Characteristics Of Youth Who Have Caused School-Associated Violent Deaths

After tracking and studying school-associated violent deaths in the United States from July 1992 to the present and common characteristics of youth who have caused such deaths, NSSF has identified the following behaviors, which could indicate a youth's potential for harming him/herself or others. Accounts of these tragic incidents repeatedly indicate that in most cases, a troubled youth has demonstrated or has talked to others about problems with bullying and feelings of isolation, anger, depression and frustration. While there is no foolproof system for identifying potentially dangerous students who may harm themselves and/or others, this checklist should provide you with a good starting point.

1. ____ Has a history of tantrums and uncontrollable angry outbursts.
2. ____ Characteristically resorts to name calling, cursing or abusive language.
3. ____ Habitually makes violent threats when angry.
4. ____ Has previously brought a weapon to school.
5. ____ Has a background of serious disciplinary problems at school and in the community.
6. ____ Has a background of drug, alcohol or other substance abuse or dependency.
7. ____ Is on the fringe of his/her peer group with few or no close friends.
8. ____ Is preoccupied with weapons, explosives or other incendiary devices.
9. ____ Has previously been truant, suspended or expelled from school.
10. ____ Displays cruelty to animals.
11. ____ Has little or no supervision and support from parents or a caring adult.
12. ____ Has witnessed or been a victim of abuse or neglect in the home.
13. ____ Has been bullied and/or bullies or intimidates peers or younger children.
14. ____ Tends to blame others for difficulties and problems s/he caused her/himself.
15. ____ Consistently prefers TV shows, movies or music expressing violent themes and acts
16. ____ Prefers reading materials dealing with violent themes, rituals and abuse.
17. ____ Reflects anger, frustration and the dark side of life in school essays or writing projects.
18. ____ Is involved with a gang or an antisocial group on the fringe of peer acceptance.
19. ____ Is often depressed and/or has significant mood swings.
20. ____ Has threatened or attempted suicide.

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