School Safety and the Whole Child
CEFPI International
Speakers

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Agenda

Introduction and background
School-associated violence
School safety
Intervention
Psychological safety
Questions
Post-Traumatic Design: How To Construct Our Schools To Heal Past Wounds And Prevent Future Violence

By Vanessa Quirk
(Read the original story here)

Over a month has passed since the Sandy Hook tragedy. Its surviving students have gone back to school, albeit at another facility (decorated with old posters to make it feel familiar), and are working on putting this tragic event behind them. The nation is similarly moving on — but this time, with an eye to action.

While the correlation between shelters and schools may not be immediately apparent, I believe the comparison to be a rich one. Consider: in shelters, safety is a primary concern, since many abusers stalk their partners and attempt to force them home; secondly, coping and healing is an intrinsic part of the shelter’s program; and, thirdly, shelters must be designed to incorporate not just parent’s, but also children’s, needs.
Background: the Building Dignity Project

WSCADV Mission

End domestic violence through advocacy and action for social change

A nonprofit coalition of 60+ domestic violence programs across the state

Focus on training, public policy change, research, leadership development, and community educational tools
Dr. Margaret Hobart, WSCADV
Shelter resident focus groups
Rules

We found many of our rules unnecessarily controlling, and found they did not foster the environment of empowerment that we wanted to create in our program.

“How We Gave Up Curfew (and a lot of other rules, too),”
Karin White Tautfest,
YMCA of Pierce County
Site Design

Empower
Making one’s own decisions; reclaiming the autonomy and dignity eroded by abuse

Assess the neighborhood’s ability to support residents’ regaining independence, economic opportunities, and social connections. When building a new shelter or assessing an existing building as a potential shelter, consider the following: will residents be able to easily access public transportation? Groceries? Health care? Educational and recreational facilities? Is the area pedestrian and/or bicycle friendly? Will the neighborhood feel safe, particularly to women walking with children? Will residents be able to access resources nearby? If not, can the site provide enough space to accommodate bringing resources in?

CASE STUDY
Rebuild: Family Resource Center of Lincoln County

“Feeling a part of a community is a wonderful way to heal – especially for kids. Being integrated into a neighborhood helps ‘normalize’ childhood for kids.”

Lynn Kuchenbuch,
Family Resource Center, Lincoln County
Site Design

[Re]connect
Community support and [re]connection with others to break the isolation of abuse

Allow varied/multiple levels of access for public areas.
A community meeting room open to the public may be used by residents to gather with family and supportive friends, host community groups for meetings, and/or provide a location for classes or workshops. Similarly, an outdoor gathering space that can be used for public events, without compromising resident safety, can invite community members to get involved in fulfilling the shelter’s mission.

LEARN MORE
For more on community access at the Dove House, see Communal Space: [Re]connect

CASE STUDY
Rebuild: Eastside Domestic Violence Program

“Sometimes things are safer in broad daylight.”
Cheryl Bozarth, DAWN (Former Director of Dove House)

CONSIDER THIS
Protecting individual confidentiality does not always require a secret location. While many domestic violence programs have traditionally relied on “secret” locations as a strategy to keep the shelter safe, it is more difficult to keep a location secret now than it was 30 years ago. GPS-enabled devices and the internet challenge programs’ abilities to ensure secrecy. In response, some programs focus on security and individual client confidentiality while acknowledging that physical locations may be known. These programs have found that letting go of the “secret location” has opened new ways for their communities to support both the program and individual survivors.
Site Design

Secure
A sense of safety and well-being

Create a secure environment with clearly defined boundaries between the shelter and surrounding community.
Limited visibility into the interior from the public, exterior side protects residents’ privacy.
Protected outdoor play spaces for children visible from communal spaces and individual units allow parents to supervise children.
Exterior lighting on timers in outdoor areas extend the opportunities for use of outdoor spaces into the evening.

