



# School Safety Issue

# The Advocate

Vol. 8 No. 4

A newsletter on children's issues

November 1998

## Federal School Safety Report Released

The federal government released the **Annual Report on School Safety, 1998** in conjunction with the White House Conference on School Safety October 15.

The report, produced by the departments of Education and Justice, includes a comprehensive and concise overview of research on the nature and scope of the problem, suggestions for action, and a very useful list of resources.

Major findings of the report include:

- \* Students are less likely to be victimized but more likely to feel unsafe.
- \* Most schools are safer than the community at large.
- \* Serious crime and violence are concentrated in a



- small percentage of schools.
- \* Violence is more likely in larger, urban schools and with older students.
- \* Fist fights and theft are the most common crimes.

### Statistics about School Violence

Number of Schools (1998)	109,000
Number of Students (1998)	51,500,000
School Deaths* (1997-98)	42 people
(1996-97)	25 people
(1993-94)	51 people
Students injured with a weapon (1996)	4.9 percent (ISR)
Schools reporting one or more serious violent crime	10 percent

Fewer than 1 percent of the 7,357 children murdered in 1992 and 1993 were killed at school.

Twice as many people were killed in 1997 by lightning than were killed at school.\*\*

Source for all statistics except where noted: Annual Report on School Safety, 1998

\*National School Safety Center \*\*Justice Policy Institute

Other findings were:

- \* Fewer weapons are in schools.
- \* Gang presence nearly doubled from 1989 to 1995.
- \* Violence and drugs are linked.
- \* Teachers are often crime victims.

The reports suggests that communities:

- \* Establish school-community partnerships.
- \* Identify and measure the problem.
- \* Set measureable goals and objectives. Identify appropriate research-based programs and strategies.
- \* Implement the comprehensive plan.

A pdf file of the 48-page report may be found at [www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/SDFS/news.html](http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/SDFS/news.html) on the Internet. Single copies of the report can be ordered by calling 1-877-433-7827.

**What is the story in Tennessee? See Inside.**

# House Committee studies school safety

The Tennessee House of Representatives has created the Ad Hoc Committee to Study School Safety Issues with Speaker Pro-Tempore Lois DeBerry, D-Memphis, as chairperson. The committee began meeting this summer, hearing from experts and researchers and from students.

House Speaker Jimmy Naifeh established the committee and told its members, "There are no limits of what you can do; there is no time limit to report back."

The members agreed with Naifeh that they had taken on a difficult task, but they also shared his sense of responsibility to the people of Tennessee to address their fears.

As Dr. Peter Blauvelt of the National Alliance for Safe Schools, later warned them, "There is no silver bullet" or easy answer to solve school safety problems.

Some speakers, such as Dr. Pamela L. Riley, director of the Center for the Prevention of School Violence recommended tougher weapon laws and limiting access of minors to handguns.

Riley's recommendations also included dealing with violent students, focusing resources on schools for funding school resource officers and alternative schools and for teaching violence prevention, and strengthening the juvenile justice system, as the Juvenile Justice Reform Commission is trying to do.

Dr. Helen Smith, a forensic psychologist in Knoxville, recommended "zero tolerance" for students who bully, tease, and stigmatize other students. She pointed out that schools in the South provided less one-on-one time with students and recommended an Oregon measure that calls for psychological observation of students who bring guns to school.

Smith said all the students responsible for recent school shootings had told others of their plans. Students should be taught it's not tattling to warn school personnel, and schools should be listening, she said.



The committee, which is meeting in cities across the state, also heard from students and school and law enforcement personnel. It is expected to meet again in December.

The legislative addresses of committee members are listed below. Legislative offices are in Nashville.

