

## Tips and Trends

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From ICJE, Inc. <jimrechel@icje.ccsend.com>  
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To Phillip Calvert <PCalvert@faulkner.edu>



April/May 2026

## Dying with Dignity?

I don't watch *60 Minutes* much anymore, but I happened to catch an interview with former Senator Ben Sasse and his wife, Melissa McLeod Sasse—Melissa is formerly of Birmingham and a University of Alabama alumna.

Ben is dying of cancer and has been interviewed at length recently; I happened to see a couple of interviews of him over the last 2 weeks.

He is clearly a man of faith and is facing his numbered days with dignity—speaking with open honesty about his faith, his struggles, and his family. Later, someone mentioned to me that they had seen one of his interviews, and glowingly said they admired him for *dying with dignity*.

We hear that phrase often, but we seldom hear someone say that a friend or community leader is “living with dignity.” For some reason, we tend to emphasize dignity at the end of life more than we do during life itself. If you have a chance, read about Melissa McLeod Sasse and Ben Sasse—you’ll see lives that have been led with dignity. (See link below.)

For many of us—especially those in law-enforcement-related careers—it can be difficult not to be pulled into the abyss of cynicism and negativity by the culture we are immersed in every day. Yet within that everyday challenge are opportunities to live a life of dignity, rising above the collapse of families, values, and respect that can seem to surround us.

In practice, many of us (me included) can get caught up in tactical positioning against those whose behaviors threaten our way of thinking—or, more importantly, run contrary to the teachings passed down to us through His disciples.

It seems fitting that ICJE, as an organization committed to law and order, would cite some of the best guidance on living with dignity from a simple, but quote from the Apostle Paul.

It comes from a letter while he was in prison.

In Colossians 3:12, Paul writes: “Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, **compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience...**” How badly we need those traits in today's world.

Those are the attributes of “living with dignity”.

May God bless you each and every moment, as we all strive to live out His will.

Thanks,

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ICJE Newsletter Editor

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Ben Sasse Wife

## **Ben Sasse Wife: Melissa Sasse, Her Private Strength, and the Family Story Behind the Public Figure**

A detailed, factual look at Ben Sasse's wife, Melissa Sasse, her life, health journey, family role, and lasting influence.

[Read More](#)

## **Training Desk: Educational Opportunities**

The ICJE training list has been updated, and we are working on new programs and initiatives, so visit the ICJE website for more details.

[Visit our Website](#)



**Middle District of Alabama - Law Enforcement Toolkit Training**

**May 21, 2026 / 9:00am - 4:00pm  
(6 Training Hours)**

Enterprise State Community College  
Lurleen B. Wallace Hall - Multipurpose Room  
600 Plaza Drive, Enterprise, AL 36330

*Attendance is open to all sworn law enforcement and prosecutors  
(credentials will be checked at sign in)*

*No Registration Fee*

Trainers will include professionals from ATF, FBI, DHS and U.S. Attorney's Office.

To register, go to <https://forms.osi.office365.us/r/cuiULRPaJZ>

Registration:

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A gunman opened fire and set a blaze inside a Mormon church in the small town of Grand Blanc, Michigan, on September 28, 2025, killing four people and injuring at least eight others

## Church Security Training Issues

**Train and follow your notification procedures—otherwise, even strong security plans can fail.**

In a recent discussion about a security-related incident at a large non-denominational church in Kentucky, we discussed the organization's security plan and the training conducted as part of their comprehensive security program.

The plan was strong: a dedicated security team and coordinator, along with many current and retired law-enforcement personnel providing concealed-carry coverage during services.

A critical provision required any staff member who noticed a **potential** threat to immediately notify the security team, follow a defined communication chain, and coordinate with law enforcement.

The team conducted walk-throughs and tabletop exercises, and the process appeared to work as designed.

That changed during a real-world situation. Just before a service, the pastor observed concerning behavior and called 911 directly. The report appears to have been interpreted as an active-shooter event rather than a request to assess a suspicious person.

The security team was not alerted and remained unaware until the police response overwhelmed the service.

