The Melissa Institute
For Violence Prevention and Treatment

ACTION STEPS FOLLOWING THE MARCH FOR OUR LIVES DEMONSTRATIONS:
A TOOLKIT

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The Melissa Institute's mission is to prevent violence and promote safer communities through education and application of research-based knowledge.

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AFTER THE MARCH FOR OUR LIVES, WHAT ARE POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS?
A TOOLKIT – please visit www.melissainstitute.org

The Melissa Institute for Violence Prevention and Treatment is dedicated to the prevention of violence through education, community service, consultation and research. Our mission is to prevent violence and promote safer communities through education and application of research-based knowledge. Knowing the movement for safe schools will not end with the March for Our Lives, we have developed a **Toolkit** of possible next steps.

TOOL 1 begins with an open letter to the students of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School and their supporters. It is a reminder that most social change arises from the bottom and highlights the critical role of individual and group efforts.

TOOL 2 is a discussion checklist that helps individuals search for common areas of agreement on reducing gun violence.

TOOL 3 provides research-based guidelines on ways to engage in dialogue and attitude change discussions.

TOOL 4 provides a procedure by which lessons can be learned in the aftermath of a violent episode to reduce the likelihood of further such incidents.

TOOLS 5 and 6 focus on what people can do to make schools safer, more nurturing and academically more effective. **TOOL 5** highlights the critical role of principals, while **TOOL 6** focuses on specific ways to reduce day-to-day threats to school safety and specific methods to create a more peaceful and safe school environment. Several websites for related resources are included.

TOOL 1: A REMINDER TO ALL FOLKS WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE MARCH FOR OUR LIVES AND THOSE WHO SUPPORT THEIR GOALS

An Open Letter to the Students of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School
and Their Supporters Everywhere

***Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world;
indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.***

Margaret Mead

Much of the history of the modern world is the story of actions led by students and other young people. As evident in the March for Our Lives movement, students once again rose up and answered the call to action in incredible numbers.

In the face of sorrow, the students of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School can be proud of the manner in which they responded and the leadership they have demonstrated. You have behaved in the great tradition of the most effective student movements – articulate, informed and courageous. You have magnified your effectiveness by your savvy use of social media. Congratulations! You have touched the heart and conscience of the nation.

Gun violence has plagued many communities of color in the U.S. with little national attention given to such incidents. Thus, it is important to ensure an inclusive and comprehensive understanding of the various ways communities are affected by gun violence. The voices of all impacted by gun violence should be integrated in such a conversation as exemplified by the students of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School ensuring that voices of those who have gone unheard be included in the national dialogue.

But this movement is just at the beginning. Such changes require sustained efforts to keep it moving forward. It requires specific strategic measures and allies.

For the last 22 years, The Melissa Institute for Violence Prevention and Treatment, located in Miami, has worked to reduce violence in schools and communities. The Institute is named in honor of a young student named Melissa, who was a victim of fatal gun violence. The Melissa Institute was founded as a vehicle to transform unimaginable grief into social action (please see www.melissainstitute.org).

In this spirit, we offer the following TOOLKIT as a way to help the movement make schools safe and reduce gun violence.

Please direct any comments or questions to Heather Winters, Executive Director, at heather@melissainstitute.org. She will see that your concerns and queries reach the appropriate members of the Institute's Scientific Board.

TOOL 2: A DISCUSSION TOOL: WHAT ARE YOUR VIEWS ABOUT REDUCING VIOLENCE AND MAKING SCHOOLS SAFER?

The Melissa Institute for Violence Prevention and Treatment is committed to nurturing a national discussion about ways to reduce violence and make schools safer. Whether you are a politician or a member of the general public, we encourage you to take a moment and fill out this Discussion Tool, and then reflect on the difference between those items you with which you AGREE, PARTIALLY AGREE, and DISAGREE. It is our hope that you will engage in a discussion of these measures and how you came to these decisions. These questions are meant to serve as a mechanism from which deeper dialogue can take place. Often time, we engage in heated discussions only to find out we agreed on the same things in the end. This measure enables you to see the things you share in common and the areas where there are differences.