- Lois M. DeBerry (D-91), 15 Legislative Plaza, 37243-0191, (2429 Verdun St, Memphis, 38114-5847) rep.lois.deberry@legislature.state.tn.us, (615) 741-3830
- John J. DeBerry, Jr. (D-90), 26 Legislative Plaza, Nashville, TN 37243-0190, (207 Sledge Ave, Memphis, 38104-4659) rep.john.deberry@legislature.state.tn.us, (615) 741-2239
- Jere L. Hargrove (D-42), 18A Legislative Plaza, 37243-0190, rep.jere.hargrove@legislature.state.tn.us, 741-1875 (310A East Broad, Cookeville, TN 38501, (615) 526-2223, Fax (615) 528-2394)
- Mark L. Maddox (D-76), 109 War Memorial Building, 37243-0176 (245 Legens, Dresden, TN 38225, (615) 741-7847) rep.mark.maddox@legislature.state.tn.us, 741-7847.
- Steve McDaniel (R-72), 103 War Memorial Building, 37243, (97 Battleground Drive, Parkers Crossroads, TN 38388, (901) 968-7883), rep.steve.mcdaniel@legislature.state.tn.us, 741-0750.
- Kim A. McMillan (D-67), 32 Legislative Plaza, 37243, (P.O. Box 365, Clarksville, TN 37041-0365, (931) 906-0902, Fax (931) 906-0904), rep.kim.mcmillan@legislature.state.tn.us, 741-2043
- Page Walley (R-80), 213 War Memorial Building, 37243, (23085 Highway 18-N Toone, TN 38381-7975, (901) 658-2237, Fax (901) 658-2237), rep.page.walley@legislature.state.tn.us, 741-2054.

# DOE funds Safe Schools Act grants

The Tennessee Department of Education is evaluating applications for Safe Schools Act of 1998 grant funding. Ten million dollars will be distributed to local school systems for:

- \* Innovative violence prevention programs;
- \* Conflict resolution programs;
- \* Disruptive or assaultive behavior management;
- \* Improved school security;
- \* Peer mediation;
- \* Training for employees on risk factors associated with perpetrators of school-related violence.

The funding amount and match required from grantees are based on the Better Education Program (BEP) formula that considers allocation and local fiscal capacity.

Local school systems are allowed flexibility to experiment with innovative approaches to school safety. Schools receiving funds for the 1998-99 school year will be considered for continuation funding.

According to DOE guidelines, applicants should

- \* base programs on a thorough assessment of system needs;
- \* involve community stakeholders as well as building administrators, teachers, and parents;
- \* rely on research to determine the most successful program to meet local needs.

Grants will be administered by the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Programs and Office of Administrative Services. Reimbursement for grantees' expenses may be requested monthly.

Other DOE safety-related programs include:

- \* Tennessee School Safety Center;
- \* School/Court/Community Partnership Grants – supports cooperative activity between schools, juvenile courts, and community-based youth service organizations;
- \* Youth Leadership for a Safe and Drug-Free Tennessee – provides leadership training for young people;
- \* Governor's Conference for a Safe and Drug-Free Tennessee – hosts annual conference to share



successful strategies;

- \* Drug Abuse Resistance Education – grants to local school systems and law enforcement agencies.

The **Tennessee School Safety Center**, which opened in 1995, provides other training and technical assistance to local schools and communities in the areas of violence prevention and school safety. Training programs include school safety planning, crisis management, verbal de-escalation techniques, and school disciplinary procedures. A clearinghouse for print and audiovisual resources is also maintained.

The School Safety Center cooperated with the Tennessee School Boards Association to sponsor a Safe Homes-Schools-Safe Communities Summit this summer. Experts from across the state and the nation shared information with educators, elected officials, law enforcement officers, and community members.

The DOE also administers federal funds under the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities program.

For more information, contact

Tennessee School Safety Center  
7th Floor, Andrew Johnson Tower  
710 James Robertson Parkway  
Nashville, TN 37243-0375  
(615) 741-3248  
Mike Herrmann  
[mherrmann@mail.state.tn.us](mailto:mherrmann@mail.state.tn.us)  
(615) 741-8468

# School Safety: A Concern in Tennessee and the Nation

Despite the dramatic nature of recent school shootings, schools are safer than the community and may be no more dangerous today than in the past, according to the *Annual Report on School Safety, 1998*.

In 1996, 26 of every 1,000 student were victims of serious violent crimes away from school, more than twice the rate of for students at school (10 per 1,000).

