share their best practices. General Moore chose this goal because the Attorney General, in most states, has a scope of responsibility that gives the office holder the credibility to convene and harness the energy of individuals who can make a difference on this issue.

The initiative culminated in a Youth Violence and School Safety Summit in Jackson, Mississippi, on May 3-4, 1999, just two weeks after the tragedy at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado. This event served as a timely forum for experts from all over the country to discuss the culture of violence in which our children now live, and to share ideas for what states can do to help. This report summarizes the recommendations that emerged from the Summit.

We would like to emphasize that despite recent occurrences, schools are still one of the safest places in a community for children. A U.S. Department of Justice survey showed that students ages 12 through 18 are more likely to be victims of serious violent crime away from school than at school.\(^1\) In 1996, about 10 of every 1,000 students (ages 12-18) were victims of serious violent crimes at school or going to and from school.\(^2\) In contrast, about 26 of every 1,000 students were victims of violent crimes away from school.\(^3\) While statistically most schools will never endure the nightmares witnessed in Alaska, Colorado, Mississippi, Kentucky, Arkansas, Pennsylvania, Washington, and Oregon, we can do more to protect our children both in and out of school.

With that in mind, the National Association of Attorneys General is committed to identifying measures to create safer environments for our children and we are pleased to share the best ideas from our Youth Violence and School Safety Summit.
"We need to teach children at an early age that conflicts should be resolved through communication and compromise, not through violence."

James Doyle
Wisconsin Attorney General

Preventing this kind of tragedy requires all of us—parents, educators, employers, law enforcement, faith communities—to help create and sustain the healthy and stable environments our children need. We must get guns out of the hands of children; we must instill in youth respect for themselves, their peers, and their communities; and we must identify early on those children who need special help.

J. Joseph Curran
Maryland Attorney General
RECOMMENDATION 1: Investing in children early pays off

Support and build upon existing resources for effective early brain and childhood development programs

The 0-3 age group is one that law enforcement typically focuses on. In recent years, however, there has been interest in the impact of early childhood experiences, particularly in the first three years of life, on a child’s health and development, academic achievement, and potential for juvenile delinquency. Contributing to this interest is research indicating that most physical development in the brain occurs by age three, and that there is a demonstrated link between brain formation and early stimulation and nurturing.

It is well known that many of our country’s children start life with the odds stacked against them. A growing body of research documents the negative effect of trauma during the early years of life on brain development and the ability of individuals, in later years, to establish positive relationships with others. Known social risk factors for poor intellectual development include intergenerational poverty, low levels of parental education and intelligence, and unstimulating and non-optimal parent-child interactions. Additional biological risks include poor nutrition, low birth weight, and premature birth.4

The good news is that research in this area supports the conclusion that early childhood interventions can yield measurable benefits that endure long after the child matures.

STATISTICS

In a cooperative study involving the National School Safety Center and the Centers for Disease Control, an analysis was made of “School-Associated Violent Deaths” during the 1992 to 1994 school years, and identified 211 school-associated violent deaths, most of which involved intention to cause personal injury. Specific common factors were identified among perpetrators:

- 40 percent had a past background of criminal misbehavior;
- 24 percent had been previously involved with substance abuse;
- 35 percent were involved in gangs; and
- 70 percent had previously brought a weapon to school.

Using these factors and percentages, consider that:

- If 40 percent of the perpetrators had a criminal background, the inverse of this data is that 60 percent did not;
- If 35 percent were gang-involved, the inverse suggests that 65 percent were not;
- If 24 percent were drug-involved, the inverse suggests that 76 percent were not.

The data suggests that even with all that is known, what is not known about these children is greater than what is known. This indicates that there are many other factors that influence the development of youth violence.

Source: Statement of Dr. Ronald Stephens, Executive Director, National School Safety Center, to the Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Youth and Families Committee on Education and the Workforce, United States House of Representatives Hearing on Understanding Violent Children, April 28, 1998.

