

classroom routines, lagging academically, and in some instances dealing with personal issues, such as drug and alcohol abuse and dependency," said Perzel.

He said the remedial schools would provide monitoring that a typical school could not provide.

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### **SCHOOL OFFICERS ARE SUCCESSFUL IN S.C.**

South Carolina's Education Department reports school resource officers have contributed to a decline in violent incidents on campuses.

State Superintendent Inez Tenenbaum also credited character education, conflict resolution programs and community involvement for the decline.

Some schools trained students to assist through peer mediation and conflict resolution. Educators introduced counseling services for anger management and alcohol and drug abuse.

Schools have also adopted zero tolerance standards. Schools expel students found with weapons or send them to alternative schools.

The total number of school crimes dropped 3 percent in the last academic year and schools recorded the fewest weapons offenses in 11 years.

The two largest categories of simple assault and disturbing schools (bomb threats, false fire alarms, disorderly conduct) dropped. Handgun and firearm incidents fell to 51, the lowest number reported in the past 11 years.

In 1993-1994, handgun and firearms possession incidents hit a record high of 232.

"Schools, communities and law enforcement have worked long and hard to improve school safety," said Tenenbaum in releasing the report.

"They have implemented 'zero tolerance' discipline policies, and they have hired school resource officers for better security. It's only logical to think that these steps would produce more reports, and that certainly has been happening in recent years. We're hoping that the schools' message of 'zero tolerance' is sinking in and that these numbers will continue to improve."

The department conducted a workshop last year to instruct educators on the ways to report and qualify incidents. The agency expects better reporting this year because educators are more familiar with the software and reporting methods.

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### **64% OF SUICIDE RISKS FAIL TO GET COUNSEL**

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration said 64 percent of teens at risk for suicide receive no counseling.

The agency estimated that almost 3 million youth age 12 to 17 considered suicide in 2000 and more than a third of those actually took action.

Girls were almost twice as likely as boys to have thought about or tried to commit suicide, according to the National Household Sur-

vey on Drug Abuse.

Those at highest risk of suicide are youths that claimed consumption of alcohol and controlled substances.

The study found that only 36 percent of youths who said they considered suicide or tried to kill themselves received counseling.

"Research has demonstrated that the most effective way to prevent suicide is through the early identification and treatment of those at risk," the agency said.

White, black, Hispanic and Asian youths reported similar rates of suicide risk, the report said. Youths in Western states were the most at risk, almost 14 percent, followed by the South, 13 percent; the Midwest, 12 percent; and the Northeast, 11 percent.

In all, the study showed that 9 percent of children age 12-13 considered or tried to commit suicide in 2000. The percentage for teenagers 14-15 and 16-17 was 13.7 percent for each age group.

Inf.:

[www.samhsa.gov/oas/2k2/suicide/suicide.htm](http://www.samhsa.gov/oas/2k2/suicide/suicide.htm)

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### **DRUG ADDICTION LEADS GIRLS TO PROSTITUTION**

Most prostitutes in Massachusetts had a family history of abuse and addiction that prompted them to run away from home as teens, according to a Suffolk University professor's research.

Associate Sociology Professor Maureen Norton-Hawk said runaway girls turn to prostitution as a means for survival and to support

drug addiction.

Norton-Hawk said 52 percent of prostitutes she interviewed in jail reported using crack on a daily basis and 44 percent reported using heroin.

A little more than half said they were physically abused before they turned 17 and 48 percent said they were sexually abused by that age. Half said they ran away from home three or more times before they left for good.

Their average age was 32, about three-quarters were single, and 60 percent did not have a high school education. The women had an average of two children.

Presenting her study at a forum sponsored by women lawmakers, Norton-Hawk encouraged the state to consider alternatives to incarceration, which she said was damaging to the women's children and did little to prevent them from returning to prostitution.

Norton-Hawk estimated that Massachusetts spent \$668,000 in 2000 to imprison prostitutes.

Inf.: Norton-Hawk, 617-573-8491; [mhawks@acad.suffolk.edu](mailto:mhawks@acad.suffolk.edu).

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## **CONNECTICUT BEGINS REVIEW OF RUNAWAYS**

Connecticut's Child Fatality Review Panel has begun an inquiry into state law that limits parental authority to get their runaway children to return home.

State law allows a child between the ages of 15 and 18 to leave home against parental wishes. The law also blocks the state from inter-

vening unless the child commits a crime or is a victim of crime.

The panel began the review following the ecstasy overdose death in June of a runaway girl who resisted efforts of her mother and social welfare authorities to return home.

State Child Advocate Jeanne Milstein said the panel planned to submit recommendations next year to the legislature for improving the public and private safety nets for runaway children and their parents.

The review-panel probe will also provide an opportunity to boost public awareness of the dangers of ecstasy and other synthetic drugs.

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## **MAINE SPURS OUTREACH TO BENEFIT RUNAWAYS**

Maine has increased funding and initiated two pilot programs to deal with the growing problem of homeless and runaway youth.

The objective is to get the youths off the streets as quickly as possible and into a nurturing atmosphere. Social welfare authorities believe early counseling and family mediation can fix problems for about two-thirds of the youths.

The youths usually fit into two categories. The one-time event involves an unhappy child that easily reunites with family after mediation.

In the second, youth advocates say teens are trying to escape abusive families that engage in domestic violence and substance abuse. These are the toughest cases and require more resources.

In the session that ended in April, the legislature appropriated \$315,000 for pilot programs in Bangor and Portland with the objective of finding and helping homeless and runaway children under age 16.

Voters also approved a referendum in June that designated \$500,000 for a new center in Portland for homeless teens.

The center will provide medical and mental health services, substance abuse counseling and family counseling.

A state housing authority study in July 2001 found that 425 children were staying at emergency shelters, up from 233 at the same time five years earlier. That number includes children of homeless families as well as those living without their parents, but nevertheless suggests a substantial increase in runaways living without a steady home.

In cases where the youth has left a severely dysfunctional home, the teen may not even be reported missing, and returning the child to parents may not be a viable option.

Police and social service providers say they don't automatically return a runaway or homeless teenager to the child's family, but instead try to remedy what made the child leave in the first place.

But police and social service officials said most youths that stay on the streets for any length of time migrate toward prostitution, burglary, robbery and substance abuse.

Young, homeless girls are particularly vulnerable to sexual assault and sometimes resort to sex as a