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**National Institute of Justice**

**Comprehensive School Safety Initiative  
Report**

**May 2014**



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## Introduction

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The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2014 (Public Law 113-76), provides \$75 million for the Comprehensive School Safety Initiative, which is described further in the accompanying explanatory statement. This Initiative is to be overseen by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) within the Office of Justice Programs (OJP). In implementing this initiative, NIJ is to collaborate with key partners from multiple, relevant disciplines on developing a strategy and model for comprehensive school safety.

NIJ developed the Comprehensive School Safety Initiative in consultation with federal partners and Congress. It is a research-focused initiative designed to increase the safety of schools nationwide through the development of knowledge regarding the most effective and sustainable school safety interventions and programs. Ultimately, the Initiative's goal is to develop improved strategies and models for comprehensive school safety. To accomplish this, NIJ is undertaking a broad-based approach that involves several component parts, including:

- Building partnerships with federal agencies that focus on school safety issues from a variety of vantage points, e.g., law enforcement, mental health, education, and criminal justice;
- Convening researchers and practitioners to understand better the predictors of school safety and conducting knowledge management activities to distill and translate knowledge for special audiences;
- Conducting independent research and evaluation;
- Assessing technologies for increasing school safety;
- Enhancing national school safety data collection mechanisms; and
- Implementing research programs in local schools to test innovative approaches to enhancing school safety.

The current state of knowledge regarding school safety is varied and extensive. While a significant amount of information about school safety is available, there is much more to learn. Although there is no commonly accepted school safety “model,” school safety experts generally agree on some of the principal components and elements that make up school safety plans and programs. In FY 2014, NIJ plans to examine the issues surrounding school safety within three broad areas: (1) understanding the history of school safety programs nationwide; (2) conducting independent research and evaluation; and (3) testing the effects of various school safety interventions. By examining these three areas, NIJ's aim is to isolate factors in current school safety models such

that at the end of the project period, NIJ can develop a comprehensive model with some degree of confidence that the factors included are evidence-based. This knowledge will provide schools with guidance on which aspects of school safety are most effective and sustainable. It also will inform the direction in which the development of comprehensive school safety models should continue to progress.

## The Framework

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NIJ has developed a framework to guide its Comprehensive School Safety Initiative. The framework establishes a set of goals and guiding principles that meet congressional objectives and comport to the ideals of building knowledge through objective, independent research in pursuit of sustainable models of school safety.

### Goals

- Improve the safety of schools nationwide through the development of a solid foundation of knowledge and best practices that can be implemented through individualized school safety personnel, programs, policies, and activities, and result in a sustainable and cost effective school safety program.
- Rigorously test and evaluate school safety models and their component parts through research programs in K-12 public and tribal schools.

### Guiding Principles

- Undertake research-focused projects that contribute to building a solid foundation of rigorously tested, objective, and independent knowledge and best practices about school safety;
- Emphasize both process and outcome evaluation so that specific intermediate factors can be identified and evaluated and promising practices can be implemented most effectively;
- Evaluate programs and school safety models based on their long-term sustainability and cost/benefit to ensure that their adoption is feasible financially for schools; and
- Produce research that will result in knowledge and findings relevant to a wide range of schools and school districts;
- Emphasize, through research efforts, the importance of:
  - Non-discrimination (based on such things as students' disability, race, national origin, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, or language proficiency) and

- Avoiding a “school-to-prison pipeline” (policies and practices that unnecessarily remove students from schools and into criminal and juvenile justice systems).
- Promote mutually beneficial collaborations between school districts and their research partners that continue after the study period is complete.

## **Federal Partnerships**

An interagency working group of federal partners meets regularly to assist in the development of the Comprehensive School Safety Initiative. Members share their historical knowledge, research efforts, data collection activities and strategies, and programs supported by each agency. Members of the group include representatives from:

Department of Justice:

- Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS)
- Civil Rights Division (CRT)
- Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)
- Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS)
- Office of Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP)

Department of Education;

Department of Homeland Security;

Department of Health and Human Services:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD)
- National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)
- National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)
- National Institutes of Health (NIH)
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

Department of the Treasury:

- U.S. Secret Service (USSS)

NIJ anticipates that these organizations will continue to support the initiative by assisting in the composition of the peer review panel members. Also, the federal partners will assist in identifying stakeholders who can inform the current state of school safety research and practice in the building of knowledge.

## **The Plan**

It is critical for every major research initiative to develop a plan that can guide the work for the life of the project. As important as the plan itself is the need to ensure transparency by allowing outside scrutiny and adherence to high standards of project execution.

The Comprehensive School Safety Initiative program plan consists of three major parts:

- 1) Understanding the history of school safety programs nationwide;
- 2) Conducting independent research and evaluation; and
- 3) Testing the effects of various school safety interventions via pilot projects.

## Understanding the History

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To understand the history of school safety programs nationwide, NIJ will:

- **Establish the foundation** for current safe school initiatives across the country (approximately \$500,000) by:
  - Identifying the current number of school districts, public and tribal schools by grade level, and number of private schools by grade level;
  - Identifying and documenting current safe school initiatives; and
  - Reviewing academic literature to determine the state of school safety research efforts.
- **Convene stakeholders**, including researchers and practitioners (approximately \$1,000,000) to:
  - Bring together individuals to address specialized topics such as school safety in tribal schools, multicultural schools, and rural schools; and
  - Translate the research into practice and develop school safety models.
- **Enhance data collection** mechanisms related to national school safety (approximately \$3,550,000).

### Establish the Foundation

To move the school safety program forward, NIJ will document the current state of school safety programs nationwide. If there have been success stories in building sound, evidence-based programs, NIJ will document those successes and develop plans to retest them in a broader population. If there are failures, NIJ will document and test those results to avoid making the same mistakes in a broader arena. In addition, NIJ will document the extant literature on school safety to identify any evidence-based programs currently available and begin to build a cumulative base of knowledge.

### Convene Stakeholders

The NIJ plan includes identifying stakeholders and bringing them together to assist in building the historic base on knowledge and envisioning a way forward to enhance what is known and document, from recognizable experts,

the practical value of lessons learned. In addition, NIJ will bring together individuals to address specialized school safety topics that may not be addressed in other parts of the school safety research agenda. These topics may include issues such as school safety with respect to:

- Schools with large numbers of Spanish-speaking English language learners;
- New immigrant communities;
- Students with physical disabilities;
- Multi-cultural schools;
- Home schools, charter schools, and magnet schools;
- Tribal schools; and
- Correctional educational settings.

NIJ will engage in knowledge management efforts to translate and combine the knowledge gained through the specific research projects and efforts. Further, NIJ will regularly convene the grantees that are participating in the initiative to encourage cross collaboration, learning, and the formation of a community of practice.

NIJ will also host focus groups to assist in establishing the base of what we know about school safety today and refining specific technology needs or approaches to address those needs. These focus groups will consist of stakeholders working in the area of school safety. These stakeholders will include (but are not necessarily limited to):

- Law enforcement;
- Mental health professionals;
- Parents and students;
- Researchers;
- School administrators;
- School counselors, psychologists, and social workers;
- State educational and criminal justice agencies; and
- Teachers.

## **Enhance Data Collection**

Meaningful research into school safety cannot be accomplished without first ensuring the integrity of the data. As a result, federal, state, local, and tribal entities have evaluated their data needs and begun collecting information designed to identify school safety needs and improvement across time and location. These early data may have met the immediate needs of organizations but fall short as more sophisticated research questions are asked and more

sophisticated research methods are used. NIJ will engage in a number of data improvement efforts, including:

- Conducting a new national survey of the activities of law enforcement in schools (Bureau of Justice Statistics, approximately \$1,000,000);
- Enhancing the School Survey on Crime and Safety to include mental health efforts (Department of Education and the U.S. Census Bureau, approximately \$1,700,000);
- Providing funding to enhance data collection for the School Associated Violent Deaths national database (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, approximately \$250,000);
- Developing a database and data collection platform of averted school attacks (Office of Community Oriented Policing Services and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, approximately \$500,000); and
- Providing funding to pilot an emergency room admittance data collection around school injuries (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Consumer Product Safety Commission, approximately \$100,000).

See Appendix A: Federal Databases Related to School Safety for additional information on school safety data.

## Conducting Independent Research

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The independent research supported by the Comprehensive School Safety Initiative will focus on two areas of interest:

- 1) Two assessments on technology and school safety - one focusing on how technology is used today to prevent violence in schools and another assessing technology needs of the future; and
- 2) Conducting objective, independent, investigator-initiated research.

