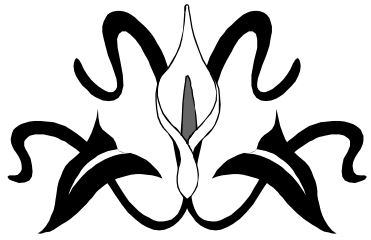


SDFS NOTES

OCTOBER 1997

VOLUME 1, ISSUE #4

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
DIVISION OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION
BUREAU OF INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT AND COMMUNITY SERVICES
SAFE SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITY SERVICES SECTION



The School Environmental Safety Incident Reporting (SESIR) System, the topic of this issue of SDFS Notes, collects data in every Florida school on school crime and violence. It was designed for the purpose of securing accurate and uniform data across schools. Since the SESIR System is a relatively recent development, most schools and districts are still learning how to use it appropriately. For a copy of the *1996-97 School Safety Report, SESIR System Handbook*, contact the Safe and Drug-Free Schools office at (850) 488-6304, SunCom 278-6304.

This issue of *SDFS Notes* provides a questionnaire to help Florida educators to identify problems and improve the quality of their district's SESIR data collection system. It addresses common problems faced by schools and districts in the implementation and use of the system. Use this report as a foundation for achieving a quality SESIR process.

The following are the 21 types of incidents that **are required to be reported** on the SESIR:

- alcohol
- arson
- battery
- breaking and entering/burglary
- disorderly conduct
- drugs, except alcohol
- fighting
- homicide
- kidnapping
- larceny / theft
- motor vehicle theft
- robbery
- sexual battery
- sexual harassment
- sex offenses
- threat / intimidation
- tobacco
- trespassing
- vandalism
- weapon possession
- other major offenses

On the following pages are some questions to help districts and schools identify the strengths and weaknesses of their data system. Put a checkmark by the appropriate **yes/no** response.



Assessing Overall District Support for SESIR

Yes No

- Has your superintendent made it clear that SESIR data is important to collect and must be collected honestly and **accurately**?
- Have contact people been assigned to oversee revisions and to respond to questions from schools?
- Is **one** person responsible for answering questions about the SESIR computer system and data elements?
- Is a **different** person responsible for clarifying definitions and answering questions on how to report an incident?
- Is a **uniform** referral form and reporting process being used at every school for accurate collection of SESIR data?
- Does every school have a copy of the *School Safety Report, SESIR System Handbook* and all forms needed for data collection?
- Does every school receive regular SESIR system updates?
- Have all school and district staff been fully trained on the SESIR system?
- Are data available for school staff to review during the data review period in October?
- Are all 21 types of SESIR incidents included in your **Student Code of Conduct**?
- Do definitions for SESIR match definitions in the Code of Conduct? *While determining this match, the district should be certain that required actions are spelled out in the Code of Conduct for all Zero Tolerance type incidents. Actions are based on the Zero Tolerance Rule. The district should also review measures being taken to implement the new tobacco and weapons laws. (See page eight for citations of these statutes.)*



Assessing Overall District Data

Examine the reported incidents on the district's SESIR summary page. It will be highly unlikely that a district will have zero incidents in the categories of fighting, disorderly conduct, and tobacco; however, if all columns contain zeros, then there are probably errors in the reporting. One way to address such error problems would be for district officials to meet with those individuals from the various schools who input data, as well as those who supervise the school's data entry process. (See *Developing a SESIR Advisory Group* on page six of this issue of 'Notes.')



Reviewing incidents on your district SESIR summary page

Yes No

- Are there any incident type columns in which no incidents have been reported? *(These will have zeros in the incident column.)* Are these entries reasonable, given general awareness of events that took place during the past school year?
- When looking at the incident types, do the numbers reported for each type seem reasonable, given general awareness of events that took place in your district during the past year? *(One year, for example, a large district reported only three fights for the entire school year. For another year, a small district of six schools reported 300 sex offenses.)*
- Given general awareness of events during the past year, were all major incidents, such as homicide or kidnapping, reported accurately and consistently?
- Do data accurately reflect major events that received media coverage, such as arson, sexual battery, acts of violence and/or drugs at school?
- Are there any columns, other than incident type columns, in which no incidents have been reported? If so, are these columns accurate?



