

School Safety Update

The Newsletter of the National School Safety Center

November 2000

San Bernardino interagency partnership develops protocol for “Kids with Guns”

As school crime and violence have increasingly registered as a prime concern among citizens, school officials have begun to develop closer working partnerships with law enforcement, probation, the courts and other youth-serving agencies. One result of such partnerships has been the trend toward setting up formal Interagency Agreements. Such agreements share a common purpose — making schools safe havens in which all students may learn and enhancing the services provided to young people in need of special supervision and to their families.

The San Bernardino County Law Enforcement Education Partnership is an example of interagency collaboration. The partnership includes the presiding juvenile court judge; the district attorney; the county superintendent of schools; the probation department; county department/s of behavioral human services, health, and children’s services; the sheriff’s department, various municipal and school police departments; and the California Highway Patrol.

These participating agencies joined together to develop a countywide protocol for managing young people who are found in possession of a firearm either on a school campus or in the community. In an effort to prevent youth violence in San Bernardino County communities, the protocol is designed to create a uniform and consistent response to minors who carry firearms.

The protocol is to be applied to all juveniles who are arrested with firearms either on campus or on their way to and from school. The protocol will be used on a discretionary basis for those minors arrested with firearms off campus. If an arresting officer has reason to believe that the firearm was being carried to create a violent incident on a campus, the officer may choose to follow the protocol.

According to the protocol agreement, each young person arrested with a firearm will be assessed using a standardized procedure to determine his or her potential for violence. The purpose of the assessment is to determine how to deal with offender.

Each agency has agreed to certain responsibilities stated within the written protocol. In addition, each agency agrees to cooperate with and support the efforts of each of the partners in preventing illegal firearm possession by minors, treatment of these minors, and education to promote public safety. The specific responsibilities of participating agencies include the following:

- **Law Enforcement** will investigate each instance of a minor caught in possession of a firearm. The law enforcement investigation will include contact with the minor’s parents or legal guardian at the minor’s home and an attempt to gain a consent search of the minor’s room/residence or vehicle. Law enforcement will be responsible for collecting initial information that can be used to assess the youth’s propensity for violence and threat to the community. Information collected in law enforcement investigation will include:

- the reaction of the parent/guardian;
- the suspect’s access to firearms;
- the suspect’s familiarity with firearms;
- a description of the suspect’s home environment, particularly any materials found in the suspect’s room that make threats to others or that have dark, violent or morbid themes.

- **Probation** will detain the minor in Juvenile Hall at least through the detention hearing. Using a preliminary assessment tool developed by the Behavioral Health department, probation intake staff will evaluate the minor and notify the

Behavioral Health staff if the minor in custody appears to be at risk and to need further evaluation. Probation will be also responsible for notifying other participating agencies about the minor’s detention.

- **The San Bernardino County Office of Education** will make available information about the minor to any appropriate agency and serve as a liaison between the schools and outside agencies. When a minor has been detained due to possession of a firearm, the county education office will contact the school administration where the student is enrolled. The county representative will explain the circumstances and seek to gain the school’s cooperation in providing appropriate school records to other agencies and in completing preliminary assessment reports about the suspect.

Schools within the county will follow specific procedures when a student is found in possession of a firearm on a school site or at a school-related activity. The first step of the protocol will be to contact the local law enforcement agency and request law enforcement presence. Schools will also suspend and recommend expulsion of the student per the Education Code.

The San Bernardino Superintendent of Schools, in conjunction with the local school districts, will develop an adjunct protocol to deal with threats of violence made by students that do not immediately involve firearms. The primary assessment tool can be the personality assessment profile developed by Behavioral Health or a similar instrument developed by the schools.

