### Memorandum

# National Center for Education Statistics

**DATE:** June 9, 2020

**TO:** Robert Sivinski, OMB

**THROUGH:** Carrie Clarady, Avar Consulting, in contract to NCES

**FROM:** Deanne Swan, NCES

**SUBJECT:** School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS) 2018 and 2020 – SSOCS 2020 June 2020 Communications Change Request (OMB# 1850-0761 v.20)

The School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS) is a nationally representative survey of elementary and secondary school principals that serves as the primary source of school-level data on crime and safety in public schools. SSOCS is the only recurring federal survey collecting detailed information on the incidence, frequency, seriousness, and nature of violence affecting students and school personnel from the school's perspective. Data are also collected on frequency and types of disciplinary actions taken for select offenses; perceptions of other disciplinary problems, such as bullying, verbal abuse and disorder in the classroom; the presence and role of school security staff; parent and community involvement; staff training; mental health services available to students; and, school policies and programs concerning crime and safety. Prior administrations of SSOCS were conducted in 2000, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2016, and 2018. The 2018 and 2020 SSOCS full-scale data collections were approved in July 2017 with the latest update approved in April 2020 (OMB# 1850-0761 v.12-19).

This submission provides updated versions of the SSOCS 2020 communications materials and focuses on two changes: (a) a change in the contact schedule that includes additions to the contact materials, and (b) an extension of the data collection window. These changes result in no changes to participant burden or cost to the federal government.

As in the changes in v. 18-19, these changes to the communication materials and schedules of respondent outreach are due to the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, which has resulted in the closing of schools and a recent reopening of operations at the Census Bureau's National Processing Center (NPC) at a reduced capacity. These changes are also in response to the current response rate for the SSOCS, which is presently at 36 percent, well below NCES reporting standards. Because of the widespread closure of school buildings and shift to online learning, many of the targeted respondents to SSOCS (public school principals) are experiencing extraordinary demands on their time. With the halt of mailout operations at NPC, our mail packages can no longer be sent as originally planned, and even if they could be sent as planned the high rate of building closures for public schools mean that the packages would not be received. It is critical that our communications reach our respondents through the most accessible medium – e-mail – and in a manner that allows them to provide responses via a web portal during the summer break, a time when respondents may have more time than they did during the changes at the end of the SSOCS requests for response, moving not only from mail to e-mail for our communication with respondents, but also to push responses to the web portal.

Part A has been updated to reflect a new additions to the communication strategy and a revised schedule due to an extension of the data collection window, and Appendix A has been updated to reflect new dates for emails and packages to be sent, to add eight additional emails to be sent throughout data collection and a revised mail package.

The noteworthy changes to the approved materials are listed below. Text added since the last approved version of each document is marked in burgundy font color, all text deleted since the last approved version is marked in crossed-out burgundy font color, and all unchanged text is shown in black font.

# The follow updates were made to Part A:

# Section A. Justification. (p. 1)

The request to conduct the 2018 and 2020 School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS) was approved in July 2017 with the latest update approved in March-April 2020 (OMB# 1850-0761 v.12-1819). This latest submission provides updated versions of the SSOCS 2020 communications materials and, new schedules for respondent outreach and extending the period of data collection,, changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak which has resulted in the closing of schools and a temporary discontinuation-pending resumption a temporary discontinuation of mailout operations. Appendix A has been updated to reflect new dates for emails and packages to be sent, as well as adding two-eight (in two minimally different versions, for a total of sixteen) additional emails to be sent throughout data collection.

# Section A.5. Methods Used to Minimize Burden on Small Entities (p. 7)

The SSOCS:2020 initial invitation letter will be mailed to respondents in February 2020 and will include log-in information and instructions to complete the online questionnaire within 2 weeks. Schools that do not respond will be contacted again by mail and e-mail to encouraged them to complete their questionnaire online. Schools that have not responded within 6 weeks-by July 2020 will be mailed a SSOCS:2020 paper questionnaire. Schools will also receive periodic e-mail reminders throughout the data collection period. The data collection period will remain open through mid-June-the end of August 2020.

