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Autism and the Classroom: A Challenge for SROs

From WNDU

MISHAWAKA, IN| A Mishawaka middle school student faced expulsion this week. The student's dad says he made an inappropriate comment to his teacher. It's apparently one of many issues this student has had.

At a meeting late Wednesday afternoon, school officials learned Forest Lyvers would be allowed to stay. The student's dad says his son's behavior can be blamed on Asperger's Syndrome. Aspergers is a form of autism.

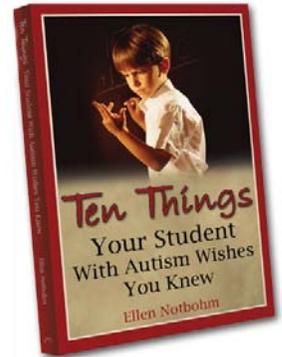
NewsCenter 16 spoke with Lyvers' Dad, Glenn, before he learned that is son would be able to stay at the school. Late Wednesday, Lyvers says the school has decided that they don't have enough evidence on the Aspergers disorder to expel Forest.

For the past few days, Forest has been at home, suspended from school. Officials at Mishawaka schools did not want to comment on the issue for confidentiality reasons. Lyvers says the school has decided to order some tests for Forest and look at the ways they're dealing with him, in order to make it an easier situation for everyone.

As for Asperger's Syndrome, most who have it are extremely intelligent, but lack simple social skills.

Lyvers insists his son has made improvements and needs to be around other kids for social interaction. "He needs to talk to other kids, have friends, be able to communicate with people and learn how to talk. I'm going to argue that the socialization he's been getting has been inappropriate at school and it's setting him up to fail," says Glenn Lyvers, Forest's Dad. "I don't want the other kids to be disrupted and if I felt he was disrupting education of other students, I would land on the side of those students."

Forest's Dad says he's pleased with how the school handled the situation in the end. He says he's looking forward to getting his son back in his regular school routine. Forest is expected to go back to class on this Monday. Lyvers has also created a website chronicling the events.



Kylee Bassett, Indiana Department of Education, gave a presentation at the most recent SRO Consortium of Indiana concerning this very topic and the role of School Resource Officers when handling situations involving autistic children. For a summary of her presentation, see page 15.

In The News

Schools Embracing Powers for Police

Article published in the Indianapolis Star on January 28, 2007

INDIANAPOLIS, IN | Half a dozen Indiana school boards are considering whether to take on the new responsibility of authorizing police officers. The move could create a minefield of issues from issuing badges to setting policies.



So far, Pike Township Schools may be the only district to use a new law that allows school boards to appoint officers.

Previously, school districts could not grant police powers, although several have long said they have "police departments" that derive authority from a local sheriff or police chief.

In districts that convert, students will see little difference. A badge or uniform may change, but few officers will change duties. The change affects school boards, which will have greater responsibility for making police policy regarding training, firearms use, police chases and various protocols. Any school police policy entrusted to mayors and sheriffs would rest with school boards, too.

Pike Township Schools became the first school district to launch its own police department in July. Brownsburg, Center Grove and Indianapolis Public Schools are among those considering the change.

Districts cite different reasons for making the move, including not having to worry about deals with the sheriff or police chief changing when new administrations come to office.

In many districts, the shift also would make officers eligible for training at the Indiana Law Enforcement Academy, where regular police officers in the state train. "I wanted to professionalize and really solidify our school police," said Al Kasper, Pike Township Schools' police chief. "Prior to that, we were special deputies on the Sheriff's Department. We got a lot of that, 'You're not the real police thing.' "

IPS administrators say they don't plan any changes in the function of their 91-officer police department if the district makes the switch.

"I don't think my orders are going to change at all," said Sgt. John Akers, the police supervisor at Arlington High School. "Maybe I'll get more responsibilities. I don't know."

Three changes that matter

- **Political control:** School boards hope that by taking on the role of granting police powers they can protect departments from political changes by mayors and sheriffs.

- **Benefits:** The survivors of officers of school police departments may be entitled to more benefits if they are killed in the line of duty than if they are special deputies or reserve officers.

- **Training:** Many school police officers were not eligible for training at the Indiana Law Enforcement Academy, but those in newly created school police departments would be.

Pike Township officers, often called on to assist city police with minor matters, likely will be freed up to do more work in the school, said School Board President Larry Metzle.

"Every time they had a children's crime, they were involving our police," Metzler said. "The police force is as large as some small towns. When we're paying for it, it seems we ought to be able to control it."

Marion County Sheriff Frank Anderson had expressed concern about school districts launching their own departments, but changes in the law requiring training for officers resolved the issue, said spokesman Julio Fernandez.

Darren Washington, a Gary Public School Board member, said his district is considering launching its own police department but wants to hash out policies and procedures in advance.

"Before you just go and enact the school police force," he said, "there's a lot of research that has to be done."

Washington said the public can have confidence in school police departments because they are headed by veteran officers, often from local police. He cited Pike's Kasper, who spent 21 years as a criminal investigator and trainer for the U.S. Army.

Police leaders in Brownsburg and several other communities support the school departments. Johnson County Sheriff Terry McLaughlin applauds Center Grove Schools' potential move.

"Center Grove ought to be commended for taking a proactive approach to problems in the school," he said.

Cyberbullying Among Children on the Rise

Article published in the Times on November 28, 2007

ATLANTA, GA As many as one in three U.S. children have been ridiculed or threatened through computer messages, according to one estimate of the emerging problem of cyberbullying. Another new study found the problem is less common, with one in 10 kids reporting online harassment. But health experts said even the lower estimate signals a growing and concerning public health issue. "I wouldn't consider something that 10 percent of kids report as low," said Janis Wolak, a University of New Hampshire researcher who co-authored the second study. Wolak and other researchers, though, found that in many cases the incidents of online harassment were relatively mild.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is trying to draw attention to how U.S. adolescents are affected by e-mail, instant messaging, text messaging, blog postings and other electronic communications. Last year, CDC officials convened a panel of experts to focus on the topic. They also funded a special issue of the Journal of Adolescent Health to publish more research on the subject. The journal released the articles Tuesday. It's difficult to say how severe online harassment is as a public health issue, because a posting or e-mail that might upset some children is shrugged off by others, CDC officials said. And the result of surveys can differ depending on how questions are asked.



But the issue was attracted the attention of lawmakers in Oregon, Washington, New Jersey and other states that have introduced bills or instituted programs designed to reduce cyberbullying. Last week, officials in a Missouri town made Internet harassment a misdemeanor, after public outrage over the suicide of a 13-year-old resident last year. The parents of Megan Meier claim their daughter, who had been treated for depression, committed suicide after a teenage boy who flirted with her on MySpace abruptly ended their friendship, telling her he heard she was cruel. The story gained national prominence this month when it was revealed the boy never existed -- it was a prank allegedly started by a mother in the girl's neighborhood.