- **The Department of Behavioral Health (DBH)** will develop a preliminary assessment tool, which will be used by agencies working with the suspect to as-

sess the threat of danger that the minor presents. The results of the assessment will be used in determining the best course of action for the minor. The following information will be identified and/or assessed:

- the response of the child;
- a complete personal history of the child;
- the response of the parent/s;
- the child's family life circumstances;
- the violence, if any, precipitating the situation;
- access to firearms in the home and in the community;
- a description of the home and bedroom of the minor; and
- any relevant environmental and cultural factors.

DBH will review the preliminary assessment information provided by law enforcement and probation and, if deemed necessary, will complete a risk assessment by both a licensed mental health practitioner and a certified child psychiatrist to determine:

- the danger posed by the suspect to self and/or others;
- how suspect's actions may be related to a conduct disorder or to other types of mental disorders; and
- the suspect's proneness to violence.
- **Human Services Systems** will research its database to determine if there is an open case on the minor or his/her family. Should the agency have a file, information will be shared with the appropriate agencies.
- **The Department of Children's Services** will provide full support of this effort within the mandates and laws that govern the department. This includes researching any previous cases referred to the department involving the minor and/or the minor's family; cooperating with law enforcement agencies conducting child abuse investigations; assessing protection issues within the juvenile suspect's home; and making resources available to children and families in need of Child Welfare services.

• **The District Attorney** will review and prosecute cases where the charges can be proven for any minor found in possession of a firearm, either on or off a school campus. Whenever possible, the District Attorney will also file charges against parents or legal guardians for the negligent storage of a firearm that ends up in a minor's possession and/or failure to exercise reasonable supervision, control and care of a minor.

In addition to these specific responsibilities, each participating agency in the San Bernardino Law Enforcement Education Partnership agrees to review the protocol annually to determine its continued applicability or need for modification. The agreement also acknowledges that public service agencies are subject to fluctuations in the availability of personnel. According to the written agreement, "if any agency cannot fulfill all of its obligations pursuant to the protocol because of personnel restrictions, every effort will be made to ensure that the intent of the protocol is realized."

Assessing risk factors associated with violent behavior

Thomas J. Craney, Ed.D., a school psychologist with the Frederick County Public Schools in Middletown, Maryland, submitted the following organizing tool to NSSC to share with other school-based professionals. This assessment tool is not to be used for profiling nor is it exhaustive, but provides an empirically based and systematic approach to violence risk assessment. The tool is the culmination of Dr. Craney's review of the literature and research over the past year.

Presented first is a general list of guidelines for conducting violence risk assessments. Following is a list of characteristics and limitations of Dr. Craney's organizing tool. Presented on the opposite page is his approach to assessing a student's risk for violent behavior.

General guidelines for conducting violence risk assessments

- Use multiple formats and sources of information, and attempt to corroborate reports, facts and information.
- Use empirically-based risk factors to

make "risk estimates," NOT predictions.

- Recognize the importance of social context, and base "risk estimates" upon specific social contexts.
- If necessary, form several "risk estimate" opinions based upon future social contexts and specific possible circumstances.
- Understand behavior within a developmentally appropriate context.
- Understand that past aggressive behaviors vary by:

Chronicity - "Life-course persistent" versus "adolescence-limited" aggressive tendencies.

Recency - Acts of violence in the distant past should not be given "equal" weight of more recent acts of violence

Frequency - How often acts of violence have been committed and latency between acts of violence

Severity - Little relationship exists between the most serious violent offenses and risk of repeated violence (except in rape/sexual assault)

Context - Past acts of violence involve

specific settings, circumstances, times and persons.

General characteristics of the organizing tool

- This organizing tool is not exhaustive, but provides an empirically based and systematic approach to violence and risk assessment.
- Individual risk factors are listed in an arbitrary order and not in order of importance or significance.
- Individual risk factors are not equally weighted in their importance and may vary in their weight or importance from person to person.
- There is no formal system for "scoring" this assessment. A "degree of risk" approach should be used (i.e., none, mild, moderate, severe).
- Most of the empirically based factors contained within this tool pertain to males, and are less strongly correlated with females.

Contact Dr. Craney at 240/236-1250 for more information.

