



Keeping Students Safe

Implementing A Statewide School Safety and Prevention System



A Proposal by the
Oregon Task Force on School Safety



Forward

Incidents of school violence have created a critical challenge for schools and communities around the country – how do we ensure that schools are safe havens where students can learn and thrive without being bullied, harassed, or face physical harm from violent acts?

The Oregon Task Force on School Safety proposes establishing a statewide school safety and prevention system, with a four-pronged approach to addressing this crisis. This model focuses on the primary drivers of safety threats to students: bullying, harassment, physical violence and suicide.

Increased communication and collaboration among schools, law enforcement, mental health providers, juvenile justice and other agencies is a key part of this solution. The Task Force's goal is to ensure that every Oregon student and parent is confident their school is a physically and emotionally safe place to be.

The “Why”

While we want our schools to be joyful, safe places for our children to learn, we must do more to make this a reality for all students. Bullying and harassment are a pervasive problem in schools. Youth suicides are increasing at an alarming rate. Even school shootings have impacted Oregon, most recently at Umpqua Community College.

These statistics tell the story:

- In 2017, more than 9% of 8th graders reported not going to school at least one day in the previous 30 due to safety concerns. (2017 Oregon Healthy Teen Survey)
- Nearly one in three 8th graders – and over one in five 11th graders – reported having been bullied at school in 2017. (2017 Oregon Healthy Teen Survey)
- More than 30% of Oregon 8th graders in 2017 reported feeling “so sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks in a row” that they “stopped doing some usual activities.” (2017 Oregon Healthy Teen Survey)
- Suicide is the second leading cause of death among youths aged 10 to 24 years in Oregon in 2017. (Oregon Health Authority, 2018)
- 239 shootings have occurred at schools nationwide since 2014, resulting in 138 deaths (Gun Violence Archive, 2018)

Research shows there can be a link between suicidal behavior, bullying and acts of violence. The Final Report and Findings of the Safe School Initiative (2002),

a study conducted by the U.S. Secret Service and the U.S. Department of Education, found that 78% of students who committed acts of school violence exhibited a history of suicide attempts or suicidal thoughts at some point prior to their attack. The study also found that targeted violence offenders often claim to have been bullied and alienated from their peers, family and the world at large.

Increased national attention after incidents of school violence has prompted parents, educators, legislators, law enforcement officials, mental health professionals and others to press for answers to two central questions:

- Could we have known these violent acts were being planned?
- If so, what could we have done to prevent them from occurring?

We know that in most cases, students who have committed violence told someone of their intent to do harm. Even with this information, schools often don't have the resources or expertise to know what to do and to intervene effectively. School districts need the support of a system that will bring school personnel together with community experts to quickly assess threats, intervene in behavior, and provide services to students before a threat escalates.

The Proposal

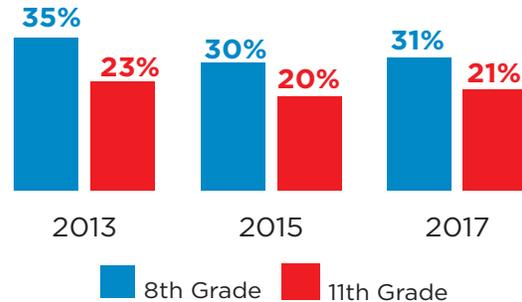
The Oregon Task Force on School Safety is recommending a pro-active, public health approach to the issue of school safety and violence prevention. It calls for establishing a comprehensive and systematic threat assessment system that uses early interventions to keep students safe. The goal is to intervene earlier, rather than wait to react to a crisis.

The key tenets of this approach are part of an eight-point plan that was developed by national experts and outlined in a recent article published by National Public Radio (Here's How to Prevent the Next School Shooting, Experts Say," 2018). So far, around 2,300 individual experts and around 200 universities, national organizations, school districts and others have endorsed it as a promising practice.

This recommendation includes four main components:

- Implement a multi-disciplinary student threat assessment system to help school personnel identify, assess and support students who present a potential risk for violence toward others.