SEEKING COMMON GROUND

FOCUS ON ACCESS TO GUNS

Please indicate **AGREE (A)**, **PARTIALLY AGREE (PA),** or **DISAGREE (D)** next to each item.

____ 1. Express support for Second Amendment rights.

____ 2. Keep guns out of the hands of individuals who are deemed to be dangerous.

____ 3. Prohibit domestic abusers and felons from acquiring and possessing guns.

____ 4. Impose a ban on the sale of guns to individuals on the "No Fly" list.

____ 5. Increase the age from 18 to 21 for the purchase of guns, since brain development of youth is not fully complete until early adulthood.

____ 6. Improve the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) for individuals with criminal backgrounds.

____ 7. Ensure that various agencies report to the NICS and penalize those that fail to provide required information to the FBI.

____ 8. Reinstate regulations that prohibit individuals with a significant mental illness and other disabilities from purchasing guns.

____ 9. Ban the sale of guns on the Internet that do not permit background checks to be conducted.

____ 10. Ban the sale on the Internet of homemade three-dimensional guns.

____ 11. Support "Red Flag" laws that could temporarily remove guns from individuals who are

deemed to be dangerous by law enforcement officers, while ensuring that due process is followed in the determination.

___ 12. Permit judges following due process to remove firearms from gun owners who demonstrate violent behaviors and instability, as reported by law enforcement officers.

___ 13. Allow <u>only</u> licensed gun dealers – those who are required to conduct background checks – to sell guns at gun shows. Conduct regular enforcement procedures at gun shows to ensure compliance.

___ 14. Impose a three-day waiting period for the purchase of assault-type weapons.

FOCUS ON THE NATURE OF GUNS SOLD

___ 15. Ban the sale of bump stock devices that allow semi-automatic weapons to fire much more rapidly. (A federal ban has recently been proposed.)

___ 16. Provide longer "add on" sentences for any conviction in which a gun is involved.

___ 17. Outlaw the sale of armor-piercing bullets, which further endanger the police and others.

___ 18. Outlaw the sale of high-capacity magazines (often defined as more than 10 rounds of ammunition).

___ 19. Require gun owners who are permitted to carry concealed guns in their own state to abide by the "concealed carry" restrictions in other states, which may involve obtaining a permit for that state.

___ 20. Prevent the federal government from passing the Concealed Carry Reciprocity law (currently being considered), which would allow a person whose state permits concealed carry of guns to also carry a concealed gun in any other state, regardless of that state's restrictions.

___ 21. Allow the use of assault-style weapons, such as the AK-47 and AR-15," to be used <u>only</u> in shooting galleries as authorized by state laws.

___ 22. Invite emergency room doctors to educate their patients and the public about the impact of military-style weapons on the body. https://theatln.tc/2IFKnbU

___ 23. Reintroduce the ban on all military-style assault weapons that was allowed to expire by Congress.

PREVENTIVE ACTIONS TO MAKE SCHOOLS SAFE

___ 24. Maintain and enforce gun-free school zones.

___ 25. Arm teachers and administrators in schools and ensure that they have been well trained to use their weapons in a highly stressed assault situation.

___ 26. Train police to manage individuals with mental illness and developmental disabilities and individuals of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds.

___ 27. Increase and properly train school resource officers at all schools. Budget accordingly.

___ 28. Identify students who are at high risk of becoming violent toward themselves and others because of having experienced multiple adverse childhood experiences (high ACE scores). Provide them with preventive mental health services and resources.

___ 29. Increase funding for school mental health services. Compare this funding with the amount to be spent on providing police security at all schools.

___ 30. Improve training of school mental health counselors and other healthcare providers to identify and work preventively with students at high risk for violence or victimization.

___ 31. Improve communication and coordination across agencies such as schools, community mental health agencies and families to increase the likelihood that high-risk students don't fall through the cracks.

___ 32. Implement an independent post-school shooting assessment team of experts to identify the "lessons to be learned," rather than to place blame. This strategy is modeled after the National Transportation Board, which investigates the causes of various accidents.