Assessing risk factors associated with violent behavior (continued)

Traditional and Non-Traditional Violence Factors

McGee and DeBernardo (1999) included certain school-related acts of violence within the “Classroom Avenger Profile” and characterized these acts as “non-traditional” violence. Each of the factors below is preceded by a “☒” denoting a traditional violence factor, or a “◆” denoting a factor which may be viewed from **both** traditional and non-traditional perspectives. The interpretation of individual risk factors may be, in part, depend on the emergence of a pattern. For the purposes of this assessment tool, the following definitions apply:

- ☒ Traditional Violence – Acts often related to juvenile gangs, the inner city, minority or ethnic status, turf warfare, drugs, or more conventional criminal activity such as armed robbery or extortion.
- ◆ Non-Traditional Violence – Acts of vengeance related to the premeditated shooting of targeted victims.

(NOTE: McGee and DeBernardo’s “Classroom Avenger Profile” referenced above is not intended to be used for predicting violent behavior or profiling, but rather to be used after a violent incident has occurred. Dr. Craney’s “organizing tool” is also not a profiling tool. His assessment tool is presented here in an abbreviated format. Typically the instrument would allow space under each factor for the assessor to record relevant information pertaining to the subject collected during the assessment.)

Specific Details Regarding the Aggressor’s Plan

Severe Mod. Mild None

- | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | ◆ | Motive (i.e., precipitating event, reason, trigger/s-vengeance, etc.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | ◆ | Communication of intent (i.e., methods, to whom, how long, etc.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | ◆ | Who/victim pool (i.e., target/s of violence and their proximity to aggressor, etc.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | ◆ | What method/how (i.e., physical attack, shooting, bombing, etc.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | ◆ | Access to weapons (i.e., guns, knives, explosives, etc.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | ☒ | Where (i.e., anticipated location, place, etc.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | ☒ | When (i.e., date, time of day, opportunity, etc.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | ☒ | Viability of plan (i.e., realistic, likely to be implemented, etc.) |

School History Factors

Severe Mod. Mild None

- | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | ◆ | Achievement levels (i.e., grades, instructional placements, achievement tests, etc.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | ◆ | Intellectual functioning (i.e., IQ and/or aptitude tests, etc.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | ◆ | Level of school-related participation (i.e., sports, extracurricular activities, etc.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | ◆ | Level of social engagement (i.e., relationships with peers and adults, loner, etc.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | ◆ | Disciplinary actions (i.e., nature of offenses, frequency and recency, etc.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | ◆ | Suspensions/Expulsions (i.e., nature of offenses, frequency and recency, etc.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | ☒ | Previous weapon/s violation (i.e., what weapon, what intent, recency, etc.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | ☒ | Attendance (i.e., excessive absences, chronic tardiness, etc.) |

Personal History Factors

Severe Mod. Mild None

- | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | ◆ | Criminal/juvenile offenses (i.e., delinquency, type, disposition, etc.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | ☒ | Previous threats (i.e., verbal or physical, trigger/s, level of follow-through, etc.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | ☒ | Physically or verbally aggressive behaviors (i.e., fights, pushing/shoving, aggressive language, etc.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | ◆ | Preoccupation with weapons, death and/or violent themes (i.e., talk, drawings, writings, etc.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | ◆ | Surveillance and/or stalking (i.e., gender, purposeful monitoring of potential targets, etc.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | ◆ | Actual or threatened loss of important relationship (i.e., girlfriend/boyfriend, parent) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | ☒ | Victim of violence, abuse or neglect (i.e., sexually, physically or verbally abused or neglected) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | ☒ | Central nervous system trauma /neurological soft signs (i.e., head injuries, seizures, etc.) |

Assessing risk factors associated with violent behavior (continued)

Personal History Factors (continued)

Severe Mod. Mild None

- Empathy, sympathy and remorse (i.e., attachment/bonding, capacity to identify with another's feelings, guilt, etc.)
- Cruelty to animals (i.e., purposeful cruelty to pets and/or wild animals, etc.)
- Fire setting and explosives (i.e., fire setting and explosive experimentation— pipe bombs, etc.)
- Mental disorder (i.e., ADHD, depression, conduct disorder, personality disorder, subclinical manifestation, current status, course treatment, etc.)
- Alcohol and/or other substance abuse (i.e., type, purpose, recency, frequency, treatment, etc.)
- Weapon exposure, access, training and usage (i.e., skill level, hunting, target practice, etc.)