LEARN MORE
For more on how clear sightlines support parenting, see Site Design:
Parent

CASE STUDY
Rebuild: Family Resource Center of Lincoln County

“I feel safe because there are bars on all the windows, there’s cameras everywhere, the police come in two minutes... so I feel like in the building... I am safe.”

Resident,
YWCA Pierce County

STRAATEGY IN ACTION
A steel artist donated time to create window coverings which are both secure and artful at the YWCA Pierce County.
Controlled access allows residents to come and go freely and safely.
Strategies include:
- Keycards
- Key Fobs
- Perimeter and entry cameras

Controlled access can ease curfew policies. Fob access is more secure than keyed access and more flexible than staff-monitored access. Where a lost key could mean changing all the locks, a lost fob or key card may simply be deleted from the system. Focus groups indicate that survivors appreciate the use of cameras to ensure their safety and security from their abusers. Agency policies and practices need to make clear that the intention and use of security cameras is for safety not to monitor residents’ behavior.

LEARN MORE
For staff related benefits, see Staff Space: Secure

CASE STUDIES
- Remodel: YWCA Walla Walla
- Rebuild: Family Resource Center of Lincoln County
- Rebuild: Salvation Army Catherine Booth House

“Yes, a lot of people know where the shelter is, but there are cameras, so if a person is coming in that shouldn’t be there, they have a way to lock the doors. So I feel safe. Even if the abuser is out there, he can’t come in.”

Resident, YWCA Pierce County

< STRATEGY IN ACTION
At the YWCA Pierce County staff monitor the entry via a camera and ask residents for a unique number code before buzzing them into the shelter.
Art can be a bridge to the community and an expression of culture. Art can communicate welcome and affirm the value of the services provided and the population being served.

Partner with local organization to create and maintain outdoor spaces. Inviting local organizations and volunteers to sponsor and maintain green spaces, gardens and playgrounds, etc. on shelter property is a cost-effective strategy for achieving high quality outdoor spaces. It also helps to get the community invested in the well-being of the shelter residents.

**CASE STUDY**
Rebuild: YWCA Pierce County

< STRATEGY IN ACTION
At the Asian Counseling and Referral Services the artwork throughout the building reflects the community’s traditions; the artist worked from the idea of everyone sitting together to have a banquet; and engaged community members in creating works of art using rice bowls.

“There are lots of people in communities who want to be a part of something good; we just need to ask them for help.”

Karin White Tautfest,
YWCA Pierce County

< STRATEGY IN ACTION
Pomegranate Center is a non-profit organization in Washington State that engages volunteers in designing and building unique gathering places and public art that reflects the culture and character of the people they serve. To learn more, see the Pomegranate Center website.
Private Space

[Re]connect
Community support and [re]connection with others to break the isolation of abuse

At entries to private spaces, dutch doors, shades and shutters allow residents to control their environment and level of social engagement. This makes it easy for residents to signal their openness to spontaneous socializing.

“It feels good to have my own space. I lock the door, I don’t let anybody in sometimes, or I tell them to come on in. It feels good.”

Resident,
YWCA Pierce County
Access to nature promotes well-being.
Outdoor space offers opportunities for reflection, connection with children, privacy and healthy activity. Research has shown that nature, including the feeling of sunshine and access to views of trees, etc., can provide healing effects on those recovering from trauma. (Cooper Marcus, Claire and M. Barnes. Healing Gardens: Therapeutic Benefits and Design Recommendations, New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1999.)

For more on Nature Explore
Classrooms for domestic violence shelters, see here

CASE STUDY
Remodel: YWCA Walla Walla

Gardens can offer solace.
Healing gardens can facilitate art therapy sessions, exterior group work sessions, and the option to garden. Gardens also offer a point of connection with other community programs, such as those aimed at environmental education. At the same time the garden wall can create a protected outdoor play space for children.

95%

The percentage of shelters that state a calming outdoor area would help their clients' recovery process.

