



NEWS RELEASE



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Orange County Law Enforcement Agencies and Educators Partner to Strengthen School Safety

COSTA MESA, CALIFORNIA (July 29, 2014) – In response to the Sandy Hook tragedy and other incidents of violence in the nation, there has been a call to reduce gun violence and protect children and communities. Many agencies have realized the importance of creating safer school climates and have proposed solutions, such as hiring additional school resource officers, counselors and mental health professionals, and promoting collaboration between schools and law enforcement in developing comprehensive emergency plans, which include hands-on training.

Orange County law enforcement agencies and educators have responded to this call to action. The Orange County Intelligence Assessment Center (OCIAC), which is operated by the Orange County Sheriff's Department, and the Orange County Department of Education (OCDE) have launched the **School Assessment Project**, a united effort to collect information from every school in Orange County to ensure the safety of all students. The data being collected includes school emergency plans, evacuation routes, maps, and other details that will be provided to first responders during school emergency situations.

OCIAC is a collaborative effort of eleven public safety agencies including law enforcement, fire and healthcare service that provide resources, expertise and information to detect, prevent and respond to criminal and terrorist activity. OCIAC works closely with local law enforcement agencies and OCDE to collect the data from schools and provides feedback to schools regarding their emergency plans. This collaboration between school officials and local law enforcement strengthens protocols for school safety across the county.

Orange County Superintendent of Schools, Al Mijares, stated, "Student and staff safety is the number one priority at all school events, on campuses, and especially in our classrooms. Therefore, it is our collective responsibility to protect the welfare of our students at all times. We are grateful to OCIAC and the Orange County Sheriff's Department for their willingness to share their expertise and guidance with emergency planning and coordination."

"It is critical for local law enforcement agencies to work in collaboration with our schools in creating emergency plans and performing practice drills," said Orange County Sheriff Sandra Hutchens. "The data collected in the School Assessment Project coupled with mitigation activities offers the best protection for the schools in our county."

Dr. Mijares and Sheriff Hutchens will present two awards recognizing one school administrator and one law enforcement official for outstanding work in integrating the School Assessment Project after the Sheriff's keynote address at the Fifth Annual Safe Schools Conference on Wednesday, July 30, 2014 at 1:00pm.

The Safe Schools Conference focuses on critical issues related to school safety and student well-being, including the connection between school safety and student achievement. Conference topics include dropout prevention, bullying/cyber bullying, gang intervention and prevention, law enforcement and safe schools, legal issues, alcohol and other drugs, building a positive school climate, triage training for nurses, and crisis response. The conference is being held July 30 – August 1 at the Crowne Plaza Anaheim Resort, 12021 Harbor Blvd., Garden Grove, CA, 92840.

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