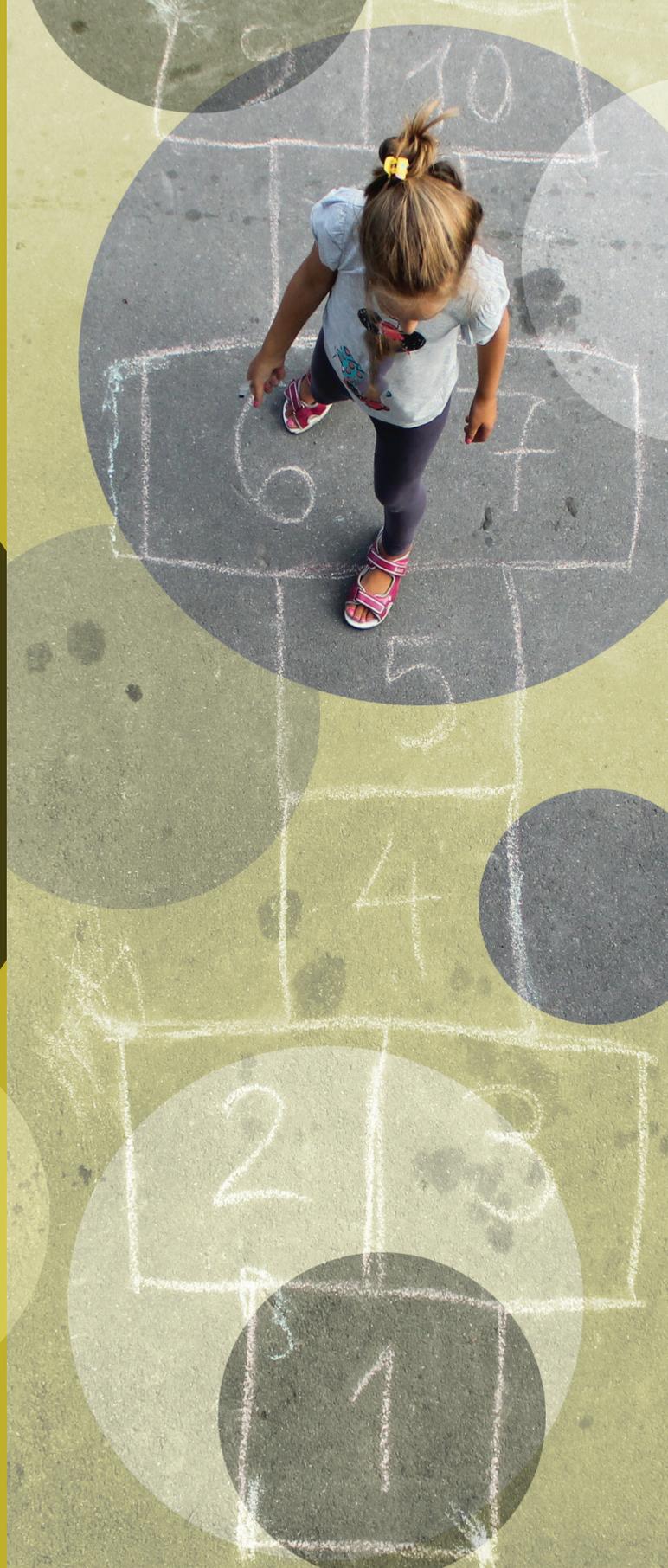


A Summary of
the COPS Office

Secure Our Schools Program Assessment



COPS

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING SERVICES
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

Submitted to:

U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Community Oriented Policing Services
145 N Street, N.E.
Washington, DC 20530

Submitted by:

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The Internet references cited in this publication were valid as of the date of this publication. Given that URLs and websites are in constant flux, neither the author(s) nor the COPS Office can vouch for their current validity.

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Washington, DC 20530

To obtain details on COPS Office programs, call the COPS Office
Response Center at 800.421.6770.

Visit COPS Online at www.cops.usdoj.gov.

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About Circle Solutions, Inc.

Circle Solutions, Inc. (Circle) is a professional services firm with a corporate commitment to the health and safety of people and communities. Since our founding in 1980, Circle has specialized in providing technical assistance to guide federal, state, and local agencies and grantees in better managing complex problems, instituting and managing organizational changes, and optimizing program performance. Since 1997, Circle has served as the research, training, and technical assistance (RTTA) provider for numerous COPS Office initiatives aimed at improving school safety. These signature programs have included:

- School-Based Partnerships Program (collaborative problem solving training and technical assistance for 150 grantees)
- School Resource Officers: Roles, Responsibilities, and Training (recommendations of the national focus group on school safety reform post Columbine)
- COPS in Schools: Keeping Our Kids Safe (program management and training delivery for 10,000 school resource officers [SRO's] and school administrators over 8 years)
- SRO Performance Measures: Outcome Based Performance Systems (model SRO performance evaluation systems design and testing in 6 sites nationally)
- Collaboration Toolkit: How to Build, Fix and Sustain Effective Law Enforcement Partnerships (guide for school-law enforcement collaboration)
- Secure Our Schools National Assessment and Technical Assistance (assessment of best practices of Secure Our Schools grantees)
- Assessment of Educational Facilities Officers Program (organizational study of COPS-funded program in Montgomery County, Maryland, schools).

About the COPS Office

The Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) is the component of the U.S. Department of Justice responsible for advancing the practice of community policing by the nation's state, local, territory, and tribal law enforcement agencies through information and grant resources.

Community policing is a philosophy that promotes organizational strategies that support the systematic use of partnerships and problem-solving techniques, to proactively address the immediate conditions that give rise to public safety issues such as crime, social disorder, and fear of crime.

Rather than simply responding to crimes once they have been committed, community policing concentrates on preventing crime and eliminating the atmosphere of fear it creates. Earning the trust of the community and making those individuals stakeholders in their own safety enables law enforcement to better understand and address both the needs of the community and the factors that contribute to crime.