***In minutes, the plan, training, and coordination broke down—not due to malicious intent, but because the notification procedure was bypassed.***

Ultimately, it was a false alarm.

For those responsible for planning and preparedness in your community, please review the Church Security Checklist and the training and operational resources provided at the end of this month's newsletter, and confirm your notification procedures are understood and practiced.

## **CrimeDesk: Crime and Society**



### **Rampaging 1,000-teen Mob storms Tourist Attraction, Hurts Officers in Violent "Takeover"**

On April 25, 2026 over 1,000 teenagers stormed Orlando's ICON Park in the latest teen takeover, leading to nearly a dozen arrests and sending two police officers to the hospital.

[Read More](#)

### **Mob Scene Plaques Opening Day**

Police arrested multiple people after 'disorder and violence' in Cincinnati. Video shows large crowds pushing, shoving and fighting at The Banks after the Reds' season opener.

[Read More](#)

## Defining the Takeover Phenomenon

As the takeovers plague more and more communities, I thought it would be beneficial to do some research. The information below is a combined article of material I gathered through research using ChatGPT, Grok, and Co-Pilot. I combined and edited the information from each query.

A “teen takeover” can be defined as:

A social media-coordinated mass gathering of youth in a public or commercial space that has a high likelihood of escalating into disorder, disruption, or criminal activity.

The events typically exhibit the following characteristics:

- Rapid mobilization through platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and encrypted messaging apps
- Large participant volumes, often in the hundreds or more
- Fluid intent, shifting from social gathering to disorder
- High unpredictability, with limited advance warning

The defining feature is not merely the size of the gathering, but the speed at which it forms and escalates.

### Peer Influence and Behavioral Contagion

In the context of teen takeovers, peer dynamics are amplified by:

- Real-time communication
- Social validation through visibility and recording
- Reduced perceived risk due to group size

This creates a behavioral contagion effect, where actions spread rapidly across the group.

### Crowd Psychology and Deindividuation

In operational terms, once a crowd reaches a certain density, risk escalates, particularly when emotionally charged stimuli (e.g., conflict, confrontation, or police presence) are introduced.

## **Social Media as a Force Multiplier**

Social media platforms serve as both organizational infrastructure and amplification mechanisms. They enable:

- Rapid coordination without centralized leadership
- Anonymity or pseudonymity, reducing perceived accountability
- Viral reinforcement, where content from one event inspires replication elsewhere

Research into digitally mediated collective behavior shows that online signals can translate into real-world action with minimal friction. In effect, social media reduces the “activation energy” required to assemble a crowd.

## **Motivation and Environmental Context**

Often many participants in these events are not initially motivated by criminal intent. Instead, research suggests drivers such as:

- Boredom and lack of structured activities
- Desire for social interaction and belonging
- Curiosity and novelty-seeking behavior

However, when combined with large group dynamics and minimal supervision, these factors create conditions where opportunistic crime can emerge. Combined with the erosion of the foundational values guiding acceptable behavior in society, chaos ensues.

## **From Gathering to Disorder: The Escalation Pathway**

For practitioners, it is useful to conceptualize these events as a progression:

### **Stage 1: Digital Mobilization**

- Event promoted via social media
- Messaging may be vague (“link up,” “pull up,” “everyone come out”)

### **Stage 2: Physical Convergence**

- Rapid influx of youth into a defined area
- Initial atmosphere may be social or celebratory

### **Stage 3: Threshold Activation**

- Crowd density increases
- Minor incidents (arguments, pushing, provocations) occur

### **Stage 4: Disorder**

- Fights, vandalism, or panic behaviors emerge
- Law enforcement intervention may escalate tensions

### **Stage 5: Opportunistic Crime**

- Theft, robbery, and assaults occur under cover of chaos

This “flash-to-crime pipeline” highlights a key point: the environment created by the gathering—not just participant intent—drives criminal outcomes.

## **Implications for Law Enforcement**

### **Intelligence and Early Detection**

Monitoring open-source social media channels can provide early indicators of planned gatherings. However, the decentralized and informal nature of communication presents challenges in distinguishing credible threats from routine online activity.

