

Today's school crimes are more violent than in years past and involve children at younger ages.

School Safety

UPDATE

Annual study shows 3 million crimes on school campuses

Nearly 3 million thefts and violent crimes occur on or near school campuses every year, according to the National Crime Survey. That's almost 16,000 incidents per school day or one every six seconds.

National Crime Survey data shows that youths between the ages of 12 and 19 were the victims of 1.9 million violent crimes — rape, robbery and assault — and experienced 3.3 million crimes of theft each year from 1985 to 1988. Much crime against teens occurs in and around schools or on the street. About half of all violent crimes against youths 12 to 19 occurred in school buildings, on school property or on the street, according to the survey data released in May 1991 by the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Statistics.

Even though the number of crimes on school campuses has remained about the same for the last few years, recent statistics indicate that crimes committed at school are more serious in nature, the age at which children are committing

these crimes is becoming younger and younger, and the frequency of assaults is increasing. The level of school crime and violence reported in the annual National Crime Survey is comparable to the findings of the National Institute of Education's (NIE) *Violent Schools — Safe Schools* study conducted in 1978, the last in-depth national study on school crime.

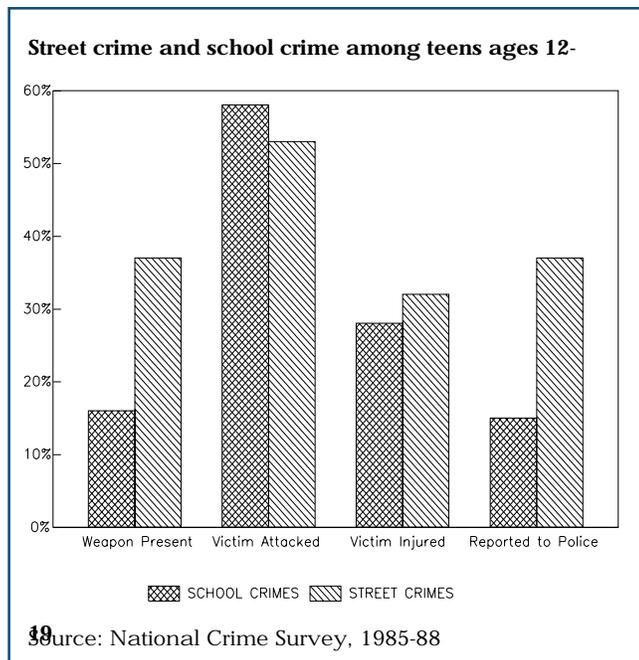
According to the National Crime Survey's report on teenage victims, approximately 67 out of every 1,000 teenagers experienced a violent crime each year, compared to 26 violent crimes for every 1,000 persons age 20 or over. Teens also experienced twice as many thefts as adults. About 118 out of every 1,000 teens were the victim

of a theft annually, while the rate for adults was 62 per 1,000.

Twelve percent of the violent crimes in school buildings involved an offender with a weapon. In comparison, three times as many violent street crimes — 37 percent — had a weapon involved. However, the National Crime Survey found that in other respects, violent crimes committed on the street or at school were similar in severity.

In fact, about the same number of violent crimes against teens occurred either in a school building or on school property as on the street. The National

Crime Survey reported that an average of 476,365 teens were victimized in violent street crimes each year, while 483,764 teens were victimized annually by a violent crime occurring at school or on school property.



COVER STORY

School crimes against both students and teachers often are not reported to the police. In about 37 percent of the violent crimes in school buildings and 32 percent of those on school property, the police were not notified.

According to a report by the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority, nearly one-third of robberies, one-quarter of thefts and 40 percent of assaults among Illinois students were not reported. Among teachers, 16 percent of robberies, 40 percent of thefts and 25 percent of assaults were not reported.

Other data compiled by the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority reveals that one in 12 public high school students reported being physically attacked at school or on the way to school last year. About the same number — one in 12 — stayed home one or more days out of fear that someone would hurt or bother them at school.