The COPS Office awards grants to state, local, territory, and tribal law enforcement agencies to hire and train community policing professionals, acquire and deploy cutting-edge crime fighting technologies, and develop and test innovative policing strategies. COPS Office funding also provides training and technical assistance to community members and local government

leaders and all levels of law enforcement. The COPS Office has produced and compiled a broad range of information resources that can help law enforcement better address specific crime and operational issues, and help community leaders better understand how to work cooperatively with their law enforcement agency to reduce crime.

Since 1994, the COPS Office has invested nearly \$14 billion to add community policing officers to the nation's streets, enhance crime fighting technology, support crime prevention initiatives, and provide training and technical assistance to help advance community policing.

By the end of FY2011, the COPS Office has funded approximately 123,000 additional officers to more than 13,000 of the nation's 18,000 law enforcement agencies across the country in small and large jurisdictions alike.

Nearly 600,000 law enforcement personnel, community members, and government leaders have been trained through COPS Office-funded training organizations.

As of 2011, the COPS Office has distributed more than 6.6 million topic-specific publications, training curricula, white papers, and resource CDs.

COPS Office resources, covering a wide breadth of community policing topics—from school and campus safety to gang violence—are available, at no cost, through its online Resource Information Center at www.cops.usdoj.gov. This easy-to-navigate website is also the grant application portal, providing access to online application forms.



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
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COPS

Dear Colleagues,

School should be a safe place for all children to learn and develop, and local law enforcement agencies have been asked to play an increasingly prominent role in ensuring school safety. Security equipment and technologies have also become a customary part of school safety plans. To assist in these efforts, the COPS Office has invested more than \$720 million in school-based hiring programs for law enforcement, provided funding for more than 6,300 schools resource officers and distributed over \$111 million to approximately 5,500 schools to help enhance school safety through the installation of new security equipment.

Through a community policing philosophy that engages law enforcement, school administrators, parents, and students in problem-solving partnerships, I believe that schools have become safer. However, the effectiveness of using safety equipment and technologies as a prevention strategy is often called into question. In response, we funded an independent review of the Secure Our Schools (SOS) program, an initiative that provides funding to law enforcement and schools for security technology, environmental design, security assessments, training and other measures to improve school security.

This report by Circle Solutions is based on case studies of a sampling of SOS sites to review how the program was implemented. The findings highlight success factors, challenges, safety and security strategies, and overall “best practices.”

While I strongly believe that the SOS program has helped to provide safer learning environments in our nation’s schools, I am painfully aware that our work is not done. We know that every day millions of children are exposed to violence and trauma in this country and the recent attacks on our elementary schools and college campuses have deeply shocked and saddened our country to its core. We must continue to identify individual needs of schools through comprehensive safety assessments and implement solutions designed to address specific schools safety challenges. Law enforcement should play a critical role in these assessments. When working as a genuine education partner within the schools, law enforcement can serve as both a protective source of security as well as a gateway for identifying children in need and connecting them with necessary support services.

I hope that you find the information useful in understanding the role technology, training, and education can play in developing school safety strategies and the role that law enforcement can play in defending the safety of our children in our schools.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bernard K. Melekian".

Bernard K. Melekian, Director

Office of Community Oriented Policing Services

Overview of the Secure Our Schools program

The COPS Office administered the school safety initiative known as Secure Our Schools (SOS) from 2002 through 2011. It was part of a larger office portfolio of demonstrated commitment to school safety that included COPS in Schools, School-Based Partnerships, and the Safe Schools Initiative. SOS grants enabled state, local, and tribal governments to purchase and develop school safety resources based upon a comprehensive approach to preventing school violence and individualized to the needs of the schools. This included such things as:

- Placement and use of metal detectors, locks, lighting, and other deterrent measures
- Security assessments
- Security training of personnel and students
- Coordination with local law enforcement
- Other measures that provide a significant improvement in security

The COPS Office worked with law enforcement agencies to ensure that the funds addressed the most pressing security needs of schools and students, and to support solutions that rely on both new technologies and the experience and expertise of both school administrators and law enforcement professionals.

The SOS program, along with the Department of Education's Safe Schools Healthy Students (SSHS) and the Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (REMS) programs, represents the bulk of the federal school safety initiatives and to varying degrees supports school security strategies. Both SSHS and REMS support the use of school security technologies in a limited fashion. REMS allows funds to be used to purchase school security equipment related to emergency planning and response. SSHS does not allow funds to be used for direct purchase of security equipment; however, it does allow law enforcement agencies to include school security strategies among activities to address safe school environments and violence prevention activities. The SOS program was the only school safety initiative program that exclusively provided direct funding for the purchase and implementation of security technologies to improve school safety.

About the national assessment

The national assessment of the Secure Our Schools program was the first critical study and assessment since the inception of the program in 2002. Conducted through a cooperative agreement awarded to Circle Solutions, Inc., this study was a comprehensive process evaluation of SOS programs across the country. The purpose was to identify and assess implementation of the program, success factors, challenges, safety and security strategies, and overall "best practices" of a nationally represented sample of SOS grantee programs. The assessment comprised three main components including a comprehensive literature review, baseline descriptive analysis of grantee program data, and case studies of nine grantees conducted through site visits by Circle Solutions staff. The case studies provided the most in-depth information and analysis from a cross-section of grantee programs—what was needed, what was done, how well it worked, and what was accomplished.

This document presents highlights of the literature review and the nine case studies that were submitted to the COPS Office as the final project report. It also includes the key overall findings identified by the evaluators.

What we know about school safety

Much has been made of the pendulum shift from heavy emphasis on security equipment and technologies to prevention programming and back, as well as the wisdom of using security equipment and technologies as a prevention strategy. Understandably, the effectiveness of using security equipment and technologies to prevent crime and violence has been questioned. Despite the misgivings, including security equipment and technologies as part of school safety plans has become customary, as evidenced by school districts in 2007 spending a total of \$1.17 billion on security equipment and services and an average of \$163,600 for cameras and digital recorders, devices to control access to buildings, and data/computer security systems.¹ Over the years, with shifts in school safety priorities, funding for security equipment and technologies has risen and fallen but never been done away with. In fact, although current data shows that schools

use natural, lower-cost security practices such as visitor sign-in, fencing, or lighting more often than higher cost security equipment and technologies, school security equipment and technologies are a growing part of the school safety landscape and as such, knowing in what capacity equipment and technologies should be used to be most effective is all the more important.