Research in both areas will provide a base of knowledge upon which NIJ can begin to build a comprehensive school safety model.

To support innovative means of understanding the most effective approaches to improving/enhancing school safety, NIJ has issued a broad-based, investigator-initiated solicitation (Grants.gov number NIJ-2014-3798) inviting the best and brightest minds to study what works and what doesn't work in enhancing school safety. This solicitation will be open until May 20, 2014.

In addition, NIJ advertised and detailed the specifics of the solicitation in a Dear Colleague letter that was sent to educators and researchers across the country.

Funding of studies resulting from this solicitation will occur prior to September 30, 2014, with a project start date of January 1, 2015.

The Comprehensive School Safety Initiative will focus its research activities on:

- **Assessing school safety technologies** (approximately \$1,500,000); and
- **Conducting independent research and evaluation** through the solicitation discussed above (approximately \$15,000,000).

### Assessing School Safety Technology

NIJ will provide funding to conduct an assessment of the current state of school safety technology and one focused on the future technology needs of the nation's schools. NIJ will undertake a comprehensive assessment of how technology currently is used in the United States and other countries to prevent and respond to criminal acts of violence in K-12 schools, both public and private.

The assessment will identify: (1) the technologies currently being used; (2) how they are used (e.g., purpose, policy, and practice); (3) what is known about the efficacy of those technologies; and (4) considerations affecting their deployment and employment, to include cost and legal considerations.

The assessment is expected to include (but will not be limited to) the following areas of technology:

- Physical security technologies, including access controls, locks, cameras, and school-wide communication and emergency notification systems;
- Information technologies that, for example, may facilitate the exchange of information among schools, law enforcement agencies, and mental health and services providers to help identify individuals, including students that may pose a threat to themselves or others;
- Software risk assessment and planning tools; and
- Social media monitoring technologies.

See Appendix B: Technology Assessment Plan for additional information.

## **Conducting Independent Research and Evaluation**

NIJ has asked for the best and brightest research ideas for increasing school safety in its Investigator-Initiated Research solicitation. Eligible applicants for the Investigator-Initiated Research include states, units of local government (including tribal entities), non-profit, and for-profit organizations, institutions of higher education and certain individuals. The purpose of this solicitation is to learn more, through a variety of research methods, about which personnel, programs, practices, and policies work, either individually or collectively, to make schools safe.

NIJ is interested in research that rigorously examines the efficacy, effectiveness, efficiency (cost/benefit), and sustainability of various aspects of the components of a comprehensive school safety strategy. This knowledge will provide practical information that schools can use to develop the most effective school safety models and programs. Examples of issues NIJ is interested in include:

- Efficacy and cost/benefit ratios associated with having law enforcement professionals or other security personnel in schools, their potential involvement in a school-to-prison pipeline, and their most effective roles and responsibilities;
- Short-term and long-term effects of school discipline policies, school discipline alternatives, restorative justice, and peer mediation programs;

- Cost/benefit ratios associated with placing various types of mental health personnel in schools and their most effective roles and responsibilities;
- Effectiveness of various responses to active school shooters;
- Effectiveness of various threat assessment approaches currently being used in schools;
- Analysis and identification of the most effective approach for improving school climate and culture;
- Efficacy and cost/benefit ratios associated with various school safety technologies and physical security measures and their impact on safety and on students' perceptions of safety; and
- The most effective implementation models for school safety interdisciplinary teams.

This is not an exhaustive list of research issues and NIJ is prepared to consider any application that demonstrates careful crafting and adoption of a research question and exhibits a strong research and methods approach.

See Appendix C: Investigator-Initiated Research - The Comprehensive School Safety Solicitation and Appendix D: Dear Colleague Letter for Investigator-Initiated Solicitation for further details.

## Testing the Effects of Interventions via Pilot Project Grants

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To begin to understand the underpinnings of the various elements of school safety models across the country, NIJ will fund local school districts and state educational agencies to support the implementation of school safety interventions (e.g., personnel, programs, activities, and policies) in local schools and to advance research efforts to measure the effectiveness of these interventions.

The Comprehensive School Safety Initiative will implement pilot research programs in K-12 public and tribal schools to test approaches to enhancing school safety (approximately \$47,000,000).

- School districts and state educational agencies will be the primary grant applicants.
- School districts will fund local schools to procure school safety needs in terms of such things as personnel, technology, programmatic funding, and training.
- Funding will be provided to districts to engage a local research partner to develop school safety-related research questions and methodology.
  - Approximately 1/4 to 1/3 of funding will be provided to the research partner.
  - Research topics might include such topics as the effectiveness and cost/benefit of various elements of school safety:
    - Mental health and wellness (e.g., mental health professionals, teacher training, referral programs);
    - Security and preparedness (e.g., law enforcement officers in schools, technology, physical security, data collection mechanisms, threat assessment, active shooter responses, emergency operation plans);
    - Climate and culture (e.g., restorative justice, peer mediation, parental involvement, bullying prevention, truancy reduction); and
    - School-to-prison pipeline and student discipline (e.g., law enforcement role, efforts to reduce exclusionary discipline,

monitoring and tracking programs, extent of disparate arrests, differential enforcement and discipline in schools).

NIJ will provide funding to school districts (local education agencies) and state educational agencies to fund school safety initiatives in local schools and test whether those initiatives have any effect on enhancing school safety.

Importantly, the school districts or state educational agencies will partner with a researcher or research organization, including universities (including tribal institutions of higher education), nonprofit or for-profit organizations (including tribal nonprofit or for-profit organizations), and public entities such as state educational agencies or state criminal justice agencies that have experience in conducting research and evaluation. Researchers and school districts will agree jointly on specific and significant research questions pertaining to school safety that can be addressed through this initiative. Applicants will be expected to dedicate between 1/4 and 1/3 of funding directly to research partners to develop and carry out a rigorous program of evaluation. The remaining 2/3 to 3/4 of funding will go toward costs to implement interventions to be evaluated.

Potential school interventions can address a wide range of issues related to school safety. The issues to be examined generally fall within the following broad areas: mental health and wellness services, security and preparedness, and school climate and culture. However, NIJ is receptive to proposals to test a wide variety of interventions. For example, NIJ is interested in school-to-prison pipeline issues and ensuring the non-discriminatory treatment of students, both of which cut across many elements of school safety. Research studies may include such things as obstacles to effective implementation; examination of costs and benefits to varying implementation strategies; comparisons of popular training methods; evaluations of commonly implemented and under-evaluated programs; examination and validation of various school safety assessment instruments; examination of unintended consequences of interventions; variations in roles and responsibilities of different types of personnel; and/or assessment and development of potential technology solutions to address school safety issues. In practical terms in deciding how to approach the pilot project solicitation and in understanding how applications will be evaluated, two important factors need to be considered: 1) what is the potential impact on school safety of the initiative or intervention to be tested, and 2) how strong (rigorous) is the research plan designed to assess the intervention.

See Appendix E: Developing Knowledge About What Works to Make Schools Safe Solicitation and Appendix F: Dear Colleague Letter for Developing Knowledge Solicitation for further details.

## Timeline

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January 17, 2014	Enactment of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2014
February 19, 2014	NIJ released “Investigator-Initiated Research: The Comprehensive School Safety Initiative” solicitation
April 16, 2014	NIJ released “Developing Knowledge About What Works to Make Schools Safe” solicitation
May 20, 2014	Application deadline for “Investigator-Initiated Research: The Comprehensive School Safety Initiative”
July 10, 2014	Application deadline for “Developing Knowledge About What Works to Make Schools Safe”
September 30, 2014	Grant awards completed
January 1, 2015	Start date for research projects
January 15, 2015	NIJ reports on the research projects that were awarded
January 1, 2016	Interim reports from research projects due
April 1, 2016	NIJ reports on status of the Initiative
January 1, 2017	Interim reports from research projects due
April 1, 2017	NIJ reports on status of the Initiative
December 31, 2017	Final reports due (most projects will be completed in three years, but in some situations, projects may extend to as long as five years)
April 1, 2017	NIJ reports on outcome of the Initiative

## **Appendix A: Federal Databases Related to School Safety**

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NIJ and its federal partners have investigated the various federal databases related to school safety and have determined that with a few additions, these databases will serve the needs of the Comprehensive School Safety Initiative. The following describes these databases and offers and justifies the addition to be made in each database.

