

SAFE SCHOOLS PROJECT



A White Paper on school safety and external threat protection

The United States Internet Crime Task Force, Inc.

A Non-Profit – Government Assist – Victim Advocate Agency

Sponsored and in conjunction with
The Jefferson County Medical Society

Executive Director: David J. Evangelista
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Executive
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The United States Internet Crime Task Force, Inc.
A Non-Profit – Government-Assist – Victim Advocate Agency
Radcliff, Kentucky - USA

Executive Summary

June 1, 2005

The USICT, Inc. has a long history of child victim advocacy and crime prevention, since our inception into the field of Internet enticement prevention in 1999, our efforts to keep the Internet clean of illegal and immoral activity has resulted in the closure of nearly 100,000 child pornographic and incest related websites, chat rooms, bulletin boards and other web based content.

By fostering relationships with Local, State, and Federal Law Enforcement agencies and other civic groups, we have been successful in assisting in the recovery of missing children through our poster dissemination program and our speedy law enforcement referral network.

Our network has allowed us to keep our members both informed of current issues and of critical alerts when a child becomes missing or is endangered.

Recent events in the area of school based violence has lead our mission from cyber space child advocacy to the classroom where we hope that our 3 area safe school project will provide even better public advocacy and support for the safety of every child in America.

While it is impossible to insulate every child from every danger that lurks in both cyber space and in the real world, we hope that our advocacy programs and services will make a significant impact on how well educated our children and parents are and we hope to raise the level of awareness through these programs.

Our safe schools project mission is to: "Provide every child in the US with a learning environment that is free from outside violence through education and technology."

We openly welcome your thoughts and comments about this program and encourage you to contact us if you are interested in participating in this program.

Sincerely,

David J. Evangelista
Executive Director / Founder

BACKGROUND

National research by the US Secret Service, the Department of Juvenile Justice, and the National Criminal Justice Reference Center have reported that since 1993, the rate of school violence has decreased. However, it has also been found that as a result of recent high profile school shootings and media coverage have raised the fears of parents around the United States.

Schools are still the safest place for children in the US however, since 9/11 and recent high profile school violence incidents, parents have a higher expectation of their public schools to keep their children safe while their children attend school.

Nearly all schools have many safety programs designed to keep our children safe in the event of tornadoes, earthquakes, fires, and other natural disasters. While since Columbine some school districts have begun implementing some form of lockdown procedure. There are no national standards of school lockdown procedures and the responsibility of developing a policy currently lies with each facility administrator to conduct his/her own threat assessment and implement some form of procedure for lock downs.

The contention of the USICT, Inc. Safe Schools Project is to create a national lockdown procedure that has a fundamental base set of procedures that can be expanded on by each facility as each site may differ in vulnerability. By creating a basic set of safety guidelines it will allow students that migrate from one facility to the next across the country to be familiar with one set of rules and not have to re-learn something that should be otherwise instinctive.

For Example. Most Americans young and old know the sound of a fire alarm and know when someone says "Fire" what they should do. However in the unfortunate event of a violent school incident, there are no advanced warning systems in place for students to know that an immediate threat is at hand, nor what they should do.

In the pages that follow, we hope to share with you our vision of a National Safe Schools project that helps to create a nationalized set of standards for lockdown procedures, external threat prevention by using technology to secure facilities and provide notification of sex offenders residing in the proximity of a school.

SAFE SCHOOLS PROJECT OVERVIEW

The fundamental purpose of The USICT, Inc. Safe Schools project is to provide every child in the US with a learning environment that is free from outside violence through education and technology.

We propose to accomplish this mission in three focus areas:

- External Facility Security and Threat Assessment
- A National Standardized Lockdown procedure
- Educational and Awareness Programs

Here is a brief overview of each of the focus areas.

External Facility Security and Threat Assessment: This area will focus on all aspects of external threats to the school facilities either by way of an assault on the facility by an attacker or by way of a sexual predator. Our goal is to help obtain funding to provide technology to schools to prevent violence and to utilize existing resources to notify schools when a registered sex offender moves within a pre-determined proximity of an educational facility.