Several experts who testified at the NAAG Youth Violence and School Safety Summit indicated that supportive educational programs in the first three years of life can vastly improve children’s development, and even “level the playing field” for at-risk children. We need to follow their suggestion to join forces with other state and community groups to become more responsive to the development of young children, and focus on the following objectives:

- promoting healthy development and preventative care beginning prenatally and continuing through the first three years of life;
- providing all parents with educational opportunities for improving their parenting skills;
- helping parents develop problem-solving skills that enable them to meet their families’ needs;
- supplying vaccinations to children under three years of age for free, or at a nominal cost; and
- preventing child abuse and neglect.5

States should conduct a comprehensive review of existing programs and policies to help identify administrative obstacles to improving existing services. A timeframe should be developed for proposing common standards and review criteria for early childhood and family support programs. The criteria should include:

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The principle of timing.
Generally, interventions that begin earlier in development and continue for a longer period of time afford significantly larger benefits to the participants than those that begin later and do not last as long.

The principle of intensity.
Programs that are more intensive in terms of the number of home visits per week, number of hours per day, days per week, and weeks per year produce more positive effects than do less intensive interventions. In addition, children and parents who participate most actively and regularly in programs are the ones who show the greatest benefits.

The principle of program breadth and flexibility.
Interventions that provide more comprehensive services (e.g., multiple social, health, and educational services) are more likely to have larger and more lasting effects than do interventions that are narrower in focus (e.g., home visiting only, parent education only).

The principle of cultural appropriateness.
To achieve desired outcomes, interventions provided for children and families need to recognize and build on cultural beliefs, traditions and practices. When interventions do not build upon cultural values and strengths, they are less likely to be effective and sustained.

To succeed, early child development programs must meet established standards of quality. Translating research findings into a comprehensive plan to meet these goals will require smart policy and legislative decisions. States should work toward reducing duplication of efforts and fragmentation of services; directing resources more selectively to those children and families in the greatest need; and providing needed technical assistance, monitoring, and research so that program quality and consistency can be improved.

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7 *Id.*

8 *Id.*
RECOMMENDATION 2:

Cultivate after-school programs that appeal to parents and children

The hours between 3:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. are commonly referred to by law enforcement as "Prime Time for Crime." This is because many children are left unsupervised after school and until their parents return home from work. Not every child is capable or inclined to participate in extracurricular activities. Unsupervised children are at significantly higher risk of truancy, stress, pregnancy, receiving poor grades, risk-taking behavior and substance abuse. Many children will spend nearly all after-school time watching television, and are therefore exposed to literally thousands of acts of violence before they reach adulthood. Still others spend time alone in other unproductive or unlawful activities.

After school programs are essential for filling the need for "something to do." The informal learning environments provided by after school programs offer an opportunity to build good social relationships with other children and program staff, and learn athletic, artistic, and intellectual skills in a safe place.

States should organize coalitions with county and city government, social service agencies, and youth and civic groups to develop programs for children to have a safe place to go for fun and education after school hours. Programs can be relatively simple. For instance, in Mississippi, students were asked to design a good after school program. All
students included the following essential components: a snack; someone to help them with their homework; fun recreational activities; someone to listen and pay attention to them; and someone they could talk to about their problems.⁹

States should strive to support programs that meet these simple criteria and provide the following basic resources:

- a safe haven away from the negative influences of the street;
- guidance, discipline, and values modeled by caring adult leaders;
- constructive youth development activities and programs in supervised supportive environments;
- access to comprehensive, coordinated services that meet the complex needs of youth at risk;
- educational support, increased awareness of career options and goal-setting skills; and,
- a comprehensive violence prevention initiative.¹⁰

Many communities already have Boys and Girls Clubs or other after school programs that should be supported and expanded to serve a larger population. Other communities may need the use of a facility to host such programs and allow a program to exist where it otherwise will not. We need to work to help break down this simple barrier. Schools, churches, parks, recreation centers, youth serving agencies, child care centers, family day care homes, libraries, public housing, and corporate headquarters are all potential sites.

“In Maryland, 350,000 children are left to their own devices after school each day. Statistics show that when children are unsupervised, juvenile crime skyrocket – this is unacceptable. Every school should have at least one after school program – period....”

J. Joseph Curran, Jr.
Maryland Attorney General

While many school officials allow their facilities to be used, others point to legal obstacles and refuse, citing liability concerns. Too often they are asking lawyers the wrong question -- “is there a problem” -- rather than, “how can we do this?” Most of the time, legal barriers can be overcome, and Attorneys General can be effective in breaking down these obstacles.