### **Enhance the School Survey on Crime and Safety — Department of Education/U.S. Census Bureau (~\$1,700,000)**

The School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS) is the primary source of individual school-level data on crime and safety in the United States. It is administered by the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). The SSOCS is a nationally representative cross-sectional survey of about 3,500 public elementary and secondary schools. It is designed to provide estimates of school crime, discipline, disorder, programs, and policies. SSOCS is administered to public primary, middle, high, and combined school principals in the spring of even-numbered school years. SSOCS data are frequently used by researchers and schools to benchmark school safety and to engage in various research efforts. Data can be used to assess what crime prevention programs, practices, and policies are used by schools and to examine the relationship between school characteristics and violent and serious violent crimes in elementary, middle, high, and combined schools.

NIJ understands the value of this repeated cross-sectional data collection and the opportunity that it presents to gather even greater levels of information on school safety issues. NIJ is entering into an Interagency Agreement with the Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics to fund an enhanced version of the 2015/2016 SSOCS.

NCES will work with NIJ and other federal and non-federal stakeholders to develop more in-depth information into specific aspects of school safety, most notably to include additional information on the roles and responsibilities of mental health professionals and law enforcement officers working in schools.

### **Conduct a new national survey of law enforcement activities in schools — Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) (~\$1,000,000)**

One of the most important, and at times controversial, aspects of school safety efforts is the role and presence of law enforcement officers in schools, including school resource officers (SROs). SROs are sworn law enforcement officers responsible for providing security and crime prevention services in the school

environment. A local police department, sheriff's agency, or school system typically employs SROs who work closely with school administrators in an effort to create a safer environment for students and staff. The responsibilities of SROs are similar to regular police officers in that they have the ability to make arrests, respond to calls for service, and document incidents that occur within their jurisdiction. SROs may serve as mentors and problem solvers, law enforcement, and educators in a triad service model. They may engage in activities such as developing and implementing crime prevention efforts and community justice initiatives; training students in conflict resolution, restorative justice, and crime awareness; identifying improvements to physical security; and assist in developing relevant school policies and procedures. Their activities and responsibilities are governed by jointly developed Memoranda of Understanding so that SROs can serve effectively as a bridge between law enforcement and schools.

In addition to these activities, some have expressed concerns that law enforcement involvement in schools contributes to a school-to-prison pipeline. The school-to-prison pipeline refers to the unnecessary introduction of juveniles to the criminal justice system, which can have long-term negative impacts on a young person's opportunities in life. There also exists the potential for SROs to be involved inappropriately in student disciplinary issues and the excessive use of exclusionary student discipline in schools.

Although there have been isolated local efforts to examine empirically law enforcement involvement in schools, and SROs in particular, there currently exists very little national-level data on the extent of law enforcement involvement in the nation's primary and secondary schools or in their typical roles and responsibilities. In addition, anecdotal evidence points to increases in the numbers of SROs as communities respond to well-publicized school shooting incidents. However, estimates of the approximate number of SROs vary widely.

NIJ seeks to improve the amount of information pertaining to the roles, responsibilities, and actions of local law enforcement in primary and secondary schools as a part of the data systems enhancement efforts. NIJ will enter into an Interagency Agreement with the BJS. With this funding, BJS will initiate a new data collection focused on the activities, roles and responsibilities of law enforcement agencies as they pertain to schools, with a specific emphasis on SROs and other law enforcement personnel who have responsibilities for interacting with schools and for working in a school environment. BJS also will collect data on the activities of law enforcement as they pertain to the school-to-prison pipeline, including the numbers of arrests of students on school grounds and the nature of these arrests.

**Develop a database and data collection platform of averted school attacks — Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS)/Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) (~\$500,000)**

On December 13, 2013, a shooting occurred at Arapahoe High School in Colorado. Within minutes, the nation and beyond knew of the incident. One week later, a planned shooting was averted at Trinidad High School, also in Colorado. The media attention given to the latter incident was a mere fraction of that given to the completed attack.

These types of situations lead to important questions:

- How many planned K–12 school attacks are prevented each year?
- What is the ratio of completed to averted attacks?
- What are the critical factors, alone or in combination, that contribute to the successful prevention of school attacks?

There is no national repository of information about averted school attacks or even completed school attacks. As a result, policymakers and practitioners lack valuable evidence-based insights that potentially could guide their decisions and actions, increasing the number of positive outcomes. Because school shootings themselves are relatively rare events, the universe of data on these episodes is small. Widening the area of focus to include averted school attacks would expand greatly the available information on these threats. Currently, there exists no available data system that systematically collects information on these events.

NIJ will enter into an Interagency Agreement with the COPS Office (with assistance from the Federal Bureau of Investigation) to collect in-depth information regarding averted and completed school attacks through the development and implementation of a new data intake platform.

The database will be populated initially by reviewing public domain sources and interviewing local officials involved in prevented and completed school attacks since January 2000. With a deeper understanding of the dynamics, timing and evolution of these threats, those directly responsible for protecting the nation’s students will be better prepared to accomplish that critical responsibility.

**Provide funding to enhance the collection of the School Associated Violent Deaths national database — CDC (~\$250,000)**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has been collecting data on school-associated violent deaths since 1992 through the School-Associated Violent Deaths (SAVD) Surveillance System. SAVD has benefitted from a partnership with the Departments of Education (Office of Safe and Drug Free

Schools; Office of Safe and Healthy Students) and the Department of Justice. SAVD provides the most comprehensive national-level data available about school-associated violent deaths, common features of these events, and potential risk factors for perpetration and victimization. To date more than 850 deaths have been confirmed within the SAVD system. SAVD data play an important role in monitoring and assessing national trends in school-associated violent deaths and inform efforts to prevent fatal school violence.

SAVD captures data on all homicides, suicides, and legal intervention-related deaths associated with U.S. elementary and secondary schools (public and private) that occur at or on the way from or to schools or school-sponsored events. SAVD uses multiple strategies to identify potential cases, including a systematic search using Lexis Nexis and independent searches of public records and Internet search engines, and actively confirms that each report meets the case definition. SAVD also incorporates data from the Department of Education's Common Core of Data, the U.S. Population Survey, and the National Center for Health Statistics' (NCHS's) National Vital Statistics System (NVSS), and law enforcement investigative reports for confirmed cases. An annual analysis of SAVD data is published in the Indicators of School Crime and Safety produced by the National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, and BJS, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice.

When this information is collected and aggregated across multiple years, the data can guide prevention strategies and policies. A unique aspect of SAVD is the inclusion of detailed information obtained from law enforcement investigative reports and structured interviews with law enforcement personnel who investigated the incident and school officials who are familiar with the incident. These sources provide rich information about the nature of each incident (e.g., specific location, time of day, nature of dispute, gang involvement, warning signs), school characteristics (e.g., size, urbanicity, population served), and victim and offender characteristics (e.g., demographic and behavioral information for students as well as non-students). This information can have direct implications for preventing fatal and non-fatal school violence.

This ongoing system for data collection and analysis is well-positioned to aid NIJ in developing and enhancing information related to school safety. CDC will obtain complete law enforcement and/or school data for recent cases of school-associated violent deaths and institutionalize processes to increase future efficiency and timeliness of SAVD's data collection. To complement and enhance SAVD's current capacity to identify school-associated violent deaths, CDC will hire two PhD-level fellows who will conduct interviews and obtain records from previously confirmed cases. This work will help to more fully

examine the circumstance and background information to document the factors contributing to fatal school violence. Fellows also will analyze the data and develop data-driven recommendations about comprehensive prevention strategies. CDC also will improve the efficiency and timeliness of the SAVD surveillance system. This will be accomplished by transitioning the system's data collection activities to a software platform that supports Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) software and Computer Audio Recording of Interviews (CARI). This software will facilitate high-speed survey management, data entry, and data management to support statistical analysis.

**Provide funding to pilot an emergency room admittance data collection around school injuries — CDC/CPSC (~\$100,000)**

The National Electronic Injury Surveillance System (NEISS) is operated by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC). The expanded system, called the NEISS All Injury Program (NEISS-AIP), began on July 1, 2000, and collects data about non-fatal injuries and poisonings treated in U.S. hospital emergency departments, whether or not they are associated with consumer products. The NEISS All Injury Program (NEISS-AIP) is a collaborative effort by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (CDC/NCIPC), and the CPSC.