Personal Characteristics and Tendencies

Severe Mod. Mild None

- Name calling/cursing/abusive language (i.e., slurs, put-downs, inappropriate language, etc.)
- Externalizes blame (i.e., does not take responsibility for won actions, plays the victim, etc.)
- Intense emotions and/or weak inner control (i.e., poor anger control, labile emotions, etc.)
- Impulsive/stimulus seeker (i.e., acts without thinking of consequences, takes risks, etc.)
- Bullying behavior (i.e., manipulates others through intimidation, etc.)
- Intolerant of differences/prejudicial attitudes (i.e., expressed hatred for certain groups, bigots, zealots, etc.)
- Victim or perceived victim of discrimination or harassment (i.e., ostracized, called names, bullied, etc.)
- Low self-esteem (i.e., negative self-image, self-critical orientation, etc.)
- Self-destructive or suicidal (i.e., self-mutilation, suicide attempts, gestures, threats, ideation, etc.)

Family Related Factors

Severe Mod. Mild None

- Appropriate adult supervision (i.e., appropriate boundaries of space, time, behavior, etc.)
- Family support (i.e., parents/guardians engaged in student's life, dysfunctional, seek help, etc.)
- Attachment/bonding difficulties developmentally (i.e., caregiver, history-neglect, temperament, etc.)
- Exposed to violence (i.e., family patterns of aggression/violence, spouse abuse, etc.)
- Socio-economic status (i.e., family resources, lifestyle and living arrangements, etc.)
- Employment/economic instability (i.e., employability, consistency, agency involvement, etc.)
- Criminal history and/or antisocial tendencies in relatives (i.e., relatives incarcerated, etc.)
- Mental health disorders in relatives (i.e., depression, ADHD, antisocial personality, etc.)
- Alcohol and/or other substance abuse disorders in relatives (i.e., type/s, status, course, treatment, etc.)
- Relatives committed/attempted suicide (i.e., when, how, perceived reason why, etc.)
- Weapons in home (i.e., whose, number, type-rifle, shotgun pistol, purpose, etc.)

Assessing risk factors associated with violent behavior (continued)

Social/Cultural Factors

Severe Mod. Mild None

- | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Primary peer group characteristics (i.e., interests, activities, philosophies, etc.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | ◆ | Local and/or neighborhood culture (i.e., level of violence/aggression, acceptance level, structure, control, etc.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Identifies with antisocial group/cult (i.e., heroes and philosophies with antisocial orientation, Hitler, etc.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Gang membership (i.e., recognized, active or past, why, activities/purpose, etc.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | ◆ | Copycat influence (i.e., proximity in time, place and rationale to other incidents, cause sympathetic, etc.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | ◆ | Pop culture influences (i.e., level of interest, supervision, time spent, money spent for clothing, posters, etc.) |
| | | | | ◆ | Music (i.e., specific artists, themes, etc.) |
| | | | | ◆ | Video games and activities (i.e., purpose, themes and nature of games, etc.) |
| | | | | ◆ | Movies and television (i.e., violent/aggressive themes, plots of revenge, etc.) |
| | | | | ◆ | Books, web sites (i.e., themes, etc.) |
| | | | | ◆ | Internet (i.e., purpose, web-sites visited or published, chat rooms, etc.) |

NSSC's list of characteristics of youth who have caused school-associated violent deaths