# Section A.12. Estimates of Burden for Information Collection (p. 12)

# SSOCS:2020 (p. 12)

SSOCS:2018 yielded an unweighted response rate of approximately 58 percent. When the responding schools were weighted to account for their original sampling probabilities, the response rate increased to approximately 62 percent. As in the prior collections, the objectives of the SSOCS:2020 sample design are twofold: to obtain overall cross-sectional and subgroup estimates of important indicators of school crime and safety and to develop precise estimates of change in various characteristics relating to crime between the SSOCS administrations. To attain these objectives and taking into consideration the low response rates in the 2016 and 2018 collections, approximately 4,800 total schools will be drawn in the sample: 2,340 schools will be assigned to the "early incentive" treatment; the remaining 2,460 schools will be assigned to the "email promised incentive" treatment. Respondents that are in districts which do not allow gifts or payments to employees will not receive contact materials with the incentive language. Because of the strained data collection environment that has resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic in the United States, which includes the closure of many schools across the nation and the closure of the Census Bureau's National Processing

Center (NPC), the contact strategy will be shifted to predominantly email packages encouraging data submission through the web portal. In order to encourage response at a time when resources of respondents are strained, the incentives will be offered to all respondents. Given the inclusion of both web menu and incentive experiments aimed at increasing the overall response, we anticipate at least maintaining the SSOCS:2016 and SSOCS:2018 response rates, which will yield more completed surveys than needed to meet the study's objectives.

### A.16. Time Schedule (p. 14)

### Table 5. Schedule of major project activities: SSOCS:2020

Task	Date
Contact special districts to begin approval process	June 2019–January 2020
Complete and deliver special district applications and packages	June 2019–January 2020
Draft special mailing materials for schools in special districts	June 2019–January 2020
Data collection begins	February 2020
Data collection ends	July August 2020
Restricted-use data file finalized	February March 2021
First Look report through NCES review	March April 2021
First Look report released	July August 2021
Restricted-use data file released	September October 2021
Survey documentation released	September October 2021
Public-use data file released	November December 2021
Web tables through NCES review	March April 2022
Web tables released	July August 2022

# <u>The following updates were made to Appendix A – SSOCS 2018 & SSOCS 2020</u> <u>Communication Materials</u>

### The most recent versions of contact materials for SSOCS:2020 are provided on pp. 78-79, 90-105.

# Summary of Changes in the Timeline for Mailings (Physical and E-mail) for 2020 SSOCS

- Revision and rescheduling of physical mailing (3<sup>rd</sup> package) on 07/22/2020 because of reopening of Census Bureau's National Processing Center (NPC)
- Addition of Follow-up E-mail on 06/16/2020
- Addition of Follow-up E-mail on 06/25/2020
- Addition of Follow-up E-mail on 07/07/2020
- Addition of Follow-up E-mail on 07/16/2020
- Addition of Follow-up E-mail on 07/28/2020
- Addition of Follow-up E-mail on 08/06/2020
- Addition of Follow-up E-mail on 08/18/2020
- Addition of Follow-up E-mail on 08/25/2020

**Change 1:** Changed date and text for planned mailing with a paper questionnaire; it is now scheduled for mid-July in deference to the reopening of Census National Processing Center (Appendix A pp. 78-79). The old version of this letter has been deleted and two updated versions of this letter have been added to Appendix A, one for districts that allow incentives and another for districts that do not (see pp. 5-7 of this memo for the full text).

**Change 2:** Added eight new follow-up emails (Appendix A, pp. 90-105). As above, there are two versions of each of these eight emails, one that is appropriate for districts that allow incentives and another for districts that do not (see pp. 8-23 of this memo for the full text of all new emails).

**Note:** All documents on pp. 6-23 of this memo are additions to Appendix A. They are rendered here in black rather than burgundy font for ease of reading.

