

**School Violence and its
Aftermath:
What you can do to help**

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No financial conflicts to disclose

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How we will work today

- Identify aspects of violence prevention, preparation, response, and recovery where you are uniquely suited to make a difference.
- Explore examples and resources of best practices for each of these phases.
- List specific actions you can take.

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1. Preventing violence in the first place

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The principal objective of school violence-reduction strategies should be to create cultures and climates of safety, respect, and emotional support within educational institutions. (Fein et al., 2002, p. 11)

<https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/scirp/quick-guide>



The image shows a QR code and a screenshot of the 'School Climate Assessment Framework' website. The website header includes 'National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments' and 'U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION'. The main content area is titled 'School Climate Assessment Framework' and includes a 'Quick Guide to Helping School Climate Assessments' section. There are also sections for 'Assessing School Climate' and 'EDSLS' (Educational Data System for Learning Support).

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"Violence is a process, as well as an act. Violent behavior does not occur in a vacuum. . . violent acts often are the culmination of long-developing, identifiable trails of problems, conflicts, disputes, and failures. . . Perpetrators of violence consider, plan, and prepare before engaging in violent acts. A key to prevention is to identify these behaviors."

-Fein, Vossekuil, and Holden

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Must-reads

	https://www.secretservice.gov/sites/default/files/reports/2021-03/USSS%20Averting%20Targeted%20School%20Violence.2021.03.pdf	
	https://www.secretservice.gov/sites/default/files/reports/2020-10/USSS_NTAC_Enhancing_School_Safety_Guide.pdf	
	https://www.secretservice.gov/sites/default/files/2020-04/Protecting_Americas_Schools.pdf	

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1. When did they know?

Out of 91 cases reviewed:

- The majority received the information more than a day before the attack.
- 59% were told days or weeks in advance
- 22% were told month or years prior
- 19% were told a few hours or less before the attack.

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2. Did bystanders share?

← No Action → Actively conveyed information

Only 4% of the individuals with prior knowledge attempted to dissuade the attacker from violence.

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3. What did we learn about failure to disclose?

Four factors supported the belief that it could never happen

- Belief that such talk was attention seeking behavior
- Belief that it would never actually be carried out
- The student making the threat did not seem serious - joking
- Overt and repetitive statements - led people to believe they were not serious.

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Students have information and intelligence


In a word, listen.

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What does this have to do with you?

- **Targeted school violence is preventable when communities identify warning signs and intervene.**
In every case, tragedy was averted by members of the community coming forward when they observed behavior that elicited concern.
- **Schools should seek to intervene with students before their behavior warrants legal consequences.** The primary function of a threat assessment is not criminal investigation or conviction. Communities should strive to identify and intervene with students in distress before their behavior escalates to criminal actions.
- **Students were most often motivated to plan a school attack because of a grievance with classmates.** Like students who perpetrated school attacks, the plotters in this study were most frequently motivated by interpersonal conflicts with classmates, highlighting a need for student interventions and de-escalation programs targeting such issues.
- **Students are best positioned to identify and report concerning behaviors displayed by their classmates.** In this study, communications made about the attack plot were most often observed by the plotter's friends, classmates, and peers. Schools and communities must take tangible steps to facilitate student reporting when classmates observe threatening or concerning behaviors. Unfortunately, many cases also involved students observing concerning behaviors and communications without reporting them, highlighting the ongoing need for further resources and training for students.

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What you can do:

- Sign up for e-mail updates from the Secret Service.
- Read these reports.
- Share these reports with central office administrators.
- Lead a discussion of each one.
- Assess current practices.
- Assess school climate with a validated measure.
- Make an action plan.

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Implications for School Policy

- Encourage rapid reporting of threats or disturbing behaviors
- Define safe avenues for reporting - including anonymous reporting
- Ensure that all those who report a threat or threatening situation will be treated with respect and that the information they provide will be closely guarded.
- Pledge to take action.

