

## **Identifying Students “At-Risk” for Violent Behavior: A Checklist of “Early Warning Signs”**

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There has been a dramatic increase in the frequency of violence in our schools and, in a sense, we should consider all of our students “at-risk.” The purpose of this information sheet is to assist school personnel in identifying children and adolescents who are at greater risk for engaging in violent behavior.

The following checklist of “early warning signs” will facilitate identification of students who may be in need of intervention. **The greater the number of items checked**, the greater the potential for violent acting-out behavior. For help, turn to individuals who regularly work with at-risk children and adolescents - professionals in the fields of education, law enforcement, social services, medicine, mental health, etc.

### **Children and adolescents at-risk may:**

- express self destructive or homicidal ideation
- have a history of self-destructive behavior
- articulate specific plans to harm self and/or others
- engage in “bullying” other children
- have difficulty with impulse control
- evidence significant changes in behavior
- engage in substance abuse
- become involved with gangs
- evidence a preoccupation with fighting
- have a history of antisocial behavior
- evidence a low tolerance for frustration
- externalize blame for their difficulties
- have harmed small animals
- have engaged in fire setting
- evidence persistent bed wetting
- appear/acknowledge feeling depressed
- talk about not being around
- express feelings of hopelessness
- give away possessions
- appear withdrawn
- evidence significant changes in mood
- experience sleep and eating disturbances
- have experienced prior trauma/tragedy
- have been/are victims of child abuse
- have experienced a significant loss
- evidence a preoccupation with television programs/movies with violent themes
- evidence a preoccupation with games with violent themes
- have access to a firearm
- have brought a weapon to school
- evidence frequent disciplinary problems
- exhibit poor academic performance
- have been frequently truant from school
- evidence a preoccupation with guns and/or other weapons