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⁹ MIKE MOORE, ATTORNEY GENERAL, MISSISSIPPI, INVESTING IN OUR CHILDREN: A REPORT ON YOUTH VIOLENCE AND SCHOOL SAFETY (1999).

RECOMMENDATION 3:
Expand volunteer mentoring programs that match responsible, caring adults with at-risk children

As evidenced by early childhood development research, a positive bond between a developing child and a nurturing adult pays rich dividends that can last a lifetime. With the growing erosion of two-parent families and heavy demands on overburdened support systems, this attachment is increasingly jeopardized. In every community, there are hundreds of children left to find companionship on the streets or to spend many hours at home without an adult.

When a child's family is unable or unwilling to provide adequate supervision and support, a mentor can help fill this critical gap. The very presence of a mentor in a youth's life can help to reduce isolation and provide needed supervision and support. A positive adult role model offers new perspectives to youth who live in situations rife with substance abuse and violence. Attorneys General have played an important role in coordinating and generating support for mentoring programs, and we need to encourage other law enforcement officials to do the same.

The concept of mentoring is not new. It is generally a one-to-one relationship between a pair of unrelated individuals, usually of different ages. Within this relationship, the mentor supports, teaches, counsels, and assists the mentee on a regular basis over an extended period of time.

Examples of formalized mentoring programs date back as early as the 19th century when the Friendly Visiting campaign, supported by charitable societies, recruited hundreds of middle-class women to work with poor and immigrant communities. Big Brothers/Big Sisters (BB/BS) of America, founded in 1904, is a well known successor to the Friendly Visiting campaigns. BB/BS primarily connects middle-class adults with disadvantaged youth.

Mentoring relationships can be found in many different settings. In schools, tutors help support successful educational

“For Virginia to have a future worthy of its promise, mentors and tutors, willing to give two to three hours of their week to a child, are needed to build our foundation.”

Mark Earley
Virginia Attorney General

PROGRAM

General Earley has met with business and community leaders across the state to discuss their support and participation. The Attorney General's Office is serving as a clearinghouse for the few mentor and volunteer organizations in the area. For more information, contact David Bolshik

12 Id.
experiences. In juvenile and family court, court-appointed special advocates provide support and advocacy for children in need of assistance. In the substance abuse field, sponsors are used to support sobriety.\textsuperscript{13}

Currently there are many types of formal mentoring programs that work to ensure that each child they serve has at least one significant adult in his/her life that can be a friend, role model, guide, and teacher of values. States should work to support a multi-agency collaboration to develop and expand culturally appropriate programs that are tailored to the individual needs of their communities. Although these programs will vary from state to state and community to community, they should contain the following common goals:

- delinquency prevention
- improved school performance
- increased school attendance
- violence prevention
- prevention of gang involvement
- career development
- goal planning
- anger management
- prevention of alcohol, tobacco and illegal drug use, and
- independent living skills.\textsuperscript{14}

Most programs subject potential mentors to background checks and train them to establish a safe environment for their mentee. Background checks and training should be required and mentors should submit reports to the supervising agency about their activities and contacts with the mentee.

Mentors should also be trained to understand that they should not attempt to be a savior, foster parent, therapist, parole officer, or peer.\textsuperscript{15} Rather, they should strive to be a trusted friend with a commitment to developing the child's character and capabilities.

\textbf{STATISTICS}

Young people with mentors are 46 percent less likely to begin using illegal drugs; 27 percent less likely to begin using alcohol; 53 percent less likely to skip school; 37 percent less likely to skip a class; more confident of their performance in schoolwork; less likely to hit someone; and, get along better with their families.

\textit{Source: Big Brothers/Big Sisters 1995 Impact Study.}

Gang activity in schools has increased sharply. The presence of street gangs and drugs is related to increased school crime and victimization of students. Violent victimization of students often coexists with reported availability of drugs in schools. Between 1989 and 1995, the percentage of students who reported that street gangs were present at their schools increased from 15 to 28 percent. In 1995, students who reported that they had been the victims of a violent crime at school were more likely to report that drugs were available at school than students who reported that they had not been violently victimized at school (73 percent compared with 65 percent).