The schoolyard continues to be a source of in-person bullying: Studies indicate roughly 17 percent of early adolescents say they are victims of recurring verbal aggression or physical harassment. Some kids suffer both in-person and electronic harassment, but it's more often one or the other. A study by California-based researcher Michele Ybarra found 64 percent of youths who were harassed online were not also bullied in person.

The new studies made conflicting estimates of the size of the problem. The largest estimate came from Ybarra, president of Internet Solutions for Kids, a nonprofit research organization. One Ybarra study was based on an online survey of 1,588 children ages 10 to 15. It found 34 percent said they were the victim of Internet harassment at least once in the previous year, and 8 percent said they were targeted monthly or more often. Also, 15 percent said they're received at least one unwanted sexual communication in the past year. That included solicitations for sex or conversations about sex or questions about bra size or other personal sexual information. Wolak's study was a telephone survey of 1,500 Internet users, ages 10 to 17. The 9 percent who said they were harassed online in the previous year was an increase from the 6 percent in a similar study in 2000.

Schools Must do More to Eliminate Bullying

Article published in the Journal and Courier on January 6, 2008

WEST LAFAYETTE, IN Most of us remember teasing. As a child, some of us were teasers. Others regret that we did nothing to stop the teasing. Our behavior was unacceptable then. It continues to be so today.

"Kids can be cruel. Kids tease." These are justifications for such behaviors -- excuses, not reasons. Teasing is not harmless. It is a form of bullying, pure and simple.

Bullies target kids who look or talk different or who do not "fit in." Riley Children's Hospital statistics reveal that 61.6 percent of victims of bullying are targeted because of their speech or looks. Up to 7 percent of eighth-grade students stay home because of bullies.

What is bullying? When does teasing rise to that level? The U.S. Justice Department says that bullying "involves a real or perceived imbalance of power, with the more powerful child or group attacking those who are less powerful."

Bullies use physical, verbal and psychological means to terrorize their victims. According to Stanford University Medical Center research, as many as 90 percent of elementary age students are victims of bullying. In middle school and high school, bullies threaten victims, use physical violence, harass and publicly intimidate them. Bullies also destroy their personal property.

Continued...

Most bullying occurs when adults are not vigilant. Playgrounds and school hallways are common places where this occurs. The American Psychological Association recommends that schools have adequate adult supervision during at-risk activities. Some schools are so large they cannot adequately monitor student behavior.

Modern technology takes bullying to a higher level. Bullies now use the internet and cell phones. The National Crime Prevention Council identifies cyberbullying as actions where the bully:

- Tricks a victim by pretending to be someone else.
- Spreads lies and rumors.
- Tricks victims into revealing personal information.
- Sends or forwards mean text messages.
- Posts pictures of victims without their consent.

Bullying is costly, with serious, long lasting consequences. Victims have high levels of depression, anxiety and suicidal thoughts. Sometimes they carry through with those thoughts. Up to 15 percent of bullied children require intervention and support.

Reactions to bullying can be deadly. In 2002, the Secret Services reported that nearly 75 percent of attackers in school shootings reported being bullied. Reflecting on the numbers, one wonders why there are not more school shootings.

Bullying may be a crime in Indiana, where the law says, "A person who intentionally causes another human being, by force, duress, or deception, to commit suicide commits ... a Class B felony." Victims may also sue bullies for damages under civil procedures.



Bullying is so prevalent that states are passing anti-bullying laws. Indiana did so in 2005, defining bullying as, "overt, repeated acts or gestures" -- physical, verbal or written -- or any other behaviors "committed by a student or group of students against another student with the intent to harass, ridicule, humiliate, intimidate or harm."

Indiana schools must have policies against bullying. Yet, some schools do not identify bullying. Instead, they use the term harassment. Tippecanoe School Corporation addresses harassment, and West Lafayette Junior-Senior High School handbook prohibits "behavior that does physical or psychological harm to another person or urging of other students to engage in conduct." Lafayette

School Corporation's elementary school handbook has similar language.

By reducing bullying to harassment, schools ignore the problem. In reality, when children complain, adults at schools often say, "It's just teasing. You must learn to deal with it." We must demand that schools stop treating bullying as a rite of passage, a part of growing up.

The Bully Police, a watchdog organization advocating for bullied children, recommends that policies cover certain points. Among other things, policies should:

- Use the word "bullying" and specifically prohibit it.
- Not address it as a school safety issue (a reaction to Columbine-like incidents).
- Define bullying.
- Protect against reprisal or retaliation.
- Provide accountability.

The Bully Police assigned Indiana anti-bullying laws a B plus.

Does that mean bullying does not happen here? Of course not. But resources are available and schools must use them. Discipline and punishment are not the answer. Only proactive, responsive schools can prevent tragedy from happening.

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Report: Schools Must Reassess Discipline

Article published by the Indianapolis Star on January 14, 2008

EVANSVILLE, IN | Indiana's schools should come up with new ways to solve discipline issues instead of relying on strict rules that punish all students the same way, an Indiana University report says. The university's Center for Evaluation and Education Policy said recently that many schools use rules like zero tolerance policies or one-day suspensions that may not change student behavior.

"We're all reinforced by different things, and we're all punished by different things," said Sandy Washburn, one of the authors of the CEEP report.

Disciplinary issues are statistically worse in Indiana than elsewhere, the report found. During the 2005-06 school year, there were 6,324 expulsions and 313,322 suspensions in Indiana, according to the Department of Education. More than 600 schools that year reported a rate of 10 or more suspensions per 100 students.

IU researchers suggested a three-tiered system called Schoolwide Positive Behavior Supports. The system includes schoolwide initiatives, group interventions for those with common disciplinary problems and individual interventions.

Some Indiana schools are already using the model and have had good results so far, the researchers said.

Sam Elder, a member of the Vanderburgh County Taxpayers Association, said the rates of suspension and expulsion in the Evansville-Vanderburgh School Corp. are too high. "The last couple of years it has inched up, and the worst problems we have are at our high schools," Elder said.



POLICE LINE DO NOT CROSS POLICE LINE DO NOT CROSS



Recent School Shooting Violence

Shootings in Indiana, Oklahoma, North Carolina, California and Finland



Police Investigate High School Shooting in Indianapolis

Article published by The Columbus Republic on January 15, 2008

INDIANAPOLIS, IN | Indianapolis metro detectives are following a lead in a shooting outside Broad Ripple High School Friday night. A 17-year-old girl and a man in his twenties were hit by stray bullets following several fights inside the high school following the Rockets vs. Arlington High School game. Just hours after the shooting, someone posted video of the brawls on YouTube.com.

"It was something that had been brewing an on-going feud between some girls who decided to bring it to the broad ripple game," said Campus Administrator Greg Allen at Broad Ripple High School.



On the video posted to YouTube.com you can hear Allen asking the hundreds of spectators to take their seats. "The very next disturbance if we have a disturbance that I would call the game and unload the gym and the two teams would finish the game by themselves," said Allen.

