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**KEEPING SCHOOLS OPEN
AS COMMUNITY LEARNING
CENTERS:**

**Extending Learning in a Safe,
Drug-Free Environment
Before and After School**

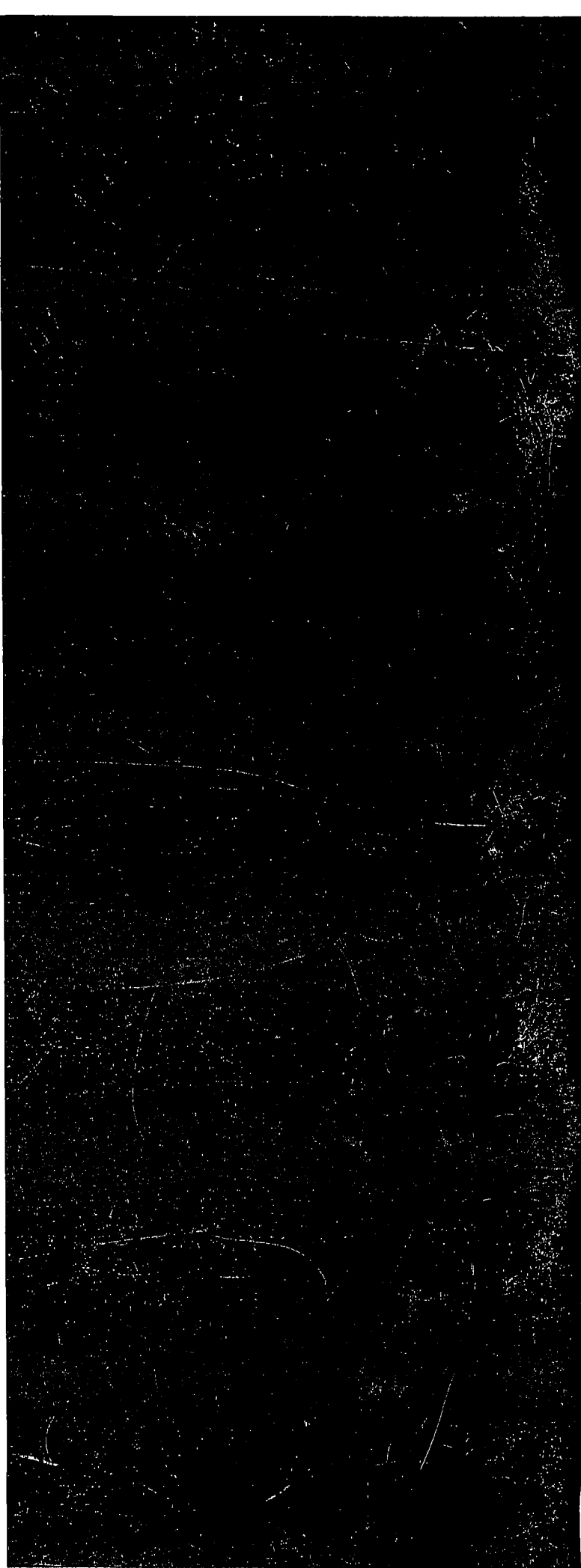


PARTNERSHIP

for Family

Involvement

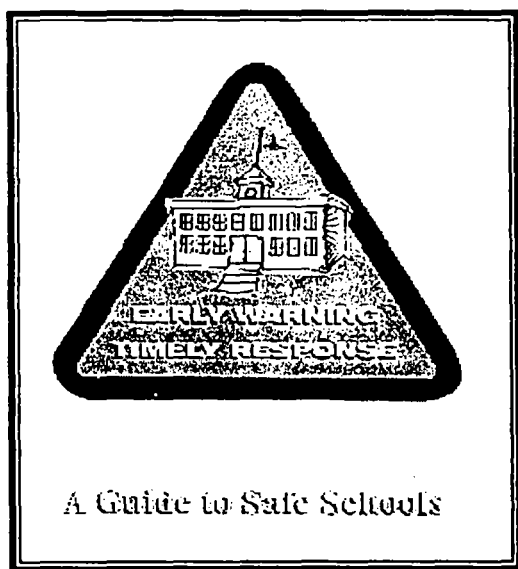
in Education



Cathy
260-0917

SAFEGUARDING YOUTH: AN ACTION GUIDE TO IMPLEMENTING

EARLY WARNING, TIMELY RESPONSE



FINAL
December 3, 1999

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CHAPTER 1:

AN ACTION GUIDE FOR SAFE SCHOOLS

Schools are safe places. Nevertheless, school shootings during the 1997-98 school year created a widespread demand to enhance school safety. At the request of the President, the Attorney General and Secretary of Education directed their Departments to prepare *Early Warning, Timely Response: A Guide to Safe Schools* ("Early Warning Guide"). The Early Warning Guide has been copied, downloaded, reprinted, and distributed to agencies, organizations, and every school across the nation. The Early Warning Guide is an example of effective collaboration within, between and among federal agencies, national associations, researchers from various disciplines, and practitioners, family members, and youth. Hundreds of individuals joined together to design, develop, review, and disseminate this research-based and practice-validated Early Warning Guide. The Early Warning Guide was so well received that the Department of Education collaborated with the Department of Justice to develop the "Action Guide" to help schools across all grade levels implement the Early Warning Guide and improve school safety.

The purpose of this Action Guide is to help schools develop and implement a comprehensive violence prevention plan grounded in the principles of the Early Warning Guide. This Action Guide is based on evidence-based practices. Effective programs are strategic, coordinated, and comprehensive and have three characteristics in common: schoolwide prevention, early interventions, and intensive services for students with severe emotional or behavioral needs including those with disruptive, destructive, or violent behaviors.

Prevention, early intervention, and intensive services can reduce violence and other troubling behaviors in schools. Understanding what leads to violence and knowledge of evidence-based practices can help schools identify and address warning signs early, so children can get the help they need before it is too late. The most promising prevention and intervention strategies involve the entire educational community—administrators, teachers, families, students, support staff, and community agency staff—working together at every step from needs assessment to evaluation of results.

Safe schools are places where

- ❖ There is strong leadership, caring faculty, family, and community involvement—including law enforcement officials and representatives of community-based organizations—and student participation in the design of programs and policies.
- ❖ The physical environment of the school is safe and schoolwide policies are in place to promote and support responsible behaviors.
- ❖ Prevention and intervention programs are sustained, coordinated, comprehensive.
- ❖ Interventions are based on careful assessment of student needs.
- ❖ Evidence-based approaches are used.
- ❖ Staff are provided with training and support to help them implement programs and approaches.
- ❖ Interventions are monitored and evaluations conducted to ensure that the programs are meeting measurable goals and objectives.

Schools that have comprehensive violence prevention and response plans in place, and teams to design and implement those plans, report the following positive outcomes:

- improved academics
- reduced disciplinary referrals and suspensions
- improved school climate that is conducive to learning
- better staff morale
- more efficient use of human and financial resources
- enhanced safety.

Overview of the Action Guide

School violence occurs in a unique context in every school, making a one-size-fits-all approach inappropriate. This Action Guide is a how-to guide for schools to develop and implement a violence prevention and response plan. It also offers strategies for customizing the plan to address the particular strengths and needs of individual schools such as

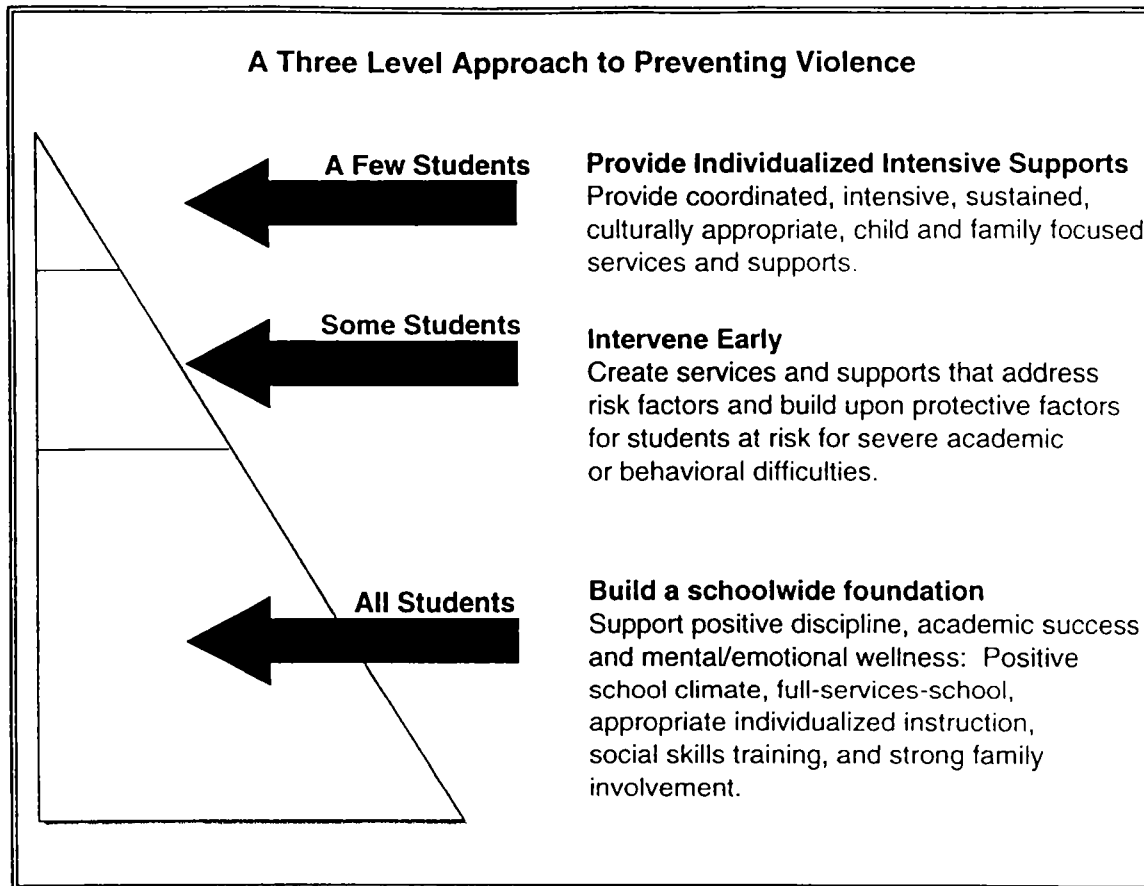
- identifying and understanding the problem of school violence and its relationship to school climate
- building a schoolwide foundation that prevents most problems from occurring
- recognizing, reporting, and using the early warning signs effectively
- developing interventions to respond to students whose behaviors are troubling.

Building a comprehensive plan takes time and requires input from students, staff, agencies, families, and other community members. This Action Guide presents strategies that schools have found useful in developing and implementing these plans. We provide examples of sound practices and programs and offer suggestions on what to look for and what to do.

No plan will ensure that a school will be immune to violence. Nevertheless, having a plan in place and implementing that plan *reduces* the likelihood of violence occurring.

A Comprehensive Three-Level Approach to Prevention

Research on safe schools demonstrates that a comprehensive three-level approach to prevention is the most efficient and cost-effective approach to reduce the risk of violence. These three levels are depicted in the triangle that follows.



Schoolwide Foundation

An effective schoolwide foundation is designed to improve the academic performance and behavior of all children. The schoolwide foundation includes:

- compassionate, caring, respectful staff who model appropriate behavior, provide a climate of emotional support, and are committed to working with all students
- developmentally appropriate programs for *all* children that teach and reinforce social and problem-solving skills
- teachers and staff trained to support positive school and classroom behavior
- engaging curricular and effective teaching practices
- child and family-focused, culturally competent approaches
- collaborative relationships with families, agencies, and community organizations.

Although these interventions alone are sufficient for most students' needs, they will not address the needs of all students. An effective foundation makes it easier to identify students who require additional interventions and increases the effectiveness of all interventions—both early and intensive. Chapter 2 describes the schoolwide foundation.

Early Intervention



Early intervention is necessary for those students who demonstrate that they are at risk of academic failure or behavior problems. These interventions, combined with an appropriate foundation, are sufficient for almost all students. Chapter 3 describes early interventions and how they can be used to respond to early warning signs.

Intensive Supports



Intensive interventions are necessary for those students whose needs cannot be fully addressed by early intervention. These interventions should always be individualized and address both the needs and strengths of a child (for example, a child with poor verbal skills but who loves to paint and has artistic potential). Intensive interventions often involve multiple, coordinated services, such as individualized special education services or interagency wraparound supports. Chapter 4 describes intensive interventions.

Safe Schools Combine All Three Levels

For a school to be safe for all children, all three levels must also be in place. A school that builds a schoolwide foundation will fail if it ignores the needs of children at risk of severe academic or behavioral problems or children who are seriously troubled or troubling. A school that only identifies troubled children and “treats” their troubling behaviors will also fail without helping to prevent other children from succumbing. A schoolwide foundation will address the needs of 60 to 95 percent of children. In most schools, early intervention services will address the needs of most of the other students, while individualized intensive interventions will be needed at some time for the remaining children.

