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Congressional Statement of Dr. Ronald Stephens

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SUBCOMMITTEE ON EARLY CHILDHOOD, YOUTH AND FAMILIES
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
HEARING ON UNDERSTANDING VIOLENT CHILDREN

Youth Violence: Coming Soon to a School Near You

Recent reports from the US Departments of Justice and Education reflect a slight reduction in school crime, but try to explain this to parents in Jonesboro, Arkansas; Pearl, Mississippi; Paducah, Kentucky; or to citizens and parents in Edinboro, Pennsylvania who experienced the killing of a teacher, along with the wounding of another teacher and two students this past weekend. Since 1992, there have been 211 violent-associated school deaths [as of April 28, 1998] that we can document. The incidents are just as likely to occur in rural and suburban America as they are in the inner city.. We are all still reeling from the recent shocking reminder in Jonesboro, Arkansas, that violent juvenile crimes -- even when they invade only 10 percent of our nation's schools -- are symptoms of danger and dysfunction that must not be ignored.

It should not require an act of courage for parents to send their children to school. Although the incidence of crime and violence may have declined slightly, the severity of those incidents continues to escalate. Fistfights and fire drills in schools have been replaced by gun fights and crisis drills. Violence is no respecter of persons, geography, class, color or ethnic origin. And it can happen anywhere. While the average American can no doubt name the five largest urban metroplexes in the country where violence often occurs, who could predict that it would galvanize towns such as Grayson, Olathe, Blackville, Lynnvilleville, Moses Lake, Bethel, Jonesboro, Pearl, West Paducah and now Edinboro?

For the most part, violence does not begin in schools. It walks onto school premises from the neighborhood. It enters the school doors with students, educators, visitors, volunteers and predators and sometimes even campus supervisors. Violence evades metal detectors, counselors and teachers because fear, anger, hopelessness, longing, and frustration are carried invisibly in hearts and minds. Whatever the source of that violence, whether from the home, the community or elsewhere, the effects of violence on learning are so destructive that educators are placing school security on the education agenda out of self-defense and necessity. Teachers cannot teach and students cannot learn in an environment of intimidation and fear.

Despite our best intentions, school safety cannot be legislated. It must be grown and developed from within. True crime prevention begins with heartware, not hardware. It is supported with positive attitudes and actions, which promote the safety, success and well-being of all children. Thus, it behooves us to eliminate those aspects of American life that conspire to rob all too many children, youth, parents, workers and citizens in general of their energy, hope and desire to learn and succeed.

Understanding Youth Violence

Before we can identify the causes of youth violence, we must first examine its pervasiveness and the scope of the school violence problem. One out of twelve young people who stay away from school do so because of fear. This is a national tragedy.

A 1994 study produced by Metropolitan Life Insurance indicated that annually, one in four students and one in nine teachers are attacked in schools.

According to "Violence and Discipline Problems in U.S. Public Schools: 1996-97," a study by the National Center for Education Statistics, 10 percent of all public schools experienced one or more serious violent crimes (i.e., murder, rape or other sexual battery, suicide, physical attack or fight with a weapon, or robbery) that were reported to police or other law enforcement officials during the 1996-97 school year.

According to the U.S. Department of Justice's report, "Juvenile Offenders and Victims: 1997 Update on Violence," the rate of violent victimization of juveniles (ages 12 through 17) was nearly three times that of

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adults in 1994. In 1995, 10 percent of high school students said they had carried a weapon to school in the 30 days preceding the survey.

According to the Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics "America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being," in 1994, almost 2.6 million youth ages 12 to 17 were victims of violent crimes.

The U.S. Department of Justice's "Juvenile Arrests 1995" summarizes arrest statistics of juveniles. Findings are derived from data reported to the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting Program. In 1995, juveniles were involved in 32 percent of all robbery arrests; 23 percent of all weapons arrests; 15 percent of all murder and aggravated assault arrests; and 13 percent of all drug arrests.

