



School Safety Newsletter

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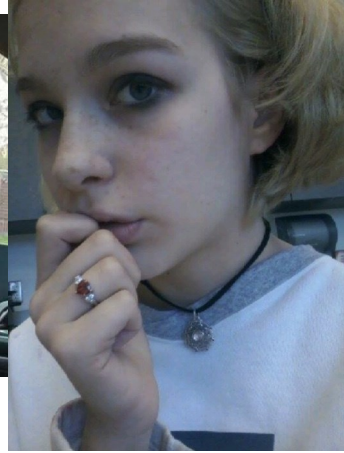
Santa Fe School Shooting Incident Victims

<https://www.houstonchronicle.com/texas-school-shooting/victims/>

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In This Issue

- Santa Fe School Shooting Incident Victims
- As '13 Reasons Why' Returns, Schools Try to Help Students Who Are Thinking of Suicide
- Next Monthly Webinar - June 6, 2018
- 'Incels' Are A Danger To Everyone, Including Themselves
- Texas High School Shooting Prompts Talk of 'Contagion Effect'
- Program Encourages Area Students to Report Crime



As '13 Reasons Why' Returns, Schools Try to Help Students Who Are Thinking of

Suicide

May 16, 2018, National Public Radio

<https://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2018/05/16/607066609/as-13-reasons-why-returns-schools-try-to-help-students-who-are-thinking-of-suici>

School officials have issued warnings to parents ahead of the second season of the Netflix drama "13 Reasons Why," which premiered on May 18, 2018. The first season, which centered on the suicide of a high school student, triggered cautions from the National Association of School Psychologists. Netflix has responded to concerns by adding PSA-style messages filmed by the cast and putting up a web site with links to resources.

The national attention comes at a time when, new research suggests, one in five teens may have considered suicide. And school leaders are starting to recognize that they have a lifesaving role to play.

Suicide is the second leading cause of death for teenagers. And experts argue it's more than just an individual mental health issue. It's a public health issue, affected by the web of relationships that exists in the place where most teenagers spend more waking hours than anywhere else.

Take a new study published in the journal Pediatrics. Rami Benbenishty, Ron Avi Astor and Ilan Roziner analyzed hundreds of thousands of high school students' responses to the California Healthy Kids Survey, which students take in grades 5, 7, 9 and 11 across the state. It asks a range of questions about topics like bullying and feelings of belonging.

On average, one in five students answered "yes" to the question, "During the past 12 months, did you ever seriously consider suicide?"

This is known as "suicidal ideation" and is an important indicator of someone who might be seriously depressed, anxious, stressed or who may actually attempt suicide.

This study was the first using this survey to look at rates of suicidal ideation within schools. The study was repeated across two waves of the survey, for extra reliability.

Suicidal ideation rates ranged widely across schools in the study, from a low of 4 percent to a high of 67 percent. At the high end, that's 2 out of 3 students considering ending their lives.

Schools with higher reported levels of victimization, such as bullying and fighting, had higher rates of suicidal ideation as well. So did schools with higher rates of victimization linked to discrimination — where students were targeted for their race, gender or sexual orientation. So did schools with more girls — girls tend to report a higher level of suicidal ideation generally.

And here's what the study authors found most important: These school characteristics accounted for an individual's risk of thinking about suicide twice as much as the observable characteristics of the individual.

"What this means is that we can understand the phenomenon of suicidal ideation far more when we include all the school factors," Ron Avi Astor, a professor at the University of Southern California, told NPR.

And that implies, the authors wrote in the paper, that "it is possible that certain school characteristics either enhance or buffer the influence of individual characteristics."

These findings are new. And they have a few different implications for policy, Astor told NPR. First, the wide range in rates of suicidal ideation, from 4 to 67 percent, suggests resources ought to be targeted to those schools at the high end of that range.

Second, he said, suicide prevention should go hand in hand with other school-climate efforts targeting bullying and discrimination. "We need a new type of setting-oriented intervention around climate, welcoming, warmth, community," he says.

