

## Chapter 38

# School Counselors' Use of a Multitier System of Support to Foster Safe School Experiences and Respond to School Violence

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### **ABSTRACT**

*In this chapter, the authors introduce and identify current issues, controversies and problems that influence school safety and counselor preparedness. A brief overview of school violence in America, counselors' training to deal with school violence, and factors that influence school violence are provided. Following this, the authors present a multitier system of supports (MTSS) as a recommended model for counselors to (1) prevent, (2) prepare and plan, (3) respond, and (4) lead recovery efforts as related to school violence. Finally, a case study is presented in which the authors apply best practices within the American Counselor Association's national framework to handle a crisis.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Perceptions of school safety and violence have changed in recent years as the result of school shootings (Eklund et al., 2018). As a former Superintendent of a large school district, one of the authors of this chapter remembers that school safety focused on “no running in the hallways” because a student could get hurt. Unfortunately, school safety has now become “no shooting in the hallways” because a student or educator could get killed. Perceptions have changed due to a disturbing trend of school violence and school shootings from Columbine in 1999 to Sandy Hook in 2005 to Parkland in 2018 (Eklund et al., 2018). The 2018 Parkland shooting, which resulted in tragedy and 17 individuals losing their lives (Carter et al., 2019), is the most extreme form of school violence that has potential to change schools, families, communities, and our nation. However, in addition to these massive incidents of school violence, other forms of violence, which have potential to transform into larger forms of destructive behavior, include bullying, in-school fighting, harassment, racial microaggressions, and dating violence (Toomey & Storlie, 2016). The impact of these forms of violence in schools can be seen in the following ways: (1) racial or sexist comments based on appearance; (2) verbal insults; (3) backbiting; (4) fear of not speaking up in class; or (5) fear of being ridiculed (Hernandez & Seem, 2004; Toomey & Storlie, 2016). These subtle forms of school violence are important because the Constitutional Rights Foundation (n.d.) reported approximately 2 million incidents take place in schools each year, with approximately 36% of adolescents in secondary schools experiencing at least one incident of peer victimization (Wang et al., 2009).

School violence has impacted students' learning and educators' teaching by creating fear and anxiety (Agnich, 2015). This fear for potential school violence undermines the goal of education and disrupts teaching and learning by creating negative school climates (Agnich, 2015; Borum et al., 2010; Cornell, 2006). For example, Minor and Benner (2017) found that Black adolescents' perceptions of school climate were related with enrollment in postsecondary education. Because of the relationship between school safety and student success (Crosnoe & Benner, 2015), school safety is everyone's responsibility, including counselors, who can use strategies to prevent, mitigate, and respond to violence. While predicting school violence is impossible, counselors can implement strategies to improve school climate and teacher-student relationships, thereby increasing the likelihood that students will recognize and report potential violent acts to their teachers or other school personnel.

In this chapter, unless otherwise specified, “counselor” will refer to “school counselor.” We have four objectives with this chapter: (1) present a model of school safety for counselors that includes prevention/mitigation, preparedness and planning, response, and recovery (Cowan et al., 2013); (2) identify current issues and challenges that influence school violence; (3) provide considerations for best practices when working to reduce and prevent school violence; and (4) present a case study and apply best practices within the American Counselor Association's (ASCA) national framework (2019).

## **BACKGROUND**

Σχηροολ πιολενχε χαν βε χονχεπτυαλιζεδ ιν διφφερειτ ωαψς: ψουτη πιολενχε, ρανδομ σχηροολ πιολενχε, ταργετεδ σχηροολ πιολενχε, σχηροολ σηοοτινγς, σχηροολ τερροριςμ, σχηροολ μασς σηοοτινγς, χομπλετεδ σχηροολ πιολενχε, απερτεδ σχηροολ πιολενχε, σχηροολ ηομιχιδε, σχηροολ συιχιδε, αιδ σχηροολ σεξυαλ ασσαυλτ (Ηενρψ, 2000). Μορε ρεχεντλψ, σχηροολ πιολενχε ηασ βεεν δεαδλψ: Παρκλανδ, Φλοριδα, ωιτη 17 κιλλεδ αιδ 17 ινφυρεδ; Χολυμβινε Ηιγη Σχηροολ ωιτη 15 κιλλεδ αιδ 21 ινφυρεδ, αιδ

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