



The North Carolina Center
for Safer Schools

A Resource Guide on School Safety

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Introduction

The [North Carolina Center for Safer Schools](#) at the Department of Public Instruction serves as a premier resource center for educators, school administrators, law enforcement, youth-serving community agencies, mental health professionals, juvenile justice officials, policymakers, parents/guardians and students throughout the state. We're dedicated to providing quality training, technical assistance and guidance to help our North Carolina schools implement powerful school safety initiatives.

With the support from the [Governor's Crime Commission's](#) Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Grant, we're offering a comprehensive school safety resource guide to cultivate awareness and understanding around multiple topics of school safety. The Resource Guide is divided into two parts.

Part One explores six areas of importance that have been specifically targeted by legislators and school safety leaders as requiring fast and comprehensive action. These six sections will help educators (and parents) explore each of these topics more in-depth and offer resources for further learning and support. Part One explores the following topics:

- | | |
|------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Threat Assessment | 4. Parent Reunification |
| 2. Anonymous Reporting | 5. Bullying |
| 3. Critical Incident | 6. Student Engagement |

To ensure that we cover most of the safety puzzle to protect our students, state-wide, from mental and physical violence, we've developed a second part to our Resource Guide.

Part Two of the Resource Guide explores six additional issues of youth safety and violence which affects school climate. These topics originate from **R.I.S.E** - a training program that focuses on Resiliency, Information, Support and Empowerment. This multi-day regional training presents educators, community leaders, mental health professionals and other youth-serving professionals with important information given by top school safety specialists.

These top school safety specialists shared critical information and resources for the inclusion in part two of this guide. Part two previews the following topics:

- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| 7. Teen Dating Violence | 11. Substance Misuse |
| 8. Human Trafficking | 12. Suicide Prevention |
| 9. Gang Awareness | |
| 10. Youth Gun Violence | |

Both parts of the Resource Guide include wide-ranging and comprehensive information with key resources for the selected topics, including:

- A comprehensive overview of the topic area and its importance to school safety.
- The objectives participants will learn by the end of the guide.
- A connection to state/federal laws, policies, standards, and best practices.
- Supplemental resource materials that are relevant to each section.
- Further resources and contacts for expanded knowledge and enhanced skill-building.

By developing this School Safety Resource Guide, it is our hope that staff will have some of the tools needed to assist students by providing services to those victimized by traumatic or adverse experiences. Knowing how to prevent and handle adverse interactions can also help reduce suspension, expulsion, and arrest to keep kids in school and moving toward a bright future. Finally, identifying constructive ways to remedy behavior that has a negative impact before a potential conflict occurs can lower the chances of school violence and increase safety and well-being for all students and the communities in which they live.

For more information on the resources covered in the School Safety Resource Guide, please contact the Center for Safer Schools at 919-807-4001. To learn more about us, please visit our [website](#) at <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/cfss>, [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) at NC Safer Schools.

Part One

Threat Assessment

Anonymous Reporting

Critical Incident

Parent Reunification

Bullying

Student Engagement

Threat Assessment



Introduction

The School Threat Assessment represents an important component of a comprehensive approach to school safety.

This guide is designed to help you:

- Understand legislative implications as it pertains to schools' responsibility to assemble and operate a Threat Assessment Team
- Identify the different types of threats
- Identify the varying categories of threat
- Recognize best practices in documenting threats and using documentation for future assessment
- Recognize best practices in response to threats
- Recognize best practices in creating a safety plan and Re-entry Plan
- Identify resources for further consideration

Why Threat Assessment is Necessary



School violence is often planned rather than impulsive. A well-organized and consistent Threat Assessment policy allows for prevention and proactivity instead of merely response and reactivity.

Threat assessment responsibility

Schools have a legislative mandate to establish a threat assessment team and to operate in a clear, meaningful process when faced with a threat. Legislation mandates a threat assessment procedure that does the following:

- Provides guidance to students, faculty, and staff regarding recognition of threatening or aberrant behavior that poses a risk
- Conducts assessments to determine appropriate response to a threat
- Identifies members of the school community to whom threats should be reported
- Utilizes anonymous reporting applications for students to receive information about school safety concerns that require an investigation
- Responds and intervenes based on the level of threat determined in assessment

Three Parts to Threat Assessment

*A threat assessment defined by NC Legislation is “A fact-based process emphasizing an **appraisal** of observed, or reasonably observable, behaviors to identify potentially dangerous or violent situations, to **assess** them, and to **manage or address** them.”*

Appraise. Assess. Address.

What is a Threat?

A threat can come in different forms, and it includes both harm to others and harm to self. It's important to note that threat assessments focus on people while vulnerability assessments focus on facilities. In general, the impetus for starting an investigation in a threat assessment typically hinges on specific threatening behavior.¹ Threats can be categorized into different types and levels.

Concerning Behavior and Response

Some behaviors will require immediate intervention and have more serious consequences.²

Immediate Response Behavior	Possible Responses
Threats of violence Engagement in violence Bringing a weapon to school Bullying or harassing others Other criminal behavior	Detention Suspension Contacting authorities Re-entry plan with specific requirements

Other behaviors may warrant concern but not rise to the level of immediate intervention. These are warning signs that may justify a response.

Warning Signs Behavior	Possible Responses
Increased absenteeism Withdrawal or isolation Dramatic changes in behavior/appearance Drug or alcohol use Erratic, depressive, or other mental health symptoms	Counseling Mental health care Tutoring Social and family services partnerships

Assessment teams will also be tasked with evaluating the type and level of threat in order to determine the appropriate response.

Types of threats³

Transient	Quickly and easily resolved with no lasting intent to harm others—including comments made out of a burst of anger, in an argument, or as a joke or figure of speech. Typically resolved on scene and ends with an apology, retraction, or clarification.
Substantive	Can be direct (aimed at a specific individual or group) or indirect (vague or ambiguous). Is often repeated over time or to different people. It may involve the recruitment of accomplices or invitation for an audience. There is often physical evidence of plan to carry out the threat.

Categories of threats³

	There is no current identified risk. It may represent “venting” without an intent to harm. These threats often lack details and are inconsistent. NC Legislation says, “the individual or situation does not appear to pose a risk of violence or serious harm to self or others and any exhibited issues or concerns can be resolved easily.”
	The individual acknowledges violent thoughts but does not have a plan for them. The person does not seem to see the situation as hopeless and is willing to look at alternative solutions. NC Legislation says, “the individual or situation does not appear to pose a risk of violence or serious harm to self or others, at this time, but exhibits behaviors that indicate a continuing intent and potential for future violence or serious harm to self or others or exhibits other concerning behavior that requires intervention.”
	The individual has direct, clear communication that is fixated on a person or cause. There may be an increase in intensity or severity of tone with frequent thoughts of violence expressed. A potential target, time, or place may be named. NC Legislation says, “the individual or situation appears to pose a risk of violence or serious harm to self or others, exhibiting behaviors that indicate both a continuing intent to harm and efforts to acquire the capacity to carry out the plan, and may also exhibit other concerning behavior that requires intervention.”
	A plan for implementation of violence is underway and an immediate threat exists. There is often a well-thought out plan and action-oriented language. The individual has the means, desire, and ability to carry out the plan. NC Legislation says, “the individual or situation appears to pose a clear and immediate risk of serious violence toward others that requires containment and action to protect identified or identifiable target or targets and may also exhibit other concerning behavior that requires intervention.”

Risk and Protective Factors

Determining how to best react to a threat requires an understanding of the risk factors that make an individual more prone to youth violence and protective factors that make an individual less prone to violence—even in the face of other existing risk factors.⁴

	Risk Factors	Protective Factors
Individual	- Poor behavioral and impulse control - Social, cognitive, or information-processing deficits - High emotional distress - History of treatment for emotional problems - Antisocial beliefs/attitudes - Exposure to violence and conflict in family - History of violent victimization - Attention/hyperactivity deficits or learning disorders - Academic struggles - History of early aggressive behavior - Substance abuse history	- High academic achievement - High, long-range goals - Positive social orientation - Popularity acknowledged by peers - Well-developed social skills - Planning skills - Involvement in a faith community
Relationship/ Family	- Isolation - Limited communication - No regular activity together - Inconsistent/absent caregivers - Limited or no social involvement - Limited ability to use constructive problem-solving strategies	- Connectedness to family/adults - Ability to discuss problems with parents - Perception of high and long-term expectations from caregivers - Frequent shared activities with caregivers - Consistent presence of caregivers - Involvement in social activities - Family use of constructive problem solving

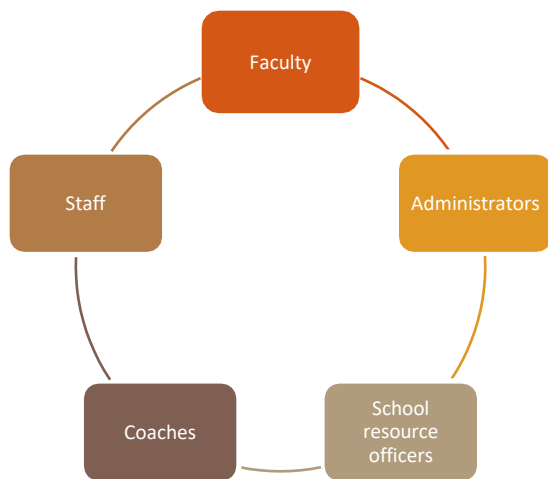
Social/ Peer	- Association with delinquent peers - Gang involvement - Social rejection - Lack of involvement in social activities - Poor academic performance - Low commitment to school	- Engagement with socially mature peers - Commitment to school - Close relationships with non-violent peers - Involvement in healthy social activities - School environment with clear behavior rules and consistent reinforcement of boundaries
Community	- Diminished economic opportunities - High concentrations of poor residents - High levels of transience - High level of family disruption - Low levels of community participation - Socially disorganized neighborhoods	- Cohesive and inclusive school culture - Stable economic environment - Opportunity to engage with community - Long-term residents of multiple generations

Creating the Threat Assessment Team

A Threat Assessment team should be assigned to the task of reviewing threats and assessing them to determine necessary responses. This team is typically established by the Superintendent or their designee. Best practices for threat assessment teams are as follows:

Composition-

Threat assessment teams should include individuals with expertise in education, school administration, mental health, and law enforcement. The best teams include faculty, staff, administrators, coaches, and school resource officers.² There are various sources of information available to Threat Assessment Teams, but consideration should be given to:



Size-

The size of the team is largely determined by the needs of the school system. Some teams are smaller and represent a single school while other teams are larger and represent an entire district or county.²

Leadership-

Threat assessment teams need a designated leader.²

Meeting Frequency-

Teams need to be able to meet quickly when an active situation is brought forward. They should also meet on a regular basis for role-playing and learning activities.²

Conducting Investigations

Part of the team's responsibility will be to conduct investigations into reported threats. A community systems approach to investigation recognizes that an individual has many different systems of interactions and that a thorough understanding of a threat requires an exploration of multiple layers of interactions.²

Sources of Information	Areas to Investigate	Methods of Investigation
Family, friends, and neighbors Online interactions Hobbies, employment, and clubs Classmates, teachers, coaches, custodial staff and bus drivers Judicial and legal records	Motives and goals Access to weapons Concerning communication Inappropriate interests in violence, school shooters, or mass attacks Stressful events or losses Individual emotional and development issues Evidence of desperation or suicidal thoughts History of or perspective on violence Consistency between student's statements and others' Evidence of planning an attack	Conducting interviews Reviewing online activity Reviewing social media Reviewing school projects/assignments Reviewing disciplinary records Reviewing academic records

Responding to Threats

One of the most important jobs of the Threat Assessment team is responding to threats based on the investigation. Prior incidents may elevate the threat beyond that indicated by the individual incident. Once a thorough, holistic assessment has been made, the team should make a recommended response.² Appropriate responses could be...

	- Contact parents/guardians - Protect intended victim - Consider need for intervention - Document threat
	- Notify administration - Protect intended victim - Contact parents/guardians - Document assessment of individual - Develop plan with administration - Meet with parents to sign plan - Consider disciplinary actions
	- Notify administration - Protect intended victim - Contact parents/guardians - Consider need for law enforcement support - Document assessment of individual - Develop plan with administration - Meet with parents to sign plan - Consider disciplinary actions - Plan re-entry meeting if removal from school is implemented - Make plan for community follow-up
	- Make sure all students and staff are safe - Immediately contain student of concern with constant supervision - Consider need for law enforcement support - Contact administration - Contact parents/guardians - Document assessment of individual - Develop plan with administration - Meet with parents to sign plan - Consider disciplinary actions - Plan re-entry meeting if removal from school is implemented - Make plan for community follow-up

Additional Considerations in Response²

Law enforcement should be involved in any incident that:

- Involves weapons
- Involves threats of violence
- Indicates a concern for an individual's safety.

****The school resource officer (SRO) should be encouraged at all levels.***

Expulsion can be used as a disciplinary measure, but it is not always as safe as it seems. Removing the individual from school may make it difficult for the team to follow up or monitor the student. It can also make the individual feel further isolated. Any expulsion should include a management plan to stay connected to the student and the student's family with a proactive response plan in place for escalating behaviors.

Parent communication is mandated by law. Best practices include parents in developing a response plan and a measure of accountability for signed plans.

Response Plans

The response plan explains what actions will be taken after the threat has been assessed. They can include the following²:

Interventions

- Mental health consultations
- Crisis centers
- In-home safety precautions
- Student supervision requirements
- Re-entry planning meeting

- Backpack/coat checks
- Empty pockets/no baggy clothes
- Empty desk

Restricted Schedule

- Alternative arrival/dismissal schedule
- No access to restroom during large-group activities (lunch, assemblies)

Supervision

- Adult escort to/from classes/bus
- Supervised daily activities (lunch/recess/breaks)
- Monitor and review of drawings and writings
- Escorted by parents/guardians during after-school events and field trips

Support

- Access to school services
- Provision of supported, structured prosocial activities

Communication

- Immediate administration involvement if threatening behavior is observed
- Daily teacher-parent communication

Access Restrictions

- No belts

Documenting and Reporting

Threat assessment teams respond to reports of documented threats. In order to have the necessary information, schools must establish documenting and reporting procedures. These procedures are also legally mandated through NC Legislation. Schools must collect the following information for annual reports to the Center for Safer Schools:

- Number of threat assessments conducted
- Demographic information on subjects of threat assessments
- Number of threat assessments deemed high- or imminent-risk
- Demographic information on subjects deemed high- or imminent-risk
- Types of actions taken in response to high- or imminent-risk assessments
- Results of actions taken in response to high- or imminent-risk assessments

Best Practices

The best practices for documenting and reporting include the following²:

- Multiple Reporting Methods
 - Online form on school website
 - Dedicated email address
 - Dedicated phone number
 - Smartphone apps
- Anonymous Reporting Options (mandated by legislation)
- Necessary Reporting Information on Form
 - Description of threat made or behavior witnessed
 - Name of person making the threat
 - Time and place of the incident's occurrence
 - Intended targets or victims
 - Person reporting threat (if not anonymous)
 - People who witnessed the threat being made
- Maintenance
 - Actively monitor all channels of reporting
 - Handle threats immediately
- Documentation
 - Track demographic information, threat assessment level, action taken, and results

The Importance of School Climate

Part of the conversation surrounding threat assessments is making sure that the school is doing all it can to minimize threats and promote reporting of suspicious behavior. School climate plays a huge role in both of these elements.^{2,5}

Bystanders are more likely to report information when they know how to report the information and they trust the adults in their lives to react to threats meaningfully and fairly. Creating an appropriate school climate includes the following best practices:

- Clear, safe reporting procedures
- Meaningful, consistent follow-up strategies
- Protection and privacy for reporting individuals
- Culture that teaches the difference between “snitching” and seeking help
- Providing multiple, highly-visible and widely-publicized methods for reporting
- Tracking and maintaining records of criminal incidents and threats of violence
- Teacher, administrator, and staff training on proper responses
- Classroom and school-wide initiatives to help students make connections with classmates
- Actively identifying and creating clubs to help connect students to prosocial environments
- Investing in socioemotional learning (SEL) curricula for all students, faculty, and staff
 - Supporting relationships
 - Student engagement
 - Safety
 - Cultural competency and responsiveness
 - Setting high expectations and providing challenge

The Importance of Training

Ongoing, regular, and intentional training is a crucial component to a threat assessment procedure that works. All stakeholders must be trained in the policies and procedures. Targeted training will be needed for the following groups²:

- Faculty/Staff/Administrators (*all* staff including custodians, food service workers, etc.)
 - Train in the prevention, reporting, and response plans
 - Related training such as suicide prevention, SEL, conflict resolution, and mental health awareness can benefit the school climate
- Students
 - Train in how to report a threat and what information to include
 - Train to reduce stigma around mental, emotional, and developmental issues and to help them recognize signs of distress
- Law Enforcement and School Resource Officers
 - Encourage officers to have a positive presence at the school through co-teaching classes, coaching, working with the school community at after-school events, etc.
 - Train in the reporting procedures for a threat
 - Include officers in staff training to help establish the threshold for contacting law enforcement

Resources

[The North Carolina Behavioral Threat Assessment \(BeTA\) Unit](#)

BeTA Unit was developed by the North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation in 2018 to take a proactive approach to prevent violence in our communities. The (BeTA) Unit compiled a resource guide to support K-12 schools in North Carolina in which was used as a guide to create the content for this resource.⁶

[The National Threat Assessment Center \(NTAC\)](#)

Provides links to best-practices in threat assessment and the prevention of targeted violence, including resources on conducting threat assessments in K-12 schools, building positive school climates, and requesting training from NTAC personnel.⁷

[National Association of School Psychologists \(NASP\)](#)

Provides information and links to research on conducting threat assessments in K-12 schools.⁸

[The National Behavioral Intervention Team Association \(NABITA\)](#)

Provides education, resources, and supports to campus behavioral intervention team personnel and those who work to provide caring interventions of at-risk individuals.⁹

[Final Report of The Federal Commission on School Safety](#)

12/18/2018 (US DOE, USSS, US DHHS, US DOJ)¹⁰

Spotlight Resource

For more information about Threat Assessment, please contact the Center for Safer Schools at 919-807-4001 and/or the North Carolina Behavioral Threat Assessment Unit (BeTA) Unit at ncbeta@ncsbi.gov, 888-624-7222.

References and Additional Resources

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- ²National Threat Assessment Center. Enhancing school safety using a threat assessment model: An operational guide for preventing targeted school violence. (2018). Retrieved from https://www.secretservice.gov/data/protection/ntac/USSS_NTAC_Enhancing_School_Safety_Guide_7.11.18.pdf
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Anonymous Reporting



Introduction

When it comes to preventing and intervening in a crisis, early information is a crucial component. One of the best ways that school communities can ensure that information is given thoroughly, quickly, and effectively is to implement an anonymous reporting system and the supplemental training and practices that support full-scale use.

This guide is designed to help you:

- Understand the need for anonymous reporting systems.
- Identify best practices for anonymous reporting systems.
- Utilize the statewide resource for student anonymous reporting.

Context for the Problem

In order to understand why an anonymous reporting system is such an important part of a school's safety plan, it's first necessary to understand the severity and prevalence of the types of incidents that could be prevented or mitigated with better reporting procedures.

Stats¹

Gun Violence	Suicide
114,644 people are shot in the U.S. each year; 14,783 of them are 18 or younger	Suicide is the third leading cause of death for youth between ages 10 and 24
34,668 people die from gun violence each year; 2,277 are children	16% of students report serious considering suicide
20,308 gun suicides occur each year; 640 are children	Suicide among teens and young adults has almost tripled since the 1940s
4 out of 36 people murdered daily are under 18	

Students Have Knowledge

Experts agree that students usually know more about threats of violence from other students than adults do. The information that students have is crucial to a meaningful, timely response to a potential crisis. In order for them to share that information, though, they must have a trusted means to do so and the training to know when to use it.²

Mass Shootings are Planned

Most mass shootings are planned for 6 months to a year. In almost every documented case, warning signs were given before the incident. The fact that most mass shootings build up over a relatively long period of time means that there is potential to intervene and stop an incident from occurring if information is shared early enough.²

Shooters Share Plans

Most school shooters tell someone about their plans.

- National Threat Assessment Center found that in 31 out of 37 targeted school attacks, the attacker had told at least one person about the plans.
- In most cases, the people told were peers such as classmates, siblings, and friends.

Why Anonymous Reporting

At this point, it may be clear that helping students share the information they know is important to preventing and mitigating potential crises, but it's also important to understand why anonymous reporting is such an important option.

Student-Friendly

Anonymous reporting systems can be marketed directly to student audiences and the communication platforms they use most.

Students Need Training

Students lacked training and knowledge about when to report. Without the confidence that their knowledge is worthy of a report or the assurance that their report will be taken seriously, students are less likely to report. Students need training in the following areas:

- What incidents should be reported
- What the procedure will be for responding to reports
- That their anonymity will be protected

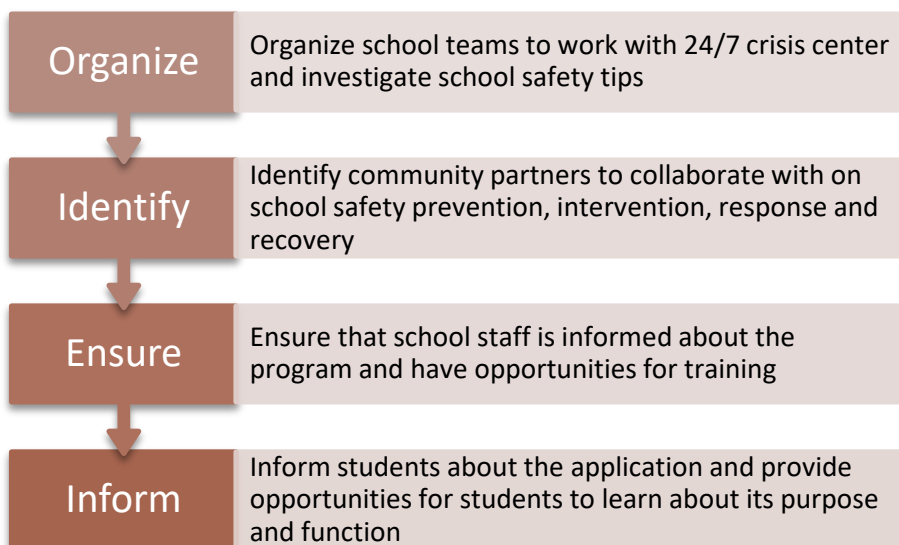
State Resource

Per [G.S. 115C-105.51³](#), the NC Center for Safer Schools in the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction is implementing a statewide student anonymous safety tip application. Through a newly initiated partnership with Sandy Hook Promise, the state will launch the *Say Something Anonymous Reporting System* to all middle and high schools in the 2019-20 school year.⁴

Training for Students: Public secondary schools shall inform students about the application and provide opportunities for students to learn about its purpose and function. The governing body of each public secondary school shall work with the NC Center for Safer Schools in the Department of Public Instruction to ensure that employees of the public secondary schools receive adequate training in its operation. G.S. 115C-105.51

Training for educators and law enforcement agencies. The Sandy Hook Promise team and a DPI School Safety Team will be in contact with schools to provide information about implementation and training.