# 2020 Second Reminder Letter to Principal; 3rd Package, First Questionnaire (to be sent 3 weeks after Census National Processing Center is operational, May 28, 2020) (Updated April 2020)

#### SSOCS-16L

#### Dear <insert name>:

Over the past two months, we have contacted you to ask for your participation in the 2020 School Survey on Crimeand Safety (SSOCS). If you have already returned the completed questionnaire, thank you for your participation, and please disregard this letter. If you have not yet had the opportunity to complete the questionnaire, I encourage you to complete the enclosed questionnaire *as soon as possible*. Please understand, we would not keep asking if yourparticipation was not critical to producing high-quality results. Data from SSOCS can have an impact on governmentpriorities and practices. We want to ensure the needs of your students have a voice in those discussions.

We know that you are very busy and receive many survey requests. However, we urge you to take time to complete this very important survey. While your decision to participate is voluntary, your response is crucial to understand the state of crime and safety issues in U.S. schools. Schools will not be identified by name in any reports. Your responses help the policy and program offices at the U.S. Department of Education design grant programs intended to address school safety, violence prevention, and school climate.

A postage-paid return envelope is enclosed for your convenience. If you have any questions about the study, please do not hesitate to contact the U.S. Census Bureau at 1–888–595–1332. The U.S. Census Bureau, the survey collection agency, is also available to answer your questions via e-mail at <u>ssocs@census.gov</u>. To learn more about SSOCS, please visit <u>http://www.nces.ed.gov/surveys/ssocs</u>.

Sincerely,

James (Lynn) Woodworth, Ph. D. Commissioner National Center for Education Statistics U.S. Department of Education

Enclosures 2020 SSOCS Questionnaire

NCES is authorized to conduct this survey by the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (ESRA 2002, 20 U.S.C. §9543). All of the information you provide may be used only forstatistical purposes and may not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose except as required by law (20 U.S.C. §9573 and 6 U.S.C. §151). Reports of thefindings from the survey will not identify participating districts, schools, or staff. Individual responses will be combined with those from other participants to produce summary statistics and reports.

#### 2020 Second Reminder Letter to Principal: 3rd Package, First Questionnaire, promised incentive

(to be sent July 22, 2020 (estimated)) SSOCS: 2020 – 15LCI

Dear PRINCIPAL,

Over the past few months, we have sent you several invitations to complete the School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS) online. The SSOCS is the only regular national study that collects information about crime and safety in public schools.

According to our records, you have not yet completed the SSOCS questionnaire online. If you have recently completed the online questionnaire, thank you for your participation, and please disregard this letter. If you have not, I encourage you to complete the enclosed questionnaire as soon as possible.

These are unprecedented times, and the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) of the U.S. Department of Education is aware of the strain COVID-19 has put on schools. We understand that you are facing challenges in adjusting day-to-day operations to deliver meaningful learning experiences to students during building closures. We also understand that you are very busy and receive many survey requests. We urge you to take time out of your busy schedule to complete this critically important survey.

As a token of our appreciation for taking the time to complete our survey with so many other things going on, we will mail you \$10 later this summer at the conclusion of the study.

Although your decision to participate is voluntary, your response is crucial to understand the overall state of school climate issues in U.S. schools. Data from previous SSOCS collections are used by the Department's Office of Safe and Supportive Schools to inform decisions for guidance to states and local education agencies pertinent to providing a safe school environment for students. Specifically, SSOCS asks about whether schools have plans to use in response to pandemic disease. Having accurate information on this helps to inform the need for more resources to provide to states during these unprecedented times. As a reminder, schools will not be identified by name in any reports.

A postage-paid return envelope is enclosed for your convenience. If you have any questions about the study, please do not hesitate to contact the U.S. Census Bureau at 1–888–595–1332. The U.S. Census Bureau, the survey collection agency, is also available to answer your questions via e-mail at ssocs@census.gov. To learn more about the SSOCS, please visit http://www.nces.ed.gov/surveys/ssocs.

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#### 2020 Follow-up e-mail (June 16, 2020) (updated June 2020) (Reminder email to all principals – All Treatments, Promised Incentive) #P10A

Subject line: There is Still Time! U.S. Department of Education Survey Reminder (\$10 incentive)

#### Dear <PRINCIPAL>:

We are living through a difficult time, characterized by many changes for educators and students. We need your help completing the 2020 School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS), a federal survey that gathers statistics on programs and practices implemented across our nation to provide a safe school environment.

