



# ECS Alert

## School Safety: Resources for Policy

Education Commission of the States

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## Resources for State Leaders Seeking to Improve School Safety

### INTRODUCTION

In the wake of the December 2012 shootings at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, governors, legislators, and education leaders from across the country signaled their intentions to pursue legislation and policy to improve school safety. **The purpose of this ECS Alert is to provide Education Commission of the States' constituents with quick access to resources and information on potential policies directly related to school safety.** The following pages contain descriptions and links, sorted by topic, from ECS and other organizations.

#### SCHOOL SAFETY TOPICS

(Click on topic to be taken to a list of resources for that topic)

- [School Safety – State Policy](#)
- [School Safety – Research](#)
- [School Safety – Programs, Practices, and Organizations](#)
- [Zero Tolerance](#)
- [Bullying](#)
- [School Facility Design](#)
- [Mental Health, Student Well-being, and Engagement – State Policy](#)
- [Mental Health, Student Well-being, and Engagement – Research](#)
- [Mental Health, Student Well-being, Engagement – Programs, Practices, and Organizations](#)

In addition to the resources listed here, ECS can conduct additional information searches and provide customized technical assistance to our constituents. Please call the ECS Information Clearinghouse at 303.299.3675, or contact Kathy Christie or Jennifer Dounay Zinth ([kchristie@ecs.org](mailto:kchristie@ecs.org); [jdounay@ecs.org](mailto:jdounay@ecs.org)) with any inquiries.

## SCHOOL SAFETY: STATE POLICY

 [From the ECS State Policy Database: School Safety](#): This database—updated weekly—provides a chronological listing of enacted or adopted policies from across the states.

 [From the ECS State Policy Database: School Safety—Disaster/Emergency Preparedness](#): This database—updated weekly—provides a chronological listing of enacted or adopted policies from across the states.

## SCHOOL SAFETY: RESEARCH

[Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2011](#): This is the 14th in a series of annual publications produced jointly by the U.S. Department of Education and the Bureau of Justice Statistics. The report covers topics such as teacher injury, victimization, bullying, school conditions, fights, weapons, availability and student use of drugs and alcohol, and student perceptions of personal safety at school. Indicators of crime and safety are compared across different population subgroups and over time. (Institute of Education Sciences, November 2010)

[Breaking School Rules: A Statewide Study on How School Discipline Relates to Students' Success and Juvenile Justice Involvement](#): The Council of State Governments' Justice Center and the Public Policy Research Institute at Texas A&M University conducted a statewide study of nearly 1 million Texas public secondary school students who were followed for at least six years. Among the most notable findings is that the majority of students were suspended or expelled between 7th and 12th grade. Also found in the study: (1) When students are suspended or expelled, the likelihood that they will repeat a grade, not graduate, and/or become involved in the juvenile justice system increases significantly; (2) African-American students and students with educational disabilities were suspended and expelled at especially high rates. (CSG Justice Center, August 2011)

[Secret Service Safe School Initiative](#): In 2002, the U.S. Secret Service completed the Safe School Initiative—a study of school shootings and other school-based attacks—that was conducted in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Education. The study examined school shootings in the United States as far back as 1974 through the end of the school year in 2000, analyzing a total of 37 incidents involving 41 student attackers. The study involved extensive review of police records, school records, court documents, and other source materials, and included interviews with 10 school shooters. The focus of the study was to develop information about the school shooters' pre-attack behaviors and communications. The goal was to identify information about a school shooting that may be identifiable or noticeable before the shooting occurs to help inform efforts to prevent school-based attacks. This website contains the final report in addition to other publications.

## SCHOOL SAFETY: PROGRAMS, PRACTICES, AND ORGANIZATIONS

Secretary Duncan sent a [message](#) to all U.S. school districts in which he shared some resources from the Department's [Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools Technical Assistance Center](#). Lists of resources included those for [helping youth and children recover from traumatic events](#) and for [creating and updating school emergency management plans](#).