Bullied in the Last 30 Days



2017 Oregon Healthy Teens Survey (February 2018)

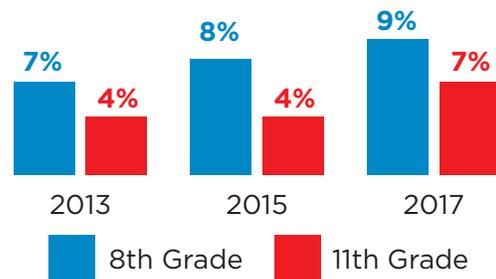
- Promote student mental wellness and enhance youth suicide prevention efforts in schools.
- Implement effective bullying and harassment prevention programs.
- Promote the use and implementation of Oregon’s statewide school safety tip line (SafeOregon).

Here’s how it would work:

Education Service Districts (ESDs) would assist school districts within their region to convene multi-disciplinary teams of school counselors, community mental health professionals, family and youth community-based service providers and law enforcement partners. Together they would work with their school personnel to develop an intervention services plan for the student at risk of committing violence. These teams would also work with families and the community to provide wraparound supports designed to break negative patterns and steer youth in a positive direction.

This model has proven effective in Salem-Keizer Public Schools for more than 15 years and has been practiced throughout Washington County school districts for nearly 10 years.

Missed School Because Felt Unsafe in Last 30 Days



2017 Oregon Healthy Teens Survey (February 2018)

A budget of \$1,860,119 is proposed to hire 15.1 FTE staff to oversee and implement these initiatives. Staff would be hired in these areas:

- School Safety and Prevention Specialists (8.0 FTE) would work with schools throughout the state. Specialists would be assigned regionally to ensure strong linkages and familiarity with the community.
- Youth Suicide Prevention Specialists (4.0 FTE) and one manager (1.0 FTE) would provide training, outreach and technical assistance to key school staff regarding youth suicide prevention and mental wellness promotion.
- A total of 1.1 FTE (School Psychologist .50, clerical support .50 and supervision .10) would provide training and technical assistance in student threat assessment.
- One program administrator position (1.0 FTE) would be established at the Oregon Department of Education to provide oversight of the system. In addition, a steering committee would be established, comprised of experienced practitioners in the areas of public mental health, law enforcement, education, and juvenile justice. Additional areas of representation could be added, as needed.

Increasing Protective Factors

In addition, the proposed plan helps students increase protective factors. It is important to build a web of support for students to reduce risk factors for tragic ends such as suicide and homicide, and for preventing other negative outcomes such as dropping out of school, incarceration and chronic substance abuse disorders. These protective factors include:

- Coping skills and resilience
- Family and school social support
- Supportive school environments
- Strong social connectedness
- Access to supportive adults

Research shows that learning self-regulation, pro-social behavior and cooperation leads to lower levels of substance use, higher graduation rates from high school, lower levels of antisocial behavior, and fewer suicides. Academic achievement and positive attitudes improve, and behavior problems decrease when schools invest in social and emotional learning.

It is important to engage youth in developing these solutions. Often efforts at youth mental wellness and suicide prevention are aimed primarily at adults (i.e. training them to recognize warning signs and where to access resources). While these are important strategies, we also must involve youth in creating tailored, appropriate and effective mental wellness and suicide prevention plans in our schools.

Finally, schools shouldn't be in this alone. To genuinely make a difference, a multi-system approach is required, where schools and communities pool resources and use a variety of tools to meet students' needs.

Four Key Components

1. Implement a statewide student threat assessment system

Threat assessment is a proven method of early intervention that can help prevent violent incidents in school environments. It is recommended by the FBI, US Department of Education, and the US Secret Service.

The FBI has identified “a number of potential school shootings that were prevented because students reported a threat to authorities that was investigated and determined to be serious. Based on these observations, the FBI and Secret Service both recommended that schools adopt a threat assessment approach to prevent targeted acts of violence.” (O’Toole, 2000; Albrecht, 2010).

It's important that all schools use the same system to assure that best practices are followed and that there is consistency in providing training and other resources. Many Oregon schools have systems for dealing with students at risk for violence, but often they are not consistent with best practices and vary greatly in application. Many do not involve community partners, such as mental health, law enforcement or other agencies that can provide valuable information and support.