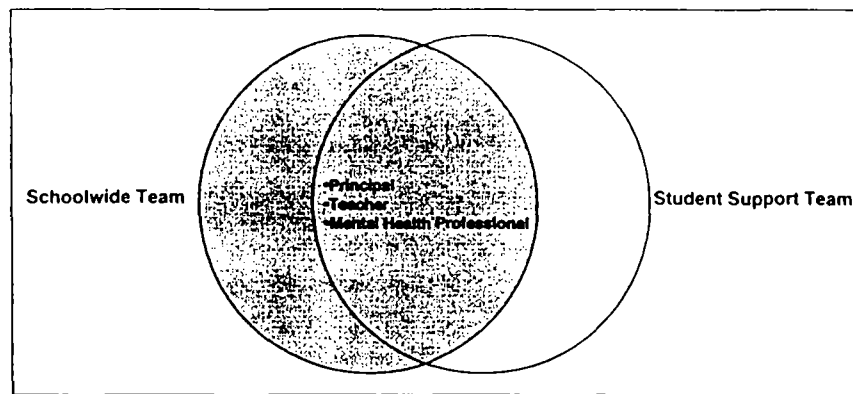
Safe Schools Employ Teams Efficiently and Effectively

Each day school personnel make important decisions about how to implement the best educational program for the entire school and how to most appropriately provide for specific students who may be experiencing difficulties. Effective schools usually form a small number of teams composed of professionals and support personnel who are charged with the responsibilities associated with these two functions. This Action Guide recommends that schools employ two such teams: one concerned with overall school performance and one that addresses individual student problems. These teams are integral to creating and implementing a comprehensive plan for safe and effective schools. It is also recommended that a minimum of three people—the principal, a teacher, and a mental health specialist—serve on both teams. For the purpose of this Action Guide, the first team, which deals with overall school issues, will be called the *Schoolwide Team*. The team that addresses specific student problems will be called the *Student Support Team*.

Employing Teams Efficiently

Schools are often burdened by too many teams that impact staff time and result in fragmented efforts. Whenever possible, the Schoolwide Team and the Student Support Team should be an expansion or refinement of existing teams, and those two teams should coordinate their efforts with all relevant teams, committees, or workgroups. While this may increase the workload of some teams in the short run, it will increase their long-term effectiveness.

Although schools may use other titles for their teams, almost every school currently has such teams in place. The Schoolwide Team is sometimes called the School Management Team or School Improvement Team. The Student Support Team may already be known as The Child Study Team or the Student Assistance Team. While the prime functions of these two teams are different, they are both necessary to undertake the creation of safe, educationally sound learning environments. It is important to note that while the teams have different responsibilities, coordination is necessary between these two teams. To facilitate this coordination, they should have a number of members in common. For example, the principal, a teacher, and the school's mental health professional most likely would be important members of both teams. In addition, the teams should have a dynamic, collaborative relationship in which knowledge and information are continuously shared. This will help to ensure that the schoolwide, early, and intensive interventions are aligned to meet the goals of a safe and effective school.



Safe Schools Have the Capacity to Plan, Implement, Monitor, and Evaluate a Prevention and Intervention Plan

Safe schools are strategic and smart. They identify and assess their needs and strengths; determine their safe school goals and objectives; align their efforts with other school reform and community initiatives; select and implement evidence-based approaches to realize these goals and objectives; coordinate and monitor their implementation; and evaluate the effect of their interventions. Doing this effectively requires individuals who have the appropriate expertise, credibility to relevant stakeholders, access to resources, and authority to act. This schoolwide team should possess expertise and credibility in seven areas:

- prevention, early intervention, intensive intervention
- school reform
- community resources

- family concerns
- student concerns
- staff concerns
- administrative concerns.

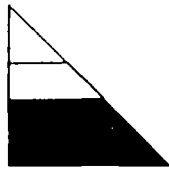
Chapter 5 describes the role of this team.

Safe Schools Have the Capacity to Identify and to Respond to Individual Needs

Safe schools have Student Support Teams in place to assess the needs of children who exhibit early warning signs. These teams should be composed of individuals who have the cultural and linguistic competence to identify the students' needs and strengths. These teams should have expertise in five areas:

- diagnosing mental health problems
- evaluating academic difficulties
- conducting functional assessment of student behavior to determine the “why” behind a behavioral problem or incident
- consulting with and supporting school staff, students, and families
- coordinating school and community services
- collaborating with students and families.

To maximize its effectiveness, the Student Support Team should involve the student and his or her family in their deliberations. In the event that the student is being considered, or is eligible for special education services, the team must meet the requirements for individualized planning under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). If the student is receiving services from other community agencies, the team's activities should be coordinated with those of the other agencies (child welfare, juvenile justice, mental health, vocational rehabilitation, and substance abuse, for example). The role of this team is elaborated upon in Chapter 3.



CHAPTER 2:

BUILDING A SCHOOLWIDE FOUNDATION

Some students will learn and behave appropriately in almost any school environment. Other students, however, require some level of support to help them realize high academic and behavioral standards. The schoolwide foundation provides all students with the supports and skills they need to become effective learners and problem solvers. In addition, the foundation provides student and staff with the support and skills they need to develop and foster appropriate behaviors and healthy emotional adjustment. Research suggests that when effective schoolwide systems that focus on learning and behavior are in place, most schools can prevent at least 80 percent of problematic student behaviors.

The Early Warning Guide identified 13 characteristics of a school that is safe and responsive to all children.

13 Characteristics of a School that is Safe and Responsive to All Children

1. Focus on academic achievement
2. Involve families in meaningful ways
3. Develop links to the community
4. Emphasize positive relationships among students and staff
5. Discuss safety issues openly
6. Treat students with equal respect
7. Create ways for students to share their concerns
8. Help children feel safe expressing their feelings
9. Have in place a system for referring children who are suspected of being abused or neglected
10. Offer extended day programs for children
11. Promote good citizenship and character
12. Identify problems and assess progress toward solutions
13. Support students in making the transition to adult life and the workplace

This chapter describes four key components of a comprehensive, effective schoolwide plan that can be used to prevent school violence:

- creating a caring school community in which all members feel connected, safe, and supported
- teaching appropriate behaviors and social problem-solving skills
- supporting positive behavior support systems
- providing appropriate academic instruction.

Creating a Caring School Community in Which All Members Feel Connected, Safe, and Supported

Safe schools support caring relationships between and among students, faculty, and staff. Establishment of these relationships reduces the causes of interpersonal conflicts (prejudice, for example) and allows students to gain a sense of belonging, pride, and attachment to the school. These feelings are important to keep students engaged in the educational process and sensitive to the needs of others with whom they interact in the school. Establishing these relationships between students and staff makes it more likely that students can share their safety concerns with staff and enhances the opportunities for adults to coach, mentor, and even to discipline students if necessary.

Creating caring relationships is not easy—particularly in large and diverse schools. Schools can create and nurture caring environments by organizing the environment to support positive relationships (by creating small learning communities within schools, for example). In addition schools can develop effective programs to prevent harassment, bullying, and intergroup conflict. These programs will be most effective when they align with social skills instruction, the schoolwide discipline system, and the school's curriculum.

Resolving Conflict Creatively Program (RCCP)

The RCCP is a school-based primary prevention program that begins in kindergarten and extends through the 12th grade. It is one of the largest and longest running conflict resolution initiatives in the country that is designed to promote constructive conflict resolution and positive intergroup relations. The specific objectives of the program include: making children aware of the different choices they have for dealing with conflicts; helping children develop skills for making those choices; encouraging children's respect for their own cultural backgrounds and those of others; teaching children how to identify and stand against prejudice; and making children aware of their role in creating a more peaceful world. These objectives are implemented primarily through a curriculum taught by trained teachers and designed around several core skills including: effective communication and listening, expression of feelings and management of anger, resolving conflicts, fostering cooperation, appreciating diversity, and countering bias. The 30 to 60 minute lessons are organized into units based on these core skills and are delivered in a manner that facilitates student-directed discussions and learning. Separate curriculums for lower and upper elementary school grades as well as high school enable concepts to be conveyed to children in age-appropriate ways. In addition to the classroom curriculum component, RCCP also incorporates the training of student-based peer mediation groups and administrators. The program aims to create environments in classrooms and across entire schools where opportunities for social-emotional learning are provided alongside opportunities for traditional academic learning. Formal evaluation of the impact of RCCP found significant reductions in the frequency of aggressive behaviors and in the types of thinking and cognitive processing leading to aggression (e.g., hostile attributions, aggressive fantasies, and aggressive problem-solving strategies). When trained teachers employed the curriculum regularly, RCCP was found to benefit all children regardless of grade, gender, and classroom or neighborhood context.

Activities to build community are varied, but, in general, successful community building ensures that students associate positive experiences with their interpersonal interactions in the school environment. In other words, students who are accepted, respected, and encounter interpersonal and academic success will feel good about their school experience. Numerous schoolwide activities can be developed to build a strong sense of community within the school. These activities range from the formal use of anti-bias curriculum that teaches children tolerance and dealing with prejudice to the fair and equal treatment of all students within the school building.

Teaching Appropriate Behaviors and Social Problem-Solving Skills

Just as students learn how to read, write, and calculate math equations, they must also learn how to interact appropriately with peers and adults and how to solve interpersonal conflicts nonviolently. A school will be at increased risk of having students who solve problems using violent means if the students do not know how or are not encouraged to interact appropriately and to use problem-solving skills. Thus, safe schools form mechanisms to develop interpersonal, problem-solving, and conflict resolution skills in all students.

Social skills instruction is an effective way to teach appropriate behaviors and problem solving skills to all students. Social skills can be taught either directly through structured lessons or indirectly by integrating problem-solving themes into other curricula such as social studies or reading. In either case, social skills and problem-solving activities should become a part of the daily school routine. Numerous social skills programs are available; the school should select a program that best fits the culture of the school. There are a number of considerations that should be made when selecting appropriate programs for the particular setting. The following program evaluation criteria will help determine which program will best meet the needs of the individual school.

Program Evaluation Criteria

- ❖ **Outcome Evidence:** Is there evidence that this program has worked in other school communities similar to yours? How widely used is this intervention?
- ❖ **Fiscal Costs:** Is training required? Will materials need to be purchased separately?
- ❖ **Personnel/Staffing Implications:** Will additional staff be required or will duties need to be expanded? Does this intervention require a particular setting?
- ❖ **Program Outcomes with Diverse Populations:** Has the program been effective with students similar to the students in your school community?
- ❖ **Flexibility:** Can the intervention be altered to meet your unique needs? What is the likely effect of modifying the intervention?
- ❖ **External Support:** Is it available? How much will it cost?

Many successful social skills programs teach students to develop a problem-solving language that will assist in guiding and monitoring their behavior when they encounter a difficult situation. This language and the corresponding behaviors are taught by providing students an opportunity to see others use successful social skills, practice the skills themselves, receive feedback from the teacher and others on the use of the skills, and then try them out in real situations.

It is important to develop an infrastructure to support the ongoing use of social skills programs. This infrastructure should include at least three main components:

- training of all school staff in the teaching of social skills

- designating school support leaders
- monitoring and supporting the teaching of social skills.

Second Step Curriculum

Second Step is a violence curriculum developed by the Committee for Children. The curriculum is designed to enable children, preschool through junior high, to change the attitudes and behaviors that contribute to violence. These objectives are implemented through a school-based in-class social skills curriculum that teaches children specific skills to reduce impulsive and aggressive behaviors and to increase their level of social competence. Three primary skill areas are emphasized: empathy, impulse control, and anger management. Each social skill lesson is integrated into the regular curriculum through 35-minute sessions that are conducted once or twice a week where teachers lead discussion, model skills, and have students role-play. The curriculum also incorporates a family-based component that employs a video-based parent program and a series of parent group meetings. Formal evaluation of the impact of the Second Step Curriculum indicated moderate decreases in aggression and moderate increases in prosocial and neutral interactions over the period of one school year for students receiving the Second Step Curriculum. Furthermore, evaluation indicated that the control group of peers who did not receive the curriculum displayed increases in their physical and verbal aggression over the same school year.

Staff Training

Programs designed to teach children new skills will be most beneficial if *all staff* are involved in teaching, reinforcing, and modeling the use of those skills. When new staff are hired they also will require training. Training should be conducted with someone skilled in in-service training and consultation and who is familiar with social skills programs. It is critical that staff be comfortable with and committed to teaching problem-solving skills, encouraging and reinforcing their use, and holding students responsible for using the skills. Most programs that are designed to teach students problem-solving skills are adaptable to the needs of teachers. Acquisition of good teaching skills may be more difficult for non-teaching staff and, therefore, these individuals should receive adequate initial training and responsive follow-up support.

Staff Support

The degree to which a new program is implemented will depend largely upon the support provided to those implementing the program. Someone in the school should have the skills, time, and authority to assist staff in their initial and ongoing efforts to teach and support students to use appropriate problem-solving skills. In addition, because students may have several teachers, some coordination will be necessary to ensure that teachers are consistently teaching these skills and that all staff members are modeling and reinforcing the students' use of these skills.

Monitoring the Program

Periodic checks by the support leaders will be helpful to see how frequently and appropriately teachers are teaching the skills and whether they are being taught in a consistent manner across classrooms. Over time it will be important for the school to determine whether the program is working. Most teachers will be able to tell quickly whether students are using the social skills in class. It is important, however, to observe whether these skills are also being used outside of class and outside of school.