For assaults, NEISS-AIP collects data about the relationship of the perpetrator to the injured person (such as spouse, partner, parent, other relative, friend, stranger, or multiple perpetrators) and the context of the assault (such as altercation, robbery, sexual assault, drug-related, gang-related, and drive-by shooting). Preliminary analysis of NEISS-AIP data for 2012 collected more than 1,400 emergency department cases of non-fatal assault-related injuries that occurred on school property. Weighted data based on these emergency department cases suggest there were about 60,000 school-associated assaults treated in U.S. hospital emergency departments in 2012. Since 2005, CDC also has funded a NEISS-AIP Assault Special Study screen that collects additional information on all assault-related injuries, including information about the role of the victim (e.g., initiated violence, bystander), number of individuals involved, whether victim was referred to protective services, whether a report was made to police, etc.

NIJ will enter into an IAA with CDC/NCIPC that will be used to pilot an expansion of the NEISS-AIP Special Study screen to collect information on school context. For example, for incidents that happened at school, CDC/NCIPC would test the ability to capture information on the type of school, whether the victim was a student or visitor, where the incident occurred on campus, weapon involved, method of transport to the emergency department, etc. CDC/NCIPC will work with NIJ and other federal stakeholders on the development of the additional data capture elements. This pilot stage is

necessary to determine the availability of this assault circumstance data in the emergency department chart. The pilot will take place at five NEISS-AIP hospitals over a period of about 6-9 months. At the conclusion of the project, CDC/NCIPC will assess the feasibility of an expansion of this data collection to all emergency rooms and will provide a cost estimate for this effort.

## **Appendix B: Technology Assessment Plan**

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### **School Safety Technology Assessment Plan (\$1,500,000)**

In part, the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) Research, Evaluation, and Development Project Grants program (CFDA#16.560) supports research to identify technologies to improve the criminal justice system and its response to crime, violence, and delinquency. As part of the Comprehensive School Safety Initiative, NIJ will conduct two complementary studies. The first will identify how technology is used today to prevent and respond to criminal acts of violence in schools. The second will identify unique technology needs associated with preventing and responding to such acts. NIJ will compare the findings from these two studies to identify gaps in technological capability where development of new technology may enhance school safety.

#### How Technology Is Used Today

In 2013, The Johns Hopkins University (JHU) received a competitive award under this program to establish a center to conduct research, test, and evaluation activities to inform NIJ's non-forensic technology research and development (R&D) efforts and its efforts to inform the field concerning technology and related issues.

As one of the activities to be funded in FY2014, NIJ has asked that JHU undertake a comprehensive assessment of how technology is used currently in the United States and other countries to prevent and respond to criminal acts of violence in K-12 schools, both public and private. NIJ envisions that this assessment will: 1) identify the technologies currently being used; 2) how they are used (e.g., purpose, policy, and practice); 3) what is known about the efficacy of those technologies; and 4) considerations affecting their deployment and employment to include cost and legal considerations. This assessment is expected to consider, but is not necessarily limited to, the following:

- Physical security technologies, including, but not limited to, access controls, locks, cameras, and school-wide communication and emergency notification systems.
- Information technologies that, for example, may facilitate the exchange of information among schools, law enforcement agencies, and mental health and services providers to help identify individuals, including students that may pose a threat to themselves or others.
- Software risk assessment and planning tools.
- Social media monitoring technologies.

## Technology Needs

In 2013, the RAND Corporation (RAND) received a competitive award under this program to conduct research to assist NIJ to identify and assess the highest priority technology needs of three of the four criminal justice communities of practice: law enforcement, courts, and corrections.

Among other activities under this award, RAND hosts focus groups to assist NIJ in refining specific technology needs or approaches to addressing those needs. The number of focus groups and the topics they consider may vary from year to year and are developed collaboratively between RAND and NIJ.

Of the activities to be funded in FY2014, NIJ proposes that RAND conduct a focus group to assess the unique technology needs associated with preventing and responding to such acts in K-12 schools, both public and private. This focus group will engage the major stakeholders partnered with law enforcement in preventing and responding to such acts. These stakeholders, although not necessarily limited to, should include:

- Law enforcement
- Mental health professionals
- Parents and students
- Researchers
- School administrators
- Teachers

## Appendix C: Investigator-Initiated Research: The Comprehensive School Safety Initiative Solicitation

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Presented here is the substantive material. The full solicitation, including the instructions for applying, is at: <https://ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/sl001118.pdf>

**U.S. Department of Justice**

OMB No. 1121-0329

Approval Expires 07/31/2016

Office of Justice Programs

National Institute of Justice



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The [U.S. Department of Justice](#) (DOJ), [Office of Justice Programs](#) (OJP), [National Institute of Justice](#) (NIJ) is seeking applications for funding for research and evaluation on safety in schools nationwide. This program furthers the Department's mission by sponsoring research to provide objective, independent knowledge and tools to meet the challenges of crime and justice, particularly at the State and local levels.

### **Investigator-Initiated Research: The Comprehensive School Safety Initiative Eligibility**

In general, NIJ is authorized to make grants to, or enter into contracts or cooperative agreements with, States (including territories), units of local government (including federally recognized Indian tribal governments as determined by the Secretary of the Interior), nonprofit and for-profit organizations (including tribal nonprofit or for-profit organizations), institutions of higher education (including tribal institutions of higher education), and certain qualified individuals. For-profit organizations must agree to forgo any profit or management fee. Foreign governments, foreign organizations, and foreign institutions of higher education are not eligible to apply.

NIJ welcomes applications that involve two or more entities, however, one eligible entity must be the applicant and the other(s) must be proposed as subrecipient(s). The applicant must be the entity with primary responsibility for conducting and leading the evaluation or research.

NIJ may elect to make awards for applications submitted under this solicitation in future fiscal years, dependent on the merit of the applications and on the availability of appropriations.

### **Deadline**

Applicants must register with [Grants.gov](#) prior to submitting an application. (See "How to Apply," page 21.) All applications are due by 11:59 p.m. eastern time on May 20, 2014. (See "Deadlines: Registration and Application," page 3.)

All applicants are encouraged to read this [Important Notice: Applying for Grants in Grants.gov](#).

### **Contact Information**

For technical assistance with submitting an application, contact the Grants.gov Customer Support Hotline at 800-518-4726 or 606-545-5035, or via e-mail to [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov). The [Grants.gov](#) Support Hotline hours of operation are 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, except federal holidays.

Applicants that experience unforeseen Grants.gov technical issues beyond their control that prevent them from submitting their application by the deadline must e-mail the NIJ contact identified below **within 24 hours after the application deadline** and request approval to submit their application.

For assistance with any other requirements of this solicitation, contact [NIJschoolsafety@usdoj.gov](mailto:NIJschoolsafety@usdoj.gov). General information on applying for NIJ awards can be found at [www.nij.gov/funding/Pages/welcome.aspx](http://www.nij.gov/funding/Pages/welcome.aspx). Answers to frequently asked questions that may assist applicants are posted at [www.nij.gov/funding/Pages/faqs.aspx](http://www.nij.gov/funding/Pages/faqs.aspx).

Grants.gov number assigned to this announcement: NIJ-2014-3798

Release date: February 19, 2014

SL001118

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# Investigator-Initiated Research: The Comprehensive School Safety Initiative

## (CFDA No. 16.560)

### Overview

The Department of Justice Appropriations Act, 2014, provides funds for the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) to undertake a research-focused initiative, the *Comprehensive School Safety Initiative*, to increase the safety of schools nationwide. This wide-ranging initiative will bring together the nation's best minds to research the root causes of school violence, develop technologies and strategies for increasing school safety, and provide pilot grants to test innovative approaches to enhance school safety across the nation.

**Authorizing Legislation:** Title I of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 (sections 201 and 202); Department of Justice Appropriations Act, 2014.

### Deadlines: Registration and Application

Applicants must register with Grants.gov prior to submitting an application. OJP encourages applicants to **register several weeks before** the application submission deadline. In addition, OJP urges applicants to submit applications 72 hours prior to the application due date. The deadline to apply for funding under this announcement is 11:59 p.m. eastern time on May 20, 2014. See "How to Apply" on page 21 for details.

### Eligibility

Refer to the title page for eligibility under this program.