The National School Safety Center developed the following list derived from tracking school-associated violent deaths in the U.S. from July 1992 to the present. In 1998, after studying common characteristics of youngsters who have caused such deaths, NSSC identified the following behaviors, which could indicate a youth's potential for harming him/herself or others.

peatedly indicate that in most cases, a troubled youth has demonstrated or has talked to others about problems with bullying and feelings of isolation, anger, depression and frustration. While there is no foolproof system for identifying potentially dangerous students who may harm themselves and/or others, this list provides a starting point.

support staff to address needs of troubled students through meetings with parents, provision of school counseling, guidance and mentoring services, as well as referrals to appropriate community health/social services and law enforcement personnel. Further, such behavior should also provide an early warning signal that safe school plans and crisis prevention/intervention procedures must be in place to protect the safety of all students and staff.

Accounts of these tragic incidents re-

These characteristics should serve to alert school administrators, teachers and

1. _____ Has a history of tantrums and uncontrollable angry outbursts.
2. _____ Characteristically resorts to name calling, cursing or abusive language.
3. _____ Habitually makes violent threats when angry.
4. _____ Has previously brought a weapon to school
5. _____ Has a background of serious disciplinary problems at school and in the community.
6. _____ Has a background of drug, alcohol or other substance abuse or dependency.
7. _____ Is on the fringe of his/her peer group with few or no close friends.
8. _____ Is preoccupied with weapons, explosives or other incendiary devices.
9. _____ Has previously been truant, suspended or expelled from school.
10. _____ Displays cruelty to animals.
11. _____ Has little or no supervision and support from parents or a caring adult.
12. _____ Has witnessed or been a victim of abuse or neglect in the home.
13. _____ Has been bullied and/or bullies or intimidates peers or younger children.
14. _____ Tends to blame others for difficulties and problems s/he causes her/himself.
15. _____ Consistently prefers TV shows, movies or music expressing violent themes and acts.
16. _____ Prefers reading materials dealing with violent themes, rituals and abuse.
17. _____ Reflects anger, frustration and the dark side of life in school essays or writing projects.
18. _____ Is involved with a gang or an antisocial group on the fringe of peer acceptance.
19. _____ Is often depressed and/or has significant mood swings.
20. _____ Has threatened or attempted suicide.

Federal report on school safety finds children safer at school

“Indicators of School Crime and Safety 2000,” the third report in a series of annual reports on school crime and safety from the Bureau of Justice Statistics and the National Center for Education Statistics, presents the latest available data on school crime and student safety. As the report shows, more victimizations happen away from school than at school.

Key findings: Good news

The total nonfatal victimization rate for young people declined between 1993 and 1998. The percentage of students being victimized at school also declined over the last few years. Between 1995 and 1999, the percentage of students who reported being victims of crime at school decreased from 10 percent to 8 percent. This decline was due in part to a decline for students in grades 7 through 9. Between 1995 and 1999, the prevalence of reported victimization dropped from 11 percent to 8 percent for 7th graders, from 11 percent to 8 percent for 8th graders, and from 12 percent to 9 percent for 9th graders.

As the rate of victimization in schools has declined or remained constant, students also seem to feel more secure at school now than just a few years ago. The percentage of students ages 12 through

18 who reported avoiding one or more places at school for their own safety decreased between 1995 and 1999—from 9 to 5 percent. Furthermore, the percentage of students who reported that street gangs were present at their schools decreased from 1995 to 1999. In 1999, 17 percent of students ages 12 through 18 reported that they had street gangs at their schools compared with 29 percent in 1995.

Not so good news

For some types of crimes at school, rates have not changed. For example, between 1993 and 1997, the percentage of students in grades 9 through 12 who were threatened or injured with a weapon on school property in the past 12 months remained constant—at about 7 or 8 percent. The percentage of students in grades 9 through 12 who reported being in a physical fight on school property in the past 12 months also remained unchanged between 1993 and 1997—at about 15 percent.

