Safe Schools/Healthy Students Grantees Report Reduced Violence and Safer Schools

Key Findings: 2005 Cohort

Fewer students involved in violent incidents

Grantees reported a 15 percent decrease in the number of students involved in violent incidents (from 17,800 in Year 1 of the grant to 15,163 by Year 3).

Decreased levels of experienced and witnessed violence

Grantees reported a significant decrease in the number of students reporting that they had experienced or witnessed violence (from Year 1 to Year 3).

School-level improvements in overall safety and violence

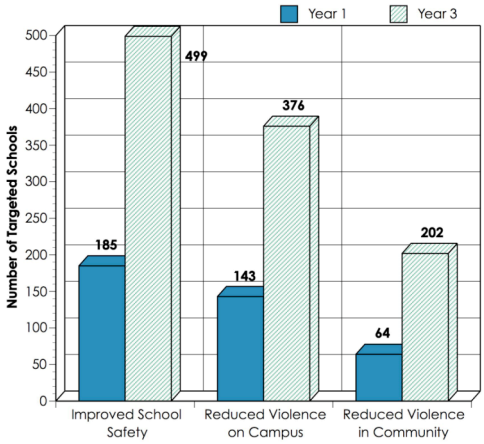
Most staff at grantee schools reported that the Initiative had made their schools safer. By Year 3, 84 percent said the Initiative had improved school safety, 77 percent said it had reduced violence on campus, and 75 percent said it had reduced violence in the community.

The recent National Survey of Children's Exposure to Violence reported that nearly one-half of children surveyed were physically assaulted and more than one-quarter had witnessed violence in their homes, schools, and communities during the past year. The Safe Schools/Healthy Students (SS/HS) Initiative plays a critical role in addressing violence in schools, particularly for school districts who report in the first year of their grant a high percentage of children who have experienced (35 percent) and witnessed (60 percent) school violence. SS/HS is an unprecedented collaborative grant program supported by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the U.S. Department of Education, and the U.S. Department of Justice.

SS/HS grantees apply evidence-based violence prevention strategies to help make their schools a safe environment where students can learn. In partnership with local law enforcement agencies, grantees identify and implement programs and activities such as safety and security assessments, districtwide safety plans, violence prevention curricula, and staff training. These strategies are working. Analyses showed significant decreases in violence from Year 1 to Year 3 of the grant, with fewer students reporting that they had experienced violence (12 percent decrease) or witnessed violence (15 percent decrease).

The National Evaluation also examined data from the annual School-Level Survey to determine how teachers and other school staff felt about the grant's impact on safety and violence at their school (see chart). Significant numbers of staff said they perceived "great" or "very great" improvements over time in school safety and violence as a result of the grant. From Year 1 to Year 3, these perceptions of improved school safety grew by 59 percent, while perceptions of reduced violence on campus and in the community grew by 61 percent and 46 percent, respectively.

Improvements Reported by School Staff



By Year 3 of the grant, 84 percent of staff attributed improvements in school safety to the SS/HS grant. In addition, about three-quarters said the grant had reduced violence on campus and in the community.

Comparison to National Data

The SS/HS National Evaluation has documented significant improvements among grantees for selected youth outcomes since 2005, in contrast to national trends. Data for the same period from sources such as the Youth Risk Behavior Survey showed no significant changes in the number of students who reported either experiencing or perceiving violence.

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