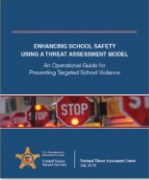
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https://www.secretservice.gov/sites/default/files/reports/2020-10/USSS_NTAC_Enhancing_School_Safety_Guide.pdf




Enhancing School Safety Using a Threat Assessment Model



Step 1: Establish a multidisciplinary threat assessment team
Step 2: Define prohibited and concerning behaviors
Step 3: Establish and provide training on a central reporting system
Step 4: Determine the threshold for law enforcement intervention
Step 5: Establish assessment procedures
Step 6: Develop risk management options
Step 7: Create and promote a safe school climate
Step 8: Provide training for all stakeholders

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What you can do:

- Read these guidelines
- Review your current threat assessment practices against these guidelines.
- Share these guidelines with your threat assessment teams.
- Ask team members to identify barriers. They may need to do this individually and privately.
- Do not take the word of one person. There is a reason why we have teams!
- Pay special attention to April.
- Make an action plan.

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Now, let's look at the research on situations that set the occasion for aggression. . .

- Aggression is often a response to being humiliated.
- Youth prone to carry guns report that shame can only be undone through aggression. --The Gun Safety Institute

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TASH Trauma Technical Assistance System Network (TASH) provides technical assistance to support school districts' systematic implementation of evidence-based practices.


De-Escalation Materials

These ten modules provide practitioners with a strong foundation in identifying how underlying and professional stress may impact the workplace.

- Module 1: An Introduction to the Cycle of Escalation
- Module 2: Self-Reflection
- Module 3: Self-Reflection
- Module 4: Self-Reflection
- Module 5: Self-Reflection
- Module 6: Self-Reflection
- Module 7: Self-Reflection
- Module 8: Self-Reflection
- Module 9: Self-Reflection
- Module 10: Self-Reflection

<https://www.kodetash.org/tash/de-escalation-materials>

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What you can do:

- Help school leaders understand how to observe teacher-student interactions
- Encourage professional development on everyday de-escalation in the classroom, not just crisis prevention.
- Lead discussions of case studies that highlight teacher missteps and encourage reflection.
- Look at office discipline referrals and study the patterns. Consider upstream interventions so that students don't end up in the office.

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2. Drills

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Where can we turn for advice?

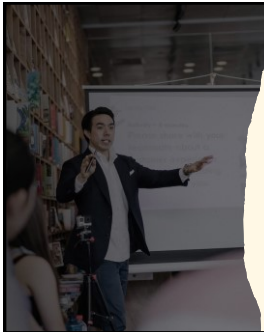


Research on best practices for armed assailant drills

Research on how students attain crisis self-efficacy

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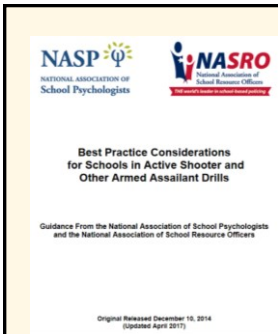
What do experts tell us?

"The behavior of an adult in an emergency directly affects the physical and psychological safety of students in crisis. Therefore, the effectiveness of armed assailant drills relies on educating and training adults carefully, responsibly, and continually. Students look to faculty and staff—the designated trusted adults on site—for direction and guidance. When adults are well-trained and stay calm, the students will follow and gain confidence and ability."

Best practice considerations for schools in active shooter and other armed assailant drills, NASP, NASRO (2017, p. 6).

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<https://www.nasro.org/clientuploads/resources/Best-Practice-Active-Shooter-Drills.pdf>

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graph LR
    A[Self-efficacy] --> B[Crisis self-efficacy]
    B --> C[Motivation to comply]
  
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Avery, E. & Park, S. (2016). Effects of crisis efficacy on intentions to follow directives during crisis. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 28(2), 72-86.

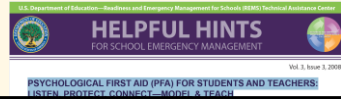
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Promoting crisis self-efficacy


“Adults also should ensure accurate information or “risk communication” about new safety measures, drills, and ways of staying safe is conveyed to students. Knowledge helps build resilience and increases the sense of ability to cope.”

Wong, M., Schreiber, M., & Gurwitsch, R. (2008). Psychological first aid (PFA) for students and teachers: listen, protect, connect—model & teach. *Helpful Hints for School Emergency Management*, 3(3), p. 6



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What you can do:

- When age-appropriate, invite students to . . .
 - Identify what went well.
 - Share points of confusion.
- Co-facilitate after action reviews

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https://ems.ed.gov/docs/2017Toolbox/CO_After%20Action%20Report.pdf


https://ems.ed.gov/docs/After_ActionReports.pdf

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3. During a violent incident

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Limit Exposure to Trauma

- Children's exposure to trauma occurs primarily in three ways, as delineated by Hoven et al. (2005). Direct exposure consists of experiences with the event itself, while family exposure occurs when family members have been affected, as either victims or responders. Media exposure refers to depictions of the traumatic event through the digital and print media.