There was an increase in the use of marijuana among students between 1993 and 1995, but no change between 1995 and 1997. In 1997, about 26 percent of these students had used marijuana in the last 30 days. Furthermore, almost one-

third of all students in grades 9 through 12 (32 percent) reported that someone had offered, sold, or given them an illegal drug on school property—an increase from 24 percent in 1993.

In 1998, students were about two times as likely to be victims of serious violent crime away from school as at school. In 1998, students ages 12 through 18 were victims of more than 2.7 million total crimes at school. In that same year, these students were victims of about 253,000 serious violent crimes at school (that is, rape, sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault). There were also 60 school-associated violent deaths in the United States between July 1, 1997 and June 30, 1998—including 47 homicides.

Rather than relying on data from a large omnibus survey of school crime and safety, this report uses a variety of independent data sources from federal departments/agencies including the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Center for Education Statistics, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. By combining multiple and independent sources of data, this report may present a more complete portrait of school crime and safety than would be possible with any single source of information. (See <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/> for entire report.)

Department of Education reports on State Implementation of the Gun-Free Schools Act – Year: 1998-1999

The Gun-Free Schools Act (GFSA) requires that each state receiving federal funds under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act must have a state law that mandates all local educational agencies (LEAs) in the state to expel from school, for at least one year, any student found bringing a firearm to school. GFSA requires states to report information about the implementation of the act annually to the Secretary of Education.

The Department of Education requires each state to submit an annual report and in August 2000, released data from the 1998-99 school year based on the state reports. The report is not designed to provide information regarding the rate at which students carry firearms to school.

The data reported by the states concern disciplinary actions only. All of the information contained in the report should be interpreted with caution. Some states attached caveats and data notes to their data that should be considered when interpreting the data.

- 55 states reported that they expelled a total of 3,523 students from school for bringing a firearm to school.
- 57 percent of the expulsions by school level were students in high school, 33 percent were in junior high, and 10 percent were in elementary school.
- 59 percent of the expulsions reported by type of firearm were for bringing a

handgun to school.; 12 percent of the expulsions were for bringing a rifle or shotgun to school, and 29 percent were for some other type of firearm (such as bombs, grenades, or starter pistols).

- 27 percent of expulsions were shortened to less than one year.
- 72 percent of shortened expulsions were for students who were not considered disabled.
- 44 percent of the expelled were referred to an alternative school or placement.

Complete report is available on-line at www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/SDFS/GFSA/

Department of Justice reports national crime rate falls more than 10 percent

The nation's violent crime rate fell by more than 10 percent during 1999, reaching its lowest level since the Justice Department's Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) started measuring it in 1973. There were an estimated 28.8 million violent and property crimes during 1999, compared to 44 million such incidents counted in the first year of BJS's National Crime Victimization survey.

The BJS report says every major type of personal and property crime measured decreased between 1993 and 1999. The declines in the rates for selected crimes were as follows:

- Completed violent crimes: -32.7%
- Rape: -40%
- Robbery with injury: -38.5%
- Aggravated assault with injury: -41.2%
- Threatened with a weapon: -45.3%
- Personal theft: -60.9%
- Completed household burglaries: -39.4%
- Completed motor vehicle thefts: -39.5%

- Thefts of \$250 or more: -23.8
- Attempted theft: -56.9

The 1999 data indicated that 54 percent of all violent crime victims in 1999 knew their attackers. Almost 70 percent of the rape and sexual assault victims knew the offender as an acquaintance, friend, relative or intimate, compared to just under 50 percent of the aggravated assault victims.

Forty-four percent of last year's violent victimizations were reported to police, compared to 34 percent of property crime victimizations. The most frequently reported crime was motor vehicle theft, while the least frequently reported was personal theft.

The survey also noted that a little more than 28 percent of the rape and sexual assault were reported to the police. A gun was present but not necessarily used in about 1 percent of such incidents and an-

other type of weapon was brandished in another 4 percent.