The Public Agenda's Getting By: What American Teenagers Really Think About Their Schools, the results of a fall 1996 random telephone survey of 1,300 high school students nationwide, revealed that 48 percent of public school students said that drugs and violence are serious problems in their schools.

Causes of youth violence

Understanding youth violence is a complex issue which is affected by a wide variety of social, economic, political and individual factors.

In a cooperative study involving the National School Safety Center and the Centers for Disease Control, an analysis was made of "School-Associated Violent Deaths" during the 1992 to 1994 school years. Specific common factors were identified among perpetrators:

- 40 percent had a past background of criminal misbehavior;
- 24 percent had been previously involved with substance abuse;
- 35 percent were involved in gangs; and
- 70 percent had previously brought a weapon to school.

Since July of 1992, the National School Safety Center has identified 211 school-associated violent deaths, most of which involved intention to cause personal injury. Using these factors and percentages, consider this:

- If 40 percent of the perpetrators had a criminal background, the inverse of this data is that 60 percent did not;
- If 35 percent were gang-involved, the inverse suggests that 65 percent were not;
- If 24 percent were drug-involved, the inverse suggests that 76 percent were not.

The data suggests that even with all we know, what we don't know is greater than what we do know. This suggests that there are many other factors that influence the development of youth violence.

Researchers and youth-serving professionals have identified many risk factors which contribute to violence. Perhaps the top two such factors are a history of victimization and perceptions of isolation.

Past victimization.

Research involving schoolyard bullies reflects that about 80 percent of bullies were first victims of bullies in the form of parents, peers, siblings or others. Many victims become perpetrators of crime in response to their own experiences with ridicule, physical punishment, torment and abuse. The combination of being both a victim and a perpetrator makes it more difficult to understand and sort through the causes of violent behavior. The way youngsters are treated by parents is perhaps the most influential predictor of child behavior. Most psychologists agree that bullying and aggression are learned behaviors. If they are learned, the implication is that they can be unlearned.

Youngsters who feel isolated, neglected, ignored and ridiculed.

This factor itself is complicated. Some suggested causes of perceptions of isolation and neglect include:

- economic deprivation that distances children and youth from peers who have advantages and comforts they lack;
- lack of growth and enrichment activities such as conversation with family members, childhood reading experiences, exposure to social activities with family members and friends, pre-school classes;
- lack of nurturing role models and persons who can serve as caring supervisors, mentors or advocates;
- youngsters' perceptions that they are not understood and not appreciated;
- conflicts and isolation perceived due to differences among the culture of the family and varieties of cultures in the school or larger community;
- family disorganization and lack of meaningful rituals (for example, shared mealtimes, birthday celebrations and family outings)

Other causes of violence in youth include:

A background of misconduct and trouble at home, at school and with the law.

One of the best predictors of future behavior is past behavior. Youngsters who begin at home to act out, withdraw, bully others and evidence impaired attention spans reveal potential indicators of future trouble. Such children are candidates for immediate and early intervention. Consequently, prevention and early

intervention activities and programs through churches, social services agencies and schools can go far to ensure that disruptive, delinquent behavior does not become ingrained.

It is critical to guide children through positive role modeling, encourage them through positive mentoring, and help them achieve success through supervision and support.

Social skills deficit disorder.

A common pattern among perpetrators is a social skills deficit disorder, which is often characterized by rage, defiance, thoughtlessness, detachment and nonconnectivity. Often these youngsters feel powerless and hopeless, but with a gun, they feel powerful and in control. Several new terms have been developed over the years to describe these kinds of individuals, including ADHD (attention deficit hyperactive disorder), ODD (oppositional defiant disorder) and IED (intermittent explosive disorder). Whatever the label, the result of disruptive, delinquent behavior is unacceptable.

School failure.

School failure is a significant predictor of later offending. Because such failure is a consistent predictor or correlate of violent behavior, it may be useful to identify children who are at risk of school failure due to living in high-risk, economically deprived neighborhoods. Such children must be targeted for preschool intellectual enrichment programs, which have correlated positively with reductions among children at-risk for school failure and later offending.

