

**COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES - DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH
EMERGENCY OUTREACH BUREAU**

TARGETED SCHOOL VIOLENCE: PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION

Premeditated school shootings have occurred throughout the nation. The tragedies have resulted in serious injuries and loss of life with associated acute and long-term emotional harm to survivors, educational institutions, and communities.

In response to this particular type of school violence the May 2002 United States Secret Service and the United States Department of Education's "Final Report and Findings of the Safe School Initiative: Implications for Prevention of School Attacks in the United States" and the 2007 Virginia Tech Review Panel provided a list of findings and recommendations addressing the Columbine, Virginia Tech, and similar school shootings. In general, the majority of school shooters exhibited a pattern of maladjustment and behaviors of concern that predated the student's final act of violence. These reports identified a number of key findings such as the importance of developing preventive measures including protocols and procedures for responding to and managing threats and other behaviors of concern.

In response to these events and publications the County of Los Angeles the Department of Mental Health Emergency Outreach Bureau established a School Threat Assessment Response Team (START) in 2009 dedicated exclusively to the prevention of campus violence. The goals are relatively straightforward: develop relevant partnerships to mitigate/eliminate threats; assist students of concern in their efforts to complete their education without incident; and prevent a Columbine or Virginia Tech incident.

START has responded to numerous incidents of potential school violence in elementary, middle, high school and college campuses. Timely intervention has prevented a school tragedy.

START recently established a Memorandum of Understanding with the Los Angeles Unified School District and Los Angeles Police Department to collaborate on students of concern. Recognizing that the student may require mental health services, academic assistance, or criminal intervention, this partnership allows for a coordinated effort to assist school threat management teams and enhance intervention strategies. This partnership is the first of its kind in the country and was recognized in September 2012 by the Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University through their Bright Ideas in Government program.

Partnerships with other law enforcement agencies and educational institutions are currently underway. The local Federal Bureau of Investigation Office has partnered with START to develop a regional approach to Targeted School Violence. This effort will formalize our effort with college campuses.

In summary, START collaborates with educational institutions, law enforcement and other agencies to address Targeted School Violence through Training and Consultation, Early Screening and Identification, Assessment and Intervention, and Case Management and Monitoring.