What will schools need to do?



How it works^{5,6}

Step by step procedure

- Step 1: Someone submits a tip through the app, website, or hotline. They must associate themselves with a school within the district to do so.
- Step 2: The Crisis Center assess the tip and delivers it to the school team or dispatch as appropriate.
- Step 3: Depending on the severity of the tip, the school team or both law enforcement and the school team will act within their established policies and procedures.

What to expect

There are many trends and lessons learned from existing programs that can help schools prepare for what to expect once they start using the Say Something tip line.

Topics Reported

The top ten topics reported via the tip line include are

1. Bullying/Cyber Bullying
2. Cutting/Self-Harm
3. Suicide/Suicide Ideation
4. Drug Use/Distribution
5. Depression/Anxiety
6. Intent to Harm Someone
7. Anger Issues
8. Planned Fight/Assault
9. Sharing Inappropriate Photos
10. Physical Abuse

To learn more about the app and how to get started, please contact the NC Center for Safer Schools at 919-807-4001.

References and Additional Resources

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Critical Incident

Contributor: Donna Dougherty, School Safety Consultant



Introduction

Schools and school administrators are responsible for the safety of their community, and that means preparing for crisis scenarios. In order to be fully capable of providing safe school environments, schools must have a standard, well-documented procedure for responding to a variety of critical incidents.

This guide is designed to help you:

- Explain the importance of all hazards planning
- List specific types of hazards across a range of probabilities and severities
- Identify the four phases of crisis planning
- Make an appropriate response plan based on the events of the incident
- Identify elements of successful crisis planning team membership
- Identify elements of crisis planning training including stakeholders, responsibilities, and roles
- Explain appropriate actions and plans for an active shooter situation
- Identify resources available to help with training for an active shooter situation
- Identify resources available to help with training for a crisis plan

Why Crisis Planning is Necessary



NC 115C-105.49 mandates the adoption of a *School Risk Management Plan (SRMP)* that includes a *critical incident response plan*.

Crisis planning responsibility

Schools have a legislative mandate to establish a crisis planning procedure and practice of that procedure that has the following elements:

- Includes “a full school-wide tabletop exercise and drill based on the procedures documented in its School Risk Management Plan (SRMP).”
- Includes drills with a “practice school lockdown due to an intruder on school grounds.”
- Involves local law enforcement agencies in drills and exercises (a “strongly encouraged” practice).

All Hazards Planning

Schools need to be prepared for a range of crisis and emergency events. These range from relatively common occurrences to highly unlikely ones.

Gas leak/chemical spill/risk of explosion

Fire

School bus accident

Severe weather/natural disasters (flood, fire, tornado)

Loss or kidnapping of a student

Unauthorized person on campus

Suicide attempt at school

Loss of utilities

Active shooter

Bomb threat

Hazardous materials

Four Phases of Crisis Planning

There are four phases to crisis planning. While each one may involve a different approach, perspective, and expertise, they are all equally important to having a well-developed crisis response plan.¹



Phase 1: Prevention/Mitigation

Prevention involves making a crisis event less likely or making damage from an event less severe. Since there are so many different kinds of crises for which a school must prepare, there are likewise many different approaches to prevention and mitigation. This step is intended for long-term, sustained effects.^{2,3} Here are some examples:

- **Controlled Access-** School grounds can be made more secure by controlling access to the buildings and its premises through ID access and multi-door access.
- **Building and Grounds Assessment-** Knowing the building's structural weaknesses and logistical concerns can help develop response and maintenance plans.
- **Relationship Building-** Building positive relationships within the school district and community helps ensure processes run smoothly in the event of a crisis. Include firefighters, police, public works team members, facilities managers, emergency medical teams, public health agencies, and social workers.
- **Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Curriculum-** Prevention is making a crisis less likely in the first place, and SEL, student engagement, and positive school climate helps establish protective factors for student violence and suicide.

Phase 2: Preparedness

Preparedness is a crucial part of the crisis planning cycle. It involves ensuring that plans are developed, that training for implementation is conducted, and that actions are taken on an ongoing and regular basis to ensure safety. Considerations include the following^{2,4,5}:

- **Determine Crises to Include in Plan**- After assessing most likely threats for the school's particular location (weather, structural, etc.), determine what crises will be included in the plan. Remember that it is legislatively mandated to include a plan for an intruder.
- **Identify Possible Response Actions**- Depending on the type of emergency and the specifics of the situation at hand, there are many different types of responses that may be taken:
 - Lockdown- Lock all exterior doors and move students to secure location
 - Modified Lockdown- Lock all exterior doors, but students can move freely within the building
 - Shelter in Place- Contain staff and students indoors, often in a specific location
 - Reverse Evacuation- Moving from outside to inside the building
 - Evacuation- Moving from inside to outside the building
 - Bus Evacuation- Moving from inside to outside the bus
- **Drill Schedule** -Once it has been established which crises will be included in the plan, the next step is to create a drill schedule that encompasses the different types of drills necessary to implement the full plan. There are multiple types of drills and exercises to consider:
 - Drill- practices a single emergency response
 - Tabletop exercise- key personnel and community partners get together to analyze an emergency scenario. Tests and builds abilities of stakeholders to communicate, coordinate, and cooperate.
 - Full-Scale exercise- Simulates a full-scale response to an emergency as if the incident actually occurred.

- **Identify Stakeholders-** For each type of crisis, identify the stakeholders.
 - School Staff- Who will be involved from the school staff? Consider administrators, nurses, teachers, etc.
 - Community Partners- Who will be involved from the community? Consider police, medical personnel, etc.
- **Define Roles and Responsibilities-** Once stakeholders are identified, it's important to make sure each person knows what his/her particular role is in the response. There should be many roles to ensure that each person can focus on his/her own task during a crisis. Some roles to consider include the following:
 - School commander
 - Liaison for emergency responders
 - Student caregiver
 - Security officers
 - Medical staff
 - Spokesperson
- **Other Considerations-** There are other considerations to make in the preparedness stage, and these will vary based on individual needs. Here are some potential areas to explore:
 - Develop communication methods- emergency notifications, terms and definitions, communication during an evacuation, community-wide information
 - Alert response procedures for when a potential emergency situation is developing
 - Creating maps and facilities information including entrances/exits, utility shut offs, and stairwells
 - Obtaining equipment and supplies including first aid kits, communication tools, and response kits for different roles
- **Training-** All of the people who will have to act in a crisis need to be trained on expectations. Training should include the following:
 - Crisis theory and crisis organizational models
 - Children's response to trauma, grief, and bereavement
 - Physical and mental health triage

- Classroom and support room interventions
- Memorialization principles as ongoing healing process following crisis/loss

Preparation for Students with Disabilities

It's important to recognize that students with disabilities may face specific challenges during a crisis situation. Planning must make accommodations for these challenges and prepare for them in advance. Students may face the following challenges⁶:

- Difficulty being in large crowds
- Difficulty processing instructions quickly
- Struggling to keep quiet during a lockdown or in the dark
- Dealing with noise from sirens and shouting
- ADA Challenges (deaf, blind, wheelchair, etc).

To address these needs, planning should follow a four-step plan:

- **Step 1:** Involve special education teachers, parents, staff, and community partners in planning.
- **Step 2:** Create individual emergency and lockdown plan (IELP) for each student with special needs
 - Work backward from IEP when applicable
 - Review IEP for communication needs, physical supports, behavioral supports, accommodations, and medication
 - Consider school layout and accessibility barriers
 - Brainstorm solutions to barriers
 - Use solutions to create IELP
- **Step 3:** Determine how and with whom to communicate IELP details
 - Parent waivers to share confidential information with first responders
 - Identify multiple adults who are informed of IELP

- **Step 4:** Determine methods for storing and maintaining IELP access
 - Keep IELP with student's belongings (electronic device, in daily planner, with medication, etc.)
 - Keep IELP in multiple locations accessible to school staff and administrators

While making plans for students with special needs, there are some other considerations to take as well:

- Make sure to consider all students with special needs and not just those with IEPs
- Be sure to have a plan that tells students what to do if a teacher is injured or killed
- Include transportation to evacuation site in IELP plans
- Practice often, especially the most challenging parts such as maintaining silence and following directions quickly.
- Provide extra post-incident support due to the heightened risk for students with disabilities to suffer from emotional stress and health challenges following a crisis.

Phase 3: Response

When it comes time to actually respond to a crisis in action, there are many steps that need to be taken.

Categorization and Response- As part of an immediate response, the appropriate reaction to the situation must be determined.

- Building is unsafe; school grounds are safe
 - Evacuate to on-site outdoor location
- Building is unsafe; school grounds are unsafe
 - Evacuate to off-site location
- Threat is outside building and weather-related (tornado sighted)
 - Shelter in place in protective position in interior spaces of building
- Building is safe; threat is outside the building and not weather-related
 - Modified lockdown (students move within building, all doors locked, no entry or exit)
- Building is safe; threat is outside building and occurred while students are outside
 - Reverse evacuation to safely move students and staff into building
 - Modified lockdown

Planning for Evacuation

- Identifying and preparing evacuation sites
- Communicating evacuation procedures to all stakeholders
(See Reunification Resource for more details)

Reunification of Students with Parents/Guardians

- Establish safe, organized reunification process
- Assign roles and responsibilities to ensure process is followed
(See Reunification Resource for more details)

Response in the Event of an Active Shooter Incident

There are specific guidelines and recommendations for how to respond in the event of an active shooter incident. Although no one really knows how they would respond to such a traumatic event, these guidelines offer persistent options which are interchangeable depending on the type and circumstances of the event.^{7,8,9}

First Response: Run

When possible, running to safety should be the first priority.

- Run outside to field or parking lot
- Teachers should be giving clear instructions
- A predetermined meeting location should be identified and communicated during safety drills/trainings
- Leave belongings behind
- Warn and prevent other individuals from entering the area once you have left
- Keep hands visible and empty
- Call 911 as soon as you are safe and describe shooter, location, and weapons

Second Response: Hide

When running is not possible, hiding should be the next priority.

- Silence all electronic devices and turn off vibration
- Do not hide in groups—spread out along walls
- Use text messaging or social media to communicate with law enforcement
- Stay in place until all clear is given

Third Response: Fight

Only as a last resort, fighting should be used when no other options are available.

- Use chairs, heavy objects as weapons
- Fight to survive
- Stick with choice once it has been made

Card System Procedure Updates-

Past training has focused on using a “card system” where color-coded cards were placed outside of classroom doors to indicate the status of the people inside. The new system is simplified from previous iterations.

- If a student is injured, place a red card outside the door.
- Do not use a green card. These were previously used to indicate people were safe, but they were found to be too confusing, and it identified the room as occupied for the shooter. Law enforcement officers are looking for red cards only.

After Officers Arrive

Training needs to include how to respond once officers arrive to make sure help is given effectively and without added confusion.

- Keep hands visible and empty
- Know that officers may pass up injured people while securing the situation
- Avoid asking officers for instructions or grabbing them for help
- Proceed in the direction from which officers are entering the premises

Phase 4: Recovery

The fourth stage of crisis management is recovery, and it should be included in planning as well. Recovery helps students and staff return to learning and starts to rebuild the school community.²

There are many goals to recovery:

Goal 1: Return to learning as soon as possible.

Goal 2: Keep students, families, and media informed.

Goal 3: Repair buildings and grounds as needed.

Goal 4: Assess emotional needs of staff, students, families, and responders.

Goal 5: Provide stress management during class.

Goal 6: Provide mental health debriefings for staff, responders, and anyone who assisted with crisis.

Goal 7: Take time to recover.

Goal 8: Remember anniversaries of crises.

Resources for Developing a Crisis Plan

[FEMA Guide for Developing High Quality School Emergency Operations Plans-](#)

This document provides a step-by-step guide to help schools create a crisis intervention plan from beginning to end.¹⁰

[National Incident Management System \(NIMS\)-](#)

This FEMA-affiliated program provides a comprehensive approach to incident management with a focus on standardization and flexibility. (Courses 700, 800, 100, 200, 360, 362, and 546.a are particularly relevant).¹¹

[North Carolina School Risk Management Plan \(SRMP\)-](#)

This web-based, wizard-style tool for creating digital SRMP allows authors to store plans and export them for easy sharing.¹²

Resources for Training

[North Carolina Critical Incident Response for School Faculty and Staff](#)

This guide includes an overview of critical incident response planning procedures and offers training suggestions. Training includes sample scenarios for use in tabletop drills.⁴

[ALICE: Active Shooter Civilian Response Training-](#)

This training includes a K-12 Schools component and blends e-learning with in-person instruction.¹³

[Crisis Intervention Teams for Youth-](#)

This supplemental training is available to law enforcement and focuses on working with youth.¹⁴

[National Threat Assessment Center \(NTAC\)](#)

A division of the U.S. Secret Service that provides resources and training for threat assessments and targeted violence.¹⁵

[Prevention of and Response to Suicide Bombing Incidents \(PRSB\)](#)

Coordinated through the Center for Safer Schools, FEMA provides information/training tailored to schools on suicide bombing incidents and what educators need to know.¹⁶

[The School Risk Management Plan portal](#)

It is mandated by law that all LEAs enter their school facility maps/blueprints onto the site, but many have not done so yet.¹⁷

[NEA's School Crisis Guide](#)

This school crisis response guide provides recommendations and guidance for all the phases of crisis response, with added emphasis on the psychological health and safety of students and school staff.⁵

Spotlight Resources

Please contact the North Carolina Center for Safer Schools at 919-807-4001 to learn more about these resources and/or training opportunities offered and coordinated through the Center.

References and Additional Resources

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- ² U.S. Department of Education. Practical information on crisis planning. (2007). Retrieved from <https://www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/emergencyplan/crisisplanning.pdf>
- ³ Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools. Mitigation for schools and school districts. Retrieved from https://rem.s.ed.gov/docs/Mitigation_Fact_Sheet_508C.pdf
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- ⁷ Critical Incident Response for School Faculty and Staff training presentation. Retrieved from <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/cfss/center-programs/critical-incident/>
- ⁸ Active shooter. (n.d.) Retrieved from <https://www.ready.gov/active-shooter>
- ⁹ Department of Homeland Security. Active shooter: How to respond. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/active-shooter-how-to-respond-2017-508.pdf>
- ¹⁰ FEMA Guide for Developing High Quality School Emergency Operations Plans. Retrieved from https://rem.s.ed.gov/docs/REMS_K-12_Guide_508.pdf
- ¹¹ National Incident Management System (NIMS). Retrieved from <https://www.fema.gov/national-incident-management-system>
- ¹² North Carolina School Risk Management Plan (SRMP). Retrieved from <https://sera.nc.gov/srmp/>
- ¹³ ALICE Training Institute. Active Shooter Civilian Response Training. Retrieved from <https://www.alicetraining.com/>
- ¹⁴ Critical Intervention Team -Youth. Retrieved from <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/cfss/center-programs/cit-youth/>
- ¹⁵ National Threat Assessment Center (NTAC). Retrieved from <https://www.secretservice.gov/protection/ntac/>
- ¹⁶ Prevention of and Response to Suicide Bombing Incidents (PRSBI) Course Description. Retrieved from <http://www.emrtc.nmt.edu/training/prsbi.php>
- ¹⁷ North Carolina Risk Management Portal. Retrieved from <https://rmp.nc.gov/Portal/>

Parent Reunification



Introduction

An important component of a Critical Incident Response Plan is the Reunification Plan. In the event of a crisis situation, it may be necessary to evacuate students from the school grounds and reunite them with their parents and guardians. Depending on the magnitude of an event, reunification can take place either at the school or at an off-site location. This process can be complex and challenging, so planning for it requires many layers of consideration.

This guide is designed to help you:

- Identify the elements of a preferable evacuation site
- Identify key elements of a safe and effective reunification process
- Explain the different components of a reunification site
- Identify transportation needs for evacuation and reunification
- Explain the “double gate” method
- Plan for adequate reunification training
- Access resources for reunification

Evacuation

In the event that evacuation is necessary, it is important to have the site chosen in advance and to have procedures for transportation, reunification, and on-site recovery put into place as part of critical incident training (*see Critical Incident, page 25*).

Choosing an Evacuation Site

There are many different reasons students may need to perform an evacuation, and different sites will be better suited for different situations. For that reason, multiple sites should be identified and linked in planning with particular crisis situations.¹

➤ **Primary Outdoor Evacuation Site**

The primary evacuation site should be on school grounds. This is the location students would gather if the threat was inside the building but not on the school grounds (such as a fire contained within the building).

➤ **Secondary Evacuation Site**

The secondary evacuation site is used when the school grounds are not safe. The most common choices are nearby schools, churches, community buildings, and recreation centers. This site should meet several qualifications:

- Far enough away from school to avoid crisis-related issues
- Large enough to accommodate all students and necessary staff to operate reunification plan
 - Student to teacher ratio should be no more than 30:1 for elementary and 40:1 for middle and 50:1 for high school).
- Logistically allows for traffic control and a double gate system
 - Request Point should be out of view of both Assembly Area and Release Point
- Layout provides adequate parking
- Provides adequate resources for students such as restrooms, medical area, and mental health first aid area.
- Access to adequate communication tools (radio/internet)

➤ **Backup Off-Site Location**

A second evacuation location meeting all of the above qualifications should be identified for use in the event that the first site is unavailable.

Transportation During Evacuations

Consideration should be made in advance concerning how to transport students, teachers, and staff to the off-site evacuation location. Buses, drivers, and routes for each school should be determined in advance. The plan should include routes to both the preferred and back-up off-site location. Also, the plan should include the number of buses and drivers needed for each school and where the bus drivers will come from.

It is crucial that the transportation plan includes accommodations for all students including those who may have special needs and accessibility challenges. Consider including transportation plans for students with IEPs and other special considerations.

Reunification^{1, 2}

Reunification with parents/guardians as quickly and safely as possible is the goal following an evacuation. In order to achieve that goal, reunification plans need to be set up in a way that:

- Maintains the chain of custody
- Prevents further complications during an already chaotic time
- Helps set the stage for a productive and meaningful recovery that takes the school community's mental health seriously.

I Love U Guys – Standard Reunification Method

The Standard Reunification Method was introduced in 2009 from the I Love U Guys Foundation which started in 2006 by Ellen and John-Michael Keyes following a school shooting that took the life of their daughter, Emily.

Adams 12 Reunification Method

The Adams 12 method was developed in Colorado and also stands as an example of best practice.

Physical Layout

It's very important to control the flow of traffic (foot and vehicular) during reunification. If parents see their children before they have completed the process, they are likely to take them and that can disrupt the chain of custody and student safety.

Students should be evacuated to the Assembly Area that is out of the line of sight from the Request Point and the Release Point. Buses or room dividers can be used to break line of sight if separate buildings or rooms are not available. At the reunification site, parents will go to a request point first, and then be moved to the release point. The students will be brought from the assembly area to the release point by a staff runner.

The reunification process should operate with a **double gate system**¹. This means that there is a request point or gate and a release point or gate, ensuring that students are only released to verified and authorized parents and guardians.

Basic Reunification Process

- Step 1: Set up Reunification Site: Request Point, Assembly Area and Release Point
- Step 2: Parents are directed to the Request Point to complete the Request Form
- Step 3: Parents are then directed to the Release Point
- Step 4: Students have been delivered to the Assembly Area (out of sight of parents/guardians)
- Step 5: Request Form has been verified and Runner goes to Assembly Area to retrieve student
- Step 6: Runner brings student from Assembly Area to parent/guardian at Release Point

Roles and Responsibilities

Reunification during an emergency is likely to be a time of high emotions and turmoil. It's important that there are clear roles and responsibilities assigned before a crisis happens and practiced during training so that individuals are able to carry them out smoothly. The Reunification Team whether on-site or off-site should include: Request Point, Assembly Area and Release Point Staff as well as other possible staff assignments.

- **Request Point Staff**- Verifies parent ID and custody rights; directs parents to Release Point
- **Assembly Area Staff**- Helps manage students in the Assembly Area
- **Release Point Staff** – Again verifies ID and custody rights prior to releasing students
- **Commander**- Oversees smooth operation of Reunification process
- **Public Information Officer**- Communicates with parents and press using communication channels established as part of crisis planning
- **Social Media Coordinator**- Gives updates on social media if appropriate
- **Safety Officer**- Oversees Reunification Site for safety concerns
- **Liaison Officer**- Communicates with First Responders
- **Operations**- Oversees operational staff
- **Greeters**- Helps coordinate parents and communicate the process to them
- **Runners**- Takes bottom of Reunification Card to Assembly Area and brings student back to Reunification Site
- **Crisis Counselors**- Available if needed at a separate room or area
- **Movie Coordinator**- Deploys projector and screen to help manage elementary students at Assembly Area
- **Planning**- Oversees planning staff if needed
- **Scribe**- Documents events
- **Logistics**- Oversees logistics staff and sets up the Reunification Site including signage

Reunification Form/Card

The Reunification Form/Card should have four parts.

- Part 1: Reunification Information (completed by parent)
 - Student name, grade, cell phone number
 - Name, signature, and phone number of person picking up student
 - Relationship to student
 - Y/N check on photo ID match (completed by Request Point Staff)
- Part 2: School Personnel Portion
 - Student name and grade written again (by parent)
 - Student birthday written (parent)
 - Time, initials, and notes (school personnel upon release of student to Runner)
- Part 3: Reunification Process Instructions
- Part 4: Parent/Guardian Sign Off

Supplies

There will need to be supplies for the Reunification Process to operate smoothly.

