

MISSOURI SAFE SCHOOLS

Newsletter of the Missouri Center for Safe Schools

February 2008

FROM THE DIRECTOR . . .

Russ and I have completed the Eighth Annual MCSS Advanced Safety Coordinator Trainings. The attendance at the trainings has increased each year. This year was no exception. I congratulate all those who serve as school district safety coordinators. The time and effort dedicated to the safety of our children is greatly appreciated.

As the school year moves into Spring, remember to pay close attention to the school culture/climate. There have been several school shootings during this period in recent years (i.e. Columbine, CO, April 20; Virginia Tech, April 16; Jonesboro, AR, March 24; Springfield, OR, May 21; Lake Worth, FL, May 26; Santee, CA, March 5; El Cajon, CA, March 22; Red Lake, MN, March 22; etc.).

Some preventive steps:

- Increase supervision and visibility of school personnel
- Provide information to staff, parents and students on recognizing anxiety, stress, or a mental health problem
- Conduct classroom meetings to discuss school safety
- Implement programs to reduce harassment and bullying
- Review threat assessment procedures

February is Missouri Earthquake Awareness Month: Earthquake! Drop, Cover, and Hold!

When you feel an earthquake, DROP under a desk or a sturdy table. Stay away from windows, bookcases, file cabinets, heavy mirrors, hanging plants, and other objects that could fall. Watch out for falling plaster or ceiling tiles. Stay under COVER until the shaking stops. HOLD onto the desk or table. If

it moves, move with it.

As Always, Safety First!

Glenn Berry

FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT GRANT

The U.S. Department of Education's Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools announced the release of the Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (REMS) Fiscal Year 2008 grant application (CFDA 84.184E). The notice inviting applications was published in the Federal Register on January 8, 2008. The application package may be downloaded from Grants.gov at <http://apply.grants.gov/apply/GetGrantFromFedgrants?cfda=&opportunity=ED-GRANTS-010808-001&competitionid=>

To access the application package, click on the Instructions and Applications "download" link. Before you can view and complete an application package, you must have the PureEdge viewer or Adobe Reader installed. Click [here](http://www07.grants.gov/resources/download_software.jsp) to download the PureEdge Viewer if you do not have it installed already.

This competition limits eligibility to local educational agencies (LEAs) and consortia thereof. Note: The REMS grant competition limits eligibility to applicants that do not currently have an active grant under this program. For the purpose of this eligibility requirement, a grant is considered active until the end of the grant's project or funding period, including any extensions of those periods that extend the grantee's authority to obligate funds

(71 FR 70369).

The application deadline is February 19, 2008.

USDE will be scheduling a series of Question and Answer telephone calls during the grant application period. To view the dates and times for those calls, please visit the Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools Technical Assistance Center Web site at <http://rems.ed.gov>

SCHOOL CLOSING DUE TO PANDEMIC

The social distancing measures that will be implemented during various phases of a pandemic will be commensurate with the severity of the pandemic and the societal impact. While it may be necessary to eventually close schools, the goal of every community should be to keep schools open and safe whenever feasible.

In discussions about extended (8+ weeks) school closings due to pandemic influenza, school administrators have expressed several concerns. Two questions that always come up are:

1. What would be the DESE position regarding funding school operations during the closing?
2. What are the options that would be considered in adjusting the length of the school year?

RSMo 171.033 says that any school district that cannot meet the minimum school calendar requirement of at least one hundred and seventy-four days of actual pupil attendance due to circumstances beyond school district control (including inclement weather, flooding, and fire) may request from the commissioner of education a waiver of that requirement. Regarding inclement weather cancellations, the statute says a district shall be required to make up the first

six days of school lost or canceled due to weather and half the number of days lost or canceled in excess of six days but it does indicate if that would apply to other types of closures. Historically the commissioner has not allowed for additional forgiveness days. For example, when school buildings were lost due to a tornado the school district was still required to meet the 174 day minimum.

THREAT ASSESSMENT CD

There is an excellent interactive CD threat assessment training tool available from the US Department of Education and the US Secret Service. The CD, entitled "A Safe School and Threat Assessment Experience: Scenarios Exploring the Findings of the Safe School Initiative," can be ordered as publication ID: ED002738C from e-mail address edpubs@inet.ed.gov.

