

Incidents involving student violence continue to occur. Electronic devices and anonymous social media applications are fueling the growth of these threats, due to their capability for widespread information sharing and the inherent difficulties involved in tracing threats back to the offender. Proactive study of the latest reporting, documentation, and investigation procedures is one of the best ways to resolve peer conflict before it escalates.

Risk Mitigation

Long term sustainable school safety requires a commitment to preventative measures. These measures can include altering the school environment both culturally and physically. Culturally, it has been suggested that schools can enhance their anti-bullying programs and expand their mental health services. A 2014 survey* of 15,000 US high school students revealed that victims of bullying are twice as likely to carry guns or other weapons to school. Clear Risk Solutions offers Bullying Prevention training for both staff and students, as well as other resources. Physically, schools have many options to enhance security such as:

- Hiring school security personnel
- Hiring commissioned peace officers
- Expanding or establishing a district police department
- Hiring a private security department
- Increasing surveillance measures
- Installing metal detectors
- Installing interior classroom door locks
- Ensuring two-way communication with administrators' offices
- Conducting routine searches
- Instituting strict visitor policies and practices
- Conducting routine lockdown or intruder exercises

Warning Signs

School administrators should educate their staff in recognizing and reporting potentially threatening behavior. While no two threats of violence are alike, the FBI's report "The School Shooter: A Threat Assessment Perspective" notes that students who display a number of behavioral warning characteristics are more likely to carry out their threats. Administrators should be aware of the following warning signs:

- Student reveals intentional or unintentional thoughts and feelings that may signal impending violent acts
- Exhibits a dramatic change in behavior
- Displays poor coping skills (low tolerance for frustration/lack of resiliency)
- Has experienced a failed love relationship
- Is unable to let go of perceived wrongs
- Exhibits signs of depression, narcissism, or alienation
- Dehumanizes others or lacks empathy
- Has an exaggerated sense of entitlement or superiority
- Shows pathological need for attention
- Externalizes blame
- Has anger management issues
- Masks low self-esteem
- Demonstrates a lack of trust
- Is part of a closed social group
- Is drawn to inappropriate role models
- Is intolerant of certain groups of people (rigid and opinionated)
- Has unusual interest in sensational violence or violent entertainment

*Centers for Disease Control's Youth Risk Surveillance System Survey
Information provided by Munich Reinsurance Company