Two major research studies - the National Crime Victimization Study (NCVS) and University of Michigan Monitoring the Future Survey (MFS) - have been tracking school violence over time and in greater detail.

The NCVS, which interviewed 10,000 randomly sampled students, found little change in the percent of students who reported property or violent victimization between 1989 and 1995. The survey found violent victimization had risen from 3.4 percent in 1989 to 4.2 percent in 1996, a 10 percent increase. However, the study found the percentage of students reporting gang presence nearly doubled and that drug prevalence increased slightly.

The Monitoring the Future Study, which surveys 18,000 students per year, found rates of victimization reported for the previous 12 months have changed little since the annual surveys began in 1976.

In 1996, according to the MFS, 4.9 percent of

students reported being injured with a weapon, down from 5.7 percent in 1976; 13.2 percent reported being threatened with a weapon; and 21.6 percent reported being threatened without a weapon.

According to the 1997 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance survey, 7.1 percent of Tennessee students reported being threatened or injured by a weapon on school property. This figure was slightly lower than the national percentage of 7.4.

	State	Nation
Felt too unsafe to go to school within last 30 days	4.5	4.0
Carried a weapon on school property	11.2	8.5
Threatened OR injured with a weapon on school property*	7.1	7.4
In a physical fight on school property*	14.1	14.8
Property stolen/damaged on school property*	30.8	32.9

\*One or more times during the preceding 12 months.

Fear is a problem for schools. Nationally 46 percent of students said fear had prompted behavior changes.

Four percent of the nation's middle and high school students report they never feel safe at school, according to pollster Louis Harris. Other 1994 national surveys found that 40 percent of parents of high school students were very or somewhat worried about their child's safety and 80 percent of people responding said violence was a serious problem.

Last year, 126,813 Tennessee students were suspended, and 2,619 were expelled. Expulsions dropped, reversing a trend. While 14 percent of expulsions were for violence or threatened violence, 7.3 percent were for firearms, and 3.1 percent for other weapons. More than a third of expulsions were for possession/use of drugs. A new category this year, battery of staff, accounted for 0.6 percent.

Reason	1982 - 83	1992 - 93	1993 - 94	1994 - 95	1995 - 96	1996 - 97	1997 - 98
Firearms	4	115	160	188	142	98	192
Other Weapons	7	58	61	107	143	306	82
Fighting	4	49	106	112	151	214	107
Violence/ Threatened violence	19	85	68	251	403	587	367
Drug Possession	49	77	58	199	324	850	927
All Other reasons	56	325	422	909	925	1,257	944
Total	139	709	875	1,766	2,088	3,312	2,619

Source: Tennessee Department of Education

# Preventing Problems and School Violence

Tennessee schools like other schools in the nation use a variety of tools to combat school violence.

The Tennessee Department of Education reports that research shows the best way to prevent violence is to have an educational program that engages the students and keeps them active/interested.

Schools across the country have instituted school safety strategies, including expelling students whose conduct makes them a risk to other students, restricting access to outsiders, placing school resource or law enforcement officers in the schools, and reducing potential for conflict and violence.

In 1995, the state legislature instituted a “zero tolerance” policy for state schools. Schools are required to expel for a period of one calendar year any student who brings a weapon to school. Students will also be expelled for illegally possessing narcotic or stimulant drugs and committing battery on a teacher. State law gives schools the right to search students or their possessions on school property.

Some experts point out that expulsion further isolates already disturbed students, as in the case of the student in Springfield, Oregon, whose shooting spree happened after he was suspended for bringing a gun to school. The first item on the Tennessee School Boards Association legislative agenda addresses this concern. It is a request for adequate funding for alternative schools for suspended and expelled students.

Nationally, 96 percent of schools required visitors to sign in before entering the school. Fifty-three percent controlled access to school buildings, and 24 percent, to school grounds.

## Peaceable Schools

Schools in Tennessee can receive training in conflict resolution from the William J. Harbison Foundation of the Tennessee Bar Association. The training is funded through the Tennessee School Safety Center.