A lack of best practices or consistency may result in missed opportunities to avert a potential tragedy, or at the very least, opportunity lost to help a youth in crisis. It also can create a false sense of security in our schools.

A statewide threat assessment system would:

- Support all school districts in Oregon.
- Assist school personnel in identifying students with ongoing incidents of reactive violence or aggression toward others.
- Assist school personnel in identifying students who present a potential risk for targeted violence or aggression toward others.
- Provide training and standardized screening protocols for school personnel.
- Provide supervision strategies for students who are in at-risk situations and help connect students and families with community-based services and related support.
- Mitigate education community risk and liability.

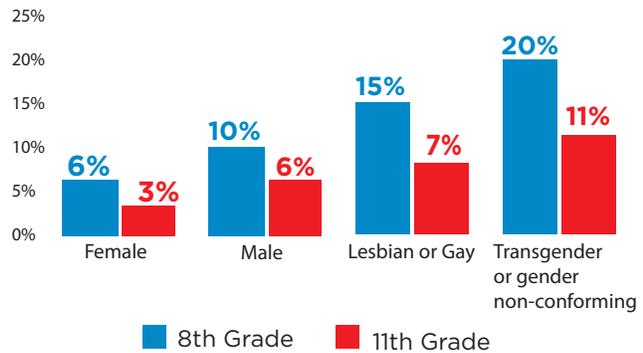
The Task Force anticipates the need to contract with an organization to provide training and technical assistance related to student threat assessment as part of this proposal.

Threat Assessment Protocols

The proposed statewide student threat assessment system is based on a two tiered approach for assessing youth risk:

- The Level 1 Protocol uses a school-based assessment completed by a trained site team comprised of at least one school administrator, counselor or mental health representative and a law enforcement officer (either in person or by phone consultation).

Threatened With a Weapon at School in Last 12 Months



2017 Oregon Healthy Teens Survey (February 2018)

- The Level 2 Protocol typically employs a community-based assessment, collaborative effort involving representatives from schools, public mental health and law enforcement. Additional members might include Oregon Youth Authority, Department of Human Resources, Juvenile Justice, community colleges and other public agencies serving youth.

The Level 1 Protocol addresses threats of harm from one or more students directed toward others (students, staff, parents, relatives and/or community members). It provides supervision strategies that directly address the established risk factors identified in the assessed student(s).

If there is a perceived high risk, a need for further investigation or a lack of resources, the case may be referred to the Level 2 team for further assessment and consultation.

2. Support youth suicide prevention efforts

Early identification and intervention of students at risk of committing suicide is a critical piece of a student threat assessment system. In 2016, 98 Oregon youths aged 10-24 took their own lives, according to Oregon Health Authority (OHA) data. That is up from 90 youth suicides in 2015. Oregon ranked 15th highest in the nation for suicide among youths aged 10 to 24 years in 2016 and 16th in 2015.

Suicide is an even greater concern with LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) youth. One half of LGBT youth said they considered suicide during 2017, and one fourth said they actually attempted suicide. (2017 Oregon Healthy Teen Survey)

Number of Suicides Youths aged 10-24



Oregon Health Authority data, 2018

There can also be a link between suicidal thoughts/actions and acts of violence, according to The Final Report and Findings Of The Safe School Initiative (2002). Research of 41 targeted mass attackers revealed that 32 (78%) exhibited a history of suicide attempts or suicidal thoughts at some point prior to their attack. The report noted that many offenders attempt or succeed at suicide or “suicide by cop” at the conclusion of a targeted violence event.

A study of 160 active shooter incidents in the United States between 2000 and 2013 revealed that 64 of the offenders (40%) committed suicide (A Study of Active Shooter Incidents, 2000-2013).