"Mary Kay Truth About Abuse" Survey, National Findings from Third Survey of Domestic Violence Shelters in the U.S., April 2011

“A young girl learning to care for a small plant is also learning to care for herself. A little boy watching a resident killdeer protect her nest begins to explore family dynamics. These lessons open the children’s minds and hearts, and the healing begins.”
Shauna Bigelow,
Shelter Children's Counselor,
Family Shelter Services, Downers Grove, IL
School-associated Violence
Myths

School violence is an epidemic

School violence is a police/security problem

School violence is committed by extremists
School-associated Violence

Deaths occurred in communities of all sizes and in 25 states
Firearms were responsible for majority of deaths
Victims & offenders - male & young

Motives - interpersonal disputes
Less than 1% of homicides and suicides in U.S.
High schools and now universities
(source: NSSC, 1998)
School-based Safety and Crisis Issues

Schools are a safe place for students

Incidents of school violence have dropped since 1992 in the US; recent increase 2007

Violence has changed over time

:: Urban
:: Rural/Suburban
:: Female – top group now
:: Cyberbullying

It can happen in your district

Prevention is cheaper than intervention
Safety & Crisis Issues

There is no single “profile” to define who will be a “shooter” – U.S. Secret Service - 2002

Schools do not believe it will happen to them

Schools need a Safe School Plan

Schools need to prepare for crisis response

Schools need to focus outside the school district/local authority for resources
Importance of School Safety

Physical safety of students and staff
Preserving the right of other students to an education
Strong preventive action is justified

1-3% of students will be a chronic problem – easily identified by administrators or teachers or other students
Issues to Discuss

Physical Plant
:: Surveillance
:: Access
:: Evacuation/stay in place
:: Media/cell access or denial
:: Hardening of structure

Options
:: Gathering places – bathroom, cafeteria; library, playground = trouble spots
:: Monitoring – teachers/staff
Issues to Discuss

Pleasant environment – clean, orderly, etc.
Messages for and to students
Safe & monitored gathering places – “build community”

Prevention v. intervention
Ability to modify teacher and child space – paint, walls murals, mosaics, stained glass, etc.
Avoid dead-end hallways; isolated rooms
Issues to Discuss - Programs

Communication – inside and outside school
Community involvement
Prevention programs
Programs for At-Risk students
Family support

Rules/social media policies
Allocation of resources
Triggers – bully proofing; cyberbullying; discipline
Defining a Safe School

A “safe school” is a place where students can learn and teachers can teach in a warm and welcoming environment, free of intimidation and fear of violence . . . .

A safe school provides an educational climate that fosters a spirit of acceptance and care for every child. It is a place where behavior expectations are clearly communicated, consistently enforced, and fairly applied.

Ron Stephens, 1998
Safe & orderly school: What does the research say?
Characteristics of Safe Schools: 1

Focus on academic achievement
Involve families in meaningful ways
Develop links to the community
Emphasize positive relationships among students and staff

Discuss safety issues openly
Treat students with equal respect
Characteristics of Safe Schools: 2

Create ways for students to share their concerns
Help children feel safe expressing their feelings
Have in place a system for referring children who are suspected of being abused or neglected
Characteristics of Safe Schools: 3

Offer extended day programs for children
Promote good citizenship and character
Identify problems and assess progress toward solutions

Support students in making the transition to adult life and the workplace
Six Broad Factors Contributing to School Safety

Personal characteristics of each student and staff member
Physical environment of the school
Social environment on campus

Cultural characteristics of students and staff member
Local political atmosphere
Surrounding economic conditions
Safe School Philosophy and Our Vision

It is easier and cheaper to prevent school violence than to deal with its aftermath. It is an ongoing, broad-based process that needs regular attention and allows students, teachers, and staff to work in a safe environment where all students can achieve at high levels.