Unfortunately, there is little to no empirical research on the impact of security equipment and technologies in decreasing violence and crime in school settings,^{2,3,4} with the exception of metal detectors, and it is widely understood that security equipment and technologies alone cannot prevent school violence or crime.^{5,6} Despite the lack of evidence, security equipment and technologies play an increasingly important role in school safety programs⁷ and are considered useful in improving school safety and security if combined with other strategies such as an educational/training program addressing school climate and/or natural surveillance.^{8,9,10}

Security equipment and technologies also make schools safer by deterring unauthorized persons from being on campus,^{11,12} securing school premises, property, and data (e.g., school personnel and student information); deterring students from committing a crime,^{13,14} providing ways to collect information or enforce procedures and rules that schools would not be able to afford or rely on security personnel to do;¹⁵ enabling schools to provide a level of security that can cover some of the areas that staff members and security officers cannot;¹⁶ providing administrators or security officials with information that would not otherwise be available;^{17,18} closing the gap between confirming a threat and getting critical information to students and staff quickly;¹⁹ and freeing up personnel and staff.^{20,21} The literature also notes benefits specific to surveillance technologies—providing strong evidence preserved on tape or digital video^{22,23} that is helpful in solving/resolving situations, as well as improving response and enforcement by security personnel and police.²⁴

What is clear throughout the literature is that there are certain essential elements for successful school safety programs, including that they must be:

- Comprehensive, coordinated, and balanced—balancing a mix of security measures, effective equipment/technologies, and educational programs geared toward positive student behavior and school climate to address the full range of safety issues within the school

- Guided by strategic planning
- Established, as well as implemented through the partnership and collaboration of participating stakeholder groups (e.g., school administration, law enforcement, students, parents, teachers, board members, security teams)
- Supported by continuing training

Comprehensive, Coordinated, and Balanced

A prevailing view in the literature is that using school security equipment and technologies alone will not create a safe school environment. To be effective, these strategies must be balanced and coordinated with many other strategies, particularly educational programs focused on school climate.²⁵⁻³² This theme is echoed in comments from Jefferson County Public School Superintendent Cynthia Stevenson in a recent interview in which she stated that the most significant change or shift in school safety after the Columbine tragedy was a comprehensive and extensive focus on safety planning, training, and creating a positive school climate.³³

Relying too much on security equipment and technologies risks ignoring important aspects of school safety—school culture and emotional climate³⁴—and leads to a false sense of security.^{35,36} Interestingly, heavy-handed use of equipment and technologies that create a prison-like atmosphere has been shown to trigger resistance and undermine school climate and safety.^{37,38} A study of school violence and disruption found the “organization of the school environment plays a critical role as facilitator or inhibitor of violence and disruption” and suggests that “more rigid, controlled, security/equipment doesn’t necessarily add up to less violence.” The findings suggest that rigid control may foster the violence and disorder the school is trying to avoid.³⁹ A GAO report assessing a broad range of promising programs intended to curb violence at schools found that successful programs took a comprehensive integrated approach, combining both environmental (school climate) and security measures.⁴⁰ In addition, a report of six New York City public schools found those that were successful in maintaining safety focused on a balanced approach combining equipment/technology with educational programs to improve school climate.⁴¹

The keys to developing a safe learning environment are to implement comprehensive school-wide strategies focused on facilities designed to maximize safety (i.e., CEPTD), establish programs that create a positive environment for learning and prevent violence, use equipment and technologies that help monitor school campus activity and student behavior, utilize police officers or security personnel who can deter crime/violence and build bonds with students, and implement crisis plans that give administrators a clear road map of what to do in an emergency.^{42, 43, 44}

Strategic Planning

One central reason security equipment and technologies are ineffective is because of lack of planning. Successful implementation and use of security equipment and technologies depends a great deal on having a plan⁴⁵⁻⁵⁷—“Experts advise decision makers to practice caution before purchasing a new system on the market or installing a camera in every corner of a school without a thorough understanding of a particular school’s needs and a concrete comprehensive plan for the execution and maintenance of its security program.”⁵⁸ The safety planning must be considered from a system perspective—“looking at the big picture in order to arrive at the optimal security solutions.”⁵⁹ Schools are much better off “integrating a variety of technological solutions into a cohesive system rather than addressing security programs piecemeal.”⁶⁰ It is important to annually review and update safety plans to reflect the most current risks and needs of the school.⁶¹⁻⁶⁴

The literature stresses the importance of conducting periodic safety and security assessments prior to implementing any safety plans or strategies.⁶⁵⁻⁷⁰ “Best decisions are based on school security assessment because it is a way to clearly see if you need to be implementing new practices, installing new technology, and rethinking the design of your space.”⁷¹ A study of a model of school violence and disruption found that conducting a safety assessment prior to implementing prevention/intervention programs was a significant factor in lowering levels of violence and disorder.⁷² A key recommendation from a 2006 comprehensive review of the North Carolina’s school safety and security program was to implement a statewide mandate for school

administrators and law enforcement to conduct routine school assessments when developing safety plans to prevent school crime and violence.⁷³ After the Columbine tragedy, Colorado mandated that every school conduct school safety assessments and have a safety plan in place.⁷⁴

The main goals of safety planning include integrating all strategies where components work together, and upgrading and expanding the infrastructure and system if necessary,^{75, 76, 77} periodically and routinely conducting school assessments to provide an objective review of the school’s risks and needs, and integrating the right security equipment/technology solutions into the broader safety plan.^{78, 79}

Partnership and Collaboration

Other important elements of success are strong partnerships and collaboration among schools, law enforcement, emergency personnel, students, parents, and community members.⁸⁰⁻⁸⁴ One of the seven key characteristics of the most promising school-based violence prevention programs identified in a GAO study is “strong strategic partnerships, strong interagency partnerships, parental involvement, and community linkages.”⁸⁵

Effective communication is integral to successful partnerships and collaboration.⁸⁶⁻⁸⁹ At a 2009 White House summit on school safety, safety specialists asserted that “more than high-tech measures such as metal detectors or security cameras, the key to halting violence is effective communication and parental involvement.”^{90, 91}

