



# School Safety Toolkit *for Tennessee Families*

## Helping Parents Prepare & Engage in School Safety

This resource, developed by the Tennessee Department of Education, the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services and the Tennessee Department of Safety and Homeland Security, presents parents with a toolkit to more easily prepare and engage in their child's safety at school.

## INTRODUCTION

Tennessee parents and families are the primary driver of their child's education and help ensure their child is ready to succeed when they enter the classroom.

Governor Bill Lee signed [Executive Order No. 97](#) to enhance school safety procedures and protocols across the state and promote school-level engagement with parents and families.



### How to Prepare

In knowing the needs of your child, parents and families are best positioned to utilize resources that are available to your child's school community to address concerns before they are elevated. By equipping yourself with knowledge about available supports and how to access them, you are prepared to take on challenges that could potentially lead to increased violence in schools if not addressed ahead of time, such as [bullying](#).<sup>1</sup>



### How to Engage

Together, we can keep our schools safe through increased engagement that often starts at home. When parents and families use and share the resources available to them, or find ways to volunteer or get involved with their school communities, students can become safer, healthier, and better able to thrive.

This guide also covers how parents and families can report suspicious or concerning activity through the SafeTN App, access mental health resources for their student through programs administered by the Department of Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services and inquire about their child's school security compliance with Schools Against Violence in Education Act.

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix of Links for full URLs of all hyperlinks found in this toolkit.



## Download SafeTN today!



[tn.gov/safety/homeland-security/safetn.html](https://tn.gov/safety/homeland-security/safetn.html)

## SCHOOL SAFETY IN THE PALM OF YOUR HAND

[SafeTN](#) is a secure, open door communications platform where you can send in tips and access useful resources to help keep your school and community safe.

### How Does It Work?

With our anonymous reporting system, students, faculty, parents, and the public can easily and confidentially report their concerns to help prevent violence in our schools and our communities. Tips can be submitted 24/7 through the mobile app from any compatible device. The Tennessee Department of Safety and Homeland Security will review, assess, and then send all submissions to law enforcement, mental health crisis response teams, and/or school administrators for intervention based on the information received.

### What to Report?

With SafeTN, you can anonymously report suspicious or criminal behavior and other safety concerns. You can do this by reporting observed threats, behaviors, or actions. Here is an example of some of the common behaviors and incidents to report:

- » Assault
- » Sexual misconduct
- » Bragging about an upcoming planned attack
- » Violence or planned violence
- » Physical injury or harm to self or others
- » Threats of violence





## HOW TO PREPARE

Families, particularly parents, are often the first to notice changes in their student's behavior. Whether the changes are in the classroom or at home, families play a key part of building safe learning environments. Proactively promoting safety starts with understanding your child's physical, mental, and emotional health needs.

### Look for Warning Signs

Parents and families may recognize changes in their student that could be signs of harm being caused by others at school. Some signs to look out for include, in no particular order:

- » Social withdrawal
- » Excessive feelings of isolation and being alone
- » Excessive feelings of rejection
- » Being a victim of violence
- » Feelings of being persecuted
- » Low school interest and poor academic performance
- » Uncontrolled anger
- » Patterns of impulsive and chronic hitting, intimidating, and bullying behaviors
- » History of discipline problems
- » History of violent and aggressive behavior
- » Intolerance for differences and prejudicial attitudes
- » Use of drugs and alcohol
- » Affiliation with gangs
- » Serious threats of violence

This list is not intended to capture all warning signs. Exercise your best judgment if something seems off with your child.

For many students, aggression or violence towards themselves or others can stem from a combination of feelings, behaviors, and events in the warning signs listed above (Dwyer et al., 2000).<sup>2</sup>

2 Dwyer, K., Osher, D., & Warger, C. (2000, Spring). Warning signs of school violence. ERIC Review. School Safety: A Collaborative Effort. 7(1) pp 16-17. (ERIC Document No. ED440640)

## Quick Tips for Families

- » Seek opportunities to serve on your child's school district school health advisory committee and develop actionable goals to support safety, health, and overall well-being.
- » Partner with your parent-teacher organization and local law enforcement (School Resource Officers) to host a school safety family night/forum that brings awareness around school safety policies, procedures, bullying, suicide prevention, and social media engagement.
- » Modeling self-care and optimism can play a significant role in a child's wellbeing. Provide reassurance, support, and reaffirm safety to help foster resilience. Visit [Care for Caregiver: Tips for Families and Educators](#) for more information and resources.
- » Protecting our children on the internet can be difficult. For valuable tips and resources on internet safety visit [Internet Safety](#).
- » Check out [6 Rules for School Safety](#) for great ideas about talking to your children and supporting their safety at school and at home.



## Resources

### *Behavioral Health Safety Net for Children*

The Behavioral Health Safety Net (BHSN) for Children provides essential outpatient mental health services to Tennesseans ages 3 to 17 who don't have insurance coverage or lack full behavioral health coverage. There are no limits on family income for eligibility.