Prevention and postvention

California is one state that's focusing more attention on this issue. After a series of high-profile clusters of student suicides in northern and central California, the state passed a law mandating schools to establish suicide prevention, intervention and "postvention" programs. Postvention refers to the steps a school takes after a loss.

Doreen Marshall is a psychologist with the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. Her group just released a new edition of a toolkit for schools: "After a Suicide." It focuses on postvention and preventing contagion.

"Adolescents really look to their peers for signals on how to be in the world," Marshall says. "When they lose a peer by suicide, kids may identify with the person who died."

Monthly Webinars!

First Wednesday of Every Month

at 10 am

(Except January, July, and August).

Next Webinars

Wednesday, June 6, 2018

Each webinar has a round table discussion at the end. Questions are always welcome!

To participate, you must be a vetted member. For more information please email schoolsafety@isp.state.il.us

As '13 Reasons Why' Returns, Schools Try to Help Students Who Are Thinking of Suicide

(Continued)

The core insights here echo Astor's study: Suicide needs to be thought of as an environmental risk, not just an individual mental health issue. And, schools can help. The toolkit's recommendations include:

- Put an appropriate time limit on spontaneous memorials, including online message boards or shrines at school, to avoid glamorizing or romanticizing the student who died.
- Be sensitive to cultural differences in attitudes toward death and the morality of suicide.
- Communications to the media should include warning signs, information about community resources and messages of hope and recovery.
- Share accurate information on social media, to stop rumors.
- Use social media to share resources, promote prevention and to respond to rumors and to students who may be at risk.

"Schools need to have suicide on their radar," Marshall sums up. "At any given moment there are students in their school who are having suicidal thoughts, who are engaging in suicidal behaviors. We want schools, as the gatekeepers beyond families, to be mindful."

Responding to students in Escondido

Kimberly Israel is a coordinator of community outreach for the Escondido Union School District, a K-8 district in northern San Diego County. The district is part of a consortium working with Astor's research team at USC to apply research to school climate and safety.

Her middle school students report a suicidal ideation rate slightly higher than the average — between 19 and 25 percent over the last several years.

"When you start to calculate that out, it's a lot," she says. "You start thinking of actual students, it's just this kind of sad reality."

They haven't yet been successful in changing the percentage of students who report thinking about suicide in Escondido. But, Israel says, there are other indicators of the positive impact they're having.

In response, over the last decade, Escondido has increased its investment in social and emotional services and providers. "We decided about six years ago that our goal was to get our kids to understand the resources available to them," Israel says, "not only for their time in school, but as they continue on in college and beyond."

To that end, every sixth-grader gets classroom-based lessons on depression awareness and suicide prevention. Parents are offered a free class at the same time, and teachers are regularly re-trained on spotting risk factors.

The district strengthened its relationships with community mental health providers, including those who serve low-income families.

And just about every day, says Israel, a staff member at one of the district's 23 schools is doing a formal risk assessment or an informal screening on a student who's been identified by herself, a peer, a family member or a staff or faculty member as being potentially at risk for suicide.

In a formal risk assessment, parents are notified and a referral is made to services inside or outside the school. Or, if the need is severe enough, a student may be recommended for hospitalization or even committed involuntarily.

As a result, more students are receiving mental health services. Students report feeling safer and more connected to school. Student behavior is better.

They do all this with 27 social workers, 10 school counselors and a handful of school psychologists, plus their community agency partners — for 16,000 students.

"It's not big on paper," Israel says, but the ratio of students to providers compares favorably with other districts in the county (and across the country, for that matter).

Across the schools that Astor's team studies, moving the needle on suicidal ideation has been tough, he says. "Our whole way of thinking as a society is focused on the individual level rather than the setting level."

Districts like Escondido have "great resources" to respond to threats once they're made known, but "it makes lots of sense that even gold standard districts have a hard time lowering this earlier warning flag."