Approximately 900 staff members from 165



Tennessee schools have received the training during the past two summers. During the training, the schools design individualized school conflict-resolution plans based on school needs. Suzanne Stampley, Peaceable Schools director, reports a high degree of implementation. She said 98 percent of this summer’s participants reported that they are implementing the plan created during the training.

Recent studies show that implementation of conflict resolution programs has an academic payoff in rising test scores, Stampley said. Implementation is most effective if tied to classwork.

## Characteristics of Effective Prevention Programs

A Clearinghouse on Urban Education study found that the most effective prevention programs:

- \* Make an accurate assessment of the problem, including gang activity.
- \* Use all community resources, including social service and law enforcement.
- \* Incorporate family services.
- \* Intervene early in a child’s life.
- \* Include positive experiences.
- \* Create and communicate clearly defined behavior codes and enforce them strictly and uniformly.
- \* Look at the effort as long-term.

A U.S. Department of Education study found that 78 percent of schools surveyed nationally had some form of conflict resolution in 1996-97. Sixty-eight percent of schools with programs included student involvement in resolving student conduct problems.

## Warning Signs

Presenters to the Legislative Committee on School Safety were told that no list can predict which student will turn deadly, but risk factors are known. The National School Safety Center provides a checklist of characteristics associated with school violence. This checklist is a tool to identify students whose needs require more attention.

1. Has a history of tantrums and uncontrollable angry outbursts.
2. Characteristically resorts to name calling, cursing or abusive language.
3. Habitually makes violent threats when angry.
4. Has previously brought a weapon to school.
5. Has a background of serious disciplinary problems at school and in the community.
6. Has a background of drug, alcohol or other substance abuse or dependency.
7. Is on the fringe of his/her peer group with few or no close friends.
8. Is preoccupied with weapons, explosives, or other incendiary devices.
9. Has previously been truant, suspended, or expelled from school.
10. Displays cruelty to animals.
11. Has little or no supervision and support from parents or a caring adult.
12. Has witnessed or been a victim of abuse or neglect in the home.
13. Has been bullied and/or bullies or intimidates peers or younger children.
14. Tends to blame others for difficulties and problems s/he causes her/himself.
15. Consistently prefers TV shows, movies or music expressing violent themes and acts.
16. Prefers reading materials dealing with violent themes, rituals, and abuse.
17. Reflects anger, frustration, and the dark side of life in school essays or writing projects.
18. Is involved with a gang or an antisocial group on the fringe of peer acceptance.
19. Is often depressed and/or has significant mood swings.
20. Has threatened or attempted suicide.

Source: National School Safety Center.

## Resources

Other useful federal publications include:

- *Indicators of School Crime and Safety, 1998* (available at <http://nces.ed.gov> or <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/>);
- *Early Warning, Timely Response: A Guide to Safe Schools* by the Department of Education and Department of Justice (1998);
- *Creating Safe and Drug-Free Schools: An Action Guide* by the Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and the Department of Education's Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (1996).

Single hard copies of federal publications can be ordered by calling 1-877-433-7827. The TTY/TDD number is 1-877-576-7734.

U.S. Dept. of Education ([www.ed.gov](http://www.ed.gov))  
400 Maryland Ave., SW  
Washington, DC 20202  
Safe and Drug-Free Schools Programs Office  
([www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/SDFS](http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/SDFS))

U.S. Department of Justice ([www.usdoj.gov](http://www.usdoj.gov))  
950 Pennsylvania Ave., NW  
Washington, DC 20530-0001  
Justice Information Center ([www.ncjrs.org](http://www.ncjrs.org))

**Continued on page 7.**

*The Advocate* is published by the Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth as an information forum on children's issues. The Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth, an independent state agency, serves as an advocacy agency and information resource for planning and coordination of policies, programs, and services on behalf of the state's children and youth. The 21-member Commission, appointed by the governor, works with other agencies and with regional councils on children and youth in each development district to collect information and solve problems in children's services. To receive *The Advocate*, contact Fay L. Delk, Publications Editor, Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth, 710 James Robertson Parkway, 9th Floor, Nashville, TN 37243-0800. Phone: (615) 741-2633. Fax No.: (615) 741-5956.

