

A safe and effective school climate is necessary for promoting educational excellence in our public schools. Ensuring school safety is an issue that requires a multi-pronged approach.

Local and national polls of educators and school employees reveal that they rejected the notion of arming additional school employees as a response to improving the safety of a school and preventing future school shootings.

* In Colorado, 80% of CEA teacher members and 52% of CEA educational support professional (ESP) members rated “allowing school employees to carry concealed firearms” as least effective method; and
* 65.6% of CEA teacher members and 44% of CEA ESP members rated “require at least one employee at each school to carry a gun” as least effective. (source: CEA member poll, January 2013)
* Nationally, 68% of NEA members (teachers and educational support professionals) opposed a proposal to allow teachers and other school employees to receive firearms training and allow them to carry firearms in schools, including 61% who strongly opposed it. (source: NEA member poll, January 2013)

Educators do support increasing security within public schools and increasing counseling and mental health services for students.

* Current law permits select school district employees (such as School Safety or School Resource Offices) to have concealed carry weapons on school grounds if it is part of their job duty. [C.R.S. Section 18-12-214 (3) (b)] Additionally, school resource officers (SROs) are specifically trained to deal in high-stress, rapid-response situations in a school setting and become integrated members of the school staff. Ideally, SROs also receive training in counseling to better prepare them to assist and work with students.
* In 2008, Colorado established the Colorado School Safety Resource Center (C.R.S. Section 24-33.5-1801) to better assist schools and school districts on establishing safe school environments. The center provides trainings and resources to school districts, many at no cost. ([www.Colorado.gov/CSSRC](http://www.Colorado.gov/CSSRC)) Ensuring school safety includes developing and implementing a safe physical school environment with routine assessments and review; maintaining communication with local first responders; training for staff on issues such as bullying and harassment prevention; and availability of qualified school personnel to identity and diagnosis warning signs of potentially problematic or violent behavior. The center provides information and training on all of these issues and more.
* Mental health services are also crucial. Schools are often the places in which some of the first signs of mental health issues can be spotted and diagnosed. Therefore it is critical that there are adequate numbers of qualified school personnel to make these diagnoses and/or spot warning signs of potentially problematic or violent behavior. Unfortunately, there is a huge shortage of these types of professionals in our public education system (from pre-k through higher education), which impedes the ability of school personnel to ensure a learning environment that is safe, secure, respectful, and nurturing.