Alcohol and other drugs.

Use of alcohol and other drugs tends to diminish inhibitions and lower an individual's threshold for violence. School administrators across the country are looking for ways to identify early the potential for violence. For instance, Carmel High School in Indiana mandates a drug test when a youngster is suspended or expelled from school for an infraction. Early results have shown that 40 percent of students tested because of fighting tested positive for illegal substances, 42 percent of students violating the tobacco policy also tested positive for illegal substances. The good news about Carmel High's testing program is that after the testing, 64 percent of all students who tested positive for an illegal substance received treatment.

Gang involvement and gang violence.

Involvement in gangs is a vicious cycle of intimidation, violence and retaliation masquerading as "belonging" and taking part in peer rituals. The November/December 1997 issue of *Juvenile Offender* reports on the Rochester Youth Development four-year study of a sample of 1,000 7th- and 8th-grade Rochester public school boys and girls, a majority of whom were from high-crime areas. (The data as reported in the publication were weighted to represent the total population.) The study reveals that adolescent gang members, representing only 30 percent of the study population, were more involved in delinquent acts than were the adolescent nongang members. Gang members were responsible for 65 percent of general delinquency, 86 percent of serious crime, 60 percent of public disorder crimes, 70 percent of drug sales, 63 percent of alcohol abuse and 61 percent of drug use. In addition, gang members often escalated violence through their rivalries and retaliation activities.

In several of the school-associated multiple shootings, individuals have been gang-involved or negatively influenced by peer groups. For instance, in Pearl, Mississippi, the perpetrator was a member of satanic cult; in Bethel, Alaska, and Lynneville, Tennessee, the shooters were influenced by other students.

Prejudice and discrimination.

Emphasis on differences, along with acts of bigotry based on differences, has perhaps done more to fuel gang membership and involvement than anything else in American society. The way others are treated, particularly newcomers, has a great deal to do with the alliances and affiliations that are formed. However, prejudice and discrimination are pervasive in society at large, not simply instrumental in encouraging the formation of gangs or other social groups. Inbred fear, hate and discrimination are often imperceptibly passed from one generation to another without any defensible justification or understanding.

Violence publicized in the media and sports.

Violence is publicized throughout our culture in movies, sports and the media. Our societal attraction to violence is exhibited in our crime rates and in the media. Such publicity has a significant effect on stimulating youth violence. Young people tend to become what they see and what they experience. The United States has one of the highest rates of interpersonal violence among all nations of the world. In addition, the United States has the highest homicide rate of any Western industrialized society.

When it comes to the media, the theme seems to be "if it bleeds, it leads." There is a tendency to showcase the most violent acts in daily news reports. Oftentimes fights at school are not reported unless the incident results in a serious injury. Even video and arcade games have taken on a deadly and violent character. The marketing language tells the story. We've gone from "Mortal Combat" to "Mortal Combat II" to ultimate annihilation and even worse. The way we die says so much about the way we live. Death review boards across the country have observed that now when youngsters kill each other, it is often not simply a single shot that brings death to the victim, but multiple shots to the head, chest or groin, reflecting not simply violence, but raging violence.

Easy availability of guns.

Despite the argument that people kill, guns don't, the easy accessibility of weapons to young people in this country is staggering.

A 1993 study of juvenile possession of firearms drawn from questionnaire volunteer responses of 835 male serious offenders in 6 juvenile correctional facilities in 4 states and 758 male students in 10 inner-city schools near those facilities revealed: 83 percent of inmates and 22 percent of the students had possessed guns; 55 percent of inmates carried guns all or most of the time in the year or two before being incarcerated; 12 percent of the students did so, with another 23 percent carrying guns now and then.

When asked how they would get a gun, 45 percent of the inmates and 53 percent of the students said they would "borrow" one from family or friends; 54 percent of the inmates and 37 percent of the students said they would get one "off the street."

