Mitigating the Threat of School Violence after COVID-19

Presented by the Department of Homeland Security

Thursday, June 24th

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Webinar Agenda

- **Speaker Introductions**
  - SchoolSafety.gov Representatives from Homeland Security
  - DHS Intelligence & Analysis Representatives
  - DHS Center for Prevention Programs and Partnerships Representatives
- **Purpose of Today's Webinar**
  - Audience and Objective
- **Introduction to Targeted Violence Prevention**
- **Strategies to Become an Engaged Bystander**
- **Resources**
  - Threat Assessment and Reporting Resources
  - Mental Health and Bullying Resources
  - SchoolSafety.gov Resources
- **Q & A**

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Featured Speakers

Kaitlin Seale

Acting Associate Director for School Safety
School Safety Task Force
Department of Homeland Security

Benjamin Carlson

Counterterrorism Intelligence Analyst
Counterterrorism Mission Center
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John Picarelli

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About Our Partners

The DHS Office of Intelligence and Analysis (I&A) manages the department-wide processes for coordinating and executing the intelligence cycle at both the federal and local levels. By integrating its capabilities with those of other DHS Components, I&A enhances threat identification, mitigation and response across the Department's mission areas. Additionally, I&A formulates and implements key strategies and initiatives that address critical barriers to information sharing.

The DHS Center for Prevention Programs and Partnerships (CP3) seeks a resilient America where localities are united to help end targeted violence and terrorism. CP3 uses a public-health, whole of society approach to equip and empower local efforts to prevent individuals from mobilizing to violence before it becomes a law enforcement matter, or whenever traditional law enforcement resolutions, such as arrests or charges, are not viable or ideal.

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Webinar Objectives

1. Raise awareness of potential risk factors and indicators for targeted violence in schools;

2. Raise awareness of the likelihood that students may have been exposed to multiple risk factors during the COVID-19 pandemic, and;

3. Provide resources to become an engaged bystander as part of a comprehensive local prevention framework.

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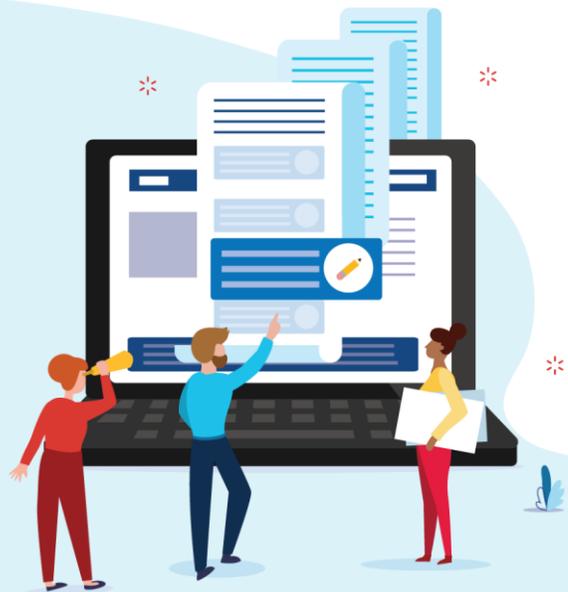
Overview

- On January 21, 2021, President Biden signed an executive order urging the reopening of schools.

- DHS I&A and CP3 believe that the threat of targeted violence in schools will remain elevated as more children return to school full-time.

- Even after this elevated threat subsides, prevention of targeted violence should remain a key goal of schools and the communities in which they are located.

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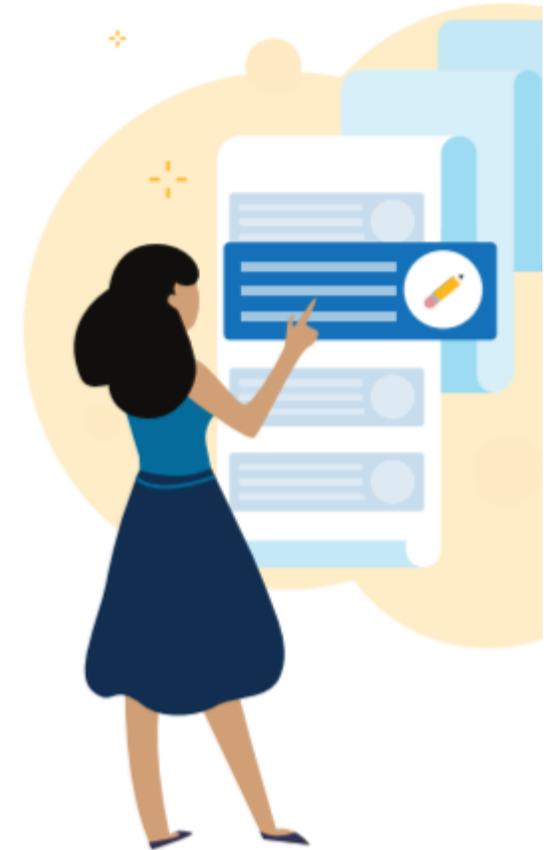
Risk Factors

A risk factor is a characteristic that may increase an individual's susceptibility to radicalization to violence. Having one (or more) risk factors does not mean an individual will radicalize to violence. Risk factors are not predictive.

