

Public Health Approaches to School Health and Safety

Funded under grant number 21STFRG00014: "Reintegrating the returning spouses and children of foreign terrorist fighters" from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Science and Technology Directorate (S&T).

Background

This project focuses on reducing school violence, including gun violence, through public health approaches to school health and safety. We will examine elements of school culture and procedures that contribute to safety, specifically:



School belongingness



Bullying and school responses



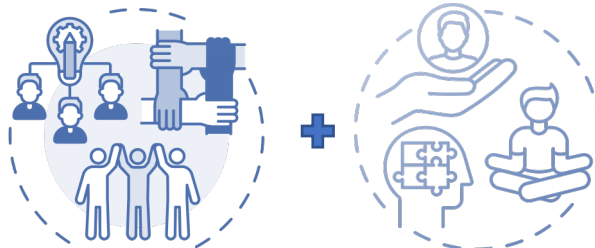
School-based threat assessment teams

This project will focus on identifying barriers and facilitators in three states (MA, IL and CT) that differ in state mandates and development of threat assessment teams, allowing an understanding of how this approach could be applied in different settings.

What we expect to accomplish in Year 1

Year 1 will focus on school-based threat assessment teams. Although school-based threat assessment teams are commonly recommended or even state-mandated, there is little practical information on barriers and facilitators to making these teams a reality.

Examine barriers and opportunities to establish school-based threat assessment teams and associated multidisciplinary health and safety management teams.



Establish guidance for promoting school safety through both enhancing protective factors across the school ecology (e.g. increasing sense of school belonging) and also providing intensive psychosocial support and intervention to youth assessed as being on a pathway towards violence

What we expect to accomplish in Year 2

Year 2 will involve original data collection in 6 schools examining levels of perceived school belongingness, experiences of bullying, and trust in school administration/adults.

- Conduct interviews with stakeholders (e.g. school administrators and teachers, students, families, state level DOE policymakers, law enforcement, school-based mental health providers), school TAT observations where relevant, state-level policy review, and develop a summary report/manuscript.
- Examine the association of these hypothesized risk and protective factors from the dataset; this dataset will also serve as a baseline assessment against which change in these factors can be measured in response to changes in school policy and practice.
- Conduct a literature review on best practices in promoting belonging and trust and addressing bullying, and provide summary guides to the participating schools along with a 'benchmark' card showing each school's relative strengths and weaknesses in known risk and protective factors.
- Develop manuscripts as well as recommendations/implementation guides based on findings.

Contact Us:

Stevan Weine M.D., Professor of Psychiatry, Director, Center for Global Health, University of Illinois at Chicago, smweine@uic.edu

B. Heidi Ellis, PhD., Associate Professor of Psychology, Director, Trauma and Community Resilience Center, Boston Children's Hospital and Harvard Medical School, Heidi.Ellis@childrens.harvard.edu