



DoDEA

SAFE Schools

NEWSLETTER



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Administrator and DSSO Contest!

Do you have a safe school success story that has helped improve your safe school plan? Are you itching to share your ideas with fellow DoDEA administrators?

The first six recipients to submit their safe school story will receive a copy of the video: "A Critical Incident: What to do in the first 20 minutes." The video offers a dramatization of a school shooter incident and describes steps that schools must consider when planning to respond to an incident.

Submit your story today to Jennifer Bloom at: jbloom4@csc.com. ■

High School Students Involved in Violence

Students transferring into DoDEA schools are increasingly likely to have experienced physical violence in their previous school. In 2003, one-in-three high school students reported involvement in a physical fight, and approximately one-in-16 high school students reported carrying a weapon on school property in the U.S. The July 30, 2004, issue of *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR)* published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) contains an article entitled, "Violence-Related Behaviors Among High School Students—United States, 1991-2003."

According to the report:

- ◆ Together, homicide and suicide are responsible for one fourth of the deaths among 10-24 year olds.
- ◆ Threats and injuries with a weapon on school property increased among white 9th-grade students and all black students.
- ◆ More students skip school due to safety concerns.

Top decrease the risk of violent student behaviors administrators can:

- ◆ Establish physical and social environments that promote safety.
- ◆ Offer prevention programs to help high-risk youth and their families acquire the skills and support.
- ◆ Monitor student behaviors and develop and disseminate effective prevention strategies.
- ◆ Maintain dialogue with the Juvenile Crime Section of the Provost Marshal/Safety Office.



DoDEA administrators can access prevention programs in the Prevention Programs and Intervention Strategies Guides at: www.dodea.edu/schools/ISGuides.htm. For more details on the study go to: www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5329a1.htm (MMWR, July 30, 2004 / Vol. 53 / No. 29). ■

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New Brochure Available

DoDEA administrators can see the way the Safe Schools Program mirrors much of the work of the Department of Education (DoEd) in an easy-to-read crisis planning brochure titled “Practical Information on Crisis Planning.” The brochure highlights the actions a school might take when preparing for a crisis. Topics addressed include: mitigation and prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery. In the mitigation and prevention discussion DoEd suggests that schools:

- ◆ Review incident data.
- ◆ Review the last safety audit to examine school buildings and grounds.
- ◆ Encourage staff to provide input and feedback during the crisis planning process.
- ◆ Determine major problems in the school with regard to crime and violence.
- ◆ Coordinate with community emergency responders to identify local hazards.
- ◆ Determine who is responsible for overseeing violence prevention strategies at the school.
- ◆ Assess how the school addresses student crime and violence problems.



Administrators can review this brochure to help them identify their problems during Phase I of the Safe School Planning process. For a copy see: www.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/crisisplanning.pdf. ■

Crisis Response & Students

Have you talked to students about the role they should play in the Incident Response Process? The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) publication *Guide for Preventing and Responding to School Violence* offers the following suggestions for students:

1. Try not to panic.
2. Share all relevant information with law enforcement, teachers, and school staff.
3. Do not attempt to go back into the school or to your locker to retrieve any personal items until you receive permission.
4. Support teachers in assessing who is accounted for and who is not.
5. Calm and reassure fellow students.
6. Follow school, law enforcement, or other emergency response personnel directions.
7. Do not speculate or perpetuate rumors.
8. Do not retaliate or take unnecessary chances.

Students who understand what to do during a crisis can serve as an asset during Incident Response. For more information see *Guide for Preventing and Responding to School Violence* at: www.theiacp.org/documents/pdfs/Publications/schoolviolence2.pdf ■



New Challenge: Cutting

DoDEA school staff may want to keep an eye out for a small segment of the student body performing a secretive and self-abusive activity known as cutting. There have been many recent reports on the rise in the number of teen girls who are cutting themselves with knives and razor blades in an effort to cope with their psychological and emotional issues.