Primary drivers for preventing youth suicides are increasing connections to families and peers and helping youth develop a sense of belonging, according to OHA’s 2017 Youth Suicide Intervention and Prevention Plan Annual Report. Sources of Strength, a peer-led school prevention and resiliency program, is highlighted in the OHA report for its successful pilot project in the Albany and

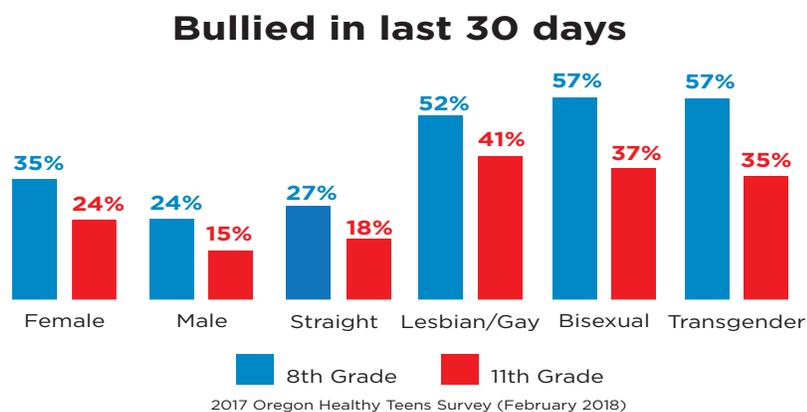
North Clackamas school districts. The results were so impressive that both districts plan to expand the program to additional middle and high schools. Programs such as the Signs of Suicide and Good Behavior Game also have shown a reduction in suicide as well as decreasing suicide ideation, improving general life skills, and changing gatekeeper behaviors (Katz, Bolton, Katz, Isaak, Tilston-Jones and Sareen, 2013).

The Task Force anticipates the need to contract with an organization to provide training, outreach and technical assistance related to the youth suicide prevention and mental wellness promotion as part of this proposal. The technical assistance partner should have the following qualifications:

- Accredited by the American Association of Suicidology
- Affiliate of National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
- Experience working on suicide prevention efforts in school districts in multiple regions of Oregon
- Experience operating a peer-to-peer, youth focused crisis intervention service and challenges
- Experience with youth crisis intervention across multiple social media platforms, including text, email and chat

3. Support bullying and harassment prevention efforts

Bullying and harassment are consistently the most common problem reported to the SafeOregon tip line. Nearly one third of 8th graders and over one in five 11th graders reported having been bullied at school in 2017, according to the 2017 Oregon Healthy Teen Survey. Data at the Oregon YouthLine -- a peer to peer crisis line that connects with thousands of Oregon youth each year -- suggests the problem is growing. The YouthLine saw a 36 percent increase in bullying-related contacts from teens in 2017 over 2016.



Bullying, intimidation, harassment and threats of violence are even bigger issues for LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) youth. In 2017, LGBT youth were twice as likely to experience bullying and harassment at school (2017 Oregon Healthy Teen Survey). They were twice as likely to have been threatened with a weapon. They were three times as likely to have stayed home from school because they were afraid for their safety at school.

Research shows that adults can stop bullying behavior by responding quickly and consistently to bullying (Stop Bullying.gov, 2018). The Task Force will collaborate with Oregon Department of Education to ensure school staff are trained on how to identify bullying, enforce school rules and policies, as well as incorporate trauma informed practices in classrooms (Oregon Safe Schools & Communities Coalition, 2017).

4. Promote the statewide school safety tip line (SafeOregon)

The SafeOregon tip line was implemented in 2017 to provide students and parents an easy tool for reporting potential threats. It already has provided timely information to help school and law enforcement officials prevent acts of violence and self harm.

Nationwide, over half of averted school violence in 2017 was the direct result of student reporting, according to the Police Foundation, a national non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to policing.

968

SafeOregon Tip Reports
January 31, 2017 - March 31, 2018

SafeOregon Data Report (March 2018)

The number one reason why students do not report threats is the fear of retaliation from their peers. The SafeOregon tip line can be accessed from the privacy of a phone, home computer or other Internet equipped device, eliminating the possibility of being identified by another student. Tips are reviewed by a technician and forwarded to the appropriate responding agency. For example, a tip involving a weapon brought to school is forwarded to school officials and to local law enforcement.

More than 968 tips have been received since the system was implemented a year ago. Currently 910 schools are using the tip line. The success of the tip line is dependent on schools keeping contact information current and actively promoting it within their school communities.