A Harvard School of Public Health survey in 1993 revealed that of the 2,508 students surveyed (in 96 public and private elementary, middle and senior high schools, grades 6 through 12), 59 percent said that they could get a handgun if they wanted one. Two or three who knew where to get a handgun said that they could get one within a 24-hour period.

In the old days, when fistfights were the way to settle arguments, young people would walk away with a few bruises or black eyes. Today, however, with guns it is about body counts, not bruises. We have transitioned from the single shot zip guns to the six shooter to semi-automatic weapons. There seems to be a tendency to see how much more violent the next school-associated violent death can be.

Absence of responsible adult supervision.

Despite all of the high-tech strategies-- including camera surveillance, metal detectors, motion sensors and access control systems--still the single most effective strategy for preventing youth violence is the physical presence of a responsible adult in the immediate vicinity.

The above are just a few of the causes associated with violent juvenile behavior. We must develop recommendations for actions that parents, educators and students themselves must take to eliminate this threat to the education and development of skilled, knowledgeable, socially responsible citizens.

What can be done?

Teachers are so frustrated about school safety that such issues are now becoming part of their collective bargaining agreements. Emerging components of collective bargaining agreements include recommendations such as the following:

- zero tolerance policy, applicable to all students, for assaults or any weapons or dangerous devices capable of producing bodily harm;
- expulsion of students who repeatedly engage in actions resulting in serious violations;
- cooperative problem-solving to develop improved security procedures involving teachers and school staff;
- automatic and immediate expulsion for assaults on educators;
- requirement for students expelled for violent behavior to successfully complete a behavior modification program prior to school readmittance;
- reassignment to another school for students who have assaulted an educational employee (Receiving schools will be given all information available concerning assaultive students.);
- immediate investigation of allegations of assault or weapons possession followed by prompt and reasonable action to protect all parties;
- prompt reporting to appropriate school security or police personnel of incidents of assault or weapons possession;
- prioritizing the establishment of area safety and security before providing emergency treatment;
- requirement for school district to file criminal charges against any student or any patron found to be on school premises under the influence of drugs and or alcohol (School district will support any employee who chooses to file such criminal civil charges.);
- annual evaluation of hearing officers for student due process hearings;
- school district authorization for employees to use force to prevent injury to self or another;
- requirement for school district to train all employees to deal in a nonthreatening manner with threatening students;
- requirement for the school district to continue payment of an employee's salary without charging sick leave when employee has been injured due to school violence;
- requirement for school district to provide leave with pay for one week for any educator assaulted by a student or patron, whether or not the employee has been injured;
- requirement for school district to pay any legal fees incurred in holding students and parents liable for damages; and
- requirement for school district to provide leave with pay if the employee is injured as a result of school violence.

What Congress Can Do?

What can be done at the federal level to mediate against causes of youth violence such as those I have outlined?

1. Place school safety on the national agenda.

2. Permanently fund the National School Safety Center:

- to provide national leadership as a catalyst for promoting and preserving school safety.
- to provide training and technical assistance; and
- to serve as a central resource for model programs.

The National School Safety Center is the nation's leading school crime prevention resource and brings with it a wealth of resources and experience. Funding for this much-needed program has expired.

3. Continue to provide grant funds for research and evaluation of violence prevention programs and strategies.

4. Fund rigorous longitudinal studies of populations of at-risk children and youth to identify causal factors influencing youth violence and to identify protective factors that contribute to effective prevention/intervention results.

5. Encourage state legislation which focuses on:

- comprehensive safe school legislation;
- improved information sharing;
- expanded alternative school programs for troubled youth;
- expanded after-school programs for children and youth;
- youth community service and involvement through volunteering;
- development of truancy prevention/intervention programs;
- interagency cooperation and collaboration; and
- encouragement of teacher training in school violence prevention.