These findings, which parallel the 1978 NIE study, come from a 1990 survey of 31 public high schools across the state about crime and victimization levels in their community. Other data from the study revealed that:

- Suburban students reported higher theft and assault rates than did students from large Illinois cities.
- Theft was the most common crime reported, with 22.6 percent of the students and 28.5 percent of the teachers being victimized during the 1989-90 school year.
- One in 12 students had been the victim of a physical attack during the last school year, and almost twice that many had escaped an attempted assault. Eight percent of the assault victims reported being stabbed or cut, and 4 percent reported being shot.
- Almost one-third of the students said they had brought a weapon to school for self-protection at some time during their high school career. One in 20, or 5.3 percent, said they had brought a gun to school.
- One in 11 teachers reported that a student had threatened to hurt them during the past month.

California's most recent school crime data reflected 174,478 crimes for the 1988-89 school year, up 5 percent over the previous school year. Assaults were up 16 percent to 69,191. Armed assaults were up 25 percent over the previous year to 1,830. Most alarming was the increase in guns on campus — up 40 percent from the prior year.

Although only schools in California and South Carolina are legally mandated to keep records about criminal inci-

dents, the increase in school crime nationwide has led urban areas in particular to track the amount of crime that occurs on their school campuses. In Philadelphia, the number of school crime incidents has steadily increased from 5,861 in 1987 to 7,505 in 1990. This number includes crimes classified as assaults, robberies, theft and vandalism as well as weapon- and drug-related offenses.

In the Dade County (Florida) Public Schools, assaults for the 1989-90 school year reached 1,889, up 9 percent over the previous year, and robberies and motor vehicle thefts were up 12.5 percent.

Teachers can't teach and students can't learn in an environment filled with fear and intimidation. In fact, many good teachers have dropped out of the educational system because of the threat of violence.

In Detroit, attacks against teachers have increased 900 percent since 1985, according to district records. In New York City during the 1989-90 school year, 464 assaults were committed against teachers, which is up 34.9 percent from the prior year. Incidents of harassment increased 16.4 percent, and larceny increased 23.9 percent, according to the

United Federation of Teachers.

The level of school crime affects the behavior of both students and teachers, often with detrimental effects on after-school activities. For instance, teachers in New

York City schools are advised to leave campus immediately after dismissal for their personal safety.

Teachers are increasingly concerned about violence and disruptive behavior in the schools. A 1987 U.S. Department of Education survey of teachers from urban, suburban and rural school districts nationwide found:

- 44 percent reported more disruptive behavior than five years ago;
- 42 percent observed a serious fight in the past month;
- 20 percent said they were threatened while at school;
- 40 percent said behavior interfered with teaching; and
- 29 percent said they had seriously considered leaving teaching because of behavioral problems.

The magnitude of school crime and violence affecting both students and teachers can no longer be ignored. This critical issue has come to the forefront of public concern, but a long-term solution will require educators to work with parents, law enforcement officials and the community in implementing prevention and intervention strategies to alleviate violence in our nation's schools.

Teenage victims had about the same chance of being attacked or injured at school, on school property or on the street.

Superintendents address issues of ethnoviolence

The Fall 1991 issue of the *School Safety* Newsjournal focused on the topic of ethnoviolence — acts of violence or intimidation motivated by prejudice and hate. To further research what effects ethnoviolence is having on our nation's schools, the National School Safety Center surveyed state school superintendents to find out what various states are doing to combat school violence that is motivated by racism and bias.

William L. Lepley, director of Iowa's Department of Education, says that the incidence of hate crimes has been growing in their state. A total of 40 bias-motivated crimes — including cross-burnings, vandalism and assaults — were reported in 1987 and 1988, while 27 such incidents occurred in 1989. "Although a clear reporting mechanism doesn't exist for incidents that take place in schools, we know from media reports that they do occur," Lepley says.

In 1990, Iowa amended existing state hate crimes law to provide increased penalties for bias-motivated crimes, to mandate that data concerning such crimes be collected and reported statewide, and to ensure that the victims of hate crimes be protected under the law.

A special task force also has been appointed to examine and report on bias-motivated crimes in Iowa. One of the task force's recommendations has been to increase public awareness in this area, which includes "providing K-12 students with educational experiences that will give them a better appreciation for diverse people and cultures, not just prevent bias-motivated crimes," Lepley adds.

"As the task force recommendations are put in place, we will place further emphasis on developing curriculum materials and training educators in cultural sensitivity and effective instructional techniques," Lepley explains.