Police arrested 6 teens for participating in at least two fights during the game. But they said when the game ended the rowdy crowd spilled onto the streets surrounding the school. And someone fired a gun. "We had metal detection at the gate so I can say with a high degree of certainty that there were no weapons inside the gymnasium," said Allen.

But someone did have a gun outside. Shots hit a 17-year-old girl in the foot. And a man in his twenties in the hip. Detectives are close to finding the shooter. "The detective is pursuing a lead right now he has a name that he's following up on and we are not quite ready to release it until he has more concrete evidence that he was in fact involved with the shooting," said Sgt. Paul Thompson with the Indianapolis Metro Police Department.

Campus Administrator Greg Allen said about 15 Indianapolis Public School police officers were at the game. And they did call IMPD for assistance after the first fight inside the gym. Allen said he and school police will review security policy for each individual home basketball game.

Shooting After Basketball Game in Oklahoma

Article published by KSBI-TV News 5 on January 16, 2008

PUTNAM CITY, OK | A parking lot full of people leaving a basketball game quickly cleared out after gunshots rang. The shooting at Putnam City High School Tuesday night left one teen shot twice in the lower back and sent to the hospital. Police have still not arrested a suspect and many people are left questioning the safety of schools.

The victim has been identified as 17-year-old Donnell Hartimon. Police say Hartimon was in a verbal altercation when a gun was pulled out and he was shot. Police don't know why the fight started but say it was gang-related. Police believe the shooter is a black male that was wearing a white t-shirt, they say he fled the scene.



Hartimon was currently not a student, but was last school year. He was later banned from school property. "Well you have to understand that that was a unique occurrence we have never had anything like that happen, and at the same time violence like that can happen anywhere in society," says Putnam City Schools Representative Steve Lindley.

Lindley says at all the high schools they have a guard inside and in the parking lot. The schools also have a camera system and secured access entrances.

He says school must go on. "For students it needs to be normal day at school, there are things that they need to learn and things that we need to teach them," says Lindley.

Police are left counting their blessings. "With the number of people that were in that parking lot, in that area, we are fortunate that we only had one shooting victim," says Warr Acres Police Chief Roger Patty. Police say they have been interviewing witnesses and are confident an arrest will come soon.

Ashville High School Shooting Suspect Captured

Article published by the Ashville Citizen-Times on January 10, 2008

ASHVILLE, NC | A 16-year-old boy accused of firing up to four gunshots at a group of students at Asheville High was captured Wednesday in Tennessee. Investigators had been tipped that Sherwayne Akeem Bascom was on a bus bound for Knoxville, police said. Bascom was captured as he stepped off the bus Wednesday evening. Police had taken out warrants charging the suspended Asheville student with assault with a deadly weapon and discharging a firearm on school property.

Authorities said Bascom walked into the center of the school's campus about 3:30 p.m. Tuesday looking for someone he knew. He fired two to four shots from a handgun as the student fled, police said. No one was hurt.



The school system waited until about 8 p.m. to notify parents through automated phone messages that weapons had been displayed in a confrontation but made no mention of a gun or gunfire. Asheville police about 10:30 a.m. Wednesday acknowledged for the first time that they were searching for a shooter. "Investigators were contacting his family and friends (and) attempting to arrest him all night," Asheville police Capt. Tim Splain said.

Police said they don't believe Bascom meant to hurt anyone besides his intended target, a student with whom he had an ongoing dispute. "The suspect didn't walk on campus and randomly shoot at potential victims. He sought out the one person he wanted," Splain said. Splain said he did not know if the shooting was tied to gangs, which police have said are behind a surge in violent crime in Asheville.

As a result of the shooting, Asheville City Schools officials will install security cameras at the shooting site, a campus-gathering place on the lower side of the school's cafeteria.

Bascom was a ninth-grader at the Randolph Learning Center, Asheville City Schools officials said. He has been suspended since mid-November. According to Asheville police, Bascom and an Asheville High student approached a male student in a breezeway outside the school and told him he wanted to fight.

Other nearby witnesses realized Bascom had a handgun, which police said he used to fire shots at the fleeing student and about five others standing nearby. They were the only people known to be in the line of fire, and it was not immediately known what the bullets struck, Splain said.

Full Story: <http://www.citizen-times.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=200880109125>

SWAT Team Searches for CC College Shooter

Article published by KTVU on November 8, 2007

RICHMOND, CA | Officers from five police agencies searched Thursday for a gunman who shot a Contra Costa College student police cadet three times at close range. Richmond police Lt. Mark Gagan said a SWAT team is searching Fairmede Park in Richmond, where police believe the gunman could be hiding out. The shooting occurred on Shane Drive on the border of the college campus, which is located at 2600 Mission Bell Drive in San Pablo, at about 12:55 p.m., Gagan said.

The victim was a student and campus police cadet. He was not a sworn officer and was not armed, but he was wearing a uniform, Gagan said.

Richmond police Detective Sgt. Mitch Peixoto said the victim had been driving a campus police golf cart when he came upon a man involved in a car theft. When the cadet pulled up alongside the man, police said the gunman shot him three times at close range.



The victim was in critical condition when he was taken to John Muir Medical Center in Walnut Creek. According to Peixoto, he has since been stabilized and has gone into surgery.

Meanwhile, about 50 police officers from five different law enforcement agencies sealed off a large area around the campus, which included parts of San Pablo, Richmond and unincorporated areas of the county. Police also brought in five K-9 teams, three helicopters and a SWAT team, police said.

Streets in the area remain blocked off and officers are searching vehicles as they leave, Gagan said. Highland Elementary School in Richmond was locked down following the shooting. The school is located at 2829 Moyers Road in Richmond, just one block from the park where the shooter is currently being sought. Students have since been escorted off school grounds and released to their parents or guardians, Gagan said.

Finnish School Shooter Dies After Killing Eight

Article published by USA Today on November 11, 2007

TUUSULA, FINLAND | An 18-year-old student opened fire at his high school in this placid town in southern Finland on Wednesday, killing eight people before shooting himself in a rampage that stunned a nation where gun crime is rare. Police were analyzing YouTube postings that appeared to anticipate the massacre, including clips in which a young man calls for revolution and apparently prepares for the attack by test firing a semiautomatic handgun. The gunman shot the victims — five boys, two girls and the female principal — with a .22-caliber pistol, police said, adding about a dozen other people were injured as they tried to escape from the school. Witnesses described a scene of mayhem in the leafy lakeside community, in which the assailant scoured the school for victims shouting slogans of "revolution."

Police chief Matti Tohkanen said the gunman belonged to a gun club and got a license for the pistol on Oct. 19. He did not have a previous criminal record, Tohkanen said. "He was from an ordinary family," he said. Investigators were searching for a possible motive in the YouTube postings that appeared to reveal plans of the deadly attack. One video, titled "Jokela High School Massacre," showed a picture of what appeared to be the school and two photos of a young man holding a handgun. The person who posted the video was identified in the user profile as an 18-year-old man from Finland. The posting was later removed. The profile contained a text calling for a "revolution against the system."