Benefits of strong partnerships and collaboration highlighted in the literature include coming up with better solutions, effective problem solving, leveraging and sharing resources, access to partnering agency resources, better communication, and more effective programs.^{92, 93, 94} In addition, full participation and collaboration of partners (particularly school staff, parents, and students) during the planning and decision-making process to purchase security equipment and technologies as part of a broader safety plan, helps ensure acceptance and effective implementation.^{95, 96, 97} The literature recognizes that “collaboration between school and home and between schools themselves remains the most effective way to address safety issues.”⁹⁸

Training

Investments in security equipment and technologies such as surveillance, access control technology, ID badges, mass notification systems, and the like become ineffectual due to lack of training among school staff, students, and key partners.^{99–105} Unfortunately, experts find that adequate training is often not offered because schools either don't have the time or there are not enough quality resources or trainers.¹⁰⁶ When investing in equipment and technologies, it is critical to invest in training for the people who will operate and maintain them.

An article about the lessons learned, gains, and setbacks in school safety 10 years after Columbine highlights the importance of training, and notes that lack of training among students, staff, and community results in a lack of awareness and knowledge about how to be prepared and respond, and continues to be a glaring gap in school preparedness nationwide.¹⁰⁷ A GAO report on the status of school districts' emergency management planning and preparedness found that only 30 percent of districts train with community partners.¹⁰⁸ Another GAO report concluded "one of the best ways to prepare your building and the people inside is to create an emergency management plan and train"—the report estimated that 95 percent of all school districts have written plans; however, up to 25 percent have never trained with any first responders or law enforcement and more than two-thirds do not regularly train with community partners on how to respond and implement their plans.¹⁰⁹

Training should include teachers, administrators, and staff as well as school security staff and law enforcement that use and maintain security equipment and technologies and should cover topics such as how to report a crime or spot behaviors that might lead to an incident.¹¹⁰

In addition to these essential elements, there are also specific practices that can improve the efficiency and effectiveness of school safety efforts, including:

- Focusing on implementation
- Comprehensive data collection/analysis
- When possible following statewide/national safety standards
- Strong leadership

Focusing on Implementation

Making certain all policies and procedures related to school safety and security strategies are understood and well-executed is vital to their effectiveness and sustainability in the long term.^{111–115} A national study of delinquency prevention in schools found that implementation of school safety and prevention programs was a more important factor of success than the program itself and concluded that schools should focus on the quality of implementation as a means to improve the effectiveness of their school-based safety prevention programs.¹¹⁶ The study went on to say that "even for security and surveillance activities, where implementation may seem more straightforward than for other types of prevention activity, only 71 percent of the activities occur daily."¹¹⁷

It is essential to have adequate capacity to adopt and sustain school-wide safety strategies, including the use of security equipment and technologies.¹¹⁸ Beyond having well-established policies and procedures, a large part of building capacity to successfully create a safe school environment is regularly practicing the fundamental strategies summarized in the previous section (i.e., planning and training). Solutions to improve security that include security equipment and technologies should be in place along with other implementation activities such as training, drills, safety plan development, periodic assessments, data collection, and crime analysis.¹¹⁹

Data Collection and Analysis

The decision to use school security equipment and technologies and assess their effectiveness should be based on data and information from the school; however, for many states, collecting school violence and crime data poses a barrier to effective safety and school planning.¹²⁰ A study comparing school security measures at public high schools found there are few standards for employing security strategies and little data regarding the degree and types of security measures that exist in schools today.¹²¹ A number of state-commissioned studies assessing the range of violence prevention and school safety found a lack of available data and analysis of crime/victimization patterns or trends in schools.^{122, 123} A North Carolina statewide study found "school administrators lack assistance in analyzing school violence data for trends—comprehensive data is typically only available a year or two after the data is gathered."¹²⁴

An appropriately designed and applied data monitoring and tracking system has numerous benefits, including providing data for establishing policy, education, and enforcement priorities;¹²⁵ guiding school safety teams in developing their safe school plans;¹²⁶ providing information to local school districts and law enforcement to develop appropriate school safety programs;¹²⁷ identifying patterns in crime types, locations, and perpetrators;¹²⁸ and evaluating effectiveness of security and safety measures (including security equipment and technology).¹²⁹ A number of states have data requirements for schools to encourage better decisions based on better information.¹³⁰

Security and Safety Standards

One significant challenge schools face when implementing and evaluating the usefulness of their security and safety measures, particularly equipment and technologies, is that there are no national standards and very few state-level standards to guide them.^{131–134} A study assessing security measures in public schools in four geographic regions found that because there are no national standards, school communities employed a variety of security strategies.¹³⁵

Recently, efforts have been made to establish standards and guidance to help schools develop a quality emergency management program and be prepared to respond to crisis situations. These standards are based on the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and align the school district emergency operations with four phases of emergency management: mitigation/prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery. However, these standards do not provide much guidance in regard to the purchase, implementation, and maintenance of security equipment and technologies or the integration of these measures into the broader safety plan, and little data exist examining the degree and types of security measures used in schools or their effectiveness in preventing crime and violence.¹³⁶ The literature recommends that schools consider adopting the guidelines for school safety technology outlined by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) regarding types of products, strengths/weaknesses, costs, requirements, and legal issues to consider¹³⁷ or be based on resources found at the National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities under Safe School Facilities (<http://www.ncef.org/safeschools/index.cfm>).