In order to properly use the CD, you should also have the publication "Threat Assessment in Schools: A Guide to Managing Threatening Situations and to Creating Safe School Climates" available at http://ercm.ed.gov/index.cfm?event=resources#hc_2.

INDEPENDENCE SCHOOL DISTRICT THREAT ASSESSMENT INQUIRY PROCEDURE

After a threat has been reported to the Administrator, the Administrator will fill out the pre-referral forms and gather the information requested (interviews with all persons involved). When the pre-referral process is complete, the Administrator will contact the School Counselor to interview the student who reportedly made the threat. After the School Counselor has interviewed the student, the Administrator will

assign appropriate discipline to the student. If the School Counselor determines that the threat is substantive or that more information is needed, the Administrator will call the School Psychologist to make a referral for a threat assessment inquiry.

If the School Psychologist determines that the information qualifies as a threat, a threat assessment inquiry will be initiated. If the School Psychologist determines that the information does **not** qualify as a threat, an alternate process will be followed (behavior intervention, positive behavior supports, etc.). The Administrator will then contact the student's parent or guardian to let them know about the incident, and whether the team will be pursuing a threat assessment inquiry.

If a threat assessment inquiry is being conducted, the School Psychologist will come by the school and pick up the information that the Administrator and School Counselor have collected. The School Psychologist will then determine who needs to be part of the interdisciplinary team (typically the Administrator, School Counselor, Family School Liaison, School Psychologist, teacher(s), student, and parent(s) will be part of this team).

The School Psychologist will meet with all team members as soon as possible. At this time, roles will be assigned, a time frame will be determined, and a final meeting time will be set up. Usually, the School Psychologist will conduct an extensive interview with the student, review the student's school file including disciplinary records. The School Psychologist will send an email to all of the student's teachers requesting information on how the student is functioning in their classes (academically and socially) and asking for any concerns that the teachers have with the student. The Family School Liaison typically collects the parent interview.

Members will complete their assignments and send their completed information to the School Psychologist by a designated date. The School Psychologist will compile the information into a report for the final meeting

with the parent, student, and team members. At the final meeting, a team decision will be made about the safety of the student. At this meeting, supports will be set up and interventions will be determined to address the level of risk that the student poses.

If you have questions about this procedure, contact Breanna Dykes, School Psychologist for Independence School District, bdykes@indep.k12.mo.us.

UPCOMING EVENTS....

- February 29-March 1, PPP Family Festival, TanTarA Resort, <http://dese.mo.gov>
- March 2-4, Pathways Conference, DESE, TanTarA Resort, 573-761-7770
- April 1-3, Olweus Train-the-Trainer, Union Station, www.clemson.edu/Olweus/

TORNADO SHELTER

Tom Mayfield, the Safety Coordinator for Excelsior Springs School District, reports on an effective way to improve sheltering procedures. He has labeled the "tornado-safe" walls, which students and staff are to kneel next to, with small images of funnel clouds. Now, students, staff, and visitors move with more confidence to the safe shelter areas when the tornado alarm goes off. You can reach Tom at 816-630-9210 or tmayfield@estigers.k12.mo.us for more information.

MULTI-HAZARD EMERGENCY PLANNING FOR SCHOOLS

The Federal Emergency Management Agency's 2-day Multi-hazard Emergency Planning for Schools Course offering in Kansas

City, which was cancelled due to weather December 11-12, 2007, has been rescheduled for May 20-21, 2008. The location remains the Kansas City Emergency Operations Center, 635 Woodland Avenue, Kansas City, Missouri. Class time each day is 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The class is limited to 30 participants. There also be a local offering at the Southwest Center for Educational Excellence in Webb City on March 6-7, 2008. Apply on line at <http://training.dps.mo.gov>.

Those who reside more than 50 miles from Kansas City may request lodging for the May class. There will be no lodging provided or expense reimbursement for attendees at the Webb City local offering in March.

