



## April 2019 IMPLEMENTING NEW SCHOOL SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS

In 2018 we saw the most school shootings on record, and the burden on schools to safeguard their students and employees has grown commensurately. There are new developments to help schools meet this challenge, and they can be found in reports issued in December 2018 by the federal government and the state of Florida after the school shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas School in Parkland, Florida. ([Final Report of the Federal Commission on School Safety](#) December 2018, [Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Safety Commission, Initial Report, January 2019](#).) These reports represent the current thinking on safeguarding schools against gun violence. Every school should read these reports and conduct a risk assessment to ensure they're following best practices to prevent gun violence. In the meantime, this document provides essential safety recommendations that can be implemented immediately while comprehensively addressing larger security gaps. Even small changes can have a big impact on school safety.

We believe the four areas discussed below can have enormous impact in reducing gun violence in schools: a well-administered hotline for early reporting of concerning behavior, incorporating gun safety into school culture, using a social-emotional education curriculum that promotes inclusivity and gun safety, and an effective Code Red policy. Three of these measures are preventative, and the fourth--Code Red--can save lives during a gun violence episode.

### **Priorities for Preventing Gun Violence in Schools**

#### **1. Hotline--Identify and Intervene in Concerning Behavior**

Effectiveness: Extremely effective, since 80% of school shooters tell someone about their plans.

Program: Elements of an effective reporting system :

- Establish an anonymous and easy way to report troubling behavior
- Visually display the reporting hotline in every classroom and include a short description.
- Encourage early reporting and emphasize reporting of any troubling behavior--not just threats. Encourage reporting as a way to change a friend's life or save lives.
- Educate students and teachers to get comfortable using it.

- Establish a threat assessment team to document reports, evaluate reported behavior and refer to appropriate treatment, diversion and emergency protective orders. (Ensure awareness and understanding of California Gun Violence Restraining Order law.)
- Review the reports of troubling behavior received to date to ensure that adequate action has been taken.
- Review the results of the California Healthy Kids Survey to identify risks in your school—weapons, violence, bullying, etc.
- Reports of concerning behavior may also be made to:
  - FBI online reports: <https://tips.fbi.gov/>
  - Local San Francisco FBI Office Public Access Line: 415-553-7400.
  - Or by calling 911.

### Resources

Sandy Hook Promise has established a free “[Say Something](#)” anonymous reporting system and training curriculum.

Contact [programs@sandyhookpromise.org](mailto:programs@sandyhookpromise.org)

## **2. Incorporate Gun Safety into School Culture**

Effectiveness: Extremely effective in reducing school shootings, since 75% of school shooters get access to weapons at home. Implementation is simple and has the added benefit of reducing suicides and domestic violence.

Program: The National PTA and American Academy of Pediatrics support asking about safe gun storage.

- Remind parents it’s their job, and legal responsibility in California, to keep guns locked and ammunition stored separately.
- Include gun safety in the school’s beginning-of-the-year contract with parents.
- Use the school newsletter and website to remind parents of their obligation to keep guns locked, and to ask if unlocked guns are in the home before sending children to play or babysit at another’s home.
- Train kids to ask parents and friends if they have unlocked guns in the home.
- Train students, teachers and parents about seeking Gun Violence Restraining Orders. GVROs remove guns from the home of someone who is at risk to himself or others. (GVROs are called ERPOs in other states.)
- Encourage your school PTA to invite a Brady volunteer to present information about safe gun storage, GVROs and anonymous tip-lines.

### Resources

The Brady Center’s [End Family Fire program](#) provides information for parents about safe storage of guns in the home. Brady can supply digital versions of these materials.

View a [short PSA video](#) on safe gun storage and additional resources at

[EndFamilyFire.org](http://EndFamilyFire.org)

[The ASK Toolkit](#) is a parent toolkit for asking about guns in the home.

Sample Parent-School [Gun Safety Pledge](#).

[Gun Safety Pledge](#) used in Marin County California Schools.

Brady Center members are available to help implement this program in Marin County.

### **3. Supplement Your Social Emotional Education Program**

Effectiveness: Very effective. An essential component of a school's gun violence prevention program.

Program: Supplement existing character education curriculum with these elements:

- Train students to be inclusive, recognize the signs that others may be struggling, and reach out to those who may be struggling.
- Train students to use the hotline to report concerning behavior or someone who may be thinking of harming himself or others.
- Use students as resources in diagnosing both threats and solutions. The students generally know who may have weapons, who is fantasizing about suicide, and who is threatening violence. The California Healthy Kids Survey provides specific feedback about these risks in your school. School climate can also be measured using free U.S. Department of Education school climate surveys.
- Teach safe gun storage and empower students to talk to their parents, friends, relatives, babysitting employers and future roommates about whether their guns are stored safely: locked, unloaded, and out of children's reach. Brady Center can provide a free [digital toolkit](#) for this training (target audience: high school students and parents).
- Teach students to ask law enforcement for a Gun Violence Restraining Order if they're concerned about a family member or friend in crisis who should not have access to guns.

Resources:

Sandy Hook Promise provides a [free curriculum](#).

### **4. Code Red—Active Assailant Response Policy**

Effectiveness: Extremely effective component of a school emergency plan. A well-executed Code Red will save lives in an emergency.

Program: A written, unambiguous Code Red or similar active assailant response policy is an essential component of a school's emergency response program. A Code Red policy should:

- Unambiguously establish the roles, responsibilities and actions of all persons on campus to identify threats, notify others of threats and respond to threats. Coordinate with local law enforcement.
- Make unequivocally clear that all personnel are empowered to activate emergency active assailant response procedures.

- Underscore that Code Red procedures are to be immediately implemented upon notification.
- Every school should have an effective communication system through which everyone on campus can see and/or hear, and immediately react to, a called Code Red. Ideally, Code Red includes live alerts on classroom message boards and intercoms, cell phones, campus computers and campus wifi. Also ideal is a two-way communication system with classrooms.
- Classrooms should have established safety measures such as hard corners or other safe areas and automatically locking doors. Teachers should have the ability to cover windows quickly and lock doors from the inside of classrooms.
- Conduct Active Shooter Drills--coordinated with law enforcement--to solidify roles and responsibilities during a crisis, as well as age-appropriate active shooter training for students.

**References:**

This document has been prepared by the San Francisco Regional Leadership Council of the Brady Center. Our volunteers are available to answer questions: Jen Reidy [jen@reidycommunications.com](mailto:jen@reidycommunications.com) or Marita Daly [marita@maritadaly.com](mailto:marita@maritadaly.com).

[Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Commission](#)

[January 1, 2019 Draft Report](#) The MSD Commission report contains an extensive list of recommended school safety measures, categorized by cost and ease of implementation.

[Final Report of the Federal Commission on School Safety](#)

December 18, 2018

Safe and Sound Schools [Safety Toolkits](#)