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## **NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Attorney General Kaul Advocates for Office of School Safety Funding**

MADISON, Wis. – As part of Attorney General Josh Kaul’s 2023-2025 crime fighting budget request for the Wisconsin Department of Justice (DOJ) and in efforts to keep Wisconsin kids safe, Attorney General Kaul is calling on Wisconsin legislators to fully fund the Office of School Safety (OSS) in the next biennial budget. Wisconsin DOJ has requested 16 full time positions in OSS and roughly \$2.2 million to ensure OSS can continue providing critical resources to Wisconsin schools and communities.

“The Office of School Safety has been doing great work to keep our schools safe,” said Attorney General Josh Kaul. “Full funding in the upcoming state budget will ensure that OSS can continue providing the resources it currently provides for schools around the state.”

OSS was created with bipartisan support in 2018 in response to the Parkland, Fla. school shooting and has proven to be a critical resource for Wisconsin schools. Since its inception, OSS has distributed nearly \$100 million for safety enhancements, threat assessment training, and mental health training to public, private, charter, and tribal schools throughout Wisconsin. OSS staff provide training to schools around the state, they developed and maintain critical incident response teams for every region of Wisconsin, and they established and run the Speak Up, Speak Out Resource Center, including the 24-hour tipline.

On September 1, 2020, OSS launched Speak Up, Speak Out (SUSO), a 24/7 statewide confidential reporting system free to all Wisconsin schools. SUSO is a comprehensive, one-stop place to turn with important concerns, offering a Threat Reporting System, Threat Assessment Consultation, Critical Incident Response and General School

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Safety Guidance. SUSO aims to promote the reporting of concerns before violence happens. Since its inception, SUSO has received thousands of tips. During the 2021-2022 school year, SUSO received 136 potentially lifesaving tips. Bullying and suicide threats were the most reported tips to SUSO during the 2021-2022 school year.

Students, parents, school staff, or any community members can submit a school safety concern or threat via the SUSO website, mobile phone application, or toll-free number.

SUSO Reports can be made 24 hours a day, 7 days a week:

- Online at [speakup.wisconsin.gov](https://speakup.wisconsin.gov)
- 1-800-MY-SUSO-1 (1-800-697-8761)
- Mobile app ([iOS](#)/[Android](#))

In 2022, OSS established and trained twelve Critical Incident Response Teams (CIRTs) around the state. CIRTs are designed to provide all Wisconsin K-12 public, private, charter and tribal schools with access to a regionally based team to support them if a critical incident ever occurs at their school. Each CIRT is made up of volunteers who are part of a multi-disciplinary team. These teams include law enforcement officers, school administrators, counselors, psychologists, social workers, nurses, teachers, school safety experts, and representatives from other related professions. The mission of the CIRT program is to minimize the psychological impact of a school critical incident; provide resources to help stabilize the school community; work to identify individuals that may require long-term mental health services after a critical incident occurs; and offer support to school administrators and educators. Wisconsin is the first state to implement regionally based CIRTs on a statewide basis.

Additionally, OSS staff are certified to train a variety of courses that follow national best practices related to crisis response and offer these trainings free of charge to any Wisconsin school that requests it. Some trainings equip school staff to respond effectively when a crisis event occurs in a way that will promote psychological recovery for all staff and students. Other trainings help school staff establish standardized response and reunification for any school crisis, from fires and floods to acts of violence. OSS staff continue to expand the trainings offered to ensure that Wisconsin schools have a comprehensive toolkit to help keep kids safe.

OSS was initially supported by more than \$2 million in federal grant funding from the U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Assistance. OSS is currently supported by more than \$1.8 million in American Rescue Plan Act funding which will end in December of 2023. Wisconsin DOJ has requested the legislature permanently fund OSS in the next biennial budget.