### Program-Specific Information

The Department of Justice Appropriations Act, 2014, provides funds for a broad, research-focused initiative to increase the safety of schools nationwide. As a part of this initiative, NIJ

seeks the best and brightest research ideas for increasing school safety in the United States. The range of research questions and methodologies available under this solicitation is very broad. The research methodology may include, for example, natural experiments, randomized controlled trials, demonstration field experiments, longitudinal studies, and secondary data analysis.

The Act also calls for NIJ to develop a strategy and Comprehensive School Safety Model for communities to use to enhance their local school safety. From a research perspective, this is an unusually large undertaking with many moving parts. As a result, and consistent with the Act, under this solicitation NIJ will consider particularly ambitious proposals that exceed the typical size, scope, and duration of NIJ's grants.

Under the Comprehensive School Safety Initiative, NIJ will make available approximately \$15 million dollars for multiple grants that will address school safety issues directly. Each research effort funded must contribute to our base of knowledge and evidence building about school safety.

Accordingly, the research should look broadly at an array of factors that contribute to school safety. Each component of the Comprehensive School Safety Initiative shall adhere to a single guiding principle: every activity aims to build a solid foundation of knowledge and best practices upon which communities across this country can develop and implement individualized school safety programs that have endured rigorous scientific testing. Congress has identified, as a beginning point, a number of examples of factors and issues related to comprehensive school safety programs that investigators may consider for research and evaluation under this solicitation:

- The root causes of school violence.
- Technologies and strategies for increasing school safety, such as surveillance cameras and other safety-directed technologies.
- School-to-prison pipeline.
- School safety assessments and plans.
- Evaluation of school safety technical assistance or training.
- Other programs and technologies intended to enhance overall school safety.
- Gaps in the nation's mental health system as it may relate to school safety.
- Exposure to violence in the media as it may relate to school safety.
- Testing promising new approaches to school safety.
- Development and implementation of appropriate school safety training modules.
- Environmental approaches to school safety, including school design and layout.

In addition to the previous aspects of school safety, investigators also may consider applying for funding for research projects focused on determining the efficacy, effectiveness, efficiency (cost/benefit) and/or sustainability of the following areas as they relate to or impact school safety:

- School resource officers and other law enforcement support.
- School mental health professionals and support systems.
- Student/teacher/staff engagement techniques and models.
- Parental engagement and community support.
- Efforts to improve school climate and culture.
- Bullying prevention programs or other violence prevention programs/initiatives.
- Crisis/emergency management.
- Inter-disciplinary school safety team-based frameworks.
- Data collection instruments/processes that schools may use to analyze and monitor all aspects of school safety issues.
- Positive school discipline programs.
- Efforts to address disparate treatment of students (based on race, disability, sex, etc.) as a result of school safety programs.
- School discipline alternatives and restorative justice.
- Any common or innovative school safety responses, policies, programs, initiatives, or technologies.

### **Goals, Objectives, Deliverables, and Expected Scholarly Products**

The goals of the Investigator-Initiated Research: The Comprehensive School Safety Initiative solicitation are to improve the knowledge and understanding of school safety and school violence, and to enhance school safety programs through rigorous social and behavioral science research. The objectives of this solicitation are to fund high-quality, broad-based research projects and to facilitate advances in basic scientific knowledge and methods as they relate to school safety and/or school violence prevention.

In addition to required data sets, a draft and final summary overview of research results, interim and final progress and financial reports,<sup>1</sup> NIJ expects scholarly products to result from each award under this solicitation, taking the form of one or more published, peer-reviewed, scientific

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<sup>1</sup> See “Additional Requirements” section of this solicitation, below, for additional information.

journal articles, and/or (if appropriate) law review journal articles, book chapter(s) or book(s) in the academic press, technological prototypes, patented inventions, or similar scientific products.

**Important Notice Regarding Scholarly Products Expected to Result from All NIJ Research, Development, and Evaluation Grant Awards**

To help ensure that NIJ's grant-funded research, development, and evaluation awards produce scholarly products of the highest possible quality, NIJ has implemented certain changes in its Fiscal Year 2014 solicitations. Accordingly, NIJ **strongly encourages** applicants to read this solicitation in its entirety and pay particular attention to NIJ's expectations in the "Goals, Objectives, Deliverables, and Expected Scholarly Products" section, above, and to the "Performance Measures" section, below. Namely, NIJ has changed requirements regarding project technical deliverables and increased expectations regarding grantee publication of scholarly products. These changes will also be reflected in the special conditions attached to awards beginning in FY2014.

### **Amount and Length of Awards**

Total funding for this solicitation and the number of awards made will depend on the availability of funds, the quality of the applications, and other pertinent factors.

To allow time for, among other things, any necessary post-award review, modification, and clearance by OJP of the proposed budget, applicants should propose an award start date of January 1, 2015.

If the applicant is proposing a project that reasonably could be conducted in discrete phases, with each phase resulting in completion of one or more significant, defined milestones, then NIJ strongly recommends that the applicant structure the application – specifically including the narrative, expected scholarly products, timelines/milestones, and budget detail worksheet and budget narrative – to set out each phase clearly. Given limitations on the availability to NIJ of funds for research, development, and evaluation awards, this information will assist NIJ in considering whether partial funding of proposals that would not receive full funding would be productive. (If NIJ elects to fund only certain phases of a proposed project in FY 2014, the expected scholarly products from the partial-funding award may, in some cases, vary from those described above.)

NIJ may, in certain cases, provide supplemental funding in future years to awards under its research, development, and evaluation solicitations. Important considerations in decisions regarding supplemental funding include, among other factors, the availability of funding, strategic priorities, NIJ's assessment of the quality of the management of the award (for example, timeliness and quality of progress reports), and NIJ's assessment of the progress of the work funded under the award.

Applicants should be aware that the total period of an award, under this solicitation, including one that receives a funding supplement or a no-cost extension, ordinarily will not exceed five years.

**All awards are subject to the availability of appropriated funds and to any modifications or additional requirements that may be imposed by law.**

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To read the full solicitation, visit: <https://ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/sl001118.pdf>

## Appendix D: Dear Colleague Letter for Investigator Initiated Solicitation

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April 11, 2014

Dear Colleague:

The purpose of this letter is to alert school officials and social and behavioral scientists and researchers about an exciting research opportunity. The National Institute of Justice (NIJ) is interested in receiving proposals related to our “Investigator-Initiated Research: The Comprehensive School Safety Initiative” solicitation. The announcement has been on the streets for a few weeks now, but we would like to provide more insight into the kinds of proposals we are seeking.

It is most important to note that the solicitation is wide open—NIJ will consider any research topic that can add to our knowledge base about school safety. Think broadly: What do we know and what do we need to know? This is your opportunity to test innovative ideas about school safety. Does your idea have the potential to make a difference where school safety is concerned? Can it be implemented in the real world? If successful, could it be adopted by schools across the country or schools in certain parts of the country (e.g., rural areas)?

The Department of Justice Appropriations Act, 2014, provided funds for NIJ to conduct research about school safety. Accordingly, NIJ developed the Comprehensive School Safety Initiative to use a variety of research and data collection efforts to learn which programs, policies and practices (either individually or in concert) are effective in making schools safer. The broad-based initiative involves several components, including bringing together researchers and practitioners to better understand the causes of and best responses to school violence, assessing technologies and mechanisms, and implementing research programs in local schools to test various approaches to enhancing school safety.

The purpose of the “Investigator-Initiated Research” solicitation is to learn more, through a variety of research methodologies, about programs, practices, and policies (either individually or collectively) that work to make school safer. NIJ recognizes that one of the most effective approaches to creating a safe learning environment is to ensure that schools develop a

comprehensive school safety strategy by analyzing data related to school crime and culture. School safety strategies typically have a number of components, including factors related to data collection and analysis, school culture and climate, training of staff, involvement of law enforcement, effective school discipline policies, mental health services, evidence-based prevention programs, student involvement, and engagement of parents and community groups.

NIJ is interested in research that rigorously examines the efficacy, effectiveness, efficiency (cost/benefit) and sustainability of various aspects of the aforementioned components of a comprehensive school safety strategy. This knowledge will provide practical information that schools can use to develop the most effective school safety models and programs.