Potential Risk Factors:

The potential risk factors are not predictive; however, a community that is aware of the risk factors is an empowered community and is able to proactively engage in prevention programs.

- Suicidal ideation
- Depression
- Intense anger
- Mental illness
- Social isolation
- Family financial difficulties
- Family-based substance abuse
- Family-based arrest/incarceration

- Family-based discord
- Family-based mental health problems
- Abuse/Neglect
- Parental absence
- Academic poor performance
- Previous disciplinary actions
- Holding a grievance

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Indicators

An **indicator** is a behavior that suggests an individual has already radicalized to violence

Indicators:

If a student has demonstrated any of these indicators, a community's threat assessment and management team or law enforcement should be contacted immediately.

- o Threatening a target
- o Expressed intent (verbalization) to carry out an attack including threats on social media
- o Planning an attack

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Key Statistics

- **91%** of school attackers had observable psychological (depression, suicidal ideation, anger, psychotic symptoms, etc.), behavioral (defiance, poor impulse control, violation of social norms, etc.), or neurological (developmental delays, cognitive deficits, etc.) symptoms.

- **80%** of school attackers were bullied by their classmates. Some of the attackers actively sought help to address bullying but received an ineffective response or no response at all.

- **51%** of school attackers had engaged in observable planning behaviors prior to the attack.

- **94%** of school attackers had experienced a risk factor within six months of their attack

Source: U.S. Secret Service National Threat Assessment Center

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COVID-19 and Increased Exposure to Potential Risk Factors

- A nationally representative survey of 3,300 youth (aged 13-19) found that students have been experiencing multiple negative impacts of the pandemic including:

  - 30% of respondents reported feeling unhappy or depressed with nearly as many reporting they worry about having basic needs (food, medicine, and safety) met.

  - 29% of respondents do not feel connected to school adults with nearly as many reporting they do not feel connected to their classmates or their community.

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Source: Youth.gov

COVID-19 and Increased Exposure to Potential Risk Factors

- Anecdotal evidence also suggests students have experienced an increase in cyberbullying. Students who had experienced bullying before the pandemic are also more likely to experience pandemic stress.

- Prior to schools closing, millions of students relied on the mental health resources provided by schools, including access to mental health professionals. These resources were either severely restricted or terminated altogether as schools moved to online-only instruction.

- Reduced access to services coupled with the exposure to additional risk factors suggests schools – and the communities in which they are located – will need to increase support services to help students readjust to in-person learning.

! Having one or more potential risk factors does not mean a student will engage in targeted violence or terrorism. Potential risk factors are not predictive.

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CENTER FOR PREVENTION PROGRAMS AND PARTNERSHIPS (CP3)
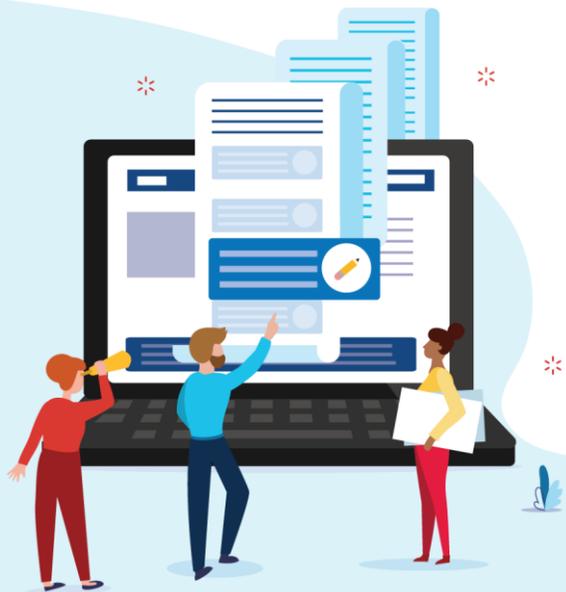
Radicalizing to Violence

- CP3 works with local communities to create local prevention frameworks that prevent individuals from radicalizing to violence and intervene with individuals who already have – or are in the process of – radicalizing to violence.

