



Department of Justice

STATEMENT OF

**ALAN R. HANSON
PRINCIPAL DEPUTY ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL
OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE**

BEFORE THE

**HOMELAND SECURITY COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS, RESPONSE AND
COMMUNICATIONS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

AT A HEARING ENTITLED

**“PROTECTING OUR FUTURE: ADDRESSING SCHOOL SECURITY
CHALLENGES IN AMERICA”**

PRESENTED

JULY 9, 2018

Statement of

**Alan R. Hanson
Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General
Office of Justice Programs
U.S. Department of Justice**

**Before the
House Homeland Security Committee
Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response and Communications**

**Entitled
“Protecting Our Future: Addressing School Security Challenges in America”**

July 9, 2018

Chairman Donovan, Ranking Member Payne, Members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to discuss research-based approaches to preventing school violence and school safety grant programs administered by the Department of Justice (Department). My name is Alan Hanson, and I am the Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General for the Office of Justice Programs (OJP).

The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2018, enacted on March 23rd of this year, included the Student, Teachers, and Officers Preventing (STOP) School Violence Act of 2018, which authorizes funds to address school violence and improve school security by providing students, school personnel, and community members with the tools they need to recognize, respond quickly to, and prevent acts of violence.

OJP’s grant programs and initiatives that address school safety are administered by several components: the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), and the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC). These offices collaborate with other Department components, like the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Office, and federal agencies to identify and develop school safety approaches, with the goal of reducing crime and ensuring public safety.

The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2018 also provides \$75 million to the STOP School Violence Act program to address school violence. BJA received \$50 million to provide grants to states, units of local government, and Indian tribes. These grants are used for the training of teachers and the education of students to prevent student violence, and to support threat assessments, crisis intervention teams, and the use of technology for anonymous reporting. The balance (\$25 million) was provided to the COPS Office to provide grants for law enforcement training and coordination to prevent school violence and for a variety of school safety equipment (e.g., metal detectors, locks, lighting) and alerting technologies.

To address the legislative goals of the STOP School Violence Act, OJP developed two solicitations. The first is the *BJA STOP Prevention Training and Response to Mental Health Crisis Program* and the second is the *BJA STOP Threat Assessment and Technology Reporting Program*. Both solicitations opened on June 7, 2018, with a closing date of July 23, 2018.

The *BJA STOP Prevention Training and Response to Mental Health Crisis Program* will fund states, units of local government, and federally recognized Indian tribes to provide training to teachers and administrators. The training will help teachers and administrators identify and react to potential acts of violence and situations that may involve mental health issues. The program will also help educate students on violence prevention measures. This could include reporting potential threats and situations that students believe could lead to acts of violence.

The *BJA STOP Threat Assessment and Technology Reporting Program* will provide funding to states, units of local government, and federally recognized Indian tribes to develop and conduct threat assessments and implement crisis intervention teams. These efforts will encourage cooperation and partnership with local/tribal law enforcement and the community to assist with the proposed programs. Under this solicitation, grantees can apply for funds to develop and implement a reporting program that can include mobile applications, web-based programs, or hotlines intended to ensure that any individual reporting can remain anonymous. This technology may be useful in sharing vital data with law enforcement to prevent incidents.

Funding under the COPS Office may be used for coordination with local and tribal law enforcement; training for local and tribal law enforcement officers to prevent school violence against others and self; the placement and use of metal detectors, locks, lighting and other deterrent measures, or target hardening; the acquisition and installation of technology for expedited notification of local and tribal law enforcement during an emergency; and any other measures that may provide a significant improvement in security.

The Act requires that grants be evidence-based and have, to the extent practicable, an equitable geographic distribution among the regions of the United States and among urban, suburban, and rural areas. To ensure that there is an equitable distribution, the BJA solicitations are organized by categories based on population. This allows applicants to be evaluated with others whose jurisdictions are similar in size and face similar challenges. The Act also states that the Federal Government can provide only 75 percent of the funding for each project, thus requiring a 25 percent cash or in-kind match.

The Act stresses coordination and partnership with local and tribal law enforcement and emphasizes evaluation as a program element. All programs must reflect an evidence-based approach. Performance measures will help the Department identify successful programs and practices that can be shared nationwide.