Examples of issues NIJ is interested in funding include:

- The efficacy and cost/benefit of having law enforcement professionals or other security personnel in schools, their potential involvement in a school-to-prison pipeline and their most effective roles and responsibilities.
- The short- and long-term effects of school discipline policies, school discipline alternatives, restorative justice and peer mediation programs.
- The costs/benefits of placing various types of mental health personnel in schools and their most effective roles and responsibilities.
- The effectiveness of various responses to active school shooter drills.
- The effectiveness of various threat assessment approaches currently being used in schools.
- An analysis of the most effective approach for improving school climate and culture.
- The efficacy and cost/benefit of various school safety technologies and physical security measures, and their impact on safety and on students' perceptions of safety.
- The impact of campus alert systems, such as those deployed on college campuses.
- An evaluation of school resource officers who are funded by the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS).

Schools and school administrators may want to obtain answers to more specific questions, such as:

- Are the actions we are taking to ensure the safety and well-being of students and staff effective?
- Are the actions we are taking to ensure the safety and well-being of students and staff cost effective, or are there alternatives that could provide the same level of safety and well-being at a lower cost?
- What are the unintended consequences of actions we are taking to make schools safe?
- What role can technology play in creating safe schools? What are the positive and negative aspects of using technology for this purpose?

- Does early identification of students' mental health needs, coupled with the provision of adequate services, have an impact on school safety?
- What will be the impact on school safety if every student in a school is connected to a responsible adult?
- What will be the impact if school safety is improved without addressing community or family safety?
- What are the key elements of a comprehensive school safety model?
- What training is required to enable teachers to identify and assess students who need mental health services?

These lists are not exhaustive, but they give applicants a better understanding of the wide range of school safety issues that NIJ would be interested in funding. In addition, NIJ encourages applicants to work with individual schools, school districts, charter schools and tribal schools to identify issues that need further exploration and to develop research programs that produce strong evidence on the most significant school safety issues and topics.

NIJ plans to award multiple grants and a mixture of both large- and small-scale projects under this solicitation. Therefore, applicants are encouraged to submit projects that are beyond the normal scope and dollar amount of NIJ-funded research. Approximately \$15 million will be awarded for this solicitation.

Proposals are due by May 20, 2014. Applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application by September 30, 2014.

Prospective applicants may submit questions to the email address included with the solicitation. To help you respond to this competition for funding, see the frequently asked questions at <http://nij.gov/funding/Pages/solicitation-qa.aspx#sl001118>

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Greg K Ridgeway". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "G" and "R".

Greg Ridgeway, Ph.D.  
Acting Director  
National Institute of Justice

## Appendix E: Developing Knowledge About What Works to Make Schools Safe Solicitation

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Presented here is the substantive material. The full solicitation, including the instructions for applying, is at: <https://ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/sl001122.pdf>

**U.S. Department of Justice**

OMB No. 1121-0329

Approval Expires 07/31/2016

Office of Justice Programs  
*National Institute of Justice*



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The [U.S. Department of Justice](#) (DOJ), [Office of Justice Programs](#) (OJP), [National Institute of Justice](#) (NIJ) is seeking applications for funding to develop knowledge about the effects of personnel, programs, and activities on school safety in the United States. Funds are available to local education agencies (LEAs), public charter schools that are recognized as an LEA and State educational agencies (SEAs). Applicants are expected to enter into an agreement to partner with highly qualified researchers and research organizations to test whether an intervention (e.g., additional personnel (such as school resource officers or mental health service providers), programs, policies, or activities) help us understand what works in making schools safer. One example of a permissible intervention under this solicitation would be schools hiring school resource officers or mental health service providers. The underlying purpose of this solicitation must be to contribute significantly to the base of knowledge about specific activities that improve school safety in a sustainable and cost-effective manner. This program furthers the Department's mission by supporting research to provide objective, independent knowledge and tools to meet the challenges of crime and justice, particularly at the State and local levels. The Department of Justice is committed to ensuring that school safety practices provide fair, beneficial, and developmentally appropriate services for youth, and in no way contribute to a school-to-prison pipeline.

### **Developing Knowledge About What Works to Make Schools Safe**

#### **Eligibility**

Eligible applicants are limited to local education agencies (LEAs), public charter schools that are recognized as an LEA, and State education agencies (SEAs). Eligible applicants must identify a highly skilled research partner and local participating schools. Proposals must demonstrate the researcher capabilities and the local schools' willingness to participate in the study. Research partners can be institutions of higher education (including tribal institutions of higher education), nonprofit or for-profit organizations (including tribal nonprofit or for-profit organizations), and public entities such as State education agencies or State criminal justice agencies that have experience in conducting research and evaluation.

While the applicant must be an LEA, public charter school that is recognized as an LEA, or an SEA, NIJ welcomes applications that involve multiple entities (such as multiple school districts, schools, and research partners). However, one eligible LEA or SEA must be the applicant. Other partners must be subrecipients who agree to assist the applicant in carrying out various aspects of the proposed project.

NIJ may elect to make awards for applications submitted under this solicitation in future fiscal years, dependent on the merit of the applications and on the availability of appropriations.

#### **Deadline**

Applicants must register with [Grants.gov](#) prior to submitting an application. (See "How to Apply," page 23.) All applications are due by 11:59 p.m. eastern time on July 10, 2014. (See "Deadlines: Registration and Application," page 3.)

All applicants are encouraged to read this [Important Notice: Applying for Grants in Grants.gov](#).

#### **Contact Information**

For technical assistance with submitting an application, contact the Grants.gov Customer Support Hotline at 800-518-4726 or 606-545-5035, or via e-mail to [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov). The [Grants.gov](http://Grants.gov) Support Hotline hours of operation are 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, except federal holidays.

Applicants that experience unforeseen Grants.gov technical issues beyond their control that prevent them from submitting their application by the deadline must e-mail the NIJ contact identified below **within 24 hours after the application deadline** and request approval to submit their application.

For assistance with any other requirements of this solicitation, contact [NIJschoolsafety@usdoj.gov](mailto:NIJschoolsafety@usdoj.gov). General information on applying for NIJ awards can be found at [www.nij.gov/funding/Pages/welcome.aspx](http://www.nij.gov/funding/Pages/welcome.aspx). Answers to frequently asked questions that may assist applicants are posted at [www.nij.gov/funding/Pages/faqs.aspx](http://www.nij.gov/funding/Pages/faqs.aspx).

Grants.gov number assigned to this announcement: NIJ-2014-3878

Release date: April 16, 2014

SL001122

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# Developing Knowledge About What Works to Make Schools Safe

(CFDA No. 16.560)

## Overview

The National Institute of Justice (NIJ) introduced the Comprehensive School Safety Initiative in response to the Department of Justice Appropriations Act, 2014, which provides funds to NIJ to undertake school safety research. The purpose of the Comprehensive School Safety Initiative is to learn more about how personnel, programs, and activities contribute to school safety. This broad-based initiative involves several component parts, including providing local schools with personnel or safety equipment to enhance safety and perceptions of safety; bringing together researchers and practitioners to better understand the predictors of and best responses to school violence; assessing technologies and strategies for increasing school safety without creating adverse unintended consequences; enhancing national school safety data collection mechanisms; and implementing research programs in local schools to test various approaches to enhancing school safety. The Department of Justice is committed to ensuring that school safety practices provide fair, beneficial, and developmentally appropriate services for youth, and in no way contribute to a school-to-prison pipeline.

Through this solicitation, NIJ will provide funding to successful applicants that are local education agencies, public charter schools that are recognized as local education agencies, and State education agencies for school-safety-focused personnel, programs, activities, and evaluations. The applicant is expected to enter into agreements with a highly qualified research partner to identify, test, and evaluate interventions and approaches that are intended to enhance school safety. (For example, school districts may determine that schools in their districts need school resource officers. This solicitation would fund the school resource officers, provided that a highly qualified research organization will evaluate their effectiveness in reducing school violence.) In partnership with the applicant, the research partner is expected to engage in independent research and evaluation activities to rigorously examine various facets of specific, locally implemented, school safety interventions, including their effectiveness, efficacy, sustainability, unintended consequences, and cost/benefit. The researcher/applicant

partnership should be based on a formal agreement that demonstrates value placed upon open communication and the sharing of information and ideas. The goal of the partnership should be objective, high-quality research and evaluation activities with emphasis on fidelity to research designs. Ultimately, through this solicitation, NIJ hopes to build the state of knowledge about issues involving school safety.

**Authorizing Legislation:** Department of Justice Appropriations Act, 2014 (Public Law 113-76).

## **Deadlines: Registration and Application**

Applicants must register with Grants.gov prior to submitting an application. OJP encourages applicants to **register several weeks before** the application submission deadline. In addition, OJP urges applicants to submit applications 72 hours prior to the application due date. The deadline to apply for funding under this announcement is 11:59 p.m. eastern time on July 10, 2014. See “How to Apply” on page 23 for details.

