



SAFE Schools

NEWSLETTER



Community Services

Most military installations provide a variety of services to help service personnel and their families. DoDEA administrators can make parents aware of the community resources available to them. Free classes offered through the community services office include:

- ◆ Parenting Children;
- ◆ Anger Management; and
- ◆ Stress Management.

Some Employee Assistance Programs offer confidential mental health or credit counseling. For services available at your installation, consult your community services office. For additional ideas, see the Prevention Program Guides at: www.dodea.edu/schools/ISGuides.htm. ■

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Violence Prevention Seminar at Fort Bragg

On October 3-4, Fort Bragg Schools sponsored a violence prevention seminar that offered a good example of proactive Risk Reduction Planning. The training covered several topics and addressed sources of stress that could result in violence. The topics include:

- ◆ Deployment and Post-Deployment Issues;
- ◆ Suicide Prevention;
- ◆ Stress Management;
- ◆ Child Abuse and Prevention; and
- ◆ Special Education and Early Interventions.



Attendees included principals, counselors, school psychologists, school liaison officers, and a social worker. Participants discussed how to recognize signs of student stress and practical ways to help students.

Fort Bragg Superintendent Tom Hager kicked off the training. He noted that addressing students' emotional and psychological needs contributes to the military mission by allowing sponsors to concentrate on their work.

Guest speaker Breta Sandifer, Army Community Service, described the psychological stress that service members and their families experience during preparation for departure, deployment, and homecoming. LTC Stephen Kelly, Army Chaplain Corps, explained the extensive suicide prevention program implemented to serve personnel. Doryan Dixon, Employee Assistance Program, reviewed the resources available to help with crisis intervention.

Gerhard Guevarra, Shevelle Ramirez, and Emily Grimes, School Liaison Officers, helped develop the conference agenda. They recruited speakers from the military community and the neighboring Cumberland County Public Schools. For additional information, contact safeschools@csc.com or Gerhard Guevarra at: gerhard.guevarra@us.army.mil. Special thanks to Mr. Guevarra for inviting us to the training! ■

Recognizing and Preventing Gang Activity

Although DoDEA schools are not plagued by problems with gangs, the news media has reported gang activity in Europe, Asia, and the Southeastern United States. In Korea, where gangs are known as “syndicates,” a national anti-gang campaign recently succeeded in disbanding three high school syndicates. Student gang members used cellular phones to coordinate criminal activity that included extortion, assault, and prostitution.



Gang prevention information is available to help DoDEA administrators who want to:

- 1) Educate students transferring to public schools about the dangers of gang involvement before they are exposed to recruitment.
- 2) Help gang-involved youth transferring into DoDEA schools who would like to leave their gang life behind.
- 3) Provide preventive education to preempt attempts by gangs to recruit DoDEA students.

For authoritative information on how to recognize and prevent gang involvement, visit the Office of Juvenile Justice’s National Youth Gang Center at: www.iir.com/nygc. See the Suburban Gangs article on page six of this newsletter for ideas on gang prevention. For additional ideas, see the Prevention Program Guides at: www.dodea.edu/schools/ISGuides.htm. CSC’s Safe Schools Program has a wealth of additional information on gangs. Send specific questions to safeschools@csc.com. ■

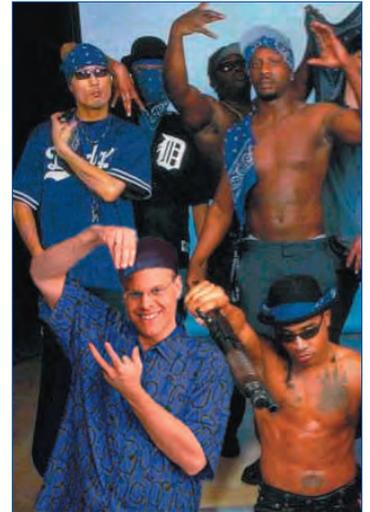
DoDEA Safe Schools Program Managers
Ed Englehardt, Rose Chunik

Safe Schools Newsletter Editorial Staff
Bob Michela, Keith Shaver, Brian McKeon

This is an unofficial publication produced by DynCorp, Inc. on behalf of the Department of Defense Education Activity Office of Safety and Security. The material herein is presented for informational purposes and does not constitute official policy of the Department of Defense. All comments and questions should be directed to Bob Michela at: rmichela@csc.com.

Crips Founder Warns Students About Gangs

From his prison cell on death row, Stanley “Tookie” Williams, one of the two founders of the Los Angeles-based Crips gang, speaks out against gang activity. He warns elementary students about the risk of joining gangs.



Presenting his comments here is not intended to glamorize a thug, or celebrate a former gang member. Stanley Williams was convicted of committing four murders and is scheduled to be executed on December 13, 2005. However, whether or not Mr. Williams is sincere, he offers an articulate, credible warning of the danger of joining gangs. The following is a verbatim excerpt from “Tookie’s” web site.

