

(11/12/25) **This continuing education resource is from the national  
Center for MH in Schools & Student/Learning Supports at UCLA**

### **Featured**

**(1) Strengthening school safety through prevention**

**(2) Call for Nominations: National Award for Work on Transforming  
Student/Learning Supports**

And, as always, you will find

**(3) Links to more resources**

**This community of practice Practitioner is designed  
for a screen bigger than an Iphone.**

**For discussion and interchange:**

**>Strengthening school safety through prevention**

**Request from a colleague:**

"We have a new school safety director for the district. He is a retired policeman. I want to provide him some concise materials, such as a school safety assessment or a checklist-type instrument. He is beginning by forming a 'needs assessment' team, which will include parents. I am concerned that given recent national violence their orientation will be more toward police interventions rather than building a proactive system. Can you provide a not too detailed list of safety tools and school status variables to evaluate in the think tank sessions. I would hope any 'tools' or documents would give a focus on the importance of things to have in place that focus on prevention."

**Center Comments:** Prevention is a cornerstone of effective school safety planning. Well-designed prevention strategies foster a positive school climate and reduce risks before they escalate. A primary focus is on deterring violence and minimizing injuries through initiatives such as violence-prevention and resiliency curricula, conflict resolution programs, and restorative justice practices. Equally important is building resiliency—enhancing students' motivation and capacity to cope with stress—while reducing circumstances that undermine well-being (e.g., threats to feelings of competence, self-determination, and connectedness).

The first priority is to strengthen school safety and crisis intervention planning and response capabilities. This can be led by school administration or through the establishment of a standing safety/crisis response and prevention workgroup. Such a workgroup varies in size but benefit from including an administrator, student support staff (e.g., nurse, psychologist, counselor), and individuals with relevant expertise from the district and community.

Initial tasks include:

- reviewing strategic and action plans for safety and crisis response and prevention
  - preparing all at a school for responding to the different types of emergencies, including clear role assignments and capacity-building for crowd management, immediate medical and psychological first aid, rumor control, and media handling
  - preparing all at a school to implement recovery efforts so students can resume learning and staff can resume their duties
  - designing and building capacity for immediate aftermath counseling and debriefing
- Once these foundational steps are in place, the workgroup can enhance plans and capacity for
- providing brief and longer-term follow-up care as necessary
  - preventing what is readily preventable.

## Comments from the Field:

We also sent this request to a number of school safety experts. Here is what they said:

- (1) “Thanks for checking with me. Here are a couple of documents and resources that come to mind. The attached toolkit has a lot of resources cited and the National Center for School Safety has many more across topics. I would not assume that a retired law enforcement officer will automatically focus on criminalization. I know this is a big concern with some civil rights groups, and the concern is propelled by some correlational studies showing that adding law enforcement to a school is associated with higher arrests and suspensions, but in our research on the role of law enforcement in threat assessment, the results are to the contrary. The way in which officers are selected and trained, and what they are expected to do in the school, matters a great deal. The new ASIS standards for school security include threat assessment, but have a primary focus on security measures that can be considered. Note that most of the document presents possible security measures, not requirements.”
- (2) “You might forward the Guide for Developing High-Quality School Emergency Operations Plans: [https://rems.ed.gov/docs/rems\\_k-12\\_guide\\_508.pdf](https://rems.ed.gov/docs/rems_k-12_guide_508.pdf) . If the Safety Director is interested, more information regarding PREPaRE workshops can be found at: <https://www.nasponline.org/professional-development/prepare-training-curriculum> ”
- (3) “There is certainly a lot of ‘noise’ in the school security field. Marketing information (open and disguised) from security vendors, overnight experts in the field promoting their services and products, etc. There really is not a template per se as requested in the inquiry you received.  
We have a great deal of free resources on our website: [www.schoolsecurity.org](http://www.schoolsecurity.org)  
We have web pages up on specific topics: <https://schoolsecurity.org/school-safety-resources/>  
Blog articles on current issues as they arise:  
<https://schoolsecurity.org/blog/Free> videos: <https://schoolsecurity.org/videos/>  
and more....”
- (4) “ It took me a while to develop a reply, because this can be a sensitive situation. Yesterday, I was in a session with several superintendents who are struggling with how to merge security measures with behavioral health prevention and intervention.  
It’s encouraging that the new director is beginning with a needs assessment team that includes parents, because that opens the door to a broader conversation about what really keeps schools safe. While police-oriented interventions are often top of mind given recent events, the most effective safety systems start long before a crisis. They build on prevention, connection, and readiness.  
There are several concise tools and checklists available that can help guide the team’s discussions without overwhelming them. For example, the U.S. Department of Education’s Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (REMS) toolkit offers a self-review checklist that districts can use to see if all the essential components of a safety plan are in place. What makes this especially useful is that it highlights prevention and preparedness, not just emergency response.  
Alongside emergency planning, it’s important to look at the overall climate of the school. Climate surveys for students, staff, and parents—many of which are free and easy to administer—can quickly surface whether people feel connected, supported, and safe (see the list below). Research shows that when students feel a strong sense of belonging and trust in adults at school, both behavioral issues and safety concerns decline, which makes school safer. Including these surveys in the assessment process ensures that the “human side” of safety is measured as carefully as the physical side.  
Other tools, like school safety assessments developed through the National Institute of Justice and state school safety centers, can provide simple checklists for reviewing the physical environment—things like secure entry points, clear visitor protocols, communication systems, and maintenance of facilities. These complement the climate surveys by addressing both the place and the people (see the list below).  
Pulling this together, I’d recommend that the team focus its review in three broad areas: the physical environment (facilities and safety infrastructure), the school climate and culture (relationships, inclusion, student and family voice), and mental/behavioral health supports (counselors, social workers, threat assessment protocols, and early intervention systems). Framing the work around these categories helps keep prevention at the center, while still leaving space for police and security expertise where appropriate. Also, school districts are used to and, in some cases, required to base its plans on the three-tiered model. We can and need to change the school safety paradigm by including security measures into the three tiers (I’ve developed that model, which has been adopted by several school

