



## *Safe Communities ~ Safe Schools*

# FACT SHEET

FS-SC01

2000, 2009

## Safe Communities ~ Safe Schools Initiative

### Background

In 1999 the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence introduced the Safe Communities ~ Safe Schools (SCSS) initiative to learn more about what types of challenges Colorado schools face and to assist schools in creating safer learning environments. The initiative was made possible by The Colorado Trust and several other key Colorado partners.

This SCSS project found that:

- ◆ bullying is a significant problem in many Colorado schools.
- ◆ youth violence occurs in rural, urban and suburban communities.
- ◆ the gender gap in serious violence is declining as more girls become involved in violence.
- ◆ drugs and gangs are prevalent in many communities.

It also found that crime and violence are declining in our communities; that there is less chance of becoming a victim of violent crime now than in the last 30 years; and that, in general, schools are relatively safe places as youth are twice as likely to become a victim of serious violence outside of school.

### New Initiative

In 2008 federal funding from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, secured by former Senator Ken Salazar, has allowed CSPV to again aid Colorado schools in improving their school safety. The renewed Safe Communities ~ Safe Schools (SCSS) effort offers school safety research and prevention expertise by providing informational resources and technical assistance in violence prevention planning and evidence-based programming.

### Safe Communities ~ Safe Schools Model

CSPV has introduced the Safe Communities ~ Safe Schools initiative to educators, law enforcement officers, politicians and community members throughout Colorado. CSPV developed the Safe Communities ~ Safe Schools Model to assist each school in designing an individualized safe school plan. The goal of this model is to create and maintain a positive and welcoming school climate, free of drugs, violence, intimidation and fear—an environment strongly supported by the community in which teachers can teach and students can learn. (Details available in the Safe Communities ~ Safe Schools Model fact sheet)

### Technical Assistance

CSPV staff is available to schools and school districts for technical assistance concerning the Safe Communities ~ Safe Schools Model by telephone, email, or through a limited number of school site visits. Technical assistance can be provided regarding the components of the Safe Communities ~ Safe Schools Model including the strategic planning process, creating a safe school planning team, conducting a school climate and site assessment, establishing a social support team, and identifying effective strategies for implementation.

### Online Assessment Tools

Online student surveys are available to schools through a secure website. Using a core set of questions on school climate, bullying, violence, alcohol and drug use, protective factors, as well as other topics, schools will be able to gain a better understanding of their specific violence prevention and safety needs and, ultimately, develop a strategic plan to meet those needs. Schools also have the option to add questions in specific categories like health and wellness or mental health. On completion, a comprehensive report based on responses to the surveys will be automatically generated and provided to schools. These results will also include state and national comparisons, where available. Surveys for staff, parents and community members will be available Fall 2009.

Following the assessment, schools may obtain further technical assistance in areas such as improving safety plans (including crisis plans), implementing evidence-based violence/drug prevention programs and strategies, as well as information on conducting risk and threat assessments.

### Other Resources

In addition to the online assessment tools, CSPV's Information Clearinghouse contains a number of other resources on safe school planning, many of which are available for no charge on the CSPV web site ([www.colorado.edu/cspv](http://www.colorado.edu/cspv)):

- ◆ **Publications**—publications include a planning guidebook detailing safe school planning steps, law related issues, selection of effective prevention programs as well as others on youth violence research and Blueprints evidence-based programs may be found on the CSPV web site.
- ◆ **Newsletter**—this quarterly Safe Schools newsletter is a joint communication outreach between the Colorado School Safety Resource Center (CSSRC) and CSPV's Safe Communities ~ Safe Schools (SCSS) project.
- ◆ **Fact Sheets**—brief tools on the topics of youth violence, juvenile aggression, safe school planning, threat assessment, bullying/cyber bullying, targeted school violence, etc.
- ◆ **Databases**—searchable databases containing school violence prevention literature, programs and resources.
- ◆ **School-Based Programs for Violence Prevention**—descriptions and effectiveness of school-based violence and drug prevention programs that have been implemented around the country can be located in the Blueprints section of CSPV's web site.

### Regional Trainings

CSPV and the Colorado School Safety Resource Center (CSSRC) are partnering to provide trainings around the state on subjects related to safe school planning. These trainings are free to anyone in Colorado involved in safe school planning, and include topics such as: school violence trends, information sharing, threat assessment, mental health issues, school liability, gangs, bullying, crisis planning, evidence-based programs, etc.

### Pilot Sites

More intensive technical assistance on physical safety and school climate is being provided to a select group of pilot sites in the School Safety Pilot Program, which is a collaborative project of the Colorado School Safety Resource Center (CSSRC) and Safe Communities ~ Safe Schools (SCSS) project at CSPV. These schools/districts applied for participation in the program and were selected based on location, need, and overall commitment on behalf of the community and its school(s).