

***Statewide Report on  
School Safety and  
Discipline Data  
2002-2003***



**Florida Department of Education  
Division of Public Schools  
Bureau of Student Assistance  
Office of Safe and Healthy Schools  
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For additional information on this publication, contact the Office of Safe and Healthy Schools, Florida Department of Education, Room 501 Turlington Building, Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0400.

Telephone: (850) 245-0416

FAX: (850) 245-9978

Suncom: 205-0416

E-mail: [sdfs@fldoe.org](mailto:sdfs@fldoe.org)

## INTRODUCTION

In public schools across America, students thrive and learn in an environment that is free of crime and violence. Students report that they feel safe when they perceive discipline to be fair and consistent across the school, and when teachers are caring and helpful. With consideration to several tragic, violent, events that occurred in our nations schools, ensuring the safety of students within Florida schools is as important as providing students with a quality education. Therefore, one of the goals of the Florida Department of Education (DOE) is to develop and implement safety and security measures that will help schools continue to provide safe and secure learning environments. One of the tools developed to help districts with data assessment and evaluation when planning for school safety is the publication, Statewide Report on School Safety and Discipline Data.

Now, more than ever, data play a pivotal role in the planning for school safety by assisting in the identification of potential or existing safety problems within schools. Since the 1995-1996 school year, DOE has annually collected data on 21 incidents of crime, violence, and disruptive behavior through the *School Environmental Safety Incident Report (SESIR)* system. SESIR, as it is commonly identified, collects incident data that occur on school grounds, school transportation, and at off-campus, school-sponsored events during any 24-hour period, 365 days per year. Incidents are reported to SESIR whether individuals are students, non-students, or if the offender is unknown. DOE also collects annual data on the types and number of discipline actions administered when students violate school or district rules. The three reported discipline actions are In-School Suspensions, Out-of-School Suspensions, and Expulsions. Data are reported statewide and by district.

Specifically, this publication summarizes the most recent three years of SESIR and Discipline data that were reported to DOE by the 67 school districts in Florida. Under State totals, the following are provided:

- The “SESIR Incident Summaries” includes "Time of Incidents," "Persons Involved," "Location of Incidents," and "Number and Percent of Schools Reporting No SESIR Incidents."
- “SESIR Totals” includes student population, raw totals of each of the 21 incidents as well as the number of incidents per 1,000 students. (This provides a means of standardizing for comparisons with state average and other districts.)
- “SESIR Totals: Trends by Categories” includes a trend analysis of the SESIR data over a period of three school years for incidents grouped in categories.

- Discipline Data includes data for the past three school years, 2000-2001, 2001-2002, and 2002-2003, and disaggregated by gender and race for each of the school levels: elementary, middle and high. The report identifies the total number of disciplinary actions per school level, gender and race, as well as the number and percent of individual students who have been suspended or expelled one or more times. This allows for comparisons among levels and by gender and race for further analysis.

The student population numbers that are provided in this report are from *Survey 5 Demographics* which provides a cumulative count of all the students served in a given school year. The SESIR and Discipline data provided and discussed are also collected in *Survey 5* and are a cumulative record of all the incidents in the respective years. The SESIR data for the 2000-2001 school year is current as of November 2001, for the 2001-2002 as of November, 2002, and for 2002-2003 as of December, 2003.

### SESIR Incidents and Related Elements

As previously stated, the SESIR system collects data on 21 incidents of crime, violence, and disruptive behavior that occur in schools or on school grounds, transportation, or at school-sponsored events. Below, the incidents have been divided into categories based on incident characteristics.

#### ⇒ **Violent Acts Against Persons**

1. *Homicide*
2. *Sexual Battery*
3. *Robbery*
4. *Battery*
5. *Kidnapping*

#### ⇒ **Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drugs**

6. *Drugs*
7. *Alcohol*
8. *Tobacco*

#### ⇒ **Property**

9. *Breaking/Entering*
10. *Larceny/Theft*
11. *Motor Vehicle Theft*
12. *Arson*
13. *Vandalism*

- ⇒            **Harassment**  
                 14. *Threat/Intimidation*  
                 15. *Sexual Harassment*
- ⇒            **Other Non-Violent Incidents**  
                 16. *Sexual Offense*  
                 17. *Trespassing*  
                 18. *Other Major*
- ⇒            **Incidents Not Categorized**  
                 19. *Fighting*  
                 20. *Disorderly Conduct*  
                 21. *Weapons Possession*

Following the 1998-1999 school year, the SESIR incident definitions were revised to better define the incidents and help schools correctly identify the incidents. These new definitions were effective for the 1999-2000 school year. Subsequent revisions were made in 2001 to refine the definitions and provide additional examples and non-examples of the 21 incidents. These definitions and guidelines may be found on the Office of Safe and Healthy Schools web page <http://www.firn.edu/doe/besss/discipline.htm>

