



The State of Illinois is launching a school safety program called Safe2Help Illinois in an effort to raise awareness of the 21<sup>st</sup> century threats facing schoolchildren in Illinois.

**Mission:**

In the absence of a trusted adult, Safe2Help Illinois will offer students a safe, confidential way in which to share information that might help prevent suicides, bullying, school violence or other threats to school safety. This program is not intended to suspend, expel or punish students.

Rather, the goal is to get students to “Seek Help Before Harm.”

Safe2Help Illinois will also develop an educational curriculum aimed at changing the culture in Illinois schools while also providing the resources to help parents and educators reinforce the components of this program.

**About Safe2Help:**

Safe2Help Illinois is a 24/7 program where students can use a free app, text/phone, website (Safe2HelpIllinois.com) and other social media platforms to report school safety issues in a confidential environment. Once vetted, the tips will immediately be shared with local school officials, mental health professionals and/or local law enforcement, depending on the nature of the tip. The program also will help local officials by connecting them with mental health resources or other appropriate resources to intervene and help students before they harm themselves or others.

In visiting with other states that have implemented similar programs, we found the two most common tips have been threats of suicide and bullying. We believe we will see similar results based on the following statistics:

- 47,000 Illinois students reported attempting suicide in 2015.
- Nearly 100 Illinois youth (age 10-19) died by suicide in 2015.
- 2 in 10 Illinois students report being bullied.
- Students who are bullied are twice as likely to attempt suicide.

Similar school safety programs in other states have been assessed as effective in helping prevent acts of school violence. In fact, on the first day of Nevada's program, a tip successfully thwarted a potential school attack.



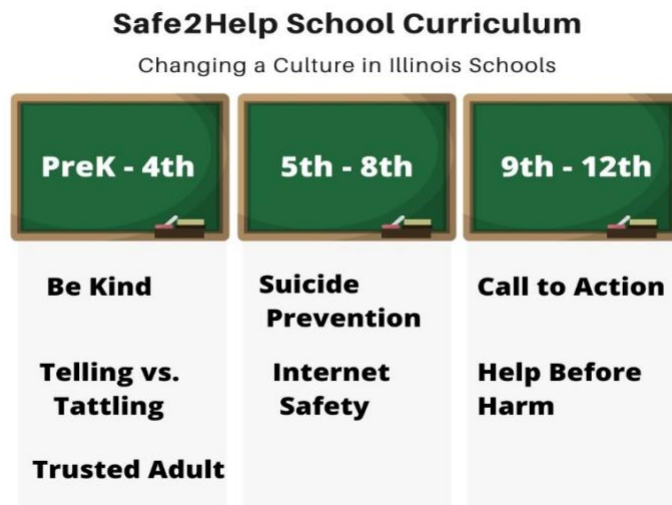
According to the Federal Bureau of Investigations, in 85-percent of mass shootings that occurred, someone knew something before the event took place. These signs range from social media posting to observed signs of distress.



Within the last 15 years, in almost every case of a mass school shooting committed by a student in the United States, after action reports indicate at least one other student knew something might happen and did not come forward for a variety of reasons.

### Changing the Culture:

This is a long-term initiative to change the school culture in Illinois. By providing a recommended educational curriculum as early as preschool, we hope to remove the stigma associated with mental health issues, foster a culture of kindness, and instill important lessons such as the difference between telling and tattling, internet safety, and suicide prevention.



### Marketing:

The Illinois Terrorism Task Force is working with the University of Illinois Springfield to develop a series of online videos that can be used in a social media/online campaign targeted to middle and high school age students. Additional spots will be developed through a partnership with Illinois Broadcasters Association to target adults and educators.