## **Eligibility**

Refer to the title page for eligibility under this program.

## **Program-Specific Information**

### **Background**

NIJ will provide funding to LEAs, public charter schools recognized as LEAs, or State education agencies (SEAs) interested in testing initiatives that enhance school safety. The initiatives may include programs, policies, or practices (such as the hiring of law enforcement personnel and mental health providers) that may have the potential to enhance school safety. To qualify, applicants will need to recruit schools to participate in the research project. Applicants must also partner with a researcher or research organization that has considerable experience conducting research and evaluation. The research organizations can be institutions of higher education and nonprofit or for-profit organizations, or public entities (such as State education agencies or State criminal justice agencies that have experience in conducting research and evaluation).

Applicants and their research partners have considerable discretion in determining the kinds of research and safety initiatives to test based on the most meaningful initiatives in their particular jurisdictions. However, NIJ is particularly interested in the impact on school safety of mental health services, public safety and preparedness (such as the use of school resource officers), and school climate and culture programs. The applicant, in concert with the local participating schools, must reach agreement about the type of intervention they will seek. For example, if the applicant determines that mental health service providers would serve their community’s school safety needs best, the applicant and research partner can determine the best way from a research perspective to ascertain whether the intervention (i.e., mental health service providers) makes a difference. The important thing to remember is that for any proposal selected and funded, there must be a viable strategy to collect strong evidence to assess the intervention’s effectiveness, efficacy, sustainability, generalizability, or cost/benefit in terms of school safety outcomes and unintended consequences. Also, in terms of school safety specifically, the applicant and researcher will determine the appropriate outcomes for their particular study. The

outcomes may range from a reduction of more common occurrences (such as bullying, fighting, and aggressive behavior) to reduction or elimination of more serious and less frequent incidents (such as assault and violent crime).

The definition or understanding of school safety is another broad consideration the applicant and researcher must take into account. School safety is an elusive concept. For example, does it refer to visible signs of protection, such as school resource officers, locks on doors, or restricted access to the building? On the other hand, does school safety exist when there are feelings of safety on the part of students and teachers, less bullying or a decrease in fights or aggressive behavior or when mental health service providers are made available to students, faculty, staff, and administrators?

The research on school safety is extensive and on going. But, one may ask, has the research helped us understand what a safe school is and what actions need to be taken to ensure a safe school? Although there is no commonly accepted school safety “model,” there is general agreement on some of the principal components or elements that may enhance school safety. The components broadly include such things as appropriately trained school resource and other law enforcement officers with well-defined roles and responsibilities, mental health service providers, and elements of school climate and culture. More specifically, the components include the development and implementation of school discipline policies that are fair, nondiscriminatory (based on such things as students’ disability, race, national origin, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion or language proficiency), provide for graduated sanctions, and avoid unnecessary suspensions, expulsions, truancy, drop-outs, probation violations, and referrals to the justice system; use of science-based prevention programs that address school climate and employ youth-centered conflict resolution strategies (such as peer-mediation and restorative justice); comprehensive and continuous training of staff on issues, including the identification of students who have been exposed to violence or who may pose a risk to others or themselves; a strategy based upon the proactive analysis of accurate and timely data; the input of students and staff in the design of policies and programs; the ability to implement developmentally appropriate interventions, and the linkage or connection of students to responsible adults. In addition, most models for school safety emphasize that school safety is connected to and influenced by a host of factors that occur not only in schools but in the home and community as well. Therefore, the most effective approaches to school safety will involve the efforts of individuals, families, and groups both inside and outside of school.

To help potential applicants and researchers think about potential research questions, the following are broad questions related to different school safety elements. Keep in mind these are illustrative only. They are designed as broad parameters around which applicants and researchers can develop measurable questions:

- 1) What types of behavioral health, mental health, and wellness-related interventions and implementation models, and developmentally appropriate approaches, including the procurement of different types, roles and responsibilities of mental health professionals, are most effective and efficient in producing school safety outcomes?
- 2) What security and preparedness interventions and implementation models, including the procurement of different types, roles and responsibilities of personnel (law enforcement working in schools, other security personnel as well as teachers and administrators):

- a. are most effective and efficient in producing school safety outcomes?
  - b. contribute to an unwanted school-to-prison-pipeline, the inappropriate use of exclusionary discipline practices, or discrimination against students?
- 3) What climate and culture interventions and implementation models are most effective and efficient in producing school safety outcomes?

The proposed research strategy should make use of robust methods for process, implementation, and outcome evaluations. **Applicants should employ the most rigorous methods appropriate for the proposed research questions.** They should consider conducting studies through the implementation of randomized controlled trials or other rigorous evaluation methods. Other research methods may include, for example, multi-level, multi-method data collection and analysis, natural experiments, demonstration field experiments, longitudinal studies, and secondary data analysis that complements larger-scale research based on original data collection. The evaluations should address both appropriate school safety outcomes, such as aggressive behavior and injuries, as well as the potential unintended consequences, such as increases in suspensions, referrals to the criminal justice system, truancy, probation violations and drop out rates.

**Applicants are strongly encouraged to focus their efforts on a limited range of interventions so they can develop the most robust research designs possible given the funding available to develop evidence regarding the effectiveness and cost/benefit.**

Research studies may include such things as obstacles to effective implementation; examination of costs and benefits to varying implementation strategies; comparisons of popular training methods; evaluations of commonly implemented and under-evaluated programs; examination and validation of various school safety assessment instruments; examination of unintended consequences of interventions; variations in roles and responsibilities of different types of personnel; and assessment and development of potential technology solutions to address school safety issues.

Applicants and their research partners may propose to work with any combination of elementary, middle, or high schools or may choose to focus solely on a single type of school or range of grades. Applicants should consider carefully the schools and grades on which they will focus based on the research questions they propose to address.

Finally, research under this solicitation should be completed in phases. Thus, successful applicants should be able to identify and report to NIJ any scientifically founded results any time during the life of the grant and no later than at the conclusion of each year of the research. For example, the first year may be a formative one in that the successful applicant and researcher partner examine in detail the available tools for the successful implementation of the intervention. At the end of the first year, the successful applicant and research partner might report that they need more data and why, and request that local schools begin collecting those data. At the end of Year 1 or sooner, the partnership may develop an agreed-upon logic model that can provide the roadmap for future research. The phased approach is designed to take seriously the planning and implementation phases of the project. In addition, it offers an opportunity to report and highlight early findings of the research.

Applicants should:

- Propose to dedicate between 1/4 and 1/3 of funding directly to research partners to develop and carry out a rigorous program of evaluation. The remaining 2/3 to 3/4 of funding should go toward the personnel, programs, and activities provided to schools to serve as interventions for purposes of evaluation.
- Propose to incorporate any local school safety assessments and plans as they develop proposed programs and initiatives.
- Take into account that, if proposals include the hiring of law enforcement officers, the unit of local government (i.e., the governmental unit that will employ the officers hired as part of the applicant's implementation of a school safety initiative under the proposed project) must achieve a net gain in the number of law enforcement officers who perform non-administrative public safety service.
- Coordinate with law enforcement, juvenile justice, and school mental health professionals when appropriate.
- If funded, expect to contribute materials and content to a common school safety website.
- Submit along with their applications an administrative agreement or, at a minimum, a letter of support from their research partners and other entities with which they will collaborate, including other school districts, mental health service providers, law enforcement organizations, and municipal government partners. If an award is made, funds will be withheld until a formal agreement between the applicant and the primary research partner is in place. This agreement must provide detail on the roles and responsibilities of each party, and ensure that the independence and objectivity of the research partner is maintained.

### **Goals, Objectives, Deliverables, and Expected Scholarly Products**

The goal of the Comprehensive School Safety Initiative is to fund research that improves the knowledge and understanding of specific activities that can improve school safety in a sustainable and cost-effective manner without *creating adverse* unintended consequences. This knowledge will be used by NIJ to inform the development of a comprehensive school safety model. The objective of this solicitation is to determine the effect of personnel, programs, and activities on school safety as determined through high-quality, broad-based research projects that facilitate advances in basic scientific knowledge and methods as they relate to comprehensive school safety issues and programs.

