

## Safe Schools

School violence and safety is a national concern. Today, more than ever, it is essential that communities, businesses, parents and students work together to develop and implement a disciplined program to create an environment where learning can take place.

In response to school shootings across the country, the Attorney General's Office, with the assistance of the Louisiana Department of Education, the Louisiana Commission on Law Enforcement, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Louisiana (Caring Program for Children) and Cingular Wireless created "**Operation Safe Haven**" - a comprehensive safe school plan developed to ensure that our state's schools are educated on crisis prevention, and are prepared and trained to handle crisis situations. The program addresses identification of potential problems, preparation of crisis and disaster plans, and implementation of these plans for all schools and school employees.

Mrs. Sandra Ezell, from the Louisiana Attorney General's Office, has visited Webster Parish and conducted school safety inspections. School Crisis plans are updated on an annual basis, and more frequently if needed.

### School Safety Tips

Here's a checklist for what teachers, parents, and students can do to keep themselves safe at school:

#### **TEACHERS:**

Teachers should pay attention to the following types of behavior exhibited by students:

1. Persistent disregard for or refusal to follow rules.
2. Seeing self as always the victim.
3. Obsession with games and TV shows of a violent nature.
4. Depression or mood swings.
5. Bullying
6. Misplaced or unwarranted jealousy
7. Involvement with or interest in gangs
8. Talks consistently about weapons or violence or bringing a weapon to school.
9. Artwork or writing that is bleak, gang related violent or that depicts isolation or anger.
10. Lack of interest in school.

#### **PARENTS:**

1. Discuss the schools discipline policy with your child. Show your support for the rules and help your child understand the reasons for them.
2. Involve your child in setting rules for appropriate behavior at home.
3. Talk with your child about the violence he or she sees on television, in video games, and possibly in the neighborhood. Help your child understand the consequences of violence.
4. Help your child find ways to show anger that do not involve verbally or physically hurting others.
5. Help your child understand the value of accepting individual differences.
6. Note any disturbing behaviors in your child. Ex. Bully, fighting, alcohol, drugs, behavior problems at school, lack of friends, cruelty to animals, gang involvement. Get help for your child. Talk with the school counselor or trusted professional.
7. Listen to your child if he or she shares concerns about friends who may be exhibiting troubling behaviors. Share this information with trusted school officials.
8. Be involved in your child's school life by supporting and reviewing homework, talking with teachers and attending school functions.
9. Encourage your school to offer after school programs.

10. Talk with parents of your child's friends. Discuss how you can organize a team of parents to help with violence prevention activities at school.

### **STUDENTS:**

1. Participate in or help develop guidelines in your school that promote a drug and gun-free, safe environment for learning.
2. Volunteer to serve on an advisory committee of students to assist with the Crisis Planning in your school.
3. Report weapon possession, drug or alcohol use or bullying threats, gang activity or vandalism to school authorities and parents.
4. Learn the consequences of gang involvement. Use this understanding to help other students and seek help from school personnel.
5. Follow the school code of conduct, understand that rules are made for everyone, and recognize the consequences of violating the rules.
6. Whenever possible, travel with others to and from school and to school events. Students must be aware of their surroundings.
7. Work with teachers, principals and other students in developing a student community service program.
8. Encourage your parents to come to the school and be involved. Support the school.
9. Serve as a mentor to another student encouraging good behaviors at school and home.

### **COMMUNITY:**

1. Adopt a school. Help students and staff to promote a sense of community in the school through activities and programs. Volunteer.
2. Join with school and law enforcement in creating and sustaining safe corridors for students traveling to and from school. Eliminate neighborhood trouble spots.
3. Help students with job skills, internships and employment.
4. Encourage employees to work with students in skills training, leadership mentoring one-to one coaching.
5. Speak up in support of funding to implement programs and resources that help schools with violence prevention activities.
6. Offer your professional skills. Speak to schools on the effects of violence in the community at their school and personal lives. This includes public health personnel, defense and prosecuting attorneys and judges.
  1. Report crimes or suspicious activities to police immediately.