In addition to the 21 incident types, SESIR also collects five data elements that may be associated with the incidents. These elements describe whether external factors from one of the following areas are related to the incident:

- Gang-Related
- Alcohol-Related
- Drug-Related
- Hate-Crime Related
- Weapon-Related

These related elements allow SESIR incidents to be described more comprehensively. For example, during a *Battery* incident in which a knife was used and the student was also under the influence of alcohol, the incident would be reported as *Battery*, *Weapon-related* and *Alcohol-related*. This coding method provides a more accurate depiction of the related elements that often occur with SESIR incidents. The weapon-related incidents also ask for schools to enter a description of the weapon. It is especially important that guns or other firearms are accurately coded as this information is used to substantiate Federal Gun-Free Schools violations for the federal *Gun-Free Schools Act* annual report.

The following are the weapon definitions schools use as part of the Comprehensive Management Information System:

Code	Code Definition
F	Firearm, Other
H	Handgun
R	Rifle or Shotgun
K	Knife
O	Other Weapon
U	Unknown weapon
Z	Not Applicable

In addition to the five related elements, other specific details about SESIR incidents are also collected. These include the following:

- *Type of Offender*—Student or Non-student.
- *Time of Day*—During School Hours or After School Hours.
- *Type of Weapon Involved*—Firearm, Handgun, Knife, Other Weapon, Rifle or Shotgun, or Unknown Weapon.

Collectively, these descriptive elements provide an inclusive picture of the various types of incidents that occur in schools.

### SESIR Data Quality

The National Center for Education Statistics has previously recognized the SESIR system as a model for school safety data collection.<sup>1</sup> Although the system has been nationally recognized, the data continue to be based on subjective decisions and interpretations made by administrators at the school level. Thus, caution must be exercised in the interpretation and application of SESIR data. Threats to data validity that have been identified include the inaccurate and inconsistent application of incident definitions, over and under-reporting of SESIR data, and variations within the formats utilized by districts to record SESIR incidents.

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Education. National Center for Education Statistics. *Recommendation of the Crime, Violence and Discipline Reporting Task Force*, NCES 97-581, prepared by the National Education Statistics Agenda Committee: 1996.

The Department of Education is aware of these concerns with the SESIR system and has, over the past several years, developed and delivered training courses to school district personnel throughout the state. The training courses were designed to help schools and districts become more knowledgeable of the SESIR incident definitions and to develop more accurate and consistent data reporting. In addition, DOE developed a training CD-ROM that provides interactive instruction on SESIR incident reporting requirements. The CD-ROM includes details about the SESIR incidents and definitions, examples of how and when to code SESIR incidents, video clips that illustrate incidents and proper coding procedures, and a self-assessment test that evaluates users on their knowledge of the SESIR system. This CD-ROM was disseminated to school districts before the 2000-2001 school year to assist in improving the knowledge and skills of school-level personnel who identify and report SESIR incidents. Since 2002, a revised version has been distributed as requested. A poster summarizing the incident definitions and the incidents which require reporting to law enforcement is also available as a job aid upon request to the Office of Safe and Healthy Schools.

The SESIR data and categories provided in this report will differ slightly from that which is reported in the *Florida School Indicators Report (FSIR)*. The *FSIR* provides incident data for the elementary, middle, and high schools in categories only, so it is not possible to view data on individual incidents at this site <http://info.doe.state.fl.us/fsir/>. Total incident numbers may differ from the *Statewide Report on School Safety and Discipline Data* because of different capture dates. These reports are based on data as of a particular date. The Statewide report has historically used a November/December date to allow districts to make modifications/corrections, where the *FSIR* is based on an earlier fall date.

### SESIR Data Interpretation

When examining the data contained in this report, caution should be exercised if making comparisons between school districts. Numerous social and environmental factors, such as the size of the district population, can significantly impact SESIR data between districts. The number of incidents may vary among districts due to differing interpretations of incident definitions, varying levels of consistency with which schools report incidents, and variation in the amount and level of training provided to school personnel who report SESIR incidents.

It is extremely difficult, and not recommended, to make general comparisons of SESIR data from one district to another without taking into context other social factors and variables which are not provided in this report. It is important to recognize that the information contained in this report should not be misconstrued to imply that districts that reported fewer incidents have safer schools. The purpose of this report is to simply provide the SESIR and discipline data that were reported to DOE by the 67 Florida school districts; it is not to use

the data to formulate assumptions to draw conclusions about the safety within schools. Any further interpretation regarding the safety and security of Florida schools using this report is not advised.