

— TOP TAKEAWAYS —

Safe, Seen, and Supported: What Actually Keeps K–12 Schools Secure

EFFORTS TO PROMOTE SCHOOL SAFETY NEED REVISION

- More than one in ten American teenagers now skips school out of fear of being there.
- While some firearm policies may reduce certain harms, no firearm policy, on its own, prevents the daily violence and the pathway behaviors that precede a student becoming a killer.
- In 2021-22, U.S. public schools most often reported lack of alternative placements for disruptive students and inadequate funding as limiting schools' crime prevention "in a major way."
- Because there is no single profile of a student attacker, a well-designed threat assessment responds to behavior, context, stressors, and access to means, never to demographics.

PROGRESSIVE APPROACHES TO DAILY DISORDER FAIL TO CURTAIL VIOLENCE

- Under the Obama administration's "disparate impact" standard for school discipline, a school could face a federal civil rights investigation whenever its suspension or expulsion rates were racially disproportionate, regardless of whether any individual decision was discriminatory.
- The first Trump administration repealed the "disparate impact" standard, but the Biden administration signaled support for it (stopping just short of reinstating it). As this back-and-forth causes confusion for schools, Congress should instead codify a "disparate treatment" standard.
- The "restorative justice" approach to classroom management does not reduce suspensions for violent offenses, reduce suspensions in middle schools, or reduce arrests; it actually worsened academic outcomes in grades 6–8, with black students' test scores taking a statistically significant hit.

SCHOOLS SHOULD CONSIDER PRACTICAL AND EFFECTIVE SAFETY SOLUTIONS

- Ultimately, disciplinary policy is safety policy, and schools that will not enforce standards of behavior cannot protect the students and teachers inside them.
- While treating every behavioral problem as a medical treatment problem excuses misconduct and drains counselors away from students with genuine clinical needs, denying the link between untreated serious mental illness and violence amounts to malpractice at the level of public policy.
- Through reporting mechanisms, trained security personnel, targeted funding and technical assistance, and implemented standards of behavior, schools can adopt comprehensive safety strategies.

Click [HERE](#) to read the policy focus and learn more about what actually keeps K-12 schools secure.