According to Dr. Scott Poland, Director of Psychological Services for the Cypress-Fairbanks School District in Houston, Texas, "Cutting is catching schools by surprise; as many as 13% of adolescent girls engage in this behavior." Girls work to keep their cutting a secret from everyone by wearing long sleeved shirts, even when it's hot. Most often girls cut their wrist area or their inner thigh says Poland.

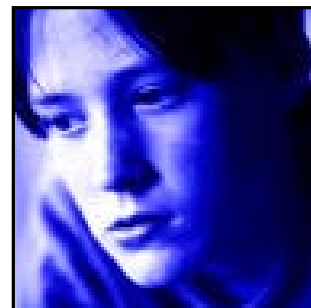


What do girls get out of cutting? This activity raises endorphins in the brain that are similar to the rush one would get from exercising. Girls say that it releases their anger and frustrations. Sometimes girls cut themselves so they will not kill themselves. Poland warns that many cutters urge their classmates to join them in self mutilation.

Dr. David Rosen, Director of The Teenage and Young Adult Medicine Clinic in Michigan says that cutting is associated with intense self-loathing.

Recent teen movies such as "Thirteen" have modeled this behavior. Poland, the author of four books on

school crisis and youth suicide, stressed that the origins of cutting are complex and may include abuse, violence in the home, or eating disorders.



Poland says cutting must be dealt with gently. Counselors and staff are advised to help student's in the following manner:

- ◆ Work with students individually, not in groups.
- ◆ Do not expect the problem to go away because the student tells you they will stop; cutters need counseling.
- ◆ Assess students for suicide risk and take cutting behavior seriously.
- ◆ Help students express their emotions through words and writing.
- ◆ If necessary, suggest to students that they use a substitute behavior such as pressing an ice cube on the arm or snapping a rubber band on the wrist.
- ◆ Tell the student's parents and refer the student to a mental health resource.

For more information on this issue contact Dr. Poland at: 713.460.7825 or Polandnasp@aol.com. A helpful web site is: <http://www.nasponline.org/> which has articles on cutting and related mental health topics. ■

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Responding to a Bomb Threat

When faced with a bomb threat, ask yourself how you would respond in each of these situations:

- ◆ The school secretary answers the phone and receives a bomb threat.
- ◆ A seventh grader overhears another student say that he knows how to build a bomb and is not afraid to use it.
- ◆ A teacher receives an E-mail threatening a violent act at the school.



Some situations demand an immediate protective action while others might require more information gathering. DoDEA administrators planning their response to a bomb threat can use a free interactive planning tool which comes as a CD-ROM titled “Bomb Threat Response Tool,” published by the Department of Education and the Department of Justice. The CD helps administrators answer the tough questions concerning how to evaluate whether a bomb threat is real.

This tool helps schools and emergency responders plan an effective response to bomb threats by walking users through several critical planning questions. The bomb threat response tool includes these suggestions for responding to an actual explosion:

- ◆ Alert emergency responders: call 911, Fire, and Police.
- ◆ Take cover. Remain where you are unless you are in immediate danger. If you are in immediate danger, go quickly to the nearest safe location.
- ◆ Notify the front office immediately if someone you are with is hurt or if you are injured. Also notify the front office if you have any information about the explosion or what might have caused it.
- ◆ If it is possible and you are properly trained, render emergency assistance to injured persons in the area.
- ◆ Listen for evacuation instructions.



The tool also describes duties for various school staff members:

- ◆ Administrators will assess what exploded, where, and the injuries that were caused. Additionally, they will communicate instructions to staff as quickly as possible. Administrators will also determine the evacuation route and communicate with first responders.
- ◆ Custodial staff will shut off gas and electricity to the building, if it can be done safely.
- ◆ Medical personnel will treat injuries as quickly as possible.