Action at the local level

This nation's educational system has its foundation at the local level. Education is a federal concern, a state function and a local responsibility. Assigning such responsibility to parents, students, educators and other citizens closest to the need for schooling is both appropriate and demanding. There is much to do in carrying out the educational mission of the schools and in preserving schools as safe havens for learning. The following list details ways in which school administrators, law enforcers, parents, students and local citizens can promote the educational mission of schools and preserve schools as safe havens in which children can learn and develop their skills as successful, socially responsible citizens.

No. 1: Place school safety on the top of the educational agenda on each campus and within the community.

School administrators tend to get not only what they expect and deserve, but also what they measure. When the district makes a conscious decision that safe and welcoming schools are a high priority and measures its progress by assessing aspects of school safety, that commitment provides the basis for the development of strategies to achieve this goal. Placing school safety on the educational agenda is a mandatory first step toward safer and better schools.

No. 2: Develop a comprehensive systemwide safe schools plan.

A districtwide safe schools plan should be established, complemented by a safe schools plan for each school site. These plans benefit from the collaborative input of parents, students, educators, law enforcers, the courts, probation and social service personnel, and religious, corporate, and other community leaders who represent the racial and ethnic balance of the community. Safe school planning requires vigorous, ongoing interagency support. Community and corporate partnerships should not focus merely on security and supervision but also on education. Plans should be annually updated and broadly disseminated to students, parents and staff.

No. 3: Amplify the mission statement.

The school's mission statement should reflect the context in which the school and district wishes academic learning to take place. For instance, the phrase "To learn in a safe and secure environment free of violence, drugs, and fear" enhances the school's legal position to create and enforce policies promoting a safe, caring and disciplined school climate. A statement of this nature can markedly increase the validity and credibility of the district's efforts to create and preserve a safe environment.

No. 4: Enhance multicultural understanding.

Stress the unique worth of every person. Polarization among student groups and the rise in gang activity indicate a need to develop educational programs that bring students together and focus on cultural competence and cooperation, not merely tolerance.

No. 5: Ban forms of nonphysical intimidation.

"Hard looks," "stare downs," "mad-dogging" and "mean-mugging" should be added as actionable offenses to the student code of conduct. Such threatening behavior should not be tolerated. Psychological intimidation

can be as damaging as physical assaults.

No. 6: Create an active student component.

Students should be involved in their own safety and in safety planning. Consult with students on safety strategies and recommendations. Devise a life skills curriculum that focuses on good decision-making, responsible citizenship and conflict resolution. School violence is the tangible expression of unresolved conflict. If we can help children and youth identify and implement constructive conflict resolution techniques, our campuses can be made much safer. A curriculum that emphasizes courtesy and thoughtfulness will contribute toward this goal. Involve students in planning and managing student events, campus beautification and crime reporting. Encourage students to report any suspicious individuals on school grounds. Provide students and staff with a toll-free, anonymous hotline for reporting weapons offenses and other criminal activity. Student participation promotes responsible student development and maturity, enabling students to be part of the solution rather than being perceived only as part of the problem.

No. 7: Implement a peer counseling and peer mediation program.

Students represent one of the best agents for promoting and maintaining a safe campus. An effective peer counseling program can head off many problems before they reach explosive levels. Students trained as peer counselors can serve as influential resources for nonviolent problem solving.

No. 8: Make the campus welcoming.

School safety leadership begins at the top. Unquestionably, the best principals know their students and spend much of their time outside their offices. Staying in touch cannot be accomplished in a cloistered office. The way the day begins affects the climate of the entire day. Greeting students at the front door, being present in the hall during class changes, visiting classrooms and participation in special events is crucial.

No. 9: Establish an engaging system of extracurricular programs and services.

Without positive and challenging activities, students tend to fill the void with negative activities. A safe school provides students with several options before, during and after school. Schools must work with the community's local recreation department, social services agencies and youth and civic groups to ensure that children and youth and their families have a safety net of agencies, advocates and services available to them.

No. 10: Develop and enforce a school dress code.