Another YouTube video clip showed a young man clad in a dark jacket loading a clip into a handgun and firing several shots at an apple placed on the ground in a forested area. He smiled and waved to the camera at the end of the clip. A third clip showed photos of what appeared to be same man posing with a gun and wearing a T-shirt with the text "Humanity is overrated."

Students at the school said the killer often wore the same clothes to school: a brown leather jacket, black trousers and a checkered shirt. He almost always carried a brief case. Tuomas Hulkkonen, a student at the school, said he knew the gunman well, and that he had been acting strange of late. "He withdrew into his shell. I had noticed a change in him just recently, and I thought that perhaps he was a bit depressed, or something, but I couldn't imagine that in reality he would do anything like this," Hulkkonen told Finnish TV broadcaster MTV3.

Experts warned the Finland shooting could inspire copycat attacks in other parts of the world. "An event like this in Finland might have an effect in the U.S.," said Christopher P. Lucas, a psychiatry professor at New York University. He added that YouTube provides a ready way for shooters to publicize their acts and provide some sort of justification.

Full Story: http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2007-11-07-finland-shooting_N.htm

School Safety

Top 10 Things to Watch for in the Next 12 Months

Article published in the Practical School Security and Emergency Planning E-Newsletter on January 14, 2008

1. **Gang violence** and conflicts involving opposing neighborhood cliques will continue to escalate in school communities with a presence of such rivalries.

2. Expect to see **firearms incidents**, including non-fatal school-related shootings, to grow.

3. **Athletic event security, bus security, and to and from school safety threats** will continue to challenge school administrators and safety staff.

4. A continued escalation of **school threats** (bomb threats, death threats, and rumors of school violence threats) will plague school administrators. Poorly prepared administrators will make questionable, knee-jerk decisions on school threats, such as unnecessarily closing schools, when other options may be appropriate.

5. **Parental pressures** upon boards and administrators for greater attention to school security will continue. Media stories on school safety will continue to grow and will intensify with high-profile incidents. Louder parental and media calls for "accountability" will apply not only to academics, but also to school safety.



6. Schools experiencing a crisis will have to do more than the appropriate traditional approach of bringing in counselors and psychologists to deal with the **crisis aftermath**. Expect parental demands to cause schools to also re-evaluate their security measures and emergency planning plans.

7. **Greater joint planning, cross-training, and tabletop exercises** to test written school crisis plans will be necessary as schools must partner more with public safety and community partners.

8. BUYER BEWARE! **Product-affiliated security and emergency planning vendors will be more aggressive**, and sometimes more manipulative and misleading, while targeting school budgets. Be leery of "free security assessments" and other offers that are too good to be true! Also **scrutinize information from school safety and education professional associations as vendors also attempt to "buy their way in"** through backdoor support of association conferences, "partnerships" with associations for "free" services to the associations' members, sponsorships of conferences where the vendor does presentations, and other marketing tricks. Buyer Beware!

9. **Boards and administrators will be forced to be better educated consumers** of security and emergency products and services to protect against product vendor pressures and manipulation, and to protect their districts' limited budgets and potential liability.

10. School leaders will increasingly realize that they **cannot do school security and emergency planning "on the cheap" and with shortcuts**. Being "penny wise but pound foolish" will increase financial and school image liabilities, and will damage school leader reputations with their parents and local media.

Kenneth Trump of the National School Safety and Security Services created this list. To subscribe to his School Safety E-Newsletter, please see his website @ www.schoolsecurity.org.

No Trespass Sign Helps Joliet Schools Deal with Violence

Article published by the Chicago Tribune on January 15, 2008

JOLIET, IL| When Joliet school officials approached police last summer with mounting concerns about students carrying pellet guns and other toy weapons onto campuses, police told them the law wasn't on their side. Schools could suspend students and in more serious cases, expel them, police said. But it simply wasn't illegal to carry toy guns, not even to school. That's when Will County State's Atty. James Glasgow instructed three school districts in the Joliet area to post "no trespassing" signs in their buildings that specifically outlaw air rifles, BB or pellet guns, paintball guns and any "look-alike" weapons that could be mistaken for the real thing. They also prohibit sharp instruments such as knives and razors.

The signs went up at the beginning of the school year at 40 schools at all levels, ratcheting up punishment by charging violators with misdemeanor trespassing. If convicted, students 16 and younger face up to a year in juvenile detention, while those 17 and older could land in jail. Often, students receive probation and hours of community service, said Glasgow spokesman Chuck Pelkie.

The goal in moving the cases from the classroom to the courtroom is to give schools a more powerful weapon to combat the threat of violence, Glasgow said. The 5-month-old program, believed to be the first of its kind in Illinois, has sparked interest among educators in other counties, Glasgow said. He is drafting a letter to Atty. Gen. Lisa Madigan to see if there's interest in implementing the program statewide. "It doesn't take changes in the law or lobbying at the state level to put this into action," he said. "You're taking something that's already on the books and using it to really go after the problem of youth violence at schools."

A dozen students have been arrested and charged with trespassing since the school year began in August, one as young as the 4th grade, said Lt. Gregg Glomb, who leads the Joliet Police Department's SAFE program for violence-free schools. Four of the cases are pending, Pelkie said. Those allegations include: a Hufford Junior High student, 13, for bringing ammunition to school; two St. Mary Magdalene Elementary School students, 11 and 13, for carrying knives in their backpacks; and a Joliet Central High student, 15, for bringing a knife to school.

In November, a student with a knife at Joliet West High School pleaded guilty to criminal trespassing and was sentenced to two years' probation with a 7 p.m. curfew and 75 hours of community service. While some might consider that a stiff penalty when no one is injured or assaulted, Glomb and others said it's the best way to drive home the message that such weapons can escalate a confrontation and cause panic on school grounds. "At 5 feet the gun might not look real, but at 20 feet it does. So the threat is there," Glasgow said. "They don't even have to use it in a threatening way. If someone sees it and thinks it's real, that's enough."



In Joliet and in urban schools outside Chicago, officials have reported steady increases in the number of students carrying toy guns, knives and even electric Taser-like devices onto school grounds. In November 2006, police responded to a call that a 7th grader at Jefferson Junior High in Naperville had a toy gun that fired plastic pellets. Police later released the student, 13, without charging him. The following month in Florida, a 15-year-old was killed by a SWAT officer at school while carrying an airsoft pistol, a type of air-powered pellet gun that has become popular because of how closely it resembles real handguns and assault rifles. That same month, Aurora passed an ordinance similar to one in Chicago that makes it illegal to buy, sell or possess a replica gun.

In November 2007, police in McHenry arrested a McHenry Middle School student, 11, who allegedly brought a "laser shock novelty" gun to campus. The 4-inch gun emitted a small shock when students pulled the trigger. Police considered a charge of disorderly conduct, but eventually the case was referred to a panel of student-age jurors, who sentenced the youth to community service. Last month, the Forest Ridge District 142 board expelled two 6th graders at Hille Middle School in Oak Forest for carrying small Taser-like devices made from disposable cameras. "When I was growing up, it was appropriate to have a cap gun and carry it around. That was a boy thing to do," said Don White, superintendent of Troy Community School District 30-C in Plainfield, whose six schools have posted "no trespassing" signs. "But society has changed, and we need policy in place to reflect that."