\textsuperscript{13} Id. at 5.

\textsuperscript{14} Id. at 14.

\textsuperscript{15} Twin Cities One to One (visited June 7, 1999) <http://www.mentoringworks.org>.
RECOMMENDATION 4:  
Develop a mechanism for children to anonymously report threats or acts of violence

Because children are afraid of retribution, and because they fear that teachers and parents may not keep their identities confidential, they will frequently decide not to divulge information about dangerous behavior, even if the behavior is directed at them.

"It's more important than ever that students are aware that they have a place to report guns in school or threats of violence."

Jim Ryan  
Illinois Attorney General, about his establishment of a toll free tip-line in the state

Students are in the best position to know what is happening in their schools and are the most valuable prevention "tool" available. This obstacle must be addressed through the development of a reasonable and anonymous method of reporting violations of school policy.

States should work with school districts to develop anonymous reporting mechanisms. This may take the form of a toll free tip line to provide an anonymous way for kids to report guns, bombs, and the harassment of other students without fear of retribution. If this method is selected, states should devote resources to publicizing the telephone number. Another method for reporting is to simply provide a locked mailbox in an area away from the teachers where students can drop anonymous notes.

Some states have developed programs where students are trained to respond to tips while keeping the identities of children confidential. These programs are often combined with those that train students in conflict resolution through peer mediation and counseling.

STATISTICS

Teachers are also vulnerable to becoming victims of crime in schools. On average each year, from 1993-1996, there were 123,800 violent crimes against teachers at school and 192,400 thefts from teachers at school. This translates into a rate of 30 violent crimes for every 1,000 teachers and 46 thefts for every 1,000 teachers. Teachers in urban schools (39 for every 1,000) were more likely to be victims of violent crime than were teachers in suburban and rural schools (20 for every 1,000 teachers in suburban schools and 22 for every 1,000 teachers in rural schools).


"Kids need teachers that care for them and they can trust."

Teenage Panelist  
NAAG Youth Violence and School Safety Summit
PROGRAM

Alabama Attorney General Bill Pryor is committed to the Governor’s major goal of statewide guidelines for school safety and mandated the creation of clear management plans for all schools. A Safe Schools task force in school safety holdings was created that comprised 10 hours of SARS (VRRUS) course environment guidelines that address and advise regarding potential safety at other spring activities. Ten thousand bumper stickers with the phone numbers have been distributed to schools.

The Attorney General’s Office has also established a Safe Schools Initiative website that can be reached from General Pryor’s homepage (http://www.aogn.state.al.us). This is a resource for all schools to download the latest information about school safety planning in Alabama.

For more information, contact Maury Mitchell or Lynn Childs at (334) 242-7200.
RECOMMENDATION 5:

Form partnerships between school officials and law enforcement to facilitate a better understanding of the laws relevant to privacy, crime reporting, and information sharing.

School officials and the law enforcement community should develop written agreements such as "joint powers agreements" or "memoranda of understanding" to explain their mutual responsibilities and affirm how they will work together toward the common goal of increasing school safety.

These agreements should include a section on the respective responsibilities of these organizations under the state and federal laws pertaining to crime reporting and the confidentiality of certain student records, and should be updated annually.

Both school officials and law enforcement officers complain about confusion associated with these laws. For instance, some school officials, relying on a mistaken interpretation of these statutes, have failed to notify police or prosecutors about events and offenses on school grounds that they are required to report. Likewise, school officials complain of unsatisfactory responses from local police when they report serious offenses on school property.

Crime Reporting

Obviously, some violations of school rules also constitute a violation of criminal law. This is certainly true of the most serious disciplinary infractions, such as those involving drugs, weapons, and violence. On occasion, school officials learn during the course of an investigation, or as a result of a search, that a crime has been committed by or against a student. In most states, school officials are required by law to promptly report information regarding these types of offenses to law enforcement authorities. School officials are also required to turn over to police any suspected controlled dangerous substances or drug paraphernalia that may come into their possession.

"Schools that are the most successful at dealing with violence are schools that have developed strong ties with law enforcement."