A National Standardized Lockdown Procedure: This area will focus on creating a standardized lockdown procedure for each and every learning institution in the United States. The fundamental purpose for a standardized procedure provides students from kindergarten to graduation the ability to develop a "Muscle Memory Reaction" to an alarm as a result of an act of school violence. Our Emergency Lockdown System (ELS) will provide a standardized set of procedures that every school must adhere to. This ELS procedure will be a living procedure, meaning that it may be modified from time to time to adjust to new threats. We hope to initiate this by creating a new piece of legislation and proposing it to Congress.

Educational and Awareness Programs: This area will focus on creating educational and awareness programs such as power point presentations, flyers, and other forms of medium to educate both students, faculty and staff about the various forms of external danger or threats to their facility. Emphasis based on physical attacks or threats and also by way of online enticement of children through the Internet. The implementation of a central sex offender notification network and system to provide notification to faculty and administration when a sex offender moves within certain proximity of an educational facility. This information can be disseminated using technology and the Internet by sending an SMS text message or email as well as a monthly subscription to our custom sex offender flyer service.

EXTERNAL FACILITY THREATS

Research has shown that since 1974 there have been 37 incidents involving 41 attackers that have brought school violence to 26 states with more than one incident occurring in Arkansas, California, Kentucky, Missouri, and Tennessee.

In these high profile cases over half of the attackers selected a faculty member or staff member as a target.

In more than 2/3 of the incidents, the attacker killed one or more students, faculty or others at the school. Handguns, rifles or shotguns were the primary weapons used and the most crucial piece of information was that these incidents happened in the middle of the school day. Therefore, it is important to have building security and security procedures in place during the school day and have those rules enforced.

Research has shown that these incidents are rarely impulsive in nature but rather a planned attack. It is critical to provide a safe buffer zone for schools by securing entrances and exits during the day and "funneling" all traffic through a central "secure" area to prevent any unauthorized building access. This can be accomplished by securing administrative entrances and exits or maintenance access points with either biometric door locks, security access locks, or video intercom / door buzzer systems.

The USICT, Inc. hopes to acquire grant funding to assist facilities obtain the necessary technology to implement a more secure learning institution. While our goal is not to turn our schools into prisons, it is intended to act as quite the reverse. It is intended to act as a barrier between violence and an otherwise unobstructed safe learning environment that is free from violence from would-be attackers.

It is often proven that those with intention of committing a crime are often discouraged from performing the act if there are security measures in place. For example, a bank robber is less likely to commit the crime if he/she could observe a heavy presence of security. They would most likely choose a less protected institution.

In about $\frac{3}{4}$ of school attacks, the attacker held some type of grudge and in 2/3 of these cases, they can be attributed to some form of bullying. Meaning that the juvenile attacker (which ranges from 11-17) was a victim of some form of bullying. Most states have already implemented Anti-Bullying legislation which addresses the root cause of most of these attacks which is why these crimes of violence has experienced a slow decline. But we need not get complacent or assume that the only solution to preventing school violence is to rely on one preventative measure, just as it is foolish to rely only upon a fire extinguisher but neglect to change the battery in the fire detector! At that point, you merely become reactive instead of pro-active.

It is important to mention that relying on law enforcement to solve the problem of school violence incidents when they occur is foolish since over half of the violent attacks on schools were resolved or ended "BEFORE" law enforcement responded to the scene. In most cases the attacker was stopped by faculty or staff; stopped on his/her own or committed suicide.

Most of these attacks only lasted 20 minutes or less which emphasizes the need for a National Lockdown Procedure, which we will discuss later.

Up until now, we have discussed the threat of a violent attack to the school however we have not discussed other areas of external threats to a facility. While there are many, such as a terrorist attack or other form of violence, we should also explore other domestic threats such as those from sexual predators, which we will discuss later.

Our goal is to seek federal, state, and private funding opportunities to assist schools obtain the necessary equipment to secure their facilities. This could range from security cameras, metal detectors, Alarms, Locks, or Intercom systems. It can be up to the school administrator to determine the most vulnerable area of their facility.

To be eligible for assistance under this program, the facility must provide education either public or private schools to children from K-12. With priority emphasis on elementary and alternative schools where funding availability may be limited or competitive.

Each school will be placed on an availability list for assistance and will be contacted when funding becomes available. Meanwhile these schools would qualify immediately for our National lockdown procedure and our education and awareness programs.

NATIONAL STANDARDIZED LOCKDOWN PROCEDURE

While our schools still remain a relatively safe place for our children. We must always be aware of the various threats to their safety. Schools have implemented fire drills, tornado drills, and earthquake drills.