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Reunite families when it's safe





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<https://loveguys.org/The-Standard-Reunification-Method.html#Download-the-ROK>


ROK Reunification Operation Kit
Downloadable versions of all materials are made available at no cost. It would be great if you let us know you are using these materials.



ROK Box Full of binders Binders Full of Job Action Sheets Lanyards Role IDs Use Dry Erase All of the rest of the Kit

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What you can do:

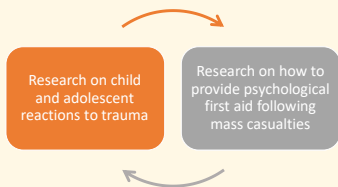
- Encourage your district to practice its reunification plan before a crisis.
- Share the many resources on the foundation website you just saw.
- Explain the notion of exposure and encourage families to keep students away from the news as much as possible.
- Encourage adults at school to have their conversations about the event in private spaces so that children do not overhear them.

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4. Aftermath

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Where can we turn for advice?



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The Trauma-Sensitive Schools Training Package

offers administrators a framework and roadmap for adopting a trauma-sensitive approach school- or districtwide.

includes a variety of resources for educating school staff

provides school leaders with a step-by-step process for implementing a universal, trauma-informed approach

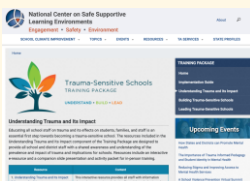
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The next three slides come from an excellent program, Understanding Trauma and Its Impact




- E-Resource Companion Slide Presentation



<https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/understanding-trauma-and-its-impact>

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Definition of trauma

The three "E's" of trauma

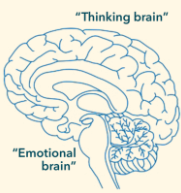
Trauma refers to an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has lasting adverse effects.

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The stress response system

1. The amygdala senses threat and sets off the alarm.
2. Thinking brain assesses the situation.
3. Thinking brain goes off-line. Emotional brain activates fight or flight response.
4. Thinking brain helps shut off the alarm and helps us to calm down.

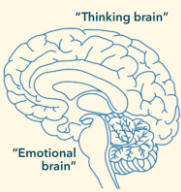


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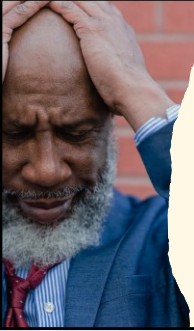
The stress response and trauma

- An experience becomes **TRAUMATIC** when it overwhelms our system for responding to stress.
- The emotional brain continues to sound the alarm and send messages to fight or flee, even after the threat has passed.



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Impact of trauma on staff

- Increased anxiety
- Reduced energy and focus
- Trouble regulating emotions
- Difficulty managing responses to students and parents
- Diminished capacity to maintain positive teacher-student and teacher-parent relationships
- Poor attendance or work performance



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Postvention Standards Manual A Guide for a School's Response in the Aftermath of Sudden Death, Fifth Edition


<https://www.starcenter.pitt.edu/manuals/manual-descriptions>

This manual has been prepared for educators, social workers, school psychologists, counselors, and other professionals who work with children and adolescents in the aftermath of tragedies. It is intended to guide schools and communities in developing their own postvention (services offered in an aftermath of a suicide or tragedy) policies and procedures. This guide does not replace professional advice and should not be the only source of guidelines for a specific situation, as each crisis will be different. Appropriately trained professionals should be consulted for discussion and evaluation of particular issues or cases.

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Supporting Victims

1. Provide safety, security, and privacy.
2. Reunite families as soon as it is safe.
3. Triage those at greatest risk.
4. Educate caregivers and victims and validate about their reactions.
5. Arrange long-term mental health supports.
6. Anticipate and address critical events, reminders, and anniversaries.

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Risk factors for long-term consequences are exposure and/contact.

1. Victims, witnesses, perpetrators, suspects
2. On-site - students, faculty, staff, parents
3. Off-campus - students/staff absent on day of incident
4. Out-of-vicinity - friends at other nearby schools

Wong, Fink, Stein, Kataoka, & Steiger, 2003, pg.# not given).

