

Safer Schools Symposium

The Need:

School and community safety are paramount in most areas of the USA at this time, yet few have spent even one day focusing on this issue and on the role youth can play in improving school and community safety. In addition, because bullying and violence affect every sector of a school and community, there are many programs and services already in place but not everyone is aware of them; there are overlapping and duplicated efforts as well as service gaps.

The Safer Schools Symposium brings a broad cross-section of key community, district/county/regional, and school-site leaders together with experts in the fields of school safety, violence prevention, and youth empowerment for a day of education, dialogue, and planning. Strategic improvements and collaboration occur during and after this effective day.

The Safer Schools Symposium:

The Safer Schools Symposium (SSS) is designed to raise awareness and increase knowledge, showcase current best-practices within the district/county/region, foster collaboration, and produce action plans.

The SSS includes most of the higher-level administrators from the district/county/regional office and each school site, as well as representatives from law-enforcement (SROs and community police specializing in youth crimes and issues), juvenile justice (staff and judges), gang task forces, mental health and guidance, youth-oriented community-based organizations and others involved in working to make schools and communities safer and more welcoming for all.

The one-day, structured SSS format includes presentations from those who can show best-practices already utilized within the schools, showcased by expert speakers and youth. The day ends with strategic planning in district- and site-based groups.

- Start the day with inspiring speakers, including a keynote presentation by experts who will speak on youth development and its role in improving school safety.
- The SSS includes the services of an experienced strategic planner, educator, and facilitator from CM.
- Youth and local adult speakers from other sectors will also give presentations, including teams from chosen schools who will demonstrate or discuss their successful violence-prevention approaches and programs already in place.
- Teams from schools or district teams at a county/regional symposium will be given a *SCHOOL SAFETY SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL* prior to the SSS and utilize the responses to this

For more information or to schedule a workshop, please contact: Dr. Sally Ember, Outreach Director, 707-823-6159 x 102, or sallyember@community-matters.org

tool for planning and strategizing together in the afternoon, facilitated by activities and questions provided by CM staff.

- Teams will leave the SSS with concrete planning and actions for the next steps for reducing school violence and improving school climate at every site.

Symposium participants will:

- ✚ increase awareness throughout the district/region/county of the broader role students can play in creating safer schools.
- ✚ deepen the commitment of school and community leaders to change policy and practice, and take concrete steps to reach out to involve more students in these efforts. promote greater student involvement as change-agents for safer schools and thereby reduces incidents of mistreatment and violence and improves school climate.
- ✚ develop strategies and plan for complementing and strengthening existing efforts for improving school safety and school climate and reducing violence.
- ✚ Increase collaboration among schools, youth-serving organizations, law enforcement, and local government by participating in activities that inform and inspire.
- ✚ share with one another the practices, strategies, and programs that are already in place; learn what works and what hasn't.
- ✚ synchronize efforts, since many districts and counties are dealing with fragmentation, with varied and multiple programs, site-based approaches, and not enough strategizing and communicating across the district and across the county among all school sites.
- ✚ create an Action Plan with their site team, using the *SCHOOL SAFETY SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL*.

The planning for a SAFER SCHOOLS SYMPOSIUM includes:

Community Matters will provide technical assistance: guidance and consultation to a team of district/county/regional staff (and others, if invited) responsible for planning the SSS.

CM staff facilitate the SSS and conduct informational sessions in keynote/large-group and/or workshop/small-group settings.

This technical assistance includes:

- assistance with planning, such as
 - ❖ the *SCHOOL SAFETY SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL*,
 - ❖ a timeline
 - ❖ a checklist
 - ❖ sample agendae/templates for events;
- suggestions for teams to present best-practices that highlight the roles of students culled from the local schools;
- the keynote speaker (Rick Phillips and other experts);
- suggestions for other speakers/presenters;
- the event facilitator (CM staff);
- follow-up support.

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The district/region/county staff would be responsible for: gathering participants and event volunteers, as well as providing facilities and logistics (e.g., supplies, printing, food).

Cost:

COSTS range from \$2700 - \$6000, depending upon what roles CM plays and the length of the Symposium day.

NOTE:

The SSS could be preceded by a Youth Summit on Violence-Prevention, also facilitated by CM staff. The Youth Summit is an effective way to hear from and garner ideas from the high school representatives (diverse, verbal student leaders) and analyze and organize their input.

Information from this Summit brings the voices of the local young people to the SSS for use in strategic planning, and engage students in the process.