___ 33. Have school principals conduct and report regularly on safety measures that their school has taken. (See the Melissa Institute School Principal Checklist, which is included in TOOL 5).

___ 34. Improve and continually evaluate educational practices such as bully prevention programs, peer warning procedures, school readiness programs, reading skills training programs, student school connectedness efforts, parent involvement programs, suspension and expulsion procedures and school dropout prevention programs.

___ 35. Empower federal researchers such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to treat violence as a public health issue. Fund and disseminate the scientific findings. (This option has recently been reauthorized after the 1996 federal Dickey Amendment, which banned funding for gun violence research for the last several decades.)

___ 36. Encourage pediatricians and other doctors to ask their patients about gun safety issues.

___ 37. Hold parents legally responsible for failing to properly safeguard guns in their possession if they are used in a violent manner.

___ 38. Support weapon buy-back programs in order to take unwanted guns out of circulation.

___ 39. Require gun manufacturers to produce safer guns, with features such as high-security locks and "smart guns" technology, that allow guns to be fired only by authorized users.

___ 40. Encourage politicians to refuse to accept political donations from the NRA and encourage them to donate to civilian and police victims of gun violence.

TOOL 3: WAYS TO CONDUCT A DISCUSSION THAT CONTRIBUTES TO ATTITUDE CHANGE

One objective of the March for Our Lives movement is to encourage a national dialogue on ways to make schools safe and bring about legislation designed to reduce gun violence. Such efforts should be informed by the psychological research on ATTITUDE CHANGE. Here are a few things to keep in mind and specific examples of how to implement these findings in follow-up efforts to bring about change. Students are encouraged to engage politicians of both parties in town hall meetings and organized discussion groups after the politicians have filled out TOOL 2. Students may consider working with effective grassroots groups, such as Indivisible (www.indivisible.org) and Move On (www.MoveOn.org), to further strengthen their support and effectiveness. Remember that attacking, threatening and disparaging their views will only lead to the hardening of their positions. TOOL 3 provides examples of how to conduct such interviews, using research-based attitude change procedures. Be mindful that the cultural background of the individual with whom you are speaking as well as your own matters. In addition to all of us coming from different backgrounds, we were raised in different time periods, which impacts the way we are socialized.

BEHAVIORAL PRINCIPLES TO KEEP IN MIND

1. Argumentation does NOT work in changing people's beliefs and attitudes. Attacking someone only CONTRIBUTES to resistance and hardening of their positions (the "hardening of their categories").

2. There is a need to help individuals identify their GOALS for a specific position or action and consider the discrepancy between what they want to see happen and their current views.

3. The best way to achieve long-term change is to have individuals offer SELF-GENERATED REASONS to change their attitude and beliefs. There is a need to engage individuals to share their thinking processes in how they came to the decision to endorse a specific position.

4. Finally, the discussion should be respectful and empathic in an attempt to understand the individual's perspective. It should use the ART OF QUESTIONING ("HOW" and "WHAT" questions, as noted in the examples below).

A SCRIPTED EXAMPLE OF HOW TO ENGAGE POLITICIANS, LEADERS AND MEMBERS OF THE NRA IN A DISCUSSION ON REDUCING GUN VIOLENCE USING PRINCIPLES OF BEHAVIOR CHANGE

Sir or Madam, thank you for the opportunity to discuss ways to make schools safe and ways to reduce gun violence. I do not know if you have children in schools, or nieces or nephews in school, but I am sure you share our concerns, given the rash of recent school shootings.

I have taken the liberty of listing four proposals that have been offered, and I would greatly appreciate if you could take a moment and read these over and indicate if you agree with any of them.

1. Keep guns (especially military-style assault weapons) out of the possession of individuals who are deemed to be dangerous.

2. Increase funding for mental health services to schools.

3. Ban the sale of bump stock devices that allow semi-automatic weapons to fire much more rapidly.

4. Ban the manufacture and sale on the Internet of three-dimensional homemade guns such as the AR-15, which anyone can simply order and obtain.

