

# HEALTH & SAFETY

A NEWSLETTER FOR NYSUT'S HEALTH AND SAFETY LEADERS

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## Report says school shooters are not impulsive

Since the Newtown Elementary School shooting, districts all over the state have been reviewing their emergency response plans. What about prevention? In March, NYSUT addressed proactive school safety at its health and safety conference. The same month, the New York School Boards Association sponsored both a meeting of stakeholders and a conference about safety in schools. Experts in those sessions all confirm that school culture and support have a lot to do with preventing attacks.

After the school shooting in Columbine, the Secret Service conducted a review of all school shootings from 1974 through 2000. Their findings revealed not only the absence of a shooter profile and mental illness diagnosis, but no common motives. What they did find was that most shooters planned their attacks over a period of time; they were rarely impulsive acts. Recent information revealed that the mass shooter in Newtown, Conn., had planned his attack over several years.

Motives among shooters varied but they tended to identify with previous attackers and suicide was at the heart of many. Most were known to have difficulty coping with significant losses or personal failures.

### 'Bystanders' are key to prevention

One of the authors of the Secret Service report was Bryan Vossekuil, now retired. He points out that there are limits to physical measures to prevent school shootings; more important are strong efforts to identify and assess those who may be moving to action and for schools to intervene appropriately.

School-based attackers engage in a rational process of planning. Therefore, many attacks are preventable. The report states, "Prior to most incidents, other people knew about the attacker's idea and/or plan to attack." Since

most school shootings have been perpetrated by students, these were friends, schoolmates, siblings and others. Tragically, these bystanders did not reach out to an adult and alert them to the dangerous situation. Reasons for not reporting can be complicated, but a crucial element is how comfortable students feel about giving adults information about a potential incident. Schools must have a system that convinces students to come forward.

### Encouraging information sharing

Since Columbine, there have been hundreds of plans for school shootings that were stopped along the way by means other than law enforcement

intervention. A 2008 Secret Service study on bystanders shows why information was shared: the bystanders had a positive emotional connection to the school and its staff.

How to achieve that environment? In a meaningful social and emotional environment, communication is key. This includes a model where the school community is told how to report threats against the school, what to do and why it's important to report. Whatever system is in place, it must be fair, equitable and confidential. If bystanders know that they will be believed and information would be protected, they are likely to come forward.

When students are confident the information they provide will be reasonably investigated and appropriate action taken, they are more likely to speak up. A good first step toward building the climate and culture that will lead students to report is to assess the school's resources and current capacity to develop positive programs and to respond to problems. Are school psychologists, nurses, counselors and social workers working together as a team, along with the rest of the staff? You may not need to add more staff, but make sure they are being used to the best benefit of the school.



Representing more than 600,000 professionals in education and health care  
For more, see [www.nysut.org](http://www.nysut.org).

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# Teen safety & health: Prepare students for workforce

by Susan McQuade, NYCOSH Safety Health specialist and coordinator of NYCOSH's Youth Project

Teen workers are at high risk for on-the-job injuries. Dozens of teen workers were killed at work in New York state over the past decade and, in the U.S., there is an annual average of 795,000 non-fatal injuries to young workers treated in U.S. hospitals. This rate is **two times higher** than the rate for workers 25 years and older. This increased risk is due to teens' limited knowledge of the workplace and their lack of work experience.

To address this concern, NYSUT and the New York Committee for Occupational Safety and Health (NYCOSH) are working with



the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health to promote the of *Youth @ Work: Talking Safety*, a free, classroom-based curriculum devoted to educating teens on workplace hazards, and the laws that protect them from serious injury and illness on the job.

The curriculum has been adapted for all 50 states, and can be downloaded at: [www.cdc.gov/niosh/talking-safety/](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/talking-safety/).

NYSUT is seeking high school and middle school teachers who are interested in leading efforts in their schools to promote the use of the *Youth @ Work: Talking Safety* curriculum.

"The downloadable curriculum includes lesson plans, student handouts and reproducible overheads, and the lesson plans are engaging and well thought out," said NYSUT Vice

President Kathleen Donahue.