Federal law requires replica guns to carry orange tips. But many remove those tips, making it more difficult to tell the difference between real and fake. It's a deception that can play into a student's hands if they're brandishing the weapon for intimidation, or even just to show off, said Jennifer Bertino-Tarrant, Will County regional superintendent. "So often the kids bring the guns just to get attention," Bertino-Tarrant said. "But we're in a day and age when you have to take every threat seriously. You can't afford to be wrong."

With highly publicized school shootings around the country, districts across Illinois have generally adopted a "zero-tolerance" stance when it comes to students and weapons, even fake ones, said Supt. Phyllis M. Wilson of Joliet Public Schools District 86, which posted "no trespassing" signs at its 20 schools. "Zero tolerance" typically means a suspension if a student is found with a weapon, and mandatory expulsion when students use it threateningly. But even zero tolerance takes into account a student's background and intent when handing out discipline, White said. That's also true with the no-trespassing law, as police have the option to pursue a case or not. And that puts the power in the right hands, Glasgow said. "We weren't looking for something that would follow a kid the rest of his life," he said. "But there's no doubt we wanted something that would get a kid's attention."

Technology & Web Safety

Cops Aim to Remove Walls between Web, Offline Patrols

Article published by USA Today on November 3, 2007

Raise your hand if you've heard of *Second Life*, police Lt. Charles Cohen asks a room of about 75 law enforcement officers from around the country. *Second Life*, a sprawling online universe, has had technology circles abuzz for a while. But here, it might as well be a watch repair shop. Only a few hands go up. Cohen has some explaining to do.

And so begins another session in the traveling classroom of this fast-talking Indiana state trooper at the forefront of the idea that cops need to be better at incorporating the online world into their patrols. Many police departments have computer crews that perform skillful forensic analysis on hard drives and specialize in nailing online predators. Cohen's lectures are not for them. Instead he's trying to reach everyone else in law enforcement: beat cops, homicide detectives and other investigators who might otherwise think monitoring the Internet is not their responsibility.

More and more, such boundaries don't make sense. Whether it's on MySpace, Facebook, *Second Life* or other Web flavors of the moment, criminals and victims — especially young ones — are leaving clues in plain sight online, even for offline crimes. Things people once wrote in private diaries now cascade through websites that stimulate free expression — and are open to anyone who comes looking.



In one recent example, a detective in Newark, N.J., tracked the alleged killers of three college students by mining MySpace pages maintained by the suspects and their friends. In another, pictures and prose posted online by the killer of Taylor Behl, a 17-year-old Virginia college freshman, connected him to the victim and ended up revealing where her body was stashed.

And in an Indiana case in which Cohen helped, a young man wrote, truthfully, on his MySpace page: "I just killed two cops." "People under 25 tend to think about what is public versus private information differently from the rest of us, and that is great for law enforcement investigators," Cohen, 37, tells his audience in Arlington, at a conference of the National White Collar Crime

Center. Later, he adds in an interview, "Your computer usage is in some ways a window into your soul."

But the anonymity and the sheer scope of the Internet also can make it easier for criminals to cover their tracks. And today's hot online hangout is tomorrow's dead zone. The trick for cops is to figure out how to keep up — a proactive step that doesn't come easy, given that most police departments have to concentrate their limited resources on reacting to crimes. Les Lauziere, a computer crimes investigator for the Virginia Attorney General who was part of the Behl case, suggests that police need to incorporate Internet analysis into just about every investigation. In the coming years, he says, asking whether a police department has a distinct cybercrime unit will be like asking if there's a telephone squad.

Full Story: http://www.usatoday.com/tech/webguide/internetlife/2007-11-03-policeonline_N.htm

MySpace Deal to Protect Hoosier Kids, Deter Sex Predators

Article published by the Indianapolis Star on January 15, 2008

After two years of discussions, the social networking Web site MySpace.com has agreed with Indiana and 45 other states to new measures to combat sexual predators and other misuse, officials said Monday. A statement by attorneys general in several states, including Indiana Attorney General Steve Carter, said MySpace.com has agreed to include several online protections and participate in a working group to develop age-verification tools and other technologies. According to the statement, MySpace.com also will accept independent monitoring and changes to the structure of its site.



In addition, Carter is urging state lawmakers to pass a bill to make it a felony for convicted sex offenders to use social networking Web sites frequented by children. "While the agreement with MySpace is a step in the right direction, a law addressing use by sexual predators is more encompassing and provides punishment for those who would violate the law," Carter said in a news release Monday.

The attorneys general have been seeking greater controls for online networking sites to prevent sexual predators from using those sites to contact children. "We thank the Attorneys General for a thoughtful and constructive conversation on Internet safety. This is an industry wide challenge, and we must all work together to create a safer Internet," MySpace Chief Security Officer Hemanshu Nigam said in a written statement.

He said the agreement includes measures the industry should adopt "to provide a safer online experience for teens, and we look forward to sharing our ongoing safety innovations with other companies." Among other measures,

MySpace agreed to:

- Allow parents to submit their children's e-mail addresses to MySpace to prevent anyone from misusing the addresses to set up profiles.
- Make the default setting "private" for 16- and 17-year-old users.
- Respond within 72 hours to complaints about inappropriate content and devote more staff and resources to classify photographs and discussion groups.
- Strengthen software against underage users.
- Create a high school section for users younger than 18.

Source: The Times

Cells, Texting Give Predators Secret Path to Kids

Article published by CNN on November 3, 2007

MOON TOWNSHIP, PA It's happened again. A teacher is accused of having sex with a student and, like many times before, cell phone calls and texting reportedly had a role in sexually abusing a minor. The same cell phones that parents buy as safety devices for their children are the gadgets that pedophiles and predators use to prep kids for sexual encounters, experts and police say.



The latest case is out of Pennsylvania. Police say a 26-year-old P.E. teacher admitted to having sex with a 14-year-old student in the school's parking lot. Detectives from the Moon Township Police Department said they found nude pictures of Beth Ann Chester on the teen's cell phone along with text messages. Chester faces 14 charges, including three counts of sexual abuse of a child and involuntary deviate sexual intercourse. Robert Del Greco, Chester's attorney, declined CNN's request for a comment. His client has a preliminary hearing on January 22.

Before cell phones, laptops and Sidekicks -- a BlackBerry-like device for the younger, hipper crowd -- someone might have noticed that a teacher was "grooming" a child, or being way too attentive, too often. Not anymore.

Now, teachers have weeks, months and years to secretly undermine a child's parents and get a student to go along with sexual contact. "The fact is a teacher can show absolutely zero outward signs of interest in a child, but because of technology, they can have an ongoing relationship and no one would know," said Ted Thompson, the executive director for the National Association to Prevent Sexual Abuse of Children.

