

Office of the Governor

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NEWS RELEASE

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RELEASE: September 22, 1999

Governor Visits "Teens First" After-School Program Discusses Role of State in Preventing Youth Violence

Gov. Christie Whitman today visited Long Branch Middle School's "Teens First", an after-school program geared at helping middle school students develop the skills they need to resolve conflicts and avoid situations involving drugs and violence.

The Governor told students about a new program aimed at helping students prevent violence and keep it out of their schools and their communities. The V-Free initiative announced by the Governor earlier this month, creates a tip line, 1-877-624-8082, for students to call when they are concerned about a potentially dangerous situation. A website, , is also available to provide resource information for students, teachers and parents. In addition, \$75,000 will be made available to help students get involved in the effort to prevent violence.

"Every one of the students in this room can help make a difference," the Governor said. "You can take responsibility for your actions. You can turn away from drugs and put your own future first. And you can help your peers understand that violence is never the solution to our problems."

"Teens First", operated by Substance Abuse Resources, is a component of the non-profit's Strengthening Families Program. The Strengthening Families Program is a substance abuse prevention program administered throughout Monmouth County. The program receives a \$350,000 annual grant from the Department of Health and Senior Service's Division of Addiction Services' Prevention Unit.

Featuring interactive activities such as role-playing, art and games, the program seeks to promote healthy attitudes and behaviors among the middle school students who participate. In addition, the 32-week program helps students recognize anger and teaches them constructive problem solving strategies.

Keeping Kids Safe Governor Christie Whitman's Initiatives to Reduce Youth Violence

Intervention and Referral Services Project

This initiative, developed by the Department of Education was designed the to help schools develop more effective intervention programs. Every New Jersey school is already required to provide intervention services; this program will help ensure that these services meet the needs of students.

Gun Locks

Governor Whitman has placed \$175,000 in the state budget to help new gun owners pay for gun locks to eliminate children's access to weapons. The Governor has also proposed legislation to require that every gun sold in New Jersey either have smart gun technology or a gun lock.

Tip Sheets for Recognizing Violence

Prepared by the Violence Institute, the tip sheet tells teachers, parents, and other students what patterns can signal potentially violent tendencies and what actions should be taken when a student exhibits them.

School Search Manual

Regarded by the National School Boards Association as one of the best resources available to help school officials keep guns and dangerous weapons out of schools.

Safe Schools Initiative

This program helps prevent violence, disruption, and drug and alcohol abuse in schools. It includes the Zero Tolerance for Guns Act, which the Governor signed to require the immediate removal of students who bring weapons to school, and the development of countywide alternative education programs as a way to keep disruptive or violent students in school but away from other students whose education was being disturbed.

Uniform Emergency and Trauma Protocol

A Uniform Emergency and Trauma Protocol is being developed for the young victims of violence. By reaching out to young victims or witnesses of violence, further violent behavior can be discouraged.

Crisis Intervention Units

The Crisis Intervention Units in each of the 21 county Family Courts will be expanded to include jurisdiction over children who are identified as being at risk for behaving violently, under a proposal offered by Gov. Whitman

Commission to Deter Criminal Activity

Governor Whitman reactivated this Commission under the direction of the Attorney General, which is developing a peer-based violence prevention program. The Attorney General is also encouraging school officials to work with law enforcement agencies to ensure that our schools are safe places for our children to learn.

School Based Youth Services

These programs operate in 30 New Jersey school districts and are run by the Department of Human Services. The School Based Youth Services Program has a proactive approach that attempts to reach kids before it is too late. The program provides comprehensive services directly at the school sites. One aspect of the program is a new approach that involves kids building a "fight-free" school. Called

SAVVY for "Students Against Violence and Victimization of Youth," it has resulted in a 93% reduction in the number of fights in one participating school. (Essex Vo-Tech in Newark)

Children's Mental Health System of Care

The Department of Human Services is developing a Children's Mental Health System of Care initiative, a major reform of our state's system for dealing with children with serious emotional disturbance. This initiative will help us to manage our current mental health and child welfare services more effectively and to expand the range of services available for children and families. It will close gaps in the current system and give families real options when they need them most.

Center for Youth Policy and Programs

This initiative will provide resources for agencies and organizations that foster personal responsibility among youth. The Center will establish a statewide youth advisory commission, with representatives from such organizations as the New Jersey Youth Corps and the Work Incentive Board youth councils. It will also develop a youth leadership training institute, a mentor program, and a best-practices component that will spotlight successful youth programs.