[Behavior-Oriented Approaches To Reducing Youth Gun Violence](#): Advocacy groups on both sides of the gun issue frequently point to changing personal behavior—of both parents and children—as a key element in reducing gun violence among youth. Efforts to bring about these changes range from community-based campaigns, to laws and programs that encourage parents to store their guns safely, to educational initiatives that focus on keeping young children away from guns and encouraging youth to

resolve disputes without violence. Unfortunately, these behavior-oriented programs have not shown great success in reducing youth gun violence. This article reviews the research surrounding behavioral approaches to gun violence prevention and highlights obstacles that hamper the effectiveness of these programs. (Marjorie S. Hardy, *The Future of Children*, vol. 12, no. 2, 2002)

[Center for the Prevention of School Violence \(CPSV\)](#): This site is a good resource for promising practices at the school level, strategies for preventing school violence, and developments in North Carolina. CPSV is primarily directed at school-level officials but also works with state officials across the country. The center has developed a “safe school pyramid” of promising strategies based upon intervention as well as prevention. Its website includes access to a “Web conferencing forum” and several publications on preventing school violence.

[Center for the Prevention of Youth Violence](#): Housed at Johns Hopkins University’s Bloomberg School of Public Health, the Center for the Prevention of Youth Violence conducts research on a variety of subjects in youth violence, provides training and education, works with local and statewide programs and interagency groups to develop and direct violence prevention programs/projects, and provides additional information on a wide array of topics in the field of youth violence, including after-school programs, bullying, mental health, gang resources, model programs, youth as leaders, and more.

[The Deliberative Democracy Consortium](#): The mission of the Consortium is to bring together practitioners and researchers to support and foster the nascent, broad-based movement to promote and institutionalize deliberative democracy at all levels of governance in the United States and around the world. Its list of [guides and reports](#) offers insight into ways public deliberation can augment decision-maker interaction with the public, and get things done.

[National Association of School Resource Officers](#): Founded in 1991, the National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO) is an organization for school-based law enforcement officers, school administrators, and school security/safety professionals working as partners to protect students, school faculty and staff, and the schools they attend. NASRO was founded on the “triad” concept of school-based policing which is the true and tested strength of the School Resource Officer (SRO) program. The triad concept divides the SRO’s responsibilities into three areas: Teacher, Counselor, and Law Enforcement Officer.

[National Crime Prevention Council \(NCPC\)](#): This website includes information about crime prevention, community building, and comprehensive planning, including newsletters, frequently asked questions, program ideas and examples, and training and tools. NCPC is a national nonprofit organization whose mission is to help America prevent crime and build safer, stronger communities. Articles available on this site include: *School Violence: Turning Tragedy into Action*, *Safer Schools: Strategies for Educators and Law Enforcement*, and *Stopping School Violence: 12 Things You Can Do.*”

[National School Safety and Security Services](#): This website includes a wide range of resources on school security planning, crisis preparedness, and linking security with prevention and intervention programs. The organization also offers consulting at local and state levels. Resources include: *State-level School Safety Strategies for Legislators and Elected Officials* and *Early Warning Signs of Youth Violence: Fact, Fiction or Fad?*

[National School Safety Center](#): This organization advocates for safe, secure, and peaceful schools. The center produces videos and publications highlighting school safety research, practice, strategies, trends,

and resources. The center also executes school safety assessments, identifying key factors impacting student and staff safety, including existing school safety plans, anti-terrorist measures, and the prevalence of gangs, weapons, and drug or alcohol abuse.

[Response Options](#): Response Options is a critical-incident response training company that specializes in active shooter and violet intruder events. Response Options specializes in the ALICE (Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, Evacuate) approach to critical incident response.

[Virginia Youth Violence Project](#): This website, hosted by the University of Virginia's Curry School of Education, provides a vast amount of resources on school safety and youth violence prevention, grouped around the subjects of violence in schools, threat assessment, prevention, bullying, and juvenile violence. The site also offers access to conference presentations and recent publications by project-affiliated students and staff, and links to other websites related to school safety and juvenile violence.