Visit [TN.gov/bhsn](http://TN.gov/bhsn) for more information.

### *Mental Health America*

Mental Health America (MHA) affiliates MHA of the Midsouth and MHA of East Tennessee provide outreach and support for people at every point in their mental health journey. Both organizations offer a range of screenings and trainings. MHA of East Tennessee offers [Mental Health 101 trainings](#) in schools in East and Middle Tennessee.

You can also visit:

- » MHA Midsouth: [mhamidsouth.org](http://mhamidsouth.org)
- » MHA East Tennessee: [mhaet.com](http://mhaet.com)

### *Regional Intervention Program*

The Regional Intervention Program has a 50+ year history of helping parents address challenging childhood behaviors. The program is available at 11 locations across Tennessee for parents and children up to age six.

Visit [TN.gov/parenting-that-works](http://TN.gov/parenting-that-works) for more information.





## HOW TO ENGAGE

When families are equipped with knowledge about available resources and supports and how to access them, they are better prepared to take on challenges that can potentially lead to increased violence in schools if not address earlier on, such as [bullying](#).

### Partner With Your School to Prevent Bullying & Harassment

While every child must learn how to interact with others and deal with difficult situations, they do not have to tolerate being bullied or harassed. Addressing bullying is important to all students involved. Students avoiding school because of bullying will suffer academically as well as socially.

Every student deserves to be treated with respect and have a safe and civil learning environment. Furthermore, Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-4503 requires that every school district have a policy prohibiting bullying and harassment as well as procedures for investigating reports of bullying and harassment. If you suspect your child is being bullied, please report it to your school and don't assume someone already knows. Caregivers are often the first to notice key signs of bullying. Questions regarding bullying should be directed to the Tennessee Department of Education's [Office of Safe and Supportive Schools](#) at 615-812-3353. Parents can also call the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation (TBI) School Violence Hotline at 1-800-824-3463 or see [tn.gov/behavioral-health/children-youth-young-adults-families/violence-bullying-prevention.html](https://tn.gov/behavioral-health/children-youth-young-adults-families/violence-bullying-prevention.html).

### Help Prevent Suicide

If your child is in a mental health crisis or is threatening suicide, parents and families should call Tennessee's Statewide Crisis Line immediately at 988 or 855-CRISIS-1 (855-274-7471) to connect with our statewide network of mobile crisis services for children and youth. You'll talk with mental health professionals who are equipped to handle challenges that come with children's mental health. For more information, visit [tn.gov/behavioral-health/need-help/suicide-prevention/tspn.html](https://tn.gov/behavioral-health/need-help/suicide-prevention/tspn.html).

## Questions to Ask Your Child’s School . . .

### About Physical Security:

- » Does every door lock, and who is responsible for locking the doors?
- » Who is allowed to enter the building during the school day?

### About Preparedness:

- » If there is an emergency situation, how should parents get in touch with the school?
- » Does the school have safety plans for after-school and extracurricular activities?
- » My child is in a portable classroom – how do you think differently about their safety?

### About Coordination with Law Enforcement:

- » Does the school have a school resource officer (SRO)?
- » Is the school in regular communication with their local Police or Sheriff’s Department?

### About Mental Health Resources:

- » If something is troubling a student, is there a school counselor they can talk to?



## Resources

### Tennessee Suicide Prevention Network

[TSPN.org](http://TSPN.org)



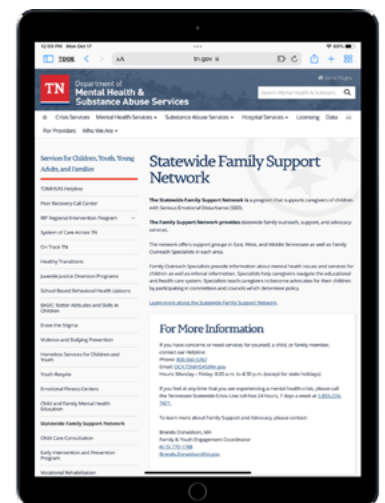
*"Saving Lives in Tennessee"*

The Tennessee Suicide Prevention Network is a statewide organization working tirelessly to eliminate the stigma of suicide. Through education efforts and events, their goal is to expose as many people as we can to the facts and numbers of suicide – and to debunk the myths. TSPN offers different trainings specialized for business, schools, and community groups to detect warning and risk factors of suicide. These are FREE sessions, and you can choose which one you think will best suit your audience.

### Statewide Family Support Network

[TN.gov/behavioral-health/children-youth-young-adults-families/family-support](http://TN.gov/behavioral-health/children-youth-young-adults-families/family-support)

The Statewide Family Support Network is a program that supports caregivers of children with Serious Emotional Disturbance (SED). Family Outreach Specialists provide information about mental health issues and services for children as well as referral information. Specialists help caregivers navigate the educational and health care systems. Specialists teach caregivers to become advocates for their children by participating in committees and councils which determine policy. The network offers support groups in East, West, and Middle Tennessee as well as Family Outreach Specialists in each area.