He said that his new study suggests creating schools where fewer students are bullied, and paying attention to student composition, could start to improve prevention efforts. But, more research is needed.

'Incels' Are A Danger To Everyone, Including Themselves

Phil Barker, April 30, 2018

<https://www.stuff.co.nz/life-style/life/103496623/incels-are-a-danger-to-everyone-including-themselves>

OPINION: It used to be difficult to explain what an "incel" is. People just couldn't get their heads around the concept. "They're a growing, highly active online community so insanely angry that women will not have sex with them whenever they want, they want to rape and kill all women," I'd say.

Yep, there's a political movement for dudes who can't get laid and are seriously pissed off, aka Involuntary Celibates. And it's apparently the fault of women, feminism and left wing politics.

Essentially everyone's fault but their own.

NO LAUGHING MATTER

Incels would be absolutely hilarious if they weren't so incredibly dangerous. The response to their existence used to be "No, wait, what, seriously? This is really a thing? That's insane!" Now, terrifyingly, it's "those evil little bastards have done it again".

But the incel is a lesson in gob-smacking irony and hypocrisy. They demand women to be sexually available to them, yet, at the same time, rail against their perceived promiscuity if, heavens forbid, they've ever had a previous sexual partner.

They pen so-called manifestos on the "death of all women" yet describe themselves as the "nice guy".

DOWN THE RABBIT HOLE

I have a daughter who is almost 20. I worry deeply for her and the world she is entering. But if I had a son the same age, I would be equally worried for him. More so, in fact.

Because, as nuts as the extreme world of incels seems, it's so very, very easy for a sad, lonely, angry, isolated young man to fall down the Red Pill rabbit hole and become a genuine danger to himself and others.

Because it's easier to point the finger of blame than ask "what could I do to be a better person?". And this is made easier when you find a cesspool of like-minded, embittered men willing and ready to validate every one of your most base conspiracies against the opposite sex.

SOFT TARGETS

If people fall on hard times, governments and agencies step in and help out (OK, sometimes). It's a basic human right. Incels see sex as a basic human right, too, therefore demand governments implement "girlfriend programs" so sex is distributed (read: enforced) evenly across society.

And multiple partners should be outlawed. It's not fair the "Chads", as the incels label good-looking men, get lots of women and the fedora-wearers end up home alone with their porn.

Marginalized, angry young men are soft targets for radicalization. They are already cocked, loaded and aimed, a gentle whisper in the ear all that's needed to pull the trigger.

A HISTORY OF VIOLENCE

In 2014, Elliot Rodger [University of California, Santa Barbara] killed six people and injured 14 before killing himself. A video he posted vowed "retribution" against the women who would not sleep with him.

Last week in Toronto, 25-year-old Alek Minassian drove a van onto the footpath, killing 10 and wounding 15.

Just before his rampage, he posted on Facebook praising the "Incel Rebellion".

Back in 1999, the two teen shooters who killed 13 and injured 34 at Columbine High School in the US, were bullied and ostracised by the "jocks". One of the key themes in one of the shooters' journals was his despair at his lack of success with women.

REACH OUT

There's no one-fix solution. Yes, men must look out for other men, but not in a "don't dog the boys" pack mentality. Instead, talk to each other. Value each other. Constantly reinforce that sex is something that is shared, willingly, on equal terms and women don't owe you anything. It's a responsibility every man has to his younger peers.

The Handmaid's Tale author, Margaret Atwood, nails the horrible situation we find ourselves in: "Men are afraid that women will laugh at them. Women are afraid men will kill them."

Phil Barker has edited NW and Woman's Day magazines, and published such titles as Vogue, GQ, Delicious, InsideOut and Donna Hay. He is a consultant creative director and communications specialist, currently writing a book on "man stuff" for publisher Allen & Unwin.