- Reunification Site
 - Power supply, internet access, and computers
 - Student emergency release cards or online information
 - Signage indicating it is the Reunification Site, Request Point, Release Point and signage for alphabetized last names for tables
 - Radios to communicate between Request Point, Assembly Area, and Release Point
 - Student rosters
- Other Supply Concerns
 - Water and possibly food for students
 - Entertainment/activities for students
 - First aid equipment

Custody Verification

There are different methods to ensuring custody verification before releasing students. The example below helps ensure accountability.

- The parent/guardian's identity is confirmed via photo ID and compared to the student's demographic card in school records. This method ensures maximum accountability, but it is more time consuming and requires greater human resources.

Mental and Medical Health Intervention

There will be a need for medical and mental health professionals at the Reunification Site to assist in immediate, crisis-related needs. There should also be written materials available to give parents as they are reunited with students. These should provide mental health support options.³

Resources

[Family Reunification Resource Guide](#)

Planning Resources from OSHS & Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (REMS) Technical Assistance Center⁴

[1Plan Family reunification guide](#)

The Double Gate System is a family reunification process that utilizes a Request Gate and a Release Gate to formally verify that students are released only to verified and authorized parents, guardians or authorized adults (Requestors).¹

[Standard Reunification Method - I Love U Guys](#)

Standard Reunification Method presents a practical method to unite students with parents after an evacuation or crisis. It is based on the Adams 12, Five Star School District Practices.²

[Topic-Specific Resources to Support Your Emergency Planning: Family Reunification](#)

Web page provides useful resources on the topic from the REMS TA Center, ED, and Federal partner agencies. The materials are organized into the before, during, and after phases of an emergency.⁵

Spotlight Resources

For additional resources, best practices, to request training and/or assistance in developing a Reunification Plan, please contact the NC Center for Safer Schools at 919-807-4001.

References and Additional Resources

- ¹ 1Plan. Family reunification guide. Retrieved from <https://safeplans.com/media/pdf/FamilyReunification.pdf>
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- ⁴ Family Reunification Resource Guide. Retrieved from https://rems.ed.gov/docs/FamilyReunification_Resources_508C.pdf
- ⁵ Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (REMS) Technical Assistance Center. Retrieved from https://rems.ed.gov/Resources_EM_Functions_Reunification.aspx

Bullying



Introduction

Bullying can threaten students' physical and emotional safety and can negatively impact their ability to learn. School staff play an important role in preventing and addressing bullying behavior.

This guide is designed to help you:

- Define bullying in accordance with North Carolina legislation
- Accurately identify instances of bullying when they witness them
- Differentiate effective from ineffective bullying reporting procedures
- Implement the steps of bullying intervention in a way that prioritizes student safety
- Identify the warning signs of bullying behavior or of being bullied in a student
- Recognize representative bullying intervention methods
- Recognize representative bullying prevention methods
- Access resources to help with the prevention and intervention of bullying

North Carolina's LEGAL Definition of Bullying



In North Carolina, the legal definition of bullying within the context of school violence prevention is:

“any pattern of gestures or written, electronic, or verbal communications, or any physical act or any threatening communication, that takes place on school property, at any school-sponsored function, or on a school bus, and that:

- (1) Places a student or school employee in actual and reasonable fear of harm to his or her person or damage to his or her property; or
- (2) Creates or is certain to create a hostile environment by substantially interfering with or impairing a student's educational performance, opportunities, or benefits. For purposes of this section, "hostile environment" means that the victim subjectively views the conduct as bullying or harassing behavior and the conduct is objectively severe or pervasive enough that a reasonable person would agree that it is bullying or harassing behavior.

Bullying or harassing behavior includes, but is not limited to, acts reasonably perceived as being motivated by any actual or perceived differentiating characteristic, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, socioeconomic status, academic status, gender identity, physical appearance, sexual orientation, or mental, physical, developmental, or sensory disability, or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have one or more of these characteristics.”¹

Key Points to Remember:

- **Not just physical:** includes both communication (in person and virtual) and physical acts
- **Location matters:** takes place on school property, a school bus, or a school-sponsored event (*although bullying can occur in other locations when considering broader definitions*)
- **Victims' perception matters:** counts as bullying when victim fears harm or bullying creates an environment that impairs their interactions there
- **Wide range of differences:** definition specifically includes motivations on behalf of differentiating characteristics

Student-Friendly Definition of Bullying

While the legal definition is what guides teacher's reporting and intervention responsibilities, it's also important to have a definition that helps guide students:²

- When someone says or does something *unintentionally* hurtful and they do it once, that's RUDE.
- When someone says or does something *intentionally* hurtful and they do it once, that's MEAN.
- When someone says or does something *intentionally* hurtful and they *keep doing it*, even when you tell them to stop or show them that you're upset, that's BULLYING.

Definition of Cyberbullying

"Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place over digital devices like cell phones, computers, and tablets.

- Cyberbullying can occur through SMS, Text, and apps, or online in social media, forums, or gaming where people can view, participate in, or share content. Cyberbullying includes sending, posting, or sharing negative, harmful, false, or mean content about someone else. It can include sharing personal or private information about someone else causing embarrassment or humiliation. Some cyberbullying crosses the line into unlawful or criminal behavior."³

As of this writing, cyberbullying is not considered a crime in the state of North Carolina.

Dispelling the Myths

Part of addressing bullying effectively is breaking down the misconceptions and myths. When we have a better understanding of how and why bullying occurs and what impact it has on victims, we are better prepared to address it meaningfully and effectively. ⁴

Myth 1: Bullying is the Same Thing as Conflict

Reality	Why it Matters
Conflict can occur among any pair or group of people. It happens when there is a disagreement or antagonism. Bullying, unlike conflict, relies on an imbalance of power. In bullying, the victims are unable to adequately defend themselves against the bullies.	Conflict resolution strategies are incredibly effective and important for handling conflict, but they can make the victimization of bullying even worse. Conflict resolution strategies should be reserved for conflict and not used for bullying.



Myth 2: Bullying Involves Physical Contact

Reality	Why it Matters
The stereotypical image of a bully is someone who is physically intimidating someone else. We often associate it with physical violence, and while physical violence <i>can</i> be part of bullying, it is not necessarily so. In fact, the most common form of bullying for both boys and girls is verbal bullying. Social bullying is also very common (especially for girls).	Since bullying often happens out of the sight or earshot of adults, empowering students to stand up against bullying and intervene as a bystander is an important way to change the culture and make the educational environment safer.

Myth 3: Kids Tend to Tolerate Bullying When They See It

Reality	Why it Matters
There's a common misconception that most kids are content to turn a blind eye or even join in on the act when they witness bullying. Fortunately, research has found that most kids are averse to bullying and want to help stop it when they see it.	If we do not fully understand the scope of bullying, we can have trouble identifying it in order to adequately intervene and react. It is important that anyone in a position of authority in a school environment know the full definition and scope of bullying.



Policy framework requirements

The same legislation that defines bullying in the state of North Carolina requires that all school administrations create a policy that meets a *minimum* of eight requirements (though schools are invited to go beyond these requirements in their efforts). The statement must:¹

1. Prohibit bullying and harassing behavior.
2. Define bullying and harassing behavior (at least as strictly as Article 29C115C 407.16).
3. Provide descriptions of expected behavior for students and employees.
4. Establish consequences and appropriate remedial action for a person who commits an act of bullying or harassment.
5. Define a procedure for reporting an act of bullying or harassment, including an anonymous reporting option.
6. Define a procedure for prompt investigation of reports of serious violations and complaints and identify either the principal or a designee as the person responsible for the investigation.
7. Prohibit reprisal or retaliation against any person reporting and establish consequences and remedial action for anyone who engages in reprisal or retaliation.
8. Establish how the policy will be disseminated and publicized, including notice that the policy applies to school-sponsored functions.

Statistics on the Prevalence and impact of bullying

The following national statistics have been collated by the U.S. government from a variety of authoritative sources.⁵

National Statistics

<i>Been Bullied</i>	<i>Been Cyberbullied</i>
The 2017 School Crime Supplement (National Center for Education Statistics and Bureau of Justice) indicates that, nationwide, about 20% of students aged 12-18 experienced bullying. The 2017 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) indicates that, nationwide, 19% of students in grades 9–12 report being bullied on school property in the 12 months preceding the survey.	The 2017 School Crime Supplement (National Center for Education Statistics and Bureau of Justice) indicates that, among students ages 12-18 who reported being bullied at school during the school year, 15% were bullied online or by text. The 2017 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) indicates that an estimated 14.9% of high school students were electronically bullied in the 12 months prior to the survey.
<i>Bullied Others</i>	<i>Link between Bullying and Suicide</i>
Approximately 30% of young people admit to bullying others in surveys.	Research indicates that persistent bullying can lead to or worsen feelings of isolation, rejection, exclusion, and despair, as well as depression and anxiety, which can contribute to suicidal behavior.

Seen Bullying

- 70.6% of young people say they have seen bullying in their schools.
- 70.4% of school staff have seen bullying.
- 62% witnessed bullying two or more times in the last month
- 41% witness bullying once a week or more.
- When bystanders intervene, bullying stops within 10 seconds 57% of the time.

How Often Bullied

In one large study, about 49% of children in grades 4–12 reported being bullied by other students at school at least once during the past month, whereas 30.8% reported bullying others during that time.

Defining "frequent" involvement in bullying as occurring two or more times within the past month

- 40.6% of students reported some type of frequent involvement in bullying, with 23.2% being the youth frequently bullied, 8.0% being the youth who frequently bullied others, and 9.4% playing both roles frequently.

How Often Adult Notified

- Only about 20 to 30% of students who are bullied notify adults about the bullying.

<i>Types of Bullying</i>	<i>Where Bullying Occurs</i>
The most common types of bullying are verbal and social. Physical bullying happens less often. Cyberbullying happens the least frequently. ➤ About 1 in 5 teenagers will be the victim of text bullying.⁶ ➤ 95% of teens report witnessing cyberbullying on social media.⁶ Middle schools students experienced these various types of bullying: ➤ name calling (44.2 %) ➤ teasing (43.3 %) ➤ spreading rumors or lies (36.3%) ➤ pushing or shoving (32.4%) ➤ hitting, slapping ➤ kicking (29.2%) ➤ leaving out (28.5%) ➤ threatening (27.4%) ➤ stealing belongings (27.3%) ➤ sexual comments or gestures (23.7%) ➤ e-mail or blogging (9.9%).	Most bullying takes place in school, outside on school grounds, and on the school bus. Bullying also happens wherever kids gather in the community. And of course, cyberbullying occurs on cell phones and online. Middle schools students experienced bullying in these various places at school: ➤ classroom (29.3%) ➤ hallway or lockers (29.0%) ➤ cafeteria (23.4%) ➤ gym or PE class (19.5%) ➤ bathroom (12.2%) ➤ playground or recess (6.2%).

North Carolina Statistics

According to the 2017 High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey:⁷

- 18.7% of responding North Carolina students reported having been bullied on school property during the preceding 12 months.
- 13.9% reported having been electronically bullied during the same time period.

Know the warning signs

Often, victims of bullying are hesitant to speak out and may fear retaliation or be embarrassed. It is very important that the people who are around students the most (educators, parents, school staff, administrators) are trained to recognize the warning signs⁸.

Signs of Being Bullied ⁹	Signs of Being Cyberbullied ¹⁰	Signs of Being a Bully ⁹
➤ Unexplained injuries ➤ Loss or destruction of personal property ➤ Frequent headaches or stomachaches ➤ Frequent instances of faking being sick to avoid school ➤ Changes in appetite or eating habits ➤ Difficulty sleeping or an increase in nightmares ➤ Decline in school performance or increase in loss of interest in school ➤ Sudden loss of friendships or sudden avoidance of social situations ➤ Decreased self esteem ➤ Self-harm, running away from home, or talking about suicide	➤ Sudden anger or sadness after using computer or phone ➤ Withdrawal from family and friends ➤ Appears nervous after receiving a text message or notification ➤ Reluctance to use computer or phone in front of others	➤ Involvement in physical or verbal fights ➤ Friendships with those who bully others ➤ Increase in aggressiveness ➤ Frequent discipline at school (detention, suspension, sent to principal's office) ➤ Sudden appearance of unexplained possessions or money ➤ Failure to take responsibility for actions ➤ Competitive; focused on popularity

Proper intervention response to an active incident

The first line of defense against bullying is adults who are trained to intervene when they see it in action. It's essential to know what to do when you witness kids actively engaging in bullying behavior.¹⁰

What to Do	What NOT to Do
✓ Intervene immediately. Do not wait to see if the kids will work it out on their own.	✗ Do NOT ignore the situation and assume the students involved will be able to handle it on their own.
✓ Separate the students involved in the incident.	✗ Do NOT immediately start questioning the students involved or figuring out what happened. Focus on separating the students and making sure everyone is safe first.
✓ Make sure everyone is safe, and provide medical attention if needed.	
✓ Remain calm. Do not yell or elevate the incident. Model respectful and controlled behavior throughout your intervention	

Medical Attention

Remember that medical attention includes both physical injuries and any mental health concerns. These should be the top priorities for immediate attention.

Questioning Procedure

After the students are separated and safe, the next step is to ask questions that will allow you to find out what happened.

- Never question the students involved publicly.
- Question the students involved separately, not together.
- Do not ask spectators to describe publicly what they saw. Wait until you can speak with them apart from other bystanders so that they don't influence each other's accounts.

Involvement of Authorities

Depending on the severity and details of the bullying incident, intervention may include involving the authorities—school security officers or police. Authorities should be involved if the following conditions apply:

- A weapon is involved.
- There were threats of serious injury.
- There were hate-motivated threats (racism, homophobia, sexism, etc.)
- There was serious bodily harm.
- There was sexual assault or abuse.
- There was involvement in an illegal act (robbery, extortion, etc.)

Reporting of bullying incidents

Given the relatively low rate of reporting by students, it's incredibly important that students know the reporting procedures and feel safe and confident that they can report bullying without retribution. Schools should establish a reporting hierarchy and make it clear to students.

Student Reporting Procedures

Strategies for ensuring student reporting of incidents can vary depending on the size and needs of the school, but some of the best practices include the following: ¹¹

Provide multiple methods of reporting including, but limited to:

- Written forms (with anonymous options)
- Phone hotlines
- Text message services
- Staff forms
- Parent forms

The purpose of these forms is to gather enough information to aid a thorough investigation as part of a meaningful response. This information may include the following:

- Name and grade of the accused
- Name and grade of the victim
- Date and time of the incident
- Description of the incident
- Location of the incident
- Witnesses to the incident
- List of documentation or evidence
- Reports should be handled by the principal or designee. Students need to know that reports are taken seriously and treated with respect or they will not report.
- Reporting methods should be readily available and well publicized. A locked box for anonymous forms to be dropped off is one option. The drop box should be located in an area that ensures the privacy of students leaving reports, and students need to be made aware of that location. Posters with hotline or text numbers are also a popular option.

School Responsibility to Report

Bullying is not a designated reportable offense according to North Carolina legislation. It does not have to be reported to law enforcement. However, bullying (and other reportable offenses) **must** be reported to the Department of Public Instruction through PowerSchool per NCBOE policy SSCH-000.¹²

9/11/2019

eEOA kDSolutions

Policy

School Violence Acts Defined and the Annual Report of these Crimes

Descriptor Code: SSCH-000

NORTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Policy Manual

Item	Description
Policy Title	School Violence Acts Defined and the Annual Report of these Crimes
Policy Category	Safe School Program Guidelines (SSCH)
Policy ID	SSCH-000
Policy Date	2014-09-04
Previous Policy Dates	12/02/1993, 12/07/1995, 08/07/1996, 12/05/1996, 02/05/1998, 01/13/1999, 01/10/2001, 03/04/2010, 02/02/2012
Statutory Reference	GS 115C-12(21)

(a) Local Education Agencies (LEAs) shall report the following crimes and offenses within five school days to the State Board of Education via the Department of Public Instruction-approved discipline reporting system in conformity with the State's Uniform Education Reporting System:

1. Homicide as defined in G.S. §14-17 and 14-18;
2. Assault resulting in serious personal injury as defined in G.S. §14-32.4;
3. Assault involving the use of a weapon as defined in G.S. §14-32 through 14-34.10;
4. Rape as defined in G.S. §14-27.2, 14-27.3 and 14-27.7A;
5. Sexual offense as defined in G.S. §14-27.4, 14-27.5 and 14-27.7A;
6. Sexual assault as defined in G.S. §14-27.5A and 14-33(c)(2);
7. Kidnapping as defined in G.S. §14-39;
8. Robbery with a dangerous weapon as defined in G.S. §14-87;
9. Indecent liberties with a minor as defined in G.S. §14-202.1, 14-202.2 and 14-202.4;
10. Assault with a firearm or powerful explosive as defined in G.S. §14-34 through 14-34.10 and §14-49 through 14-50.1;
11. Robbery with a firearm or dangerous explosive as defined in G.S. §14-87;
12. Willfully burning a school building as defined in G.S. §14-60;
13. Making bomb threats or engaging in bomb hoaxes as defined in G.S. §14-89.2;
14. Assault on school officials, employees, and volunteers as defined in G.S. §14-33(c)(6);
15. Possession of a controlled substance in violation of the law as defined in G.S. §90-86 through 90-113.8;
16. Possession of a firearm in violation of the law as defined in G.S. §14-269.2;

17. Possession of a weapon in violation of the law as defined in G.S. §14-269.2;
18. Unlawful, underage sales, purchase, provision, possession, or consumption of alcoholic beverages as defined in G.S. §18B-302;
19. Assault as defined in G.S. §14-33 but not resulting in an injury as severe as defined in G.S. §14-32.4;
20. Fighting, or affray as defined in G.S. §14-33;
21. Gang activity as defined in G.S. §14-TO.16 14-50.20;
22. Robbery as defined in G.S. §14-87, but without the use of a dangerous weapon;
23. Extortion as defined in G.S. §14-118.4;
24. Communicating threats as defined in G.S. §14-277.1;
25. Threat of assault with a firearm or powerful explosive as defined in G.S. §14-277.1;
26. Threat of assault with a weapon as defined in G.S. §14-277.1;
27. Threat of assault without a weapon as defined in G.S. §14-277.1;
28. Possession or use of tobacco products as defined in G.S. 414-313;
29. Property damage as defined in G.S. §115C-398;
30. Bullying as defined in G.S. §115C-407.15;
31. Cyberbullying as defined in G.S. §14-458.1 and 14-458.2;
32. Verbal harassment as defined in G.S. §115C-407.15;
33. Sexual harassment as defined in G.S. §115C-335.S; Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. §2000e et seq.;
34. Harassment - Race/Ethnicity as defined in §115C-407.15;
35. Harassment - Disability as defined in §115C-407.15;
36. Harassment — Sexual orientation as defined in §115C-407.15;
37. Harassment — Religious affiliation as defined in §115C-407.15; and
38. Discrimination as defined in Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. §2000d et seq.; Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. §2000e et seq.; Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, 20 U.S.C. §1681-1688; Americans with Disabilities Act, 42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.

(b) Failure to follow reporting requirements under this provision may justify disciplinary action pursuant to 16 NCAC 6C.0312 (License Suspension and Revocation).

(c) These offenses must be reported when they occur under the following conditions and circumstances: (1) on school property, defined as any public school building, bus, public school campus, grounds, recreational area, or athletic field in the charge of the principal or (2) off school property on a school-sponsored field trip.

History Note. 'Attthoritp G.S. 115C-12(21), G.S. HOC-288[g], G.S. HOC-307(a),'
NC Constitution Article IX, Sec. 5.

Effective Date: July 1, 2010, ' _____

NC State Board of Education

Date Adopted: 9/4/2014

Last Reviewed: 9/4/2014

Policy Reference Disclaimer: *These references* are not intended to be part of the policy itself, nor do they indicate the basis or authority for the board to enact this policy. Instead, they are provided as additional resources for those interested in the subject matter of the policy.

State Reference

GS 115C-12(21)

Description

Duty to Monitor Acts of School Violence

State and federal statutes require reporting of the following incidents:¹³

- Bullying
- Cyberbullying
- Discrimination
- Verbal harassment
- Sexual harassment
- Bullying or harassment based on gender, race, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, or religious affiliation

The U.S. Department of Education requires data collection for the following:

- Possession of tobacco products
- Acts of harassment
- Violent acts resulting in injuries that fall below SBE threshold for “serious” injury

Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) collects information on the following:

- Incidents reported to law enforcement
- School-related arrests
- Zero tolerance expulsions
- Harassment based on race/ethnicity, gender, disability, religious affiliation, and sexual orientation

Bullying may be reported along with another act in the same incident

Categorizing Harassment

While there are currently no federal laws about bullying, the federal laws about harassment and discrimination of members of a protected class often overlap with bullying incidents. Protected classes include race, national origin, color, sex, age, disability, religion.¹⁴

- Bullying targeting race, ethnicity, or national origin should be reported as **“Harassment-Racial”**
- Bullying targeting disability or perceived disability should be reported as **“Harassment-Disability”**
- Bullying targeting perceived sexual orientation should be reported as **“Harassment-Sexual Orientation”**
- Bullying targeting sex should be reported as **“Sexual Harassment”**
- Bullying targeting perceived religious affiliation should be reported as **“Harassment-Religious”**

Federal law has established that **“bullying”** and **“harassment”** can be used interchangeably, potentially making bullying of a student who is a member of a protected class a legal issue. Bullying members of a protected class may be a civil rights violation.

Federally-funded schools are mandated to address harassment that falls into the above categories. These incidents are overseen by the Department of Education and the Department of Justice. Legislation that governs responses and reporting of these incidents includes the following:

- Title IV and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
- Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973
- Titles II and III of the Americans with Disabilities Act
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

Schools are specifically required to take action to address victimization due to disability status. Schools that fail to do so may be in violation of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act or Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act.¹⁵

Intervention by Bystanders

Research shows that:

- **88%** of bullying incidents take place in front of others
- Bystanders only intervene **20%** of the time
- When bystander intervention occurs, bullying stops **50%** of the time
- An overwhelming majority of kids researched show interest and value in being a helpful bystander

Bystanders can play a key role, positive or negative, in determining the course and outcome of a bullying incident.

