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Departments of Education and Public Safety Provide Resource to Help Protect Students

COLUMBUS, Ohio – A new safety resource is available to Ohio Schools that could prevent and alert local law enforcement to a school safety crisis. This resource – an anonymous tip line – is available free of charge to every school district and school in Ohio beginning today.

At the request of Gov. John Kasich, the Ohio Department of Education and the Ohio Department of Public Safety are launching the SaferOH tip line that will accept both calls and texts 24 hours a day for schools that register for the service.

This tip line will allow students and adults to anonymously share information with school officials and law enforcement about threats to student safety—whether that involves a threatened mass incident or harm to a single student.

“The safety of our boys and girls remains the top priority of our schools,” said Superintendent of Public Instruction Richard A. Ross. “The SaferOH tip line provides another resource for schools and school districts in their continuing efforts to provide a safe and secure educational environment.”

Research shows that in 81 percent of violent incidents in U.S. schools, someone other than the attacker knew something was occurring or was about to occur but failed to report it. Typically, that’s because the person who knew something feared being a ‘snitch’ or becoming the target of the attacker or bully as well.

Every tip can remain anonymous. School safety analysts may ask for additional information, but the caller can remain secret or leave his or her contact information for later follow-up.

“Nothing is more important than keeping our children safe,” said John Born, director of the Department of Public Safety. “This tip line is another tool, to fill the gap in areas where no line exists, that will allow children, parents and teachers to contribute to the safety of their schools.”

Calls or texts to *844-SaferOH* (844-723-3764) are answered by analysts in the Ohio Homeland Security’s Threat Assessment and Prevention (TAP) Unit. When action is needed, the TAP Unit immediately forwards information to local school officials, local law enforcement agencies and others, if necessary.

TAP Unit analysts always follow up quickly with the affected school and law enforcement agencies to make sure that the incident is investigated, action is taken and the outcome is tracked.

The assurance that their calls or texts cannot be traced and that serious, proper action will be taken to end the threat is helping to persuade young people to take a stand against school violence.

"The Ohio departments of Education and Public Safety are to be commended for implementing their new statewide tip line," said Dr. Ronald D. Stephens, executive director, National School Safety Center. "Tip lines are a positive and proactive way to support safe schools for all children. They acknowledge the key roles that students and community members play in promoting safe schools.

"Public awareness of tip lines can also provide a deterrent effect that may preclude acts of crime and violence from occurring by providing an early warning notice to responsible adults, linking victims or potential victims with a network of protective services to support the safety of all children and those professionals who serve them," Stephens added.

Schools can sign-up for the free tip line at saferschools.ohio.gov.