



# Responding and Recovering:

The Impact of the Virginia Tech Tragedy on  
Montgomery County Public Schools





Sharon Zuckerwar, Montgomery County Public Schools, Project SERV Director

Danny Knott, Principal, Blacksburg Middle School

Dawn Viers, Prevention Supervisor, New River Valley Community Services

Freddie Nolen, Emergency Services Clinician, New River Valley Community Services



## Montgomery County Public Schools

- Located in the Appalachian region of Southwest VA and home to Virginia Tech
- 9,500 students in grade K-12, Dr. Tiffany Anderson, Superintendent
- Includes the towns of Blacksburg, Christiansburg, as well as numerous rural communities
- 7 MCPS schools are in Blacksburg, most of these are less than 2 miles from the VT campus
- Students and Staff members have connections to VT, as friends and family of students, professors, and university employees.



## April 16, 2007 Summary Sequence of Events



- 7:15 Shootings at VT West Amber Johnston; Investigation begins
- 9:30 Shootings at Norris Hall
- 32 students and faculty were killed
- VT campus locked down/classes canceled
- Deadliest shooting rampage by a single gunman in U.S. history, on or off a school campus.



## Montgomery County Public Schools Responds

- Schools were 'locked down'; activities canceled
- Contact with local law enforcement throughout
- MCPS Counselors were on-call through the Red Cross
- Offered Community Counseling Open Houses
- Utilized NRVCS Counselors at all schools when students returned.
- Memorial activities



## A Closer Look--The Impact on One School: Blacksburg Middle School





## Impact on MCPS and surrounding community

- From the first half to the last half of April 2007, NRVCS reported a 156% increase in youth requiring evaluations for dangerous behaviors
- From April 2007 to March 2008, NRVCS saw a 62% increase in youth requiring evaluations (217 to 352). Of the 352, 191 were from Montgomery County.
- From October 2007 to March 2008, NRVCS saw a 100% increase in youth intakes for mental health services.
- In April 2008, NRVCS saw 48 youth for intakes for mental health services.



## Connecting with NRVCS



- History and relationship between MCPS and NRVCS was key in intervening
  - Safe and Drug Free Schools student assistance and prevention programming
  - Prevention programming through state and federal grants
  - School-based behavior therapists at many MCPS schools
- Ability to utilize familiar faces for critical events
- Challenge in utilizing existing staff to meet demand



## Response to Recovery – PROJECT SERV

Crisis intervention services were provided to each school in order to stabilize the learning environment.

These services included:

- Pre-screenings for hospitalizations
- Case consultation to schools
- Case management services
- Crisis stabilization services



## Lessons Learned

- Service delivery
- Case management services





Questions? Please feel free to contact us!

Sharon Zuckerwar      [szuckerwar@mcps.org](mailto:szuckerwar@mcps.org)

Danny Knott            [dknott@mcps.org](mailto:dknott@mcps.org)

Dawn Viers             [dviers@nrvcs.org](mailto:dviers@nrvcs.org)

Freddie Nolen         [fnolen@nrvcs.org](mailto:fnolen@nrvcs.org)