Helpful bystanders:

- Directly intervene (help victim, discourage bully, redirecting situation)
- Get help (adults or peers)

Hurtful bystanders:

- Instigate or promote bullying before it begins
- Encourage or “egg on” bullying once it starts
- Join in the bullying once it starts
- Passively watch and do nothing
- Instigate or promote bullying before it begins
- Encourage or “egg on” bullying once it starts
- Join in the bullying once it starts
- Passively watch and do nothing

Bystander Intervention Training

Schools should implement bystander intervention training for students as well as staff. Here are two examples of best practices in making bystander intervention training for students a part of the school curriculum:

- Bully Prevention in Positive Behavior Support” (elementary) teaches students:¹⁶
- Appropriate rules and expectations for group interactions
- How to “stop/walk/talk” when facing problem behavior (stop signal followed by walk away followed by reporting problems to an adult)

- “Bullying and Harassment Prevention in Positive Behavior Support: Expect Respect” (middle and high school) teaches students:¹⁷
- How to use a stop phrase when someone is not respectful to them
- How to use a stop phrase and remove a recipient if they are a bystander (in physical or virtual environments)
- How to use a “stop strategy” if asked to stop by someone else
- How to get help from an adult
- Other best practices for encouraging bystander intervention and reporting of bullying incidents include:
- Poster campaigns about bystander intervention and prosocial behavior
- Clear signage and communication about what constitute bullying and how to report it

Responsibility of Schools to Prevent Bullying

Schools have a responsibility to educate. The North Carolina Board of Education has made student health, safety, and responsibility a goal of its strategic plan.¹⁸ Strategic Goal 5 has the following objectives relevant to bullying:

- Create and maintain a safe and respectful school environment
- Decrease the number of students who are chronically absent, drop out, or are suspended out of school
- Decrease violence and crime in schools

Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child Model

The Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child, or WSCC model, is CDC's framework for addressing health in schools. The WSCC model is student-centered and emphasizes the role of the community in supporting the school, the connections between health and academic achievement, and the importance of evidence-based school policies and practices.



Essential Standards for Health Education

Many of the curriculum standards for health education align with educational goals that create positive socioemotional learning environments and help prevent bullying.

Elementary	Elementary
K.MEH.1.1 Recognize feelings and ways of expressing them. K.MEH.1.2 Recall stressors and stress responses. K.MEH.1.3 Illustrate personal responsibility for actions and possessions. K.ICR.1.4 Recognize bullying, teasing, and aggressive behaviors and how to respond. 1.ICR.1.1 Explain the importance of demonstrating respect for the personal space and boundaries of others. 1.ICR.1.2 Explain the value of having a diversity of students in the classroom. 1.ICR.1.3 Contrast tattling with reporting aggression, bullying, and violent behavior 1.ICR.1.4 Contrast appropriate and inappropriate touch. 1.ICR.1.5 Illustrate how to seek adult assistance for inappropriate touch. 2.ICR.1.3 Explain why it is wrong to tease others. 2.ICR.1.4 Recognize bullying behaviors and what to do if someone is bullied.	3.MEH.1.1 Explain how self-control is a valuable tool in avoiding health risks. 3.MEH.1.2 Classify stress as preventable or manageable. 3.ICR.1.1 Summarize qualities and benefits of a healthy relationship. 3.ICR.1.2 Plan how to show compassion for all living things and respect for other people's property. 3.ICR.1.4 Illustrate how to effectively and respectfully express opinions that differ. 3.ICR.1.5 Analyze situations in terms of the strategies used by people in those situations that help or hinder healthy relationships. 4.ICR.1.1 Explain the importance of showing respect for self and respect and empathy for others. 4.ICR.1.5 Exemplify how to seek assistance for bullying.
Middle	
6.MEH.1.1 Implement a structured decision-making model to enhance health behaviors. 6.MEH.1.2 Execute a goal setting plan to enhance health behaviors. 6.MEH.2.1 Organize common responses to stressors based on the degree to which they are positive or negative and their likely health outcomes. 6.MEH.2.2 Differentiate between positive and negative stress management strategies. 6.ICR.1.1 Classify behaviors as either productive or counterproductive to group functioning. 6.ICR.1.3 Use strategies to communicate care, consideration, and respect for others. 7.ICR.1.4 Use structured thinking to avoid becoming a perpetrator or victim in cyber-bullying. 7.ICR.1.6 Illustrate the appropriate role of bystanders in preventing and stopping bullying and violence.	

8.ICR.1.2

Identify the reasons that people engage in violent behaviors (bullying, hazing, dating violence, sexual assault, family violence, verbal abuse, sex trafficking) and resources for seeking help.

9.ICR.1.3

Illustrate strategies for resolving interpersonal conflict without harming self or others.

9.MEH.1.1

Identify the body's physical and psychological responses to stressful situations and positive coping mechanisms.



Prevention Strategies: Cool off the “hot spots”

It’s important that conversations about bullying are not only focused on intervention and response but also on prevention.

One strategy for prevention involves intentionally creating and maintaining spaces in a way that makes bullying less likely to occur. Educators can do this by knowing the physical “hotspots” for bullying in a school environment.

Know the Hot Spots

Here are the areas of a school where bullying incidents are most likely to occur:¹⁹

Transitional Spaces —Places where students are moving from one focused activity to another tend to have higher prevalence of bullying incidents. These include hallways and stairwells (42% of bullied students reported incidents here).	Outside on school grounds —The outdoor space surrounding the school may have less adult supervision and is the site of a significant number of bullying incidents (19.3% of bullied students reported incidents).
Classroom —Distressingly, many students report being bullied even in the controlled space of the classroom (34% of bullied students reported incidents).	Bathrooms and locker rooms —Despite being the stereotypical setting for bullying incidents (or maybe because of increased attention to these spaces due to that impression), bathrooms and locker rooms make up a relatively small (9.4%) portion of sites for bullying incidents.
Cafeteria —The cafeteria (a space filled with social dynamics) is another common site for bullying (22.2% of bullied students reported incidents).	

A school with a detailed and systematic reporting system can begin to look for patterns in sites of bullying incidents and determine their own local “hotpots.” In order to gather this data, incident reports need to include location data.

“Hot Spot” Strategies

Once educators recognize the “hot spots” for bullying within their own educational spaces, they can begin to create strategies that address them. Some strategies used to address and prevent the top location-specific bullying incidents include the following:

Transitional Spaces—Strategies to address bullying in transitional spaces can be broad (school-wide policies) or narrow (student-specific strategies). They include:²⁰

- Increased supervision of hallways and stairwells; teacher and staff schedule to ensure coverage
- Staggered release times to avoid excessive hallway congestion
- Identified “safe routes” with supervision for individual victims of bullying
- Implementation of a “buddy system” for individual victims of bullying

Cafeteria—Cafeterias are spaces with a lot of social interaction and many students together in close quarters. The volume, movement, and nature of the space can make it more difficult to supervise than other spaces. When the cafeteria is a bullying “hot spot,” here are some ways to address it:^{21, 22}

- Provide bystander intervention training for food service workers
- Host preventative inclusion events such as Mix It Up Lunch Day
- Work with parents of victims and victims themselves to create individual plans for lunch that can include safe routes, a table near a supervision point, or a buddy system

Classroom—Many forms of bullying (especially bullying centered around social isolation) is secretive in nature and can happen in front of a teacher without being obvious. If classrooms show up as a “hot spot” for bullying incidents, there are several best practices to address it: ²³

- Bullying awareness and prevention training for all staff members
- Classroom management techniques including reassigned seating and class working groups
- Curricular additions to proactively address social-emotional education

Prevention Strategies: home-school partnerships

Educators know that bullying is not only happening in the school and that the underlying causes and impacts of bullying extend beyond school grounds. It is crucial to partner with parents to prevent bullying. Schools should work to provide parents with resources and training in a number of areas.

Identification of Warning Signs

In school environments, students may be able to mask signs of being bullied or bullying others or go “under the radar,” so parents need to be informed as to how to recognize warning signs and how to report concerns through the appropriate documentation channels for intervention.

Child Being Bullied—Parents are often the first to hear and see the impacts of bullying on their own children, but they may need help recognizing the severity of the issue and knowing how to respond.

Child Bullying Others—Parents are also best able to recognize patterns of behavior in their children that indicates they are the ones doing the bullying. Giving parents tips on how to recognize bullying behavior and respond productively to it at home is key to changing social cultures at schools.

Cyberbullying in the Home

Cyberbullying is often hard to manage in schools because it continues (or is possibly entirely contained) outside of school grounds. Parents need to be given resources on the warning signs of cyberbullying and safe electronics policies. Suggestions for preventing cyberbullying include:²⁴

- Understand the technology
- Set reasonable limits
- Know their children’s online friends
- Talk with kids if they think they’re being bullied
- Explain the difference between tattling and reporting
- Show children they are loved and protected

Community Involvement

Parents are an invaluable resource when it comes to fostering community involvement that goes beyond classroom policies. Parents can be encouraged to model positive socio-emotional training in the home from early childhood to lay the groundwork for positive social interactions throughout a child's life. They can be powerful advocates for supporting comprehensive bullying prevention efforts in schools and for engaging others and supporting community-wide efforts to prevent bullying.²⁵

Spotlight Resource

For more information about Bullying and/or to request training, please contact the NC Center for Safer Schools at 919-807-4001.

For more information about the Whole Child, Whole Community, Whole Child Model and the Healthy Living Standards, please visit NC Healthy Schools at <http://www.nchealthyschools.org/>

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Student Engagement



Introduction

The first line of defense for a host of areas of concern in educational settings is a good offense. Student engagement is a proven method to reduce incidents of bullying and violence.

This guide is designed to help you:

- Explain why student engagement matters and how it connects to many areas of concern for educators.
- Identify eight key elements of positive youth development.
- Explain what makes a positive educational climate.
- Describe the components of classroom-based student engagement.
- Describe the components of community-based student engagement.
- Identify curriculum that helps students build integrity.
- Identify curriculum that helps students appreciate diversity and inclusion.
- Connect to key national and state resources

Why Student Engagement Matters



Not only is student engagement an effective solution in reducing violence, it has the potential to increase individual students' self-esteem and improve their classroom performance. Student engagement is the underlying approach to addressing student needs that form the foundation for their overall success both in school and beyond. Engagement is the prerequisite for positive youth development.

Student Engagement / Positive Youth Development

Positive youth development, or PYD, is all about engaging youth in their communities, schools, youth organizations, and families in a productive and constructive way. According to the definition developed by the federal Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs, PYD enhances young people's strengths and promotes positive outcomes by providing opportunities, fostering positive relationships, and providing the support needed to build on those strengths.

Elements of Positive Youth Development

There are eight key elements of positive youth development, all of which provide opportunities for engaging young people.¹ These elements will help define what constitutes student engagement and demonstrate the broad-reaching impact that student engagement programs and approaches can have.

1. **Physical and psychological safety** is about creating an environment in which students feel both physically and psychologically safe. The most obvious means of doing this is creating a space free from bullying and violence. However, psychological safety takes it even further and promotes a clean, welcoming environment where students are respected and treated well by both peers and staff.

2. **Supportive relationships** provide ongoing, genuine care. Students need supportive relationships between themselves and parents, teachers, coaches, mentors, peers, and members of the community. This helps them understand their own value and contribution to a larger society.
3. **Opportunities to belong** help students find a sense of purpose and see how their efforts contribute to a larger goal. Whether this is through sports, extracurricular activities, work, or military opportunities, students should be granted the chance to participate.
4. **Support for efficacy and mattering** refers to giving students the support to contribute meaningfully and fully to the groups to which they belong.
5. Many social norms instilled upon children focus on what not to do. Students need models of **positive social norms** that demonstrate valuable and desirable qualities. Seeing these norms modeled with the expectation that they can embody them as well both the individual actions of students and their own self confidence.
6. Humans are naturally curious creatures who desire the opportunity to learn to do new things and explore new activities. Providing **opportunities for skill building** that are appropriately challenging and meet varying interests is crucial to positive development.
7. The definition of **appropriate structure** varies by age and by individual needs, but all students benefit from having the structure that works best for their individual learning, social, and communicative outcomes.
8. **Integration of family, school, and community** efforts ensures that the work done to engage students does not end when they leave campus. Much of their lives take place outside of school, and integration of family and community into the student engagement efforts ensures that it will be consistent and meaningful.

Creating a Positive Educational Climate in Schools

There are many elements that make up a positive educational climate. It's important to remember that what happens in the classroom is only part of the overall school experience for students, and a holistic approach that considers their overall well-being and sense of purpose is the most effective way to ensure students have the foundational grounding that they need to do well in all areas of their lives.

A Sense of Belonging

One of the most important elements of a student's sense of belonging at school begins with their relationship to teachers. Research has shown that students who feel bonded to their teachers have better academic and social outcomes. This is particularly true for students in schools with a high rate of poverty.²

What does a bonded student-teacher relationship look like? It's one that's framed with warmth, care, and positivity. Students who are bonded with their teachers are more likely to come to them with concerns whether those originate in the home, with peers, or in the classroom. One of the most important things that teachers can do to build these bonds is to show students that they genuinely care about them and believe in their ability to succeed. Here are some concrete steps to bring that attitude about students forward in the classroom:³

- **Set positive expectations.** Research shows that teachers' expectations about students tend to be self-fulfilling prophecies. If students perceive low expectations, they are less likely to put in the effort required to exceed them. Teachers need to genuinely believe in their students' abilities to do well, and they need to communicate that belief frequently and sincerely.⁴
- **Promote equitable participation.** When teachers track their classroom participation (which students they call on to answer questions, who leads discussions, etc.), they often find that a small percentage of students are doing the majority of the participating. Without a conscious effort to create equitable classroom participation, this pattern can leave many vulnerable students feeling

less connected to the material and less confident in their own abilities. Teachers can implement systems to track participation and ensure that everyone is getting an opportunity and also mix up the methods of participation to provide multiple avenues for joining the conversation so that students with different communicative strengths are all given the opportunity to give voice to their ideas.

- **Wait for responses.** One of the simplest ways in which teachers can engage more students and promote a positive classroom environment that shows students they are capable and that their ideas are worthy is to simply wait. Often, silence is uncomfortable, and teachers will assume students don't know the answer or are not paying attention and move on. However, if they increase the latency period between asking a question and moving on, they will get more responses—often from students who do not normally participate. In addition to giving learners more time to think about their responses, this also sends the message that their ideas are necessary and worthwhile for the conversation to continue. It centers student experience in the classroom, making it a necessary cornerstone rather than an optional addition.
- **Scaffold assignments.** Scaffolding occurs when teachers build in supports and guidance to help students meet the challenges of an assignment. Proper scaffolding allows teachers to set high expectations (thus boosting students' sense of purpose) while also ensuring that students are given the tools to be successful. Scaffolding can be very involved (entire assignment sequences built around it) or fairly simple (guiding questions during a discussion or group work). Teachers who have the flexibility to implement multiple types of scaffolding as a response to actual student need will have the most engaged, positive classrooms.
- **Show care for students.** Asking questions about their lives outside of school, greeting students at the door when they enter the classroom, checking in with students who seem emotional, stressed, or out of sync with their usual routine, and listening to students when they talk are all ways to demonstrate care. This is a key part of creating a classroom environment that engages students and helps them feel connected to their learning.

Peer Interactions

Peer interactions can be one of the more difficult areas for educators to monitor and intervene since so much of the interaction can take place without supervision. However, positive peer interactions are an immensely important part of student engagement. Positive peer relationships can have a protective effect against many negative student outcomes, especially for high-risk student populations.⁵ In addition, positive peer relationships promote high academic performance and social competencies. Putting effort and energy into promoting positive peer interactions is a piece of student engagement that pays off exponentially.

Here are some specific strategies educators can use to build these positive peer relationships:

- **Build social skills into the curriculum.** Schools can help promote positive peer relationships by talking about friendship. Provide focused curricular support for fostering and maintaining healthy relationships with peers.
- **Use cross-age peer mentorship programs.** Peer mentorship programs, especially those that connect students across grades and age groups, can help promote positive social interactions. Older peer mentors may be matched with younger students who exhibit risk factors for academic or social struggles. The opportunity to foster a friendship and mentorship in this way is helpful for both students and promotes positive social interactions.⁶
- **Promote friendships.** Especially for younger kids, emerging friendships can be difficult to foster. Teachers can help promote these friendships by providing opportunities for sustained, meaningful interaction as well as alerting parents to burgeoning friendships so that they can make connections outside of the classroom and continue to grow.⁷

Students' Sense of Self

In order to overcome the challenges, they'll face in their life (whether it's a difficult assignment in the classroom or a catastrophic event in their life outside of school), students need to have a strong sense of self and the tools of resilience. Having a strong sense of self is related to hope. Research into self-efficacy has found that people look at a task before them and make a judgment about whether or not they are capable of handling it. If students have hope, they are more likely to perceive themselves as capable and therefore more likely to take on the challenge of the task.

There are many ways educators can help foster this sense of self in students:

- **Promote mindfulness.** Being mindful (that is, being present in the moment and acknowledging thoughts and emotions as they occur without dwelling on them) is a cognitive practice that dates back thousands of years. It continues to be a powerful tool for centering individuals and giving them a sense of their own agency and power in the world. Schools can promote mindfulness by adding it to the curriculum, giving breaks during the day to practice it, and promoting it through posters and messages that remind students to take stock of where they are throughout the day.⁸
- **Be aware of educators' impact.** A lot of students' sense of self-worth is shaped subtly by comments and interactions with the people in authority around them. What a teacher thinks is an offhand comment that a student doesn't even hear could become a lifelong source of anxiety and doubt. Since educators are in a position of immense power and interact with students who are at vulnerable points of development, they need to be especially conscious of how they talk to and about students when it comes to students' abilities and potential.
- **Identify students' strengths and let them use them.** We build a sense of self-worth when we get to put our strengths into practice in the world around us. Educators can help students find a sense of self by being aware of students' strengths and giving them a chance to act on them. This is especially important for students whose strengths may not shine in a traditional classroom setting. If a student who is often too shy and quiet to participate well in class discussions can be given the chance to show his skill at taking notes or the student who is

struggling with reading aloud because of dyslexia can be given the opportunity to help organize a group project, they (and their classmates) will better understand that there are many ways to be valuable and have academic strength.

- **Give students power.** One of the best ways to build self-worth is to see your power have an actual impact on the world. Educators can provide real, sincere opportunities for students to wield power. Have students participate as representatives on school committees where they have a vote that counts. Let students engage in problem-solving and propose rules and guidelines for classroom conduct. The more real power that students have in the educational environment, the more they will believe in themselves.⁹

Student Resilience

The focus on resilience and the related term of “grit” has been getting more and more mainstream attention as researchers like Carol Dweck and Angela Duckworth make them central to their studies. What we have learned from this research and the application of their ideas to the classroom is that helping students build resilience, a growth mindset, and the ability to bounce back from setbacks is key to their success not just in school but in life.

There are many ways that educators can help foster a growth mindset and resilience in the school environment:¹⁰

- **Use a vocabulary of growth.** Teachers are in the position to give feedback to students on their work, and the way they give that feedback matters a lot when it comes to the way the student perceives their work. If teachers discuss the finished product (be it a test, essay, or project) without leaving room for reflection on lessons learned, they are promoting a fixed mindset. Subtle changes in how feedback is delivered can help students focus less on the work that is already completed and more on the lessons they can take forward to improve in the future.

- **Create opportunities for revision.** Educators should identify places in the curriculum where revision is possible and grant students the opportunity to revise and resubmit their work. This puts the vocabulary of growth into concrete practice and shows them that making efforts to improve is worth it.
- **Identify and acknowledge positive acts of resilience.** When students fail and try again or reach out to support systems to get help, educators should make a point to recognize and acknowledge these efforts. This kind of reinforcement will help students build positive habits that will help through more difficult challenges in the future.

Complexities of a positive educational climate

There are three key elements that make up the “climate” of a school, and it’s important to consider them both independently and interdependently. A deep understanding of these elements and how they interact with and support each other reveals the roles that different educational stakeholders play in creating a positive educational climate. This kind of complex and multifaceted understanding is important to create buy-in and participation across different areas of focus.

The three main elements of educational climate according to the U.S. Department of Education’s Safe and Supportive Schools model are engagement, safety, and environment.¹¹

Engagement

Though the focus of this guide is on student engagement, it’s important to understand how engagement interacts with the other elements of a safe and supportive climate to make it fully effective. Engagement includes the way that students interact with each other, their environment, and the educators around them. Components of engagement include:

- **Relationships**—Relationships include, as we have been discussing, peer relationships, student-teacher relationships, relationships to self, and relationships to the greater community.

- **Respect for Diversity**—One aspect of a productive and positive educational climate is fostering a respect for diversity. This includes diversity along lines of race, class, gender, ability, neurology, ethnicity, and culture.
- **School Participation**—Students should be given opportunities and encouragement to participate in school activities. This includes extracurricular engagement in sports and clubs. It also includes getting to have a say in the school's power structure and participate in important decision-making in an authentic and meaningful way.

Safety

Having a positive school culture means creating an environment in which students feel safe. There are three main components of safety:

- **Emotional Safety**—Students are emotionally safe when they are free from toxic interactions such as bullying, discrimination, or harassment. It is important that schools have policies and procedures that address these situations and provide clear communication to students about how to handle issues related to their emotional safety.
- **Physical Safety**—Students are physically safe when they are in an environment that protects them from physical assault in instances of bullying and has plans and procedures in place to protect them from and respond to a host of crises. Schools with multifaceted crisis response plans that include relatively minor incidents like a student injury all the way to major incidents like a terroristic threat are prepared to make students' physical safety a priority.¹²
- **Substance Use**—Schools, especially those located in communities that are heavily impacted by substance abuse epidemics, must have a plan to deal with issues arising from substance use. This includes students' substance use but also that of their parents, extended family members, and members of the community at large. The plan should include preventive and treatment options.