Comparing across columns of data on the summary page

How can a district check its data for accuracy on reported incidents? One way is to compare columns on the summary page to see whether the incidents that were considered very serious by school officials were reported to police. If such an infraction does not appear in both columns, it may be that an incident was erroneously reported. *For example, last year a district reported three kidnappings in its SESIR data, yet none was reported to police. After a further check of the data, these three kidnappings never happened and were reported in error.*

Yes No

- Looking at your district's summary page, does the "incidents reported" column match the "reported to police" column for the most serious incidents, including:

- | | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| • arson | • kidnapping | • sex offenses |
| • battery | • motor vehicle theft | • threat / intimidation |
| • breaking and entering | • robbery | • trespassing |
| • drugs | • larceny / theft | • vandalism |
| • homicide | • sexual battery | • firearms possession |



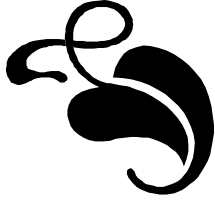
Comparing SESIR data with other available data

Yes No

- Do reported incidents reflect expulsions during the school year? Most expulsions should be based on incidents that are reported in SESIR. Review expulsion records, determine reason for expulsion, and check against reported SESIR incidents.
- Do data across a sample of schools look similar?
- When comparing elementary to elementary, middle to middle, and high to high, is there uniformity between number and type of incidents across schools? *Note: If there is a school with an unusually high number of incidents, this school might then be targeted for special assistance.*
- When comparing data from districts with similar student and community populations, are the data reported similar in type and number of incidents? Watch for large discrepancies. *One district, for example, may report three fights during the year and a similar district may have reported 1500.*
- Do SESIR data match suspension data? For the most part, reported SESIR incidents reflect offenses that require in-school or out-of-school suspension.
- Do SESIR school incident data match arrest reports from your School Resource Officers or local law enforcement?

REMINDER: The SESIR System requires schools to report on the 21 major types of serious safety incidents that may occur during the year on school grounds, all 365 days of the year and 24 hours a day, even if a student is not involved or the offender is unknown; incidents that occur on all school transportation; and incidents when a student is involved that occur at off-campus school-sponsored events. If several actions like threats or battery occur during a single incident, schools are to report the most serious action, as defined by the specific rank ordered list found on page 102 of the School Safety Report, SESIR System Handbook.

New laws have changed what exactly will be reported to police. All incidents that are considered to be against the law and that occur under school supervision must be reported to law enforcement. All controlled substance incidents, including alcohol as well as tobacco, must be reported. (See page eight of this issue of "SDFS Notes" for citation of these new statutes.)



Assessing the SESIR

System in Each School

Surveying schools and school staff about problems in data collection and reporting

Yes No

- Do schools report ease in the data collection process?
 Do teachers and administrators think the school data are accurate?

Examining the collection process

Yes No

- Is there a standard district-wide form being used to collect required information on incidents?
 Are administrators (preferably those in charge of discipline) the ones deciding on what incident to code and what additional information should be collected on the incident?
 Are all administrators in the district in agreement on definitions, coding, and data collection?
 Are the data entered based on decisions of the administrator and not on the decisions of other staff who may have made the referral, reported the incident, or entered the data?
 Is data entry of incident information done at each individual school?
 Is data entry of incident information done at least monthly?
 Is the person entering data trained in the SESIR reporting system?
 Are **all** the data collected at each school? This includes all 21 types of incidents as well as the context of the incident, such as whether the incident was gang-related or if it involved a student or non-student.

If you have answered “yes” to all of the questions on this worksheet, data collection in your district is probably consistent. Most Florida educators, however, are still refining their use of the SESIR system and may use this questionnaire as a guide. Once specific problems are identified in data quality, decisions need to be made on ways to resolve these problems. These efforts are best approached through a comprehensive, district-wide process.

REMINDER: Along with the incident type, schools must report the following information for each incident:

- Incident date
- School where incident occurred
- Incident location: school grounds, off-campus school-sponsored activity, or school-sponsored transportation
- Whether the incident occurred during or outside of school hours and at a school-sponsored or non-school sponsored activity
- Whether the offender was a student, non-student, both, or unknown
- Whether the incident was reported to law enforcement
- Whether the incident was gang-related
- Whether the incident involved some type of weapon
- Type of weapon: firearm, firearm component or attachment, explosive, incendiary or poison gas, knife, other weapon, unknown weapon
- Whether the incident was alcohol-related
- Whether the incident was drug-related
- Whether the incident was hate crime-related



Developing a SESIR Advisory Group

When officials in a district determine that errors in reporting have occurred, they should consider the development of a SESIR Advisory Group. Following are outlined steps that a district could follow in the organization of such a group or committee:



Membership of the advisory group:

- * District staff in charge of school safety
- * District staff overseeing discipline/code of conduct
- * District information systems staff overseeing SESIR
- * Representatives from all school levels within the district, including at least two schools from each level. Include school personnel who enter data, administrators who oversee data entry, administrators in charge of discipline, and SROs.

