

# **School Safety and Violence Prevention**

## **We're all in it together**

### **A Changing World**

- Growing population of students at risk for school violence, harassment, mental health problems, school failure
- Rate of juvenile violent crime, including assault and battery, has increased in the 90s
- Teens are victims of crime more frequently than any other age group
- Many students fear for their safety
- Police based in many schools

### **School Failure as a Contributing Factor . . .**

- Poverty
- Substance Abuse
- Child Abuse/Neglect
- Family Instability
- Domestic Violence
- Inadequate Child Care

### **Identification of Students with Mental Health Problems**

- 22% of children and adolescents have mental health issues needing treatment
- fewer than 20% get it
- counselors' role may involve direct intervention, consultation or referral

### **Warning Signs of Potential Violence**

- Social withdrawal
- Expressing excessive feelings of rejection
- Expression of violence in writings and drawings (these should be brought to the attention of a team-call in parents)
- Patterns of impulsive and chronic hitting, bullying, intimidating behaviors
- Feelings of persecution
- Uncontrolled anger (expressed frequently and intensely in response to minor irritations)

### **Signs of Dangerous and Violent Behavior**

- Acting out, threatening to hurt or kill (“terroristic threatening”)
- Personality changes with acting-out behavior
- Increase in alcohol/drug usage
- Becoming increasingly upset about being teased/bullied

### **Four Aspects to Consider**

- Frequency--how often does this behavior occur?
- Duration—how long has it been going on?
- Intensity
- Affect—the emotions involved—are they appropriate? (Remorse, etc.)

### **The Counselors' Role**

- Help establish network to identify at-risk students
- Leadership role on safety team—with administration
  - identify needs
  - specify safe school goals
  - develop/implement safe school plans
- Collaborate on school crisis plans
- Skills for character, citizenship, safe schools, anger management, problem-solving, pro-social skills
- K-12 curriculum

### **The Teachers' Role**

- Be vigilant to students' concerns
- Report worrisome behavior to administrator/counselor/parent
- Have classroom discussions on safety/violence issues
- Follow up classroom guidance sessions
- Help promote caring and respectful school environment
  - no tolerance of bullying and harassment
  - help promote effective communication

### **The Parents' Role**

- "Parental involvement is key to raising responsible and resourceful youth"
- Communicate with school personnel about your children
- Support school rules and regulations
- Ask for help when needed

### **The Students' Role**

- Be responsible for upholding school rules
- Tell a school adult if another's actions and words seem suspicious
- Help maintain a caring and respectful school environment
- Stand up for others who may seem victimized

### **The Community's Role**

- Provide feedback and activities for children and families (including after school programs)
- Support missions of the schools
  - financial funding
  - volunteer work in school (businesses can provide release time)
  - mentoring of students

### **Collaborative Interventions: Creating a Safety Net**

- Zero Tolerance programs: "This is not allowed in our school"
- Conflict Resolution, Peer Mediation
- Crisis Intervention Guides
- Anti-Harassment Policies

### **And More . . .**

- Inservice with teachers and parents
- Surveys on bullying—use of information to plan
- Form "At-Risk Network"—mental health counselors, psychologists, school people, etc.

### **It's OK to Tell!**

- Parents, teachers, and students should be encouraged to report suspicious behavior
- If someone may be contemplating doing harm to self or others, it needs to be told—don't ignore warning signs.
- We all need to work to protect one another
- Parents need support in working with troubled children—Try to avoid blaming if possible

**We can each make a difference!**