"In New York State and many other states, violence directed against individuals because of their race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, age, disability, gender and sexual orientation is on the increase," states Thomas Sobol, New York's commissioner of education. New York also has charged a task force with analyzing the issue of bias-

related violence.

The "Task Force on Bias-Related Violence," in a March 1988 report, made specific recommendations regarding the role of elementary and secondary as well as higher education in reducing and preventing bias-related crimes. Some of the task force's recommendations were to require that multicultural education be included in the curriculum at all grade levels; to organize statewide or regional conferences for school personnel on awareness, strategies and models for addressing the issue; and to establish exchange programs involving schools of different cultures to expose children to varied customs and traditions.

Numerous programs already are in place within New York's schools to promote multicultural awareness and find alternatives to resolving conflicts. Two of these programs, "A World of Difference" sponsored by the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith and the Council for Unity at John Dewey High School in Brooklyn, both were featured in articles in the Fall 1991 issue of *School Safety*.

The Michigan Department of Education has several programs designed to alleviate problems motivated by prejudice and hate. The Racial Equity Program provides technical assistance to school districts that are experiencing racial segregation, bias or discrimination problems. The School Safety Grant Program provides funds to school districts experiencing violence and disruptive behavior in the schools. The Michigan Department of Education also has developed materials and conducts workshops to assist school staff in the inclusion of multicultural education in the curriculum.

The Equity Assistance Center was established in 1985 as part of the Arkansas Department of Education to provide technical assistance for school districts and in-service training for school personnel to help all students receive equitable educational opportunities free from discrimination. Multicultural education, prejudice-reduction training, and equity compliance workshops are some of the classroom and administrative programs offered in Arkansas.

In Maryland, the Task Force on Violence and Extremism as early as 1982 found that young people in particular were expressing less racial tolerance. "If the age turnabout among young adults continues, there is cause for concern about the steady progress toward racial harmony that has been well underway since the 1960s," the study concluded. As a result, "training of student leaders and organizing school-based human relations committees for students have become important components of our technical assistance program," notes Maryland State Superintendent of Schools Joseph L. Shilling.

Rascon sets pace with innovations for school safety

When one thinks of school safety and the prevention of crime and violence in our nation's schools, few names are as prominent as Alex Rascon Jr. He has created a dynamic philosophy for school crime prevention through the development of a police force for San Diego City Schools. A closer look at Rascon reveals an individual who is both a pioneer and a pacesetter when it comes to the safety of San Diego's schoolchildren.

"School safety requires a uniform and consistent approach with the cooperation of all the players — site administrators, teachers, aides, students, parents, local law enforcement and community leaders," Rascon commented. "School police cannot do it alone. It has to be a team effort with everybody knowing what to do, how to do it, and what to look for." Throughout his career, Rascon has looked for ways to establish partnerships and build teamwork within the community to combat the problems of crime and violence at school.

In 1969, Rascon began his distinguished career with the San Diego City School District as one of the district's first four peace officers. He was responsible for investigating all criminal activity and for creating crime-prevention practices to improve the climate in the schools assigned to him. By 1973, 19 more peace officers had been appointed and Rascon was promoted to the office of supervisor and assistant to the director of police.

One of the most innovative crime-prevention programs in the history of San Diego City Schools was created by Rascon. He proposed that by turning off the lights which illuminate areas of public access during non-school hours and holidays, incidents of loitering and vandalsim could be decreased considerably. During the first year of districtwide implementation, property crimes went down by 33 percent and utility costs were cut by more than one million dollars.

In order to successfully implement this darkened school project, Neighborhood Watch programs were established that enlist the help of local citizens to call a 24 hour hotline number if they see any unusual activity on school campuses during the period of darkness. Today, more than 1,100 calls per year are re-

ceived from citizens after school hours to assist the district in crime prevention.

Another brainchild of Rascon is the use of ornamental iron rather than chain-link fencing around buildings and entrances of school facilities. Ornamental fencing enhances beauty while reducing vandalism and illegal entry.

One of Rascon's latest accomplishments is the creation of a new emergency operations center with the latest technology in radio equipment. The system's 800-megahertz frequency gives school police the ability to communicate directly with the city police, and it allows principals, school

police, bus drivers and maintenance personnel to be in contact with central staff. This new communication network enhances disaster preparedness and facilitates response to emergencies.