In choosing participating schools, invite a mixture of those doing quality data reporting with those who need special assistance with reporting. Principals and other representatives from schools that are not following guidelines or not collecting data at all, should be invited as members. If the district has fifteen or fewer schools, invite representatives from all schools. Remember that each school -- elementary, middle, and high - has very different issues, and each -- may need to develop separate processes for data collection.



Important Issues for advisory group discussion:

- The purpose of data collection
- The need for consistency in collection (*Remind participants of state and local needs and requirements.*)
- The process of collection. (*Discuss the current process used to collect data - use of forms, decisions for coding, data entry, etc. Remind participants that **all the key data elements** listed in SESIR need to be collected.*)



Decisions to be made by the advisory group on “Elements of Collection”:

- Type of process that will be used to collect **all** the elements.
- Specific administrator who will collect information and decide what offenses to code.
- Meanings of each definition at each school level. *Stakeholders should agree on which definitions the SROs will determine and which the school will determine. They should agree on how to define incidents where SRO/police may not be involved. For example, there are different levels of fighting, the most serious of which should be reported through SESIR. Minor pushing and shoving -- common to elementary schools -- should not be coded as a fight. In all probability, taunting words by a first grader would not be sexual harassment, but the same or a similar act could be a more serious offense when spoken by an older child. Elementary schools should discuss issues of age and development and how they relate to various incidents.*
- Plan of action to resolve identified problems.
- Date for a district-wide SESIR training; administrator to conduct the training; and items to be on the agenda.



Training School Personnel in SESIR



District-wide training

When district leadership is committed to the concept and consensus is reached, a comprehensive, area-wide or district-wide training can follow. The training should follow the issues that have been outlined. If at all possible and schedules permit, the SESIR training should begin with an opening presentation by the Superintendent of Schools or a designee. It is imperative that the district leadership express a commitment to quality data collection and honest, accurate reporting.

*Madison County SDFS Coordinator, Monteze Walker, can vouch for the benefits of a SESIR training session. Madison County has seven schools and prior to the training, each school was "doing its own thing." Walker says that, "last year's data offered an **unclear** picture of what was going on in our district. Principals left coding up to data entry personnel and each school was collecting data in its own way." Walker offered a training by FIE/SDFS personnel in which principals learned that those in charge of discipline, not data entry personnel, must make decisions about coding. Walker states, "After the training, things really changed. We made sure our Student Code of Conduct incidents matched the SESIR System Handbook incidents. This, along with other changes, is making our data much more reliable."*

For information on the new reporting laws, see:

- **CS/HB 1309 crime & substance abuse reporting -s. 230.235, F.S.,**
- **Reporting controlled substances -- s. 232.277, F.S., amended;**
- **Weapons definition expanded -- s. 790.115, F.S., amended.**
- **CS/HBs 845/1255: penalties/reporting of tobacco products – s. 569.11, F.S., created, s. 569.101 & s. 569.12, F.S., amended.**

For more information or for technical support and assistance on the SESIR system, contact: the FIE/Safe and Drug-Free School Project Office, (850)414-9976, SunCom 994-9976; Cathy Hammond, FIE/SDFS, (850)414-0235, Suncom 994-0235; or Andy Roberts, (850)487-2282.

If you would like to be placed on the mailing list to receive **SDFS Notes**, write, call, email your request to the address in the box below.

Florida Safe and Drug-Free Schools Project
Florida Institute of Education / University of North Florida
320 Blount Street, Suite 410-411
Tallahassee, Florida 32301

FIE Staff

<i>John Masterson</i>	<i>Project Director</i>	<i>(850) 414-0233</i>
<i>Leonard Everett</i>	<i>Senior Program Manager</i>	<i>(850) 414-9978</i>
<i>Cathy Hammond</i>	<i>Program Manager</i>	<i>(850) 414-0235</i>
<i>Maureen Rogers</i>	<i>Project Coordinator</i>	<i>(850) 414-0234</i>
<i>Melissa Hatch</i>	<i>Resource Librarian</i>	<i>(850) 414-0236</i>
<i>TBA</i>	<i>Executive Secretary</i>	<i>(850) 414-9976</i>

FAX Number: (850) 414-9979

The SunCom Prefix for 414 is 994 for fax or regular numbers.

Visit the FIE/SDFS WebSite at <http://www.unf.edu/dept/fie/sdfs/>
(Staff can be reached by email at the WebSite.)