Project ACHIEVE

Project ACHIEVE is a schoolwide prevention and early intervention program for elementary-age students. It places particular emphasis on increasing student performance in the areas of social skills and conflict resolution, improving student achievement and academic progress, facilitating positive school climates, and increasing parental involvement and support. This is implemented through an integrated process that involves organizational and resource development, comprehensive in-service training and follow-up, and parent and community involvement all intended to provide comprehensive preventive services to students schoolwide. Project ACHIEVE begins with a strategic planning process where teachers, staff, school-based mental health professionals, students, parents, and community members work together to adopt schoolwide systems of effective behavior management and positive skills-oriented student discipline, as well as to improve instructional practices and the academic support provided to students. These schoolwide systems focus on teaching students prosocial skills, problem solving methods, and anger management techniques, while simultaneously developing the capacity of teachers, staff, and families to respond to students and intervene positively when problem situations occur. Typically, students are taught one new skill each week, with faculty and staff across the school facilitating students' use of skills by prompting them at every reasonable opportunity with key phrases including, "Stop and Think", "Make a good choice", "What are my choices", and "How did I do"? Project ACHIEVE is designed to reduce acts of aggression, violence, and disruptive off-task behavior that often lead to suspensions, academic failure, and special education referral. Project ACHIEVE has a strong evaluation component built into the program that considers student outcomes, teacher outcomes, school outcomes, and direct and indirect outcomes. Formal evaluation of the impact of Project ACHIEVE found the following: a decrease in total disciplinary referrals to the principal's office; a decrease in out-of-school suspensions; a significant decrease in retention of students; and significant increases in the number of students scoring above the 50th percentile on end-of-year achievement tests.

Supporting Positive Behavior Support Systems

Safe schools provide a social and physical environment that fosters appropriate behavior. The social environment includes norms, rules, their enforcement, and support necessary to enable students and adults to behave appropriately. The physical environment includes the way in which the plant and the school's routines are managed to prevent problems from occurring

Establishing Schoolwide Systems to Manage and Support Behavior

Effective discipline systems must be simple, schoolwide, proactive, and positive. Simplicity is important so that all members of the school—administrators, teachers, staff, students, and their families—understand the rules and what happens when people violate the rules. These rules should be schoolwide so that expectations and behavioral supports for students are consistent across all school environments. The behavioral management systems should be proactive and positive as research demonstrates that proactive approaches (for example, intervening before a verbal dispute escalates into a fight) and positive support (teaching expected behaviors) are more effective than reactive approaches that emphasize punishment.

A critical component of a safe school environment is the establishment of clear expectations for student behavior. Additionally, clear guidelines should be established for adherence to and violation of those expectations. Early in the school year the Schoolwide Team, with input from the whole school community, should meet to establish the behaviors that all students should exhibit throughout the school campus. Ideally, these basic rules of behavior should be

- stated simply and positively (for example, say "Walk" instead of "Do not run")

- few in number so that they can be memorized
- reinforced, modeled, and enforced by the adults in the school
- consistent with the social skills that every teacher in the building is teaching and reinforcing.

Once schoolwide behavioral expectations are established, the team should determine procedures for providing incentives or consequences for appropriate or inappropriate behavior. These procedures should be agreeable to all or most members of the school and they should be easy to use. An effective schoolwide management system is one in which all students know and can explain expectations for behavior, as well as the incentives and consequences associated with adherence to or violation of those expectations.

Expectations for student behavior should be posted throughout the school and should be frequently referenced by all staff. Particularly for younger children or students with cognitive disabilities, the use of pictures or symbols to accompany each expectation can be beneficial.

Despite ongoing and structured encouragement of appropriate behavior, there are times when minor infractions occur, or sometimes, major disruptive behaviors are exhibited. Caring and warm schools use positive disciplinary measures to address these difficulties. Positive discipline has, at a minimum, three important characteristics

- an explanation of why the behavior is problematic
- an explanation of which rule was violated
- the provision of opportunities to learn appropriate behaviors and to correct mistakes.

Students need to understand that not all inappropriate behavior is the same and that different consequences are associated with different levels of inappropriate behavior. Safe schools should build their capacity to deal with multiple violations of the rules by developing multiple levels of consequences. These levels should be systematically followed and never short-circuited. That is, steps on the consequences ladder should not be skipped to expedite a child's removal from the school building. The exception is any major violation of school rules that endangers the life of the child or the lives of others. It is also critical that parents understand the school conduct codes and the consequences for violations.

Consistent use of incentives and consequences is critical to successful management of behavior at the school level. If some faculty fail to adopt and implement agreed-upon procedures to encourage student use of positive behaviors, students will be sent the message that sometimes it is okay not to solve problems this way. As a result, their use of problem-solving strategies will be erratic at best. Consistency does not just happen. It most often occurs due to school-level strategic planning, teambuilding, professional development, and ongoing discussion and evaluation. Beyond this, consistency is further strengthened when the school's system is communicated and extended into the community for families, support agencies, and other community groups.

Effective Behavior Support (EBS)

Effective Behavior Support (EBS) is a comprehensive schoolwide prevention and intervention program that provides behavioral support to students, including students with chronic behavioral problems, and consultation support to teachers. EBS has four major components that provide prevention and intervention for problematic behavior including: schoolwide behavior support systems; specific setting support systems; classroom behavior support systems; and individual behavior support systems. The schoolwide support involves procedures and processes that are intended for all students, all staff, and all settings. Schoolwide efforts clarify expectations, simplify rules for student behavior, and build in a continuum of procedures for encouraging students to display expected behaviors and discouraging students from violating rules. The most important element of support at the schoolwide level is a building-based team that oversees all development, implementation, modification, and evaluation of prevention efforts. The setting-specific support component uses a team-based mechanism to monitor specific settings and to develop intervention strategies for settings within the building where problem behaviors occur regularly. The classroom support component involves procedures and processes for individual classrooms that parallel the strategies and procedures used schoolwide. The individual support provides intensive, immediate, and effective intervention to students whose behavior presents the most significant or chronic challenge to staff. For these students, EBS provides teachers and staff with a set of functional suggestions as well as additional resources to help them manage the student's behavior more effectively and deter placement of the student out of the neighborhood school. Formal evaluation of EBS found a significant reduction in discipline referrals to the principal's office, especially in the time period prior to school vacations. In addition, evaluation findings indicated that teachers favor the EBS program because they feel more effective in their teaching and management of student problem behavior.

The important components of schoolwide management strategies are also applicable at the classroom level. Expectations for behavior, the use of incentives and consequences, and the consistency with which they are implemented are just as important in the classroom as anywhere else in the school building. Students should understand the classroom rules, have the skills to demonstrate behaviors that will allow them to meet the rules, and understand the incentives and consequences for appropriate and inappropriate behavior. In general, classrooms that are well managed are characterized by the following conditions:

- Classroom routines are well established and understood by all.
- A great majority of the teacher's time is spent on academic instruction; only minimal time is required to redirect disruptive behavior.
- Teacher feedback to students regarding their behavior is overwhelmingly positive—five positive comments to every one negative comment.
- Mechanisms are in place for students to cool off and generate more solutions to problems.
- Students are provided the opportunity to practice and use the solutions that they generate.
- Academic tasks match students' instructional levels.
- Academic tasks are presented at an engaging and appropriate pace.
- Rules and consequences are consistently followed and applied.

- There are high expectations for behavior and students.
- Transition periods are highly structured with increased adult monitoring.

Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS)

Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS) is a classroom-based curriculum for kindergarten through fifth grade students designed to prevent violence, aggression, and other problematic behaviors through the development of students' social/emotional competence and problem-solving. These objectives are implemented through the teaching of cognitive problem-solving skills that improve critical thinking skills, develop effective interpersonal interaction skills, and enhance classroom climate. The PATHS curriculum, delivered by the classroom teacher, is divided into three separate units: 1) self-control; 2) feelings and relationships; and 3) interpersonal cognitive problem solving. The cognitive problem solving skills that students learn in the third unit builds upon and expands the skills students developed in the first two units. Students are taught to competently understand, regulate, and express emotions. In addition, children are taught to recognize the feelings of others, to relate the experiences of others to themselves in order to develop empathy for others, and to understand how the behaviors of other individuals can affect their own emotions. The techniques used to teach the lessons include group discussion, role-playing, art activities, stories, and educational games. The PATHS curriculum provides students with extensive opportunities to practice the new skills and assistance with applying the skills in their daily life. Formal evaluation of the PATHS curriculum found significant reductions in students' hyperactivity, peer aggression, and noncompliance with teacher and staff directions. Specifically, first grade students receiving PATHS were found to have significantly lower levels of aggression and disruptive behaviors compared to their same-age peers who did not receive the curriculum.

In addition to developing expectations for appropriate behavior and reinforcing that behavior throughout the school, an effective schoolwide violence prevention plan will include environmental interventions that are designed to prevent unsafe behavior. These interventions are discussed next.

Creating a Safe Physical Environment

Inevitably, there will be special situations and special places in schools where problems are more likely to occur. To prevent such problems, changing the school environment may be necessary. These interventions alter the use of school space and supervision routines so that opportunities for violent or disruptive behavior are minimized or eliminated.

Analysis of the school environment is one way to determine if hot spots exist in the school. For example, the back hallway leading from the locker commons to the band room may be an area where many fights or disruptions occur due to minimal supervision and poor lighting. Perhaps analysis will also show that these problems are most likely to occur in the mornings and when increased student traffic moves through the band hallway. A thorough understanding of when and where problems occur should prove invaluable to the Schoolwide Team. Some of the environmental characteristics that a school may examine include the following:

- number and types of exits
- location of bathrooms
- design of the cafeteria, common areas, and the playground

- patterns of supervision
- density of traffic patterns throughout parts of the school during various periods of the day
- lighting
- isolated areas out of the line of sight
- bell and class schedules and the intermingling of students from different grade levels
- length of time students stand in line to wait for a bus or to wait for lunch.

Equipped with the above information, the Schoolwide Team will be in a position to modify arrangements that minimize opportunities for inappropriate behavior. Ongoing monitoring and supervision of all areas of the school will allow the team to make necessary adjustments to these accommodations throughout the year.

Providing Appropriate Academic Instruction

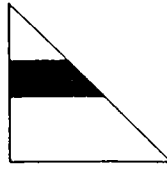
Disruptive, antisocial, or violent behavior can be a result of ongoing academic frustration and failure. Schools and teachers face tremendous pressures to cover all of the required curriculum while ensuring that every child performs at least at grade level. In their zeal to accomplish both goals, the instruction that is provided is not always tailored to meet the individual learning needs of every child. Of course, without extra support this is virtually an impossible task.

Numerous interventions have been developed to address the individual needs of struggling students. At the universal level, far fewer interventions have been fully developed; however, at least three have been shown to be both effective and feasible for teachers to implement. Class Wide Peer Tutoring, cooperative learning, and direct instruction are three instructional interventions that many schools have adopted. These strategies are particularly powerful because they provide children the opportunity to experience a high rate of success on meaningful academic tasks. They also provide students the opportunity to practice the skills that they are developing. Successful use of these techniques depends upon ongoing staff development and training to help teachers master appropriate instructional techniques.

Class Wide Peer Tutoring (CWPT)

CWPT is a method of same-age, intra-class, reciprocal peer tutoring that many around the country have found useful in adapting general education classroom instruction to meet the individual needs of diverse students with diverse skills. In addition to peer tutors, teachers divide the text into short passages that can be introduced on Monday each week, tutored during daily sessions throughout the week, and tested for progress on Friday. Because the basic academic skills units (e.g., reading comprehension, math, spelling) are short by design, they can be practiced by each student several times each day leading to mastery, fluency, or automaticity. The units also may be organized by difficulty level to accommodate skill level differences represented in the classroom. For upper-grade, content-level instruction (e.g., social studies, science), the peer tutoring materials are organized around study guides that are coordinated with text book units within chapters.

CWPT incorporates a game structure. Students earn points for themselves and for their team. They learn that winning the game is a matter of how well they and their partner respond to the task. Because of this arrangement, tutors learn to help, prompt, and really care about how their partner performs. Since teams and partners change each week, CWPT students learn from the very beginning that they are expected to work with every student in the classroom and they learn to accept a variety of individual learning styles and different personalities. More than 35 studies have shown CWPT's superiority compared to other instruction strategies. Studies show increased engagement, mastery, and fluency with the subject matter. Further, students' weekly test scores and grades have improved.



CHAPTER 3:

RESPONDING TO CHILDREN EXHIBITING EARLY WARNING SIGNS: EARLY INTERVENTION

With an effective foundation in place, most schools can anticipate at least an 80 percent reduction in student problem behaviors. Significantly reducing and preventing problem behaviors schoolwide makes it easier for staff to identify behaviors of a particular student that signal a need for additional attention and early intervention. The student who continues to experience behavioral problems, even in the presence of schoolwide prevention activities, *may* be exhibiting early warning signs of violence.

This chapter focuses on the 10-15 percent of students whose problem behaviors may be signaling a need for additional attention through early intervention. This chapter reviews the early warning signs of violence, lists effective practices used by a number of schools to build the capacity of individuals to recognize the early warning signs, outlines a process for receiving and responding to concerns about individual children, and discusses how to develop early individualized interventions to address the needs of particular students.

Review of the Early Warning Signs of Violence

The following list presents the early warning signs originally introduced in the Early Warning Guide. Safe and effective schools ensure that teachers, administrators, school support staff, parents, students, and the larger school community become familiar with the early warning signs and the principles for taking appropriate actions. Understanding is the first step in the process of early intervention because it gives people the knowledge to recognize when a child may need help.

Caution

Simplistic or mechanical use of lists of warning signs can harm children and waste resources. Schools using the early warning signs should, at a minimum, use the descriptions of the early warning signs in the Early Warning Guide.