Parents know chat rooms are dangerous. They warn their kids about the risk, but they give cell phones a nod. A New York mom, who requested anonymity because her kids don't know about her surveillance, said she uses software to regularly check her children's e-mail and online activity on the home computer. But she also gave her kids cell phones that have texting and photographic capability. Asked why she doesn't scrutinize the phone the same way she snoops on the computer, she said. "I hadn't really thought about it much."

Detective Joshua Shelton, who works in the crimes against women and children's unit in Fayette County, Georgia, says most parents are like that. He's investigating a case in which a teacher allegedly sent a message to a 14-year-old student's cell phone requesting a nude picture of her. "Parents don't have the involvement that they should with these electronic devices," Shelton said. "Parents should consider cell phones that have Internet access like a window open into their house, because that's exactly what these people are using it as."

Full Story: <http://www.cnn.com/2008/CRIME/01/11/teachers.charged/index.html#cnnSTCText>

Not-so-Private Eyes Watch School

Article published by South Bend Tribune on November 14, 2007

BUCHANAN, MI There's a tiny closet somewhere in Buchanan High School where an ordinary-looking computer server and a recorder are hard at work, 24 hours a day, doing an extraordinary job keeping students safe. Such a quiet, unobtrusive system has a powerful security reach, school officials say. That's because it's linked by network to 16 not-so-private eyes: 16 little cameras, embedded in the ceilings in the school's common areas and hallways, that capture nearly every movement, day and night, in the school's west access points, wings and gymnasiums. If Principal Sharon Steinke has her way, they'll soon be joined by 16 more cameras to cover the school's east side and second floor.

From his upstairs classroom at Buchanan High, Cisco Academy instructor and technology guru Phillip Place helps

administrators keep an eye on comings and goings at the busy school. He monitors the feeds in real time and has recordings as backup. In the future, the system will be linked directly to the Buchanan Police Department and to off-site laptop computers, where activities at the school can be monitored remotely.

A "very few" number of officials already have the ability to view real-time events at the school from a remote location, Place said. "We tell the students that you never really know who's watching you," Place told the Buchanan Board of Education from his classroom during a demonstration of the security system's capabilities prior to Monday night's school board meeting. "This would be the proof of that," he added. "You're watching a live feed from 16 different locations in the high school."

A deep blue light suffused the room as all eyes moved up to a screen-shot on the classroom wall, where a handful of tiny bodies moved at random in the hallways, at the entrances, outside the cafeterias and inside and outside the gyms. That's where most people congregate, most non-students enter and exit the building, and where most local and visiting athletes come and go for practices and sporting events, he noted.

Assistant Principal Wayne Writer, charged with managing order and discipline in the school, said the system has been "a great asset." "The kids know the cameras are there. They know their actions are being watched," he said. "Yet it constantly amazes us what the kids don't believe about it. You still run into the claim of, 'Hey, I didn't do that' until you slap a still photo of the incident down in front of them, and there's the student's picture. Then the reaction becomes, 'Wow, is that me?'"



One of the system's advantages is its ability to record the live feeds for later review, Place said. While it can't freeze live-action frames, it does allow monitors to download an entire segment, a partial segment or a single frame. These can be printed out to allow authorities to more closely scrutinize "hard copy" of an event, individual or group of individuals, Place said.

The segments are date- and time-stamped and marked with the camera number which denotes the location. By using that information, officials can piece together individual segments shot by different cameras. That enables authorities to create a seamless digital video that tracks an individual's or group's movements through the school.

Place said that most students aren't troubled by the constant monitoring. "They know they are being watched and recorded, and they don't seem troubled by it, probably because they've grown up with that," he said. "We talk to them a lot about security -- physical security, financial security, identity security, so they're aware of the issues. "Students pretty much understand that sometimes an individual has to give up some privacy to benefit the group as a whole. I find it's the parents who seem to have the most trouble with it."

A 2006 security scare at the high school — anonymous letters threatening several students — turned out to be a hoax. But the incident pointed out to school officials just how vulnerable the multiple access points and constant foot-traffic made the student body and staff.

The district immediately studied the problems and instituted a host of new policies and new security measures. Last summer, Steinke won school board approval for the two-phased camera installation program that will essentially blanket the school's entrances, hallways, gyms and stairwells with lidless, sleepless eyes around-the-clock.

Drugs & Alcohol

Police: New Mint Product Resembles Crack Cocaine

Article published by CBS News on November 30, 2007

The Hershey Company is under fire for making a product that law enforcement says resembles crack cocaine. When Philadelphia narcotics officers first saw the breath mints, called Ice Breakers, they actually ordered a field test to determine its contents because the package looked so much like illegal drugs.



Even veteran narcotics officers acknowledged that they could not tell difference between a package of crack cocaine and the breath mints package when placed side by side. "It is an exact replication what you see on the street, from the color, to the texture, to the substance itself," Chief Inspector Bill Blackburn explained.

Police fear the similarities between the newly released mints and the long-time packaging of deadly drugs could put children in danger. "We could have a real tragedy, that child could consume that product thinking that it was candy," Blackburn said. When shown the package, a parent in the Bridesburg section of Philadelphia was shocked. "It looks like dope to me," the woman said.

News Briefs

Five Students Held After Gun Taken Onto South Bend School Bus - *South Bend, Indiana*

Article published by the South Bend Tribune on December 20, 2007

After a lockdown and a search at Greene Intermediate Center, St. Joseph County police took five boys to the Juvenile Justice Center for allegedly passing around a loaded handgun on a school bus Wednesday morning, police said. Sgt. William Redman, a county police spokesman, said the boys, who were 11 to 14 years old, were detained on suspicion of criminal recklessness and possession of a handgun. One of the students brought the 9-millimeter gun onto the bus - police still don't know how -- and showed it off to the others, Redman said.

The student who brought the gun had had an ongoing dispute with another student at the school, although he did not have any specific plans to use the weapon, Redman said. Authorities found the gun in a bookbag inside a school locker after students on the bus saw the gun and told the assistant principal. The gun was jammed, police said, but it was not clear whether the student brought it that way or whether it became jammed as a result of students handling it.

See the full story - <http://www.southbendforum.com/vb/showthread.php?t=3837>

Penn Dispels Rumors, But Absences High - *Mishawaka, Indiana*

Article published by the South Bend Tribune on November 30, 2007

At least a couple of hundred more Penn High School students than usual went home early Thursday after rumors of a possible graffiti-sparked threat at the high school. "We have a lot of rumors that are flying around that are totally unfounded," Penn-Harris-Madison School Corp. spokeswoman Teresa Carroll said Thursday morning in the wake of rumors of a shooting threat at the high school of 3,000-plus students.

Thursday's rumors were sparked by graffiti found in a girls' bathroom on Monday, Carroll said. The writing said, "Kill all the (expletive)," she said.