Texas High School Shooting Prompts Talk of ‘Contagion Effect’

Lois Becker, The Guardian, May 19, 2018

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/may/19/santa-fe-high-school-shooting-contagion-effect>

On Friday May 18, 2018, 10 people were killed in a school shooting in Santa Fe, Texas. Just two days earlier, a former student opened fire at a high school in Dixon, Illinois. The officer who quickly stopped the shooter was hailed as a hero.

Researchers who have studied American mass shootings have found evidence of a “contagion effect”. In the two weeks after a mass shooting or school shooting, one 2015 study found, there is an elevated likelihood that another mass shooting or school shooting will take place.

About 20% to 30% of the incidents studied “appeared to be inspired by contagion”, said the lead author of the paper, Sherry Towers, a professor at Arizona State University who specializes in mathematical and computational modeling.

Some of the most horrific shootings appear to inspire new shootings not only for weeks but for decades. A common thread in the histories of many mass shooters is an obsession with previous shootings, particularly the 1999 shooting and bomb attack at Columbine high school in Colorado.

“Some of these incidents have a longer contagion than others do,” Towers said.

Elementary and high school students have grown up practicing “active shooter drills” along with fire drills, preparing for how they should respond if a gunman attacks.

“It’s been happening everywhere; I’ve always kind of felt like eventually it was going to happen here too,” the Santa Fe student Paige Curry told the media after the shooting on Friday. Her response went viral.

Towers, however, was cautious about the idea that school shootings were becoming common.

“The idea that we’re spiraling out of control in school shootings is perhaps not supported by the data,” she said. “That being said, the US per capita has a far higher rate of school shootings compared to any other developed country.”

In the first six months of 2018, there have been two mass shootings – shootings with four or more people killed – at American high schools, Towers said. There were only two mass shootings at K-12 schools in the decade prior.

“Yes, that is an unusually high number to have in a relatively short period of time,” she said. “Whether or not this is the beginning of a trend in increasing rates remains to be seen.”

The “contagion effect” in school shootings does not mean that the risk of becoming a school shooter is contagious in the same way measles or ebola are, said Peter Sheridan Dodds, a professor of mathematics and statistics at the University of Vermont and one of the authors of a 2017 study that found an association between the level of social media chatter about school shootings and the probability of new attacks.

“It’s not that it’s an infectious disease. It’s something that if someone is in a particular mindset, they can emulate,” he said.

Dodds thinks of school shootings as a pathway previous attackers developed – a pathway that very few people will ever be tempted to take but which has become extremely well documented in the media and in American culture. Though most people will never be interested in following that path, “it’s not hard to figure out how to emulate it,” he said.

Some law enforcement officials and parents of Americans killed in mass shootings have urged news organizations to change the way they respond, to give the perpetrators less notoriety, and to avoid coverage that glamorizes perpetrators who seem to be seeking fame.

But Towers said that while it was important to acknowledge the contagion effect in mass shootings, to focus only on media coverage and the way some shootings appear inspired by previous attacks was to miss other crucial risk factors.

“One of the things that commonly gets pushed is that it’s all about the contagion,” she said. “What’s missed often is the other conclusion of that paper, which found that the availability of firearms is clearly playing a role, a significant role.