Safe schools is an integrated part of total learning, not an add-on.
Connect with Every Child

Small schools
Well-managed classrooms
Positive (not harsh) discipline policies
Overlapping and integrated social groups
Impact of the Child Development Project

see: Every Child Learning: Safe and Supportive Schools (Learning First Alliance)

www.learningfirst.org
Support Family-School Collaboration

Valuing all families;
Effective outreach (e.g., FAST);
Culturally competent approaches (e.g., Lincoln Elementary School, Salt Lake City);

Support for family participation (e.g., Keyes for Networking); and
Positive interactions with families (e.g., Cleveland Elementary School, Tampa, FL)
See: www.CASEL.org
Foundation for Safe, Responsive Schools:

Treat all students & families with equal respect
Ensure ways for students to share safety concerns
Ensure safe, confidential ways for students to express their needs, fears, & anxieties to caring adults

Protect against abuse & neglect
Reduce risk behaviors with extended day programs
Coordinate & tailor services to prevent “too little too late”

Regularly evaluate results
Foundation for a Safe School Environment

Strong leadership
Caring faculty
Parent & community involvement
Student participation in design
Interventions based on careful assessment & setting measurable goals

Research-based prevention & intervention
Access to quality team consultation
Foundation for a Safe School Environment

Policies that support responsible behavior
Community-developed code of conduct
Negative consequences only within positive reinforcing environment

“Zero tolerance” for guns & “zero reject” from educational opportunity for all
Foundation for a Safe School Environment

**Summary**
School’s physical environment is evaluated & monitored
Everyone is responsible for a safe school
Class size is small
Dismissal is staggered

Community police/SRO’s are welcome and services are coordinated
After-school programs are available
Anti-bullying programs are in place
Early Warning Signs
Predictive Factors in Youth Violence

Child abuse
Violence in homes (Domestic violence)
Ineffective parenting
Media violence including Internet & video games
Gun access

Prejudice/intolerance/
gender issues
Poverty
Substance abuse
Protective Factors in Youth

Positive role models – “Caring Adult”
Development of self-esteem and self-efficacy
Supportive relationships, including teachers & friends

A sense of hope about the future
Belief in oneself
Strong social skills
Good peer relationships
Protective Factors in Youth

A close, trusting bond with a nurturing adult outside the family
Empathy and support from the mother or mother figure
Attached to or involved in community and school

Ability to find refuge and sense of self-esteem in hobbies and creative pursuits, useful work, and the assigned chores
Sense that one is in control of one’s life and can cope with whatever happens
What Can We Do?

We have to educate ALL children - “They send their “best” child to school each day” Secretary of Education R. Riley

Curriculum that teaches problem solving, anger management (social skills)

Children who feel connected to their family, school, and community

Positive & caring relationship with at least ONE caring adult
What Can We Do?

Break the “Conspiracy of Silence”
Start early in making a difference
Prevention is less costly than incarceration

Establish links with ALL community services & organizations that deal with our students
More help for teachers - they cannot do it all
What Can We Do?

More support staff - counselors, school psychologists, etc.
Good crisis plan and “practice them”
Remember: Kids and guns do not match

Schools are safe places to be but we can make them safer
Effective Interventions
Prevention/Intervention

School-wide Prevention
90%

Targeted Prevention
7-10%

Intensive Services
1-3%
Universal Interventions

Rules
:: Agreed upon, willing to enforce
:: Posted, brief, positively stated

Routines
:: Avoid problem contexts, times, and groupings
:: Consistent

Physical arrangements
:: Clear boundaries
:: Supervision of all areas
Keys to Effective Intervention

Identify and intervene early
Be a student of the child
Start where the child is
Give 4 times as much praise as criticism

Have a plan; stick with it
Evaluate
Collaborate
Instruction, Planning, Prevention

Teaching social skills
Prevention as prior planning
Comprehensive planning
Involve all stakeholders

Violence is learned behavior and can be unlearned
Early Intervention that teaches positive life skills may be the best hope of preventing violent behavior
Violence Prevention: School-wide

Physical plant
Organization
Discipline
Norms
Crisis response
Teacher training
Instructional delivery
Violence Prevention: Classroom

Teach and practice social skills
Connect violence prevention skills to academics
Manage class efficiently
Develop media awareness