Call to Action

The Oregon Task Force on School Safety asks for your support in funding and establishing a statewide school safety and prevention system to keep our students safe.

Our proposal is not only a school safety proposal. It is also...

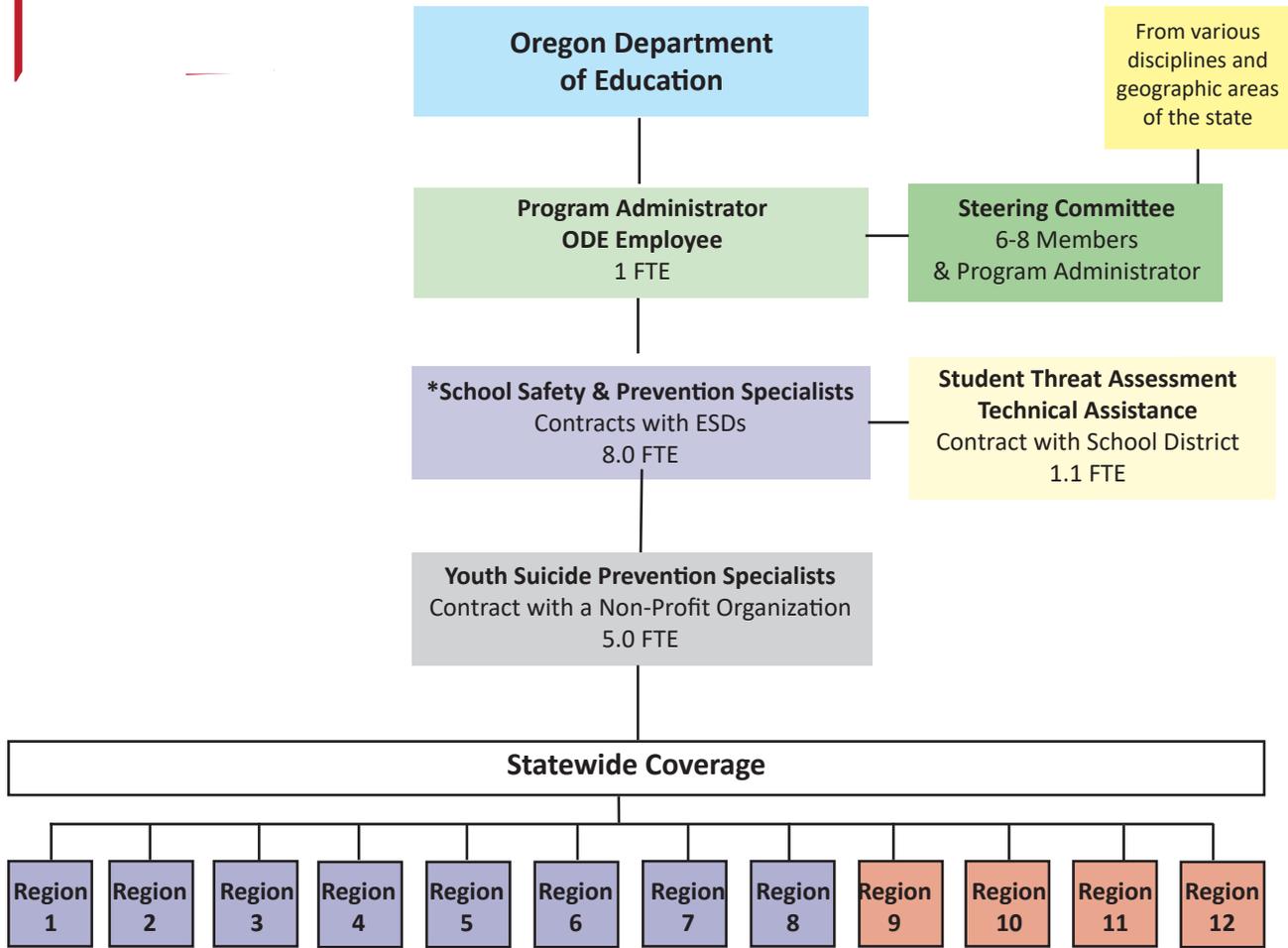
- An equity initiative
- An initiative to improve school climate
- A chronic absenteeism/attendance improvement initiative
- A student achievement initiative
- An initiative to improve the psychological safety for students and staff
- A moral imperative

Attendance, behavior and academic performance are all linked to students feeling safe in their school environment.