Sir or Madam, I wonder if you might agree with any one of these four proposals. If so, could you kindly share "HOW" you came to the decision to choose that proposal? "WHAT" led you to choose that proposal?

I hope you will permit me to ask a few follow-up questions, so I can more fully understand your position?

POSSIBLE FOLLOWUP QUESTIONS

1. IF PROPOSAL ONE ON GUN POSESSION IS ENDORSED, THEN THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS MAY BE RAISED.

- How would he/she assess who is "dangerous"?
- How would he/she ensure that such individuals do NOT have access to guns, such as through Internet sales and guns shows?
- If such individuals did indeed have guns in their possessions, what steps, if any, should be implemented to get the weapons out of their possession?

I assume, Sir/Madam, it would be helpful if we had good research on the best ways to assess and identify who is dangerous as soon as possible.

2. IF PROPOSAL TWO ON MENTAL HEALTH FUNDING IS ENDORSED, THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS MAY BE RAISED.

Sir/Madam, I appreciate your endorsement that more funding should go to mental health services in schools. Permit me, if I may, to discuss your selection of this proposal?

- WHAT specific mental health services did you have in mind and, moreover, how could we determine if they were indeed effective?
- Do you think we could identify students who are at early risk of becoming violent and what do you think we could do?
- HOW do you think we can involve the school principals as partners in this process?
- HOW much funding should be provided to meet these mental health needs? Where do you think these funds should come from?

3. FOLLOW-UP FOR PROPOSAL THREE – BAN ON BUMP STOCK DEVICES

Sir/ Madam, given that a bump stock device was used in the Las Vegas concert massacre, I am heartened by your endorsement of this measure.

- Does your concern extend to other military-style rapid-fire weapons and their availability?
- Please help me better understand, what, if anything, is DIFFERENT between the sale of bump stock devices and the sale of AR-15's?.
- If you view dangers in bump stock devices, please help me understand how these same concerns do NOT apply to other assault-type weapons?
- WHAT, if any, regulations do you think should be placed on the sale of such weapons?
- Finally, are you aware that a youth's brain is NOT fully developed until early adulthood?
- WHAT, if any, implications do you think this should have on their access to such lethal weapons?

4. POSSIBLE QUESTIONS TO PROPOSAL FOUR ON THE SALE OF HOMEMADE WEAPONS

With the increased ability of computer technology, Sir/Madam, you or family members will be able to reproduce and make a HOMEMADE AR-15, or similar weapons, in the near future.

- Do you have any concerns about the widespread access to such weaponry in our country?
- What about terrorists being able to obtain such weapons online?

- Your endorsement of this proposal indicates that you have concerns? What specific steps do you think should be taken on a preventive basis to ensure that such dangerous events do NOT occur?

Sir/Madam, I greatly appreciate your taking the time to discuss these issues and to have you share ways to make schools safe and reduce gun violence. I look forward to having a follow-up discussion and to determine what WE, together, can do to implement your efforts.

Finally, the students' discussions should be informed about the type of arguments the NRA and their supporters are likely to pose. See the article by David Gilson "Pro-gun myths, shot down," that appeared in the publication Mother Jones.

https://bit.ly/2uRgOSJ

TOOL 4: LESSONS TO BE LEARNED

In the recent school shooting in Parkland, Florida, 17 were killed and more than a dozen injured. There have been numerous school shootings in the U.S. Following such shootings there is typically an outcry that "something must be done," such as limiting gun availability, improving FBI profiling, "hardening" schools and providing more mental health counselors, and the like.

Perhaps a somewhat different approach should also be considered. In the aftermath of major accidents, the National Transportation Safety Board sends in a team of experts to evaluate the possible factors that contributed to the accident and make specific recommendations. Was it a faulty vehicle? Road or weather conditions? Human error? Each accident is unique and, importantly, each accident adds to the prevention knowledge base.

Tragedies provide important information – information that is critical to the prevention of future tragedies.