"Teen worker safety is always a topic I cover in my classroom. I have shown the Talking Safety video to my students, and it generates a lot of good discussion," said Sheryl Garofano, a high school family and consumer science teacher from North Syracuse School District. "When I use these activities, students begin to talk about their own experiences in their part-time jobs, and it makes the issues much more real to them," said Garofano.

NYCOSH and NYSUT share the goal of ensuring that every student, upon graduating from high school, understands the basic principles of workplace safety and rights on the job, a valuable skill for young people as they begin their lives in the workforce.

For more information about the project, or to schedule a teacher-training session for you and your co-workers on how to best utilize this curriculum, contact Susan McQuade at [smcquade@nycosh.org](mailto:smcquade@nycosh.org) or Wendy Hord at [whord@nysutmail.org](mailto:whord@nysutmail.org).

## HEALTH & SAFETY

*Health & Safety* is a newsletter published periodically for New York State United Teachers' Health and Safety Committee members. NYSUT locals and staff have permission to reprint all *Health & Safety* content.

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A Union of Professionals

## Free webinar! How to create greener, healthier schools

**WHEN:** 4:30 – 5:45 p.m. Thursday May 23

**WHERE:** Free webinar from your home/computer

Healthy schools that are free from toxic chemicals are critical to children's health. Unfortunately, school building materials and products can contain chemicals harmful to children's health that have been linked to asthma, learning and developmental disabilities, cancer and other serious health problems that are on the rise. For example, hazardous chemicals and materials like mercury, phthalates, vinyl and halogenated flame retardants have been found in lighting, flooring, office supplies, and/or other products in schools. The good

news is that safer and affordable alternatives are available for schools and parents to use and purchase.

Learn how you can encourage your school to be greener and healthier by launching an environmentally preferable purchasing (EPP) program.

Join this free webinar sponsored by NYSUT, the United Federation of Teachers and the Center for Health, Environment and Justice (CHEJ).

Visit <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/7510194731495990528> to sign up.



## FEDERAL

### **Excellence in Mental Health Act S.265 (Stabenow) and H.R. 1263:**

Amends the Public Health Service Act to establish criteria for certification of federally-qualified community behavioral health centers. Would make such centers eligible for payments for services under Medicaid. Authorizes Health and Human Services (HHS) to award matching grants to states or Indian tribes to expend funds for the construction or modernization of facilities used to provide community-based mental health and substance abuse services to individuals. Referred to Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee.

### **Safe Chemicals Act of 2013**

**(Lautenberg, Gillibrand):** Would protect consumers and workers by revising the existing Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) by

giving EPA resources to collect health and safety information, screen and prioritize chemicals and require risk management of chemicals that cannot be proven safe and establish a public database to compile health and safety information given by manufacturers and the EPA safety determination.

## STATE

### **School violence prevention bill A.6902 (Heastie) and S.1936-A**

**(Addabbo):** Would cover pre-K-12 public schools under the existing Workplace Violence Prevention Act, in force for all other public employees in New York. Stay tuned to the [www.nysut.org/healthandsafety](http://www.nysut.org/healthandsafety) web page for information on the bills.

### **Licensed Social Workers in Elementary Schools A03227**

**(Ortiz):** Requires at least one full-time licensed social worker to be

employed in each elementary, intermediate, middle and junior high school throughout the state. Referred to Education Committee.

### **Child Safe Products Act A.6328 (Sweeney) and S.4614 (Boyle):**

The purpose of this bill is to prevent use of dangerous chemicals in children's products and ensure use of safer chemicals. Authorizes the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to participate in interstate chemical clearing house; requires DEC to post lists of priority chemicals/chemicals of high concern on its website; requires children's products' manufacturers to disclose the presence of priority chemicals in their product(s); prohibits sale of children's products containing priority chemicals effective 2018.

## GHS: Coming soon to your workplace

*Adapted from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)*

GHS (Global Harmonized System) is a system for standardizing and harmonizing the classification and labeling of chemicals. It is a logical and comprehensive approach to:

- Defining health, physical and environmental hazards of chemicals;
- Creating classification processes that use available data on chemicals for comparison with the defined hazard criteria; and
- Communicating hazard information, as well as protective measures, on labels and Safety Data Sheets (SDS).