Throughout his career, Rascon has been called upon to provide expertise on school safety-related issues. For example, he was asked by the Governor's Office of Criminal Justice Planning to assist in the identification and drafting of 10 safe school bills to address issues such as narcotics, truancy, high-risk students, trespassing, loitering and assaults against school personnel. The bills were overwhelmingly passed in 1982 by California legislators.

Rascon has participated in producing three school safety training films. Additionally, he has contributed numerous articles for publications such as *School Safety*, *Thrust for Educational Leadership*, and *San Diego Magazine*. In 1989, the San Diego City Schools Police Department was selected by *USA Today* as one of three exemplary programs in the nation and was the subject of the television program "School Violence in the USA Today."

Whether it's implementing state-of-the-art equipment or finding an uncommon solution to a common problem, Rascon is taking the lead in making schools safer for children in California and throughout the nation.

Alex Rascon, Jr.

"School safety has to be a team effort with everybody knowing what to do, how to do it, and what to look for."

Today's youth are more violent, prone to crime

Violent crimes reach record number

If schools are a reflection of the larger community, information recently released by the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports should be reason for concern. A record number of Americans, 732 per 100,000 residents, was affected by violent crime in 1990. Murder increased 8 percent, rape went up 8.1 percent, robbery rose 10.3 percent and aggravated assaults increased 10.6 percent.

Experts continue to blame this increase on drugs. Gene Stephens, a professor at the University of South Carolina's College of Criminal Justice, stated that the war on drugs has "created a new class of organized crime, and this class is more violent than the old organized crime because it's made up of more crime-prone people: young, disenfranchised kids."

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A million teens attempt suicide

The Atlanta-based Centers for Disease Control released a study which shows that one million American teenagers attempted suicide during a recent 12-month period. The study was based on a 1990 survey of 11,631 students in grades 9 through 12.

Based on the responses of the students interviewed, the CDC estimated that 3.6 million students (27.3 percent) considered taking their own lives, 2.1 million (16.3 percent) went so far as to devise a suicide plan, and 1 million (8.3 percent) actually made an attempt. An estimated 276,000 (2 percent) sustained injuries serious enough to require medical treatment.

Latino and white students reported higher percentages of suicidal thoughts and behaviors than black students. Females significantly outnumbered males, and Latino females were much more likely to attempt suicide than black and white females, according to the survey.

Attempted suicide is "a risk factor for future completed suicide" and "a potential indicator of other health problems," such as substance abuse, depression and stress, the study found. The CDC said that educational programs designed to warn about the signs of suicide and to develop suicide prevention strategies are not widely in use.

Corporal punishment declines

The use of paddling in Georgia schools was relatively high in the early 1980s, but has fallen off dramatically since 1986. Based on a random survey of 73 percent of Georgia schools conducted by the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights, the overall percentage of students paddled fell from 8 percent in 1986 to under 4 percent in 1990. In that same period, paddling of blacks went from 12 percent to 5 percent.

Ninth-grader holds class hostage

A student who came to math class with a sawed-off shotgun held 22 classmates hostage at Stevens High School in Rapid City, South Dakota, on September 11. Although he discharged the weapon about 10 times, no one was injured in the incident.

After ordering the teacher out of the room, the armed student demanded that cigarettes and food be sent. Police Chief Tom Hennies reported that another student disarmed him when he placed the shotgun on a table to light a cigarette.

School resource officers meet

The first National Association of School Resource Officers conference was July 28 to August 1 in Sarasota, Florida. The 12th annual Florida Association of School Resource Officers conducted its conference concurrently.

NASRO President Jim Corbin reported that several hundred officers and educators attended the conference from every region of the United States. For more information about NASRO, contact Corbin at 407/898-5491, ext. 207.

Who you gonna call? Drug busters!

Police in Del City, Oklahoma, recorded a rap song that has been broadcast locally to put drug dealers on notice and to give citizens an easy way to remember the number to call when they have information about drug dealing. The song has been so successful that the department plans to record another song with a country-western sound. Del City's Drug Busters can be reached at 405/677-DRUG.

Lawmakers take action concerning school safety

Drug-free school zones upheld

New Jersey is one of many states to adopt a state drug-free school zone statute. In July, the New Jersey Supreme Court upheld the law in a case where the defendant was arrested within 1,000 feet of school-owned property.