Students for the most part have developed a general understanding that in the event of a fire, the procedure is to line up and proceed to the nearest fire exit. Faculty and staff are to take a head count and wait for further instructions. This has been the un-official "rule of thumb" during a fire drill.

The USICT, Inc. proposes another drill. An Emergency Lockdown System (ELS) be implemented. There should be installed in each and every school across the country, a panic switch (similar to a fire alarm switch) located in administrative only areas of a school that can be activated in the event of a physical assault of a school. Activation of this alarm would cause a distinct siren that is different from a standard fire alarm to sound and a signal being sent to a central monitoring station so that the proper authorities can be notified.

A set of standard rules should be created to allow children and faculty and staff members to develop a "muscle memory response" to this alarm and for it to be consistent from Kindergarten through High School. It should not be left for schools to solely develop a lockdown procedure that may vary from facility to facility causing students and staff to have to "re-learn" basic procedures that should be instilled in them from the beginning. A base set of procedures should be established and then administrators could append other steps as necessary that are unique to their facility.

The USICT, Inc. recommends that a panel or committee be established to create a national standard, which should include members from the Law Enforcement, EMS, Fire, Educational, and Legislative community.

An administrator could activate the Emergency Lockdown System (ELS) when the safety and welfare of the students, faculty or staff are in danger. This can be because a breach of physical security or protocol has happened, or when notified by authorities of a dangerous situation in close proximity to the facility such as a fleeing or violent felon in the area or an act of terrorism.

An example of some sample procedures after the activation of the Emergency Lockdown System (ELS) might be:

- Any students, faculty or staff in any corridors or hallways should proceed to the nearest classroom or room.
- All doors and windows should be closed and locked.
- All window blinds should be drawn or closed
- A faculty member should take a head count and obtain names of each individual in the room.
- All individuals should seek immediate cover under desks or tables and remain low to the ground and away from windows or doors.

- Faculty should then wait for the "All Clear" sign or password before releasing anyone from the room.
- A faculty member should meet law enforcement at a pre-determined location outside the threat area with the "All Clear" signal in the event of a false alarm; failure to do so would result in appropriate law enforcement response to the alarm.
- Regularly scheduled ELS tests should be performed however only administrators "in the know" should be aware of the test causing a sense of realism for everyone else. A pre-arranged test notification to the monitoring station would prevent emergency personnel response.

By establishing a basic set of rules for safety in the event of a lockdown, you significantly increase the chance of survival in the event of an attack.

Most all attacks on facilities lasted 20 minutes or less and over half of the incidents that occurred were resolved before law enforcement could arrive on scene. While law enforcement has responded to recent school shooting incidents and have developed rapid response procedures to these events, it should be the responsibility of the facility however, to take aggressive measures to ensure proper policy and procedures are in place and to practice them routinely.

Once the committee has created a responsible ELS procedure and warning solution, it should be summarized into the form of a legislative bill that should be forwarded to every member of the US Senate and US Congress for endorsement and then forwarded to the President of the United States to become law.

We should not get complacent when it comes to the safety of our children. Failure to implement such a warning system is both irresponsible as administrators and foolish for parents to assume that their school has a procedure in place.

EDUCATIONAL AND AWARENESS PROGRAMS

Being educated about issues is the first and most essential step to fully understanding the scope of the problem of school violence.

Up until now, we have discussed the threat of violent activity as a means of external threats to schools. There are other areas of external threats to schools such as Terrorist activity or sexual predators.

Our final area will discuss the education and awareness programs we would like to implement.

By creating a series of power point presentations, flyers and brochures about school safety and recruiting volunteer members to go out and lecture to administrators, faculty and staff as well as students, we believe that this will heighten the sense of awareness to the possibility of a school violence incident.

The USICT, Inc. would also like to develop in conjunction with a national sex offender registry the ability to tie in technology to this system. We would like to be able to develop a system that could utilize online mapping systems such as Google™ or Yahoo™ to allow facilities to enter their address and a proximity in miles they wish to monitor and then either be notified by various means (Email, SMS Text Messaging, or by mail) when a sex offender moves in that sphere of security they created around the facility.

Currently, The USICT, Inc. creates a flyer of locally registered sex offenders for schools that request to be notified. We provide this information via Email in a document that contains the photograph and registrant information but currently do this by zip code and due to the inquiry nature of some states like New York; we are unable to provide this service because of the limitations of the systems providing the information.

