



School Associated Violent Deaths

(Updated 10/06/06)

Key Message

School shootings are sobering and tragic events that cause much concern about the safety of children. Despite these events, schools remain a very safe place for children to spend their days. In fact, the vast majority of children and youth homicides occur outside school hours and property.

To learn how these events may be prevented, CDC is conducting ongoing research to learn more about the nature of school associated violent deaths. Here are some of the key facts from this research:

FACTS: What has research shown to date about school-related violence?

To date, CDC research on school associated violent deaths found:

- The number of children and youth homicides that are school-related make up one percent of the total number of child and youth homicides in the United States.
- Most school associated violent deaths occurred during transition times such as the start or end of the school day, or during the lunch period.
- We have also seen that school-associated homicides are more likely to occur at the start of each semester.
- Nearly 50 percent of the homicide perpetrators (this includes adults, children and youth) gave some type of warning signal (e.g., a threat, a note) prior to the event.
- Among the students who committed a school-associated homicide, 20% were known to have been victims of bullying and 12% were known to have expressed suicidal thoughts or engage in suicidal behavior.

Questions and Answers on School-Related Violent Deaths

Q: What kind of preventive measures may help to prevent school-associated violent deaths?

CDC in partnership with the Departments of Education and Justice is gathering information about school-associated violent deaths to identify trends that can help schools develop preventive measures to protect and promote the health, safety and development of all students. These prevention measures include:

- Encouraging efforts to reduce crowding, increase supervision, and institute plans/policies to handle disputes during transition times that may reduce the likelihood of potential conflicts and injuries.
- Taking threats seriously: students need to know who to go to when they have learned of a threat to anyone at the school, while parents, educators, and mentors should be encouraged to take an active role in helping troubled children and teens.

- Taking talk of suicide seriously: it is important to address risk factors for suicidal behavior when trying to prevent violence toward self and others.
- Promoting prevention programs that are designed to help teachers and other school staff recognize and respond to incidences of bullying between students.
- Ensuring at the start of each semester that schools' security plans are being enforced and that staff are trained and prepared to use the plans.

Q: Are there any specific youth violence prevention programs or practices that parents, communities and institutions, such as schools, can learn from to help prevent youth violence?

There are number of resources that educators, parents and others with a special interest in youth violence prevention can refer to for guidance. They include:

- CDC's Best Practices of Youth Violence Prevention. A source book for Community Action. Best Practices is the first of its kind to look at the effectiveness of specific violence prevention practices in four key areas: parents and families; home visiting; social and conflict resolution skills; and mentoring.
<http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/dvp/bestpractices.htm>
- Blueprints for Violence Prevention which identifies 11 violence prevention and intervention programs that meet a strict scientific standard of program effectiveness. The 11 model programs, called Blueprints, have been effective in reducing adolescent violent crime, aggression, delinquency, and substance abuse
<http://www.colorado.edu/cspv/blueprints/index.html>
- The first Surgeon General's report on youth violence in the United States summarizes an extensive body of research. It clarifies trends in youth violence, identifies risk factors, and reviews the effectiveness of specific prevention strategies.
<http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/youthviolence/>
- Early Warning, Timely Response: A Guide to Safe Schools
This guide offers research-based practices designed to assist school communities identify these warning signs early and develop prevention, intervention and crisis response plans. <http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osep/gtss.html>
- School Health Guidelines to Prevent Unintentional Injuries and Violence.
The Guidelines include information about adolescent violence, suicide, and unintentional injury; why it is important to focus on schools; and what schools do to prevent injuries and violence.
<http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/injury/guidelines/index.htm>
- The School Health Index (SHI) is a self-assessment and planning guide that enables schools to identify the strengths and weaknesses of their school health promotion policies and programs; develop an action plan for improving student health; and, involve teachers, parents, students, and the community in improving school policies, programs, and services. The SHI covers 5 health topic areas: physical education and physical activity, healthy eating, tobacco use prevention, unintentional injuries and violence prevention, and asthma.
<http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/shi/default.aspx>

Q: What has research shown to date about school-related violence?

Although school-associated violent deaths remain rare events, they have occurred often enough to begin to detect patterns and identify potential risk factors. Since 1992, CDC has collaborated with the Departments of Education and Justice in an ongoing national monitoring of school-associated violent deaths. The data has

provided important information about the characteristics of homicides, homicide perpetrators and the context of a homicide event to help inform potential homicide prevention strategies and activities. Results from the ongoing study indicate:

- The number of homicides of children and youth that are school-related make up one percent of the total number of murders of children and youth in the United States.
- Most school associated violent deaths occurred during transition times such as the start or end of the school day, or during lunch period. We have also seen that school-associated homicides are more likely to occur at the start of each semester.
- Nearly 50 percent of the homicide perpetrators gave some type of warning signal (e.g., a threat, a note) prior to the event.
- Among the children and youth who were perpetrators, 20% were known to have been victims of bullying and 12% were known to have expressed suicidal thoughts or engage in suicidal behavior.
- Homicides followed by suicides and isolated suicides account for nearly one in five of the violent deaths in the 2001 study.

For additional information go to a CDC and Department of Education collaborative "Indicators of School Crime and Safety" at: <http://nces.ed.gov/programs/crimeindicators/index.asp?ShowFileName=Introduction.asp>.

Q. How does the school-associated violent death study define a case of violent death at school?

A case was defined as a homicide, suicide, legal intervention, or unintentional firearm-related death of a student or nonstudent in which the fatal injury occurred (1) on the campus of a public or private elementary or secondary school, (2) while the victim was on the way to or from such a school, or (3) while the victim was attending or traveling to or from an official school-sponsored event.

Q. How does CDC track school-associated violence?

CDC collects data on school-associated violence from media databases, state and local agencies, and police and school officials to examine trends and features of school-associated violent deaths in the United States.

Q. What is CDC doing about school-associated homicides and suicides?

CDC continues to develop and share new resources to help communities prevent youth violence.

- The National Youth Violence Resource Center provides a single point of access for information about youth violence prevention for students, parents, researchers, and others. Information is in both English and Spanish.
- Our "Best Practices in Youth Violence Prevention" has been widely distributed to communities interested in practical steps to prevent violence among young people.
- We also continue to fund innovative programs, such as school evaluation programs and our Academic Centers for Excellence in Youth Violence that build knowledge about effective preventive measures.

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