Gun Photos Get 5 Expelled from Bellville - *Bellville, Michigan*

Article published by WNDU on November 7, 2007

Five Belleville High School students have been expelled after photos of them with what appeared to be guns, drugs and piles of cash appeared on MySpace.com. The Ann Arbor News says two other students got eight- to 10-day suspensions.

Van Buren Public Schools Superintendent Pete Lazaroff says the photos shown on the social networking Website were taken after a limo picked the students up from a school dance. He says he thinks the students had weapons at the homecoming dance. Lazaroff says the students bragged they were members of a gang. He says there are grounds for discipline whether the guns were real or fake.

TF North Juniors Reflect on Life After Shooting Deaths - *Calumet City, Illinois*

Article published by the Times on December 10, 2007

A group of Thornton Fractional North High School juniors want people to know who they are. The loss of two of their classmates to gun violence within the span of one November week changed their young lives. Some now worry about being shot themselves. They all say they know kids at school who are in gangs.

And most say they know kids with guns and have seen them at parties. But the nine who gathered to talk with The Times last week say that's not who they are or what their school or city is all about. They are trying to stay on the right path and want others to help them along the way.

See the full story - http://www.nwi.com/articles/2007/12/10/news/top_news/doc38edd4650fbbfea862573ad000b7c22.txt

Third Fire Set at Morton High School - *Hammond, Indiana*

Article published by the Times on November 7, 2007

Hammond Police took a 17-year-old Morton High School student in connection with a fire set in the school's wrestling room Tuesday, the third fire set at the school this year. The teen is being held on delinquent suspicion of arson and has not made a formal statement, Hammond Police Lt. Richard Hoyda said.

Officials evacuated the school around noon, after smoke from a fire set to wrestling mats and football tackling dummies spread through the school, Hammond Fire Chief David Hamm said. Authorities found a gas can in a black bookbag outside of a room inside the school.

Four Students Arrested for Selling Drugs in High School - *Valparaiso, Indiana*

Article published by the Post-Tribune on January 15, 2008

Four students were arrested on drug charges, and a warrant is being requested for the arrest of a fifth, after police learned of drugs reportedly being sold at Valparaiso High School. The arrests happened quickly on Friday, when anonymous students came forward after seeing "what they thought was a drug deal," said Cpl. Michael Grennes, spokesman for the Valparaiso Police Department.

A male in the 12th grade allegedly admitted to buying a single pill -- a prescription stimulant -- from a 16-year-old while at school, according to a police news release. Police officers stationed at the high school -- Todd Kobitz, working security, and Resource Officer Sgt. Steve Jackson as well as Juvenile Probation Officer Ken Eguia -- continued questioning students, Grennes said.



In the end, police seized 54 grams of marijuana and more than \$100 cash used in drug transactions. Two 16-year-olds were arrested, one for dealing a controlled substance and the other for possession of and dealing marijuana; two other students, ages 14 and 15, were arrested for possession of marijuana. The juveniles all were held at the Porter County Juvenile Detention Center. Police also have requested an arrest warrant for an 18-year-old male accused of dealing a controlled substance at the school.

See the full story - <http://www.post-trib.com/news/741095,vhsdrugs.article>

Student Raids Med Cabinet, Shares Pills - *Lowell, Indiana*

Article published by the Post-Tribune on December 6, 2007

A Lowell Middle School student raided his home medicine cabinet, brought muscle relaxant pills to school last Thursday for recreational use and distributed them to other students.

NIU on Alert After Virginia Tech Reference Found on Wall - *DeKalb, Illinois*

Article published by the Journal and Courier on October 26, 2007



Northern Illinois University in DeKalb is under a security alert through the end of the semester after police found threats on a bathroom wall that included a racial slur and references to the Virginia Tech shootings, a university spokeswoman said Sunday.

Campus police are investigating two separate messages found by a student Saturday night on a restroom wall in the Grant D Towers complex that read that "things will change most hastily" in the final days of the semester, which ends Friday, said Melanie Magara, a university spokeswoman.

The first set of messages, found written in black ink in a women's restroom, includes a racial slur and reads "ME / OUT . . . Die Sem Burr 10th . . . Hmz Sdn Cr" in what officials believe are references to Dec. 10 and the Holmes Student Center. Underlined letters also spell out the word "WATCH." The second entry, which appears to be in different handwriting, reads, "What time? The VA tech shooters messed up w/ having only one shooter . . ."

NIU officials increased campus security and notified people on campus about the threats by e-mail, voice mail and fliers, Magara said.

See the full story - http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/local/chi-niu_alert_webdec10,0,714223.story?coll=chi_tab01_layout

Texas School Plot Foiled after Tip Received Online - A Lifesaving Story

Federal Bureau of Investigation Press Release on December 21, 2007

In the early morning hours of this past September 11, an Arizona man logged into our website, went to our [electronic tips page](#), and reported what he had just seen on the Internet. And we are so glad he did. Turns out, he'd come across a plot by several high school students in a central Texas town called Pflugerville to mark the 9/11 anniversary in a deadly way—by setting off pipe bombs at the school, then attacking students with high caliber firearms. The students bragged of their plan by posting photographs of themselves and their pipe bombs on the web.



Our counterterrorism experts monitor our public tips page around the clock, so they were on it immediately. Time was of the essence; we had to stop this plot before the school day began in just a few short hours. They checked out the student website, but a vital piece of information—the photographs of the attackers—had already been removed. Time was running out.

The next step was to notify our local field office in San Antonio and the Pflugerville Police Department of the threat. Then, at about 2 a.m., our agents called the tipster to see if he could provide any additional information.

It was at this point that he delivered in an even more remarkable and important way. The tipster had saved on his computer the only immediately available photograph of one of the attack planners, which he quickly e-mailed to us.

That photograph paid off. It enabled the Pflugerville Police Department, the Pflugerville Independent School District, and our local field office to identify the student in the photograph and arrest him and his co-conspirators without incident before the school day started. Whew!

Lives were likely saved and a terrible tragedy prevented—all because one man took the time, in the wee hours of the morning, to let us know about an impending attack. For his efforts, he was recently presented with a special commendation from the FBI Director.

“This tipster is a hero, plain and simple,” said the special agent who heads the unit in our Counterterrorism Division that runs the web tip line. “We receive about 25,000 tips and leads like his every month, and we take them all seriously. You just never know when they might solve a case or save a life.”

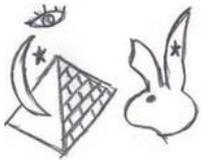
You can help, too. If you have any information about a crime or an act of terrorism that has happened or may happen, please go straightaway to our tip line and give us the facts. You, too, can play an important role in keeping communities and our nation safe.

To submit a tip, go to: <https://tips.fbi.gov/>.