Defendant Charles Ivory argued that he was not within a school zone because the property in question was not exclusively used for school purposes. He also insisted that he did not intend to distribute drugs within a school zone.

In *State v. Ivory*, 124 N.J. 582, 592 A.2d 205, 68 Educ. L. Rep. (West) 431 (N.J., 1991), Justice Marie Garibaldi cited the legislative history of the statute to show that property within the meaning of the statutory language did not have to be used for school purposes only and that lack of specific intent to violate the statute was no defense. "We recognize that the Legislature was not overly concerned with fairness toward drug dealers," she said. The Legislature created the school safety zones because "[d]rugs and school children are a volatile, explosive mix...."

All-male schools ruled unconstitutional

The Fall 1991 *School Safety* Newsjournal included an article about the strategies employed by Milwaukee Public Schools to enhance the academic performance of African-American males. One strategy was the establishment of two special schools. These schools, although open to all students regardless of race or gender, are targeted toward black males and offer Afro-centered curricula.

Since the article was published, the American Civil Liberties Union and the National Organization for Women Legal Defense and Education Fund filed suit in U.S. District Court to block three all-male academies from opening in Detroit, Michigan. The District Court ruled that single-sex schools, no matter what their purpose, are unconstitutional. The Detroit Board of Education agreed to let female students attend the schools to comply with the ruling, but the board plans to appeal the decision.

Congress advised of school crime

On July 17, 1991, Dr. Ronald D. Stephens, executive director of NSSC, testified before the House Subcommittee on Crime and Criminal Justice. Testimony was heard from school safety experts as well as victims of school crime and their families.

After considering the scope of the problem of school crime and violence and analyzing the nearly 3 million index crimes that occur on or near school campuses every year, Stephens described several strategies and programs that should be considered to address the problem. These recommendations include placing school safety on the national agenda through the implementation of a national Safe Schools Act; mandating school crime reporting; providing students with training in conflict resolution and multicultural education; creating state school safety centers; mobilizing the community; and developing safe schools plans.

The full text of Stephens' testimony is available from NSSC.

Hazelwood revisited

In *Hazelwood School District v. Kuhlmeier*, 484 U.S. 260 (1988), the U.S. Supreme Court held that when school publications are intended for educational purposes, school officials may regulate their content.

The Supreme Court said that a school, in its capacity as publisher, can choose to remain neutral on politically controversial issues and may refuse to print anything that takes another position. The high court further ruled that it was reasonable for a school principal to control student expressive activities that he concluded were unsuitable for publication on account of their subject matter, given the youth of the audience and lack of opportunity for third parties to respond.

In a similar case, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit ruled on a Nevada school district's refusal to allow Planned Parenthood to place advertisements in high school newspapers, yearbooks and sports programs. The questioned ads offered birth control methods; routine gynecological exams; and pregnancy testing, verification, counseling and referrals.

In *Planned Parenthood of Southern Nevada Inc. v. Clark County School District*, the Court of Appeals held that school-sponsored publications, including advertisements, were not intended to be public forums and that the refusals were reasonable because they were neutral in content. In allowing the principal to control the content of school-sponsored publications, the schools were acting within the ruling of *Hazelwood*.

New York program assists victims of school crime

Earlier this year, six intruders pushed their way into John's high school social studies class in New York City. They arranged themselves along one side of the room while blocking the door. For no apparent reason, one started a fight with another. While John was distracted, a third approached him on the left and deeply slashed his face with a razor, causing a wound that required more than 30 stitches.

Since the incident, John has been confused, withdrawn from his family and friends, unable to work, and plagued with headaches. This was his 33rd year in the school system.

Incidents such as this one are not uncommon. The United Federation of Teachers reports that during the 1989-90 school year, 2,790 incidents involving the victimization of school staff occurred in New York City schools. One-third of these were classified as serious violations, including assaults, robberies and sex offenses. In more than 40 of the incidents, a gun was fired.

In response to the growing awareness of the problem of school violence and its devastating effects for both the individual victim and the school community at large, the New York City Board of Education and the United Federation of Teachers jointly established the Victim Support Program (VSP) in September 1989 to provide assistance to school staff members who are victims of school-related crime.

