

Glendale Unified School District
Student Support Services

HELP A FRIEND FACT SHEET

November 22, 2006

What is Help A Friend?

In 2001, the Glendale Unified School District developed a referral process for students, staff, and parents to provide information to a school about a concern for a student's safety. It was in place at all the schools in the Glendale High School "Cluster" which included Roosevelt Middle School, Edison, Cerritos, Mann, Muir, and Marshall Elementary Schools. The "Help A Friend" referral forms were available in areas where students, staff, and parents could easily obtain them. After completion, the form was to be placed in a sealed envelope and given to the clerk in the Assistant Principal's Office. The information was kept in the strictest confidence and the clerical and administrative staff were trained on how to expedite the process to address the concern immediately.

How did the students, staff, and parents learn about the program?

Three videos were created to assist in the process. Two of them were for students to view (one at the elementary and middle school level, and one at the high school level). The third video was used with staff to train them on how to complete the form and how the process would be handled.

Why do we need another referral form or process?

Preventive measures at schools include protocols and procedures for responding to and managing threats and other behaviors of concern. Based on important documents published in May 2002 by the U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Department of Education*, the following three reasons emphasize the importance of a consistent method for communicating a concern to a school official:

- "Prior to most incidents, other people knew about the attacker's idea and/or plan to attack."
- "Most attackers engaged in some behavior prior to the incident that caused others concern or indicated a need for help."
- "In many cases, other students were involved in some capacity."

Most schools have developed ways to communicate a concern about a student's unique behavior or writing that alarms or raises concerns of a more serious nature. The concerns usually are directed to the school psychologist, counselor, or an administrator. The "Help A Friend" written referral process is a tested method that can be used by students, staff, and parents to anonymously or purposely provide information to the school.

*The Final Report and the Findings of the Safe School Initiative: Implications for the Prevention of School Attacks in the United States, pp. 31-37.