districts as part of their School Safety Plan).

- > *Physical Environment* – A safe environment starts with secure, well-maintained facilities. Schools should regularly review entry/exit procedures, lighting, visitor controls, and communication systems.

Instrument: REMS School Emergency Management Self-Assessment Checklist (U.S. Department of Education) – a concise tool that helps schools review their emergency operations plan and facility readiness.

Instrument: NIJ School Safety Assessment Tool – a practical checklist covering visitor protocols, signage, security equipment, and facility safety.

- > *School Climate and Culture* – Climate surveys reveal whether students, staff, and parents feel safe, respected, and connected. A strong sense of belonging is one of the best predictors of safe schools.

Instrument: Authoritative School Climate Survey (University of Virginia) – measures fairness, support, discipline, and engagement.

Instrument: School Climate Surveys (available from REMS and many state departments, e.g., New Jersey Staff/Student/Parent versions – quick, adaptable surveys that provide immediate feedback, and long-term surveys such as the Georgia School Climate Survey that can be used for program evaluations).

- > *Mental and Behavioral Health Supports* – Strong safety systems identify student needs early and provide supports before crises escalate.

Instrument: Virginia Student Threat Assessment Guidelines – an evidence-based tool that helps teams intervene early with at-risk students, focusing on support rather than punishment.

Instrument: School Mental Health Quality Assessment (SMH-QA) – helps schools review whether Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 supports are in place for student well-being.

- > *Family and Community Partnerships* – Parents and community agencies are critical partners in prevention and readiness.

Instrument: Parent and Guardian School Climate Survey (Connecticut version is widely used) – captures family perceptions of communication, involvement, and school climate.

Instrument: Community Partnership Self-Assessment (available through the National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments) – helps schools review how well they collaborate with external partners.

- > *Training and Preparedness* – Preparedness means that staff and students know what to do, and practice in age-appropriate, supportive ways.

Instrument: REMS Readiness and Emergency Management Drill Evaluation Tool – provides a simple way to assess the quality and effectiveness of drills.

Online course: Human Error and School Safety (an interactive 60-minute course that highlights how human error can compromise school safety plans) [I developed the course.]

Instrument: Comprehensive School Safety Planning Template (Colorado School Safety Resource Center) – includes prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery elements in one integrated framework.

With this list, each category has at least one recognized instrument or survey that the director and team can adopt or adapt. This keeps the process grounded in evidence-based practice while reinforcing that safety is more than police response — it's climate, relationships, and prevention that also matter. I hope this is helpful."

For more, see our Center resources

[\*>Safe Schools and Violence Prevention\*](#)

[\*>Violence prevention\*](#)

[\*>Crisis Prevention and Response\*](#)

[\*>Crises Assistance and Prevention\*](#)

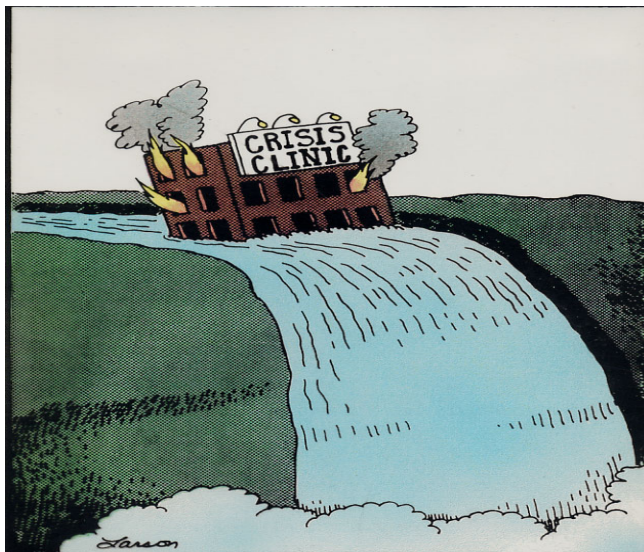
[\*>Crisis preventions self-study\*](#)

[\*>Addressing Neighborhood Problems that Affect the School\*](#)

[\*>Mapping a School's Resources to Improve Their Use in Preventing and Ameliorating Problems\*](#)

!