Questions to Ask:

In the aftermath of school shootings, establish similar procedures to investigate. We want to evaluate knowable factors associated with such violent incidents. For instance:

1. Were the official building entryway and hallway security plans in full operation?

2. Had the building practiced "active shooter alert" lockdown and evacuation procedures that school year and created an after-action report detailing what was learned and implemented appropriate modifications?

3. What specific mental health services were provided and were there efforts to arrange for follow-up treatment?

4. Were the school-based mental health staff-to-student ratios consistent with recommendations from their professional bodies?

5. Was there an operational peer warning system? Had students been provided instruction regarding what to watch for and with which adults to share information?

6. Was there a fully operational bullying prevention program that focused on the needs of those students known to be the most at risk for victimization?

7. Did the school have a threat assessment team guided by principles outlined by the U.S. Secret Service and the Department of Education?

8. Did the school have an organized and practiced crisis management plan that addressed mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery, and was it a part of a local Incident Command System?

9. What efforts, procedures and policies were in place in this school and what deserves to be shared widely?

Why Ask These Questions:

The use of such post-hoc analysis is not designed to blame the school, but rather to expand the knowledge base and provide the 114,000 principals across the nation with additional tools to help keep their students safe. Locked doors, entryway greeters, identification badges and more are the result of knowledge acquired after school shootings dating back to the 1990s. The tragic deaths at Columbine High School broke our nation's collective hearts, but they also taught first responders across the country to change their tactics. As a result, lives elsewhere have been saved.

Any form of violence, including school shootings, reflects a transaction between school, family and community settings and the specific characteristics of the student. There is a need to adopt an ecological perspective on violent behaviors and develop and implement after-event procedures and tools that can systematically and methodically evaluate factors that contribute to such tragedies and, most importantly, add to the prevention knowledge base.

We need to move beyond decrying such events and learn from them so we can reduce the likelihood of future school shootings. The Melissa Institute is committed to furthering education and application of research-based knowledge to reduce violence, and collaboratively our efforts will promote safer communities.

TOOL 5: PRINCIPAL'S CHECKLIST

In a recent column (March 13, 2018), New York Times columnist David Brooks noted that "Good leaders make good schools." He observed:

> ***When you learn about successful principals, you keep coming back to the character traits they embody and spread: energy, trustworthiness, honesty, optimism, determination. We went through a period when we believed you could change institutions without first changing the character of the people in them. But we were wrong. Social transformation follows personal transformation.***

The **PRINCIPAL'S CHECKLIST** enumerates the variety of principal initiatives that can be conducted at the schoolwide level (primary prevention), with identified "high-risk" students and their families (secondary prevention), and with students who have evidenced persistent behavioral problems and require more intensive wrap-around services and crisis management interventions (tertiary prevention). We recognize the amazing responsibility and work by the leaders of our schools; this checklist can be viewed as a type of **PRINCIPAL REPORT CARD**. It highlights the need "to pay attention to small things" in order to ensure physical, social and emotional safety.

Primary Prevention (*Schoolwide interventions for ALL students*)

1. Encourage principals to be a visible presence in greeting all students and parents visiting the school.

2. Conduct a formal review of all safety policies and school emergency plans and practices. For example, establish a regular schedule for safety drills.

3. Conduct a school safety assessment and identify any safety weaknesses and strengths and correct deficiencies.

4. Provide training in school safety, emergency management and bullying to teachers, administration staff, janitors, hall monitors, lunchroom staff and school bus drivers.

5. Ensure that there are staff members trained in emergency first aid and CPR. Post their identities, responsibilities and hourly locations.

6. Connect with community law enforcement personnel and first responders in a crisis.

7. Establish a reporting system for bullying, school violence and safety concerns.

8. Assess school grounds for security concerns with law enforcement personnel or by individuals trained in Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED).

9. Ensure that all areas of the building and grounds are supervised and there are no obvious "dead zones" where problems can occur, including bathrooms, interior stairwells, parking lots and loading docks.

10. Ensure the interior of the school buildings is well lit and clean, and reflects pride in school identity and the accomplishments of its student body.