Leadership

One factor that may seem obvious to successful implementation of any safety plan, but is often overlooked, is leadership.¹³⁸ Leadership differs from management—it is a change-oriented process of visioning, networking, and building relationships.¹³⁹ Leadership, whether from the school principal or another champion of school safety and security (e.g., director of security, superintendent), is necessary to form strong partnerships, encourage collaboration across all groups, and get everyone on board. Studies of schools successful at maintaining a low level of disorder cited strong leadership as a key factor—specifically, strong leadership that fosters collaboration, encourages parental involvement, and builds strong partnerships and community linkages.^{140, 141}



Egg Harbor Township, New Jersey

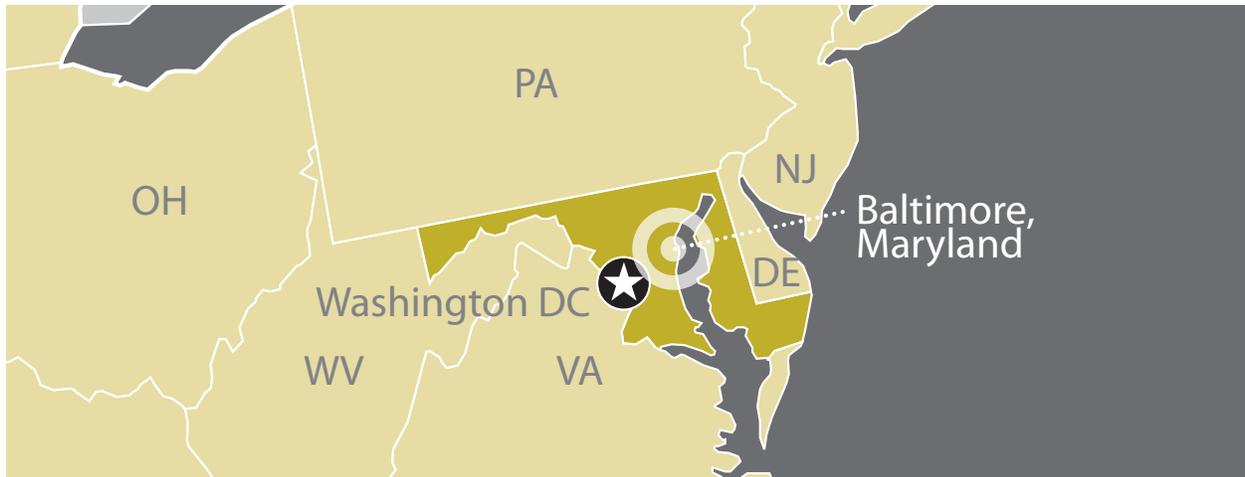
Egg Harbor Township, New Jersey, population 43,323, has experienced tremendous population growth in the last decade.¹⁴² Egg Harbor Township has 11 schools dispersed throughout the township. Designated and mandated by New Jersey as a high-growth area, the school system for years grew by more than 400 students each year. The school safety and crime issues most frequently experienced in the Egg Harbor Township schools are fights, thefts, sexual assaults, interior and exterior vandalism (especially on buses), and weapon-related charges. Many of those we spoke with expressed that they had particular concern over bus safety issues, including the possibility of a bus hijacking.

The Egg Harbor Township Police Department received an SOS grant of \$150,000 in 2005. The primary purpose was to upgrade security at the township's school bus transportation garage, making the facility capable of properly protecting the buses. This included replacing inferior fencing, upgrading lighting, and expanding the secured bus parking area. A secondary purpose was to secure perimeter and playground areas by installing four interior security gates at one elementary and all intermediate schools, to create a safer learning environment.

There were numerous accomplishments cited as a result of the SOS grant program. The new exterior fences defined school boundaries, making the school grounds safer for students. They also have facilitated the successful prosecution of persons trespassing on school property. Interior gates, which provide the ability to lock off specific areas of the schools, were placed within the buildings and are used during special functions, including non-school-related community events. These minimize the potential for vandalism to parts of the school that aren't being used at those times. Vandalism rates were reported to have decreased overall, especially on the buses.

The biggest challenge to implementing the grant was the need to change the mindset of those impacted by the new safety policies. For example, many staff found it difficult to adjust to a new requirement of carrying access cards at all times. Another challenge was maintaining the balance between security and aesthetics. While trying to improve the safety of older schools, the school district and the township police department wanted to avoid creating a detention center type of appearance.

Overall, those we spoke to felt that the SOS program made schools and the community safer in Egg Harbor Township. They were looking toward future additional improvements to the safety and security strategies built on the foundation laid by the SOS funding.



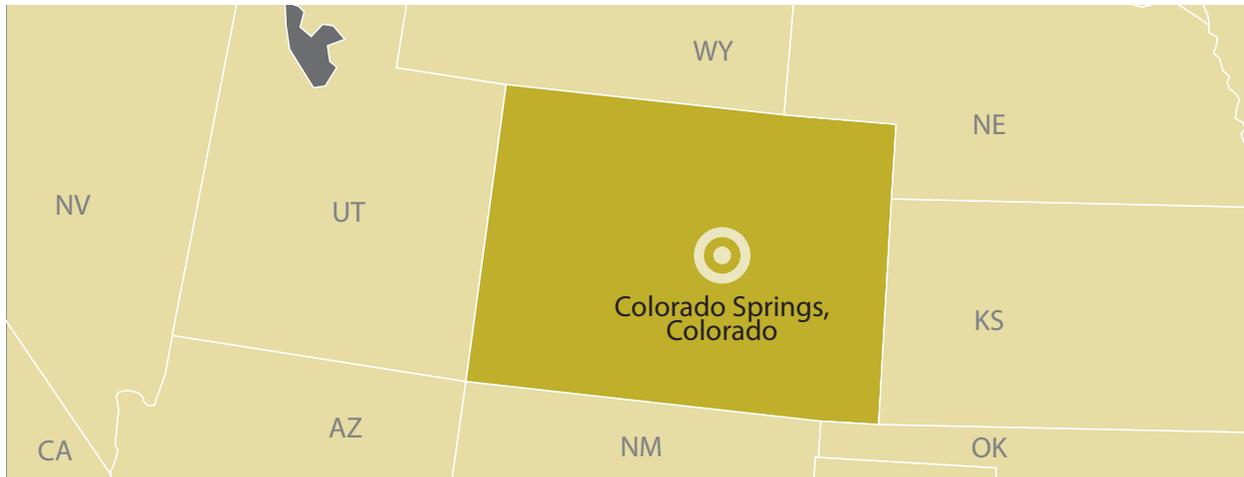
City of Baltimore, Maryland

Baltimore is located in north central Maryland and is the 21st largest city in the country with a population of approximately 620,961.¹⁴³ A crucial priority and challenge for the city is alleviating the high levels of crime and violence, and creating safer and more livable communities. Key to the community is the 80,000 students attending more than 200 schools and programs administered by the Baltimore City Public Schools (BCPS). The primary crime and safety issues of the BCPS at the time of the grant application were violent crimes, break-ins, student fights and disturbances both on and off school campus, and truants and dropouts committing crime in the communities.

