

Pinellas County Schools
Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners
Award Number: 2019-YS-BX-0010
Final Narrative Report: October 1, 2019 – September 30, 2023

The FY19 STOP School Violence Prevention and Mental Health Training Program is a program that supports efforts by state, local, and federally recognized Indian tribes to prevent and reduce school violence. This program addresses: (1) training school personnel and educating students to prevent student violence; (2) development and operation of anonymous reporting systems against threats of school violence, including mobile telephone applications, hotlines, and websites; and (3) development and operation of school threat assessment and crisis intervention teams that may include coordination with law enforcement agencies and school personnel as well as specialized training for school officials to help intervene and respond to individuals with mental health issues that could impact school safety.

Pinellas County was awarded \$499,922 from the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs (2019-YS-BX-0010) for the implementation of **Project SSAVE** (Students and Staff Against Violence Everywhere), designed to reduce violent crime through the creation of school safety training and mental health programs for school personnel and students. As a subrecipient, Pinellas County Schools (PCS) provided violence prevention training and awareness to school administrators, personnel, and students from October 1, 2019, through September 30, 2023.

Objective 1: Provide training sessions to teachers and school personnel designed to recognize and respond to threats of violence and prevent violence on campus.

During the life of the grant, more than 305 training sessions were held to provide key training to 18,187 personnel. Training sessions were specific to responding to threats of violence, violence prevention on campus, mental health awareness, substance abuse awareness, and other relevant topics. The purpose of this objective was to plan and promote continued professional development opportunities to all staff within Pinellas County Schools.

The Summer Mental Health Institute was implemented in 2019 to provide staff the chance to attend a 4-day Professional Development summit specifically addressing the mental health and well-being of student and staff with a focus on trauma informed care, working with homeless students, addressing threats of violence, bullying prevention and intervention and other topics addressing violence prevention. All trainings provide participants information on creating a climate and culture of support, acceptance, and how to be a trusted adult. Pinellas County Schools has committed to sustaining the work associated with this event and will continue this well-received professional development opportunity beyond the end of the grant program. The event taking place during the 2023-2024 school year will be the 6th consecutive year of the Summer Mental Health Institute.

Objective 2: Provide education sessions and awareness campaigns to students with the intent to prevent violence against others or self.

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In 2018, Pinellas began a pilot of the nationwide violence prevention program founded by the families of those killed during the Sandy Hook Elementary shooting. Sandy Hook Promise (SHP) is a national nonprofit organization that engages and empowers parents, school, and community organizations to deliver violence prevention programs. PCS has been collaborating with Sandy Hook Promise to implement its research based *"Know the Signs"* curriculum to school students and staff. It teaches students to identify at-risk behaviors in classmates and report signs to an adult or use an anonymous online reporting system. People who are at-risk of hurting themselves or others often show signs and signals before an act of violence takes place.

During the grant period, the Pinellas County Schools Prevention Office trained over 95,000 students in violence prevention. These activities included:

Say Something - Teaches elementary, middle, and high school students to recognize the warning signs of someone at-risk of hurting themselves or others and how to say something to a trusted adult to get help. The Say Something program seamlessly aligns with any school's existing social-emotional well-being curriculum, instruction, and programming. During this time, students explore empathy, relationship skills, problem solving, inclusivity, as well responsible decision-making.

Start With Hello - Empowers students to end social isolation by teaching them three easy steps including *See Someone Alone*: how to recognize the signs of loneliness and social isolation, *Reach Out and Help*: what students can do to help others feel included, and *Start With Hello*: how to break the ice and strike up a conversation. Start With Hello includes activities and lesson plans that can be used to teach students the skills they need to create a culture of inclusion in their school and community.

National Youth Violence Prevention (NYVP) - Brings communities together to raise awareness and learn how to stop youth violence. This week-long non-violence initiative shows the positive role young people play in making their schools and communities safer. Youth are essential partners in NYVP week, leading the change toward safer schools and communities. SAVE Promise Club empowers youth and gives them the tools and training they need to be successful leaders.

Safe Schools Week –Draws attention to the continuing problem of school violence and educates everyone about how schools can be made safer and more secure, including the use of the Sandy Hook's Say Something Anonymous Reporting System.

Unity Day – Unite together against bullying, and united for kindness, acceptance, and inclusion.

Anti-Bullying Awareness –Raises awareness of the issue of bullying among children, especially in schools. Schools are encouraged to share ideas, promoting a safe and secure environment for all student, staff, and families.

Another major focus during this grant period was the implementation of Students Against Violence Everywhere (SAVE) Promise Clubs. SAVE Promise Clubs empower students to show their

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leadership, creativity, and passion for protecting their friends, schools, and communities from violence before it happens. Led by students, these clubs are a powerful approach to preventing violence and victimization because they recognize the unique role that students play in making their schools and communities safer.

Pinellas County Schools requires all schools to have an active student-led SAVE Promise club. Through SAVE Promise Clubs, students organize activities and reminders that reinforce important lessons learned through the SHP Know the Signs programs described earlier. Ongoing activities and reminders create a culture of looking out for one another and preventing violence before it happens – creating safer classrooms, schools, and communities now and in the future. Each school has a dedicated staff member to act as the SAVE Promise Club adult champion. This person is the school liaison to the district prevention office and helps identify training needs and awareness activities.

To ensure sustainability, Pinellas County Schools implemented a District SAVE Clubs Advisory Board. This group of leaders helped create district-wide consistency among the SAVE Promise Clubs. They created awareness campaign plans, led trainings for their peers on the implementation of projects, and helped to create the Pinellas SAVE Promise Clubs newsletter.