The state of Tennessee is an equal opportunity, equal access, affirmative action employer.

No person shall on the grounds of race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, or ability to pay, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity operated, funded, or overseen by the Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth (TCCY). It is the intent of TCCY to bind all agencies, organizations, or governmental units operating under its jurisdiction and control to fully comply with and abide by the spirit and intent of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

# TNKids Followup



## Resources

---

Continued from Page 6.

The governor's TNKids initiative has announced several activities for the future.

A statewide teleconference, "TNKids Growing and Learning," on brain development is scheduled for Jan. 29. The teleconference will educate parents, educators, and caregivers on the importance of early childhood development.

A reading initiative for elementary students was announced at Pond Gap Elementary School in Knoxville. Hambleton Hill Publishers is donating books worth \$1.2 million for students in grades kindergarten through three.

A free compact disc or cassette will be given to every baby born in Tennessee in 1999. "Listen, Learn and Grow," music to stimulate and inspire young minds, is aimed at enhancing early childhood brain development. Music giant NAXOS is a partner with the state on this project.

Approximately 30,000 children will be given free eye screenings through the coordinated efforts of the Lions Clubs of Tennessee, Vanderbilt Children's Hospital, the Pediatric Ophthalmology Division at Vanderbilt Medical Center, and the state.

U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services  
([www.hhs.gov](http://www.hhs.gov))  
200 Independence Ave., SW  
Washington, DC 20201  
Centers for Disease Control - Adolescent & School Health - [www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dash](http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dash)  
Violence Prevention - [www.cdc.gov/ncipc/dvp/dvp.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/dvp/dvp.htm)

### Other Sources:

Tennessee School Boards Association  
([www.tsba.state.tn.us](http://www.tsba.state.tn.us)), 1130 Nelson Merry Street,  
Nashville, TN, 37203, (800) 448-6465, (615) 741-0666, Fax (615) 741-2824

North Carolina Center for the Prevention of School Violence ([www2.ncsu.edu/ncsu/cep/PreViolence](http://www2.ncsu.edu/ncsu/cep/PreViolence)), 20 Enterprise St., Suite 2, Raleigh, NC 27607-7375

National School Safety Center ([www.nssc1.org](http://www.nssc1.org)),  
4165 Thousand Oaks Blvd., Suite 290, Westlake Village, CA 91362

National PTA ([www.pta.org](http://www.pta.org)), 330 N. Wabash Avenue, Suite 2100, Chicago, Illinois 60611, Phone: (312) 670-6782

## Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth Regional Coordinators

### Northeast Tennessee Council

Diane Wise  
207 N. Boone St., Suite 800  
Johnson City, TN 37604  
(423) 928-0224

### East Tennessee Council

Robert Smith  
531 Henley St., 7th Floor  
Knoxville, TN 37902  
(423) 594-6658

### Southeast Tennessee Council

Marilyn Davis  
540 McCallie Ave., Suite 643  
Chattanooga, TN 37402  
(423) 634-6210

### Upper Cumberland Council

Kathy Daniels  
435 Gould Drive  
Cookeville, TN 38506-4194  
(931) 432-4494

### Mid-Cumberland Council

Scott Ridgway  
710 James Robertson Parkway, 9th Floor  
Nashville, TN 37243-0800  
(615) 532-1579

### South Central Tennessee Council

Elaine Williams  
Post Office Box 397  
Columbia, TN 38402-0397  
(931) 388-1053

### Northwest Tennessee Council

Debbie Anderson  
Post Office Box 505  
Dresden, TN 38225  
(901) 588-0458

### Southwest Tennessee Council

Rodger Jowers  
225 Dr. Martin Luther King Drive  
Jackson, TN 38301  
(901) 423-6545

### Memphis/Shelby County Council

Juanita White  
170 N. Main St., 9th Floor  
Memphis, TN 38103  
(901) 543-7657

# Meetings and Events

## Council Activities

### Northeast Tennessee Regional Council

Nov. 12, CHILD WATCH activity  
 Nov. 20, 10:00 a.m.-Noon, Council Meeting, "Grant Search," Wesley Memorial United Methodist Church, Johnson City  
 Feb. 17, Council Meeting, TBA

