

20 years later: How Columbine changed mental health response

Shayla Girardin 7:59 am April 18, 2019

The tragic Columbine shooting forever changed our schools and first responders – here's how.

We took a look at some of the resources developed in the aftermath of the Columbine shooting. One of the biggest changes, more access to mental health resources for our students. Sadly, numbers show it's still not enough.

[Safe2Tell](#) is an anonymous tip line where students or parents can report something concerning or threatening. [According to the Safe2Tell tip line](#), the most common tip they receive year after year is about suicide. The numbers are staggering! Over 2,500 Safe2Tell tips this year we're about students contemplating suicide. Experts say adolescence is when most people experience mental illness for the first time, but keeping psychologists on staff is costly.

"In about half the cases, the first signs of mental illness appear by the age of 14. In three quarters of the cases, by the age of 24," says Andrew Romanoff with Mental Health Colorado.

State lawmakers are working to help our schools pay for more mental health professionals. The problem is the funding just isn't keeping up with the demand.

In recent years, roughly 2 dozen schools were rejected for state grants to pay for health professionals, but work is being done to change this!

Right now State Rep Donald Valdez is co-sponsoring a bill that will boost grant funding using marijuana money. It cleared the state Senate last month and is now assigned to the house education committee.

Police have also changed their tactics dramatically since the tragedy of Columbine. Past procedure was to secure the perimeters and wait for tactical to arrive. Then it was up to tactical to go inside and get people out. After Columbine – everything changed.

“I could be arriving on scene, Lt. Sokolik could be arriving on scene. The first two or three people you’re going into that building and you’re going to start going to the threat,” explained Lt. Howard Black with the Colorado Springs Police Department.

CSPD says they’re constantly changing their practices to keep up with current threats.



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