## ZERO TOLERANCE

 [From the ECS State Policy Database: School Safety—Expulsion/Suspension](#): This database—updated weekly—provides a chronological listing of enacted or adopted policies from across the states.

## BULLYING

 [From the ECS State Policy Database: School Safety—Bullying Prevention/Conflict Resolution](#): This database—updated weekly—provides a chronological listing of enacted or adopted policies from across the states.

 [Bullying and Open Enrollment](#): Some state anti-bullying policies require districts to adopt strategies to protect students who have been bullied from further victimization. A few states go one step further, adopting specialized inter-district transfer policies to allow victims of bullying to enroll in another school district, or allowing for the transfer of bullies themselves. This report describes state policies to allow bullying victims, or bullies themselves, to transfer to another school or district. (Jennifer Dounay Zinth, November 2011)

 [State Anti-Bullying Policies: A National Landscape](#): This PowerPoint presentation outlines anti-bullying policies in the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Presentation was made to the 2011 National Conference of State Legislators Legislative Summit in San Antonio, Texas, on August 9, 2011. (Jennifer Dounay Zinth, Education Commission of the States, August 2011)

[Study of the Nature and Effectiveness of Virginia School Divisions' Anti-bullying Policies](#): This report presents survey results from all Virginia school divisions regarding policies, regulations, procedures, discipline actions, prevention and intervention programs, and strategies surrounding bullying. Findings indicate that all school divisions in Virginia meet the requirements of the Code of Virginia and include bullying as a part of character education and as a prohibited behavior. (Virginia Department of Education, January 2012)

[Bullying in Schools: An Overview](#): Provides an overview of a series of studies that explore the connections between bullying in schools, school attendance and engagement, and academic achievement. Included are findings and recommendations for policy and practice. (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, December 2011)

[Addressing Bullying: State Guidance to Districts and Schools is Both Helpful and a Missed Opportunity:](#) Renewed legislative attention on bullying has led state and local education agencies to enhance their focus on bullying. Some state education agencies have mainly implemented the letter of the law, while others have used the legislation to expand attention to the problem. As another barrier to learning, bullying must be addressed and not pursued as just one more initiative rather than as a major opportunity to develop a comprehensive and cohesive system for addressing barriers to learning and teaching. (Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA, 2011)

## SCHOOL FACILITY DESIGN

[School Designer: The Safer School Design Initiative:](#) This newsletter presents the “must do” design and layout changes necessary to make schools safer.

## MENTAL HEALTH, STUDENT WELL-BEING, AND ENGAGEMENT – STATE POLICY

 [From the ECS State Policy Database: Health—Mental Health:](#) This database—updated weekly—provides a chronological listing of enacted or adopted policies from across the states.

 [From the ECS State Policy Database: Whole Child:](#) This database—updated weekly—provides a chronological listing of enacted or adopted policies from across the states.

 [From the ECS State Policy Database: School Climate/Culture:](#) This database—updated weekly—provides a chronological listing of enacted or adopted policies from across the states.

## MENTAL HEALTH, STUDENT WELL-BEING, AND ENGAGEMENT – RESEARCH

 [The Progress of Education Reform: Student Engagement:](#) This issue of *The Progress of Education Reform* features highlights of K-12 research on student engagement, a civic orientation, and building resiliency. Taken together, they provide a useful, up-to-date look at evidence on the merits of engaging students for achievement and success. It also includes policy implications based on the research, as well as links to studies and resources on student engagement in higher education. (Education Commission of the States, October 2007)

[Measuring student engagement in upper elementary through high school: A description of 21 instruments:](#) This report reviews the characteristics of 21 instruments that measure student engagement in upper elementary through high school. It summarizes what each instrument measures, describes its purposes and uses, and provides technical information on its psychometric properties. (January 2011; REL Southeast)

[Engaged for Success: Service-Learning as a Tool for High School Dropout Prevention:](#) This report, prepared for the 2008 National Conference on Citizenship, presents original and secondary research that shows the ability of service-learning to address some of the principle causes of dropping out. (Civic Enterprises and Peter D. Hart Research Associates, 2008)

[Student Engagement at School: A Sense of Belonging and Participation—Results from PISA 2000:](#) This report looks at what PISA 2000 found out about the engagement at school of 15-year-old students. Specifically, it looks at two measures: their sense of belonging in terms of whether they feel they fit in at school, and their participation in terms of their class and school attendance.

