

The California State PTA expresses its profound shared sense of loss with the families in Littleton, Colorado after the devastating events of April 20, 1999 in which 15 people died at Columbine High School in the worst student-initiated violence in U.S. history.

VIOLENCE PREVENTION IN SCHOOLS

Adopted by Convention Delegates May 1999
Reviewed by Board of Managers January 2010

- WHEREAS,** The California State PTA and the National PTA promote policies and programs that enlist cooperation and collaboration among schools, parents, students and community members to provide a safe and positive school climate that is free of violence and other hazards to the safety and well-being of all students; and
- WHEREAS,** Incidents of student-initiated violence at school are rare, but are increasing; and
- WHEREAS,** Counseling and other support services in California schools have been substantially reduced in recent years, and California now ranks 51st in the national ratio of counselors to students and 50th in its overall ratio of students to support staff; and
- WHEREAS,** Comprehensive violence prevention programs have been shown to be effective and are available for use in schools and communities; now therefore be it
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA and its units, councils and districts reaffirm its commitment to the promotion and support of violence prevention in schools and communities; and be it further
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA encourage its units, councils and districts to promote education of parents, students, teachers and the community in recognizing signs and circumstances that may lead to potential outbursts of violence; and be it further
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA encourage its units, councils and districts to promote programs that educate and empower parents, students, teachers, staff and the community to strive to eliminate bias, prejudice and violence; and be it further
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA support efforts to ensure that adequate counseling and other support services are available in the elementary, middle and high schools of California; and be it further
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA promote the inclusion of violence prevention programs in the elementary, middle and high schools, and support measures to improve the ability of school staff to respond to incidents and expressed threats of violence that may occur.

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BACKGROUND SUMMARY

The most recent tragic mass homicide is part of a deadly trend in the United States. Only two cases of multiple homicides in schools were recorded between 1992 and 1995. Since 1995 there have been ten incidents of multiple homicides in our nation's schools.

There is no single precaution that might prevent a recurrence of violence in schools. It would help if schools had more people on staff whose training and duties enabled them to identify and reach out to students who may be susceptible to violent behavior. While it is impossible to predict which students will turn violent, there are warning signs. According to the American Psychological Association, "violence is a serious possibility" in children who exhibit certain typical warning signs.

While counseling alone cannot do the job, California needs to rise from last in the nation in the number of school counselors per student. The California Department of Education gives the 1997-1998 actual ratio of students to counselors at 1056 to 1. The California School Counselors Association recommends 300 students to 1 counselor in secondary schools, with 450 students to 1 counselor at the elementary level.

Schools and communities across the country have benefited from school-based violence prevention programs such as conflict resolution and anger management programs, and use of the National PTA's Community Violence Prevention Kit. School staff and others responsible for student safety also need to have the tools to enable them to respond quickly and appropriately when incidents do occur.

In the wake of the Littleton, Colorado shooting it is all the more important to pursue appropriate prevention strategies to ensure that students receive the support and assistance that may help to reduce the incidence of violence.