The Baltimore Police Department (BPD) received an SOS grant of \$500,465 in 2006 to work in partnership with BCPS and its police force of 142 officers to install closed-circuit television (CCTV) camera and monitoring technology. Called the BCPS SchoolWatch program, it was modeled after the city's highly successful CitiWatch program that uses Internet Protocol (IP)-based video technology to monitor and analyze crime incidents to identify security and safety issues and increase arrests city-wide.

The grant provided seed money for the SchoolWatch program to begin in eight schools that had been identified as most vulnerable as part of a city-wide study conducted in 2004 and 2005. Those we spoke to say the successes of the program included a reduction in arsons and thefts, an increase in cases solved and closed, and a higher rate of recovery of stolen property due to the video evidence provided through the camera system. In addition to reducing property crimes, the SchoolWatch program also led to a reduction in fighting and assaults once students realized the cameras were watching in what had been the less-frequently patrolled areas of the schools.

The biggest challenge to implementation related to the technology—specifically issues around planning for, purchasing, and working with vendors. But this was primarily overcome through a common commitment to solving the problems as they arose. Those we spoke to from the BPD, the BCPS, and the Mayor's Office often credited the strong strategic and collaborative nature of what they did as the key factor for success. Ultimately, Baltimore views the SchoolWatch program as a success not only because of the reductions in crime but because the city has been able to support and expand the program after the grant period. Based on the successes in the eight original schools, the city expanded it to 75 schools in 2010.



City of Colorado Springs, Colorado

The city of Colorado Springs is located along the southern Rocky Mountain range in south central Colorado and is the state's second most populous city. Although there is variation in crime and safety issues across the city's multiple school districts, the primary issues that led to the SOS grant application were with substance abuse, fighting, gang activity, theft, and bullying in District 20 and in District 11's Palmer High School (PHS). District 20's school population had grown significantly over the previous 15 years to approximately 22,000 students in six high schools, five middle schools, and 18 elementary schools. PHS, with a population of 1,800 students, is located in multiple buildings in downtown Colorado Springs.

In 2006 an initiative to work with students, teachers, and community members was started by school resource officers (SRO), school officials, and the Colorado Springs Police Department (CSPD) as a way to better identify problems related to school safety, neighborhood crime, and disorder. This collaboration served as the foundation of the SOS grant planning, and in 2008, the CSPD received an SOS grant in the amount of \$65,500 to increase security measures, including updating the schools' video surveillance systems and installing building access controls. The grant funds were divided between District 20 and PHS.

In District 20, we talked to many who felt that the four cameras purchased with the funding had at most a minimal impact on the overall school safety program. However, they did agree that schools

are safer now due to new security measures, equipment, and plans, and that the cameras purchased with SOS funds did contribute to the increased safety.

The grant funds to PHS helped to implement new surveillance, lockdown, and evacuation procedures. The number of cameras used to monitor activity inside and outside the school was increased by 50 percent. Incident data was tracked, analyzed, and used to position the cameras, and security staff members monitor the daily functioning of the camera equipment. PHS also doubled the number of doors operated by card access, which has reduced the number of non-PHS individuals gaining building entry. And PHS updated its computer systems to a digital format to increase recording resolution and memory capacity. These three accomplishments are reported to have resulted in an improved school climate, decreased fighting issues, and a safer school overall.

Turnover in the schools and CSPD was a continuous challenge to grant implementation; the two SROs at PHS and District 20 who were instrumental in applying for the grant retired or changed their job positions during or after the grant process. In addition, many also felt that holding law enforcement organizations accountable for something that is really school-based is challenging. One school partner commented, *"The SOS grant[s] might be better to fund though schools...[with] the law enforcement agency as a partner via an MOU would work much better."*



Leon County, Florida

Leon County, Florida—home to the state capital of Tallahassee—has a population of 275,487.¹⁴⁴ The Leon County Schools (LCS) are responsible for 50 schools, and since 2001 have taken extensive steps to improve school security as part of a statewide strategy that is linked to the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and focused on prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery. The biggest concern for the LCS and the Leon County Sheriff's Department (LCSD) was the lack of a central point of contact to coordinate communication and response across facilities.

LCSD received two SOS grants. The first funded the purchase of cameras that were installed in each middle school. The second funded the purchase of equipment to outfit the District Security Center (DSC). The main goals of the SOS projects included:

- Establishing a 24-hour emergency operations center (the DSC) as a single point of contact to reduce response times and improve appropriate levels of response
- Using 800 megahertz (MHZ) radios in partnership with local law enforcement, and using FM radios with scrolling text capabilities to inform private schools, special needs populations, and those whose second language is English
- Educating district staff about the NIMS command structure, including the roles of safety and security, risk management, transportation, and other administrative staff

One key accomplishment was the creation of the DSC. It has been operating fully staffed since February 2010, and more residents are becoming aware of the services it provides and its role in creating safer schools and communities. Another accomplishment is an 80 percent increase in the success rate of solving burglary and vandalism incidents since the installation of the security equipment. In addition, DSC systems can now track the location of all school vehicles, highly advanced weather tracking and alert systems are in place, and detailed maps of all facilities can be accessed and shared with first responder agencies. All school principals have been trained on how to use the security equipment.

One major challenge highlighted was related to human resources, as some we spoke to said the LCS wasn't prepared for the challenges of staffing a 24/7 facility. Another key challenge was the county's financing and approval procedures. Because the SOS grant is awarded to law enforcement agencies to purchase equipment and technology or services for other agencies (primarily schools), project staff were forced to work through two different financial management and approval processes.

The key factors attributed to the successful integration of the SOS grant and increased operational capacity of the county's security and safety plan was the LCSD's support and commitment of other agency partners. It was the view of all we spoke to that the community and the schools are safer due to this program.



