

# Dept. of Justice: Office of school safety, Wisconsin school safety coordinators association, and parent of Parkland shooting victim advocate for funding

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MADISON, Wis. – The Wisconsin Department of Justice (DOJ) Office of School Safety (OSS) today partnered with the Wisconsin School Safety Coordinators Association (WSSCA) and Max Schachter, a national school safety advocate and parent of one of the students killed in the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting in Parkland, Fla. in 2018, to call on Wisconsin legislators to fully fund OSS in the next biennial budget.

“Long-term funding will ensure that the critical resources provided by the Office of School Safety remain available to Wisconsin schools,” said Attorney General Josh Kaul. “The upcoming state budget should include full funding for OSS.”

“Yesterday our country experienced our 100th mass shooting in 2023. Unfortunately, the next school mass murderer is already out there. The gun that he will use is already out there,” said Max Schachter, founder and CEO of Safe Schools for Alex. “PLEASE do not think for a second that a Parkland or Uvalde cannot happen here in Wisconsin. That is exactly what we thought in Parkland and then 17 people were murdered Valentine’s Day 2018 in three minutes and 51 seconds. There is nothing more important for the safety of Wisconsin school children than fully funding the Office of School Safety. The \$2.2 million budget request is not a big ask. Florida has spent over \$200 million on schools safety every year since our tragedy.”

“The Office of School Safety has made a tremendously positive impact on improving school safety in Wisconsin,” said Jay Jones, President of WSSCA and Superintendent of the Omro School District. “School districts throughout the State of Wisconsin have benefited from the programs, resources, and support of OSS. It is critical for OSS to be permanently funded in order to support school safety.”

OSS was created with bipartisan support in 2018 in response to the Parkland, Fla. school shooting and has proven to be a critical resource for Wisconsin schools. Since its inception, OSS has distributed nearly \$100 million for safety enhancements, threat assessment training, and mental health training to public, private, charter, and tribal schools throughout Wisconsin. OSS staff provide training to schools around the state, they 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.

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. Since its inception, SUSO has received thousands of tips. During the 2021-2022 school year, SUSO received 136 potentially lifesaving tips. Bullying and suicide threats were the most reported tips to SUSO during the 2021-2022 school year.

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](https://widoj.gov)
- 1-800-MY-SUSO-1 (1-800-697-8761)
- Mobile app ([iOS](#)/[Android](#))

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.

Additionally, OSS staff are certified to train a variety of courses that follow national best practices related to crisis response and offer these trainings free of charge to any Wisconsin school that requests it. Some 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 safe.

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 will end in December of 2023. DOJ has requested the legislature permanently fund OSS in the next biennial budget.

### **About Max Schachter**

Max Schachter is a national school safety advocate. His son Alex is one of the 17 victims murdered in the Parkland school shooting on Valentine's Day 2018. Max is the founder and executive director of [Safe Schools for Alex](#) 501(c)(3). Their mission is to provide most current school safety best practices and resources to students, parents, school districts and law enforcement so that all children can learn in a safe environment.

View the press release [here](#).