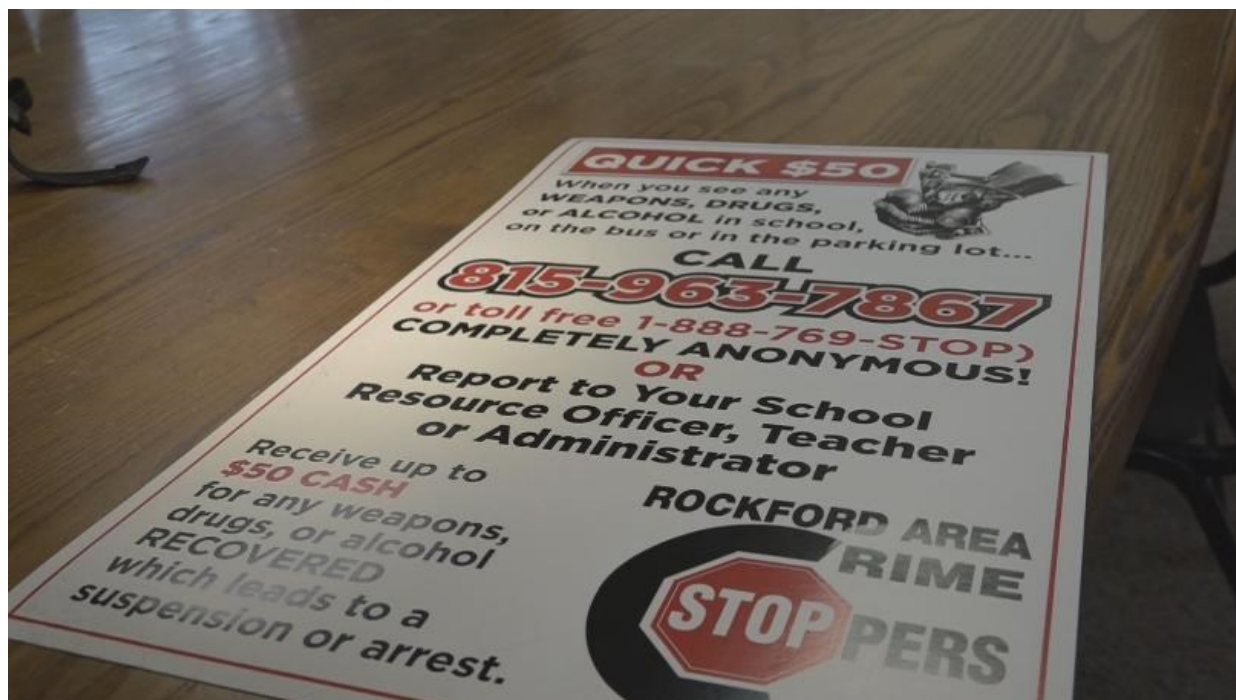
“States that had a lower prevalence of gun ownership had a lower per capita rate of mass shootings, so it’s not just a contagion effect.

“Just focusing on the media component of contagion is missing the entire story. And focusing on one aspect of it is

Program Encourages Area Students to Report Crime

Courtney Bunting, April 3, 2018

<http://www.wifr.com/content/news/Program-encourages-area-students-to-report-crime-478702573.html>



LOVES PARK, Ill. (WIFR) -- In light of school shootings and safety concerns at schools, Rockford Area Crimestoppers feels they have a program that can make schools more safe. Crimestoppers is re-launching the Quick 50 program to promote that safety.

"Just that familiar face, if they're in a situation where they need that comfortability, and they see me, and it makes it easier for them," said Loves Park Police School Resource officer Jerry Guetschow.

Guetschow believes it's more important now than ever before to make sure students feel safe inside their classrooms.

Guetschow works in Harlem Middle School help enforce the Quick 50 Program.

Quick 50 offers compensation for students who report crimes that lead to arrests.

"A lot of times I'm more readily available than the principals or the counselors because my office is right there," said Guetschow.

To report a crime, students contact the Cimestoppers line. Their phone number can be found on signs placed throughout the campus.

"If it's something that actually occurs at the school, a lot of times I'll do that investigation from start to finish. If it's a criminal investigation happening outside the school, it depends on what the jurisdiction is," said Guetschow.

This past year, seven crimes have been reported through the Quick 50 program that have eventually led to an arrest, resulting in a payout of \$230 for students.

Since Quick 50 first began in 1999, they have paid more than \$15,000. Through these reports, nine knives and two guns have been recovered.

"It builds great community service, though, just by presenting information to us or to the officers or the schools," said Rockford Area Crimestoppers Coordinator Jeff Stovall.

"That's the ultimate goal is to make it more approachable," said Guetschow. All students who report to the Quick 50 program stay anonymous.

School Safety Newsletter

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