

## Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE)

### IMPACT OF TRAUMA

The U.S. Department of Education (ED) recognizes the negative impact of trauma resulting from violence against women and girls. ED also recognizes the important role that schools play in keeping all children safe. Violence against women and girls is a serious public health issue that impacts individuals, families and communities, negatively affecting the physical and mental health of those impacted, as well as contributing to lower academic achievement and completion.

Additional statistics on women and girls in the education system, information about the impact of trauma, and sources for further information can be found in the first Federal Partners Report on Women and Trauma <http://nicic.gov/Library/025082>.

### How a Trauma-Informed Approach Can Make a Difference

In the February 2013 “Dear Colleague” letter, ED recommended actions for schools to consider to more effectively address gender-based violence. These actions include providing training to students and staff on behaviors of victims and perpetrators of gender-based violence, how to respond to trauma when incidents occur, and resources that are available for those who have become traumatized and victimized. Based on a wide body of research we know that youth exposed to violence are often at high risk for behavioral infractions as they struggle to cope – mentally and emotionally – with the trauma they have experienced. For this reason, it is imperative that school staff – including teachers, administrators, and support personnel (e.g., school counselors, school social workers, school psychologists, and school nurses) – have the skills and knowledge to recognize and respond appropriately to the behaviors of traumatized youth so as to avoid inflicting new trauma, and to provide students with the supports they need to return to the classroom.



## U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (ED)

### Major Accomplishments 2010-2013

ED provides resources to help educators implement effective programs and strategies designed to mitigate the effects of trauma, improve school climate, and prevent violence against youth. In February 2013, ED issued a “Dear Colleague” letter to chief state school officers, requesting voluntary action to reduce gender-based violence in schools and to help ensure that all students are safe. To accompany the letter, ED released a “What Schools Can Do” brief, outlining simple actions that schools and communities can take voluntarily, as well as resources available to support school leaders in reducing gender-based violence [www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/secletter/index.html](http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/secletter/index.html)

ED’s National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments <http://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov> released a training module targeted to education of specialized instructional personnel (e.g., counselors, school psychologists, school nurses, etc.) on teen dating violence intervention and prevention. Gender-based violence, including teen dating violence, was one of five major tracks and priority topics during the OESE, Office of Safe and Healthy Students National Conference in 2011. Sessions included review of research based interventions and an overview of environmental strategies that mitigate and prevent gender based violence. ED developed a fact sheet providing resources on preventing commercial sexual exploitation of children <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oese/oshs/factsheet.html>. ED is a founding member and participating federal agency in the National Forum on Youth Violence Prevention. The Forum is a network of communities and federal agencies that work together, share information and build local capacity to prevent and reduce youth violence. In 2013, OESE made funding available through an interagency agreement with DOJ to provide resources for Forum locality schools to implement or expand the use of a Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS) model to improve school climate and reduce violence.

### New Directions and Collaborations

The Administration’s FY 2014 budget request includes \$280 million for a new Successful, Safe, and Healthy Students program that would support student achievement to high standards and help ensure that students are safe, and mentally and physically healthy and ready to learn. Within the \$280 million requested, \$112 million would be used to carry out several new school safety initiatives that are included in Now Is The Time, the President’s plan to protect our children and our communities by reducing gun violence, including efforts to improve school emergency plans, create positive school climates, and counter the effects of pervasive violence on students. Two initiatives include: \$50 million for School Climate Transformation Grants and related technical assistance to help 8,000 schools train their teachers and other school staff to implement evidence-based strategies to improve school climate. The School Climate Transformation Grants initiative builds on the development and testing of evidence-based multi-tiered decision-making frameworks, such as PBIS, which have been supported with funds from the Department’s Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services. \$25 million for Project Prevent grants to LEAs to help schools in communities with pervasive violence break the cycle of violence. Exposure to violence affects almost two out of every three children. And research shows that both direct and indirect exposure to community violence can impact children’s mental health and development and can increase the likelihood that these children will later commit violent acts themselves. Being the victim of, or being exposed to, community violence in childhood is also associated with post-traumatic stress disorder. Project Prevent would address this problem by supporting the deployment of resources and technical assistance through local projects.

### Additional Resources

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<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oese/index.htm?src=oc>