## Resources *continued*

### **Mobile Crisis Services for Children and Youth**

[TN.gov/behavioral-health/need-help/children-and-youth](http://TN.gov/behavioral-health/need-help/children-and-youth)

Youth Villages, Mental Health Cooperative, Frontier Health, and The McNabb Center provide crisis services for children and youth in Tennessee.

In addition, Crisis Services staff throughout the state can help assess and evaluate children and youth, up to age 18, who are experiencing a psychiatric emergency. If a child or youth under age 18 is experiencing a mental health crisis, please call 988 or the statewide crisis line. Your call will be routed to a crisis specialist for help

**24/7 STATEWIDE CRISIS LINE: 855-274-7471 (855-CRISIS-1).**

### **School-Based Behavioral Health Liaisons**

[TN.gov/behavioral-health/sbbhl](http://TN.gov/behavioral-health/sbbhl)

School-Based Behavioral Health Liaisons are available in all 95 counties with community mental health agencies receiving state funding to provide at least one position. Liaisons increase connection to mental health services, connect families to support services, and serve as a resource for educators. Depending on needs identified in individual school districts, liaisons may serve in elementary, middle, or high schools.

### **Civil Rights & Bullying Compliance Report**

[TN.gov/content/tn/education/legal-services/civil-rights/civil-rights-bullying-compliance-report.html](http://TN.gov/content/tn/education/legal-services/civil-rights/civil-rights-bullying-compliance-report.html)

The Tennessee Department of Education created the annual Civil Rights and Bullying Compliance Report to collect Title VI, Title IX, and bullying and harassment compliance information. Each public school district must submit the report annually by August 1.

### **Project BASIC**

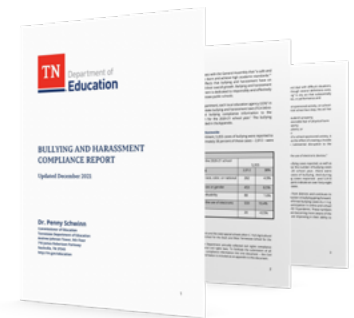
[TN.gov/behavioral-health/children-youth-young-adults-families/basic](http://TN.gov/behavioral-health/children-youth-young-adults-families/basic)

BASIC is an award-winning school-based mental health prevention and early intervention program for children. It promotes mental health by identifying children at risk of serious emotional disorders and referring them to treatment. BASIC offers mental health education through direct classroom interaction with children and through work with teachers, coaching them on strategies to promote social emotional development of children. BASIC staff operate full time in 64 elementary schools in 59 counties across Tennessee.

### **System of Care Across Tennessee (SOCAT)**

[socacrosstn.org](http://socacrosstn.org)

System of Care Across Tennessee provides mental health services for children, youth, and young adults from age 0-21. SOCAT is intended for youth and young adults who are experiencing emotional or behavioral concerns that affect their daily life (*i.e., having trouble in school, with their family, with peers or adults, with law enforcement, or children's services*). SOCAT aims to reach young people who are at risk of psychiatric hospitalization, residential placement, or DCS custody.



**BASIC:**  
Better Attitudes and  
Skills in Children





## Appendix of Links

Site Name & URL	Page(s)
<b>6 Rules for School Safety</b> scholastic.com/parents/school-success/school-involvement/6-rules-school-safety.html	5
<b>Behavioral Health Safety Net (BHSN) for Children</b> tn.gov/behavioral-health/bhsn/apply-bhsn-children.html	5, 6
<b>Bullying</b> tn.gov/education/health-and-safety/bullying-and-harassment.html	2, 6
<b>Care for Caregiver: Tips for Families and Educators</b> nasonline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-safety-and-crisis/mental-health-resources/care-for-caregivers-tips-for-families-and-educators	5

Site Name & URL	Page(s)
<b>Executive Order No. 97</b> tn.gov/governor/news/2022/6/6/gov--lee-issues-executive-order-to-enhance-school-safety.html	2
<b>Internet Safety - ICAC</b> icactaskforce.org	5
<b>Office of Safe and Supportive Schools</b> tn.gov/education/health-and-safety/school-safety.html	6
<b>Regional Intervention Program (RIP)</b> tn.gov/behavioral-health/children-youth-young-adults-families/rip.html	5
<b>Safe TN App</b> tn.gov/safety/homeland-security/safetn.html	3



Andrew Johnson Tower, 9th floor  
710 James Robertson Parkway  
Nashville, TN 37243

[TN.gov/education](https://tn.gov/education)

#TNBestforAll

*We will set all students  
on a path to success.*



500 Deaderick Street  
Nashville, TN 37243

[TN.gov/behavioral-health.html](https://tn.gov/behavioral-health.html)



312 Rosa L. Parks Avenue  
Nashville, TN 37243

[TN.gov/safety.html](https://tn.gov/safety.html)