11. Assess for not only the safety of the school and school grounds, but also for the safety of the routes students take to school. (Ask students to draw a map of how they get to and from school and/or their perceived school bus safety.) Interview school bus drivers, janitors and lunchroom staff about safety and implement intervention strategies.

12. Ensure that there are effective access control policies and procedures for keeping intruders out of the school.

13. Ensure that there are effective policies and procedures for keeping weapons out of the building.

14. Maintain a rigidly enforced policy for controlling school keys, and replace sensitive locks every several years.

15. Maintain effective policies and procedures for keeping gang-related "identifiers" and behaviors out of the building and off school grounds.

16. Check to see if staff members feel safe at all times during the school day. Work to improve the emotional climate of the school.

17. Create a well-formulated mission statement, including improvement efforts, that is shared with all parties. Work to change norms and expectations about aggression and violence and promote a positive school climate with nurturing relationships.

18. Create a collaboratively written Code of Conduct for the school. It should be current, educational rather than punitive, and define both desirable and undesirable behaviors and resultant consequences.

19. Administration and teachers have established an Inviting Learning Environment that encourages school bonding and ownership from all groups of students, staff and parents; Set up a School Website, telephone hotline, and Home-school Link; Be sure to have teachers contact parents when students are doing well in school; Involve students in establishing and implementing rules and activities.

20. Academic standards are high, and pride in achievement is emphasized and publicly expressed through multiple outlets.

21. Cultural, ethnic and other minority groups are valued, and diversity is respected and honored. Bolster strengths of students and their families.

22. Parents are welcomed into the building and provided with opportunities and information to be full partners in their child's education. Work with parents to improve parenting skills such as monitoring, supervising and academic support, as described in the ACT Program (Adults and Children Together).

23. All teachers have received training in classroom behavior management, and 95% of disciplinary consequences are administered at the classroom level.

24. All students receive evidence-based classroom instruction in self-regulation, social problem solving, and/or conflict resolution across multiple grade levels.

25. The school has a comprehensive schoolwide bully prevention program in place and systematically evaluates its effectiveness.

26. The school has implemented a student peer mediation training program and a student-led restorative justice program.

27. The school has implemented a peer warning system that allows for confidential student communication to identified adults.

28. The school has a broadly representative crisis intervention team that has been trained in crisis response and management.

29. Administration and school personnel have undertaken initiatives to foster community-based supports and partnerships. Increase the availability of youth development opportunities and civic activities.

Secondary Prevention (*Interventions designed for identified at-risk students*)

30. All teachers have received training in methods to tailor academic instruction to meet diverse student needs. Teachers have learned to convey high, clear expectations, but be realistic and collaborative. Teachers should convey a "growth" mindset to students.

31. The school has undertaken a special initiative to improve students' reading achievement and monitor its effectiveness. (See the Melissa Institute Reading Initiative Program *www.readingteacher.net.*)

32. The school has a commitment to systematically collect data to evaluate intervention programs designed to reduce bullying, improve academic performance, improve parent involvement and reduce absenteeism, suspensions, expulsions and dropouts. Share these data with staff and provide professional development days for staff training on a need basis.

33. The school community works to bolster student connectedness to school. Teachers are encouraged to be supportive, look for good qualities in students, and point it out to them and others. Celebrate student contributions, and support students who have made mistakes and talk to the students about their future.

34. Check on the health of your students. (Make sure their basic health needs are met, such as vision and hearing problems, nutrition, safety and stable homes.)

35. Supportive services staff are provided adequate time and relief from other duties to implement interventions for identified students at risk.

36. Existing interventions for at-risk students have undergone recent program evaluations to assess their effectiveness.

37. Administrators treat office referrals as teaching opportunities to augment disciplinary procedures.

38. Out-of-school suspension should be exceedingly rare and used only for clear issues of student safety and when home supervision can be ensured.

39. In-school suspension should be used sparingly – only for the most serious offenses – and should be coupled with an academic support component.

40. School personnel have assessed the dropout problem and implemented evidence-based dropout prevention programs.

41. The school has implemented a mentoring program for at-risk students.

42. Ongoing needs assessment and program planning are driven by authentic data from disciplinary referrals and academic progress monitoring, and interventions are linked to the data.

