Good afternoon. I want to thank Secretary Leavitt for coming here today to visit with some of our top leaders in education, mental health and law enforcement about our state's best practices in school safety. The images of the tragedy at Virginia Tech are still fresh in our memories. The loss of innocent life is heartbreaking. But learning every day more and more about the sociopath who did this, his disturbed life, and all the warning signs that seem more obvious in retrospect is truly what haunts us. If you're like me, you probably keep thinking over and over again: was there any way to prevent this from happening?

Texans felt the same stunned horror in 1966, when Charles Whitman climbed to the top of the University of Texas Tower. He seemed like a regular guy too- came from a well-to-do home, college-educated, a good family man. But unbeknownst to many, there were some real demons Whitman was dealing with. And when he talked about "going up to the tower with a deer rifle and shooting people," his friends, and even his physiatrist, just dismissed it as nonsense. He killed 16 people that day, and wounded many more.

When tragedies like this happen, it causes us to re-evaluate whether we are doing all we can to protect our students and our residents. That's why we are here today, to talk with key leaders in the law enforcement, education and healthcare communities to ensure we are fully prepared to not only respond to a tragedy when the unthinkable happens, but to prevent it to begin with because of rapid intervention in a troubled person's life. The work Secretary Leavitt and the other federal agencies that are participating in these discussions are doing will help institutions looking for advice on how to secure their campuses and make them safer.

Texas already has taken steps to ensure campus safety. Some universities are developing system capabilities to send text messages to student and faculty's cell phones to alert them of an emergency, others are hiring a full-time Emergency Preparedness Director, and in 2005, we constitutionally required each school district to adopt and exercise all-hazards emergency plans with school staff and students. Texas also has a School Safety Center that teaches schools how to promote positive school environments and trains staff on how to be proactive in addressing student concerns. The center publishes a report on school safety data for the public every year so parents can know how safe their child's school is.

The unexpected is a scary thing. But we can be better prepared for the unexpected by making certain our schools and universities are equipped with the knowledge and the equipment to handle emergencies, that our teachers, professors
and mental health professionals are better prepared to recognize the warning signs in dangerous individualism, and by working together to prevent tragedy before it strikes. I think we've made some progress here today. And to further discuss this, I want to introduce U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Michael Leavitt.

Thank you. We will be happy to try to answer your questions.