- Local Prevention Frameworks are a flexible model that attempts to reach all segments of society to increase awareness, encourage communities to think about creating - or linking - prevention and intervention programs, and develop programs and processes that can fill-in "gaps" within their prevention framework.

Radicalizing to violence is the process wherein an individual comes to believe that the threat or use of unlawful violence is necessary – or even justified – to accomplish a goal. That goal could be ideological or personal.

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Being an Engaged Bystander

- The school community (students, staff, parents, and other members of the broader community) are all potential bystanders.

- In order to be engaged, members of the school community need to know how to find help for an individual who may be radicalizing to violence.

A **bystander** is an individual who is aware of concerning behaviors.

An **engaged bystander** is an individual who is *aware* of concerning behaviors and knows *how* to act on those concerns.

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Local Prevention Frameworks

- CP3's initiatives and programming ultimately strive to enable and foster local prevention frameworks throughout communities.

- A local prevention framework is a network whose goal is to get help to individuals to prevent targeted violence and terrorism.

- Local prevention frameworks connect all segments of local society through:
  - Public Awareness
  - Community Engagement
  - Threat Assessment and Management
  - Support Services

- Successful prevention frameworks are locally designed and implemented because each community is unique, with different resources, population compositions, infrastructures, political climates, local needs, and relationship challenges.

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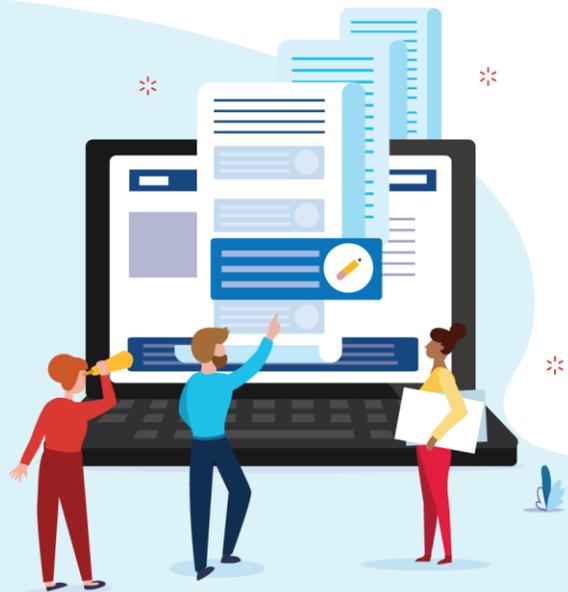
RESOURCES

Federal Resources: Part I

Threat Assessment and Reporting

- U.S. Secret Service: Enhancing School Safety Using a Threat Assessment Model: An Operational Guide for Preventing Targeted School Violence

- U.S. Secret Service: Averting Targeted School Violence: A U.S. Secret Service Analysis of Plots Against Schools.

- National Threat evaluation and Reporting (NTER): NTER offers a Behavioral Threat Assessment Train-the-Trainer Program which teaches candidates to identify and assess risk and warning signs, and manage potential threats of future, targeted violence, regardless of motive. For more information email NTER.MTP@hq.dhs.gov

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Federal Resources: Part II

Mental Health & Bullying

- National Child Traumatic Stress Network

- The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration (SAMHSA)

  - Guidance to states and school systems on addressing mental health and substance abuse

  - How to Find a Mental Health Provider

- MentalHealth.gov: Topics for Educators

- Youth.gov: Suicide Prevention Resources

- Stopbullying.gov

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SchoolSafety.gov Search Tool

SchoolSafety.gov contains a wide array of resources and best practices on key school safety topics to assist with building awareness within the school community to promote vigilance and build capacity to respond to incidents.

Users can search, browse, and identify applicable resources to make their school safer. Users can browse resources by topic area, and through filtered searching.

COVID-19 Resource Hub

To address the pandemic and its effect on school communities, SchoolSafety.gov added a comprehensive repository of federal guidance and resources specific to COVID-19.

The page features information on maintaining operations in remote learning settings, as well as during return to in-person instruction, and includes topics like cybersecurity, mental health, and physical spacing and testing.

Thank You!

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- @DHSgov

Questions? More Information? Email Us:

- SchoolSafety@hq.dhs.gov
- Terrorismprevention@hq.dhs.gov

Key Resource Links

- www.dhs.gov/cp3
- www.dhs.gov/office-intelligence-and-analysis

Question & Answer

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