Tertiary Prevention (*Interventions for the most at-risk students and their families*)

43. Students with chronic and persistent behavior problems are routinely provided with assessment-driven behavior intervention plans.

44. Students with chronic anger management and aggression problems are provided with evidence-based skills training by support services staff.

45. All school personnel have been taught and have practiced ways to defuse and redirect students who evidence aggressive and violent behaviors.

46. There are staff members professionally trained in student restraint and safe transport, and their identities are known by everyone.

47. Effective partnerships or wraparound arrangements with families, community mental health, law enforcement and social service agencies are maintained to support the students at highest risk.

48. School personnel have established procedures to identify students who have experienced multiple Adverse Childhood Experiences (high ACE Scores) as a result of abuse, neglect, parental dysfunction, and have provided them with treatment services.

TOOL 6: PROGRAMS TO INCREASE SAFETY IN SCHOOLS

While the previous tools highlighted ways to reduce gun violence, it is important to recognize that schools are still the safest place for children and youth. The actual statistics are that the likelihood of any child being murdered inside a school is upwards of 1 in 4 million. It has been noted that peaceful schools do not arise simply from installing bulletproof windows, arming teachers or expelling troublemakers.

Instead, peaceful schools come when the academic and social-emotional needs of the students within its walls are understood and substantially met.

This tool provides specific examples of how to achieve this objective and make schools safer. The tool is organized following a public health model that seeks to recognize and program for the needs of all the students (**universal programming**), some of the students who are at higher risk (**selective programming**), and a few of the students who are the most at risk (**indicated programming**). This tool is designed to reduce day-to-day threats to school safety.

Caveat: Creating safe schools is a profoundly important but often frustrating undertaking. Experience has shown that simply adding a new program or instituting a new policy will have little measurable effect. Even those schools that approach the problem systematically with evidence-based programs and procedures, as recommended in this toolkit, need to do so with patience, humility and respect for the challenge facing them.

Twenty-three years ago, Johnson & Johnson offered the following wisdom, which still applies today:

> *To change the social norms controlling street behavior requires a broad-based effort that involves families, neighbors, the mass media, employers, health care officials, schools, and government. Schools do not have the resources to guarantee health care, housing, food, parental love, and hope for the future for each child. Educators cannot eliminate the availability of guns (especially semi-automatic handguns), change the economics of the drug trade (and other types of crime), or even reduce the dangers of walking to and from school. Because there is a limit to what schools can do in reducing violence among children and adolescents outside of school, violence prevention programs should be realistic and not promise too much.*
> *http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/feb95/vol52/num05/Why-Violence-Prevention-Programs-Don't-Work%E2%80%94and-What-Does.aspx*

That understood, schools are advised to approach the task of creating a safe learning environment in a systematic, progressive and data-informed manner. This toolkit has recommendations for well-regarded programs, but they must arise out of a carefully determined

need, in collaboration with families, community services and social agencies. In addition, it is very important to ensure programs are culturally and linguistically appropriate for your setting. Specific models exist for how to culturally adapt programs to fit the specific populations of interest.

The following two websites will assist in organizing the schoolwide effort:

- Recommendations from the Melissa Institute for Violence Prevention and Treatment: http://teachsafeschools.org/seven-steps.html

- Recommendations from the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory: https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/book1.pdf

1. **Creating Safe Learning Environment:** *Universal Programming*

Teaching behavioral expectations on a schoolwide basis:

- http://www.pbis.org/school/swpbis-for-beginners

Teaching social and emotional competencies, including self-regulation and problem solving, at the elementary and middle school levels:

- Understanding the value of social and emotional learning: https://casel.org/faqs/

- Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS): https://www.channing-bete.com/prevention-programs/paths/paths.html

- PATHS research review: http://www.blueprintsprograms.com/factsheet/promoting-alternative-thinking-strategies-paths

- SNAP (Stop Now And Plan) program: www.childdevelop.ca/programs/snap

- Second Step Violence Prevention Curriculum: http://www.secondstep.org/research

- Second Step Review: https://casel.org/guideprogramssecond-step/

2. **Creating Safe Learning Environment:** *Selected Programming*

Bullying is a feature of virtually every school environment. Apart from the negative impact it has on student feelings of safety, the later life outcomes for chronic victims and perpetrators is distinctly negative.