“Tookie greatly regrets the violent history of the Crips – particularly how so many young black men have hurt each other – and he wants to do what he can to stop it. The *Tookie Speaks Out Against Gang Violence* book series for elementary school-age children is the first fruit of his longing to prevent young people of every color from becoming gangbangers, from ending up in prison, crippled by bullets, or killed.”

“Tookie is determined to make amends for having been a co-founder of the Crips. He intends to try in every way he can to guide those youngsters who have imitated him away from the road that led him to death row where he faces State execution. ‘Don’t join a gang,’ he tells children in his books, writing from his San Quentin cell. ‘You won’t find what you’re looking for. All you will find is trouble, pain and sadness. I know. I did.’”

Additional information about gangs is available from the National Youth Gang Center at: www.iir.com/nygc or safeschools@csc.com. ■

Planning for Recovery

DoDEA administrators, school psychologists, and counselors need opportunities to practice the recovery portion of their Incident Response Plan. The recovery phase helps students resume normal learning as quickly as possible. The crisis team can assist students' psychological recovery by:

- ◆ Making counselors available to help students process their emotional responses;
- ◆ Providing information to parents on the types of reactions to expect (i.e., behavioral, physical, and emotional); and
- ◆ Identifying victims or witnesses directly affected by a violent incident who need referrals for additional counseling.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) offers free on-line training to assist administrators in developing recovery plans. Their web-based training, IS 362: *Multi-hazard Planning for Schools* (<http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/is362.asp>), provides helpful templates and checklists. The reference materials accompanying this course suggest activities for crisis teams to consider when planning for recovery. The **suggestions** listed below are appropriate for either a 911-type terrorist incident, or a death/serious incident within the school community.

Morning-After Staff Meeting

The day following a tragedy should begin with a meeting before the start of the normal school day. The principal should begin the meeting by announcing what has happened, spell out the plan for the day, and answer questions. Staff will function best if they are well informed. The crisis team and community resource personnel should be introduced and the location of the crisis center/counseling rooms should be identified. Conclude with an announcement that the staff and volunteers will reconvene for a brief review session after school.

The principal should identify a qualified leader (i.e., the school psychologist, or a mental health professional) who can advise teachers on what to say in the homeroom or first class. The leader should also brief the group on the types of student reactions to expect, and how to respond to them. For some students, the event might spark memories of personal trauma. The leader can advise staff on options available to students who seek additional help. Finally, remind staff that they need to be aware of their own feelings about the incident. By reconciling their own reactions first, staff will be more effective in assisting students when classes resume.

Contact with At-Risk Students

The crisis response team should make a concerted effort to identify two kinds of at-risk students:

- ◆ Boyfriends, girlfriends, and close friends of those involved in the incident; and
- ◆ Students who are known to be depressed, under great stress, or easily “set off” for other reasons.

Each identified student should be contacted, in a sensitive and private manner, by a school staff member. The purpose of the contact is to assess his/her current state and let the student know



Planning for Recovery (Continued)

someone cares. If cause for concern is detected, the student's parents or sponsor may be notified, to ensure their support and discuss appropriate follow-up actions. In certain circumstances, the at-risk student's closest friend or friends may be notified. Additionally, close friends of the those involved in the incident may be invited and encouraged to meet as a group with a trained counselor to share their feelings and express their grief.



Letter to Parents

Prepare a letter to parents to send home with the students. This letter should sensitively and succinctly state what has happened, how the school has responded, and plans for the coming days. Include suggestions on how parents/sponsors can support their child, and contact information for community resources to call for information or help.

After-School Staff Meeting

Meet with staff again at the close of the first school day after the incident. This session may be led by the principal or crisis team leader. Review the day's events – what went well and what did not go well. Identify which students are most directly affected, and how to help them. Make any needed adjustments in the recovery plan. Announce continuing recovery plans, and allow staff and volunteers to ask questions.

Evening Parent/Community Meeting

The crisis team should plan for a parent/community meeting to be held within a day or two of the incident. The principal, crisis response team, and school psychologist or mental health professional, should speak at the meeting. Describe the types of emotional reactions to expect, and how to be helpful to students and adults affected by the incident.

Recovery Evaluation

For a few weeks following the tragedy there will be some students, and perhaps staff, who will be grieving and need on-going support or counseling. Most of the school will return to normal activity. Organize a meeting to evaluate the recovery process. Prior to the meeting, solicit feedback from people who were involved in the recovery phase. Ask someone to summarize this information at the meeting. Identify what worked well and what areas need improvement. The principal can also use this opportunity to thank those who helped the school cope with the incident.

