



NEWS RELEASE



Contacts: Arthur Cummins, Ed.D.
Administrator
Orange County Department of Education
714-327-1071

Lt. Jeff Hallock
Public Information Officer
Orange County Sheriff's Department
714-904-7042

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

COSTA MESA, CALIFORNIA (July 29, 2013) – In response to the Sandy Hook tragedy and other incidents of violence in the nation, there has been a call to protect children and create safer school climates. Proposed solutions include, 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) 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, which is led by the Orange County Sheriff's Department, is a collaborative effort of eleven public safety entities including law enforcement, fire, and healthcare services that provide resources, expertise, and information to detect, prevent, and respond to criminal and terrorist activity. OCIAC will work closely with local law enforcement partners and OCDE to collect data from schools, and feedback will be provided regarding their emergency plans. This collaboration between school officials and local law enforcement will strengthen protocols for school safety across the county.

Orange County Superintendent of Schools, Al Mijares, stated, "Students, families, and school staff have a right to expect their schools to be safe havens. Safe school environments are our number one priority and 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 Assistant Sheriff Mark Billings will announce this unprecedented partnership between law enforcement and schools at the Fourth Annual Safe Schools Conference on August 1, 2013 at 11:30 a.m.

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 31 – August 2 at the Crowne Plaza Anaheim Resort, 12021 Harbor Blvd., Garden Grove, CA, 92840.

###