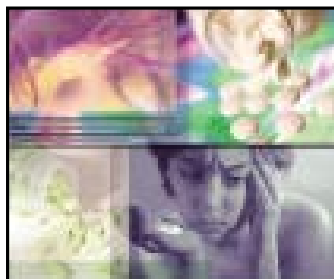
To order your free copy of “The Bomb Threat Response Tool,” go to: www.threatplan.org. Additionally, DoDEA administrators and staff are reminded that a Bomb Threat Report Form (Tool #16 in your Safe Schools Handbook for Practitioners) should be posted by all school telephones. ■

New Data on Youth Suicide

Did you know that students contemplating suicide often hurt others either verbally or physically before they kill themselves? One-in-four suicide victims injured or killed someone else before their suicide. The June 11, 2004 issue of the *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* shows recent data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) regarding the methods of suicide used by children and adolescents. The results show the relationship between suicide attempts and physical fighting in high school students, school-associated suicides; and suicide trends among young Hispanics.

“Suicide remains the third leading cause of death among young people in this country,” said Dr. Ileana Arias, acting director of CDC’s Injury Center. “We must focus on the underlying reasons for suicide and build a comprehensive strategy to prevent it.” Other youth-related findings include:

- ◆ One-in-20 high school students reported both suicide attempts and involvement in physical fights in the past year.
- ◆ Students who reported attempting suicide in the past 12 months were nearly four times as likely to report involvement in physical fights.
- ◆ Of the lethal acts of school violence carried out by students between July 1, 1994 and June 30, 1999, more than 20 percent were suicides.
- ◆ Suicide accounts for one fourth of all Hispanic youth deaths.

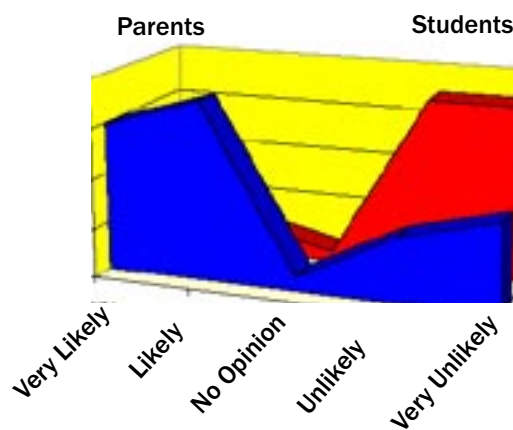


Researchers suggest the need for prevention strategies that address multiple factors (e.g., substance abuse prevention, family and peer support, and access to health services). In addition, the findings highlight the need for parents, teachers, and other youth influencers to be aware of potential signs of suicidal precursors, such as fighting and expressions of suicidal thoughts. For more go to: http://iier.isciii.es/mmwr/mmwr_rr.html. ■

Parents See Greater Threat

Two thirds of parents believe that an incident similar to the one at Columbine High School is likely to occur at their child’s school, only one third of students agree.

Source: Parents: Gallup, USA Today, CNN 4/2000; Students: ABC 3/01. ■



Limited Progress on Smoking Prevention

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently reported that the prevalence of regular cigarette smoking by teenagers is down from the late 1990s, but not enough to meet targeted health goals.

The CDC analyzed data from The National Youth Risk Behavior Survey to determine the changes in cigarette use by high school students from 1991 to 2003. Factors that might explain the decrease include: the rise in the cost of cigarettes, increased school-based prevention efforts, and the youth exposure to mass-media anti-smoking campaigns.

Factors that may have slowed the decline in students’ reluctance to stop smoking, however, include large-scale tobacco industry advertising and promotion, and reductions in the use of Master Settlement Agreement funds for tobacco prevention. The CDC also noted the increase in cigarette smoking by young actors.

The report, “Cigarette Use Among High School Students—United States, 1991-2003,” appeared in the June 18 issue of *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, available on-line at: www.cdc.gov/mmwr/PDF/wk/mm5323.PDF. ■