City of Memphis, Tennessee

Memphis is the largest city in Tennessee, with a population of 662,897.¹⁴⁵ The Memphis City Schools (MCS) is the largest school system in Tennessee and the 21st largest school system in the nation, serving more than 116,528 students among 191 schools. The primary crime and safety issues the MCS and Memphis Police Department (MPD) grapple with are violent crime, students carrying weapons to school, fights, bullying, gang-related crime and violence, drugs, chronic truancy, and student drop out.

The MPD received an SOS grant of \$615,892 in 2006. Planning for the grant was done as part of a larger strategic development program initiated by then Shelby County Mayor, District Attorney (DA), Sheriff, MPD Director, and the U.S. Attorney. The MPD proposed using the grant funds to implement part of the Operation Safe Community (OSC) project, a city-wide effort to proactively address crime and safety issues affecting students and schools. The project hired additional school resource officers (SRO) and expanded physical security resources in and around Memphis schools. In addition, new security equipment (cameras, metal detectors, lighting, and radios) was purchased, along with software upgrades for the existing systems.

The SOS program is attributed with making schools safer based on the significant decrease in violent incidents in MCS after implementation. For example, 14 schools that had accounted for more than 50 percent of all crime and safety incidents in MCS were the target for the new SOS school safety strategies. The same 14 schools now only account for 30 percent of incidents across the district. In addition, the SOS program was a key factor in helping MPD officers establish relationships with students. The MPD officers' consistent presence in the schools has contributed significantly to the officers building good, trusting relationships with students.

The major challenge with the SOS program that we heard was delays in implementation due to the local city processes required for approval and appropriation of funds. For example, metal detectors had been specified and purchased, but due to various delays in agency processes, the equipment ended up being out of date and obsolete before it could be installed.

Memphis City officials believe the SOS program, as part of the larger OSC program, was instrumental in providing the seed funding to put in place the array of school safety strategies that would not have otherwise been implemented. We found that they credited this to having an established and well-functioning network of strategic partnerships that includes the schools, police department, city leaders, community leaders, and citizens.



Township of Austintown, Ohio

Austintown Township is a 5-square-mile section of Northeast Ohio, approximately 60 miles southeast of Cleveland. A suburb of Youngstown, with a small town feel, Austintown has a population of just over 30,000. The Austintown Local Schools (ALS) comprises seven schools; three high schools and four elementary schools. The Austintown Police Department (APD) is the local law enforcement organization that is responsible for working with the schools on issues around safety and security. Prior to the SOS grant, most of the safety and crime issues the ALS faced were related to occurrences on school grounds, such as vandalism, fights, and thefts.

Prior to the SOS grant there was one only SRO, one Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) officer, and 24 analog cameras and radios. The ALS currently has 2.5 SROs on school grounds. The chief of the APD has been the primary player in championing and addressing school safety issues. Under his aegis, a Security Council was created (prior to the SOS program), which continues to meet. Over a dozen people sit on the council, including the chief, several school principals, the superintendent, the technical coordinator, and the juvenile detective representing the grant.

In 2006, the APD received a Secure of Schools grant of \$68,187 to improve the overall safety and welfare of students, staff, and the community. Specifically, the grant was intended to enhance the safety and security systems of the ALS by adding video surveillance cameras to access routes, exterior building areas, and interior elementary building areas, along with providing police cruisers with laptops and computer access to video monitors.

The SOS funding enabled the ALS to install 24 new digital cameras, allowing them to monitor more areas and put doors under surveillance. New security panels were placed in buildings, as were keyless entry access controls. Motorola GTX radios were purchased and issued to the security officers, the technical coordinator, principals, and other key school personnel, as well as installed on all 50 buses. These allowed for constant communication between all parties. Lastly, the SOS funding allowed for the purchase of laptops for the police cruisers assigned to the schools.

Those who spoke with us highlighted a number of accomplishments that resulted from the SOS funding. According to the schools' statistics and reports, there had been a decrease in the number of fights at schools by more than 50 percent. Thefts in the cafeteria and from lockers have been reduced now that cameras can easily detect such incidents. Additionally, the radio system had a significant impact on safety, and the constant contact they provided between parties was considered highly valuable.

A community-wide survey revealed that as a result of the SOS grant, parents believed the schools are now more secure and provide a safer environment. Students also reported feeling more safe and secure at school. One critical success factor emphasized when speaking with the key personnel was strong partnerships and collaboration. Strategic planning and implementation of the project was also cited as a key success factor in Austintown. Specifically, the creation of the Security Council, and subsequent actions by the chief, instilled a solid foundation for the school safety planning process.



Fond du Lac, Minnesota

The Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Reservation lies in northeastern Minnesota, adjacent to the city of Cloquet, and approximately 20 miles west of Duluth. The reservation's Ojibwe School's main building opened in 2002 and boasts unusual construction and design. The Ojibwe School has an average attendance of 330 students, from kindergarten through grade 12. The primary crime and safety issues that face the Ojibwe School are fighting, violence, theft, gang graffiti, alcohol and drug problems, and bullying.

When the school opened, it had cameras and a close-circuit television (CCTV) system installed in the school's buildings. However, the 30-piece camera system still had a number of significant "blind" spots which were known to the students and used when trying to conceal negative behaviors. The radio system Ojibwe School had been using was dated and insufficient, and the administration had experienced problems with students interrupting the frequency and talking on the radios.

As a result of these needs to update these security systems, the reservation applied for, and received, three SOS grants between 2005 and 2010. The reservation proposed using its grant funds to upgrade the digital video camera surveillance system by adding cameras to unmonitored areas, securing main entrances by installing a monitor at

the receptionist's desk, purchasing Motorola radios for the Management Behavioral Team members and other staff, and creating an anti-bullying prevention program. With the SOS funding the original camera system was upgraded and 18 cameras were added. In addition, the radio system was also upgraded and expanded, resulting in a total of 21 radios. The grant also helped to fund a new anti-bullying prevention program, allowed for a security assessment, and instituted safety training classes.

Although no formal evaluation had been done to measure the effectiveness of their safe school strategy, many of those we spoke to believe the Ojibwe School is safer while remaining a welcoming school environment. In addition to the aforementioned security upgrades, the latest SOS grant provided funding for additional staff training. School officials have noted that they have found such value in the training that eventually they would like to train everyone in the school community, including parents and community members. The reservation's focus on a balanced and comprehensive approach as well as its efforts to utilize a mix of equipment/technology, training, and educational programs helped them to successfully promote positive student behavior and address the broad scope of school crime and safety issues.