James Doyle
Wisconsin Attorney General

It is essential that school officials understand and follow the laws that require them to turn over evidence or information about suspected crimes to the police. The failure to refer a suspected offense to law enforcement authorities may unwittingly hinder
them from identifying and dealing appropriately with juvenile offenders. Further, non-reporting may prevent law enforcement from taking steps that are necessary and appropriate to intervene, to corroborate a suspicion that a particular student is the one who committed the offense, to address the juvenile's problems in a timely fashion, and to protect the public.

Law enforcement should communicate to school officials that the effect of a student's criminal activity may extend well beyond the confines of the campus, and may lead to retaliatory action taken outside of school grounds or outside normal school hours. In some cases, and especially those involving planned or threatened violence, a prompt response by appropriate law enforcement officials or juvenile courts is essential to diffuse a potentially volatile situation and to prevent further physical or emotional injury.

Furthermore, a uniform crime reporting and record-keeping system should be in place in every school. When administrators know what crimes are being committed on their campuses, when and where the crimes are committed, and who is involved, they can take appropriate action. In addition, school leaders should analyze crime data to determine whether linkages exist among criminal activities on campus.17

Cooperation

School officials should investigate a suspected violation of school rules and take such actions as are necessary and appropriate to redress and remediate infractions, or to impose appropriate discipline. School officials have their own independent authority to conduct investigations and to discipline students who violate school rules, regulations, or codes of conduct. This is true even if the infraction also constitutes a criminal offense. The imposition of school discipline in no way constitutes "double jeopardy" or otherwise limits, preempts, or precludes any appropriate action by a law enforcement agency or a juvenile court.

Nonetheless, where the local police department or prosecutor's office believes that an ongoing, concurrent investigation

by school officials or the imposition of any form of school discipline would jeopardize a law enforcement investigation or prosecution or otherwise endanger the public safety, the local police department or prosecutor's office should immediately notify the school principal and the superintendent of the school. At that point, the school principal and superintendent should immediately discontinue any ongoing school investigation and should take no further action (e.g., interviewing witnesses) without providing notice to and receiving express permission from the police department or the prosecutor's office.  

Privacy and Information Sharing
Over the course of the year, we found this area to be one of the most sensitive, and the one most in need of better education and communication between law enforcement and school officials. There is a tremendous need for these groups to discuss their mutual rights and responsibilities under the law.

To improve relations, law enforcement should educate school officials about specific restrictions in federal and state laws governing confidentiality of records. For example, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) makes certain pupil records confidential and imposes strict limits on when school officials may disclose to others, even police, information recorded in a pupil record. However, this Act only prohibits the disclosure of the contents of such records. It does not extend to other sources of information concerning the same events or transactions that happen to be memorialized in pupil records.  

"We want school officials to be unafraid to conduct searches as long as they are legal and constitutional. We want them to find the guns before they are pulled and the knives before they are used."

Peter Verniero
Former New Jersey
Attorney General and
Youth Violence and School Safety Task Force Co-Chair

Thus, a teacher, counselor, administrator, or other school staff member who is a witness to criminal activity or who discovers evidence of criminal activity

18 Note that if police or prosecutors ask or authorize school officials to conduct an interview or undertake a search, courts will likely find that the school officials have become "agents" of the police, subject to the stricter rules governing law enforcement investigations.

19 20 U.S.C.A. § 1232g.

20 See, e.g., Frase v. Andrews, 463 F. Supp. 1034 (E.D.N.Y. 1979). FERPA applies only if the source of the information is school records; the confidentiality provisions of the Act do not extend to information that was derived from a source independent of school records.
during an investigation or search is required to report this information to law enforcement authorities based upon personal knowledge and memory, notwithstanding that the criminal activity or seized evidence will also be recorded in a pupil record that is subject to FERPA. In other words, the act by a school official of memorializing an incident, event, or observation in a pupil record in no way precludes that school official or any other material witness from reporting or testifying from personal knowledge as to the documented incident, event, or observation.

Similarly, there is much confusion concerning federal law and the confidentiality of substance abuse diagnosis and treatment information. Under federal law and regulations, school officials are generally not permitted to disclose to law enforcement authorities or to any person other than a member of the local district substance abuse program that a student has received or is receiving alcohol or other drug evaluation or treatment services. Nor are school officials permitted to disclose any information, including a student's identity or information about specific illegal drug activity learned during or as a direct result of drug or alcohol abuse evaluation or treatment services provided by the local school district's substance abuse program.