Students and staff tend to behave the way they are allowed to dress. Establish a districtwide dress code policy that sets specific and unambiguous appearance standards for both students and staff. Gang attire should be prohibited, and dress code expectations should be consistently enforced. Contradictory policies and procedures and inconsistent enforcement by staff send mixed messages to students. School staff should serve as role models for students. Involve students and parents in developing appearance standards. Students and parents will support and preserve what they help create.

No. 11: Ensure that behavior expectations are clearly communicated, consistently enforced and fairly applied.

School policies should reflect behavior expectations outlined in federal, state, county and local statutes or ordinances. Review the student and teacher handbooks and place students, parents and staff on notice. Require that students and parents provide written acknowledgment that they have received and read the student behavior code.

No. 12: Carefully screen and select new employees.

One key decision parents and communities make involves deciding who will teach, train, coach, counsel and lead their children. Keeping child molesters and pedophiles out of classrooms, schools and youth-serving organizations is a major task. Responsible parenting and thoughtful leadership on the part of schools and other youth-serving agencies should provide enough reasons to establish appropriate safeguards for keeping child molesters away from children. Increasing litigation against school systems and child-care providers has created a financial reason to conduct appropriate background checks to protect the safety of children. Some school systems and youth-service organizations already have faced multimillion-dollar lawsuits for their failure to appropriately screen, properly supervise and/or remove employees who may present risks to children. Every school system should have clear policy guidelines and procedures to weed out individuals with criminal backgrounds of misbehavior involving children. Any record-screening program must consider the rights of privacy and due process as well as the right to a hearing when disqualification is involved. But the screening program also must balance these rights against the rights of the children who will be served by the individual.

No. 13: Create a climate of ownership and school pride.

Campus pride begins with a clean and orderly school. School maintenance efforts may also include the development of a graffiti abatement and community clean-up program. School officials should also work with police and community leaders to ensure the walk to and from school is crime-free and nonthreatening. Together they can work on ways to shut down drug houses and stop illegal group activities in school neighborhoods. The local U.S. attorney and city and county officials represent some excellent resources to cultivate. Their support is critical to abate gangs, drug activity and graffiti.

No. 14: Provide adequate adult supervision.

Young people need continuous responsible supervision. This may include teachers, administrators, parents, campus supervisors, or law enforcement officers. By all means, do not forget senior citizens. Like many young people, many senior citizens with talents and are looking for something to do. Recent studies show that most young people believe adults play a major role in counseling and encouraging kids toward nonviolence.

No. 15: Identify specifically assigned roles and responsibilities.

Policies and procedures that detail staff members' and parent-volunteers' responsibilities for security should be developed. These responsibilities may include monitoring hallways and restrooms, patrolling parking lots, and providing supervision at before-school and after-school activities.

No. 16: Mandate crime reporting and tracking.

A uniform school crime-reporting and record-keeping system is critical to maintaining a safe, secure campus. When administrators know what crimes are being committed on their campuses, when and where the crimes are committed and who is involved, appropriate supervision can be implemented. In addition, school leaders must analyze crime data to determine whether linkages exist among criminal activities on campus.

No. 17: Identify and track repeat offenders.

Most school crime problems are caused by a small percentage of students. To discourage their continued misbehavior and criminal acts, school leaders should track, monitor and closely supervise these youngsters.

No. 18: Maintain close supervision and ensure remedial training for offenders.

Troublemakers should not be rewarded with more time off from school or lighter class schedules. Their training and supervision should be intensified. Consider the following actions when planning close supervision: Place such students with experienced teachers; develop individual behavior and education plans; assign a specific counselor to each student; and assign these students to lockers in areas that are clearly visible and easily supervised. Create a local network of resources and youth-serving referral agencies in your community.

No. 19: Expand alternative placement options for troubled youth.

Youngsters who have committed weapons violations and other serious disruptions should be removed from the mainstream educational setting and relocated to an in-school suspension program or alternate education site within the district where closer supervision and greater structure are provided.

