



Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence • Institute of Behavioral Science • University of Colorado at Boulder
1440 15th Street Boulder, Colorado 80302 • t 303.492.1032 f 303.492.2151 • www.colorado.edu/cspv/

Statement by Delbert Elliott, Ph.D. and Beverly Kingston, Ph.D.

Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, University of Colorado

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Our best chance of early intervention to prevent serious violent tragedies like that in Newtown, CT is when we receive early information about suspicious or concerning behavior. We have learned that good surveillance and intelligence is a key violence prevention strategy. In four out of five school shootings examined by the U.S. Secret Service, someone knew the event was going to take place before it occurred. They also found that most attackers engaged in some behavior prior to the incident that raised concern or indicated a need for help.

This was the case in the Columbine tragedy. Recognizing that a number of significant red flags went unheeded, the Columbine Commission recommended the creation of an anonymous hot line where information about threatening behavior could be reported. Colorado then set up Safe2Tell, an anonymous reporting system ensuring that all Colorado students, parents, teachers and community members have access to a safe and anonymous way to report any safety concerns. Tips are reported anonymously to a toll-free number (1-877-542-7233) or through a Web reporting feature that can be accessed at Safe2Tell.org and through two-way dialogue texting. Safe2Tell has prevented 28 planned school attacks and responded to over 700 threats of violence since its inception in 2004. Currently this program is only implemented in Colorado but could be expanded and implemented on a national scale.

In the 13 years since Columbine we have also made significant progress in developing violence prevention and intervention programs that work, that allow us to intervene in the lives of troubled youth before violence becomes an option being considered. The best violence prevention begins early and continues through childhood and adolescence and we have tested effective programs to prevent violence throughout the life course. We also have effective intervention programs for those youth that are already engaged in

violent behaviors colorado.edu/cspv/blueprints. These effective programs can substantially reduce the likelihood of serious violence and offer enormous cost savings to society. However, they are not well funded or widely implemented. For example, less than 5% of eligible high-risk offenders are being treated with an evidence-based program due mainly to lack of funding and the availability of such programs in communities.

We encourage schools and communities to use a data driven approach to determine areas of concern and then implement effective prevention programs to meet the challenges of the high-risk youth. This involves using proven mental health assessment tools to identify those at risk for involvement in serious violence and providing evidence-based interventions to help these youth and their families, thereby reducing or eliminating the risk for violence. It also includes assessing the school climate to determine levels of bullying, and other measures of early involvement in aggressive behavior. The surveys can also be used to make sure the programs implemented are having the intended effects on reducing youth violence. Additional information about CSPV's school climate surveys is available at colorado.edu/cspv/safeschools/.

CSPV is applying this data-driven approach in a Northeast Denver community with high rates of violence through a CDC funded Academic Center for Excellence in Youth Violence Prevention project. The project, called "Steps to Success," aims to mobilize community members and agencies to use a data-driven approach to implement evidence-based programs and practices, and to evaluate the impact of that approach on youth violence and related outcomes. This project puts all the best that we know about violence prevention and healthy youth development into practice in one community and illustrates an evidence-based approach that other communities can model.

Our nation clearly possesses the tools and knowledge needed to prevent much of the violence and to throw safety lines to those young people who already have been swept up in the currents of violence. To this point we have lacked the leadership, political will and funding to fully implement these models. Let us commit to changing this and putting what we know works into action.