Early Warning Signs

- ❖ *Social withdrawal*
- ❖ *Excessive feelings of isolation or being alone*
- ❖ *Excessive feelings of rejection*
- ❖ *Being a victim of violence*
- ❖ *Feelings of being picked on and persecuted*
- ❖ *Low school interest and poor academic performance*
- ❖ *Expression of violence in writing and drawings*
- ❖ *Uncontrolled anger*
- ❖ *Patterns of impulsive and chronic hitting, intimidating, and bullying behaviors*
- ❖ *History of discipline problems*
- ❖ *Past history of violent and aggressive behavior*
- ❖ *Intolerance for differences and prejudicial attitudes*
- ❖ *Drug use and alcohol use*
- ❖ *Affiliation with gangs*
- ❖ *Inappropriate access to, possession of, and use of firearms*
- ❖ *Serious threats of violence (also an imminent warning sign)*

An important balance must be found between being responsive to the signs of a child who may need help and harmfully labeling or overreacting to a situation. The ability to recognize the warning signs and to interpret them as indicators that a child may potentially need assistance reduces the risk that parents, educators, and community members will misinterpret student behavior and react inappropriately.

It's okay to be concerned about a child, but it's not okay to overreact and jump to conclusions. There are early warning signs in most cases of violence to self and others—certain behavioral and emotional signs that, when viewed in context, can signal a troubled child. But early warning signs are just that—indicators that a student *may* need help.

Early Warning Timely Response: A Guide to Safe Schools, p. 5.

This balance between being responsive and overreacting is more likely achieved when the efforts to identify and respond to students are guided by the five principles for using the early warning signs of violence. Further elaboration on these five principles can be found in the Early Warning Guide.

Principles for Using the Early Warning Signs of Violence

- ❖ *Do no harm.*
- ❖ *Understand violence and aggression within a context.*
- ❖ *Avoid stereotypes.*
- ❖ *View warning signs within a developmental context.*
- ❖ *Understand that children typically exhibit multiple warning signs.*

Furthermore, the importance of building relationships with children and youth—part of the schoolwide foundation—cannot be overemphasized. When teachers, administrators, support staff, pupil services staff, and parents build close, caring, and supportive relationships with children and youth, they increase the likelihood that a child or youth who is in trouble will reach out to them. Teachers, due to their vast experiences with many same-age children, are uniquely positioned to

identify students who may be exhibiting early warning signs. Teachers have frequent interactions and conversations with students, and are responsible for monitoring student academic performance and behavior. The depth and frequency of this contact often places them in a position in which a student may disclose something to them of a personal or critical nature, such as their feelings of isolation, reports of bullying behavior, situations of abuse or neglect, suicidal ideation, or threats peers are making toward others or the school. Similarly, close and caring relationships between teachers and students can increase the chances that a student holding critical knowledge about another child or a potentially violent situation will disclose that information sooner rather than later. By getting to know children and youth, teachers, support staff, and parents are more likely to recognize a pattern or a change in behavior that may be an early warning sign and then seek assistance for the child.

Building the Capacity to Identify Early Warning Signs

Teachers, administrators, and support staff are bombarded each school year by in-service training and new initiatives. Information overload and time demands can be overwhelming. Yet, the responsibility to protect the safety of children and to meet the needs of children at risk for violence cannot be left to one person or group of people. Rather, safe and responsive schools institute practices and policies that support ALL school staff to maintain their familiarity with the early warning signs, and instill a sense of urgency to respond appropriately on the behalf of children. Safe and effective schools use a number of policies and practices to build the capacity of their school and community to identify the early warning signs exhibited by children:

- **School board policies that support training and ongoing consultation.** The entire school community knows how to identify early warning signs and understands the principles that support them.
- **Policy commitments linked to budgeted resources.** School boards should be provided with data on implementation evaluation so that they can modify policies and appropriate necessary resources.
- **School board policies that sanction and promote the identification of early warning signs.** When staff members seek help for a troubled child, when friends report worries about a peer or friend, when parents raise concerns about their children's thoughts or habits, children can get the help they need. By actively sharing information, a school community can provide quick and effective responses.
- **Policies and procedures should ensure that staff and students only use the early warning signs for preliminary identification and referral purposes.** Only trained professionals should make diagnoses in consultation with the child's parents or guardians.
- **Policies and procedures to address imminent dangers.** In addition to these support strategies, policies and procedures must be in place to ensure immediate safety. When warning signs indicate that danger is imminent, safety must always be the first and foremost consideration. Action must be taken immediately.
- **School practices that encourage and provide opportunities for staff and families to establish close, caring, and supportive relationships with children and youth.** Safe

schools ensure that adults get to know children well enough to be aware of their needs, feelings, attitudes, and behavior patterns.

- **Collaboration between school and families.** Working together, educators and parents are encouraged to review school records for patterns of behavior or sudden changes in behavior.
- **Easy access to a team of specialists trained in evaluating and addressing serious behavioral and academic concerns.** Effective schools have teams who are responsible for responding to referrals and ensuring that students receive timely and appropriate support. (See the Student Support Team for more information.)
- **Procedures in place that encourage and expect individuals to report their concerns about a student exhibiting early warning signs.** Each school should develop a procedure that students and staff can follow when reporting their concerns about a child who exhibits early warning signs. For example, in many schools the principal is the first point of contact. In cases that do not pose imminent danger, the principal contacts a school psychologist or other qualified professional who takes responsibility for addressing the concern immediately. If the concern is determined to be serious ~~but not to pose a threat of imminent danger~~, the child's family should be contacted. The family is consulted before implementing any formal assessments and is included in the development of interventions for the child. In cases where school-based contextual factors are determined to be causing or exacerbating the child's troubling behavior, the school acts quickly to modify them.
- **School leaders encourage others to raise concerns about observed early warning signs and report all observations of imminent warning signs immediately.** This is in addition to school district policies that sanction and promote the identification of early warning signs. For example, there are opportunities for educators and families to work together to increase their ability to recognize early warning signs.

Immediate Interventions for Dangerous Situations

Immediate intervention by school authorities and possibly law enforcement officers is needed when a child

- has presented a detailed plan (time, place, method) to harm self or others—particularly if the child has a history of aggression or has attempted to carry out threats in the past
- is carrying a weapon, particularly a firearm, and has threatened to use it.

In situations where students present these and other threatening behaviors, the school should immediately inform parents and other caregivers of the concerns. School communities also have the responsibility to seek assistance from appropriate agencies, such as police, child and family services, and community mental health. These responses should reflect school board policies, Federal, state, and local laws, and be consistent with the school's violence prevention and response plan.

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Connecting the Early Warning Signs to Early Intervention: Developing a Referral Response Process

Once school staff, parents, and community members become familiar with the warning signs and understand the urgency of being responsive to a child exhibiting signs, they need to know how to respond. They need to know with whom to share their concerns and how to initiate the process. Teachers and staff need to feel confident that when they share their concerns about a child support will be readily available to them. They rely upon having quick access to trained professionals whose responsibilities include determining what to do to assist these students.

In the majority of schools, a team of trained professionals already exists that provides consultation, evaluation, and intervention for students who are struggling academically, behaviorally, and socially. Safe schools will typically expand the focus of this team to include responding to individual students exhibiting early warning signs or, if necessary, create such a team. When a child or youth exhibits early warning signs, the school can no longer rely on schoolwide interventions alone. Rather, a Student Support Team, working with the teacher, child, and parent, must develop interventions that are individualized to the child and specifically target the behaviors of concern. Early intervention requires an effective referral process that can respond in a timely, coordinated, and effective manner.

First Step to Success

First Step to Success is an early intervention program designed to address the needs of kindergarten children identified as having antisocial or aggressive behavior problems. The model includes three components: a kindergarten screening process, a classroom-based skills training curriculum called CLASS, and a family intervention program called HomeBase. First Step to Success uses trained consultants who work directly with students, teachers, and parents to facilitate the coordination of intervention efforts across the home and school environments. Consultants train teachers and parents in different strategies to teach students alternative replacement behaviors and to effectively reward students when those behaviors are used appropriately and consistently. Students learn specific skills and behaviors to use that are more effective and adaptive than the behaviors they have used in the past. To provide practice and reinforcement for the new skills the child has learned, the consultant, teacher, or classroom aide provides the student with visual cues (i.e., a green or red card) during the school day that indicate whether he or she is on-task and using appropriate behaviors. Over the course of a school day, the student accrues points toward his or her behavioral goal. If the student makes the daily goal, he or she gets to select a fun activity for the entire class to participate in and appreciate. Every evening, teachers provide parents with feedback about how the student's day went. Parents are trained and encouraged to reward the child's positive behavior by spending extra time with their child in a fun child-directed activity. Once the classroom teacher feels comfortable taking full responsibility for implementing the CLASS curriculum, the consultant begins working more directly with the student's parents to assist the family with implementing the HomeBase intervention program. Formal evaluation of First Step to Success found effective and lasting improvements on the students' behavior and social adjustment, even three years after initial intervention. Significant reductions were observed in the students' aggressive and maladaptive behaviors, while significant increases were observed in the student's adaptive behaviors and academic engaged time. In addition, teachers implementing the CLASS curriculum expressed high levels of satisfaction with the program, noting that it is easy to learn, implement, and leads to favorable results with their students.

Referral

It is important for all educational staff and families to understand the role and function of the Student Support Team and to be informed that this is where they bring their concerns regarding a child who may be exhibiting early warning signs. Faculty training, parent question-and-answer sessions, classroom visits to inform students, and a public relations campaign within the community are needed to explain the Team's membership, purpose, and approach, and to disseminate information about how to request the Team's assistance. Some schools create a brochure on ways to access the Student Support Team formally and include names and telephone numbers of team members to encourage informal consultations.

Everyone—including administrators, teachers, support staff, families, and students—may find it difficult to admit that a child close to them needs help. To encourage people to share their concerns about individual children, the referral process must be easy, and it must result in immediate attention by the Student Support Team. Schoolwide referral systems should enable teachers, staff, and parents to access the Student Support Team in a timely, respectful, supportive, and confidential manner. Several principles should be considered when developing a referral process.

Principles for Developing a Referral Process

Students must be partners in identifying early warning signs and providing information about potentially dangerous situations. Just as schools need to make the referral process comfortable for adults, safe schools tailor the referral process to the needs of students. Students who have information about a peer or a potentially dangerous situation may be fearful and hesitant to share their concerns. Both the Schoolwide Team and the Student Support Team should work with students to develop ideas and vehicles for students to share their concerns about peers and situations without fear of reprisal. Some schools have created a telephone hotline or a safe school box for written concerns or have designated a set of students at each grade level who are safe school liaisons that are available to their peers to hear concerns. Vehicles like these enable students to share their concerns or information more comfortably and confidentially. Acknowledging to students that they are partners with the staff in keeping their school safe will create a sense of shared responsibility and ally students with staff and the community. Ensuring students of confidentiality will increase their use of the reporting system.

Response

The Student Support Team must have the capacity to respond to referrals in a timely, coordinated, and effective manner. Adopting a procedure to guide *how* the team provides individualized interventions and supports will significantly improve both the efficiency and the effectiveness of the team's response to children and youth in need of early intervention. Effective procedures incorporate problem solving, consultation, preliminary planning, and developing and implementing interventions. Teams recursively cycle through these activities as they develop, implement, monitor, and modify individualized interventions and supports for particular students.

Principles for Developing a Referral Process

The process of making a referral to the Student Support Team should enable students and staff to access help quickly. In developing the team's referral process, keep in mind the following principles:

- **Simplify requests for urgent assistance.** Many school systems and community agencies have complex legalistic referral systems with timelines and waiting lists. Children who may be exhibiting early warning signs and are potentially at risk of endangering themselves or others cannot be placed on a waiting list. Referral forms must provide a way to alert the Student Support Team to the urgency of the referral. Teams should consider adding a box on the standard referral form to indicate when the referral is about a child exhibiting early warning signs for violence. Alternatively, a separate referral form might be developed that is copied onto brightly colored paper and used only for referrals made on a child exhibiting early warning signs. Consideration should also be given to listing the imminent warning signs on the referral form with instructions that direct the person to go to the principal immediately if the concerns match imminent warning signs rather than early warning signs.
- **Give scheduling preference to urgent referrals.** The Student Support Team must respond by convening as soon as possible following the receipt of a referral on a child exhibiting early warning signs. These referrals cannot be pushed to an agenda in the future. In some cases, the Student Support Team will need to "bump" a non urgent referral from their agenda to meet and review the referral as soon as possible. In other situations, the team will need to convene at a day or time other than their regular schedule.
- **Encourage informal consultations.** Sometimes teachers, staff, students, and parents are hesitant to make a referral on a child they think may be exhibiting early warning signs. Their hesitation may stem from the formal nature of this action, the insecurities they feel around identifying early warning signs even with training, and how they might feel if their referral is deemed unfounded. Yet, they have concerns. Safe schools encourage informal consultations because it offers another vehicle for concerns to be shared about individual children.
- **Inform parents and listen to them when early warning signs are observed.** Parents should be involved as soon as possible. Parents need to be encouraged to meet with the Student Support Team as soon as possible when a referral has been made about their child potentially exhibiting early warning signs.
- **Make interventions available as soon as possible following referral.** Too frequently, interventions are not made available quickly. Safe and effective schools build mechanisms into their referral process that ensure that the Student Support Team convenes promptly, involves parents immediately, and, within the first meeting, makes decisions regarding what actions or steps each person will take next to support the child.
- **Maintain confidentiality and parents' rights to privacy.** In responding to a referral, Student Support Teams may determine with the family that agencies outside of the school need to become involved. Parental involvement and consent is required before personally identifiable information is shared with other agencies except in the case of emergencies or suspicion of abuse. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), a federal law that addresses the privacy of education records, must be observed in all referrals to or sharing of information with other community agencies. Furthermore, parent-approved interagency communication must be kept confidential. Nevertheless, FERPA does not prevent disclosure of personally identifiable information to appropriate parties, such as law enforcement officials, trained medical personnel, and other emergency personnel, when responsible personnel determine there is an acute emergency (imminent danger).
- **Circumvent the referral process in cases of imminent warning signs.** In the case where a student is believed to pose imminent danger, safety must always be the first and foremost consideration. In these situations, the referral process is circumvented. Action must be taken immediately by school authorities and law enforcement personnel. Principals may find it helpful to seek consultation from the Student Support Team while taking immediate action and notifying parents of the school's concerns.