Our objective is to help school districts build capacity within their unique districts and communities to provide effective and sustainable bullying/harassment prevention programs, suicide prevention programs and school/community threat assessment teams. We will also provide ongoing coordination and support to smaller, more remote school districts that may not have the capacity to substantially sustain these efforts on their own.

With this multi-system approach, schools, law enforcement, mental health and other experts can genuinely make a difference by working together and pooling resources to keep students safe.

Organizational Chart



*Regions TBD by Steering Committee, based on geography, student population, access, need, etc.

*School Safety & Prevention Specialists:

- Will be cross-trained and become specialists in all three domains: threat assessment, suicide prevention and bullying and harassment prevention
- Will promote the use of the SafeOregon Tip Line
- Will support school districts in a designated region in Oregon. Since each region is unique, the School Safety & Prevention Specialists will be based where it makes sense for their region.
- Will support school districts and their community partners by offering training, by assisting with program/plan development, by helping to establish and coordinate school and community teams, and by providing ongoing consultation, training and technical assistance.
- These will be free services to all Oregon school districts.

Budget

Estimated costs to support a statewide school safety and prevention system in its first year are:

Regional School Safety and Prevention Specialists (ESDs)	FTE	
Salary, APC and Benefits	8.00	\$ 781,009
Training, Supplies & Mileage		391,814
Total		1,172,823
Contracted Service - Youth Suicide Prevention & Wellness Promotion		
Salaries, APC and Benefits		
Manager	1.00	81,100
Youth Suicide Prevention Specialists	4.00	269,000
Training, Supplies and Mileage		45,196
Total	5.00	395,296
Contracted Service - Student Threat Assessment Training & Technical Assistance		
Salaries, APC and Benefits		
Specialist	.50	70,000
Clerical Support	.50	35,000
Supervision	.10	15,000
Training, Supplies and Mileage		37,000
Total	1.10	157,000
Program Administration - ODE		
Salary, APC and Benefits	1.00	105,000
Training Supplies and Mileage		30,000
Total	1.00	135,000
GRAND TOTAL	15.10	\$1,860,119

Evaluation

The ODE Program Administrator will compile and maintain necessary data to show utilization of the program. Steering Committee members will review this data and other information annually to determine the program’s overall effectiveness. A third-party evaluator could conduct an external evaluation; however, this likely would increase the overall cost of the program by approximately 10%.

Endorsements

Around 200 universities, national organizations and school districts nationwide – plus more than 2,300 individual experts -- have endorsed the concept of community-based threat assessment teams as one of the most promising practices for making schools safer for students and staff.

Members of the Oregon Task Force on School Safety expect to secure support from the following organizations, among others:

Federal Agencies:

Federal Bureau of Investigation
U.S. Department of Education
U.S. Secret Service

Oregon Law Enforcement Agencies/Associations:

Oregon State Police
Oregon Department of Justice
Oregon Association Chiefs of Police
Oregon State Sheriffs Association
Oregon Peace Officers Association

Education Agencies/Associations:

Oregon Department of Education
Oregon School Boards Association
Confederation of Oregon School Administrators
Oregon Association of Education Service Districts

Labor Unions:

Oregon Education Association
Oregon School Employees Association

Additional State Agencies/Associations:

Oregon District Attorneys Association
Oregon Judicial Department
Oregon Youth Authority
Oregon Department of Human Services – Child Welfare

Mental Health Agencies:

Marion County Children’s Mental Health
Polk County Mental Health
Yamhill County Family and Youth

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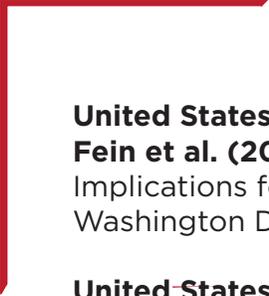
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