Teach conflict resolution skills
Remind students that they can make a difference
Violence Prevention: Community

Mentoring
Parent involvement
Parenting education skills
Youth services
Building liaisons
Creating service opportunities
Weapons education
Challenges to Violence Prevention

System coordination
Parent participation
School climate
Implementation method
(avoid scare tactics)
Program scope - long term and comprehensive best

Expectations - no easy cure - one size does not fit all
Online resources

National Association of School Psychologists
www.nasponline.org

US Department of Education
ww.ed.gov/emergencyplan

Federal Emergency Management
www.fema.gov; or www.ready.gov

Kentucky Safe Schools
www.kysafeschools.org

American Society for Suicide Prevention
www.afsp.org

Center for Effective Collaboration & Practice
www.cecp.air.org

Center for Mental Health in the Schools
http://smph.psych.ucla.edu

Safe Students/Healthy Students Action Center
www.sshsac.org

Surgeon General
www.surgeongeneral.gov

Safe Youth www.safeyouth.org

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning.
www.CASEL.org

Center for the Study of Violence Prevention www.colorado.edu/cspv/
(See Blueprints)

Virginia Tech Center for Peace Studies and Violence Prevention
www.cpsvp.vt.edu/

Secret Service National Threat Assessment Center
www.secretservice.gov/ntac.shtml

Center for Disease Control (CDC)
www.cdc.gov
Psychological Aspects of School Safety

Safe

1. I feel safe

I think of music, spiders, a warm bed, a house, and a kitchen with food. It makes me feel happy, warm, and secure. I think of the people who love me and that protect me, and that take care of my best interest.

This word reminds me of when my family is around me and when I'm at school with my friends. I don't feel safe when I'm alone.

This word reminds me of when my friends are next to me. I feel safe next to them and when my mom and dad are around me. I also feel safe.

Future

I think of the unexpected, the uncertain future; I don't like change. It makes me vulnerable.

The future worries me. When I'm trying to make a decision, I think too much about the future, which makes me indecisive.

When I think of the future, I think of being a doctor.
Characteristics of Psychological Safety in Children

Children feel safe to try new things
Children feel free from current or long-term threat
Children feel supported by adults and peers

Children feel securely attached to significant others, including peers and adults
Children feel competent to handle stressors
Children have good self-esteem
Consequences of Feeling Unsafe

Increased sense of vulnerability
Increased sense of incompetence
Increased anxiety, unhappiness, and sadness

Potential for chronic stress and trauma
Increased sense of being a victim
Social problems
Learning problems
Consequences of Feeling Unsafe

Developmentally inappropriate behavior
Increased sense of alienation, marginalization, social isolation

Virtually all school shooters were current or former students who felt alienated or isolated
Lowered self-esteem
Increased risk for emotional and behavioral problems
Consequences of Feeling Unsafe

Impairments in making and maintaining adequate interpersonal relationships

Perceptions that others do not care about them

Perceptions that others are not willing to help or intervene on their behalf

Perceptions that others may be hostile or indifferent to them
Consequences of Feeling Unsafe

Perceptions of unfair treatment
Rebellious and oppositional behavior that is not developmentally appropriate, i.e., is not expected for the child’s developmental level or age

Retaliation for feeling victimized
Arrested social and emotional development
Academic underachievement
Causes of Feeling Psychologically Unsafe

Genetic and biological factors
Poverty
Dysfunctional families
Parent/caregiver mental health issues
Parenting practices

Exposure to violence
Learning, developmental, and emotional problems
Causes of Feeling Psychologically Unsafe

Relational aggression and bullying
Schools that do not meet child’s basic social, psychological, and educational needs

Families that do not meet child’s social and developmental needs
Lack of attachment to others, especially someone who is considered trustful
Chronic stress and trauma
School Factors that Promote Psychological Safety

Adequate and accessible facilities
Caring and supportive teachers
“Schools within schools”
Protection from harassment and bullying

Physically safe environments
Inclusive and responsive schools
Avoid marginalizing students
Questions