*Dealing with crises is a frequent way of life  
at many schools*



@#@#@

We want to appreciate schools making significant strides in rethinking and restructuring student/learning supports to better address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage disconnected students. See below:

@#@#@

## Call for Nominations:

### National Award for Work on Transforming Student/Learning Supports

The National Center for Mental Health in Schools & Student/Learning Supports is pleased to call for nominations for its award to a school making significant strides in rethinking and restructuring student/learning supports to better address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage disconnected students.

#### Award Details:

- Recognition: National acknowledgment of your school's accomplishments
- Award Amount: \$1,000 to support your efforts to share your trailblazing efforts with others

**Nomination Deadline:** December 1, 2025

#### How to Submit:

We welcome both nominations and self-nominations. Please include a brief description of the work accomplished to date and send submissions to [Ltaylor@ucla.edu](mailto:Ltaylor@ucla.edu)

#### More Information:

Visit the Center's website for details about transforming student/learning supports into a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system <https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu>.

## >Links to a few other relevant shared resources

- >>'Care as capital': Developing theory about school investment in mental health and well-being
- >>K-12 Education: Most States Require Public Schools to Teach Substance Use Prevention
- >>Prevalence and Risk and Protective Factors for Radicalization Among School-Aged Youth: A Systematic Review
- >>Supporting Safe Schools: A Report Focused on Prevention, Response, and Positive Climate
- >>The Importance of Prevention in School Safety Planning and Response
- >>3 ways AI will (and won't) change schools
- >>The Promise and Peril of AI in Mental Health
- >>Children with special educational needs are more likely to miss school – it's sign of a system under strain
- >>Cell Phone Restrictions in Schools and Student Wellbeing
- >>How Will ED's Latest Layoffs Affect Students With Disabilities?
- >>Are we over-pathologising young people's mental health?

### A Few Upcoming Webinars

*For links to the following and for more webinars, go to the Center's Links to Upcoming/Archived Webcasts/Podcasts*

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/webcast.htm>

11/12 Addressing suspensions and early dismissal for students with disabilities  
11/13 Career exploration for young learners  
11/13 How schools are navigating AI advances  
11/13 School leaders supporting instruction  
11/13 Support for homeless youth  
11/13 Principals supporting teachers in classroom instruction  
11/13 The power of protective factors in social development  
12/1 Bullying and the impact on children  
12/2 Reducing risk for youth substance misuse  
12/2 Preparing students for college and career  
12/3 Authentic partnerships with families and communities  
12/3 Proactive AI safety in schools  
12/3 Understanding anxiety  
12/8 Supporting those who experience bullying  
12/9 Conflict management and problem solving  
12/9 Title I dollars to support homelessness  
12/9 Evolving high school to engage learners  
12/10 Strategic planning for education leaders  
12/11 Shifts in federal education funding  
1/15/26 Elevating school staff talent and recruiting

*How Learning Happens* (Edutopia's series of videos explores guiding all students, regardless of their developmental starting points, to become engaged learners).

*Unpacking the Impacts of Structural Racism on Youth* (Webinar recording)

## ***National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports***

Our Center emphasizes the opportunity to start now to transform how schools address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage disconnected students.

***RELEASED for 2025-2026***

### ***An Agenda for Improving Student/Learning Supports: A Month-by-Month Guide for Systemic Change with Existing Resources***

**Let Us Know about what ideas are being proposed for moving in new directions for transforming how schools address barriers to learning and teaching.**

And if anyone is thinking about increasing the capacity of a district or school with respect to developing a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of student/learning supports, we can help. **Send all info to [ltaylor@ucla.edu](mailto:ltaylor@ucla.edu)**

\*\*\*\*\*

#### ***To Listserv Participants***

- Please share this resource with others. (Everyone has a stake in the future of public education and this is a critical time for action.)
- Let us know what's going on to improve how schools address barriers to learning & teaching and reengage disconnected students and families. (We can share the info with the over 140,000 on our listserv.)

**For those who have been forwarded this and want to receive resources directly, send an email to [ltaylor@ucla.edu](mailto:ltaylor@ucla.edu)**

***Looking for information?*** (We usually can help.)

***Have a suggestion for improving our efforts?*** (We welcome your feedback.)

**We look forward to hearing from you! Contact: [ltaylor@ucla.edu](mailto:ltaylor@ucla.edu)**

\*\*\*\*\*

**THE MORE FOLKS SHARE, THE MORE USEFUL AND  
INTERESTING THIS RESOURCE BECOMES!**

For new sign-ups – email [ltaylor@ucla.edu](mailto:ltaylor@ucla.edu)

**Also send resources ideas, requests, comments,  
and experiences for sharing.**

**THIS IS THE END OF THIS ISSUE OF THE PRACTITIONER**

Who Are We? Our national Center was established in 1995 under the auspices of the School Mental Health Project (which was established in 1986). We are part of the Department of Psychology at UCLA. The Center is co-directed by Howard Adelman and Linda Taylor.