### **Rapid Deployment and Visibility**

Given the speed of escalation, agencies must prioritize:

- Pre-positioning resources in known gathering locations
- High-visibility patrols to deter escalation

### **Crowd Management Strategy**

Traditional crowd control tactics may be less effective due to:

- Lack of identifiable leadership
- Fluid crowd boundaries
- Mixed intent among participants

Agencies should emphasize:

- Communication and dispersal strategies
- Targeted enforcement against violent actors, rather than broad crowd suppression

### **Implications for Private Sector Security**

For private sector stakeholders—particularly in retail, banking, and commercial real estate—teen takeovers present a hybrid risk environment.

### **Indicators of Emerging Risk**

- Sudden influx of youth without clear purpose
- Increased filming or livestreaming behavior
- Social media references to specific locations

### **Operational Risks**

- Distraction-based theft
- Property damage
- Threats to employee and customer safety

### **Recommended Responses**

- Implement controlled access points where feasible
- Increase visible security presence
- Establish real-time communication channels with local law enforcement
- Train staff to recognize and respond to crowd-driven risk scenarios

### **Policy Considerations**

The response to teen takeovers has sparked debate among policymakers regarding the balance between enforcement and prevention. While curfews and increased policing may provide short-term mitigation, research suggests that sustainable solutions require addressing underlying factors, including:

- Availability of structured youth activities
- Design and management of public spaces
- Digital literacy and awareness related to online mobilization
- 

A purely enforcement-driven approach may fail to address the root causes of participation.

Teen takeovers combine youth behavior, rapid digital communication, and crowd dynamics, creating disorder that is contemporary in form but driven by familiar forces.

For criminal justice and security professionals, the challenge is to see these events as foreseeable results of networked social behavior under specific conditions—not isolated incidents.

Effective response requires:

- Early detection and intelligence gathering
- Adaptive operational strategies
- Cross-sector collaboration
- 

As these events continue to evolve, so too must the frameworks used to understand and manage them.

## TechDesk: Technology Around Us



### **The AI fraud scheme scammers use to bypass verification systems | Biometric Update**

Specialized AI bots fully automate every stage of the attack - from creating an immense amount of fake images to passing KYC checks and client onboarding.

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## **Alabama Suspect in Deadly Berea, KY Bank Robbery, Federal complaint says**

For those involved in physical security and financial institutions, although robberies have declined dramatically the last 20 years, this incident reminds us that criminal behavior can arise in unexpected locations.

**Technology and social media were significant components in the quick capture of the suspect, Brailen Weaver.**

Lexington police have confirmed that the suspect in the deadly bank robbery in Berea is in custody.

[Read More](#)

## **Leadership Desk**



## **What Separates Good Leaders From GREAT Ones, with Former US Marine, Joe McNamara**

I just saw Joe speak at a conference, and his message was phenomenal!

The link below provides connects to a podcase where he provides more details into Joe McNamara is a former Marine, ground force commander, and leadership speaker who's seen what real leadership looks like, both in combat and in corporate. In this episode, he sits down with Tara to unpack the mindset, emotional intelligence, and personal responsibility that separates average leaders from exceptional ones.

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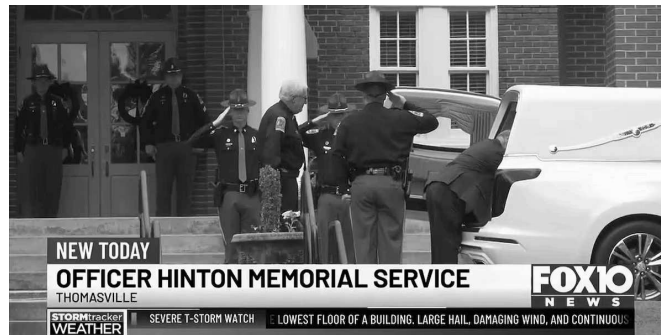
# **"Crossroads" Desk**



## Blue Watch Foundation - Fundraiser Trivia Night Last Night was Great Success

If you couldn't go to their online auction to help support their mission to reduce law enforcement mental health issues and combat suicide among law enforcement, you can donate on their website.