### East Tennessee Regional Council

Dec. 2, Public Officials Breakfast, TBA  
 Jan. 6, Council Meeting, Update on Department of Children's Services/Non-Custodial Network, TBA  
 Feb. 3, Council Meeting, Juvenile Justice Reform Commission, TBA

### Southeast Tennessee Regional Council

Dec. 1, 1:30-3:30, Hiwassee Council, "Parents Just Have to Be Blunt," Cleveland State

### Northwest Tennessee Regional Council

Nov. 13, 9 a.m.-2:30 p.m. Joint Northwest and Southwest Meeting. Paris Landing State Park, "Teamwork 98-Project Child"

### Southwest Tennessee Regional Council

Nov. 13, Meeting with Northwest Council

### Commission on Children and Youth

Dec. 16-17, Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth Meeting, Nashville, (615) 741-2633

### C-PORT Review Schedule

Nov. 16-20, South Central Region, Exit Conference - Dec. 1  
 Dec. 7-11, Davidson County, exit conference - Dec. 18  
 Call TCCY at (615) 741-2633 for more information

### Special Events

Dec. 3-4, Tennessee Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, Juvenile Court Information System Workshop, Regal Maxwell House Hotel, Nashville, (615) 741-3980  
 Dec. 8-9, Select Committee on Children and Youth Meeting, "School Health," Meadowview Convention Center, Kingsport, (615) 741-6239

Dec. 10-12, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention National Conference, Washington, D.C., (800) 638-8736  
 Dec. 15, 11:00-2:00 p.m., TennCare Partners Advisory Committee Meeting, Middle Tennessee Mental Health Institute, Nashville, (615) 741-5949  
 Feb. 8-9, Tennessee Council of Juvenile & Family Court Judges Mid-Winter Conference, (For Judges and Referees only), Crowne Plaza Hotel, Nashville, (615) 741-3980  
 Feb. 10-12, Tennessee Conference for Child Care (TACC), "CONNECTING Curriculum," Comfort Inn, Memphis (Continues Feb. 17-19)  
 Feb. 24, 9:00-4:00 p.m., Tennessee Conference for Child Care (TACC), "Communicating With Troubled Youth and Essential Elements of Good Teamwork," Memphis, (615) 385-4433  
 Feb. 25, 9:00-Noon, Tennessee Conference for Child Care (TACC), "Helping Parents of Youths in Care," Memphis, (615) 385-4433



**The Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth**  
 P. Larry Boyd, Chair  
 Rogersville

Angi Agle  
 Oak Ridge

Jim Kidd  
 Fayetteville

Beth Alexander  
 Nashville

Jerry Maness  
 Memphis

Kimalishea Anderson  
 Knoxville

Sharon T. Massey  
 Clarksville

Jarrett Austin  
 Nashville

Linda Miller  
 Memphis

Suzanne Bailey  
 Chattanooga

Semeka Randall  
 Knoxville

James Berrong  
 Maryville

Mary Kate Ridgeway  
 Paris

Callie W. Birdsong  
 Nashville

M. Kate Rose  
 Covington

Shirlene Booker  
 Gray

Susie Stanley  
 Johnson City

Betty Cannon  
 Nashville

James Stewart  
 Jackson

Wendy Ford  
 Memphis

Brenda Vickers  
 Cookeville

Connie Givens  
 Rogersville

Jim Ward  
 Alamo

Johnny Horne  
 Chattanooga

Paige Wilson Williams  
 Knoxville

Drew Johnson  
 Johnson City

Linda O'Neal,  
 Executive Director

**Commission on Children & Youth**  
**Andrew Johnson Tower, Ninth Floor**  
**710 James Robertson Pkwy.**  
**Nashville, TN 37243-0800**  
**(615) 741-2633**

*Address Correction Requested*



**BULK RATE**  
**U.S. POSTAGE**  
**PAID**  
**NASHVILLE, TN**  
**PERMIT NO. 3555**



TCCY Authorization No. 316005. May 1998. 5,000 copies per issue. This public document was promulgated at a cost of 23 cents each.