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Helplessness

- An acute sense of vulnerability can haunt victims.
- Our job to re-empower them.

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How Teachers Can Help Me:

A Book By

Empower the student to identify what helps them.

Available at
<https://www.sbbh.pitt.edu/families>

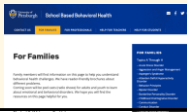



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When we have a discussion:

- ___ Give me praise when I contribute with my ideas.
- ___ Let me have a chance to speak.
- ___ Understand that I have a hard time reading other people's emotions.
- ___ Let me raise my hand when I'm ready; please don't call on me when I don't raise my hand.
- ___ Let me write down my thoughts and questions if I'm not ready to speak in front of the class.
- ___ Let me know ahead of time when we'll be having group discussion and also what we'll be talking about.
- ___ Let me know when it will be my turn to talk soon. Tap my desk.

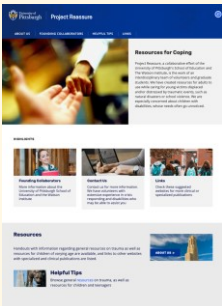


<https://www.sbbh.pitt.edu/families>



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<https://www.projectreassure.pitt.edu/>



Project Reassure, a collaborative effort of the University of Pittsburgh's School of Education and The Watson Institute, is the work of an interdisciplinary team of volunteers and graduate students. We have created resources for adults to use while caring for young victims displaced and/or distressed by traumatic events, such as natural disasters or school violence. We are especially concerned about children with disabilities, whose needs often go unnoticed.

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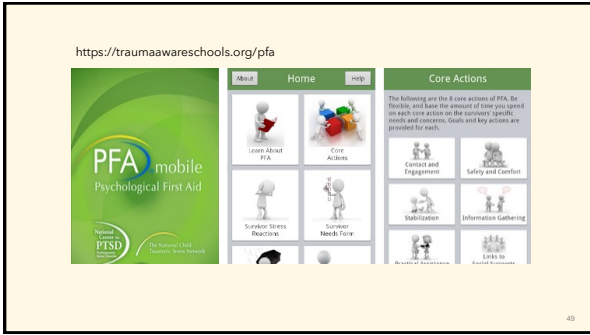
https://www.projectreassure.pitt.edu/sites/default/files/tips_anxious_0.pdf

- Help children and teens relax for a few minutes with deep breathing. If, however, a child seems to be so anxious that she is having trouble catching her breath, get help. You should always try to be calm.
- Listen carefully. Being a good listener is like being a good friend. Do not worry if you cannot understand everything the child or teen tells you. If the child seems to get more upset while telling you the story, suggest that "I want to hear more about that. What you are telling me is very important. But telling this story is hard for you. How about taking a little break from it and then telling me some more?"



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What does Psychological First Aid accomplish?

- establish a positive connection with students and staff members in a non-intrusive, compassionate manner;
- enhance immediate and ongoing safety and provide physical and emotional comfort;
- calm and orient emotionally overwhelmed or distraught students and staff;
- help students and staff members identify their immediate needs and concerns;
- offer practical assistance and information to help students and staff members address their immediate needs and concerns;

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What does Psychological First Aid accomplish?

- connect students and staff members as soon as possible to social support networks, including family members, friends, coaches, and other school or community groups;
- empower students, staff, and families to take an active role in their recovery, by acknowledging their coping efforts and strengths, and supporting adaptive coping;
- link the student and staff to other relevant school or community resources ...whose aims are "to reduce the initial distress caused by emergencies, and to foster short- and long-term adaptive functioning and coping" (Brymer et al., 2012, p. 5).

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PTSD Coach



Using your mobile device, download and review this free app.



- Can you review your understanding of trauma?
- Identify some of the general supports we've discussed?
- Find ways to calm yourself?

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What you can do:

- Before a crisis, conduct the trauma-informed professional development program reviewed here. Explore the additional resources within this website for making your school more trauma-informed. Encourage shared use of language from the program.
- Set aside some professional development time so that staff can learn Psychological First Aid.
- Introduce staff to the PFA and PTSD Coach mobile apps as resources they can use for crises.
- After a critical event, review core elements of trauma and trauma reactions. Help families understand these reactions as well. Share the Project Reassurance handouts.

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**“Do what you are meant to do now.
The conditions will always be impossible.”**

Doris Lessing, winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature, 2007

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References

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