The existence of a National Sex Offender Registry is critical if this program is to provide any form of automation, otherwise the project must be staffed and not automated.

We will over the coming months develop a division dedicated to the development of education and awareness programs to further educate parents and educators alike.

We will continue our Internet education and awareness programs and include them in the external threat category for schools.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Providing security solutions to schools can significantly reduce violent crimes of opportunity since it would require much more planning and will afford greater opportunities of discovery before the crime occurs.

Creating an ELS procedure is just plain sensible. Failure to recognize that a viable threat to our educational facilities is a reality and that every shot fired in a school is an execution of a child; faculty or staff member is blind denial. To assume that these violent crimes could never happen here is blind ignorance.

It is time to do the right thing and establish a national standard. Just as we raise our children, we establish rules. If a child does not have a set of rules to follow, they are most likely confused on what is expected of them. A standardized ELS program will help remove the confusion and establish a set of protocols that every child can remember from Kindergarten to Graduation.

Continued education and awareness is essential and programs need to be in place to provide this education where it lacks today.

The USICT, Inc. has over the years proven to be a powerful victim advocate agency by providing missing children poster dissemination around the US which has resulted to tips and recovery of missing or exploited children as well as our Internet monitoring of chat rooms and websites and crime referral and other free services.

We will continue with our mission of public advocacy with the implementation of the Emergency Lockdown System (ELS), Education and awareness through our programs.

We encourage anyone that is interested to get involved with this project to contact The USICT, Inc.

As we enter our sixth year of operation, we believe that the safety of our nation's children rely on the responsible actions we take today.

We hope that you will join The USICT, Inc. in our mission and support our Safe Schools Project so that it can successful to protect our nation's most valuable asset, our children.

APPENDIX A STATISTICS

Fear and Violence

- "Students ages 12-18 were asked how often they had been afraid of attack "at school or on the way to and from school" and "away from school" during the previous six months."
- "The percentage of students ages 12-18 who reported being afraid of being attacked at school or on the way to and from school decreased- from 12 percent in 1995 to 6 percent in 2003; however, no difference was detected in the percentage of students who feared such an attack between the most recent survey years, 2001 and 2003."
- "Students ages 12-18 were asked whether they had avoided certain places in school- such as the entrance, any hallways or stairs, parts of the cafeteria, restrooms, and other places inside the school building- during the previous 6 months. Between 1995 and 1999, the percentage of students that avoided one or more places in school decreased from 9 to 5 percent. In 2003, 4 percent of students reported that they had avoided one or more places in school."
- "From July 1, 1992, to June 30, 2000, 390 school-associated violent deaths occurred on campuses of U.S. elementary or secondary schools. Of these violent deaths, 234 were homicides and 43 were suicides of school-aged youths ages 5-19. Away from school during roughly the same period, 24,406 children ages 5-19 were victims of homicide and 16,735 child committed suicide."
- "In each school year, youth were at least 70 times more likely to be murdered away from school than at school."
- "In 2002, about 1.1 million thefts occurred at school, and about 790,000 occurred away from school for students ages 12-18."

- "In 2003, male students ages 12-18 were more likely than female students to report being the victim of a violent crime a school."
- "In 2003, 33 percent of students in grades 9-12 reported being in a fight anywhere, and 13 percent said they had been in a fight on school property."
- "Between 1993 and 2003, the percentage of students in grades 9-12 who reported being in a fight anywhere declined -from 42 percent in 1993 to 33 percent in 2003. Similarly, the percentages of students who reported fighting on school property in these years also declined -from 16 to 13 percent."

Weapons

- "In the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, students were asked if they had carried a weapons such as a gun, knife, or club in the past 30 days or carried one of these weapons onto school property in the past 30 days. In 2003, 17 percent of students in grades 9-12 reported they had carried a weapon anywhere, and about 6 percent reported that they had carried a weapon on school property."
- "In 2003, 9 percent of students in grades 9-12 reported being threatened or injured with a weapon, such as a gun, knife, or club, on school property."
- "In 2003, 12 percent of 9th-graders reported that they were threatened or injured with a weapon on school property, compared with 9 percent of 10th-graders, 7 percent of 11th-graders, and 6 percent of 12th-graders."