Environment

The remaining key element of climate of educational climate is the environment in which students find themselves. There are several aspects of school environment that should be considered:

- **Physical Environment**—This includes the cleanliness, aesthetics, and functionality of the space of the school as a whole and of individual classrooms and spaces for extracurricular activities. Consideration should be put into furnishing, decorating, and maintaining physical spaces.
- **Environment**—A robust academic environment includes the types and variety of subjects offered to students as well as the promotion of academic values throughout the school. Students should feel inspired to ask questions, seek knowledge, and engage deeply with the world around them.
- **Wellness**—The promotion of health and wellness through physical education, mental health education, nutrition, athletics, and spaces that promote healthy choices is another key part of environment. Outdoor spaces can be particularly important to promoting wellness.
- **Disciplinary Environment**—Addressing disciplinary issues equitably, compassionately, and proactively is a key component of a strong positive culture. Schools must be vigilant about tracking their own disciplinary data to ensure they are addressing implicit biases through staff training and consider disciplinary methods that focus on restorative justice and promoting positive community involvement.

Methods that Foster a Positive Educational Climate

There are many different stakeholders who are responsible for creating and maintaining a positive educational climate. Everyone from the superintendent to the custodian, from the athletic coaches to the cafeteria staff, from the classroom teachers to the administrative assistant plays a role in fostering a positive educational environment. That means there are many, many methods that can contribute to building this climate. Here are some examples that are specifically focused on student engagement:

- **Extracurricular Activities**—Participation in extracurricular activities has been linked to higher scores on standardized tests, higher GPAs, and fewer absences.

Extracurricular activities are also a proven way to help students feel connected to a community and find a sense of purpose. These activities include sports, debate, quiz bowl, academic achievement societies, and many other clubs and groups formed around specific hobbies and interests.¹³

- **Socioemotional Curriculum**—Another way that educators can help promote a positive school climate is through intentional inclusion of socioemotional training for students in the curriculum. Systematic social and emotional learning (SEL) addresses many of the key issues of student engagement including self-awareness and relationship skills. By bringing this kind of training into the curriculum, students are given the tools and the language necessary to fully understand their own socioemotional responses and adjust them to better meet their own goals and address problems proactively.¹⁴

Student Engagement in the Classroom

In the promotion of student engagement, it is perhaps most obvious to start with student-teacher interactions in the classroom. After all, the classroom is the space in which educators have the most direct control and can best implement strategic and intentional student engagement plans. The purpose of engaging students in their own learning experience is to give them a sense of agency over their education, which is a necessary foundation for growth. The elements of student engagement in the classroom are connectedness, a sense of purpose, an intrinsic desire to learn, and a voice.

Connectedness

Students must feel connected to their own learning. Many of the ways that teachers can build connectedness in the classroom are subtle. For instance, teachers can:¹⁵

- Avoid “kids today” denigration. Every generation seems to have some complaints about the upcoming one, and when teachers voice these complaints,

it can make students feel undervalued and disconnected from the learning environment.

- Get personal. Teachers can connect with student by sharing things about themselves. These don't have to be deep, dark secrets. If students know the name of their teacher's dog or their teacher's favorite sports team or where they like to go on vacation, they'll feel more connected to their classroom.
- Know what they like. Teachers don't have to try to be hip, but they should try to have a general knowledge of what their students are interested in when it comes to pop culture. Learn about the TV shows, music, and activities they like.
- Connect during hard times, too. It's easy to connect when it's about swapping personal stories and everything is going great, but it's important to connect through the hard times, too. When students are arguing with one another or when an individual student is showing signs of distress, these are important moments for teachers to remain connected.

Sense of Purpose

Providing students with a sense of purpose in the classroom often begins with examining the philosophical beliefs behind classroom choices and practices. One way to think about these philosophical differences between traditional classroom instruction and more purposeful classroom instruction is through the concept of community. In a community, students are invited to have agency over their own learning. In turn, that agency provides a deep and rooted sense of purpose that helps the engage more fully with material—especially when that material is challenging.

Spark the Intrinsic Desire to Learn

The stereotypical notion that students are lazy and don't want to do more than they have to is simply not true. Human beings are naturally curious and innovative, and students who are engaged and interested will often go above and beyond minimum requirements simply because they find enjoyment and fulfillment in doing so. In order to tap into this wealth of energy and excitement, though, educators have to make sure that they are sparking (rather than dampening) the intrinsic desire to learn. What does that look like in the classroom? ^{16 17}

Make Room for Student Voices

In order to create student engagement in the classroom, educators have to be open to hearing from students and learning what's working and what isn't. Making room for student voices and giving students opportunities to participate in meaningful school decisions is a key component of student engagement. ¹⁸



Student engagement beyond the classroom

While educators often begin with the areas where they have the most influence and control, it's important to recognize that the most effective and robust student engagement programs give students the opportunity to link what they've been doing in school with their larger community. This gives students a sense of continuity and provides real-world opportunities to bring their voice, sense of self, and passions forward in a way that will prepare them for community engagement into adulthood.

Community Involvement

Bringing student engagement beyond the classroom requires partnerships and intentional connections with organizations. As schools seek out and build these partnerships, there are some important things to accomplish.¹⁹

- **Define goals.** Before seeking out partners in the community, make sure you have a clear sense of what you do (and do not) want out of the partnership.
- **Make sure the work is genuine.** Students know when they are being given watered down opportunities or glorified busywork. They want authentic, genuine opportunities to make a real impact in their community. Make sure that your partnerships allow this kind of meaningful interaction.
- **Find connections with coursework.** Some partnerships will be a clear match with ongoing coursework and may actually fit into the learning objectives of a particular class. In other cases, the partnerships may be more loosely connected. Determine how community engagement opportunities will fit with curriculum and in what ways the two will overlap.
- **Consider duration.** Are you looking for long-term, ongoing projects that will engage students for multiple semesters (or even multiple years)? Or are you looking for short-term engagement that can be paired up with a specific assignment? Define these parameters before seeking out partnerships so that you can make sure you find good connections that will meet the needs of the school and the organization.

Make Connections

Once you have a sense of your goals, it's time to start identifying potential partners in the community.

- **Look at what exists.** It can be tempting to start from scratch and build a brand-new road map for a partnership with a program but starting with what already exists can often lead to stronger, more sustainable partnerships. See what organizations in the area are already offering and compare them to your goals.
- **Do trial runs.** Before committing to long-term, ongoing partnerships, set parameters around small trial projects to troubleshoot any issues and make sure the partnership is a good fit.
- **Define leadership clearly.** One of the hardest parts about a successful partnership program is determining how leadership roles will be handled on both sides of the connection. Assign leadership roles and define who is responsible for each piece. Make sure this agreement has been communicated transparently for all participants and give all participants a chance to weigh in and make recommendations.
- **Follow up with reflection.** Student engagement works best when students have the opportunity to reflect on how their experiences fit with their coursework, other experiences, and own perspectives on the world. Make sure to build in time for reflection throughout the partnership and after it is completed. Help students make connections but don't force their conclusions. Give them the space to meaningfully consider what the opportunity meant to them.

Parent Partnerships

Another important way to extend student engagement efforts beyond the classroom is through parent partnerships. The first step to using parent partnerships to extend student engagement is to make sure that parents are engaged in the school culture. Most schools do a good job of involving parents by assigning them tasks to accomplish administrative and educational goals. Engagement goes farther and makes parents leaders in school decisions.²⁰

Social Media Engagement

In today's interconnected online communities, schools need to recognize the way that social media can play a role in extending student engagement beyond the classroom. Social media offers a host of possible uses and benefits for both students and educators. Chief among these are:

- **Virtual classrooms**—Student engagement in the classroom can be expanded through the use of virtual classrooms. Students can participate in discussions, watch live or recorded lectures, and reach out the teachers with questions.²¹
- **Effective communication**—Many of the previous points about engagement with students, partners in the community, and parents have focused on the importance of clear communication. Social media provides an avenue for this important communication.
- **Real-world connections**—Students can use social media as a way to showcase their work and get feedback and responses from people all over the world.²² There are some great examples of schools that use social media to showcase student work.²³

To effectively use social media for student engagement, schools need plans and policies that help define their purpose, build an audience, and protect students' right to privacy. For example:

- **Get permission.** Build in permission forms for sharing images and video before starting social media accounts.
- **Use hashtags.** Schools can create their own hashtags to help make them identifiable across social media platforms. They can also use hashtags to get their students and teachers involved in larger movements.
- **Focus.** Trying to create a social media strategy across every social media platform can leave educators feeling overwhelmed and scattered. Instead, determine what you're trying to accomplish with your social media strategy and choose the platform that best fits those goals.

Student character building

Much of the discussion so far has discussed student engagement as an extracurricular component or from a holistic school climate perspective. Since social-emotional topics are so foundational to student engagement in all its forms, one way to bring student engagement directly into the curriculum is through direct instruction that includes character building and helping students build a strong moral compass.²⁴

Defining Academic Integrity

Having a definition of academic integrity for both students and educators to model and uphold in the classroom is key to creating an environment of character. The International Center for Academic Integrity defines academic integrity through the following six principles:²⁵

- Honesty
- Trust
- Fairness
- Respect
- Responsibility
- Courage
- Bringing Academic Integrity into the Classroom

There are several effective ways to bring these principles into the classroom:

- **Classroom policy**—Academic integrity should be a school policy, and that policy should be transparently and clearly communicated to all members of the community including staff, parents, and students.
- **Focus on positives**—Rather than always talking about academic integrity as an issue of punishment or wrongdoing, character-building educational communities focus on the positive aspects of upholding the six principles and connect them with overarching conversations about ethics.
- **Fair and transparent responses to violations**—Responses to violations of academic integrity should be equitably applied to all students. Policies should also be created with prevention rather than punishment as the primary driver. Finally, students who do violate policies of academic integrity should be

provided opportunities to reform and revise in a way that promotes growth while still being held accountable for their choices.²⁶

Building Moral Compasses in the Classroom

Educators can bring the principles of integrity into their classroom by:

- **Modeling behavior**—Teachers who act in a just, fair, and ethical way encourage similar behavior from their students. Simply remembering how influential educator role models can be for their students and intentionally using this fact to help make choices in conduct can improve the overall moral climate of a classroom.
- **Making connections in the material**—No matter what the subject, teachers can bring intentional and purposeful attention to ethical and moral actions (and unethical and immoral ones) in discussions and historical examples. Whether it's by pointing out the actions of a character in a book, the choices made by a historical figure, or a discussion of contemporary policies influenced by the topic, teachers can use the principles of integrity in classroom conversations.²⁷

Giving Resources to Teachers

Many of the methods for building strong moral compasses in students are highly dependent upon the subjective craft of teachers and the work they do in their classrooms. Administrators can support teachers in ways that help make this work more effective:

- **Provide opportunities for collaboration.** Many teachers report feeling isolated in their work. Providing opportunities for meaningful, sustained, and genuine collaboration and support between teachers can help give teachers the emotional and social resources they need to guide their students well.²⁸
- **Relieve the pressure.** One of the reasons frequently cited for a decline in moral training in schools is the hyper-focus on standardized test scores. Teachers who

feel pressured to perform in such a narrow way often feel they do not have time or freedom to explore the topics at the center of moral and ethical training.²⁹

Diversity and inclusion

While diversity and inclusion training are significant enough to be a topic all on its own, it is important to consider it when discussing student engagement. So many of the barriers to student engagement overlap with the systemic discrimination along lines of race, class, gender, ability, and sexual orientation. If these core principles of valuing diversity and promoting inclusive educational spaces are not met, efforts at student engagement will be inequitable and unsuccessful. With that in mind, educators should ensure that there are curriculum components and staff training that address diversity and inclusion as core principles for the school as a whole.

Curriculum Components for Diversity and Inclusion

One way to instill the principles of diversity and inclusion in the student body is through an interdisciplinary curriculum that aligns standard subject-area goals with anti-bias education. Here are some ideas:

- **Teaching Tolerance**—The Teaching Tolerance website is an educational resource project from the Southern Poverty Law Center. They provide educational activities that combine reading, critical thinking, and writing skills with anti-bias training. Their resources span all K-12 grade levels and are highly adaptable to meet the needs of specific classrooms and lesson plans. They also provide texts and activities related specifically to anti-bias education.³⁰
- **EdChange**—This is another educational resource that has collected strategies and approaches for promoting an appreciation of diversity and inclusion in the classroom. Their resources include ideas for student icebreakers and activities and lessons specifically geared toward multicultural learning.³¹
- **Scholastic's Multiculturalism and Diversity**—Scholastic, a long-standing educational resource, offers multicultural and diversity activities, links, and

supplements. The resources are divided into grade levels, and there are offerings for all K-12 classrooms to meet a variety of needs.³²

Staff Training

In addition to bringing anti-bias training into the classroom, the principles of diversity and inclusion need to be included in staff training in order to ensure that all members of the school community are aware and invested in approaches to education that value diversity and promote inclusion.

The following are some of the best practices in staff training for diversity and inclusion:

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- **Training on a wide variety of topics**—Diversity and inclusion is a wide area of study, and the best training programs discuss the principles in general but also give specific training opportunities on ways to implement those principles. These could include ADA training about creating accessible course materials, implicit bias training, and workshops to check specific assignments for bias.³⁴
- **Opportunities to host events**—One of the best ways to make diversity and inclusion a part of the school culture is to host events. Visiting speakers, roundtable discussions, and art exhibits can all bring the principles of diversity and inclusion to the forefront of the community.
- **Teacher mentor programs**—Many schools have successfully implemented faculty mentor programs that help new teachers learn about the school climate and get feedback on materials and classroom policies.

Resources

National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environment

The National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments offers information and technical assistance to States, districts, schools, institutions of higher learning, and communities focused on improving student supports and academic enrichment.³⁵

Center for Supportive Schools (CSS)

CSS helps schools become places where students want to be. Their solutions enable and inspire students to become more engaged learners; develop positive social, emotional, and health behaviors; navigate pivotal transitions; and address the overwhelming stresses of youth. CSS's flagship program, Peer Group Connection (PGC), is an evidence-based program that supports and eases students' successful transition into middle or high school. The program taps into the power of 8th grade students in middle school or 11th and 12th grade students in high school to create a nurturing environment for incoming 6th or 9th grade students, building students' social and emotional skills and positive academic and personal behaviors.³⁶ For more information, please contact Joyce Loveless, NC Executive Director, 919-263-5070, jloveless@supportiveschools.org.

North Carolina Healthy Living

NC Healthy Schools focuses on improving the health of students and staff by providing coordination and resources within the context of the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) model.³⁷

NC DPI Character Education: Character Matters

Serves as the central hub for Character Education in North Carolina and houses the repositories, communications, and recommended resources related to the implementation of the North Carolina Character Education. All administrators, educators and support staff are encouraged to browse, reference, download, share, discuss, and adapt resources.³⁸

Family Education Initiative (FEI) is a multi-service, non-profit organization created to improve the quality of life for youth, families, and communities through prevention strategies and services, leadership development, training, education, and research on proven methodologies to live a healthy and successful life. Project Arrow is a coaching and leadership program and one of FEI's initiatives.³⁹ For more information about FEI and Project Arrow, contact Gale McCoy Wilkins at (919)-824-7528, gale@familyeducationinitiative.org.⁴⁰

Spotlight Resource

For information about professional development and/or one-on-one professional coaching opportunities on student engagement and positive youth development, please contact the NC Center for Safer Schools at 919-807-4001.

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Part Two

Teen Dating Violence

Human Trafficking

Gang Awareness

Youth Gun Violence

Substance Misuse

Suicide Prevention

DISCLAIMER:

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Teen Dating Violence

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Introduction

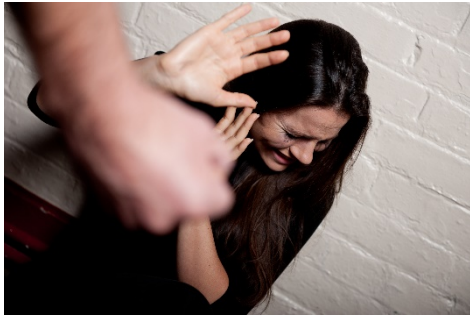
Teens are finding their sense of identity and social schemas, so the relationship patterns they craft in adolescence are harder to break later in life.

It is crucial that educators, parents, and community partners help teens develop safe, healthy relationship habits.

This guide is designed to help you:

- Define intimate partner violence and its range of behaviors.
- Understand the prevalence and impact of intimate partner violence for teens.
- Recognize the risk factors for teen dating violence.
- Recognize the protective factors for teen dating violence.
- Explain the role of schools in prevention or and intervention in teen dating violence.
- Identify the role technology plays in teen dating violence.
- Recognize effective, evidence-based intervention and prevention strategies.

Understanding the Problem



More than half the women and men who experience physical or sexual abuse first experienced abuse between the ages of 11 and 24.¹

Definitions and impact

Intimate partner violence (IPV) includes a range of behaviors:

- Physical (hitting, kicking, shoving, etc.)
- Sexual (forced sex acts, rumors)
- Emotional (threats, shaming, isolation)
- Coercive control (using threats/isolation to force unwanted acts)
- Stalking/Harassment
- Electronic/Technological

IPV correlates with:

- Increased alcohol and tobacco use
- Depressive symptoms
- Suicidal tendencies
- Eating disorders
- Risky sexual behaviors
- Poor school performance

- 1 in 3 high school students experiences IPV²
- 1 in 10 high school students report being physically hurt on purpose by someone they are dating²
- 12% of high school girls report being physically forced to have unwanted sexual intercourse³
- In North Carolina, local and state violence hotlines answer an average of 21 calls an hour.⁴
- In North Carolina, 83% of domestic abuse victims receiving services were women or girls. 20% were under the age of 18.⁵

Recognizing the Problem

The individual impacts of teen dating violence and intimate partner violence are serious enough to warrant careful attention to the problem on their own. However, the actual impacts of TDV and IPV are even more widespread and serious than they may first appear. In order to truly understand the scope of the problem and the approaches that may be successful in addressing it, it's important to understand why it matters and how its impacts spread.

Why it Matters



IPV and TDV are risk factors in and of themselves for future negative outcomes and further victimization. This is especially true for teens, who are often figuring out their role in relationships and social schemas that will often last their entire lifetimes.

Risk Factors

Recognizing dating violence among teens can also be part of the puzzle of addressing many other common problems for teens and young adults. The risk factors for IPV and TDV are two-pronged. Victims can be more likely to be victimized because of the relationships they have experienced and witnessed in the past. Having seen violent intimate relationships may make them more likely to see violence as acceptable in their own relationships. At the same time, perpetrators of IPV and TDV may look for vulnerable partners who are less connected and unable to remove themselves from the relationships.⁶

Based on the CDC’s Framework for Prevention, a combination of individual, relational, community, and societal factors contribute to the risk of becoming an IPV perpetrator or victim. Understanding these multilevel factors and their interplay with other forms of violence can help identify various opportunities for prevention.⁷

In the tables below, “X’s” indicate the existence of at least one study published in a peer reviewed journal demonstrating an association between the risk or protective factor and that type of violence.⁸

		Type of Violence Perpetration							
		Child maltreatment	Teen Dating Violence	Intimate Partner Violence	Sexual Violence	Youth Violence	Bullying	Suicide	Elder Maltreatment
Risk Factors									
Societal	Cultural norms that support aggression toward others	X ^{33,76,77}	X ^{78,79}	X ⁵³	X ³¹	X ⁸⁰			X ^{27,81}
	Media Violence				X ^{57,82}	X ⁸³	X ³⁷	X ^{84,85}	
	Societal income inequity	X ¹⁰⁸		X ⁸⁶		X ^{87,88,89}	X ⁴⁷		
	Weak health, educational, economic, and social policies/laws	X ⁹⁰		X ⁵³	X ³¹			X ⁹¹	
	Harmful norms around masculinity and femininity	X ⁹²	X ⁵⁴	X ⁵³	X ^{31,73,74}	X ⁹³	X ⁹⁴		
Community	Neighborhood poverty	X ⁴²		X ⁵³	X ³¹	X ⁴⁶		X ⁹⁵	
	High alcohol outlet density	X ⁴²		X ^{96,97}		X ⁹⁸		X ⁹⁹	
	Community violence	X ⁴²			X ³⁸	X ¹⁰⁰	X ³⁷		
	Diminished economic opportunities/high unemployment rates	X ⁴²		X ^{28,19}	X ³¹	X ⁴⁶		X ^{29,30}	
	Poor neighborhood support and cohesion	X ⁴²	X ⁴⁵	X ⁵³		X ^{46,20}		X ⁴¹	
Relationship	Social isolation/Lack of social support	X ⁴²	X ⁴⁵	X ⁵³		X ⁴⁶	X ⁵⁸	X ⁴¹	X ²⁷
	Poor parent-child relationships	X ⁴²	X ^{52,101}	X ⁵³	X ^{57,49}	X ⁴⁶	X ³⁷	X ⁵⁵	
	Family conflict	X ⁴²	X ⁵²	X ⁵³	X ³¹	X ⁴⁶	X ³⁷		
	Economic stress	X ⁴²		X ⁵³		X ⁴⁶		X ⁴¹	X ²⁷
	Associating with delinquent peers		X ⁴⁵	X ⁵⁴	X ³¹	X ⁴⁶	X ³⁷		
	Gang Involvement		X ⁶⁴	X ⁶⁴	X ⁶⁴	X ⁴⁶			

Some risk factors include poor parent-child relationship, family conflict, gang involvement, Low educational achievement, mental health issues, and substance abuse.

Protective Factors

It's equally important to recognize the protective factors surrounding IPV and TDV. Since community, peer, and family support are all shown to help teens avoid and escape relationships with dating violence, understanding these qualities can help shape meaningful and effective prevention strategies.

