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NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Office of School Safety Highlights Critical Incident Response Techniques

MADISON, Wis. – The Wisconsin Department of Justice Office of School Safety (OSS) plays an integral part in supporting Wisconsin schools during all phases of crisis response and recovery. When schools are impacted by traumatic events, such as the sudden death of a student, a bomb threat, a school shooting, staff misconduct, etc., school leaders are often looked to for the answers about how to respond efficiently and effectively. OSS provides guidance and support to schools faced with these challenges.

“The Office of School Safety ensures that support is available for students and staff impacted by crises,” said Attorney General Josh Kaul. “These services can be an integral part of re-establishing stability in a school community and helping kids get back to learning.”

Since September 2020, OSS has aided in more than 150 school critical incidents around the state. While there is no one-sized solution to all crisis events, OSS helps to guide a school’s crisis team through the steps from preparing in advance of a crisis, responding during the initial crisis, to implementing interventions that lead to successful recovery.

Should a crisis impact a school community, OSS is available to consult with school leadership and/or crisis teams to determine best practice response and recovery interventions. OSS strives to work with the school community to identify the needs of the community and respond with the right level of support, meeting the physical

and psychological security needs, to return to a safe learning environment as quickly as possible.

Types of interventions provided by OSS are determined by the needs of the community but could include:

- caregiver trainings for staff
- information and resources for staff and parents
- ongoing support and consultation to leadership teams
- aid in planning social support activities
- guidance for small group and individual interventions
- assistance in carefully designing interventions and communication after a suicide to decrease contagion

In addition, OSS has created and trained 12 regional Critical Incident Response Teams throughout Wisconsin. These teams are prepared and can be deployed when requested to aid any school experiencing a crisis. Each of Wisconsin's 12 Cooperative Educational Service Agencies has also been equipped with social support toolkits to aid in the implementation of social support interventions in response to a crisis.

About the Office of School Safety

OSS provides programs that are crucial for protecting educational staff and students. In 2020, OSS launched Speak Up, Speak Out (SUSO), a 24/7 statewide confidential reporting system free to all Wisconsin schools. It provides a single point of contact for reporting concerns before violence can occur. Learn more at speakup.wisconsin.gov.

OSS also offers a variety of free trainings concerning violence prevention, protection, mitigation, crisis response, and recovery. These include trainings for Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management (BTAM), Standard Response Protocol (SRP), and the Standard Reunification Method (SRM). OSS offers regional trainings to communities that request it.

About Office of School Safety Funding

In 2024, Gov. Tony Evers signed Assembly Bill 1050 into law, which provides bridge funding for the Office of School Safety to continue its school safety initiatives in Wisconsin through September 2025. This bridge funding will allow the state to potentially provide stable funding for the OSS as part of the 2025-2027 biennial budget. While this bridge funding has allowed OSS to continue its success in keeping students and teachers safe, long-term funding is still needed.