The system is being implemented around the world in countries such as Australia, the EU and China.

Existing laws and regulations are similar, but different enough to require multiple labels for the same product within the U.S. and in international

trade, and multiple safety data sheets for the same product in international trade. Several U.S. regulatory agencies and various countries have different requirements for hazard definitions as well as for information to be included on labels or material safety data sheets.

OSHA recently incorporated GHS into its Hazard Communication Standard.

### Changes to anticipate

Chemical manufacturers and importers will be required to provide new labels that include a harmonized signal word, pictogram, and hazard statement based on the hazard classification. Precautionary statements must also be provided. Safety data sheets (SDS) will have a specified 16-section format.

The modified HCS will also require that workers receive information and



training by Dec. 1, 2013, to facilitate recognition and understanding of the new labels and safety data sheets.

Visit <http://www.osha.gov/dsg/hazcom/> for information on the changes, including a general fact sheet, a chart with required phase-in dates and QuickCards on safety data sheets, labels and pictograms in English and Spanish.

NYSUT will be offering training to its members on the changes starting in August. Call your NYSUT regional office to schedule a workshop.

## Children's health and the environment in America

The EPA released "America's Children and the Environment, Third Edition," a comprehensive compilation of information from a variety of sources on children's health and the environment. This report includes 37 indicators of children's environmental health to address 23 important topics. The report shows trends for contaminants in air, water, food and soil that may affect children; concentrations of contaminants in the bodies of children and women of child-bearing age; and childhood illnesses and health conditions. The report incorporates revisions to address peer review and public comments on draft materials released in 2011.

Visit [www.epa.gov/ace/](http://www.epa.gov/ace/) for more on "America's Children and the Environment, Third Edition."



## Food Allergy Research and Education (FARE) unveils new website

FARE, formerly known as FAAN (Food Allergy Anaphylaxis Network), is the result of a merger between the FAAN and the Food Allergy Initiative. They provide evidence-based educational resources for all those affected by food allergies, as well as the programs and tools for educators, health care workers, policymakers, food industry professionals and others. Visit [www.foodallergy.org/home](http://www.foodallergy.org/home) for more information.



## 'Stop bullying' website

In 2012, the federal government created the Stop Bullying website — [www.stopbullying.gov](http://www.stopbullying.gov) — to encourage children, parents, educators and communities to take action to stop and prevent bullying.

The website provides detailed information on state laws and policies, interactive webisodes and videos for young people, practical strategies for schools and communities to ensure safe environments, and suggestions on how parents can talk about this sensitive subject with their children. The site also explores the dangers of cyberbullying and steps youngsters and parents can take to fight it.



## Are you a volunteer firefighter? New one-stop shop web resource

A new NIOSH webpage provides a central location for all NIOSH firefighter-related resources, projects and publications occurring and/or produced within NIOSH. NIOSH is also starting a second phase of this project asking for feedback from frontline firefighters and stakeholders in an effort to identify ways to further expand the pages to make them more useful for firefighters. Visit the webpage at [www.cdc.gov/niosh/firefighters/](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/firefighters/) for more.



Email: [FFstudy@cdc.gov](mailto:FFstudy@cdc.gov) to offer comments or feedback on the page.



## Toward Healthy Schools 2015

This recent report from the national Coalition for Healthier Schools cites multiple studies documenting the benefits of healthy indoor learning environments on attendance and achievement, then presents state-level data and policy summaries. Visit [www.healthyschools.org/HealthySchools2015.pdf](http://www.healthyschools.org/HealthySchools2015.pdf) to download for free.



Educators, parents, students, community

# ONE VOICE UNITED

## RALLY TOGETHER

June 8 noon • Empire State Plaza • Albany

- End the over-reliance on expensive, corporate-developed tests!
- Demand the fair and equitable funding of our schools!
- Pass the School Violence Protection Act!
- Restore local control of our public schools! Fix the tax cap!
- Invest in public higher education!