Victimization can cause not only serious physical injury but also can have devastating psychological consequences as well. For children, victimization can lead to problems

such as traumatic reactions and developmental arrest. For adults, it can have a profound impact on both personal and professional functioning. Reactions range from mild psychological distress to severe impairment.

The goal of VSP is to provide support for victims during the aftermath of an incident as they try to get on with their personal and professional lives. Program services include outreach to identified school staff victims, psychological counseling and referrals for long-term treatment, training for social service providers and school administrators in dealing with victims and trauma, and school-site visits to provide assistance in resolving the school's ongoing trauma.

VSP also offers an array of practical assistance and advocacy services, which include providing information about

procedures, systems and agencies; helping with the completion of forms and reports; and accompanying victims to court and the medical bureau.

In addition, the Victim Support Program has created a self-help network consisting of previously injured staff members who, following a course of training in crisis intervention, voluntarily provide support and assistance to newly victimized staff.

In a recent survey, clients of the program expressed the sense of despair and isolation that consumed them after their injury and also expressed their gratitude for having support available from VSP. As one teacher reported, "When a teacher is injured as I was, his life turns upside-down. Friends don't really understand and local union officials are not equipped to handle the situation. At 47 years of age, I found myself totally alone in the days following my injury. Until I contacted the Victim Support Program, I was really drowning. They

threw me a life preserver and helped keep me afloat until I was ready to swim by myself."

For more information about how the Victim Support Program began and how it operates, contact June Feder, Ph.D., Program Psychologist/Coordinator, or Jim Bauman, Coordinator, Victim Support Program, United Federation of Teachers, 260 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10010, 212/598-6853.

Victims information and assistance programs

National Victims Resource Center

Box 6000-AJE
Rockville, MD 20850
1-800/627-6872 or 301/251-5525

National Organization for Victim Assistance (NOVA)

1757 Park Road, NW
Washington, DC 20010
202/232-6682

National Victim Center

307 West 7th Street, Suite 1001
Fort Worth, TX 76102
817/877-3355

Victims of Crime Resource Center

McGeorge School of Law
University of the Pacific
3200 Fifth Avenue
Sacramento, CA 95817
1-800/VICTIMS (California only)
916/739-7061

NSSC relocates to expand services and training

Never has the issue of school crime and violence caused greater concern than in recent months. The safety of America's schoolchildren is on the minds of nearly everyone involved, including key policy-shapers and their constituencies. This past July, the House Subcommittee on Crime and Criminal Justice requested testimony from NSSC and other school safety experts on the scope of the problem of school crime and violence nationwide.

This burgeoning interest, combined with national and local crime reports and surveys, is evidence that school safety issues need to be high on the nation's educational agenda. According to the 1991 Gallup Poll of "The Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools," Americans favor placing the highest priority on goal six of the President's Education Goals for the year 2000 — making schools free of drugs and violence and offering a disciplined environment conducive to learning.

With a new \$900,000 grant from the U.S. Departments of Justice and Education, the National School Safety Center will continue to promote safer school campuses — free of

drugs, vandalism, gangs and bullying. NSSC recently received a commitment from the U. S. Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention for funding through 1992.

Now in its eighth year of operation, NSSC is stepping up its services. With this issue of the *School Safety Update*, NSSC introduces the **School Safety News Service**, the definitive and most comprehensive source for school crime prevention planning available.

The News Service is composed of nine monthly publications. *School Safety*, the NSSC Newsjournal, is published three times each year in the fall, winter and spring. The new *School Safety Update* is published six times each school year in October, November, December, February, March and April.

The *School Safety Update* is intended to communicate current trends and effective programs in school safety and to provide a vehicle for exchanging ideas. If you have school safety news or a program that is working, NSSC encourages you to submit original reports, artwork or program descriptions and will review each item for possible publication.

The National School Safety Center also has moved to a new location. NSSC's new headquarters house a conference room and training facility for school safety training programs and workshops. The new facilities, while reducing costs, allow for the expansion of NSSC's resource library that currently contains more than 100,000 school safety articles, publications and films.

NSSC's new offices are located at 4165 Thousand Oaks Blvd., Suite 290, Westlake Village, California 91362, telephone 805/373-9977, FAX 805/373-9277.

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