If you haven't had the opportunity to log on and complete the survey yet, we encourage you to do so. Your survey responses will be collected on a secure website.

### Respond now at <a href="https://respond.census.gov/ssocs">https://respond.census.gov/ssocs</a>

### Log in using this User ID: <USERID>

As a token of our appreciation for taking the time to complete the survey we will mail you \$10 this summer at the conclusion of the School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS).

Additionally, we want to share resources that may be helpful while navigating these difficult times. In response to COVID-19, Department-funded Regional Educational Laboratories have collaborated to produce evidence-based resources and guidance about teaching and learning in a remote environment. These resources are available for you at <u>https://ies.ed.gov/nces/edlabs/projects/covid-19/</u>.

Please note that reports of the findings from the survey will not identify schools by name. Individual responses will be combined with those from other participants to produce summary statistics and reports.

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Sincerely,

#### 2020 Follow-up e-mail (June 25, 2020) (updated June 2020) (Reminder email to all principals – All Treatments, Promised Incentive) #P11A

Subject line: We need your response today - U.S. Department of Education Survey Reminder (\$10 incentive)

Dear <PRINCIPAL>:

There is still time to complete the School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS). You may respond now by clicking on the link below.

#### Respond now at <a href="https://respond.census.gov/ssocs">https://respond.census.gov/ssocs</a>

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As a token of our appreciation for taking the time to complete our survey with so many other things going on right now, we will mail you \$10 this summer at the conclusion of the study.

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Sincerely,

#### 2020 Follow-up e-mail (July 07, 2020) (updated June 2020) (Reminder email to all principals – All Treatments, Promised Incentive) #P12A

Subject line: U.S. Department of Education Survey – (\$10 incentive)

Dear <PRINCIPAL>:

There is still time to complete the School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS). You may respond now by clicking on the link below.

### Respond now at <a href="https://respond.census.gov/ssocs">https://respond.census.gov/ssocs</a>

### Log in using this User ID: <USERID>

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SSOCS is conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) within the U.S. Department of Education and collected by the U.S. Census Bureau. If you have any general questions about the study or if you wish to complete the survey with assistance, please contact the U.S. Census Bureau at 1–888–595–1332 or via email at <u>ssocs@census.gov</u>. To learn more about SSOCS, visit <u>http://www.nces.ed.gov/surveys/ssocs</u>.

Sincerely,

#### 2020 Follow-up e-mail (July 16, 2020) (updated June 2020) (Reminder email to all principals – All Treatments, Promised Incentive) #P13A

Subject line: U.S. Department of Education Survey – (\$10 incentive)

#### Dear <PRINCIPAL>:

Please respond! Data collection for the School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS) is coming to a close. Don't miss your opportunity to contribute to data that are used by the U.S. Department of Education's policy and program offices for making policy decisions and designing grant programs intended to address school safety, violence programs, and school climate.

If you have already responded to our survey, thank you! If you have not responded yet, please click on the link below

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#### Sincerely,

#### 2020 Follow-up e-mail (July 28, 2020) (updated June 2020) (Reminder email to all principals – All Treatments, Promised Incentive) #P14A

Subject line: There is Still Time! U.S. Department of Education Survey Reminder (\$10 incentive)

#### Dear <PRINCIPAL>:

We are living through a difficult time, characterized by many changes for educators and students. We need your help completing the 2020 School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS), a federal survey that gathers statistics on programs and practices implemented across our nation to provide a safe school environment.

If you haven't had the opportunity to log on and complete the survey yet, we encourage you to do so. Your survey responses will be collected on a secure website.

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#### 2020 Follow-up e-mail (August 06, 2020) (updated June 2020) (Reminder email to all principals – All Treatments, Promised Incentive) #P15A

Subject line: We need your response today - U.S. Department of Education Survey Reminder (\$10 incentive)

Dear <PRINCIPAL>:

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#### Log in using this User ID: <USERID>

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Sincerely,

#### 2020 Follow-up e-mail (August 18, 2020) (updated June 2020) (Reminder email to all principals – All Treatments, Promised Incentive) #P16A

Subject line: U.S. Department of Education Survey – last chance (\$10 incentive)!