- Relationship between bullying and school violence:
  https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2014/05/bullying-victims-carry-weapons-guns/
  http://www.npscoalition.org/school-violence
  http://www.LCSI.org

- Useful bullying prevention websites:
  https://www.stopbullying.gov/
  https://www.prevnet.ca/
  http://www.cyberbullying.us/index.php
  http://www.bullypolice.org
  http://www.pacer.org/bullying

- Olweus Bullying Prevention Program:
  http://www.blueprintsprograms.com/factsheet/olweus-bullying-prevention-program

- KiVa Bullying Prevention Program:
  http://www.blueprintsprograms.com/factsheet/kiva-antibullying-program

- Second Step Violence Prevention Curriculum, with bullying curriculum:
  http://www.cfchildren.org/programs/bullying-prevention/

- The No Bully Program engages Solution Teams of students to generate and enact solutions to specific ongoing cases of bullying in their school:
  http://www.nobully.org

- The Eyes on Bullying Program provides toolkits for parents, teachers, and other caregivers to help build bullying prevention skills together with children and youth involved in bullying as bullies, victims, or bystanders.
  http://www.eyesonbullying.org

- The Aggressors, Victims, and Bystanders Curriculum prepares students in grades 6-9 to think and act to prevent violence from the perspective of aggressors, victims, and bystanders.
  https://nrepp.samhsa.gov/Legacy/ViewIntervention.aspx?id=142

For some students, the anger regulation and behavioral support programs at the universal level will be insufficient to meet their needs, and additional small-group skills training will be necessary. For the needs of this population to be met, school mental health personnel must be staffed at a sufficient level that allows them time and resources to implement the treatment. The following counseling programs are designed for use in the school setting.

- For students K-8: The Coping Power Program
  http://www.copingpower.com/
  http://www.blueprintsprograms.com/factsheet/coping-power

- For high school students: Teen Anger Management Education (TAME), Think First, and Aggression Replacement Training
  https://k12engagement.unl.edu/strategy-briefs/Three%20Anger%20Mgmt%20Programs%2010-21-2013_2.pdf

Research on the impact of childhood trauma shows that everyday relationships with teachers, caregivers and pro-social friends have restorative effects. A sense of belonging, school-connectedness, an inviting school environment of respect and mastery are key to bolstering resilience.

- Understanding Trauma: https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources/school-safety-and-crisis/trauma

- Creating Trauma-Sensitive Schools: http://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources/mental-health/trauma-sensitive-schools

- Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy for Trauma in Schools: https://cbitsprogram.org/

3. **Creating Safe Learning Environment:** *Indicated Programming*

The number of highest-risk students in most schools is typically no more than 5% to 10% of the population, and may frequently have diagnosed emotional behavior disabilities (EBD). If not provided adequate behavioral supports, they have the potential to occupy up to 75% of the administrator's time with their chronic problem behavior.

- A procedure adopted from community healthcare entitled "Wraparound" has been shown to be an effective process.
  https://www.pbis.org/school/tertiary-level/wraparound

- The No Bully Program engages Solution Teams of students to generate and enact solutions to specific ongoing cases of bullying in their school.
http://www.nobully.org

In response to the school shootings earlier this century, The U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Secret Service collaborated on a procedure to assist school personnel to make valid threat assessments; differentiating those who make a threat from those who may genuinely pose a threat. See: https://www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/threatassessmentguide.pdf

- An overview of the Threat Assessment process: https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources/school-safety-and-crisis/threat-assessment-at-school/threat-assessment-for-school-administrators-and-crisis-teams

- Recommended resource for schools: Cornell, D., & Sheras, P. (2005). Guideline for responding to student threats of violence. Longmont, CO, Sopris West.