School Safety

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In response to a rash of violent incidents in schools across the Nation in the late 1990's, Congress created the Safe Schools Initiative and directed NIJ to develop new, more effective safety technologies such as less obtrusive weapons detection and surveillance equipment and information systems that provide communities with quick access to the information they need to identify potentially violent youth. As a result, NIJ has undertaken a number of activities to foster a safe school environment and to complement the nontechnical components of a comprehensive school safety program—namely, planning, policy, and procedures; committed and trained school resource officers and other school security staff; information sharing; and crisis management planning and training.

Iris recognition project. A school in Plumstead, New Jersey, is demonstrating and evaluating a secure access and identification authorization system in a school environment using iris recognition technology. School staff members, faculty, and parents have voluntarily enrolled in this program. Instead of using a key or swipe card to enter the school, participating staff and visitors gain admittance when a device recognizes the unique characteristics of their eyes.

Concealed weapons detection. NIJ developed an improved electromagnetic weapons detection portal that was demonstrated in the New York City school system during 2003. The device improved the ability to detect concealed weapons. Its computer interface pinpointed the location of the weapons, and false positive readings were minimal. Assaults with edged weapons were cut in half after deployment of the portal.

Conflict resolution training. In 2003, NIJ distributed more than 35,000 copies of *Conflict Resolution for School Personnel*, an interactive CD–ROM that helps train school personnel to respond to potentially violent situations such as threats, attacks with weapons, suicide, and weapons on campus. The modules, which can be viewed in any order, are broken down into 12 tutorials (e.g., de-escalating student conflicts, assessing a suicide threat, handling suspected gunshots) and 14 interactive scenarios (e.g., a fight in the library, an Internet hit list, a gun in the cafeteria). The interactive portion presents videos of potentially dangerous situations and asks viewers to select a response from a variety of choices.

For more information:

- For a description of *Conflict Resolution for School Personnel* and order information, go to http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/pubs-sum/194198.htm.

- Other online resources for schools developed by NIJ during 2003 include:

  - School Resource Officer training tool. Developed through an award to Johns Hopkins University, this interactive online training curriculum helps school

resource officers practice the decisionmaking skills they will need to carry out their duties in the school environ-ment. (Online at http://schoolsafetynet.jhu.edu.)

☐ School Critical Incident Plan-ning Resource Directory. The National Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology Center has collected online resources intended to help law enforce-ment and school personnel with preparation for, response to, and resolution of a school critical incident. (Online at http://www.nlectc.org/assistance/schoolsafety.html.)