Once again, this federal prohibition does not apply to information about illegal activity that was learned by a school employee outside of the local district substance abuse program, and any information must be reported to police in accordance with the laws and regulations that create a duty to report certain offenses promptly.

21 42 U.S.C.A. § 290dd-2 and 42 C.F.R. Pt. II.
RECOMMENDATION 6:
Design a safety and crisis management plan for every school

Every school should develop a crisis management plan that focuses on preparation, management and resolution of a crisis. The plan should be created with the help of school officials, law enforcement, fire and medical rescue, state and local emergency management resources, and any other persons essential to handling a crisis.

"Many problems can be avoided through responsible planning...
A good crisis plan focuses on crisis prevention, preparation, management and resolution. It also identifies community resources that serve students."

Ronald D. Stephens
National School Safety Center
Executive Director

The plan should specify staff assignments and how they should be modified to react to any crisis situation that a school can possibly anticipate. This might include chemical spills, bombs, suicides, explosions, fallen aircraft, fighting, riots, random acts of violence, hostage situations, intruders or other individuals with a deadly weapon, earthquakes, floods, fires, and tornadoes.

The plans should be individualized to fit the particular needs of each school and should be reassessed each year. Key components of an effective crisis management plan are:

- a list of key staff and their responsibilities during a crisis;
- helpful telephone numbers, including those for fire, police, school district nurse, security, and administrators;
- emergency and first aid supply lists and where these items can be found in the school facility;
- guidelines for handling the media; and,
- suggestions for ways counselors, principals, and teachers can help in the aftermath of a crisis.

A crisis management plan will not work properly without training. Administrators, teachers, staff, and students all need training and practice in emergency procedure. Training should include a plan for communication within the school, as well as with the police and media, about parent notification, pupil dismissal, transportation, resumption of classes, and any counseling that might be necessary.

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Keep Schools Safe

A Partnership to Make Schools Environments for Safe Learning

Information for...
- Concerned Parents
- Teachers/School Administrators
- Law Enforcement Officials

Featured School Safety Resources

Handling Crisis Situations

What Students Can Do

How Parents Can Get Involved

The Role of Law Enforcement

Effective Prevention Tactics for...
- Drugs & Alcohol
- Gangs
- Conflict
- Weapons

Model Approaches to School Security

Discipline Codes that Work

School Safety Bibliography

A Project of the National Association of Attorneys General and the National School Boards Association

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"The menace of youth violence and gang activity knows no socioeconomic barrier nor geographic boundary."

Charlie Condon
South Carolina Attorney General

"While I watch movies with violence in them and I’m not going to shoot anybody, it does make me a little more accustomed to the idea. While I know the difference between right and wrong, every time you watch it, you start to think maybe it’s ok. It’s not going to affect your choice to do it, but seeing it just makes it a little bit closer and makes you a little more ok with it."

Teenage Panelist
NAAG Youth Violence and School Safety Summit
CONCLUSION

In a year’s time, we could galvanize, energize, and educate ourselves and others about the complexities of these issues. We could use our collective stature and position to bring together experts, students, and parents to begin to map out a community response to these challenges. But as with so many other complex issues in America, one size will not fit all. An appropriate and effective response to youth violence and related school safety issues will require a community-by-community analysis of the needs and the unique responses that are necessary to make a real difference.

In tackling these issues, please keep in mind that all the checklists, protocols, laws, and regulations will not alone cause a decrease in youth violence. What is needed is a reintroduction to our youth. We should not just talk about kids, but put them first in everything we do.

Our first step will be to continue this project next year. I look forward to working with Washington Attorney General Christine O. Gregoire and her committee to craft the agenda for her term as NAAG President, which begins this summer. I would like to thank former New Jersey Attorney General Peter Verniero and North Dakota Attorney General Heidi Heitkamp for their contributions as co-chairs of the NAAG Youth Violence and School Safety Task Force over the past year, and all the Attorneys General who gave their time and effort.

Mike Moore  
Attorney General of Mississippi and NAAG President