		Type of Violence Perpetration							
		Child maltreatment	Teen Dating Violence	Intimate Partner Violence	Sexual Violence	Youth Violence	Bullying	Suicide	Elder Maltreatment
Individual	Low educational achievement	X ⁴²	X ⁵²	X ⁵³		X ⁴⁶	X ⁵⁸	X ⁵⁵	
	Lack of non-violent social problem-solving skills	X ⁴²	X ⁵²	X ⁵³	X ^{57,56}	X ⁴⁶	X ³⁷	X ⁵⁵	X ²⁷
	Poor behavioral control/Impulsiveness	X ⁴²	X ⁵²	X ⁵³	X ³¹	X ⁴⁶		X ⁴¹	
	History of violent victimization	X ⁴²	X ¹⁰²	X ⁵³	X ³¹	X ⁴⁶	X ⁶⁷	X ⁴¹	X ²⁷
	Witnessing violence	X ⁴²	X ⁵²	X ⁴⁵	X ³¹	X ⁴⁶	X ^{103,37}	X ⁸⁵	
	Psychological/mental health problems	X ⁴²	X ⁵²	X ⁵³		X ⁴⁶		X ⁴¹	X ²⁷
	Substance use	X ⁴²	X ⁵²	X ⁵³	X ³¹	X ⁴⁶	X ⁵⁸	X ⁴¹	X ²⁷
Protective Factors									
Community	Coordination of resources and services among community agencies	X ³⁹		X ⁴⁰				X ⁴¹	X ²⁷
	Access to mental health and substance abuse services	X ⁴²						X ⁴¹	
	Community support/connected-ness	X ⁴²		X ¹⁹	X ^{38,44}	X ⁴³		X ⁴¹	X ²⁷
Relationship	Family support/connected-ness	X ⁴²	X ⁴⁵			X ⁴⁶	X ⁴⁷	X ⁴¹	X ²⁷
	Connection to a caring adult		X ⁴⁵			X ⁴⁶		X ⁴¹	
	Association with pro-social peers		X ⁴⁵			X ⁴⁸	X ¹⁰⁴		
	Connection/commitment to school		X ^{45,105}		X ^{49,50}	X ⁴⁶	X ^{37,47}	X ⁴¹	
Individual	Skills in solving problems non-violently	X ¹⁰⁶	X ¹⁰⁷			X ⁴⁶		X ⁴¹	

Some protective factors include availability of community resources, support and connection to family, connection to a caring adult, peers and/or school.⁷



Teaching the warning signs is not only important so that adults can help intervene and prevent teen dating violence. It's also important to teach the warning signs to teens so that they can recognize red flags in their own relationships and seek out help or remove themselves from the relationship early before violence escalates.⁹

Warning signs of TDV:

- Dating someone much older
- Partner “blows up” or gets angry often and/or unpredictably
- Attempts to isolate partner from friends and family
- Partner gets jealous easily and excessively
- Attempts to control what partner wears or does
- Partner insists on frequent check ins and updates about whereabouts
- Partner has a history of fighting, hurting others, or hurting animals
- Partner demands to see cell phone, text messages, e-mails, social media accounts and/or demands passwords or access to passwords
- Partner prevents or pressures partner from participating in or joining school/extracurricular activities
- Partner makes them feel guilty for focusing on school-work or other prosocial activities that may take time away from the relationship

IPV, Social Media, and Digital Abuse

Today's teens have the added threat of online and digital abuse. Because technology has such a pervasive presence in most teens' lives, it can be especially difficult to escape the influence of a violent dating relationship. It is important for those interested in preventing and intervening in teen dating violence to understand the unique challenges social media and technology present.

Elements of Digital Abuse

- Stalking using GPS data
- Secret audio/visual recordings
- Monitoring email/accessing accounts without permission
- Impersonating partner to others online
- Sending threats via text
- "Doxxing" victim (sharing personal information including address or private photos (including sexually suggestive photos)

When does it become a problem?

It can be difficult (for victims and witnesses) to recognize when more subtle forms of digital abuse have risen beyond typical relationship struggles. The behavior has risen to a problem when it:

- Is upsetting to the victim
- Causes a negative emotional response
- Causes the victim to alter his/her behavior in an unwanted way¹⁰

- 1 in 4 dating teens say they have been abused or harassed through texts
- Twice as many girls as boys report digital sexual abuse
- Less than 10% of victims sought help
- Girls and women age 16 to 24 experience the highest rate of IPV nationwide—triple the national average¹¹

School's Role in Combatting IPV

Teen dating violence can seem like a very individual and personal issue, so it can sometimes be difficult for school officials to see how they can best play a role in prevention and intervention. However, as we saw above, there are many protective factors against teen dating violence that can be fostered and supported in schools. In addition, schools can be a site of teen dating violence, and providing a safe environment for all students is part of a school's responsibility to its community members.

Connection to Student Engagement

Prosocial environments can be a protective factor against teen dating violence. Schools can help promote these environments through student engagement and getting students involved in community-wide decisions. *See Student Engagement, pg 74.*

High School Influence on Dating Norms

High school social structures can put an emphasis on the “drama” surrounding dating and influence teens' perceptions of acceptable dating norms. Prevention that helps proactively and directly teach teens what is acceptable and healthy in a relationship as well as the warning signs of abuse is crucial.

Providing a Safe Environment

Around half of students who experienced IPV reported abuse taking place on school grounds.³ School personnel need to be trained to become aware of how the environment and location play a role in teen dating violence and look for signs of harassment and abuse. These can be included in the school's bullying policies and procedures.¹²

Education

Another role that schools can play is through providing educational curricula in socioemotional learning (SEL). These curricula can help provide protective factors against IPV by boosting self-esteem and teaching about positive relationships and interactions.

Prevention and Intervention Strategies

Systemic Prevention Approach

Prevention is the most desirable response to teen dating violence, and there are many programs and approaches that have proven effective.

Teen dating violence can be viewed in ever-broadening layers of involvement, beginning with the individual and working up to a societal understanding of norms and relationship schemas.⁷

Individual

Behavioral education focusing on healthy, respectful, non-violent relationships from a young age

Relationship

Education on effective communication, training about positive gender norms in athletics, school programs on substance abuse and sexual risk prevention

Community

Enhance safe schools using evidence-based solutions, faculty/staff training to recognize risks and intervene in IPV

Societal

Promote policies and laws that support healthy youth development

Intervention Strategies

Intervention can be difficult because of the psychological components of intimate partner violence. Often, victims of teen dating violence have been groomed to accept the abuse and to see the perpetrator's acts as signs of affection and love. Attempts to force the victim out of the relationship may have the undesired result of making the victim less likely to leave. Intervention must be done carefully and purposefully.¹³

What does not work

- Parents forbidding the relationship
- Attempts to “save” the victim
- Expecting information to trickle down from teachers to students
- Placing too much work on guidance counselors or school social workers

What does work

- Listening
- Being non-judgmental
- Believing survivors (not dismissing concerns as typical “teen drama”)

Shifting focus to perpetrators

Some intervention programs focus on the perpetrators rather than the victims, and these show promising results.

- Focus on offenders at early stages as a deterrent

Resources

Safe Dates

Ten sessions for students that give them the vocabulary and training to talk about and think through causes of dating violence and how to help friends in abusive relationships.¹⁴

Shifting Boundaries

Free program for middle school students that takes a holistic approach and provides school-wide interventions and classroom lessons.¹⁵

Dating Matters

CDC-developed prevention model focusing on 11 to 14-year-olds with a holistic approach to engage across the individual, relationship, and community levels. It includes programs for youth, parents, and educators.¹⁶

Spotlight Resources

For more information on Teen Dating Violence, please contact Dr. Stacy Sechrist, smsechri@uncg.edu, and John Weil, jdweil@uncg.edu, at University of North Carolina Greensboro, [Center for Women's Health & Wellness](#) and [NC Network for Safe Communities](#).

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Human Trafficking

Contributor: Kiricka Yarbough Smith, North Carolina Council for Women and Youth Involvement



Introduction

Human trafficking is a complex and serious set of crimes that disproportionately impacts women and children. In order to successfully combat human trafficking, it's important that the people who are most likely to see warning signs and be in a position to report them are aware of the context, procedures, and effects surrounding human trafficking.

This guide is designed to help you:

- Increase awareness of the trafficking of children and youth
- Increase parent and student awareness of the risks and realities of trafficking
- Identify occurrences of human trafficking
- Recognizing indicators of human trafficking in your community
- Understand school-wide policies and protocols for identifying a suspected victim or responding to a disclosure from a suspected victim
- Receive further resources and connect to additional training

What is Human Trafficking?



Let's start with the legal definition of human trafficking, which breaks the crime down into different components and motivations, showing how complex it can be.

Definition:

- ***Sex trafficking*** in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age.
- The recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery.¹

Distinction between smuggling and trafficking

- ***Smuggling*** is a related crime, but it typically results in the transported person being left alone once reaching their destination.
- ***Trafficking***, on the other hand, involves an element of force or coercion. Often, what begins as smuggling can develop into trafficking.¹

Forms of Exploitation

Once a person has been a victim of human trafficking, there are many different ways in which they can be exploited. The most common include sexual, labor, and domestic exploitation. Examining each for its definition helps us to understand who might be most at-risk and where we might look for signs of such exploitation.²

Sexual

Sexual exploitation makes up the majority of reported human trafficking cases. It includes deception, coercion, or force into such acts as prostitution, erotic dancing, pornography, sex tourism, or forced marriages. It also includes any sex act involving a minor who has been a victim of human trafficking.

Labor

Labor exploitation takes place when a victim of human trafficking is forced or coerced to work for inadequate or no pay. This coercion often takes place through threat of exposure to immigration authorities, retention of identity papers, or use of violence or intimidation. The industries that are most likely to see labor exploitation include manufacturing, hospitality, agriculture, and construction.

Case examples

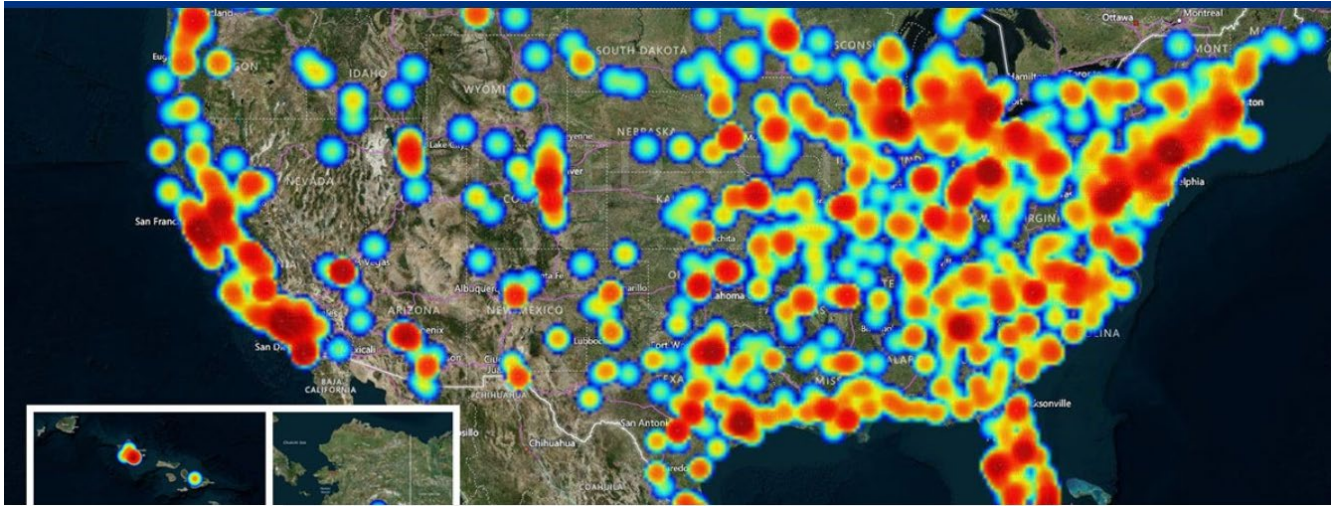
8-year-old Sergi was a blind boy from Albania who came to the U.S. when a man who posed as a medical doctor said he could treat his blindness. Instead, the boy was forced to pose for pornographic photos.³

Case examples

11-year-old Blanca and her older sister were kidnapped by her sister's boyfriend and taken across the country. The trafficker controlled both of them by restricting their movements and eliminating their contact with others. When Blanca turned 15, he removed her from school and traveled across the country forcing her to do agricultural labor and taking all of the money. Blanca and her sister were with the trafficker for 13 years before being able to contact their family.³

Where does it happen?

Human trafficking has a presence in every state across the nation. It has higher concentrations in some areas including along the east and west coasts.⁴



National Stats^{4,5}

- An estimated 40.3 million people are victims of human trafficking globally. 25% of them are children, and 75% of them are women and girls.
- An estimated 1 out of 7 endangered runaways reported in 2017 were likely victims of child sex trafficking. 88% of them were in the care of social services or foster care at the time of their runaway.
- While there is no clear number of human trafficking victims within the United States, experts estimate that there are hundreds of thousands.
- The National Human Trafficking Hotline has received more than 49,000 reported cases over the past 10 years.
- The Hotline receives an average of 150 calls per day.



North Carolina Statistics^{6,7}

It can be tempting to think of human trafficking as a problem that happens elsewhere, but trafficking happens across all kinds of communities: urban, suburban, and rural. It happens here in North Carolina, and the local statistics tell a grim tale that is in line with national trends.

- Since 2007, the Hotline for North Carolina has received 5,569 calls. 4,545 victims have been categorized as “high” (meaning there are multiple verifiable elements of trafficking).
 - An additional 1,758 have been identified as “moderate” (meaning there are multiple elements of trafficking with core details lacking).
- Sex trafficking makes up the majority of calls reported to the North Carolina Hotline.
- The top five NC locations in 2012 for calls were Charlotte, Durham, Fayetteville, Greensboro, and Greenville.

State Laws^{8,9}

Human trafficking is a serious offense that receives considerable legislative attention on the federal level. In the state of North Carolina, human trafficking is considered a felony. As defined by the North Carolina General Statutes in Chapter 14, Article 10A, human trafficking in North Carolina is defined by coercion, deception, involuntary servitude, minor status, and sexual servitude. For an adult, trafficking constitutes a Class F felony. For a child, it constitutes a Class C felony.

GS.14.430-20 (Safe Harbor/Victims of Human Trafficking)

- This law provides protections and responses for victims of human trafficking who are minors
- Mandates plan of action from law enforcement
- Gives child welfare system jurisdiction over child trafficking victims

GS 115S-81(e1)(4a)

- Mandates Boards of Education must address sex trafficking awareness and prevention in schools
- Mandates that 7th graders are taught reproductive health and safety education

Spot the Signs

Perhaps one of the most important parts of prevention and intervention to combat human trafficking is training that increases knowledge of the risk factors and warning signs for someone becoming a victim of human trafficking.

Risk Factors

Risk factors for human trafficking often include a general sense of instability and a history of abuse or manipulation. People who are victims of human trafficking are often preyed upon because of their vulnerability, so it is important to recognize their increased risk.

General Risk Factors

- Past violence or trauma
- Indebtedness to travel recruiter
- Victim of domestic violence, sexual assault, or war

Youth Risk Factors

- LGBTQ youth are five times more likely to be victims of trafficking
- History of sexual abuse or dating violence
- Low self-esteem
- Minimal social support/isolation
- Family dysfunction
- Substance abuse
- Learning disabilities/developmental delays
- Being a runaway or homeless youth
 - 1 in 7 endangered runaway youth is a probable human trafficking victim
- Being in the foster care system
 - Youth in foster care are more likely to move around a lot and less likely to have a dedicated adult watching out for their well-being, making them more likely to be targeted.
- Being affiliated with a gang
 - Gangs often use prostitution as a means of income generation. Female gang members may be sexually exploited as part of initiation or in exchange for protection.
- Being arrested or on probation

Warning Signs^{11,12,13}

General Warning

- Appearing malnourished
- Lacking official identification documents
- Responding with scripted/practiced responses
- Tattoos/branding on neck or lower back
- Untreated sexually transmitted diseases
- Security measures that appear to be keeping inside an establishment
- Not allowing people to go out in public alone
- Signs of physical injuries and abuse
- Lacking personal possessions
- Poor physical or dental health

Youth Warning

- Unexplained school absences on a recurring basis
- Frequently running away from home
- References made to frequent travel to other cities
- Signs of physical abuse such as bruises
- A “boyfriend” or “girlfriend” who is noticeably older
- Tattoos that may display the name/symbol of a trafficker
- Sudden change in behavior or personal hygiene
- Having expensive new possessions without a means to purchase them

Labor Exploitation

- Not being allowed to quit a job
- Being unpaid or paid very little
- Owing a large debt to employers that cannot be paid off
- Not being allowed breaks at work
- Being required to work excessively long hours
- Not having control of own money
- Living with an employer

Recruitment Activities

Often, people looking for human trafficking victims have an established pattern of behavior that can be recognized to help with intervention and prevention.

Recruitment activities include the following¹⁴:

- Frequenting youth congregation sites (schools, malls, group homes)
- Targeting potential victims through social media
- Grooming potential victims by creating seemingly loving and caring relationships with victims (often disguised as an exclusive romantic, consensual relationship)

The **“Three T’s”**- Recruitment strategies for sexual exploitation often rely on these three tactics:

1. Targeting- Traffickers look for vulnerable teens by monitoring congregation sites.
2. Tricking- Traffickers invest time and energy into victims. They may buy them gifts, provide them with a place to stay, and give them affection to establish trust.
3. Traumatization- Physical violence, rape, and psychological manipulation may be used to force or coerce a victim into sexual exploitation.¹⁰

Protective Factors- Parents and educators can help provide protective measures to recognize potential victims early in the recruitment process or to help prevent targeting in the first place. These preventative and protective strategies include:

- Listen to teens when they talk about peer pressure and social pressures, which can be early signs of vulnerability.
- Teach media literacy so that teens are able to analyze and evaluate messages about relationships, sex, etc.
- Encourage and provide extracurricular activities and hobbies. Building self-esteem and self-worth is a key protective factor to exploitation.
- Teach consent and the power of “no.” Include a contact plan for how to get help if they are in a bad situation.
- Provide comprehensive sex education so that teens are empowered to make healthy choices.
- Teach teens about trafficking risks and manipulative tactics¹⁰

Response/School Responsibility

Because human trafficking is such a complex problem with multiple layers, it can be difficult for people to know how to respond or recognize their own responsibility in prevention and intervention. However, traffickers are depending on people not intervening for their crimes and exploitation to continue, so it is crucial that everyone—especially those who are in environments with high risk—thoroughly learn their responsibilities and response procedures.

School Responsibility- Schools are responsible for the health and safety of their students, and research has shown that schools can serve as recruitment sites for sex trafficking of minors. This means that schools have a responsibility to learn the warning signs of trafficking, set up preventative measures for the school environment, and respond to suspected cases of trafficking with a clear, meaningful protocol that puts student safety first.

Learning Environment- One area where schools can have an important impact is in creating a learning environment that focuses on safety and the prevention and intervention of human trafficking.

Faculty/Staff Training

Providing training for faculty and staff that specifically addressing their role in combating human trafficking can help these members of the school community see their responsibilities and feel empowered to act in a meaningful, practical way.

- **Recognize Warning Signs-** All faculty and staff who interact with students should receive training on the warning signs of human trafficking.
- **Training in Reporting Procedures-** All faculty and staff who interact with students should also receive training in the proper reporting procedures so that they know what to do when they see warning signs in students.

Targeted Training

Faculty and staff members who are likely to work with students with increased risk factors should receive additional in-depth training that helps them more closely monitor and interact with students who show warning signs of human trafficking.

Policies and Protocols

Faculty and staff training requires a clear understanding of the protocols and procedures to respond to a potential human trafficking situation. In order for this training to be effective, there must be well-organized and clear reporting and response protocols put into place.

- **Best Practices Policies** Creating a safe environment involves having policies in place that protect children from being targeted while at school and having a safe space to disclose victimization with established protocols for getting help.

Policies should include the following:

- Providing training to all school personnel
- Set up security screening for all campus visitors
- Provide education programs for parents and guardians
- Evaluate and address any issues with environmental school structure in regard to safety

Another key place that schools can have a positive influence in the battle against human trafficking is by helping to change the narrative and dispel myths and misconceptions about the problem. Whether it's training that directly targets students, parents, or faculty and staff, schools can use their platform to address many common misperceptions:

Understanding exploitation- Many times, the public narrative surrounding sexual exploitation of a human trafficking victim focuses on the perceived criminal act (performing a sex act for pay) instead of recognizing the victim's exploited position. Educators should be trained and help the public understand that any child involved in sexual exploitation is a victim—even if there is no evidence of coercion or force.¹⁴

Resources

[North Carolina Statewide Resource Directory](#)

North Carolina Administration, Center for Women and Youth Involvement¹⁵

[National Human Trafficking Hotline](#)

Anyone in need of assistance and/or information and resources related to the issue of human trafficking can contact the National Hotline and access their services.⁶

[North Carolina Homeless Education Program](#)

Law and Guidance. The McKinney-Vento Education of Homeless Children and Youth Assistance Act is the primary piece of legislation dealing with the education of children and youth experiencing homelessness.¹⁶

➤ [NHEP Contact List](#)

[Unaccompanied Children, Home Study and Post Release Services](#)

The Lutheran Services Carolinas Home Study program ensures that minors are released to safe homes and appropriate sponsors by conducting assessments and home visits.¹⁷

[Practices for Identification and Intervention](#)

Guidance to States and Services on Addressing Human Trafficking of Children and Youth in the United States, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children, Youth and Families (ACYF).¹⁸

[Blue Campaign](#)

The Council for Women and Youth Involvement has partnered with the Department of Homeland Security's Blue Campaign to educate the public, law enforcement and other industry partners to recognize the indicators of human trafficking, and how to appropriately respond to possible cases.¹⁹

[Students Against Destructive Decisions \(SADD\)](#)

SADD is a youth-based, peer-to-peer organization that promotes youth empowerment and uses peer influence to spread the message of positive decision-making. SADD has many chapters located in schools across the state of North Carolina.²⁰

Spotlight Resources

For more resources and/or information about Human Trafficking, please contact Kiricka Yarbough Smith, Human Trafficking Program Director, North Carolina Council for Women and Youth Involvement at 919-733-2455, kiricka.yarbough.smith@doa.nc.gov.

Check out [Project COPE](#)²¹, a youth-focused program of the NC Council for Women & Youth Involvement, that aims to increase awareness about human trafficking and the factors that make youth susceptible to trafficking. Project COPE provides training, technical assistance, and resources to youth and community leaders that interact with youth throughout the state.

To request a training at your school/organization, please complete this [training form](#) at <https://tinyurl.com/NCTrainingForm>.