Persons 16-19 and 35-49 years old experienced violent crimes at rates lower than they did in 1998, the report said. Last year's violent crime rates fell for a third of the demographic categories examined, including males, whites, urbanites and those earning \$75,000 or more annually.

According to preliminary FBI data, homicides declined about 8 percent last year. Historically, males accounted for about three-quarters of the murder victims, and about one in eight of the murder victims was less than 18 years old.

Property crime rates continued a 25-year downward trend, dropping 9 percent from 1998 to 1999—from 217 per 1,000 households to 198 per 1,000 households.

The complete report and BJS bulletin "Criminal Victimization 1999—Changes 1998-99 with Trends 1993-99" is available on-line at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs>.

Bilingual school safety handbook developed for Chinese families and schools

The New York Life Insurance Company and the Chinese-American Parents Association (CAPA) have teamed up to publish a bilingual school safety guide called, "A Parents' Guide: School Safety and Your Child." The handbook was developed to provide parents with ways to help their children enjoy a safe and productive learning environment.

Written in both Chinese and English, the guide addresses critical issues such as violence, drugs, and school safety regulations. It also provides information about the development of young people's social skills, which will help them form and maintain healthy peer relationships.

Parents are advised in the guide to be aware of where their children may encounter violence in their everyday lives. According to the guide, children may face violence:

- At home. Violence in the home is a problem in every community. Many children are victims of or are witnesses to abuse at home.
- In the community. Gangs and street crime threaten the safety of many

neighbors and children.

- At school. Weapons and gangs have made their way into many schools. Fights are common in some places.
- In entertainment. Many TV shows, movies, and videos are packed with shootings, car chases and fights. Some popular video games also contain violence.
- In sports. Sometimes athletes commit acts of violence outside the rules of the game. Violence among fans is another serious problem.
- In the news. Children are regularly exposed to the terrible acts of war and hate from around the world.

Parents are encouraged to get help for their children if their child:

- has been a victim of violence;
- has committed acts of violence;
- has problems with alcohol or other drugs; or
- has difficulty handling his or her anger or frustration.

In addition to listing general rules and

expectations for student behavior and conduct at school, the guide recommends that parents be aware of their children's behavior in school. According to the guide, "Participating in the parents' association and other school activities can be helpful. Attending public meetings can help new immigrants better understand current regulations and keep them apprised of new regulations and changes. These meetings are also a good forum for parents to express their concerns and opinions on a variety of subjects."

The handbook further advises Chinese-American parents that Chinese parents' ways of thinking and managing affairs are quite different from the American ways. To help bridge this gap, it counsels Chinese parents to maintain close contact with their child's school's authorities and parents' associations—good advice for every parent.

Chinese-American parents may contact their local New York Life agents for a copy of the guide. Books will also be available to CAPA members and at the World Journal Bookstores nationwide.

The National School Safety Center presents School Safety Leadership Training 2000

December 5-6 Westlake Village, CA

Participants who successfully complete this two-day program will receive NSSC's *School Safety Leadership Curriculum Guide* and a certificate of completion. Registration fee of \$595 per person includes the training materials, instruction and program meals (continental breakfast and lunch each day). Program is limited to 60 participants. A \$100 nonrefundable deposit will reserve your space at the program. Call 805/373-9977 for more information and registration materials. Call now while space is still available.

Featured Topics:

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Third Party Liability
School/Law Enforcement Partnerships
Crisis Prevention and Response

Accommodations

Contact the Westlake Village Inn (1-800/535-9978) before November 5, 2000 for hotel reservations. NSSC has reserved a variety of rooms starting from \$108 + tax per night. When calling for reservations, mention the National School Safety Center to receive discounted rates. Visit www.westlakevillageinn.com to preview the types of accommodations available. The Westlake Village Inn is located at 31943 Agoura Road, Westlake Village, CA 91361, approximately 45 miles from the Los Angeles International Airport and 35 miles from the Burbank Airport.

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