Dear <PRINCIPAL>:

Please respond! Data collection for the School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS) is coming to a close. Don't miss your opportunity to contribute to data that are used by the U.S. Department of Education's policy and program offices for making policy decisions and designing grant programs intended to address school safety, violence programs, and school climate.

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Sincerely,

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#### 2020 Follow-up e-mail (June 16, 2020) (updated June 2020) (Reminder email to all principals – All Treatments, No Incentive) #P10B

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### **Respond now at** <u>https://respond.census.gov/ssocs</u>

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Additionally, we want to share resources that may be helpful while navigating these difficult times. In response to COVID-19, Department-funded Regional Educational Laboratories have collaborated to produce evidence-based resources and guidance about teaching and learning in a remote environment. These resources are available for you at <u>https://ies.ed.gov/nces/edlabs/projects/covid-19/</u>.

Please note that reports of the findings from the survey will not identify schools by name. Individual responses will be combined with those from other participants to produce summary statistics and reports.

If you have any questions contact the U.S. Census Bureau, the survey collection agency, by phone at 1–888–595–1332 or via email at <u>ssocs@census.gov</u>. To learn more about SSOCS, visit <u>http://www.nces.ed.gov/surveys/ssocs</u>.

Sincerely,

#### 2020 Follow-up e-mail (June 25, 2020) (updated June 2020) (Reminder email to all principals – All Treatments, No Incentive) #P11B

Subject line: We need your response today - U.S. Department of Education Survey Reminder

Dear <PRINCIPAL>:

There is still time to complete the School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS). You may respond now by clicking on the link below.

Respond now at <a href="https://respond.census.gov/ssocs">https://respond.census.gov/ssocs</a>

### Log in using this User ID: <USERID>

Additionally, we want to share resources that may be helpful while navigating these difficult times. In response to COVID-19, Department-funded Regional Educational Laboratories have collaborated to produce evidence-based resources and guidance about teaching and learning in a remote environment. These resources are available for you at <u>https://ies.ed.gov/nces/edlabs/projects/covid-19/</u>.

Your completed questionnaire will provide the nation accurate statistics of programs and policies implemented to provide a safe school environment. Please note that reports of the findings from the survey will not identify schools by name. Your survey responses will be collected on a secure website. Individual responses will be combined with those from other participants to produce summary statistics and reports.

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Sincerely,

#### 2020 Follow-up e-mail (July 07, 2020) (updated June 2020) (Reminder email to all principals – All Treatments, No Incentive) #P12B

Subject line: U.S. Department of Education Survey

Dear <PRINCIPAL>:

There is still time to complete the School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS). You may respond now by clicking on the link below.

### Respond now at <a href="https://respond.census.gov/ssocs">https://respond.census.gov/ssocs</a>

### Log in using this User ID: <USERID>

Additionally, we want to share resources that may be helpful while navigating these difficult times. In response to COVID-19, Department-funded Regional Educational Laboratories have collaborated to produce evidence-based resources and guidance about teaching and learning in a remote environment. These resources are available for you at <u>https://ies.ed.gov/nces/edlabs/projects/covid-19/</u>.

Your survey responses will be collected on a secure website and schools will not be identified by name in any reports. We appreciate your help in this important data collection effort!

SSOCS is conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) within the U.S. Department of Education and collected by the U.S. Census Bureau. If you have any general questions about the study or if you wish to complete the survey with assistance, please contact the U.S. Census Bureau at 1–888–595–1332 or via email at <u>ssocs@census.gov</u>. To learn more about SSOCS, visit <u>http://www.nces.ed.gov/surveys/ssocs</u>.

Sincerely,

#### 2020 Follow-up e-mail (July 16, 2020) (updated June 2020) (Reminder email to all principals – All Treatments, No Incentive) #P13B

Subject line: U.S. Department of Education Survey

#### Dear <PRINCIPAL>:

Please respond! Data collection for the School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS) is coming to a close. Don't miss your opportunity to contribute to data that are used by the U.S. Department of Education's policy and program offices for making policy decisions and designing grant programs intended to address school safety, violence programs, and school climate.