Prior to the STOP School Violence programs created this year, NIJ was actively involved in school safety research. Since 2014, NIJ's primary investments in school safety have been through the Comprehensive School Safety Initiative (CSSI). CSSI is a research-focused initiative designed to produce knowledge and identify evidence-based programs that can potentially benefit K-12 schools and school districts across the nation for years to come. Congress first funded CSSI in 2014 in the wake of the tragic shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary

School in Connecticut. Altogether, CSSI was funded from FY 2014 to FY 2017, and that funding resulted in more than 90 CSSI grant-funded projects totaling nearly \$250 million.

CSSI projects build on other research, supported by NIJ and others, to inform school safety efforts. CSSI projects cover a wide range of topics, including school shootings, threat assessment, school resource officers and police, mental and behavioral health, emergency operations planning, school discipline, bullying, technology, and school climate. Fifty-five percent of CSSI projects examine the impact of interventions on shootings and other forms of school violence. Rigorous research designs are a hallmark of these projects; almost half use randomized experimental designs.¹

CSSI funding supports evaluations and research on the causes and consequences of school violence. CSSI projects, like any research-focused program, typically take three to five years to complete, and to ensure that they produce scientifically valid results that can be translated into effective policy. The earliest projects started in 2015, and only a small number have reached completion; therefore, no final reports have yet been published. The first final reports will be available within the next year or so with others to follow in the next few years.

NIJ maintains CrimeSolutions.gov to help practitioners and policymakers understand what works in justice-related programs and practices. CrimeSolutions.gov is a valuable tool for school administrators and others to have for a more comprehensive understanding about evidence-based school safety efforts. Because this information is not static, CrimeSolutions.gov will be continuously updated as results from CSSI projects and other research efforts become available.

In addition to CSSI, two other NIJ research portfolios will contribute to our understanding about keeping students safe: 1) the NIJ firearm violence portfolio will contribute to our understanding of mass shooting incidents and perpetrators as well as the illegal use of firearms by youths; and 2) the NIJ victims of crime portfolio includes a study examining the short- and long-term impacts of school shootings.

OVC has the capacity to support schools that wish to plan for, and need to respond to, mass violence and terrorism. Following any incident of mass violence, including school shootings, the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Victim Services Division collaborates with OVC on emergency response as well as immediate and long-term community needs. OVC's "*Helping Victims of Mass Violence & Terrorism Toolkit*" is a comprehensive resource to aid communities in the aftermath of incidents of mass violence. In addition, through OVC's Training and Technical Assistance Center, consultants can provide free technical assistance for schools and communities to better prepare them for these incidents.

Through the Antiterrorism and Emergency Assistance Program (AEAP), OVC supports victims and jurisdictions that have experienced incidents of domestic terrorism or mass violence. In fact, OVC has made AEAP awards following incidents of mass shootings violence at Virginia

¹ Information on all CSSI-funded projects is available here: <https://nij.gov/funding/awards/pages/awards-list.aspx?tags=Comprehensive%20School%20Safety%20Initiative>.

Tech, and Sandy Hook Elementary School. OVC is also in consultation regarding recent incidents that occurred in Parkland, Florida; Santa Fe, Texas; and Marshal County, Kentucky.

OJJPD also funds Gang Resistance Education and Training, an evidence-based and effective gang and violence prevention program built around school-based, law enforcement officer-instructed classroom curricula. The Department's National Gang Center, jointly funded by OJJDP and BJA, disseminates information, knowledge, and outcome-driven practices that engage and empower those in local communities with chronic and emerging gang problems. This information helps create comprehensive solutions to prevent gang violence, reduce gang involvement, and suppress gang-related crime. Additionally, OJJDP supported the International Association of Chiefs of Police in the development of a toolkit on Enhancing Police Responses to Children Exposed to Violence, which may be helpful to law enforcement officials addressing school shootings.

The Department is also collaborating with other federal agencies and continues to consult with key school safety stakeholders across the country to learn about what challenges they face when it comes to keeping their schools and students safe. Findings from NIJ-funded studies will inform our decisions on how to best design future programs and equip schools and communities with the necessary tools to address and avoid future tragedies. Our goal is to develop evidence-based programs and comprehensive strategies that can be replicated throughout the nation.

The Department's commitment to ensuring safety in our schools remains a top priority. We are committed to addressing these issues and will continue to work with Congress, states, and communities to maintain supportive and safe environments for our children.

Thank you again for this opportunity to discuss these programs, and I look forward to addressing your questions.