

Dept. of Justice: Attorney General Kaul announces office of school safety funding secured for 2023-2024 school year

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MADISON, Wis. – Attorney General Josh Kaul today is announcing that the Wisconsin Department of Justice (DOJ) Office of School Safety (OSS) has secured one-time funding to temporarily continue its current, lifesaving operations to keep Wisconsin kids safe. Since its inception in 2018, OSS has become a critical resource for students, teachers, school administrators, and educational communities across the state of Wisconsin by implementing practices proven to prevent violence in schools.

“We’re committed to doing everything we can to keep our kids safe by preventing tragedy, and that’s exactly what these funds will help us continue to do,” said Attorney General Kaul. “It remains essential, however, for the state legislature to take action in the current legislative session. We must not allow critical Office of School Safety programs to be gutted at the end of 2024.”

Wisconsin DOJ has re-allocated \$1,340,000 in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to extend the operations of OSS including the Speak Up, Speak Out 24-hour tipline, critical incident response teams, and threat assessment consultation. The funds being used were originally awarded for the purpose of outsourcing testing of certain types of evidence at the Wisconsin State Crime Laboratories, however, after an exhaustive search, no vendors for testing those types of evidence were available and the funds will not be able to be expended before the deadline for using ARPA funds.

OSS staff provide trainings that follow national best practices related to crisis

prevention and response, free of charge, to any Wisconsin school that requests it. They also developed and maintain critical incident response teams for every region of Wisconsin, and they established and run the Speak Up, Speak Out Resource Center, including the 24-hour tipline. OSS has also distributed nearly \$100 million in grants for safety enhancements, threat assessment training, and mental health training to public, private, charter, and tribal schools throughout Wisconsin. OSS is a repository for 5 documents for every private, public and tribal school in Wisconsin. OSS school safety consultants provide coaching and support to local school officials as they create emergency operations plans and school safety practices in their schools.

Speak Up, Speak Out

On September 1, 2020, OSS launched Speak Up, Speak Out (SUSO), a 24/7 statewide confidential reporting system free to all Wisconsin schools. SUSO is a comprehensive, one-stop place to turn with important concerns, offering a Threat Reporting System, Threat Assessment Consultation, Critical Incident Response and General School Safety Guidance. SUSO aims to promote the reporting of concerns before violence happens.

SUSO Fast Facts

- More than 1,700 schools and law enforcement agencies in Wisconsin have received at least one tip from SUSO since its inception.
- To date, SUSO has received more than 7,500 contacts, with half of those coming in the 2022-2023 school year alone.
- Between May of 2022 and August of 2023, 68 of Wisconsin's 72 counties received at least one SUSO tip.
- Schools around the state have stopped paying private companies to provide services like SUSO and switched to use this free statewide tool. Without it, schools will have to spend tens of thousands of dollars for private services.

Students, parents, school staff, or any community members can submit a school safety concern or threat via the SUSO website, mobile phone application, or toll-free number.

SUSO Reports can be made 24 hours a day, 7 days a week:

- Online at widoj.gov

- 1-800-MY-SUSO-1 (1-800-697-8761)
- Mobile app ([iOS](#)/[Android](#))

OSS Training

OSS staff are certified to train a variety of courses that follow national best practices related to violence prevention, protection, mitigation, crisis response and recovery. OSS offers these trainings free of charge to any school or law enforcement agency in Wisconsin that requests it. Trainings offered in Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management (BTAM) equip school and law enforcement staff with the knowledge, protocol and model practices needed to determine if someone poses a threat to their school and how to intervene effectively based on the level of concern posed. Crisis Intervention trainings equip school staff to respond effectively when a crisis event occurs in a way that will promote psychological recovery for all staff and students. Other trainings help school staff establish standardized response and reunification for any school crisis, from fires and floods to acts of violence. OSS staff continue to expand the trainings offered to ensure that Wisconsin schools have a comprehensive toolkit to help keep kids and school staff safe.

School shootings are preventable. Two practices are proven to prevent school violence: an accessible, effective threat reporting system and BTAM. OSS leads the state in bringing both the practices to school.

OSS Training Fast Facts

- Between May of 2022 and August of 2023, OSS staff provided trainings and presentations in 63 of Wisconsin's 72 counties.
- Between May of 2022 and August of 2023, OSS staff reached more than 6,800 people through trainings and presentations around the state.

Critical Incident Response Teams

In 2022, OSS established and trained 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. Each CIRT 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. 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. Additional training academies are being held this summer, adding team members across the state.

CIRT Fast Facts

- Between June of 2022 and June of 2023, OSS provided evidence-based crisis response and intervention training to 226 participants at regional CIR training academies, ensuring access to best practices across the state.
- Between May of 2022 and May of 2023, OSS provided 71 instances of CIR support and resources to schools that were impacted by a traumatic incident, helping them recover and return to learning more quickly.
- There are 79 participants enrolled in the CIR academies that will take place during mid-August of 2023.

OSS was initially supported by more than \$2 million in federal grant funding from the U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Assistance. OSS is currently supported by more than \$1.8 million in American Rescue Plan Act funding which were expected to end in December of 2023. Wisconsin DOJ requested the legislature permanently fund OSS in the recent biennial budget, but the request went unfilled.

Find this press release on the Wisconsin DOJ website [here](#).