In addition to required data sets, a draft and final summary overview of research results, interim and final progress and financial reports,<sup>2</sup> NIJ expects scholarly products to result from each award under this solicitation, taking the form of one or more published, peer-reviewed, scientific journal articles, and/or (if appropriate) law review journal articles, book chapter(s) or book(s) in the academic press, technological prototypes, patented inventions, or similar scientific products.

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<sup>2</sup> See "Additional Requirements" section of this solicitation, below, for additional information.

### **Important Notice Regarding Scholarly Products Expected to Result from All NIJ Research, Development, and Evaluation Grant Awards**

To help ensure that NIJ's grant-funded research, development, and evaluation awards produce scholarly products of the highest possible quality, NIJ has implemented certain changes in its Fiscal Year 2014 solicitations. Accordingly, NIJ **strongly encourages** applicants to read this solicitation in its entirety and pay particular attention to NIJ's expectations in the "Goals, Objectives, Deliverables, and Expected Scholarly Products" section, above, and to the "Performance Measures" section, below. Namely, NIJ has changed requirements regarding project technical deliverables and increased expectations regarding grantee publication of scholarly products. These changes will also be reflected in the special conditions attached to awards beginning in FY2014.

#### **Amount and Length of Award**

NIJ anticipates that up to a total of \$47 million may become available for awards under this solicitation. It is anticipated that each award will range from \$500,000 to \$5 million in total cost. From the total amount, NIJ anticipates that it will make multiple awards for up to a 36-month project period.

To allow time for, among other things, any necessary post-award review, modification, and clearance by OJP of the proposed budget, applicants should propose an award start date of January 1, 2015.

If the applicant is proposing a project that reasonably could be conducted in discrete phases, with each phase resulting in completion of one or more significant, defined milestones, then NIJ strongly recommends that the applicant structure the application – specifically including the narrative, expected scholarly products, timelines/milestones, and budget detail worksheet and budget narrative – to set out each phase clearly. Given limitations on the availability to NIJ of funds for research, development, and evaluation awards, this information will assist NIJ in considering whether partial funding of proposals that would not receive full funding would be productive. (If NIJ elects to fund only certain phases of a proposed project in FY 2014, the expected scholarly products from the partial-funding award may, in some cases, vary from those described above.)

NIJ may, in certain cases, provide supplemental funding in future years to awards under its research, development, and evaluation solicitations. Important considerations in decisions regarding supplemental funding include, among other factors, the availability of funding, strategic priorities, NIJ's assessment of the quality of the management of the award (for example, timeliness and quality of progress reports), and NIJ's assessment of the progress of the work funded under the award.

Applicants should be aware that the total period of an award, under this solicitation, including one that receives a funding supplement or a no-cost extension, ordinarily will not exceed three years.

**All awards are subject to the availability of appropriated funds and to any modifications or additional requirements that may be imposed by law.**

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To read the full solicitation, visit: <https://ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/sl001122.pdf>

## Appendix F: Dear Colleague Letter Developing Knowledge Solicitation

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April 16, 2014

Dear Colleague:

I am writing to alert you to the National Institute of Justice's interest in receiving proposals for an upcoming solicitation: "Developing Knowledge About What Works to Make Schools Safe." This solicitation, part of NIJ's Comprehensive School Safety Initiative, marries the school safety needs of America's public schools with strong, independent research that assesses the potential solutions to those needs and builds evidence on what works in enhancing school safety.

The Comprehensive School Safety Initiative uses a variety of research and data collection efforts to learn which personnel, programs, policies, and practices either individually or in concert are effective in making schools safer. Our goal is to significantly advance the development of knowledge regarding approaches to school safety.

NIJ anticipates making awards to local education agencies (LEAs), public charter schools recognized as LEAs, and state education agencies (SEAs). Awards will be made to implement and assess the effectiveness of projects that address their local school safety needs. The projects may be small- or large-scale (\$500,000 to \$5 million), with approximately 1/4 to 1/3 of the project funds allocated to the school's research partner for rigorous, objective, and independent review and analysis of the project's contribution to school safety.

An example of the way in which a proposal is developed in response to this solicitation may be instructive. Suppose a school district determines that schools in the district need school resource officers. The school district would identify one or more schools interested in participating in the research project and seek their willingness to participate. The school districts, then, would seek a research partner with outstanding research/evaluation/statistical skills to conduct an evaluation of the project. The school district, participating schools, and research partners would determine how best to conduct an objective research project that maximizes resources while maintaining the project's scientific integrity. If the proposal is successful, NIJ would fund the SROs, data collection costs, and the research partners.

One of the most important tasks in undertaking the research project is deciding the appropriate intervention for each school based on the school's needs. For example, should it be introducing school resource officers or mental health service providers? Should it be introducing security-related technology? Perhaps it should be preparedness training. Or, importantly, it may be a combination of interventions.

I am encouraging schools to think innovatively about the types of interventions that would best serve their needs.

NIJ is interested in proposals that explore a variety of interventions, including personnel, programs, policies, and practices that can be tested and produce strong evidence on the most significant school safety issues and topics. NIJ is interested particularly in receiving proposals in three areas, either singularly or together:

- 1) **Behavioral health, mental health, and wellness** – for example, to assess the impact of different types, roles, and health professionals.

Mental health services attempt to promote early intervention so as to maximize the chance that students will avoid increased risks that may accompany untreated problems, including those related to school safety. In general, mental health and wellness services include such things as the provision of services provided by qualified school counselor, social worker, or child and adolescent psychologist. Applications should request funding both for the new mental health personnel and services and for the research team who will evaluate the personnel and services.

- 2) **Security and preparedness** – for example, to assess interventions and trainings related to school resource officers and to assess disciplinary policies and practices, especially as they relate to the school-to-prison pipeline.

In a school context, security and preparedness typically include the use of school resource officers and other security personnel; school safety assessments; emergency operation plans; data collection and analysis of systems; physical security, including physical layout lighting, access controls, cameras, and communication. The school-to-prison pipeline refers to the unnecessary introduction of juveniles to the criminal justice system through harsh punishment processes. Applications should request funding both for personnel, new technology,

or preparedness planning and for the research team who will determine how the changes affect school safety.<sup>3</sup>

- 3) **Climate and culture** – for example, to examine the impact of campus conditions as they relate to safety, relationships, and engagement, or the physical setting, or some combination of conditions.

A range of campus conditions can influence a school’s climate and culture, which in turn may influence school safety, student learning, and overall well-being. Campus conditions are designed to create perceptions about safety, acceptance, respect, and high achievement for all students. Applications should request funding to support both the new programs aimed to improve school climate and culture as well as funding to support research to assess the impact of the programs on the school's safety.

Often, the terms climate and culture are used interchangeably, and generally this is not a problem. However, researchers argue that there is an important difference: “How students and staff members feel about their school is climate. Why they feel the way they do is determined by culture – by the values and behavior of those in the school.”<sup>4</sup>

When they evaluate applications, reviewers will largely ask themselves two key questions: "What is the potential impact on school safety" and "Will the project design allow for a scientifically rigorous evaluation?"

NIJ will fund proposals that use the most rigorous methods to test the research questions associated with the intervention the school is introducing. The research methods used are wide open and may include, for example, randomized controlled trials; field demonstration projects; quasi-experimental designs; multi-level, multi-methods; natural experiments; data collection and analysis; and secondary data analysis that complements larger-scale projects based on original data collection.

Applicants must demonstrate in their proposals their willingness to enter into formal partnerships with researchers and schools who participate in the project. Funding will be withheld until the partners submit formal letters of agreement that detail their roles and responsibilities.

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<sup>3</sup> Note: Funding for SRO personnel under this grant must be for new SROs; that is, funding from this grant must not be used to supplant (i.e., replace) funds a school is already using to pay for SROs.

<sup>4</sup> Stover, Del (2005) “Climate and Culture: Why Your Board Should Pay Attention to the Attitudes of Students and Staff,” American School Board Journal, 192(12): 30-33.

At this time, NIJ expects the proposals to be due in mid-July. Subscribe to NIJ.gov to receive an alert when the solicitation is released: <http://www.nij.gov/about/pages/email-updates.aspx>

Applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application by September 30, 2014.

To assist in your deliberations regarding this competition, we will publish frequently asked questions at: <http://nij.gov/funding/pages/solicitation-qa.aspx>.

We look forward to reading your application and working with you on this important enterprise.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Greg K Ridgeway". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Greg" and the last name "Ridgeway" clearly distinguishable.

Greg Ridgeway, Ph.D.  
Acting Director  
National Institute of Justice