No. 20: Consider placing a probation officer on campus.

Probation officers can provide additional intensive supervision for students on probation who attend school. Exercising such an option can complement the efforts of student personnel staff, who then can invest more time reinforcing positive behavior among all students, rather than simply disciplining troublemakers.

No. 21: Require restitution and community service for all juvenile offenders.

Work with the presiding juvenile judge, the chief probation officer, and community or government leaders to establish a community service and restitution program at the school. Individuals involved in vandalism and malicious mischief should have positive means of making amends to society for their offenses.

No. 22: Control campus access.

Parking lots and school buildings with multiple entrances and exits maximize the potential for vandalism and defacement of vehicles and school property. Continuing efforts should be made to minimize the number of campus entrance and exit points used daily. Access points to school grounds should be supervised regularly by individuals familiar with the student body. Campus traffic, both pedestrian and vehicular, should flow through areas that can be easily and naturally supervised. Delivery entrances used by vendors also should be checked regularly. Perimeter fencing should also be considered as a means of restricting access to campus.

No. 23: Establish uniform screening procedures to monitor visitors and potential campus intruders.

Signs directing persons to the office should be placed in strategic, visible locations and should be large enough to attract visitors notice. Visitors should be required to sign in at the school office, state their specific school business, and be required to visibly display a visitor's badge. All school employees should be trained to courteously challenge unidentified persons and direct them to the main office. "May I help you?" is a kind, nonthreatening way to begin.

No. 24: Require picture identification cards for each student and staff member.

A school administrator is responsible not only for keeping students away from trouble, but also for keeping trouble away from students. Being able to distinguish enrolled students from nonstudents and guests is critical. An effective picture identification system enhances the control and management of the campus. Authorized parent volunteers and school visitors also should display clearly identifiable badges or name tags.

No. 25: Articulate a clearly defined locker policy.

The locker policy at each school should appropriately reflect the district's custodial interest. Students and parents should be notified that the lockers are school property. Students should be advised in the student handbook that lockers "and their contents" may be searched at any time for reasons of health and safety. Distributing district-owned locks to students or requiring that students use only locks for which the school has combinations will further enhance the school's custodial position in conducting routine locker checks.

No. 26: Disseminate a summary of laws pertaining to school disorder.

The summary should be drafted by the district's legal counsel and disseminated through the director of security to all site administrators and security personnel to ensure consistency of student supervision and management.

No. 27: Review discipline and weapons possession policies.

Ensure that policies attack the problem, and not simply the symptoms. Clearly distinguish between disciplinary matters and criminal offenses. Identify top discipline problems and then establish a task force of students, teachers, administrators and parents to review and/or develop effective strategies and programs that promote a safe and secure campus.

No. 28: Establish a crisis response plan.

Many problems can be avoided through responsible planning. However, sometimes a crisis is unavoidable. A good crisis plan focuses on crisis prevention, preparation, management and resolution. It also identifies community resources that serve students. The crisis response plan should include step-by-step procedures for crisis situations.

No. 29: Establish an emergency communications center.

Use the latest technology to enable site administrators to make immediate contact with teachers and school safety personnel. A school communications network should link classrooms and schoolyard supervisors with the front office or security staff, as well as with local law enforcement and fire departments. At least one radio with cellular phone capability should be available on campus for emergencies. Detention classrooms or facilities for behaviorally disruptive students also should have emergency call buttons. A fully computerized public safety emergency frequency is recommended.

No. 30: Promote crime prevention through environmental design.

Trim or remove shrubbery that interferes with natural surveillance. Provide maximum supervision in heavy traffic areas. Provide strategically located public telephones with dial-free connections to emergency services. Relocate safe activities near typical trouble spots. For instance, consider relocating a counselor's office near a corridor or locker bay where problems have occurred. Conduct ticket sales or concession activities in or near problem areas. Eliminate obstacles such as trash cans and architectural barriers that block or impede traffic flow as well as supervision and surveillance. Use parabolic/convex mirrors in stairwells and locations that require improved supervision. Replace double-entry restroom doors with an open zigzag design to better monitor behavior in restroom areas. Use automatic flush valves and automatic water faucets to reduce vandalism and control water consumption.

