



Los Angeles Unified School District
Division of School Operations
Student Health and Human Services
School Mental Health

School Violence Prevention Awareness for Parents/Caregivers



School violence is defined as any incident in which a current or former student purposefully uses a weapon to cause physical injury to, or the death of, at least one other student and/or school employee in or on the immediate property of the school while targeting in advance one or more specific and/or random student(s) and/or employee(s) (United States Secret Service, 2019).

School Violence is Preventable

Understanding various factors and warning signs is key to prevention and safety, since school violence is never caused by one single factor in isolation. Below are examples of warning signs and risk enhancers. These examples are NOT all-inclusive and are not intended to be used as a checklist.

Warning Signs

Are observable behaviors indicating that an individual may be moving on a pathway towards violence. These behaviors may be *cries for help or invitations to intervene*.

- Perception of being wronged or picked on
- Significant changes in appearance, behavior, thoughts, and/or feelings
- Feelings of anger, agitation
- Social withdrawal and/or isolation
- Violent threats (direct, indirect, verbal, or written)
- History of violent behavior
- Access to weapons
- Suicidal ideation and/or self-injurious behavior
- Preoccupation with violence (e.g., themes of violence found in social media, online gaming, music, books, movies, internet searches)
- Making final arrangements (e.g., giving away prized possessions, posting plans on social media, sending text messages to friends)
- Thinking in extremes, such as an “us” versus “them” mentality

Risk Enhancers

There is no accurate or useful profile of someone who engages in school violence. However, it is important to understand the warning signs and risk enhancers so that concerns can be addressed in a timely manner to ensure support, secure school safety, and mitigate risk.

- Access to weapons and firearms
- History of stressful events (e.g., loss; peer relations; school; personal distress or family rejection over gender identity or sexual orientation)
- History of mental illness (personal/familial), including depression
- History of involvement with law enforcement, including disciplinary actions
- Using alcohol/drugs

Understanding School Violence

There were more school shootings in 2022 (46) than in any year since Columbine. This mirrored America’s broader rise in gun violence as it emerged from the pandemic. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security shows that if we “know the signs” of gun violence, we can prevent it and reverse the trend.

- Guns used in about 68% of gun-related incidents at schools were taken from the home, a friend or a relative.
- In 4 out of 5 school shootings, at least one other person had knowledge of the attacker’s plan but failed to report it.
- In a comprehensive school shooting study, the Secret Service and Department of Education found that 93% of school shooters planned the attack in advance. When people see the signs and get help, we can end school shootings.
- Almost all mass school shooters shared threatening or concerning messages or images. More than 75% of the incidents raised concern from others prior to the attacks. Bystanders saw warning signs in most documented active shooter cases.
- About 1 out of 5 gay and lesbian youth have been threatened or injured with a weapon on school property.
- Children of color are far more likely to experience campus gun violence. It’s more than twice as much for Hispanic students and over three times as much for Black students.
- The majority of individuals with diagnosed mental illness do not engage in violence against others.

***17 Facts About Gun Violence and School Shootings**

<https://www.sandyhookpromise.org/blog/gun-violence/facts-about-gun-violence-and-school-shootings/>

Resources

For consultation, contact the LAUSD Student and Family Wellness Hotline at (213) 241-3840.

EMERGENCY INFORMATION / After Hours Services

If you need IMMEDIATE help, call 911

For a psychiatric emergency, contact the Department of Mental Health ACCESS Center at (800) 854-7771

Los Angeles School Police Department (213) 625-6631

Resources for Students & Parents/Caregivers

Crisis Text Line (24/7)

- Text "LA" to 741741

988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (24/7)

For individuals who are in a suicidal crisis or emotional distress.

- Call: 988 or 800.273.8255
- Text: 988
- Chat: <https://988lifeline.org/>

Teen Line (6pm–10pm PST, Daily)

Trained teen listeners provide support, resources and hope to any teen who is struggling.

- Call: 800.852.8336
- Text: TEEN to 839863

Trevor Lifeline (24/7)

Crisis intervention and suicide prevention services for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) young people ages 13-24.

- Call: 866.488.7386
- Text: 678678
- Chat: <https://thetrevorproject.org/webchat>



Los Angeles Schools Anonymous Reporting (LASAR)

App to anonymously report instances of suspicious activity, mental health incidents, and other safety issues from a smartphone.

School Contact Information

School: _____

Crisis Team Member: _____

Phone/Extension: _____

Crisis Team Member: _____

Phone/Extension: _____

As a parent/caregiver, you play an important role in supporting children that may be in distress and in need of support. Here are some Psychological First Aid* strategies you can utilize to provide support and respond:

LISTEN

- Listen without judgement.
- Observe verbal and non-verbal cues.
- Monitor social media and online gaming communications.
- Observe your child's personalized space/locations for worrisome information (e.g., bedroom, garage, basement, or other family member's home).
- Pay attention to changes in your child's behaviors, appearance, and schoolwork (e.g., writings, drawings, essays).
- Ask open-ended questions, such as:
 - *How long have you been feeling this way?*
 - *Are you thinking of hurting someone?*
 - *Has anyone threatened to hurt you?*

PROTECT

- Take action to ensure safety. Make a plan for the monitoring and supervision of your child (e.g., when you are at work, while running an errand, when you have an appointment).
- Make a plan to alter the home environment to maintain safety; including securing all objects/ materials that could be dangerous to your child.
- Monitor and restrict access to violent/inappropriate video games, music, media, and online activity, including websites, social media accounts and posts, video sharing, video gaming, etc. Parents/ caregivers should have access to their child's usernames and passwords for each account.
- Explore and discuss strategies to maintain safety to and from school and/or extracurricular activities.
- Be a *Trusted Adult* for your child.

CONNECT

- Seek support from school administration, mental health personnel, and/or a counselor.
- Contact the Department of Mental Health, law enforcement, or child protective services, as needed.
- Help your child identify adults they are connected with at home, school and within the community.

MODEL

- Remain calm.
- Be aware of your thoughts, feelings, and reactions as you listen without judgement.
- Report any concerns you might have about school violence to the school and/or law enforcement. This is an opportunity to model for your child(ren) what it looks like to seek help from others, and that rather than telling on someone you may be saving lives.

TEACH

- Learn the warning signs and risk enhancers for threats and provide information and education regarding school violence.
- Teach healthy ways to cope with stress, including deep breathing, writing/drawing, exercise, or talking.
- Seek options for school and community resources, including referrals for professional mental health services.
- Encourage help seeking behaviors and help your child identify *Trusted Adults* they can go to at home and at school.
- Teach your child what it means to be a *Student Upstander*, not a bystander.

*The PFA: Listen, Protect, Connect model was created in partnership by UCLA Center for Public Health and Disasters, LAUSD Trauma Services Adaptation Center, and the National Center for the School Crisis and Bereavement. The authors M. Schreiber, R. Gurwitch, and M. Wong have authorized this adaptation.