City of San Diego, California

San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD) is the second largest school district in California and serves almost 132,000 students. The district is made up of 107 traditional elementary schools, 11 K–8 schools, 24 traditional middle schools, 28 high schools, 45 charter schools, and 13 atypical/alternative schools. The San Diego Unified Police Department (SDUPD) has primary responsibility over the facilities and the areas surrounding school grounds. In 2001, the district experienced two shootings at local high schools, which were followed by a major increase in school crime and violence. As a result the SDUSD sought SOS funding as a means to acquire new technology that would help to improve school safety and security.

In 2005, the district was awarded its first SOS grant for an IP-based, nonproprietary video monitoring system. Over the next 4 years, the SDUSD received three SOS awards to support this effort. By the end of 2010, the system was designed to provide video coverage for about 50 schools, using approximately 1,000 cameras and covering a geographic area of roughly 150 square miles within the city of San Diego. The project goals were to reduce vandalism, theft, and malicious acts at schools, as well as provide a means for identifying offenders when criminal acts did occur.

Incidents of crime and violence have fluctuated over the years; however principals who have had cameras in their schools have reported a decrease in vandalism. School principals with access to video monitoring systems have reported a remarkable difference in student behavior, both from their observations of student conduct and from reductions in the number of suspensions and expulsions. Data also show a district wide reduction in burglaries, with the average annual rate prior to video monitoring being 203 compared with 126 after video monitoring installation.

SDUSD officers report that the cameras have helped change the school culture, and the number of school fights have been reduced significantly. The cameras have helped to clear several people who were falsely accused of various crimes and as a result, school officials have seen a reduction in the number of false accusations being made.

Overall, there were several important factors that contributed to the success of the district's SOS efforts. Most notably was the development of a comprehensive, coordinated, and balanced approach. The ability to use forward-thinking methods and strategic planning was integral to the successful implementation of the SOS grants in the San Diego Unified School District.



City of Sulphur Springs, Texas

Sulphur Springs is located in northeast Texas, halfway between the cities of Dallas and Texarkana. The Sulphur Springs Independent School District (SSISD) is made up of nine schools and recognizes school safety as a top priority. The recipient of three Secure Our Schools (SOS) grants, the SSISD is a community mobilized to confront school safety issues and concerns. Prior to their first SOS grant, SSISD conducted its first comprehensive safety assessment, which identified a number of areas that needed increased attention and safety improvements. Safety concerns were focused primarily around student traffic, visitors, and student behavioral problems.

The SOS grants that were awarded to Sulphur Springs allowed for several enhancements to school safety resources within the district, primarily by replacing older security equipment and technology. Specifically, the three awards provided the funds for: new cameras throughout nine school campuses; the expansion of a restricted-access keyway system; and the placement of classroom security levers on all doors, which allowed teachers to lock doors from the inside. Additionally, cameras and two-way radios were installed on every school bus.

Many of those we spoke to believed that the SOS grants broadly enhanced security capabilities and minimized the risk associated with emergency situations. Equipment, training, and the collaboration of students and staff allowed for the successful implementation of these new safety features. Data show that since the implementation of the first SOS grant in 2006, citations for misdemeanors have declined. The focus group attributes this decrease to the extensive program support they have received from the SOS grants.

One of the major challenges associated with the implementation of these awards was helping the community understand and adjust to the changes. The notion of securing all external doors during the school day, and refusing access to unauthorized visitors was viewed as unwarranted by many members of this small community. However, over time the community came to understand the benefits of the increased security measures and efforts have gained the support of parents and community members.

The success of SSISD implementation of the SOS grants can largely be attributed to the partnership and collaboration of participating stakeholders. The involvement of the entire community provides a solid foundation for working together toward the common goal of improved school safety within the district. They are constantly striving to improve their school safety approach, which has already well exceeded their original goals.



Conclusion

Based on the site visits and focus groups conducted in each of the case study sites, improved school safety was reported to be a significant outcome of the SOS program, including notable reductions in the incidents of violence, theft, and unauthorized persons entering buildings. Reports also suggested that more students and parents felt safer as a result of changes to the schools and their safety plans. In addition, it was clear across sites that the SOS funds played an important role in building and/or enhancing grantees' organizational capacities. In fact, all the sites described the grant as "being a catalyst" by providing seed money; they were each able to leverage and expand their programs after the funding ended.

In addition to being an important resource for grantees to supplement their existing crime prevention and safety strategies, many sites integrated their SOS funded strategies into an existing larger city-wide strategic plan to reduce crime and promote safer communities. For example, the city of Memphis had already developed a 5 year city-wide strategic plan to reduce crime and support positive youth development, and they improved these existing resources by integrating new complimentary strategies focused on student safety funded by the SOS. Similarly, Baltimore, Sulphur Springs, San Diego, and Leon County integrated the SOS funds into a larger community-wide strategic crime prevention and safety plan to support critical school-based capacities.

The SOS program was often and easily integrated with other funding sources to support the crime prevention and safety plans at each site. Many of the overall strategies were supported by a combination of state and local funds in addition to federal grants from the Department of Homeland Security, Department of Justice, Department of Education, and Department of Health and Human Services. However, while the SOS funds represented a relatively small portion of the total cost of these programs, it was nonetheless strategically important as the source of funding for security and technology equipment and training not allowable under other grant programs.

All of the case study sites were able to sustain the SOS funded strategies beyond the grant period. More important, for a majority of the sites they have been able to build on what was funded by the SOS grant and expand their school-based safety efforts even further. Overall, the case study sites believe the school security and technology strategies funded by the SOS program have provided them with additional tools and capacities that make it possible to respond more quickly and effectively to incidents of crime and violence, use data and crime analysis in identifying problem areas to target preventive strategies, and free up school resource officers or school-based police to focus more on building relationships with students and working with them using problem-solving strategies. The sites universally said that they would not have been able to develop the critical capacities and resources to address school crime and safety without the support of the Secure Our Schools program.



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