No. 31: Remove posters from all windows.

Posters and construction paper covering windows block natural supervision. Unless glaring sun or the need for privacy mandates the covering of windows, they should be left clear to enhance supervision.

No. 32: Use current technologies that promote crime prevention.

A host of options exists relative to access control, property identification and supervision. For example, consider electromagnetic door locking systems. Proper control strategies such as microdot systems, surveillance cameras for difficult-to-supervise public areas and other high-tech strategies may be

appropriate.

No. 33: Limit opportunities to transport and store contraband.

School systems have put in place crime prevention policies that include: allowing only clear plastic or mesh book bags, or no book bags at all; eliminating lockers; establishing a coat check area for oversized articles of clothing capable of shielding weapons; and providing students with two sets of textbooks, one for home and one for school, to eliminate the need for book bags and to reduce the time for class changes.

No. 34: Stress that campus parking is a privilege, not a right.

The parking policy should emphasize that when students drive their vehicles on school property, they agree to abide by campus rules and to having their vehicles searched. Diminishing the privacy expectation can deter the presence of contraband or weapons. The policy also enhances the district's position for legal action relative to search and seizure.

No. 35: Enhance interagency cooperation among youth-serving professionals.

Creating safe schools is a community function. Schools cannot accomplish this task alone. Safe schools actively cooperate with community agencies. Campus security operations should be coordinated with local law enforcement agencies. Include law enforcers in your curriculum, supervision and crisis planning. Community support agencies such as county mental health, child protective services, department of parks and recreation, juvenile probation and the courts together must identify students who are potentially dangerous and provide services to preclude juvenile offenders from causing further problems. These agencies must also provide services that assist in troubled students educational and personal development.

No. 36: Consistently enforce the information-sharing agreements.

At least once annually, school administrators should review their information-sharing agreements to ensure they comply with federal and state laws and to ensure school administrators and staff are doing everything possible to share such information with those who have a legitimate need to know. Special follow-up should be given by the court to ensure that court orders and other information-sharing agreements among agencies comply with court guidelines. The student record policy should state that student records may be shared with any teacher, staff member or youth-serving professional who has a legitimate need to know.

No. 37: Establish a parent/volunteer center on each campus.

The center can recruit, coordinate and encourage parents to participate in the educational process. Possible activities include helping supervise hallways, playgrounds, restrooms or other trouble spots. Classroom visits and participation in special events are encouraged. A special training program that outlines expectations and responsibilities for parents in volunteer roles can be particularly helpful. School crime decreases when responsible adult supervision is present.

No. 38: Conduct annual school safety training programs.

Prior to the start of each school year, training sessions should be held for all site administrators and security personnel to review school safety procedures. Staff should be regularly updated on safety plans through in-service training. The training should include certificated and classified staff as well as part-time and substitute employees.

No. 39: Provide teacher training programs.

Special in-house training on student behavior management should be offered for teachers and administrators. Strategies that worked 20 years ago no longer may be effective. Teachers must develop coping skills and techniques for controlling classroom behavior and dealing with disruptive youth and angry parents.

No. 40: Conduct an annual review.

Every school should conduct an annual safety assessment of its safe school planning. The evaluation component is a continuing reality check and refinement of the safe school actions and attitudes that the school wishes to create and maintain. The assessment may reveal that additional steps should be taken to improve adult supervision, revise curricula, pass legislation, redesign facilities or establish new programs.

Conviction and Commitment

Well-educated, socially responsible citizens constitute this country's greatest strength. On the eve of the twenty-first century, we are called to act with conviction and pledge commitment from the highest levels of government to the most intimate circles of caring--our families. Citizens in partnership, we must strive to ensure that our children are educated in violence-free schools and communities.

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