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AG Kaul: Dept. of Justice's Office of School Safety launches Critical Incident Response Team Program

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MADISON, Wis. – The Wisconsin Department of Justice (DOJ) today announced that the Office of School Safety (OSS) has begun training twelve Critical Incident Response
Teams (CIRTs) around the state. CIRTs are designed to provide all Wisconsin K-12 public, private, charter and tribal schools with access to a regionally based team to support them if a critical incident ever occurs at their school.

"We must take a comprehensive approach to school safety," said Attorney General Josh
Kaul. "By creating regional Critical Incident Response Teams for schools across Wisconsin, our Office of School Safety and the partners participating in this program will
ensure that resources and support are available if a critical incident takes place at any
Wisconsin school."

OSS considers a school-related critical incident to be a sudden and unexpected incident
or sequence of events which can cause trauma within a school community that may overwhelm the normal coping mechanisms of the school. School crises may be a large-
scale incident, or a smaller-scale incident that may be more individualized and affects a
small group of people. Examples of critical incidents in schools include threats or acts

of violence, natural disasters, serious injuries to students or staff, suicide, weather-related disasters, community turmoil, intruders, an Amber Alert, and hate crimes.

The mission of the CIRT program is to minimize the psychological impact of a school critical incident; provide resources to help stabilize the school community; work to identify individuals that may require long-term mental health services after a critical incident occurs; and offer support to school administrators and educators. Wisconsin is the first state to implement regionally based CIRTs on a statewide basis.

Each of Wisconsin's 12 regional CIRTs is made up of volunteers who are part of a multi-disciplinary team. These teams include law enforcement officers, school administrators, counselors, psychologists, social workers, nurses, teachers, school safety experts, and representatives from other related professions.

Every CIRT member must attend one of the four training sessions held around the state this spring/summer. Training will equip team members with techniques rooted in best practice for response after a critical incident occurs. It will also facilitate uniformity in response and support for all schools throughout the state that may deal with a critical incident. The curriculum of the CIRT training includes PREPaRE workshop 1 & 2, Introduction to Standard Reunification Method, Crisis Communication with the Media, and Resource and CIR Toolkit.

Full implementation of the regional CIRT program is projected for this fall.