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Colo. students' use of Safe2Tell up 22 percent from previous year

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Colorado students reported 84 percent more potential problems in their schools in May than they did a year ago, according to a new report released Thursday on the state's Safe2Tell program.

That program, which allows students to lodge anonymous tips on such things as potential threats to schools or student harassments, recorded 18,916 actionable tips during the 2018-19 school year, a 22 percent increase over the previous academic year.

Officials in the Colorado Attorney General's Office, which oversees the call-in program, said that while it's not uncommon for more tips to be made during the final month of a school year, they attributed the higher-than-normal tips to the May shootings at the STEM School in Highlands Ranch and the 20th anniversary of the shootings at Columbine High School, both of which rose student awareness of the Safe2Tell program, which was created as a direct result of the Columbine shootings.

"The increase in tips reported to Safe2Tell indicates increased levels of student engagement," said Attorney General Phil Weiser. "It also underscores Safe2Tell's value as an important violence intervention and prevention tool."

Since the program began in 2004, it's logged more than 65,000 actionable tips, the greatest of which by far were threats of suicide. During the entire school year, there were 3,378 such threats, 421 in May alone.

The next two issues, drug use and bullying incidents, are a distant second by comparison, but still greater than other tip topics, such as planned school attacks, alcohol use or sexual misconduct. During the school year, there were 2,054 tips of drug use and 1,848 bullying reports.

When a tip is received, local law enforcement and school district officials follow up on each report, first to determine its credibility. This school year, more than 97 percent of all tips were deemed credible. That remaining 3 percent, however, can be a problem to officials.

"Duplicate tips tell us that students are continuing to break the code of silence and feel more empowered to take ownership of making their schools and communities safer," Weiser said.

"Submitting a false tip can have serious consequences," added Essi Ellis, Safe2Tell director. "Intentionally making false reports is not a good use of school, law enforcement or Safe2Tell's time, and takes valuable resources away from those who are in crisis and actually need help."

Students can report incidents by calling 877-542-7233, go to [Safe2Tell.org](https://www.Safe2Tell.org) or get the Safe2Tell mobile phone app at the Apple App Store or Google Play.