Safe schools understand that families are central to children's educational success and social/emotional adjustment. To involve the family at each step from referral through implementation of individualized interventions, parents need to feel valued and supported and they must experience parity with other members of the team. Families should be viewed as members of the team who can provide a comprehensive picture of the children from birth to the present. Families can help the team identify children's strengths and interests, as well as validate observations of needs. The information provided by families informs decisions the Student Support Team will make with families regarding children's needs for individualized early intervention and potentially individualized assessments. Maintaining a collaborative relationship between the school and family will lay the groundwork for successful implementation of early intervention plans.

The Initial Meeting

Once the Student Support Team has received a referral for a child who may be exhibiting early warning signs, the response process begins with an initial meeting. The agenda for the initial meeting will likely address problem solving, consultation, and preliminary planning.

- **Problem Solving.** The Team convenes promptly to discuss the referral and to decide on the actions to take following the initial meeting. The Team's discussion in this initial meeting should focus on understanding the problem behaviors and events that led to the person's concerns and subsequent referral. Effective collaboration in this initial team meeting is critical. Team members must encourage the referring person to discuss concerns openly and should acknowledge the person's "good work" by noticing the child's difficulties and making the referral for assistance. A Team member should let the referring person know that questions will be posed to clarify the concerns and observations leading to the referral, and to determine any immediate risks to the child or school community that should be addressed immediately.

For the initial meeting, the Team's assessment goals are to gather preliminary information about the factors contributing to the behaviors of concern. The team should pose questions that begin to identify hypotheses or possible reasons for the problem behaviors. These hypotheses are important because they direct follow-up activities as the team moves into developing the child's individualized intervention plan. The following four categories of questions can help organize the team's discussion during the initial meeting:

Questions to Frame the Discussion at the Initial Meeting After the Referral

- Questions that lead to discussion about the child's strengths and weaknesses in such areas as academic skills and progress, friendships, emotional adjustment, coping strategies, physical health, interests, loss or other traumatic experiences, and personal and family strengths and stressors.
- Questions that lead to discussion and information about the interaction of the child's skills and ability to cope with life and school demands including self-management of frustration, conflict, and attention; adaptability to changes; and willingness to seek assistance.
- Questions that lead to discussion about the interaction of the child's skills and means for coping with instructional demands and style, including the match between the child's academic skills and the academic task demands, how directions are typically presented and if they are multi-step, ambiguous, or complicated, whether instruction is paced too slow or too fast or presented in either highly oral or highly visual modes, and the amount of independent work versus group work, pencil and paper versus hands-on projects.
- Questions that lead to a discussion of what has been tried and the results of what has been tried.

- **Consultation.** Once the Team discusses the questions, the Team will decide how best to respond to the concerns. At this stage, consultation with the referring teacher or parent may be an appropriate response. For example, the mental health professional or the school nurse may provide valuable support if the problem is social/emotional or medical in nature. The team may determine that the classroom teacher needs assistance from a master teacher to make curriculum adaptations or to use classroom management strategies. If the Team decides that consultation will not be sufficient to deal effectively with the problem, it will need to make decisions about how to proceed. This occurs when problems indicate that a more in-depth approach is needed.
- **Preliminary Planning.** At this point, the Team develops a preliminary plan to detail specific follow-up activities to outline the child and teacher supports that will be implemented immediately and continue until the Team meets again to develop the child's individualized intervention plan. The nature and complexity of the problem will determine how the team moves through the process.

To ensure effective follow-through, the Team may designate a case manager who tracks every step of the process. In addition, the Team can also list the responsibilities of each team member on the action plan, list dates each activity will be completed, and agree on a date and time when members will reconvene. Typically, families and team members find that a case manager can facilitate progress and help families feel connected and in the "communication loop."

Handling Referral Questions

One effective model that combines problem solving, consultation, and preliminary planning processes is Referral Question Consultation. This component of Project ACHIEVE was developed to specifically investigate referral concerns of teachers, parents, or others working with a student. The focus of this model is the development of specific referral questions that, when answered, have obvious implications for intervention. These referral questions are based on the development of hypotheses that are informed by the empirical and theoretical literature regarding a particular referral concern. Important to this process, referral questions and individualized assessment plans are collaboratively developed through ongoing, data-based consultation with the student's teacher, parents, and so forth. Thus, once the assessment is completed, specific answers to specific referral questions are generated. These answers directly lead to the development of interventions that alleviate the conditions causing the behavior of concern.

The remainder of this chapter describes how the Student Support Team develops, implements, and monitors early interventions designed for specific students who exhibit early warning signs.

Developing Early Interventions

Following the initial meeting of the team, follow-up activities should focus on collecting data and information that identifies the specific reasons underlying the problem behaviors and the factors contributing to it. Several data collection procedures can help identify the purposes of a child's problem behavior, but one approach—functional assessment—is becoming more familiar to school professionals. This is due to changes in special education laws requiring the use of functional assessment in particular situations involving students with identified disabilities.

Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA; Public Law 105-17 and *Final Regulations* published in the Federal Register, March 12, 1999), an individualized educational plan (IEP) team must conduct a "functional behavioral assessment" and implement an associated "behavioral intervention plan" for any child with a disability who has been removed from the current education placement for more than 10 school days in the same school year. If the child already has a behavioral intervention plan, the IEP team shall meet to review the plan and its implementation and modify the plan and its implementation, as necessary, to address the behavior.

The following discussion describes the major steps for using functional assessment to develop individualized interventions and supports. These steps will be taken by the Student Support Team to develop individualized early interventions following the initial meeting to review and discuss the referral. These phases include problem identification and analysis, plan development and implementation, and plan evaluation.

Problem Identification and Analysis

- **Definition of the targeted behaviors.** A well-developed assessment plan and a properly executed functional assessment should identify the contextual factors that contribute to behavior. This is accomplished by collecting information on the various conditions under which a student is most and least likely to be a successful learner. The information collected both indirectly and directly allows the Team to predict the circumstances under which the problem behavior is likely to occur or not.
- **Direct Measurement of the Targeted Behavior.** During this stage, the Student Support team collects and analyzes important information about the problem behavior. Observing the student in the classroom or other settings provides information regarding frequency, intensity, and severity of the problem, when and where the behavior does and does not occur, and what happens as a result of this behavior.

Measurement Leads to Success

Seventh grade twin brothers, who are receiving special education and related services were being disruptive out of school and in some of their classes. The IEP team met and decided to do a functional assessment. This included teacher interviews and classroom observations in the courses where the students were and were not disruptive. After speaking with the students, the team determined that the boys were disruptive only in science and social studies because they had difficulty reading cursive handwriting. As a result of the assessment, the teachers printed the material and worked to address the underlying learning issues. The students' academic performance and behavior markedly improved.

- **Functional Assessment.** During the problem-solving phase, the Team identifies the causes of behavior and selects interventions to directly address those causes. In using functional assessment, the Team must look beyond the behavior itself and focus on the factors, conditions, and social/behavioral, and environmental contexts. What is the child seeking to obtain, avoid, or escape? What does the child gain through this behavior or conversely, what is the child protesting? The major objective is to promote a behavior or response that serves the same function but is acceptable in the learning environment. Since the child's desires are often intricately woven with the instructional setting and demands, functional assessment can provide information on ways to modify and address

the instructional strategies and other environmental conditions contributing to the problem behavior.

Plan Development and Implementation

- **Development of a Step-by-Step Intervention Plan.** A plan should be developed to enable the child to substitute a replacement behavior and to make the environment and adult-child interactions conducive to the child's needs for support and learning. The new behaviors should be meaningful to the child and should allow the child to meet an appropriate need that the child was previously meeting by engaging in the undesirable behavior. Once the replacement behavior is defined a plan should be developed either to teach the child how to do the behavior or to change environmental conditions that are either causing or maintaining the undesirable behavior.

Developing a Plan—An Example

After Darren, an eighth-grade student with a learning disability, made a threat under his breath that he was going to beat up his teacher, the threat was recognized as an early warning sign. The teacher made a referral to the Student Support Team. The Team included the child's mother, special education case manager, general education referring teacher, principal, speech-language clinician, school psychologist, and school social worker. The team discussed the referral and the academic, behavior, and language goals currently included on Darren's IEP. The referring teacher described that Darren made the threat after being prompted for a third time to begin his work. The teacher also commented that Darren's reading skills were very poor. The team developed a preliminary hypothesis regarding the problem behavior and developed an action plan for follow-up assessment. After observing Darren in large-group instructional settings, the hypothesis was confirmed: Darren was having difficulty comprehending material presented orally, difficulty comprehending eighth-grade reading material, and difficulty communicating these problems to his teacher. As a result of the assessment, the speech and language clinician worked with Darren to script ways that he could communicate his confusion and need for assistance. At the same time, the special education and general education teachers collaborated on ways to adapt his textbooks and use cooperative learning groups to reduce the frequency of large-group oral presentation of content.

- **Implementation of the Intervention.** Each step of the plan should be implemented as planned. After two to four weeks, the Team should gauge the preliminary success of the plan and identify ways the plan may be modified or supports added. If there is a history of attempting prior interventions where the adequacy of the plan or the consistency of plan implementation was in question, the Student Support Team should allow a greater amount of time to pass before making a determination of the effectiveness of the plan. Students can "wait out" an intervention if they have a history of previous interventions being discontinued quickly.

Plan Evaluation

- **Ongoing Monitoring of the Intervention.** If the plan is successful in meeting its intended goals, then the Team must decide whether the intervention should be continued, scaled back, or applied to other behaviors or in other settings. Ultimately, the intervention should include a self-management and monitoring component so that the student can begin to take responsibility for his or her own behavior. If the plan does not meet its desired goals, then revisions to the intervention may be necessary. Revisions

may also require the team to cycle back through direct measurement of behavior and functional assessment.

Strategies for Creating Early Interventions

The following is a list of intervention strategies that may be used during the early intervention level. These strategies differ in their complexity. Although each strategy listed may work for some students, no one strategy works for all students. In addition, some strategies have been evaluated extensively through research studies, while others have less research demonstrating their effectiveness. These strategies are provided to assist Student Support Teams who are developing intervention plans for students whose behavioral problems have been resistant to universal or schoolwide interventions. It is important to note that these strategies could also be integrated with the schoolwide foundation and connected with intensive interventions (Wraparound support, for example) as a part of a comprehensive intensive intervention.

APPROPRIATE INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

Intervention Strategy	Definition
Accommodations and modifications	Changing instructional demands, the ways students demonstrate mastery, and the ways students input information to facilitate students with learning disabilities or learning differences to achieve and demonstrate academic mastery (e.g., oral responding versus written essay, tape recordings of text and information).
Alternative education— on-site educational	Alternative curriculum, settings or use of instructional practices Alternative curriculum, settings or use of instructional practices provided for students who for some reason are not succeeding in the traditional setting.
Alternative times—day/night school	Flexible schedules for students who, for various reasons, may not be able to attend school during traditional school hours.
Anger management training	Methods for teaching appropriate alternative ways to deal with anger.
Behavioral intervention	A group of strategies designed to increase positive behaviors and decrease maladaptive behaviors by manipulating environmental conditions that either precede or follow the student's behavior.
Behavior support plan	A plan designed to teach alternative replacement behaviors in environments and through adult interactions that are adapted and made more conducive to the student's individual needs.
Contingency contracting	A behavioral contract between a student and all involved adults. The contract specifies the behaviors that are expected and the consequences for performing or not performing those behaviors.
Cognitive behavioral interventions and training	An approach to behavior change that includes changing the way a person thinks or feels about a situation. For example, teaching a child that they have the problem-solving skills necessary to work through social problems in a nonaggressive way will usually prevent them from inappropriately dealing with social situations (i.e., using aggression).
Differential reinforcement	A method for decreasing inappropriate behaviors by rewarding alternative or incompatible behaviors; for example, decreasing out-of-seat behavior by rewarding the student for remaining in his or her seat.
Drop-out prevention	Interventions designed to identify students at risk for dropping out of school and provide them the services and supports necessary to help them successfully complete school.
Drop-out reentry program	Interventions and transition planning to ensure a student's success when returning to school after having dropped out.
Environmental modifications	Modifying the class and school environment to respond to unique learning, behavioral, or emotional needs of students.