Youth Gang Awareness - Black P Stones

Black P Stones

Gang Make Up: African American
Gang Colors: Black, Red and Green
Monikers/Graffiti: Five Point Star
Crescent Moon
“All Seeing Eye”
21 Stone Pyramid
Rising Sun
“Circle 7”
Other People Nation Symbols



Basic Gang History: The Almighty Black P. Stone Nation (often abbreviated BPSN or BPS) is a Chicago-based street gang estimated to have more than 23,000 gang members. The gang was originally formed in the late 1950s as the *Blackstone Rangers*. In later years, a quasi-Islamic faction of the gang emerged, naming themselves the *El Rukn tribe of the Moorish Science Temple in America* (or simply El Rukns), under their 'religious leader' and Blackstone Rangers founder Abdullah-Malik (born Jeff Fort). The BPSN has managed to finance itself through a wide array of criminal activities and are also part of the large Chicago-based gang alliance known as the People Nation.

The Black P. Stones originated, and is based, in the South Side of Chicago. Their main rivals are the Gangster Disciples, and to a lesser degree, the Black Disciples. They are rivals to all Folk Nation gangs and White Supremacist groups, such as the Ku Klux Klan, white power skinheads, and the Aryan Brotherhood. Their allies are the Vice Lords, Latin Kings and other People Nation Gangs, Black Separatist Groups, and the Bloods.

Structure and Criminal Activities: The majority of the Black P Stones identify Jeff Fort (aka “Chief Malik”) as the overall leader of the organization. *He is in federal custody until 2038.* The Black P Stones are currently the second largest street gang in Chicago with an estimated membership of over 20,000 on the streets of Chicago and almost 3,000 in the prison systems. Criminal activities consist of graffiti, assault, narcotic sales, drive-by shootings, extortion and murder.



Feds release applications on Jan. 9, due Feb. 19

[From ED.gov] On behalf of the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools, we are pleased to announce the release of the Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (REMS) Fiscal Year 2008 grant application (CFDA 84.184E). The notice inviting applications was published in the [Federal Register](#) [PDF, 70 KB] on January 8, 2008.

Purpose of Program: Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (REMS) grants support efforts by local educational agencies (LEAs) to improve and strengthen their school emergency management plans, including by training school personnel and students in emergency management procedures; communicating with parents about emergency plans and procedures; and coordinating with local law enforcement, public safety, public health, and mental health agencies. For more information, visit <http://ercm.ed.gov/index.cfm?event=FY2008GrantApp>.

Special Feature



A Closer Look - Autism and the Classroom: A Challenge for SROs

The following is a summary of the presentation in November by Kylee Bassett concerning Autism and some information for SROs on handling situations that may arise with autistic students.

Autism is a neurological disorder with no single known cause. The effects of autism are life-long and disrupt communication, social interaction, one's ability to reason and behaviors.

Autism is a subcategory of Pervasive Developmental Disorder (PDD). Asperger's Disorder is also a form of PDD. Currently, according to Indiana's Department of Education Child Count Data, 1 in 143 school-aged children receive services under the autism spectrum eligibility category. The disorder is four times more common in boys than in girls.

Imagine not being able to communicate. Imagine being in pain, but not able to tell anyone. Imagine feeling anxious, confused and frightened but not knowing why. Imagine feeling this way every day. This is what it can feel like when you are autistic.

Autism is considered a spectrum disorder. Students with this disorder may have varying degrees of effects on one's behavior. The student's measured I.Q. can be gifted to severe. Their social interactions can be aloof to active but odd. Their communication can be non-verbal all the way to completely verbal. They may be uncoordinated or coordinated. Their senses can be hypo-sensitive or hyper-sensitive.

Students with autism may be unable to predict another person's reaction, misunderstand or not react to social cues or may invade other's personal space. They may not understand the emotional state of others, dangerous situations or may have a heightened response to "trivial" change or routine.

For School Resource Officers, you may come across situations involving autistic children. Here are some important tips when addressing these students.

- Accept little or no eye contact
- Explain what you are going to do.
- Speak slowly and use simple language: "Stand Up," "Go To..."
- Use literal language.
- Phrase instructions positively.
- Allow a longer time to respond.
- Phrase questions to discover possible memorized responses.
- Model and rehearse scenario for individual prior to asking them to perform action.
- Seek advice from caregiver and teachers as they know the individual better than anyone.
- Use visuals. (An individual may have a communication board that can assist)



Autism can strongly affect the sensory system. These individuals may be overly or under responsive or sensitive to sights, sounds, touch, smells, taste or movement. Autistic children may also use a variety of techniques to self stimulate. Also called stimming, this involves repetitive physical actions when their anxiety level is beyond a comfort zone. They may appear as high on drugs or having a psychotic episode during these times. Some examples of stimming include spinning, rocking, hand flapping, running, covering ears, rolling head, biting self or hitting head.

To calm students exhibiting these behaviors:

- Stay calm and reduce stimuli (e.g. noises, etc) as much as possible.
- Avoid touch when possible.
- May need to leave immediate area. Direct others to another environment away from the problem area.
- Limit crowd intrusion.



When you arrive at and try to access a situation, you may find an autistic student stands too close or too far away from you. They may give irrelevant, inappropriate or no responses. Scripted answers or cursing using the same phrases are also common. They could be very anxious or confused, have odd gait or display an escalated behavior.

Some quick repair strategies for autism meltdowns include:

- Open up (open palms and drop arms)
- Back up: One Step
- Be quiet
- Wait...then quietly reassure
- No threats, no discussion of consequences, no extra language and no apologizing

When interviewing autistic students ask specific, clear questions. Avoid questions that require a “yes” or “no” answer. Allow time to process information. Be aware individuals may just repeat last word heard in question. (e.g. “Were you with your family or John?” or “Were you with John or your family?”)

If you need to restrain, keep in mind that individuals with autism have very low muscle tone and are especially susceptible to “positional asphyxia.” It is critical to continually monitor the person if a take down is necessary, as well as the whole time they are in custody. Remember, the person may have a seizure disorder. These types of situations may escalate the individual’s behaviors.

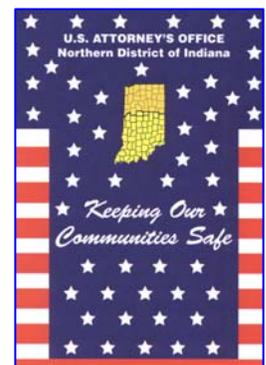
Remember: if possible, limit the number of personnel; maintain a calm scene; that every person is different; seek advice from a caregiver; allow for calming strategies; explain slowly and don’t overwhelm; model action or command; avoid head/shoulder area; check thoroughly for injury; and be patient, don’t give up!

AUTISM: Approach the person in a quiet, non-threatening manner. Understand that touching a person with autism may cause the protective “fight or flight” reaction. Talk to the person in a moderated and calm voice. Instructions should be simple and direct, avoiding slang. Seek all indicators to evaluate the situation as it is unfolding and be willing to adjust your actions accordingly. Maintain a safe distance until any inappropriate behaviors lessen but remain alert to the possibility of outbursts or impulsive acts.



Please send your comments and suggestions on the
“The Monitor” Newsletter to:

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For further information on the L.E.C.C. please visit: www.keepingourcommunitiessafe.us