Crisis team members researching recovery can refer to the DoDEA web site (www.dodea.edu/instruction/crisis), and the handbook *Safe Schools: A Handbook for Practitioners*. Additional information is available from the National Association of School Psychologists (www.nasponline.org), the American School Counseling Association (www.schoolcounselor.org), and the American Psychological Association (www.apa.org). ■

The Truth About Suicide

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), suicide is the third leading cause of death for young people. For every suicide, it is estimated that there are 100-200 attempts. There are many misconceptions about suicide. Learning the truth about suicide helps administrators assist those in need.

1. **Myth:** Teenagers who talk about suicide just want attention.
Truth: Teenagers who attempt suicide usually talk about it before they act.
2. **Myth:** Teenagers who attempt suicide always leave notes.
Truth: Some leave notes; others do not.
3. **Myth:** You should never use the word “suicide” when talking with adolescents because it will “give them the idea.”
Truth: Teenagers can feel a sense of relief that someone is willing to bring up the topic.
4. **Myth:** Suicide happens without warning.
Truth: Typically, adolescents give nine to ten warnings. These warnings can be oral or written, in the form of journals, artwork, etc.
5. **Myth:** Teenagers from rich families attempt suicide more often than those from poorer families.
Truth: Teenagers who attempt suicide come from all socio-economic classes.
6. **Myth:** After a teenager has survived a suicide attempt, he or she is no longer in danger.
Truth: The highest single predictor of an actual suicide is a past attempt. The risk is greatest during the two weeks following survival of a suicide attempt.
7. **Myth:** Once a teenager has decided to commit suicide, he or she cannot be stopped.
Truth: Professional interventions can very often prevent a suicide.



The myths and truths listed above are cited by numerous suicide prevention resources including the American Association of Suicidology, the Crisis Management Institute, and the U.S. Naval Academy’s Midshipman Development Center. For further facts on suicide, visit the CDC suicide fact sheet at: www.cdc.gov/ncipc/factsheets/suifacts.htm, or the American Association of Suicidology at: www.suicidology.org.

The CDC provides a report on youth suicide prevention at: www.cdc.gov/ncipc/pub-res/youthsui.htm. Prevention web sites designed for youth include:

- ◆ Teen-Matters, sponsored by the South Carolina Department of Mental Health: www.teen-matters.com/suicide.html; and
- ◆ Teen-Health, sponsored by the Nemours Foundation, an organization dedicated to improving the health of youth: www.teenshealth.org/teen/your_mind/mental_health/suicide.html.

Finally, if you have not yet received your copy of the Jason Foundation Suicide Prevention Kit donated to DoDEA middle and high schools, please e-mail safeschools@csc.com. ■

Preventing Gang Formation

Suburban Gangs: The Affluent Rebels is a book by Dan Korem that addresses the rising number of suburban gangs and how to prevent them from forming. Korem researched gangs in the U.S. and six European countries including the U.K. and Germany. He concluded that it is much easier to *prevent* gangs from forming than to eliminate established gangs. Law enforcement officers note that it is easier to teach youth about avoiding gang-involvement than to convince teenagers to disengage once they become gang members. The time to address “the gang problem” at your school is before you have one!

Korem, like other researchers, noted that most gang members come from a family that has at least one of the following:

1. Single parent head of household.
2. Drug abuse.
3. Physical abuse.
4. Sexual abuse.
5. One parent is severely dysfunctional (i.e., alcoholism, drug addiction).



Gang Graffiti in London, UK

Unfortunately, an increasing number of students have to deal with these issues. According to Korem, when teenagers face a crisis and there is no adult who lives in the neighborhood that they can turn to for help, they are missing a crucial protective factor.

But Korem found that if students who met the above risk factors were provided with a “protector,” their risk of joining a gang dropped dramatically. Korem provides a definition of what he means by a protector:

“A *protector* is an adult who sees a youth once a month, and maintains phone contact at least once a week The *protector*, who lives conveniently close to a youth, simply responds to a youth’s call for help”

“A *protector* is different from a mentor, such as volunteers in the Big Brothers and Big Sisters program who spend significant time helping direct a youth’s life. While mentoring programs are a desirable influence in a student’s life, mentors are hard to recruit. Even those who are concerned about helping youths simply don’t have two or three days/nights a week to spend with a youth.”

Korem notes that providing a protector for at-risk children is much easier than providing a mentor, because being a protector is less of a time commitment. His Missing Protector Strategy, detailed online at www.ifpinc.com/Missing%20Protector.htm, provides examples. To learn more about *Suburban Gangs: The Affluent Rebels* visit Dan Korem’s web site at: www.ifpinc.com. For additional ideas, see the DoDEA Prevention Program Guides at: www.dodea.edu/schools/ISGuides.htm. ■



Gang Insignia in Berlin, Germany