Intervention Strategy	Definition
Extended day programs	Structured after-school programs designed to offer student supervision. These programs can focus on athletics, academics, hobbies, or other interests.
Extinction procedures	Ignoring a behavior that is maintained by attention. For example, if a student talks out to get the teacher's attention, an extinction procedure would call for ignoring inappropriate talk-outs and reinforcing appropriate contributions to the group discussion (i.e., raising his or her hand and waiting for his or her turn to speak).
Functional communication training	Teaching students alternative, adaptive ways to communicate their needs to others, such as through a brief verbalization, hand gesture, or signal (e.g., flipping a card over which signals to the teacher the student's need for assistance).
Goal-oriented therapeutic counseling	Services provided by trained school counselors, social workers, or psychologists to help a student or group of students deal with behavior, personal, or social problems.
Group and family counseling	Counseling provided by a trained individual to help a person or persons work through a problem.
Mentoring	An individualized approach to providing a positive role model for a child. Mentors spend time with children (usually doing nonacademic type tasks).
Positive behavioral interventions	Interventions designed to build on a student's strengths and increase the frequency of these adaptive responses while at the same time modifying the environment and adult responses to support the student's learning and use of adaptive responses.
Response cost	Taking away something positive for inappropriate behavior. Staying in during recess to complete a missed homework assignment is an example of response cost.
Reward system	Rewarding students for appropriate behavior. Rewards can be social (a smile), an activity (time to read a novel), or tangible (candy or points on a token system). Students can earn rewards for themselves or for a group, and the rewards can be delivered by an adult, peer, or others.
Self-management	Teaching students to be aware of their behavior in such a way that they are able to identify its occurrence or nonoccurrence, measure its occurrence, and evaluate whether the behavior is improving, remaining the same, or getting worse.
Shadowing older students	A plan where a student "shadows" a more senior student. This is effective for transitions from one school to another.
Social problem-solving instruction	Teaching students to use an effective process to solve social problems fairly and without aggression.
Time-away	Giving the student permission to briefly leave a learning activity or request a break. This is a coping strategy reinforced and encouraged by the teacher.
Time-out	Removing the student from a situation that is rewarding inappropriate behavior. For example, if a student's anger seems to be fueled by the cheers of his or her peers, the adult may ask the student to go to a place where peer attention is not available.
Token economies	A system by which students earn points (tokens) for appropriate behavior. Points can later be exchanged for reinforcement (social, activities, or something more tangible).
Transition programs	Specifically designed interventions to identify transition needs, teach skills, and provide the supports necessary for a child to be successful in a new environment.
Tutoring	Intensive academic instruction provided by a teacher or other skilled person.

There are three keys to designing early interventions for particular students. The first is to assess as completely as possible the potential functions of the child's behavior so that selection of strategies is highly informed and targeted; it should be followed by assessment to evaluate the impact of the strategy. The second key is to match the intensity of the intervention to the severity of the need.

"Early Intervention" versus "Intervening Early"

José's performance in school has changed over the past six months. Although academically talented, he

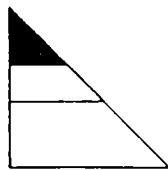
does not pay attention in class the way he used to, and sometimes he does not show up at all. His grades are dropping, and he has had increasing numbers of disciplinary referrals. José is in trouble and the situation could get worse. He is a candidate for *early intervention*. Early intervention means that someone steps in to help a child who is at risk of further problems. Interventions in instances like this are often less intensive, such as tutoring, brief counseling, or joining groups aimed to support staying away from drugs.

Mona is a bright eighth grader and has always passed her classes (although her grades are erratic), but her behavior at school remains challenging. She has a long history of discipline problems, including fighting and possession of alcohol at school. Recently, a peer approached a teacher with a note Mona had written to her, threatening to beat her up unless she stayed away from a certain boy. Mona could benefit from an immediate but more intensive intervention—*intervening early*, before some serious event may occur. The first referral for intervention does not always have to be for something “light” or “first line.” Sometimes interventions that are highly individualized and very supportive (and not necessarily restrictive) are indicated for some youth.

The third is to look at the student’s strengths and interests, including his or her cultural background. Effective interventions should be culturally appropriate.

Positive Adolescent Choices Training (PACT)

Positive Adolescent Choices Training (PACT) is a violence prevention curriculum designed to be implemented in an intensive, small group setting with African American middle and high school students who are at-risk for becoming victims of violence or perpetrators of violence. The PACT curriculum is a culturally sensitive training program developed specifically for African American adolescents. PACT uses a cognitive-behavioral group training method that equips adolescents with specific knowledge, as well as social and anger management skills to use in situations of interpersonal conflict. The curriculum involves teaching in three primary areas: violence-risk education, anger-management, and prosocial skills. Individual lessons concentrate on dispelling myths, educating students about violence, building alternative social and self-management skills, and changing cognitive beliefs that lead to physical contact, aggression, and violent acts. For instance, the violence-risk education component dispels myths about what constitutes a threat and counters belief systems that perpetuate hostility and the capacity for violence (e.g., thinking that violence is acceptable, victims don’t suffer, victims deserve what they get, and quick assumptions that others intend harm). Emphasis is placed on developing the student’s capacity to generate alternative solutions to conflict, including skills with giving positive and negative feedback, accepting feedback from others, negotiating and problem solving, and resisting peer pressure. The PACT program uses videotaped vignettes with African American role models as well as student directed role playing skits to teach skills and provide multiple opportunities to practice alternative anger management skills. Formal evaluation of PACT found a significant reduction in the physical aggression displayed at school by students participating in the intensive curriculum, as well as fewer violence-related juvenile court charges than a comparable group who had not participated in the PACT curriculum.



CHAPTER 4:

PROVIDING INTENSIVE INTERVENTIONS TO TROUBLED STUDENTS

Chapter 2 described schoolwide interventions that are intended to reduce and prevent approximately 80 percent of behavior problems in schools. Chapter 3 discussed the use of early intervention strategies for the approximately 10-15 percent of students who continue to experience behavior problems even when schoolwide interventions are in place. These students may be exhibiting early warning signs and will require the Student Support Team to develop individualized early interventions to meet their needs. In this chapter, the focus turns to the remaining 3-10 percent of children who experience significant emotional and behavioral difficulties in school. These students require intensive interventions, services, and supports to meet their needs.

The nature and severity of emotional and behavioral problems, ~~is one component that~~ distinguishes students requiring intensive intervention from students needing early intervention. Typically, students needing early intervention are experiencing mild social/emotional and behavioral adjustment problems and may also be exhibiting early warning signs for violence. In contrast, students requiring intensive interventions, services, and supports are typically experiencing moderate to severe emotional and behavioral disorders that significantly impair their functioning and quality of life across the domains of family, school, peers, and community. In many situations, students requiring intensive interventions may already be eligible for special education services or have a mental health diagnosis.

Safe schools implement intensive interventions that include a full array of services and supports that coordinate the resources of the school and other community agencies. This multifaceted approach with an array of services and supports should be individualized to meet the unique needs of each child and family. Rather than plugging children and families into interventions based on categories or levels of symptoms, Student Support Teams should work with other community agencies to tailor services and supports to the needs of the child and family. The following are examples of intervention approaches and practices that are being used to provide intensive interventions to children and their families with positive results.

Comprehensive School-Based Mental Health Programs

While many schools in the country have access to mental health professionals, such as school psychologists or school social workers who provide a range of services, typically these staff members serve several schools each week. This logistical reality can limit both their on-site availability and the amount of time they can devote to prevention, early intervention, and intensive intervention activities. In contrast to this itinerant mental health model of service delivery are comprehensive, school-based mental health programs. These programs are located in school buildings, provide a comprehensive range of mental health services to children and their families, and often have strong collaborative ties with multiple community agencies.

The Kids in Community Schools (KICS)

This Program is a school-based mental health program at the Martin Luther King School in Yonkers, New York. It is funded through the New York State Office of Mental Health and administered through Westchester Jewish Community Services. The goals of the program are to maintain students with emotional disabilities or children at risk in the least restrictive environment; to develop preventative mental health services through collaboration with families, school, and the community; and to enhance community mental health services for children. The program provides on-site, direct mental health services, including child and family treatment, crisis intervention, individual and family respite, and psychological, psychiatric, and psycho-educational services.

The success of comprehensive school-based mental health programs depends on the ability of administrators, teachers, school-based mental health professionals, and other school staff to integrate mental health priorities and educational priorities into one vision that impacts the everyday practices and decision making of school professionals. School-based mental health programs that are not woven into the fabric of the school and classrooms and the instructional priorities are often highly unsuccessful. To accomplish this integration, successful programs have combined the development of their comprehensive school-based mental health program with systematic schoolwide reform efforts. By joining schoolwide reform efforts, school-based mental health professionals can emphasize the benefits of building collaborative efforts within and between schools and among schools, community mental health providers, social services, juvenile justice agencies, and families.

The Lafourche Parrish School-Based Mental Health Program

Located in Thibodaux, Louisiana, this program provides intervention, consultation, and assessment for students with particularly strong emphasis upon coordinated intensive intervention for their most involved students with behavioral and emotional difficulties. There are three interconnected programs: discreet planned intervention, which provides targeted individualized early intervention; day treatment, which offers a therapeutic classroom environment for students requiring intensive intervention; and school-based psychiatric clinic, which provides highly intensive intervention for students and families in conjunction with community mental health centers.

Special Education and Related Services

Special education eligibility under IDEA includes the designation of emotional disturbance. Under the Federal definition, this includes children and youth demonstrating unsatisfactory personal relationships with peers and teachers and who have inappropriate types of behaviors or feelings under normal circumstances.

Once eligible under IDEA, if a child's behavior interferes with his or her learning or the learning of others, he or she is entitled to "behavioral interventions, strategies, and supports." These interventions, strategies, and supports are to be incorporated into the student's IEP. It is also important to point out that the positive behavioral interventions, strategies, and supports available under IDEA are not limited to just students with emotional disturbance. All students with disabilities whose behavior interferes with their learning or the learning of others are entitled to the development of positive interventions, strategies, and supports. Positive behavioral interventions can be effective for all students—with or without disabilities—if their behavior interferes with their learning and social/emotional adjustment.

The 1997 reauthorization of IDEA emphasized in both spirit and letter that special education is an array of services and supports rather than a place. Under its “Least Restrictive Environment” (LRE) requirements, IDEA specifies that special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment should occur only if the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily. It is important to note that positive behavioral interventions and supports, like other services provided to students with disabilities, can be implemented in the regular education classroom.

Alternative Programs and Schools

Traditional public schools have sometimes been unsuccessful in trying to address the complex needs of severely troubled children and youth that have intensely challenging behaviors. Some schools have established alternative programs to continue educating students with highly challenging behaviors who previously would have dropped out or who would have been suspended or expelled. Such programs have increased dramatically, with three out of four school districts reporting some form of alternative program(s). In some school districts, alternative programs are located within neighborhood schools. Other school districts locate alternative programs in separate facilities. Some alternative programs are quite behavioral in focus, while others emphasize a day treatment model where students and families are provided with intensive mental health and special education services. Effective alternative programs are not custodial. Rather, effective alternative programs collaborate with regular schools to facilitate reintegration. Other characteristics of effective alternative programs include

- intensive individualized instruction in credit-earning coursework
- continuation of special education services for students with IEPs
- positive behavioral support—including social skills and anger management/abatement—within a structured school environment
- psychological/mental health consultation and counseling
- intensive family involvement
- transition services that support the return to regular school
- community agency involvement (through mental health programs, social services, juvenile justice, and so forth)
- caring staff committed to relationship building with students
- effective, engaging instructional techniques with curriculum demands matched to the student’s academic skills.

Lane School, Lane Education Service District

Lane School, a public school alternative setting for students with the most serious behavioral problems, is supported by the Lane Education Service District, Lane County Oregon. With just four classrooms, the Lane School typically has fewer than 30 students in its program at one time. The program is small so that students can receive the structure, attention, and skills they need to improve their behavior and their academic performance and then prepare them to go back to their neighborhood schools. Interventions are highly individualized, and the emphasis is on effective problem solving through communication with others and on improving each student's academic performance. The supervisor of Lane School emphasizes the need for efficient and effective structures in place that lead to the creation of "civil classroom and school climates." This includes having a system of clear rules, teaching students alternative responses to anger, reinforcing those newly learned skills, intervening in aggression early, deterring violent behaviors with clear consequences, and emphasizing academics consistently.

Lane School emphasizes a strong commitment to successful transitions of the students back into their home schools, a process that begins the day students enroll in Lane School. These transitions work best when Lane School staff (in the words of Robin, a Lane School teacher and transition specialist) succeed in "export[ing] the program and...its strategies into the county's schools." These schools (only some of those to which students return) are (in Robin's words) "truly committed to advocating for each child" and (in the words of Dorothy, a Lane School consultant who spends half of her time in local school) "support each child and see him as a child with a legitimate disability."

Safe and Effective Schools for ALL Students What Works: What Works!, p. 21-22.

The Positive Education Program's Day Treatment Programs

Cleveland Ohio's Positive Education Program (PEP) operates six day treatment centers that provide a supportive environment marked by high expectations for appropriate behavior and an emphasis on competence. These centers enable students to remain at home or in their community, and to successfully return to less restrictive educational settings. Although schools often use it as a last resort, the centers are neither dumping grounds nor places that focus on the external control of behavior. Instead, they develop IEPs for each student and provide a variety of services, such as individual counseling and behavior intervention, social skills training, therapeutic arts activities, speech and language services, and crisis management/intervention. The center's many components include:

- ❖ support
- ❖ outdoor education, therapeutic camping, and community experiences
- ❖ parent support and education
- ❖ liaison to juvenile court
- ❖ academic programming.

