

Systematic Review: Anonymous Reporting Systems for School-Based Violence Prevention



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In this video, Dr. Libby Messman describes a systematic review of published literature from the last 25 years on the use of Anonymous Reporting Systems (ARS) in schools of all levels (K-12, colleges, public, private, etc.) throughout the United States. This systematic review looked specifically at how ARS played a role in violence prevention and safety initiatives. Results found that there is a significant need for more research in the form of empirical studies as well as more consistent implementation of infrastructure, training and programming.

Learning Outcomes

- » Summarize the importance of Anonymous Reporting Systems in schools.
- » Explain why the recommendations made in the review are important.
- » Compare the recommendations from the systematic review with your school's current reporting system.

Key Takeaways

- ✓ An ARS (such as a tip line or hotline) is one strategy that may encourage students and community members to come forward with information on potential acts of school violence without fear of retaliation.
- ✓ This systematic review looked at studies between 1995 and 2020 to evaluate the effectiveness of ARS in school settings.
- ✓ The studies suggest that ARS have demonstrated effectiveness in schools; however, generalizability may be limited due to variation in school setting, age level, community environment, staffing, and differences in implementation methods.
- ✓ Students often use ARS to report about their own mental health concerns, such as suicidal ideation or self-harm, which suggests that ARS give administrations insight into their school's climate.
- ✓ Studies show that the majority of perpetrators of violence share their plan with at least one other person and that ARS have been successful in a variety of professional settings.
- ✓ The primary takeaway from this systematic review was the need for further research on the impact of ARS in school settings, especially when it comes to students' perceptions of safety. Many states mandate the use of an ARS, but it is not fully clear what the most effective practices are in terms of specific software, procedures, or staff training.

Additional Resources

[Getting Buy-In for Anonymous Reporting Systems](#) - Training on the history and philosophy of ARS, its essential components, and how to effectively adopt and maintain ARS in their schools.

[A Quick Guide to Information Sharing During Threat Reporting and Assessment](#) - Short written resource on when, how, and to whom information reported via ARS or other channels can be shared.

Questions for Discussion

- » What is the purpose of the Anonymous Reporting System at your school? Who should be involved on the response team to accomplish that purpose?
- » How could you motivate students and community members to utilize an Anonymous Reporting System?
- » How can you track the effectiveness of your Anonymous Reporting System?

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