## MENTAL HEALTH, STUDENT WELL-BEING, AND ENGAGEMENT – PROGRAMS, PRACTICES, AND ORGANIZATIONS

 [Service-Learning: An Education Strategy for Preventing School Violence—Issue Paper](#): We rarely talk about what is happening within young people that causes them to react with such negative emotion and antisocial behavior. Service-learning is one strategy that shows promise for creating a “culture of caring.” (Carol W. Kinsley, Ann Southworth and Bruce O. Boston, Compact for Learning and Citizenship, Education Commission of the States, December 1999)

 [Youth Violence: A Policymakers’ Guide](#): ECS published *Youth Violence: A Policymakers’ Guide* in 1996, but many parts of it remain relevant. In particular, note the Level of Risk Continuum on pages 10-11. Ranging from “Life Threatening Risks” to “Risks Related to Personal and Social Self-Determination,” the continuum remains one of the best school audit tools ECS has found. (ECS, 1996)

[The psychological and emotional well-being needs of children and young people: Models of effective practice in educational settings](#): This report from Australia includes an in-depth review of research that: (1) identifies emerging trends concerning the psychological and emotional well-being needs of children and young people, (2) identifies and analyzes national and international models of effective practice currently being implemented, and (3) provides published research that informs evidence-based practice in working with children and young people in educational settings.

[High School Survey of Student Engagement \(HSSSE\)](#): This is a powerful assessment tool that can complement performance tests. While the results from standardized performance tests are used to evaluate student (and therefore school) success, those data cannot pinpoint the specific educational processes that are linked to the outcomes the tests measure. HSSSE data can identify student engagement and school features that affect outcomes.

[Collaborative To Advance Social and Emotional Learning \(CASEL\)](#): CASEL’s mission is to establish social and emotional learning (SEL) as an integral part of education from preschool through high school. Its goals are to: (1) advance the science of social and emotional learning; (2) translate scientific knowledge into effective school practices; (3) disseminate information about scientifically sound education strategies and practice; (4) enhance training so that educators effectively implement high-quality SEL programs; and (5) network and collaborate with scientists, educators, advocates, policymakers, and interested citizens to increase coordination of SEL efforts.

[Character Education Partnership \(CEP\)](#): This organization is a national, nonpartisan coalition of education organizations and individuals supporting the teaching of ethical values in the classroom. CEP initiatives include the publication of materials about the issue, operation of an information clearinghouse on character education resources and organizations, as well as assistance to K-12 schools in program development and implementation.

[National Association of School Psychologists](#): NASP empowers school psychologists by advancing effective practices to improve students’ learning, behavior, and mental health. NASP’s [Model for Comprehensive and Integrated School Psychological Services](#) outlines NASP’s recommendations for the delivery of comprehensive school psychological services.

[National Center for School Engagement \(NCSE\)](#): NCSE has generated many resources about school attendance, attachment, and achievement, and provides training and technical assistance, research, and evaluation to school districts, law enforcement agencies, courts, as well as state and federal agencies.

[National School Climate Center](#): The organization’s goal is to promote a safe, supportive school environment that nurtures social and emotional, ethical, and academic skills. The National School Climate Center (NSCC) schools integrate crucial social and emotional learning with academic instruction. It features a growing array of guidelines for [policy and practice guidelines](#) for state and district leaders who support school safety as well as mental health, student well-being, engagement, and effective school reform efforts. The NSCC also produced an informative [white paper](#) examining the “gap between school climate research and school climate policy, practice guidelines, and teacher education policy.”

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