A system of rewards such as positive reinforcement is used in the classrooms to promote good behavior. PEP also provides young people with a socially and academically rich environment, readies them for reintegration into mainstream settings, and works with staff in those settings to support them once they return. The classroom, generally consisting of ten students, is an open arena for student expression of emotions and promotion of high expectations.

Systems of Care

A system of care has been defined by the Center for Mental Health Services as a coordinated continuum of mental health and related services and supports that are organized to provide care. It is designed to work with families to help children or adolescents with serious emotional disturbances, get the services they need in or near their homes and communities. In systems of care, local public and private organizations work in teams to plan and implement a tailored set of services for each individual child's physical, emotional, social, educational, and family needs. Teams include family advocates and representatives from mental health, health, education, child welfare, juvenile justice, vocational counseling, recreation, substance abuse, or other service providers. Under effective systems of care, teams include the child and his or her family and build upon the child's and family's strengths rather than focusing solely on the problems of the child and family.

The range of services that may be included in a system of care include

- case management (service coordination)
- community-based inpatient psychiatric care
- counseling (individual, group, and youth)
- crisis residential care
- crisis outreach teams
- day treatment
- education/special education services
- family support
- health services
- independent living supports
- intensive family-based counseling (in the home)
- legal services
- protection and advocacy
- psychiatric consultation
- recreational therapy
- residential treatment
- respite care
- self-help or support groups
- small therapeutic group care
- therapeutic foster care
- transportation
- tutoring
- career counseling

Cross-Site Findings Regarding Schools as Part of Systems of Care

The following six practices are integral to the success of the systems of care:

- The use of clinicians or other student support providers in the schools to work with students, their families, and all members of the school community, including teachers and administrators.
- The use of school-based and school-focused Wraparound services to support learning and transition.
- The use of school-based case management. Case managers help determine needs; identify goals, resources, and activities; link children and families to other services; monitor services to ensure that they are delivered appropriately; and advocate for change when necessary.
- The provision of schoolwide prevention and early intervention programs. Prevention helps those students with or at risk of developing emotional and behavioral problems to learn the skills and behaviors that help in following school rules and enjoying positive academic and social outcomes. Early intervention allows schools to provide students with the support and training they need to be more successful in managing their behavior.
- The creation of centers within the school to provide support both to children and youth with emotional and behavioral needs and to their families. Students in the centers interact with caring staff members who can help students and their families connect with the entire system of care to help in meeting their needs.
- The use of family liaisons or advocates to strengthen the role and empower family members in their children's education and care. All three sites studied have harnessed the power that involving family members as equal partners brings to their comprehensive programs.

For greatest effectiveness, the Student Support Team and the local system of care should develop established interagency agreements that can facilitate the integration and coordination of services. When these services seem necessary for a child and family in need, community members competent in such intensive services can become part of the Student Support Team. The expanded team works together with the family and student to develop a plan. Roles and responsibilities can be determined and methods for coordination (for example, assigning a case manager), ongoing evaluation, and communication should be detailed and approved by the family.

Individualized Mental Health Services and Supports

Effective systems of care tailor interventions to address the strengths and needs of individual youth who may themselves require different interventions at different developmental stages. Over the last decade, powerful, intensive interventions have been developed to address the multiple factors contributing to serious emotional and behavioral problems. To be effective, an intervention should address all of these factors and support the entire social ecology of the youth in trouble. These programs provide intensive therapy and support that is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. There is daily contact, face-to-face or by phone, with families. These services usually last for a minimum of three to five months, depending on the seriousness of the problem and the success of the intervention. The models that have demonstrated impressive results are highlighted below.

Multisystemic Therapy

One intervention that has proven its effectiveness is Multisystemic Therapy (MST). It has been effective with youth with issues ranging from substance abuse and crime to suicidal and homicidal impulses. Multisystemic therapy is built upon eight essential principles:

- The primary purpose of assessment is to understand the fit between the identified problems and their broader systemic context.
- Therapeutic contacts emphasize the positive and use systemic strengths as levers for change.
- Interventions are designed to promote responsible behavior and decrease irresponsible behavior among family members.
- Interventions are present-focused and action-oriented, targeting specific and well-defined problems.
- Interventions target sequences of behavior within and between multiple systems that maintain the identified problems.
- Interventions are developmentally appropriate and fit the developmental needs of the youth.
- Interventions are designed to require daily or weekly effort by family members.
- Intervention effectiveness is evaluated continuously from multiple perspectives with providers assuming accountability for overcoming barriers to successful outcomes.
- Interventions are designed to promote treatment generalization and long-term maintenance of therapeutic change by empowering caregivers to address family members' needs across multiple systemic contexts.

Treatment Foster Care

Multisystemic therapy is an example of an effective strategy for addressing the needs of youth whose behaviors or needs have not developed to the point where out-of-home placement is mandated. Treatment foster care extends the model of intensive, family-focused intervention to youth whose delinquency has been so serious and so chronic that they are no longer permitted to live at home. Like multisystemic therapy, it works because it includes every major aspect of a youth's life in the intervention: the individual, family, peers, and school. Indeed, treatment foster care has been rigorously evaluated, and, compared to ordinary group care, has been shown to reduce repeat offenses and to increase successful return to living with relatives.

The model on which treatment foster care is based recognizes the challenges of living with a youth exhibiting serious antisocial behavior. Parents can be worn down by escalating conflict to a point where their normal parenting resources are seriously diminished. It is precisely these normal resources—the ability to provide meaningful adult supervision, to implement discipline consistently, to minimize association with delinquent peers, and to support academic achievement—that keep

delinquency at bay. What treatment foster care does is provide these powerful socialization forces of family life for youngsters at a point when the youths' behaviors have become so dangerous to society that they are removed from their homes.

Treatment foster care families are recruited for their ability to share the basis of their experience with adolescents, their willingness to act as treatment agents, and their ability to provide a nurturing family environment. Families apply formally and participate in a 20-hour pre-service training, which emphasizes the use of behavior management methods to provide youth with a structured daily living environment including close supervision, clear rules, and enforcement of limits. Treatment foster care parents are taught how to implement individualized plans that take into account youths' needs and the treatment foster care family's schedule and values. A three-level system is used in which the youth's privileges and level of supervision are based on their compliance with program rules, adjustment in school, and general progress. Treatment Foster Care parents participate in weekly foster parent group meetings. Here they review youths' progress, identify problems, and discuss potential solutions.

Each youth in treatment foster care participates in individual behavior therapy focused on skill building in problem solving, social perspective taking, and non-aggressive methods of self-expression. Biological families or other aftercare resources participate in weekly family therapy focused on parent management training with an emphasis on supervision, encouragement, discipline, and problem solving. Schools are an important part of the intervention; each youth carries a card to class and teachers sign off on attendance, homework completion, and attitude. Youths who are suspended are required to do schoolwork or chores during school hours.

Wraparound Planning and Services

Another approach to providing intensive interventions that has spread throughout the country is the Wraparound process. Wraparound is not a therapy or a program, but rather it is an *approach* to providing services and supports to children with serious emotional and behavioral problems and their families. The Wraparound approach is founded on 10 essential elements and values that guide the process of providing intensive services to children and their families.

Elements of Wraparound

1. Community-based
2. Individualized and strengths-based
3. Culturally competent
4. Families involved as full and active partners in every level of the wraparound process
5. Team-driven process, involving the family, child, natural supports, agencies, and community services
6. Flexible funding and creative approaches
7. A balance of formal services and informal community and family resources
8. Unconditional commitment
9. A service/support plan developed and implemented based on an interagency, community-neighborhood collaborative process
10. Outcomes must be determined and measured

The Wraparound approach includes a definable planning process involving the child and family, community agencies, and school staff that results in a unique set of school and community services and supports tailored to meet the needs of the child and family. This wraparound team should consist of both professional service providers (mental health workers, educators, child welfare

workers, law enforcement and juvenile justice personnel) and informal supports from the community (extended family members, friends, clergy—anyone the family may call to help in a crisis). The team develops goals and identifies the individualized set of services and supports necessary to achieve those goals. The plan employs a strengths-based assessment, is coordinated by a wraparound facilitator (or case manager), specifies a crisis/safety plan, and identifies measurable outcomes that can be monitored regularly.

Since a critical element of the Wraparound approach is that services and supports are provided in the child's and family's community, the involvement of school professionals from the child's neighborhood school is frequently extensive. School-based Wraparound planning builds upon the individualized nature of special education planning and includes the teacher and other relevant school personnel as part of the planning team. Given that Wraparound services and supports are usually paid for through flexible, noncategorical funding, the Wraparound team can often provide additional supports for the child that are implemented during the school day to aid teachers and other school staff.

School-Based Wraparound in LaGrange, Illinois

Since the LaGrange Area Department of Special Education began applying the Wraparound process, the number of self-contained K-8 classes for children with emotional and behavioral disorders has dropped from eight to zero as students with emotional and behavioral disorders, their families, and their teachers now receive comprehensive supports and services in a variety of settings. Although an option for self-contained classrooms is available, these programs have evolved into classrooms that serve multi-needs children such as those with autism, pervasive developmental delay, and multiple disabilities. Children who traditionally had been placed in self-contained emotional and behavioral disorders classrooms are now served through the Wraparound approach in their home schools with wraparound teams, family service facilitators, and team teachers.

CHAPTER 5:

CREATING AND IMPLEMENTING A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

This chapter describes how to implement the comprehensive three-level model of prevention using a team approach. This chapter first outlines the role of teams and how to build an effective team to address important school issues. The chapter later discusses the logistics of planning and implementation.

The Role of the Schoolwide Team in Creating Safe Schools

The Schoolwide Team, described in Chapter 2, assesses the school, including the academic and behavioral programs and school climate, to set short-term and long-term goals that will improve the quality of the educational experience for all students and the safety of the school. The Team designs general policies and procedures and selects programs that are implemented throughout the school. In addition, the Schoolwide Team coordinates these strategies. Since the Schoolwide Team shares some members with the Student Support Team, they can share information that will help the Schoolwide Team make informed decisions about the school and the safety needs of the students.

The Schoolwide Team undertakes activities to plan, implement, monitor, and maintain the school's violence prevention activities. While so doing, the Schoolwide Team proposes policies and procedures that

- link to all school improvement efforts
- align with community efforts and services
- are understood and supported by all members of the school community: students, teachers, staff, administrators, school-board members, families, and other community members
- include all three levels of prevention: a schoolwide foundation, early intervention, and intensive intervention
- reflect an understanding of how to use early warning signs appropriately
- include an efficient process for referral, problem solving, consultation, and intervention (The Student Support Team)
- employ effective evidence-based interventions that align with the school's structure, culture, needs, and resources
- align with special education requirements and all other schoolwide efforts, such as extra-curricular activities and services for English language learners.

Organizing the Schoolwide Team

Because the Schoolwide Team has the responsibility of planning, implementing, and evaluating an integrated schoolwide violence prevention effort, members of the Team should have diverse and complementary skills. Selection of Team members is critical to overall effectiveness. Members should be chosen because of their expertise in learning and behavior and leadership capabilities. Team members should be willing and able to make a commitment to the team, particularly during the initial implementation phase

The Team at Kennedy Middle School

Kennedy Middle School in Eugene, Oregon, has members from all grade levels, subject matters, an active administrator and members skilled in positive behavior support. "Our team has acting administrators from all grade levels. They meet once a month to guide and monitor the schoolwide safety planning." Kay Mehas, administrator at Kennedy Middle School.

Following is a checklist that one successful program used to develop a team.

Checklist for Constructing the Team		
Team Member	Position	Expected Contribution: • Knowledge they bring • Resources they can contribute
1		
2		
3		

Community Members and the Schoolwide Team

Comprehensive planning recognizes the influence of the larger community on the functioning of schools. It is critical that school leaders identify these influences and understand how they affect the school. Schools can enhance their violence prevention efforts by working with their community to address issues that directly influence both their community and school.

Safe and effective schools develop procedures for assessing and working with the external community environment so that programs and interventions are sensitive to community needs. In this way, schools become true partners with community agencies and organizations.

To ensure that the school considers these community-based factors and to ensure future coordination of prevention and intervention services, a variety of community leaders and family members should be involved in planning and implementation:

- parent group leaders, such as Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) officers, advocacy group leaders, and parents knowledgeable about troubling behavior
- law enforcement personnel
- attorneys, judges, and probation officers

- clergy and other representatives of the faith community
- violence prevention group representatives
- mental health and child welfare personnel
- physicians and nurses
- family agency and family resource center staff
- business leaders
- recreation, cultural, and arts organizations staff
- youth workers and volunteers
- local officials, including school board members and representatives from special commissions
- interest-group representatives and grass roots community organization members
- school public relations officers
- college or university faculty
- members of local advisory boards
- other influential community members.

Reaching Out to the Community

School safety is dependent on the ability of the school to partner with the greater community. Once the Schoolwide Team has formulated a vision, developed team cohesion, and delineated roles and responsibilities, it should reach out to the greater community. The vehicle for this outreach can be a community-wide collaboration, coalition, or work group. This outreach ensures

- ❖ community support for school efforts
- ❖ coordination of school and community services
- ❖ maximizing resources and reducing fragmentation
- ❖ support for family-school collaboration.

Building an Effective Schoolwide Team

Whether the team is well established or newly established, there is no assurance that its members do or will function as an effective team. Indeed, one of the strengths of the Schoolwide Team should be its diversity in expertise, skills, and experiences. The common goal of developing safe schools should galvanize all parties to pool their resources and work collaboratively. Cohesiveness and a sense of shared purpose, primary characteristics of effective teams, will be enhanced through the following practices:

- The Team takes time at the onset to agree on a vision.
- Individual members should make a commitment to participate in all relevant team activities and training, leaving their personal agendas at the door.

