

MOTION BY SUPERVISORS JANICE HAHN AND
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Safety in Our Schools

Premeditated school shootings have occurred throughout the nation, with the latest tragic shooting occurring in Florida. Last week alone, in Los Angeles County we encountered threats of potential violence at schools in Long Beach, Santa Clarita, Inglewood, Bellflower, Cerritos and Whittier. These incidents are reminders that our own communities are not immune to the epidemic of violence in this nation.

In 2009, the Department of Mental Health established the School Threat Assessment Response Team (START) in an effort to prevent campus violence by early identification and intervention of at-risk youth and young adults. In this past week, START has received 63 referrals. Within the last year, the START team conducted ongoing interventions with 127 students after receiving concerns from school faculty members, law enforcement and other professionals. Through this work eighty-seven additional individuals received more immediate services based on their level of need.

START is currently staffed with 10 clinicians. A significant portion of their work is conducted in collaboration with the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department on MOTION

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community college campuses. Clearly, we must consider the level of need in our community and determine whether START should be expanded in this County. Further, any expansion should be accompanied by plans to ensure that those who suspect a troubled youth or young adults may be at risk to commit violent acts have knowledge regarding how and where to seek help. Finally, although many grieving families today have experienced firsthand losses that are unimaginable, others also find themselves traumatized by the stories of children whose lives were tragically ended by violence. Those so affected, including parents and teachers, need information about how best to help and support our youth and young adults. The County has tools to prevent these tragic events and we need to make sure that parents, students and teachers are aware of them.

WE, THEREFORE, MOVE, the Director of Mental Health, in coordination with the Chief Executive Officer, Los Angeles County Office of Education, and Sheriff's Department, along with input from entities such as the faith-based community, local non-profit organizations, community providers, the National Alliance on Mental Illness, educational personnel and other relevant County departments to report back in 30-days with recommendations to enhance the START program including possible program expansion; and effective outreach and dissemination of information to school personnel, educators, parents, those who may suspect a youth is at risk for committing an act of campus violence and those directly and indirectly affected by reports of school violence.

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