If you have already responded to our survey, thank you! If you have not responded yet, please click on the link below

### Respond now at <a href="https://respond.census.gov/ssocs">https://respond.census.gov/ssocs</a>

### Log in using this User ID: <USERID>

Additionally, we want to share resources that may be helpful while navigating these difficult times. In response to COVID-19, Department-funded Regional Educational Laboratories have collaborated to produce evidence-based resources and guidance about teaching and learning in a remote environment. These resources are available for you at <a href="https://ies.ed.gov/nces/edlabs/projects/covid-19/">https://ies.ed.gov/nces/edlabs/projects/covid-19/</a>.

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Sincerely,

#### 2020 Follow-up e-mail (July 28, 2020) (updated June 2020) (Reminder email to all principals – All Treatments, No Incentive) #P14B

Subject line: There is Still Time! U.S. Department of Education Survey Reminder

#### Dear <PRINCIPAL>:

We are living through a difficult time, characterized by many changes for educators and students. We need your help completing the 2020 School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS), a federal survey that gathers statistics on programs and practices implemented across our nation to provide a safe school environment.

If you haven't had the opportunity to log on and complete the survey yet, we encourage you to do so. Your survey responses will be collected on a secure website.

### Respond now at <a href="https://respond.census.gov/ssocs">https://respond.census.gov/ssocs</a>

### Log in using this User ID: <USERID>

Additionally, we want to share resources that may be helpful while navigating these difficult times. In response to COVID-19, Department-funded Regional Educational Laboratories have collaborated to produce evidence-based resources and guidance about teaching and learning in a remote environment. These resources are available for you at <u>https://ies.ed.gov/nces/edlabs/projects/covid-19/</u>.

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Sincerely,

#### 2020 Follow-up e-mail (August 06, 2020) (updated June 2020) (Reminder email to all principals – All Treatments, No Incentive) #P15B

Subject line: We need your response today - U.S. Department of Education Survey Reminder

Dear <PRINCIPAL>:

There is still time to complete the School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS). You may respond now by clicking on the link below.

### Respond now at <a href="https://respond.census.gov/ssocs">https://respond.census.gov/ssocs</a>

# Log in using this User ID: <USERID>

Additionally, we want to share resources that may be helpful while navigating these difficult times. In response to COVID-19, Department-funded Regional Educational Laboratories have collaborated to produce evidence-based resources and guidance about teaching and learning in a remote environment. These resources are available for you at <u>https://ies.ed.gov/nces/edlabs/projects/covid-19/</u>.

Your completed questionnaire will provide the nation accurate statistics of programs and policies implemented to provide a safe school environment. Please note that reports of the findings from the survey will not identify schools by name. Your survey responses will be collected on a secure website. Individual responses will be combined with those from other participants to produce summary statistics and reports.

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Sincerely,

#### 2020 Follow-up e-mail (August 18, 2020) (updated June 2020) (Reminder email to all principals – All Treatments, No Incentive) #P16B

Subject line: U.S. Department of Education Survey – last chance!

#### Dear <PRINCIPAL>:

Please respond! Data collection for the School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS) is coming to a close. Don't miss your opportunity to contribute to data that are used by the U.S. Department of Education's policy and program offices for making policy decisions and designing grant programs intended to address school safety, violence programs, and school climate.

If you have already responded to our survey, thank you! If you have not responded yet, please click on the link below

### Respond now at <a href="https://respond.census.gov/ssocs">https://respond.census.gov/ssocs</a>

### Log in using this User ID: <USERID>

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Sincerely,

#### 2020 Follow-up e-mail (August 25, 2020) (updated June 2020) (Reminder email to all principals – All Treatments, No Incentive) #P17B

Subject line: U.S. Department of Education Survey – last chance!

Dear <PRINCIPAL>:

Please respond! Data collection for the School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS) is coming to a close. Don't miss your opportunity to contribute to data that are used by the U.S. Department of Education's policy and program offices for making policy decisions and designing grant programs intended to address school safety, violence programs, and school climate.

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Sincerely,