- The Team selects a dedicated leader or facilitator. The leader or facilitator keeps the Team task-focused and productive, while ensuring that needs are addressed and interpersonal conflicts (if any) are resolved.
- Each member of the Team is provided with the necessary information and support so that he or she can participate on the team as an equal.
- Team members should take turns taking notes, or the Team should be staffed with a secretary. These notes are circulated to the Team in a timely fashion.
- One member is responsible for liaison functions. This includes keeping the greater school and community informed and linking to other school and community teams.
- The Team develops a process for solving problems and making decisions. For example, the Team should determine if decisions will be made by consensus, majority, or some other clear and agreed-upon process.
- Teams may strengthen their interpersonal relations through trust-building activities. There is a substantial knowledge base of ways that teams can build trust and work more effectively together.

Building a productive team takes time, and prior to reaching this goal the Schoolwide Team will move through several phases. At times, these stages will feel uncomfortable as the Team experiences conflict and strives for resolution. Additionally, uneasiness will likely be experienced as members learn their roles and establish norms for communication and other routines. Over time, as members support each other and accomplish objectives, a feeling of trust and mutual respect will emerge. As additional individuals are included at various points, Team dynamics and functioning may be affected. This is a normal part of Team development and functioning and should not be a cause for alarm. However, too much turnover and turmoil can render the Team inoperable, therefore it is important that the Team remains fairly consistent and provides stability to the planning and implementation tasks.

Logistics for the Schoolwide Team

Once the Team has been established or expanded and has reviewed its charge, it should then consider logistics. Critical logistical tasks include obtaining administrative support, securing a planning budget, determining a communication process, and scheduling meetings.

Obtaining Approval and Buy-Ins

The first order of business is to obtain district or school approval and buy-in for the Schoolwide Team vision. Approval enables the Team to obtain resources to support its efforts and to secure modifications in policies and procedures. Buy-in secures the ongoing, active, and usually visible support of key administrators.

Getting Buy-In

"Before we went any further with training and planning we had a unanimous agreement that this was what the school wanted to do. We had to make sure we had a strong buy-in, there was no other way,"
Glen Carolton, School Psychologist in South West School District, Ohio. Project ACHIEVE.

Schools differ in the ways they develop and implement plans. It helps to know in advance the administration's expectations for the work and any relevant restrictions or policy guidelines, such as reporting procedures or extent of decision-making authority. If possible, the Team should invite someone who has the authority to approve procedures and allocate funds. If the Team encounters resistance, it should document the need and demonstrate the connections between its concerns (such as improved academics or community support) and school safety.

Communities also differ in the extent to which they understand the need for the team's work. At a minimum, the community should understand and support the need for a comprehensive prevention, intervention, and crisis response program. Determine the information needs of the community and tailor the team's communication strategy to address these needs.

Securing a Planning Budget

Resources and funding may be necessary for the work of the Schoolwide Team. School officials will need to know the anticipated costs. For example, will teaching staff need substitutes while they conduct Team duties?

Discuss budget requirements for the Team. The Team may need to prepare a budget for the administration to approve. Examples of budgetary considerations include release time or compensation for Team meetings, secretarial assistance, meeting space, support for family participation, and reimbursement for incidentals.

Designing a Communication Process

One of the Team's responsibilities throughout this process is to communicate its findings with the larger school community. The Team may elect to prepare a formal report or simply reorganize its findings with a cover memorandum. In either case, a few suggestions follow:

- **Prepare an executive summary.** The executive summary should state the purpose of the Team's work, provide a brief overview of the Team's work to date, and list recommendations for next steps. A brief version of the Team's executive summary can be distributed via newspapers, mailings, or on the school's Web site or bulletin board.

Executive Summary Template	
Use the following template to develop an executive summary regarding the work of the Team. This report will be used to communicate the team's findings with the larger school community.	
Date:	_____
Team members:	_____
Objective/Purpose of work:	_____
Activities to date:	_____
Recommendations/Next steps:	_____

- **Consider face-to-face meetings.** The Team may decide to schedule face-to-face meetings with the school as a whole or with different stakeholder groups. The Team should work with community representatives or a representative of the stakeholder group to identify potential questions and to prepare an agenda that maximizes the impact of the meeting. It is important to include the entire school in this knowledge sharing. The Team can invite community members and families to school meetings and consider having members attend a variety of meetings with different constituents, such as PTA meetings.
- **Solicit feedback.** Throughout this dissemination process, the Team should solicit feedback from individuals regarding the accuracy of the Team's findings and the effectiveness of its communication efforts. The school and community at large must be informed of the Team's goals and progress. Also, the Team can solicit feedback from individuals who will be involved in the next stages—developing and implementing the violence prevention and response plan.

Scheduling Meetings

The Team schedules meetings according to the task. Most teams will begin by meeting weekly. After start-up, there are four major milestones:

- conducting the school assessment
- developing the schoolwide violence prevention plan
- designing the implementation approach for the plan
- implementing and evaluating the plan

Achieving each of these milestones may require a different amount of time. It is important to note that it may take a full year to develop a plan and implementation strategy. It will take even longer to implement the plan completely and measure its effects. It is important to set realistic timelines and due dates throughout the process.

More Resources

If at any time Team members wish to study a topic in more depth, they should refer to Chapter 6, which lists references, resources, and contacts related to the topics featured in this Action Guide. In addition, Team members may wish to consult the hot-linked version of the guide that is available at the Web site of the Center for Effective Collaboration and Practice (<http://cecp.air.org>). The Web site offers hot links to other sources of information that will be useful in planning and implementation.

Implementation Considerations for the Schoolwide Team

Schools differ in the way they implement their comprehensive plans, but several generic areas are germane to implementation work:

- **Make a long-term commitment.** The plan will not be put into place overnight. Most likely, it will take several years to have all components of the plan in full operation. The important thing is to start and to set a reasonable timeline for reaching the goals and objectives.
- **Obtain district approval.** The team's goal is to obtain more than plan approval; it is to institutionalize change. This requires formal approval, which may require a vote by the school board. In addition, someone in a leadership role needs to champion the plan. This individual needs to ensure that there is sustained buy-in and support from the school community.
- **Provide sufficient training to everyone.** Training should be provided for all members including staff, students, families, and community members. All should be provided with regular, relevant training and support. Training assists the school in developing the capacity of staff, students, and families to intervene. Examples of training methods include the following:
 - in-service training for all faculty and staff
 - written manuals, pamphlets, or flipcharts
 - practice responding to imminent warning signs of violence.
- **Seek parent approval and involvement.** Families must be involved in implementing the plan. There should be open lines of communication throughout the process.
- **Seek support and involvement.** The Team should ensure that every member of the school accepts and adopts the violence prevention and response plan. This buy-in is essential if all members of the school are expected to feel comfortable sharing concerns about children who appear troubled. Too often, caring individuals remain silent because they have no way to express their concerns.
- **Secure resources.** Most plans will require both human and fiscal resources to fully implement. In preparing this part of the implementation strategy, consider the anticipated costs of activities.

- **Specify evaluation procedures.** Plan evaluation is a critical component of the comprehensive school safety plan. It increases the effectiveness of management and administration of the plan. Evaluation data should be used when renewing the plan. When planning the evaluation component, consider the following principles:
 - There should be measurable goals, objectives, and benchmarks.
 - Assessment should be based on objective data.
 - Setting timelines for effects maintains integrity with the greater community.
 - The Team should be held responsible for regular (preferably quarterly) evaluation of the prevention and intervention plans.

The following is an example of a comprehensive implementation plan developed by Patterson Elementary and Family School in Oregon from 1996-1999.

Positive Behavioral Support Intervention Plan

1. Established effective behavioral sport team
2. Designed curriculum for teaching students to be caring self-managers
3. Provided training for staff
4. Monitored behavior using referral form
5. Evaluated the program using a survey
6. Made adjustments to program including a method for addressing individual student needs.

Provided by Stella Dadson, Principal of Patterson Elementary & the Family School. Eugene, Oregon. Patterson Elementary and Family School, 1996-1999.

Finally, once the plan and implementation strategies are developed, it is time to present the plan to the community. The plan may be presented in various ways: events, town meetings, discussion groups, written products, and press releases.

The team may need to use multiple strategies to reach a large number of people. Each school will have a preferred strategy for presenting the plan. Several general considerations should be kept in mind:

- Make the presentations available in the native languages of family members and the community.
- Schedule events at a convenient time for family members and community members.
- Provide logistical support (e.g., child care, transportation) to ensure wider participation.

This communication process must be ongoing, structured, and detailed to ensure long-term community support.

Other Considerations

Despite prevention efforts, even the most effective schools will experience some form of crisis, whether it takes the form of violence, tornadoes, fires, or death of a student or a staff member. The immediate response to and long-term handling of the crisis are important variables that will affect the adjustment of students, school staff, and families. Schools that are best prepared will develop a multicomponent plan that addresses the physical and psychological well-being of students and school staff. The Schoolwide Team, with support from the local school system, should work to design a crisis response plan. The plan should be shared with all members of the school. The components of the crisis response plan include:

- specific procedures for internal and external communication
- evacuation protocols to protect students and staff from harm
- a process for securing immediate external support from law enforcement officials and other relevant community agencies
- a process for dealing with long-term effects of the crisis.

CONCLUSION

While most schools are safe, they can be safer. Improving school safety requires the strategic investment of time and dollars—scarce resources for which there are competing demands. Fortunately, schools that strategically coordinate schoolwide efforts are more likely to improve academic performance as well as reduce behavior problems.

This Action Guide builds upon the Early Warning Guide. It provides a comprehensive three-stage model that can lead to safer schools. The model incorporates prevention, early intervention, and intensive interventions in a manner that will help schools achieve improved long-term academic, behavioral, and social emotional outcomes for all students and their families. The Action Guide identifies mechanisms for implementing the plan (the Schoolwide Team and the Student Support Team) and also describes the processes that these teams can employ to improve school safety. Finally, the guide provides information about technical assistance centers and evidence-based resources that schools can draw upon to develop a comprehensive plan that addresses the particular needs and builds upon the strengths of their school and their community.

CHAPTER 6:

RESOURCES

World Wide Web

School Safety Related Resources

American Institutes for Research

<http://www.air.org/>

Center for Effective Collaboration and Practice

<http://cecp.air.org>

National Association of School Psychologists

<http://www.naspweb.org/>

National Mental Health Association

<http://www.nmha.org/>

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

<http://www.nwrel.org/>

National Resource Center for Safe Schools

<http://www.safetyzone.org/>

School Safety and Violence Prevention

<http://www.cecp.air.org/guide>

Student Support and Classroom Management

The Behavior Home Page

<http://www.state.ky.us/agencies/behave/homepage.html>

Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders

<http://www.ccbd.net>

Effective Behavior Support

<http://brt.uoregon.edu/ebs/>

Prevention and Early Intervention: Collaboration and Practice

<http://cecp.air.org/prev-ei/>

Prevention Strategies that Work
<http://cecp.air.org/preventionstrategies/Default.htm>

Wraparound Planning
<http://cecp.air.org/wraparound/default.htm>

Federal Resources

Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Division of Violence Prevention
<http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/dvp/dvp.htm>

Center for Mental Health Services
<http://www.samhsa.gov/cmhs/cmhs.htm>

National Institute of Mental Health
<http://www.nimh.nih.gov>

Office for Civil Rights
<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OCR>

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP)
<http://www.ncjrs.org/ojjdp>

Office of Special Education Programs
<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/OSEP>

U.S. Department of Education
<http://www.ed.gov>

U.S. Department of Education Safe and Drug Free Schools Program
<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/SDFS>

U.S. Department of Justice
<http://www.usdoj.gov>

U.S. Department of Justice for Kids and Youth Homepage
<http://www.usdoj.gov/kidspage>

Organizations

American Association of School Administrators
<http://www.aasa.org/>

American Counseling Association
<http://www.counseling.org/>

American Federation of Teachers
<http://www.aft.org/>

American School Counselor Association
<http://www.schoolcounselor.org/>

Council of Administrators of Special Education
<http://members.aol.com/casecec/>
Council of Exceptional Children
<http://www.cec.sped.org/>

Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health
<http://www.ffcmh.org/enghome.htm>

National Association of Elementary School Principals
<http://www.naesp.org/>

National Association of School Psychologists
<http://www.naspweb.org/>

National Association of Secondary School Principals
<http://www.nassp.org/>

National Association of State Boards of Education
<http://www.nasbe.org/>

National Education Association
<http://www.nea.org/>

National Mental Health Association
<http://www.nmha.org/>

National Middle School Association
<http://www.nmsa.org/>

National PTA
<http://www.pta.org/index.stm>

National School Boards Association
<http://www.nsba.org/>

National School Public Relations Association
<http://www.nspra.org/entry.htm>

Police Executive Research Forum
<http://www.policeforum.org/>

Family Resources

Boys Town
<http://www.boystown.org/>

Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health
<http://www.ffcmmh@ffcmmh.org>

Parent Advocacy Coalition for Educational Rights (PACER)
<http://www.pacer.org/>

Project for Parents of Children with Emotional/ Behavioral Disorders
<http://www.pacer.org/parent/ebd.htm>

The Beach Center on Families and Disabilities
<http://www.lsi.ukans.edu/beach/beachhp.htm>