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Gang Awareness

Contributor: Michelle Guarino, Gang Free NC



Introduction

In order to understand the severity and impact of gang involvement, it's important to begin by understanding what constitutes a gang and why gang presence matters in a school and the surrounding community.

This guide is designed to help you:

- Explain the dangers of gang presence in North Carolina schools.
- Recognize the warning signs for gang involvement.
- Explain a school's responsibility for prevention and intervention in gang activity.
- Identify prevention and intervention techniques.
- Access resources in the state to help with the prevention and intervention of gang involvement.

What is a gang

A gang is defined by North Carolina law as follows.

NC Law ([14-50.16A](#))¹ defines criminal gang

“Any ongoing organization, association, or group of three or more persons, whether formal or informal, that (i) has as one of its primary activities the commission of criminal or delinquent acts and (ii) shares a common name, identification, signs, symbols, tattoos, graffiti, attire, or other distinguishing characteristics, including common activities, customs, or behaviors. The term shall not include three or more persons associated in fact, whether formal or informal, who are not engaged in criminal gang activity.”

NC Law defines a criminal gang member as someone who meets at least three of the following criteria:

- a) Admits to being a member
- b) Identified as a member by reliable source (parent/guardian)
- c) Previously involved in gang activity
- d) Adopted symbols, hand signs, graffiti associated with gang
- e) Adopted the display of colors or style of dress associated with gang
- f) In possession of or linked to criminal gang by physical evidence (photographs, ledgers, rosters, written or electronic communication, membership documents)
- g) Has tattoos or markings associated with gang
- h) Adopted language or terminology associated with gang
- i) Appears in social media promoting gang

Why does it matter

Gang presence has a tremendous impact on a community and can create unrest and dangerous conditions that radiate throughout the entire area.

Gang presence is associated with violent and dangerous crimes including the following:

- Robbery with weapons
- Assault
- Murder
- Human trafficking
- Prostitution

Neighborhood gangs pose the most immediate threat in most communities. In fact, many gangs are minimizing drug trafficking and turning to human trafficking and prostitution because of its perceived lower risk of exposure. And, street gangs now target young people at earlier ages, making early intervention and ability to recognize warning signs especially important.²

Extent of the problem

There can be a misperception that gang violence only impacts certain types of communities or that gang involvement is a threat of the past. The truth is that rates of gang involvement have remained steady since the late 1990's and continues to be a major source of crime in all kinds of communities.

National Stats^{4,5}

Gangs can impact all community types

- Large cities (41.6%)
- Small cities (26.1%)
- Suburban counties (25.8%)
- Rural counties (5.5%)

As of 2012, there were an estimated **850,000** gang members across the U.S. Rate of violent offenses among gang members is three times higher than non-gang delinquents.

Local Stats³

As of 2017, there were 1,231 identified gangs in North Carolina. 300 of these gangs are considered active.

- There were 7,231 identified members, 97.6% of them are male.
- The top three gangs in both prisons and streets are
 - Bloods/UBN
 - Crips
 - Folk Nation
- Present in schools in 74% of communities²

Understanding the Problem

Understanding gang violence begins with understanding how gangs are able to recruit and maintain membership in the first place. Often, more senior members of gang target younger juveniles in order to initiate them into the gang and create a sense of loyalty and duty. Knowing the risk factors for gang involvement and the strategies used for recruitment is a crucial part of prevention.

Why do people join gangs

People join gangs for many reasons, but at the root is a sense of belonging and purpose.⁶

Factors that Influence Involvement

Some of the factors that influence someone's involvement in a gang include the following:

- Peer pressure
- Love
- Fear
- Curiosity/Boredom
- Power
- Family Influence

Perceived Benefits

People who do choose to associate with a gang may do so because they perceive the following benefits:

- Friendship
- Pride
- Identity outside of family
- A family/love
- Increased self esteem
- Acceptance
- Status
- Acquisition of resources
- Excitement
- Discipline
- Safety

All youth seek developmental needs

It's important to remember that gang involvement is often underpinned by developmental needs that are shared by all youth. In other words, children who join gangs are seeking to fill a universal need to belong and be connected.

- Sense of connection
- Belonging
- Self-definition

Risk factors

There are some risk factors for gang recruitment that make people particularly vulnerable to gang involvement.⁷

- Early drug and alcohol use
 - Early substance abuse is associated with lower possibility for prosocial interactions, which makes youth more vulnerable to gang involvement.
- Low parental monitoring
- Low coping skills

Protective factors

There are also protective factors that make youth less likely to get involved with a gang.⁷

- Positive social interactions
- Coping skills
- High parental monitoring

What does membership look like

National stats⁵

- Most gang members are male. However, most gangs do have some female members.
- Most participants in gang crimes are young, male, and either black or Hispanic.
 - Some gangs (such as white supremacist gangs) recruit based on race. Others are more racially diverse and may have members of all races. Some local iterations of national gangs may have varied racial make-up in different areas.
 - Upper age of gang members is increasing as members are remaining involved longer.

Local stats³

Age group 18-25 make up 41% of gang members, with 44% between ages 26-35

- 97.6% of members are male

Signs of gang membership

Many gangs rely on symbols to communicate their presence, mark territory, and recruit new membership. Symbol meaning is not consistent across the country, and different regions may have different meanings for the same signifier.²

Speech ➤ Use of particular slang and phrases	Hand signals
Use of written symbols ➤ Stars (five- and six-pointed) ➤ Crowns ➤ Pitchforks ➤ Three dots in a triangle ➤ Numbers	Graffiti Multiple uses ➤ Mark territory ➤ Mourn deceased members ➤ Threaten rival gangs
Clothing Colors can have specific gang identification. They may be worn as ➤ Shirts ➤ Bandanas ➤ Multicolored or single-colored beads ➤ Belts ➤ Hats ➤ Shoes ➤ Shoelaces ➤ Hair bands ➤ Jewelry	Tattoos Multiple uses: ➤ Show affiliation ➤ Show rank Social Media Multiple platforms used for: ➤ Recruitment ➤ Intra-member communication ➤ Targeting rivals ➤ Advancing criminal activities ➤ Avoiding law enforcement

Consequences of gang membership

- Youth involved in gangs are more likely to commit crimes
- Youth involved in gangs (especially girls) are more likely to be victims of violence
- Youth involved in gangs are less likely to graduate high school or find stable employment
- Youth involved in gangs are more likely to have drug and alcohol problems²

School Responsibility

As part of maintaining a safe and healthy environment for all students, schools have a responsibility to be aware and responsive to the threat of gang involvement. School should be a neutral place where gang members are not allowed to recruit or demonstrate affiliation. It is important that schools are aware of the warning signs so that they do not overlook or ignore gang activity.⁶

Provide Gang Awareness Education

The most important step for schools to take is being able to recognize gang activity when it occurs. There should be a robust gang awareness campaign that allows educators to identify and intervene in gang activity.

Teach warning signs and identification symbols

- Staff
- Counselors
- Administrators

Adopt and implement school policy to address gang-related behaviors

- Dress code
- No gang-related clothing
- No clothing with symbols identified as gang-related by law enforcement

Implement and support high school education alternatives

- Provide technical skills
- Support employment programs

Barriers to School Responsibility

There are some barriers to schools taking responsibility for gang involvement. Often, schools do not want to be associated with gang activity, so this can cause a sense of denial that masks warning signs.

5% of principals reported gangs in their school, but 36% reported gangs in community

- Staff and administrators may not recognize gang activity
- Denial of problem
- Fear of violating student privacy/confidentiality laws
- Fear of negative perception from admitting gang presence in school
- Fear of parents removing children if they associate school with gang presence
- Fear of student attrition if gang-affiliated reputation spreads

Prevention

Why prevention matters

Since we know the risk factors of gang involvement and that schools are often recruiting grounds for young members, it is crucial to put prevention plans in place.²

Harm to all students

It is also important to remember that prevention plans are not just about protecting vulnerable youth who may become victim to gang recruitment. It is about protecting all members of the school community. When gangs are present in schools, there is an increase in the following:

- Intimidation of students, teachers, administration
- Recruitment happens in schools
- Drug sales/drug use
- Likelihood of weapons on or near campus
- Risk of victimization for students and staff
- Gang-related conflicts that can escalate into more serious situations

Prevention strategies

Prevention can be difficult, especially in a community where gangs are widespread. Schools can take many steps to help prevent gang involvement.

Awareness -Recognition of area gangs' symbols and signs -Familiarity with popular slang terms -Monitoring of online activity	Parent Involvement Clearly communicate expectations: -No association with gang-involved individuals -No parties, events where gang members congregate -No use of gang-affiliated hand signals (even as a joke) -No wearing of clothing that may have meaning to area gang	Socioemotional Learning -How to counter peer pressure -Positive peer and family interactions
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Intervention

In addition to prevention strategies, schools should have intervention plans and help provide intervention training for parents.²

Recognizing warning signs

The earlier intervention occurs, the better. Being able to recognize warning signs of gang involvement allows for early intervention. Here are some common warning signs:

- Withdrawing from planned events
- Declining academic attendance or performance
- Defiant or confrontational behavior
- Staying out late without reason
- Unusual desire for secrecy
- “On edge,” increased and excessive worry about safety
- Sudden negative attitudes about police or authority figures
- Drastic changes in personal style
- Drug and alcohol use
- Possession of weapons
- Evidence of fighting
- Unexplained cash or goods

Intervention strategies

Three R’s - This strategy applies to gang symbols in school such as graffiti. Schools should adopt a 3 R’s approach that allows them to catalog important information but also make sure that the symbol is removed:

- Reported
- Recorded
- Removed

Resources

[GREAT \(Gang Resistance Education And Training\)](#)

This evidence-based program has been operating for more than 30 years and depends on the relationship between law enforcement and communities. The curricula aim to reach children immediately before prime ages for introduction to gang involvement.⁸

[North Carolina Gang Investors Association](#)

The NCGIA is an association of law enforcement and criminal justice professionals who are dedicated to the prevention of gangs and suppression of gang-related activity within the state of North Carolina.⁹

[Gang Free North Carolina](#)

Gang Free North Carolina is a gang prevention, intervention, suppression and policy organization committed to developing, promoting and sustaining state-wide strategies, policies and laws that will reduce criminal gangs and the associated criminal activity, to include injury and death.¹⁰

[National Gang Center](#)

Hosts resources and tools including online training, informational videos, curated lists of gang-related news articles and legislation, a moderated email discussion group, and more.¹¹

Spotlight Resources

For more information about gangs and/or to inquire about training opportunities, please contact Michelle H Guarino, MSW, LCSW, at mguarino@TheNCGIA.org

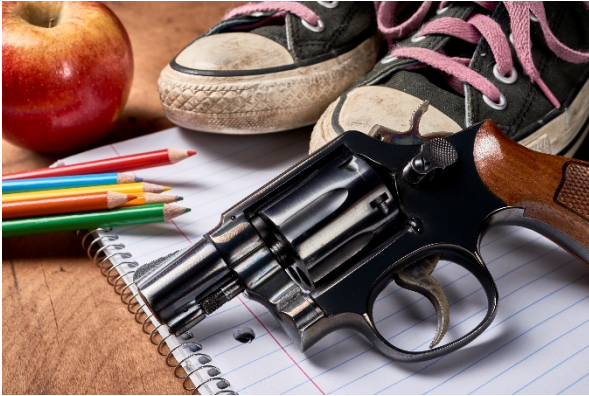
North Carolina Gang Investigators Association Gang Free NC
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Youth Gun Violence

Contributor: Lisa Jayne, Fayetteville Police Department's Operation Ceasefire



Introduction

Gun violence is at the forefront of many minds across the country, and it is especially pressing for educators. The high-profile and heartbreaking school shootings have captivated a nation and led to intense policy debates and political activism from survivors of these tragic shootings. Because of the national narrative and the political strife surrounding schools and gun violence, it can sometimes be difficult to truly understand the scope of the problem and the responsibility that educators have in helping to address it.

This guide is designed to help you:

- Understand current State legislation on gun violence
- Recognize the prevalence and incidence of youth gun violence
- Identify solutions and strategies in reducing youth gun violence and promoting positive action
- Map effective youth gun violence prevention and intervention resources and programs
- Connect to key resources in North Carolina

Contextualizing the Problem

Being part of the solution to gun violence first means understanding it in context.

Youth gun violence, as defined by the research, is “when a gun or firearm is present in the process of a youth (ages 10–24) intentionally using force or power to threaten or harm others. A youth is a victim of gun violence when he or she is injured or killed as a consequence of someone (a youth or an adult) intentionally using a gun to threaten or harm someone (whether the youth victim was the intended target or not).”¹

National stats

National statistics on gun violence reflect the incidence and prevalence of gun-related homicides, suicides, and nonfatal injuries of youth.

- ✓ There are about 33,000 gun-related deaths in the U.S. every year, and youth make up 20% of those death.¹
- ✓ Homicide is the third-leading cause of death by gun among youth ages 10 to 24.^{1,2}
- ✓ Every day, eight children are killed by guns in the U.S. — through homicide, suicide or accident — amounting to 2,920 killed each year.³
- ✓ Despite being the main focus of public policy debate and media narratives, mass shootings make up less than .5% of gun deaths.¹
- ✓ Youth homicide victims ages 15 to 24 are more likely to be male, African American or Hispanic, and live in highly populous/urban area^{1,2}
 - 70% of known homicides committed by youth were African American
 - Males accounted for 90% of known homicides committed by youth
- ✓ Almost half of youth suicides (10 to 24) were carried out with a firearm^{1,4}
- ✓ After a decline between 1990 and 2007, suicide rates among youth age 15-19 are on the rise again.³
- ✓ White males are most likely to be victims of suicide by firearm
 - 76% were white
 - 88% were male^{1,2}
- ✓ About 8% of children report exposure to a shooting as bystanders^{1,5}
- ✓ 4% of high schoolers reported carrying a weapon at least one day during the past month. White male students were most likely to have carried a gun.^{1,6}
- ✓ 3.7% of students ages 12 to 18 report having access to a loaded gun^{1,6}

Taken as a whole, these facts paint a clearer picture of what is at stake when we talk about gun violence. While mass shootings are intense tragedies that understandably draw the attention of the nation when they occur, there have been and will continue to be thousands of youth who die and are injured due to daily gun violence that gets far less attention.

Local stats

In addition to understanding the national statistics, it's important to have a clear picture of the local context on gun violence as well. In many ways, North Carolina has gun violence trends that align with the national ones. Here are some specific details about the context surrounding gun violence at the state level.

Facts

- ✓ The leading cause of violent deaths in NC are suicide (62.7%) and homicide (32.8%). Firearms are the leading method of violent deaths (63.4%), and handguns are the most commonly used firearm in these incidents (76.3%).⁷
- ✓ Children ages 0 to 19 make up 18.2% of all violent death victims in NC.⁷
- ✓ The most common location for firearm-related deaths was at home (70.7%).⁷
- ✓ 41.6% of NC residents own firearms and approximately 1 in 3 handguns is kept loaded and unlocked (NCPH)
- ✓ Among all children, those ages 15-19 have the highest rate of violent deaths followed by children under 1.⁷
- ✓ Children ages 10-19 make up 5.74% of suicides⁷ and suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death for youth ages 10-17 both nationally and in NC.⁸
- ✓ 9.3% of NC high school students surveyed in 2015 reported attempting suicide, a two times rate increase from 2011 and 2013.⁸
- ✓ 75% of guns used by youth in suicide attempts were kept in the home of the victim, a relative, or a friend.⁸

Understanding State Legislation

Gun Legislation- There is a web of legislation at both the federal and state level that governs how firearms are bought, sold, and restricted. There is also legislation that mandates how schools respond to threats or incidents of gun violence.

G.S. 115C-390.10

In compliance with the federal [Gun Free Schools Act](#)⁹, state legislation mandates NC schools to have the following in their policies and procedures:

- A minimum 365-day suspension for possession of a firearm or destructive device on educational property.
- There are provisions for case-by-case modifications to the 365-day suspension by the superintendent.
- There are also provisions that say a student shall not be subject to the suspension if they found the device took it from another person as long as they delivered or reported it “as soon as practicable” and had “no intent” to use it in a harmful or threatening way.
- A reporting system for incidents that meet particular guidelines¹⁰

Any offense on this list must be reported along with a detailed description of the offense.



G.S. 115C-288

This General Statute clarifies what incidents must be reported to school administrators and law enforcement authorities. They include 16 separate types of incidents, several of which could become pertinent in addressing gun violence:

1. Assault Resulting in Serious Personal Injury
2. Assault Involving Use of a Weapon
3. Assault on School Officials, Employees, and Volunteers
4. Making Bomb Threats or Engaging in Bomb Hoaxes
5. Willfully Burning a School Building
6. Homicide
7. Kidnapping
8. Unlawful, underage sales, purchase, provision, possession, or consumption of alcoholic beverages
9. Possession of Controlled Substance in Violation of Law
10. Possession of a Firearm
11. Possession of a Weapon
12. Rape
13. Robbery with a Dangerous Weapon
14. Sexual Assault
15. Sexual Offense
16. Taking Indecent Liberties with a Minor¹¹

Understanding the Impact and Risks

Gun violence is obviously a concern because of the direct harm that it can cause, but to fully grasp the threat of gun violence, we need to also understand the peripheral harm caused by gun violence. We also need to understand the risk factors so that we can come up with holistic, effective solutions and interventions.

Research suggests that there is not one single risk factor or set of risk factors that predict who is likely to engage in violent behavior. However, a combination of relationship, community, and societal factors contribute to the risk of youth violence. In other words, the more of these factors present in a young person's life, the greater the probability of violence.^{1,12}

Although there has not been much research on the specific risk factors for youth gun violence, there are risk factors associated with youth violence that relate to youth gun violence.¹

Risk Factors

There are identified risk factors for youth who go on to commit gun violence.

Exposure to violence

- Being exposed to violent acts increases a youth's risk of going on to commit violent acts, including gun violence, themselves. Violence exposure is linked to emotional distress, anxiety, depression, and posttraumatic stress disorder.

Access and availability to firearms

- One of the most crucial risk factors for youth gun violence is the availability and accessibility of firearms.

Impact on Bystanders

One of the most insidious parts of gun violence is its impact on bystanders. Even youth who are not hurt or killed by guns are negatively impacted by witnessing gun violence.⁵

These negative impacts include:

- More likely to abuse drugs and alcohol
- More likely to suffer from depression, anxiety, and PTSD
- Two Parkland shooting survivors were victims of suicide following the shooting.³
- More likely to fail or struggle in school
- More likely to become delinquent or engage in criminal behavior

Protective Factors Against Youth Violence

Whenever we consider risk factors, we also want to look at protective factors to see what helps to prevent gun violence, especially among at-risk populations.¹

Protective factors that protect youth from youth violence include¹³

- connectedness to family or other adults
- ability to discuss problems with parents
- the perception that parental expectations for school performance are high
- frequent shared activities with parents
- youth involvement in social activities
- commitment to school
- the consistent presence of parent during at least one of the following: when awakening, when arriving home from school, during evening mealtimes, and when going to bed.

Of these protective factors for serious forms of youth violence, there are two that have been shown to make a slight impact on youth gun violence.¹

Parent and School Connectedness

There is some evidence that parent and school connectedness can act as a protective factor for youth who otherwise have risk factors for committing gun violence.

Prevention

There are a number of measures that may indirectly affect the factors that contribute to youth violence. Evidence-based practices and programs have been shown to significantly reduce the occurrence of gun violence.¹ For more information on youth violence prevention programs and practices, check out the resource section.

In North Carolina, the Fayetteville Police Department's Operation Ceasefire serves as a model in the state for addressing youth gun violence through community-driven and educational initiatives.

Exemplary Youth Gun Violence Prevention and Education Program in NC

Fayetteville Police Department's Operation Ceasefire in Fayetteville, North Carolina is a highly successful [Project Safe Neighborhood \(PSN\)](#)¹⁴ model built on formal partnership between city and county law enforcement agencies, the US Attorney's Office (ED NC), ATF Violent Crimes Task Force, District Attorney's Office, Cumberland County Schools, Cape Fear Valley Medical Center, business leaders, University of North Carolina- Greensboro (UNCG), and the faith community.

In 2014, the [Fayetteville Police Department's PSN-Operation Ceasefire program](#)¹⁵ and partnerships initiated a youth gun violence education and prevention program, EKG.

Educating Kids About Gun Violence (EKG) engages 7th grade students through a two-hour interactive classroom presentation that teaches them about the legal, medical, and emotional consequences of youth gun possession and related gun violence. The program is taught by police officers and detectives who challenge youth to consider options and choices while facing potentially violent situations.

Success and Impact. The EKG program has taught over **25,241** students' county wide so far and continues to flourish in its' 5th year of operation! More law enforcement agencies have been trained and are teaching EKG. And, EKG received the Program of the Year Award from the North Carolina Gang Investigators Association in 2015.

Results from the program data show desired effects on student attitudes, beliefs and behaviors, specifically in reducing attitudes supportive of violence, gun carrying, and gangs, and increasing attitudes toward pro-social decision-making and abilities to think about consequences of actions.

The program has a significant appeal to those looking to adopt the EKG program in their jurisdiction in that it 1) promotes real discussion about violence and what it takes to make good decisions even under extreme peer influence; and 2) fosters positive relationships between students and law enforcement officers. The relationships with officers may positively affect student perceptions of them, thereby, increasing the likelihood that students will engage with law enforcement officers outside of school.

To learn more, see Spotlight Resources for EKG contact information.

Resources

[CrimeSolutions.gov](https://www.crimesolutions.gov)

Programs and evidence to support programs will continue to evolve. Find the most up-to-date evidence-based programs related to youth gun violence and youth violence. Offers a web-based clearinghouse of programs and practices and a process for identifying and rating those programs and practices.¹⁶

[Youth.gov](https://youth.gov)

youth.gov is the U.S. government website that offers general information on youth-related topics, including youth violence. Find youth facts, funding information, and tools to help assess community assets, generate maps of local and federal resources, and search for evidence-based youth programs¹⁷.