HELPFUL HINTS

The U.S. Department of Education's Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools announced three newly released *Helpful Hints* publications to support your school emergency management efforts in 2008. *Helpful Hints* publications provide a quick overview of school emergency preparedness topics that are frequently the subject of inquiries. The topics were selected based on your feedback and suggestions during the past calendar year. The latest issues are as follows:

- Volume 2, Issue 6, Emergency Management Planning for Institutions of Higher Education:
http://rems.ed.gov/views/documents/H_H_Vol2Issue6.pdf
- Volume 2, Issue 7, Families as Partners in School Emergency Management:
http://rems.ed.gov/views/documents/H_H_Vol2Issue7.pdf
- Volume 2, Issue 8, Establishing and Developing Strategic Partnerships with Media Representatives:

http://rems.ed.gov/views/documents/H_H_Vol2Issue8.pdf

These and additional titles are each accessible on the U.S. Department of Education's Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (REMS) Technical Assistance (TA) Center Web site: <http://rems.ed.gov>.

USDE will be creating several more *Helpful Hints* publications over the next calendar year and would very much welcome your input on topics and subject areas. Please send your suggestions to the REMS TA Center's Suggestion Box at <http://rems.ed.gov/index.cfm?event=suggestionBox>

WELL AWARE PROGRAM

The Missouri Department of Mental Health and Department of Elementary and Secondary Education have collaborated on an initiative to engage Missouri's schools in addressing teen suicide.

Missouri Well Aware, a quarterly bulletin for superintendents, principals, counselors, and teachers, provides information about preventing teen suicide, along with additional tools to identify youths at risk for suicide. It highlights resources within the state and connects school officials to the latest information on risk factors related to teen suicide.

Suicide is the third-leading cause of death among Missouri youths, ages 10-24. Approximately 14 percent of Missouri high school students reported they had considered attempting suicide in the past year, according to the 2006 Missouri Student Survey. Suicide claims the lives of more than 700 Missourians of all ages each year.

Well Aware is being developed in Missouri by the two state agencies with support of federal funding. Missouri received a \$1.2 million

federal grant in 2005 to increase strategies to prevent youth suicide. This grant helped launch seven Regional Resource Centers for Suicide Prevention that offer free training to schools, faith-based organizations, civic groups, youth-serving agencies, and others to increase effective conversations that deter suicidal action. The website for the Well Aware newsletter is:

<http://www.dmh.mo.gov/cps/issues/suicide/WellAware.htm>

SIGNS OF SUICIDE PROGRAM

The Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield Foundation announced that it is awarding a \$96,000 grant to fund a suicide prevention program in every high school and middle school in the St. Louis area. The grant was awarded to CHADS Coalition for Mental Health to implement the Signs of Suicide (SOS) program, an evidence-based program of suicide prevention and mental health screening.

“Students thinking of suicide will tell their friends first, so all students need to be empowered to recognize the signs of suicide and to respond appropriately to get help,” said Larry McCord, founder and executive director of CHADS Coalition for Mental Health. “We need to discuss suicide and depression in order to remove the stigma of mental health issues and to help students get the counseling that they need.”

The SOS program, developed by Screening for Mental Health, Inc. of Boston, can be implemented during one classroom period by existing school staff. Through a series of interviews and dramatizations, the SOS program teaches teens that depression is a treatable illness and empowers them to respond to a potential suicide of a friend or family member.

The grant from the WellPoint Foundation, the parent foundation of the Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield Foundation, will be used to implement the Signs of Suicide (SOS) program in area schools during a three-year period. The

CHADS Coalition plans to offer the program to 289 schools in St. Louis and surrounding areas during the next three years and hopes to reach up to 200,000 students.

The CHADS Coalition for Mental Health was founded in the memory of Larry and Marian McCord’s son, Chad McCord, who took his own life in 2004. Chad was just weeks from his high school graduation. Larry McCord is a project manager at Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield in Missouri.

School officials and others who want more information about the coalition or SOS program can check the coalition Web site, www.chadscoalition.org, or call 314-952-2046.

Dr. Russ Thompson, Associate Director of the Missouri Center for Safe Schools, is the newsletter editor. If you would like to submit an article for a future *Missouri Safe Schools Newsletter*, please send him your submission by e-mail to thompsonrs@umkc.edu or mail it to:

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