[Read More](#)



## Thomasville Officer, former Marine Honored at Funeral Service

Dallas Hinton, 25, died in a crash after leaving his shift.

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# One Last Thing

## Worship Center Security

Cut and paste the title of each resource into your search engine, as I did not insert links into the resource titles.

1) Comprehensive “Start-to-Finish” Security Toolkits

### **Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency – “Mitigating Attacks on Houses of Worship Security Guide”**

- The most comprehensive federal guide available
- Built from 10 years of real attack case studies
- Covers:
  - Active shooter and targeted violence
  - Suspicious behavior detection
  - Physical security layers
  - Emergency operations planning
- Emphasizes a “holistic security model” (people, process, technology)

### **Department of Homeland Security – “Houses of Worship Security Practices Guide”**

- Organized around the full lifecycle:
  - Prevention → Protection → Mitigation → Response → Recovery
- Includes practical planning templates and resilience concepts

## **CISA Houses of Worship Security Self-Assessment Tool**

- Structured questionnaire + scoring model
- Identifies:
  - Entry point vulnerabilities
  - ضعف in procedures
  - Gaps in surveillance, access control, and staffing
- Designed as a first step before spending money

## **2) Practical “During Service” Protection Resources**

Focused on real-time human threat detection and response

### **CISA “Power of Hello” Guide (Houses of Worship Edition)**

- Teaches behavioral detection and engagement
- Core principle: trained greeters = first line of defense
- Encourages:
  - Identifying anomalies (not profiling)
  - Early intervention through conversation

Operational translation:

- Greeters = informal security officers
- Ushers = situational awareness nodes

## **“Six Steps to Enhance Security Against Targeted Violence” (CISA)**

Key operational model:

1. Conduct risk assessment
2. Build a security team
3. Train staff/volunteers
4. Establish communication protocols
5. Coordinate with law enforcement
6. Exercise the plan

## **NSI / “If You See Something, Say Something” Integration**

- Encourages structured suspicious activity reporting
- Links churches to law enforcement intelligence channels

## **3) Facility Protection When Unoccupied**

This is where many churches are weakest—and where losses often occur (arson, theft, vandalism).

### **FEMA – Arson & Facility Protection Guidance**

Key controls:

- Exterior lighting (preferably motion-activated)
- Vegetation control (eliminate concealment)
- Strict key and alarm code control
- Locked doors/windows at all times
- Remove combustible materials
- Install sprinklers and alarms

Important insight:

Even basic controls (lighting + locks) are cited as high-impact deterrents.

### **CISA Physical Security Performance Goals**

- Low/no-cost improvements:
  - Access control discipline

- Surveillance placement
- Perimeter awareness
- Designed for resource-constrained organizations

#### **4) “Bridge” Resources (Tie People + Facility Together)**

##### **CISA Protective Security Advisors (PSAs)**

- Free federal field resources
- Provide:
  - On-site vulnerability assessments
  - Security planning support
  - Coordination with local law enforcement

##### **Faith-Based Information Sharing Networks (FB-ISA)**

- Threat intelligence sharing among churches
- Early warning on trends (e.g., targeting patterns)

##### **FEMA Faith-Based Community Resources**

- Emergency planning
- Volunteer coordination
- Disaster response integration

#### **5) What a “Complete Church Security Program” Looks Like (Synthesis)**

If you combine the above resources, a program typically includes:

##### **A. During Services**

- Visible but low-friction security presence (greeters/ushers trained)
- Behavioral detection + engagement (“Power of Hello” model)
- Clearly defined response protocols:
  - Medical
  - Disruptive individuals
  - Active threat
- Communication plan (radios, phones, code words)

##### **B. Between Services (Facility Protection)**

- Hardened perimeter:
  - Lighting
  - Locks
  - Camera coverage
- Access control:
  - Key/accountability logs
  - Alarm systems
- Environmental design:
  - Clear sightlines
  - No concealment areas

##### **C. Governance Layer**

- Security team (staff + trained volunteers)
- Written Emergency Operations Plan
- Regular drills/exercises
- Law enforcement liaison relationship



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