[Children's Safety Network \(CSN\)](https://www.childrensafety.org)

CSN is a national resource center for the prevention of childhood injuries and violence. The site offers a range of resources for state, territorial, and community maternal and child health programs as well as injury and violence prevention programs.¹⁸

[World Health Organization](https://www.who.int)

WHO is a part of the United Nations that focuses on global health issues. The site includes a large list of resources and studies on youth violence.¹⁹

[Center for Disease Control and Prevention](https://www.cdc.gov/nceiz)

The CDC's National Center for Injury Prevention and Control address the problems of injury, identify the risk and protective factors, develop and test preventions strategies, and assure adoption of resulting prevention strategies.²⁰

Spotlight Resource

To learn more about youth gun violence and the EKG program, please contact Lisa Jayne, Fayetteville Police Department's Operation Ceasefire Coordinator at LJayne@ci.fay.nc.us and 910.433.1017. Visit Operation Ceasefire at <https://operationceasefire.com/>

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Substance Misuse

Contributor: Erin Day, Community Impact NC



Introduction

The misuse of alcohol and prescription drugs is a serious problem for all ages and for all regions across the United States. These issues can be particularly harmful for youth whose brains are still developing and more susceptible to some of the most deleterious effects of substance use. In order to address these serious problems, it's important to understand more about the context surrounding the issues.

This guide is designed to help you:

- Describe the impacts of alcohol and prescription drug misuse on individuals and communities
- Recognize the warning signs of alcohol and prescription drug misuse
- Identify preventative methods for alcohol and prescription drug misuse
- Access resources to help with prevention and intervention for alcohol and prescription drug misuse

Understanding the Problem



Substance use has far-reaching negative impacts. The misuse of substances obviously causes harm to the individuals using them, but it also causes harm to the communities in which they live.

Impact of alcohol

Alcohol has a greater impact on youth than it does on adults because children and young adults have brains that are still developing.

Impairment	Results
Prefrontal cortex	Poor planning, organizing, time management, attention, and judgment
Stress response system	Suppresses normal hormonal response
Medulla	Breathing impairment
Cerebellum	Slow reaction time, impaired motor functions
Hippocampus	Memory loss and learning impairment

In addition to the immediate and present impacts of alcohol on youth who drink it, there are also long-lasting and potentially lifelong impacts.

Those who drink as youth are more likely to participate in stress-induced drinking in adulthood. The chances of becoming an alcoholic are much higher for someone who drinks before age 15 (40%) than someone who waits until age 21 (7%). ¹

National stats on alcohol

Nationally, alcohol is responsible for a wide range of risky behaviors and is used in consistent and high numbers. While the use of alcohol among youth has been dropping **over time**, there is still a significant portion of the youth population using alcohol.

Alcohol and other drug use is one of the six health-related behaviors monitored in the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS) because it contributes to the leading causes of death and disability among youth and adults.

- Around 50% of the U.S. population aged 12 years and older uses alcohol.
- Around 24% of the population reports binge drinking (five or more drinks for men; four or more drinks for women)
- Around 6% of the population reports heavy alcohol use (binge drinking five or more days in past month)

A survey of 12th, 10th, and 8th graders revealed the following:

The most recent data (2016) reveals these usage percentages:

- 12th graders- 33.2% (down from 72% in 1980)
- 10th graders- 19.9% (down from 41% in 2000)
- 8th graders 7.3% (down from 22.4% in 2000)

White youth are more likely to use alcohol and binge drink than black students.^{2,3}

Local stats on alcohol

In North Carolina, surveys show that alcohol use is relatively common among school-aged youth.

- 16% drink at least once a week
- 54% of high school students drink at least once a month
- 16% of middle school students drink at least once a month⁴

Impact of prescription drug misuse

The misuse of prescription drugs has frequently been called an epidemic because of the detrimental impact it is having on communities. To understand the impact of prescription drug misuse, one has to consider who uses the drugs and the wide range of motivations behind that use.

There are three main classes of drugs that are misused.

Drug Type	Illicit Uses and Effects	Street Names
Opioids (such as Vicodin, OxyContin, Percocet, and Codeine)	Pain relief, poor coordination, drowsiness, nausea, constipation, euphoria, confusion, slowed breathing or heart rate, increased risk of infectious disease through injection, death	Vikes, Lean, Stop Signs, Percs
Sedatives (such as Valium, Xanax, Ambien, Lunesta, and Ativan)	Drowsiness, slurred speech, poor concentration, confusion, dizziness, memory problems, movement problems, low blood pressure, slowed breathing and heart rate, increased risk of infectious disease through injection, increased risk of sexual assault	Barbs, Reds, Downers, Tranks
Stimulants (such as Dexedrine, Adderall, Ritalin, and Concerta)	Increased alertness, attention, or energy; increased blood pressure or heart rate; narrowed blood vessels; insomnia; reduced appetite; increased blood sugar; heart problems; psychosis; anger or paranoia; increased risk of infectious disease through injection	Skippy, Vitamin R, Bennies, Speed

The most common motivators for prescription drug misuse include the following⁵:

- Wanting to fit in with peers
- Feeling good or getting high
- Relieving depression and anxiety
- Helping to cope with stress
- Sleeping better
- Increasing alertness or concentration
- Addiction to their own initial pain prescription

National stats on prescription drug misuse^{5, 6}

- 53% of people who misuse prescription drugs get them from family and friends
- Only 5% of children who misuse prescription drugs say they get them from a stranger, drug dealer, or the internet. Most get them from someone they know.
- In 2017, 14% of high school students had used prescription pain medication without a prescription or differently than prescribed.
 - Overall usage numbers were statistically constant regardless of sex or race.

Local stats on prescription drug misuse^{5, 8}

- Overdose is the second-leading cause of unintentional injury death in NC.
- Approximately 80% of the 1000 overdose deaths in NC in 2014 were from prescription drugs, mostly painkillers.
- For every overdose death, there are 9.2 hospitalizations and 16.8 ER admissions.
- Unintentional poisoning deaths rose 391% in NC from 1999 to 2015:
 - 93% were caused by drugs (Rx, OTC, or illegal)
 - Opioids analgesics, cocaine, and heroin are the leading cause (47% of deaths)
 - Opioid analgesic use is on the rise and make up more deaths than cocaine and heroin combined
 - Males (63.5%) die in greater numbers than females (36.5%)
 - White (15.8 rate, 83.6% of deaths) and American Indians (12.0 rate, 1.5% of deaths) have the highest rates of death

Awareness

Awareness campaigns are one of the most widespread and popular methods for combating alcohol and drug misuse.^{4, 9}

- Parents who see awareness campaigns are more likely to talk to their kids about drinking.
 - 74% of parents said exposure to ads increased likelihood of discussing drinking and dangers of alcohol with children
- 81% of parents believe drinking is a problem in their communities, but only 60% are concerned about their own children drinking alcohol
- Students perceive drinking to be a problem in their communities at higher rates (93%) than their parents
- The CDC lists awareness as one of the key methods to addressing the prescription drug misuse problem
- Awareness of prescription drug misuse allows bystanders to intervene effectively when witnessing signs of overdose

Warning Signs

Knowing the warning signs allows for more effective intervention. Early intervention can help mitigate the harms of substance use.

Alcohol Misuse¹⁰

- ❑ Odor of alcohol
- ❑ Sudden change in mood/attitude
- ❑ Change in attendance or performance at school
- ❑ Loss of interest in school, sports, or other activities
- ❑ Discipline problems at school
- ❑ Withdrawal from family/friends
- ❑ Secrecy
- ❑ Association with new group of friends and reluctance to introduce them to parents
- ❑ Alcohol disappearing from home
- ❑ Depression and developmental difficulties

Prescription Drug Misuse²¹

- Stealing, forging, or selling prescriptions
- Lying or being deceitful
- Borrowing money or having extra cash
- Unaccounted for time away from home/school
- Avoiding eye contact
- Excessive mood swings
- Taking prescribed drugs in higher doses
- Hostility/abusive behavior
- Reckless behavior
- Marked increase or decrease in sleep
- Sudden changes in appetite
- Extreme changes in peer group
- Poor decision making
- Forgetfulness/clumsiness
- Losing interest in school, hobbies, or appearance

Prevention

Prevention and Intervention Programs

There are many different approaches to interventions and preventions, including programs that blend together approaches and focuses.¹²

- School-Based-These programs work to raise youth awareness about the risks of substance use and set a normative standard that it is not acceptable.
 - Programs that focus solely on increasing awareness are ineffective.
 - Effective programs address social pressures, include peer-led components, provide teacher training, include norm setting, and are interactive.
 - These programs may be inadequate for high-risk individuals.
 - School policies (consistent enforcement of sanctions and consequences) and culture (fostering positive student connections) are other school-based avenues for intervention.
- Family-Based- These programs focus on educating parents and promoting safe and enforced rules.
 - Consistent and well-communicated rules and expectations are crucial.
 - Family conflict increases likelihood of substance use.
 - Family-based programs train parents to change the environment, creating individual- and environmental-level intervention.
- Macroenvironmental- These programs take a community-based approach and focus on reducing access or making the costs of substance use higher as a deterrent.
 - Includes increased enforcement of existing laws including minimum legal drinking age.
 - Increases the social cost of alcohol use through stiffer penalties for violations.
 - Increases server and retail salesperson training to reduce access.
 - Institutes compliance checks in sales outlets.
- Multicomponent/Comprehensive- These programs combine school, family, and environmental approaches.

Prescription Drug Use Prevention

Since most prescription drug users access the substances from someone they know, many prevention strategies focus on decreasing access and increasing awareness of the dangers.²²

- Monitor prescribed drug use and talk to the doctor to ensure the lowest safe and effective dose. Talk about alternatives to the most commonly misused medications.
- Secure and monitor medication.
 - Keep medication in a locked location.
 - Monitor quantities regularly. Use an inventory card for accuracy.
- Educate children about the risks and signs of drug misuse.
 - Parents should talk to children regularly about substance use and create an environment of open communication.
 - Parents should be observant of actions, behaviors, and moods.
- Safe disposal of unwanted, expired, or unused prescription medication is crucial.
 - Permanent medication drop boxes are the best disposal method. North Carolina has boxes in communities across the state.
 - Never flush medication down the toilet unless the label indicates it is safe to do so.
 - If medications must be thrown in the trash, mix them with used kitty litter, used coffee grounds, or another inedible and unappealing substance.

Resources

[Community Impact North Carolina](#)

CINC works in partnership with communities to support and create evidence-based practices and education that prevent and minimize the harm of substance use.²³

[Alcohol Drug Council of North Carolina](#)

This nonprofit organization is supported through state and community organizations. It provides family support groups and recovery houses.²⁴

[Talk it Out NC](#)

Provides information and resources to start the conversation about underage drinking.²⁵

[More Powerful](#)

This program is led by NC Attorney General Josh Stein and Secretary Mandy Cohen. It raises awareness around the statewide opioid crisis through billboards and TV commercials.²⁶

[Orange Partnership for Alcohol and Drug Free Youth](#)

This NC program has several statewide partners and includes programs for parents, children, and retailers. It includes a youth partnership program ([ADAPT](#)) that trains young people to educate peers about the risks of drug and alcohol use.²⁷

Spotlight Resources

For more information on substance misuse, please contact Erin Day, Director of Division of Coalition Support, Community Impact North Carolina at erin@impactcarolina.org <http://www.impactcarolina.org>

For information on primary courses for Educators: Drug Impairment Training for Educational Professionals (DITEP), please contact Luke Marcum at trafficansafetytraining@gmail.com or 252-205-6773.

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Suicide Prevention

Contributor: Kenya Procter, Procter Solutions



Introduction

Suicide is a serious problem that impacts the entire nation. Understanding the problem of suicide involves looking closely at the rates of suicide both locally and nationally and considering disparities and trends. Preventing suicide begins with recognizing the problem and dispelling myths and misconceptions

This guide is designed to help you:

- Identify the causes of suicide
- Identify the risk factors for suicide
- Identify the warning signs of suicide
- Explain a school's responsibility in suicide prevention
- Explain suicide prevention strategies
- Identify resources for suicide prevention

Understanding the Problem^{1,2,3,4}



National Stats on Suicide

- 9 out of 10 people who die by suicide have a mental health condition that contributed to their death
- In 2017, 47,173 Americans died by suicide
- There were an estimated 1,400,000 suicide attempts in 2017
- Men die by suicide 3.5 times more often than women
- White males account for about 70% of 2017 suicide deaths
- There are 129 suicides per day on average

Local Stats on Suicide

- Suicide is the **2nd** leading cause of death for ages 15-34 in North Carolina
- The total deaths from suicide in NC represent 30,090 years of potential life lost
- More than **three** times as many people died by suicide in NC in 2017 than in alcohol-related motor vehicle accidents
- Firearms are most common method for suicide
- Disparities in suicide rates by race, sexual orientation, and veteran status

- ❓ Youth and young adults have the highest rate of self-inflicted injuries
- ❓ Females have higher rates of self-inflicted injury hospitalization and emergency department visits
- ❓ Males have higher rates of death by suicide
- ❓ Whites followed by American Indians have the highest rate of suicide
- ❓ Gay, lesbian, or bisexual high school students report considering, planning, or attempting suicide at significantly higher rate

Youth Stats

Understanding suicide is especially important when working to prevent suicide among youth.

- Nationally, suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death for ages 10-24.
- More teens and young adults die from suicide than cancer, heart disease, AIDS, birth defects, stroke, pneumonia, influenza, and chronic lung disease combined.
- 4 out of 5 teens who attempt suicide have displayed warning signs.

Who is at risk

Assumptions about who is at risk for suicide can prevent people from getting the help they need to prevent suicide deaths. While many people associate depression as associated with suicide, there are many other mental health conditions and precipitating factors that are risk factors for suicide. Understanding these complex risk factors helps spread awareness and give people the tools to take warning signs seriously.^{5,6,7,8}

Risk factors

Health Factors

There are many health factors that can contribute to the risk of suicide.

Mental health conditions-

Mental health conditions are often a contributing risk factor for suicide. These include the following conditions:

- Depression
- Substance abuse
- Bipolar disorder
- Schizophrenia
- Conduct disorder
- Anxiety disorder
- Low self-esteem
- PTSD

Serious physical health conditions that include pain-

Individuals who suffer from chronic conditions that are associated with a lot of pain are at an increased risk for suicide.

Traumatic brain injury-

Traumatic brain injuries can increase the risk of suicide.

Environmental Factors

In addition to health factors, environmental factors can increase an individual's risk of suicide.

Access to the means for suicide-

One of the contributing factors for suicide is access to means.

- Firearms
- Drugs

Prolonged stress-

Prolonged stress can be a risk factor for suicide, and this is an especially important point for schools to note since they can have a direct impact on the environmental conditions that students face.

- Harassment/bullying
- Relationship problems

Stressful life events-

Stressful life events can be a risk factor for suicide. These include the following:

- Financial crisis
- Rejection/divorce
- Loss/death of a loved one
- Life transitions
- Academic failures
- Trouble with authorities/school suspensions/arrest
- Natural disaster

Exposure to another's suicide-

Many health professionals have noted an increase in suicides following a high-profile suicide or within a community where someone has died by suicide. In this way, suicide can be thought of as "contagious."

- Personal exposure
- Sensationalized media exposure

Previous suicide attempts-

Someone who has previously attempted suicide is at an increased risk for suicide.

Family history of suicide-

Someone who has a family history of suicide is at an increased risk for suicides.

Childhood abuse, trauma, or neglect-

Childhood abuse, trauma, or neglect can be a risk factor for suicide.

Warning Signs

Perhaps the most important aspect of prevention is the ability to recognize warning signs for suicide and take them seriously. Intervention is a key component to suicide prevention. Individuals who are contemplating suicide can be helped.

Talk	Behavior	Mood
There is a misconception that people who talk about suicide will not actually act upon those ideas. This is a dangerous myth. The truth is that many people who die by suicide do talk about it. Recognizing the kinds of phrases and conversations that may be a warning sign is important for early intervention. These conversations may take place in person or online. The person who is considering suicide may talk about any of the following: ➤ Killing self ➤ Feeling hopeless ➤ Having no reason to live ➤ Being a burden ➤ Feeling trapped ➤ Being in unbearable pain	Behavior is another key warning sign. Someone who is at increased risk for suicide may show any of the following signs: ➤ Increased drug/alcohol use ➤ Searching for suicide methods online ➤ Withdrawing from activities ➤ Isolating self from others ➤ Sleeping too much or too little ➤ Visiting or calling people to say goodbye ➤ Giving away possessions ➤ Aggression ➤ Fatigue	A person's mood can be a warning sign for suicide. Someone at increased risk for suicide may exhibit any of the following: ➤ Depression ➤ Anxiety ➤ Loss of interest ➤ Irritability ➤ Humiliation/shame ➤ Agitation/anger ➤ Relief/sudden improvement

Protective factors

In addition to risk factors, there are also protective factors that can decrease someone's risk of suicide--even in the face of other risk factors. These include the following:

- Effective behavioral health care
- Connection to family, community, and social institutions
- Life skills
- Problem solving skills
- Coping skills
- Adaptability
- Self-esteem
- Cultural, religious, personal beliefs that discourage suicide

Connections between bullying and suicide

Especially for youth, bullying is often a serious risk factor for suicide. It is important to take bullying and harassment seriously and to provide mitigation, prevention, intervention, and support to decrease the risk of suicide.

Prevention

Strategies:

There are many strategies to help decrease suicide.

Strengthen mental health support

- Including coverage of mental health conditions in insurance policies
- Increasing mental health care providers in underserved areas

Protective environments

- Reducing access to lethal means (guns, drugs, etc.)
- Community-based policies to reduce drug and alcohol use

Promoting connectedness

- Student engagement programs
- Community engagement activities

Building resilience and problem-solving skills

- SEL Education
- Parenting and family relationship programs

Increased identification of at-risk individuals

- Training for educators, parents, and peers
- Crisis intervention plans

Social media-

Social media can have an impact on suicidal thoughts through multiple avenues. It can be a place where bullying and other triggers for high-stress events occur. It can also be a place where violent images or triggering discussions of self-harm take place.

- Parents, educators, and health professionals should be asking children about their digital lives as a regular part of health and well-being screening.
- Crisis intervention safety plans should include digital/social media plans.
- Parents should use parental control tools to limit social media through time limits, hours restrictions, and content filters.⁹

Suicide media reporting practices

- Use of images of individual who died by suicide engaging in life rather than looking depressed/disheveled
- Avoid identifying a specific incident as the “cause” of the suicide
- Limit audience exposure to images of grieving family and friends
- Avoid oversimplified or dramatized headlines
- Avoid providing exact details on location or method
- Avoid publishing content or images from suicide note, final text, or final social media post
- Avoid language like “inexplicable,” “unexplainable,” or “without warning” when describing a suicide death¹⁰

School Responsibility

Primary and secondary schools are identified as stakeholders in the NC Suicide Prevention Plan. This means that schools have an important role to play when it comes to preventing youth suicide and helping to spread awareness about warning signs and prevention strategies.¹¹

Strategies:

- Adopt rules/policies that seek to prevent bullying in schools
- Promote and support Wellness Recovery Action Plans (WRAP) for students and families
- Engage in activities to increase emotional intelligence and resiliency as part of character education efforts
- Partner with community organizations to provide suicide prevention and information
- Make suicide prevention part of the annual and ongoing training for staff
- Craft suicide prevention methods aimed at the audiences that make up their school community
- Include mandatory suicide prevention education and awareness curricula in school plan¹¹

Resources

[Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration \(SAMHSA\)](#)

A branch of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, SAMHSA aims to provide information and resources for suicide prevention programs. Resources include call centers, resource centers, and webinars.¹²

[Suicide Prevention Resource Center \(SPRC\)](#)

This federally supported resource center provides technical assistance, training, and materials to aid in suicide prevention. This includes a Best Practices Registry, a library of resources, publication of toolkits, and technical assistance.¹³

[The Jason Foundation](#)

An education and awareness program, the Jason Foundation aims to give tools to young people, educators, and parents to prevent youth suicide.¹⁴

[The Trevor Project](#)

This project was founded in 1998 and aims to provide crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to LGBTQ youth ages 13-24.¹⁵

[Child Mind Institute](#)

National nonprofit aimed at helping children and families struggling with mental health and learning disorders.¹⁶

[Youth Mental Health First Aid & Teen Mental Health First Aid](#)

Designed to teach parents, family members, caregivers, teachers, school staff, peers, neighbors, health and human services workers, and other caring citizens how to help an adolescent (age 12-18) who is experiencing a mental health or addictions challenge or is in crisis. **Youth Mental Health First Aid** is primarily designed for adults who regularly interact with young people. **Teen Mental Health First Aid** is primarily designed for teens who interact with other teens.¹⁷ To learn more about training in NC, please contact Karen Fairley, karen.fairley@dpi.nc.gov at the NC Center for Safer Schools.

[National Alliance on Mental Illness in North Carolina](#)

Promotes recovery and optimized health for those affected by mental illness through support, advocacy, education, and training with around 40 affiliate sites across the state.¹⁸

[North Carolina Collaborative for Children, Youth, and Families](#)

Serves families and community partners to help improve outcomes for children, youth, and families.¹⁹

Program Resources:

[SAMHSA Preventing Suicide: A Toolkit for High School](#)

This toolkit assists high schools and school districts in designing and implementing strategies to prevent suicide and promote behavioral health.²⁰

[Garret Lee Smith Youth Suicide Prevention Program and “It’s OK 2 ASK” Media Campaign](#)

It’s OK 2 ASK” is a website and marketing campaign to reduce stigma around mental illness and encourage youth to seek help. Aimed at 10-24-year-old in North Carolina.²¹

[Talk Saves Lives](#)

Program that trains participants in suicide prevention.²²

[More Than Sad](#)

Program aimed at high school students, parents, and teachers.²³

[safeTALK](#)

Half-day training program for ages 15 or older. Participants are trained as suicide prevention helpers. Helpers are trained to work alongside community resources.²⁴

[ASIST](#)

Two-day training program for ages 16 or older. Teaches participants to recognize someone at risk of suicide and create a plan for immediate safety.²⁵

Spotlight Resource

For more information on Suicide Prevention, please contact Kenya Procter, Senior Consultant with Procter Solutions, at 910-551-4688 and Kenya.procter@gmail.com.

Kenya is a Consultant Trainer in ASIST and a Master Training in safeTALK with Livingworks. She also serves as Chair on the Board of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, North Carolina Chapter.

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