

School Security Plans

Lines of Business: Property, General Liability, Public Officials Liability, Educators Legal Liability

Risk Control Strategy/Key Issues: To establish a program to develop and implement security measures that will help to protect students while on school property.

Suggested Policy Elements:

- **Limit public access to school facilities**
Assess how easy it is for intruders to gain access to the school facility. Establish controls for vehicles and public access. Install entry-way cameras where feasible. Internal corridor cameras may be helpful 24/7 or only during off-hours. Determine if non-school functions or activities create additional access and security risks.
- **Develop screening procedures for visitors, volunteers, contractors, and service personnel**
Sign-in procedures are, by themselves, insufficient. Visitor badges add security. Well intentioned individuals will follow the rules for visitor check-ins. Persons who intend to do harm will try to circumvent screening procedures. All school personnel should be trained regarding non-confrontational methods for approaching strangers on school grounds. All personnel and students should be directed to report any unauthorized person who is in the building or on the grounds.
- **Encourage and provide training so that students will report any unusual activities, behaviors, or unauthorized persons whom they encounter on the grounds or in the building**
Encourage students to buy into the idea that they share the responsibility for their own safety and for promoting security within their school. Students may be the first to see something unusual or out of place that requires an immediate response. Confidentiality may be an issue to address.
- **Train members of the custodial and maintenance staff to assume an active role in response to a crisis or suspicious event**
Non-faculty employees may be the first line of defense against an intruder. They should be equipped to be in contact with the central office to report unusual or threatening circumstances.
- **Prepare and periodically review and test a crisis contingency and management plan**
The plan should entail all aspects of response, including lockdown, warning alarms, use of physical security and fire systems, communications, escape protocols and routes, safe assembly points, procedures for handling medical issues, methods for distinguishing victims from perpetrators, parent notification protocols, event documentation, preservation of evidence, and public relations
- **Provide all staff members with adequate crisis training and support**
Prepare an inventory of those staff members on campus who have medical or other skills that can be utilized in an emergency. Update the information at least annually.

- **Review official school partnership agreements with law enforcement**
Ensure that the crisis roles and responsibilities of staff and law enforcers are clearly understood. Everyone should know who will be in charge during each step of a crisis as it unfolds.
- **Establish protocols and procedures for assessing and dealing with potential threats**
Establish a threat assessment team consisting of school personnel, law enforcement, and mental health professionals who may be called upon to assess the validity of a specific threat or to work together to discuss and evaluate, as appropriate, students who are experiencing unusual emotional stress or who are showing signs of withdrawal, drug/alcohol abuse, bullying, or unusual behavior.

Department of Homeland Security Resources

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) offers a wide-range of emergency preparedness resources to help schools create safe and secure environments for their students. In order to advance school preparedness nationwide, DHS offers several planning and training resources to help local schools prepare comprehensive all-hazard emergency preparedness plans that are exercised regularly and developed in partnership with their community leaders and first responders.

- **Safe School Initiative:** Established in collaboration by the U.S. Secret Service and the U.S. Department of Education's Safe and Drug Free Schools Program, the Safe School Initiative (SSI) focuses on prevention and provides useful information about the thinking and behavior of students who commit acts of targeted violence in our nation's schools. One of the key recommendations of the SSI was that schools form multidisciplinary threat assessment teams to assist with identifying, assessing and managing students who may pose a threat of targeted violence. An interactive CD-ROM, titled A Safe School and Threat Assessment Experience: Scenarios Exploring the Findings of the Safe School Initiative complements the published documents of the Safe School Initiative. The CD is available to law enforcement and school safety personnel across the country and can be ordered via the Department of Education website at <http://www.edpubs.org/>.
- **Protecting Our School's Infrastructure:** DHS' Office of Infrastructure Protection (OIP) has developed and issued Characteristics and Common Vulnerabilities, Potential Indicators of Terrorist Activity, and Protective Measures reports for public and private schools (K-12) and higher education institutions. With dual benefits in addressing both terrorism and criminal-related security issues, these resources are available to local law enforcement and school officials to help identify site-specific vulnerabilities, anomalies or incidents that may precede a terrorist attack or other kind of harmful incident, and certain measures that can be taken to better protect and create a safer environment. DHS has conducted over 40 Site Assistance Visits at schools to help officials identify potential vulnerabilities as well as Soft Target Awareness Courses that address the security of schools and higher education institutions.
- **Protecting Against Man-Made or Terrorist Incidents:** The DHS Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) offers a series of manuals and publications to help schools address their physical design and layout as part of mitigation process to protect against terrorist attacks and natural disasters. These materials include: Design Guide for Improving School Safety in Earthquakes, Floods and High Winds; Primer to Design Safe School Projects in Case of Terrorist Attacks; Incremental Seismic Rehabilitation of School Buildings (K-12): Providing Protection to People and Buildings; and FEMA Mitigation Case Studies Protecting School Children from Tornadoes: State of Kansas School Shelter Initiative.

- **School Preparedness Training Courses:** FEMA also offers several courses – both online and in-person, through the Emergency Management Institute to help schools and district personnel develop emergency plans for all-hazards. Through “train-the-trainer” courses, FEMA links school personnel with first responders, law enforcement, public health officials and others to discuss different needs and decisions that may arise during an emergency such as transportation, food and health, medical assistance, facility management, and communication. More information on available courses may be found at <http://training.fema.gov/emiweb>.
- **Lessons Learned Information Sharing (LLIS):** Established to help first responders, emergency planners and managers, and homeland security partners prevent, prepare for, and respond to terrorism, this web portal includes valuable best practices and lessons learned information, including a section on school emergency planning. Additional information may be found at <https://www.llis.gov>.
- **DHS “READY” Campaign:** A national public service advertising campaign produced by The Advertising Council in partnership with the Department of Homeland Security, the Ready Campaign is designed to educate and empower Americans to prepare for and respond to emergencies, including natural disasters and potential terrorist attacks. Ready Kids is the newest addition to the campaign and provides a family-friendly tool to help parents and teachers educate children, ages 8-12, about emergencies and how they can help their families better prepare. Individuals interested in more information about family, business and community preparedness can visit www.ready.gov or call 1-800-BE-READY to receive free materials.
- **Citizen Corps:** Created by President Bush in 2002, Citizen Corps provides Americans of all abilities with opportunities to gain information, training, and hands-on volunteer opportunities that increase community preparedness and resilience to all types of hazards. Headquartered at FEMA, there are more than 2,220 Citizen Corps Councils nationwide. These councils operate at the community level bringing public and private sectors together with local government, emergency managers, voluntary organizations, and first responders to coordinate disaster preparedness planning and response efforts in our communities. Schools are encouraged to partner with local Councils to integrate school emergency plans with community plans; coordinate alert systems; and educate, train and exercise the school community. Visit www.citizencorps.gov for more information.
- **Funding and Additional Resources:** DHS offers several grant programs to State and local governments with potential applicability to school-related violence or terrorism. States and local governments make the decision as to whether this program may be applied to educational facilities. Information on DHS grants is available at www.grants.gov.

A complete DHS list of emergency preparedness resources for schools may also be found online at www.dhs.gov/schoolpreparedness. In addition, individuals can view a School Preparedness Virtual Town Hall conducted by the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Education. This 90-minute web cast provides information concerning grant programs and other school preparedness resources available from the Department of Education’s Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools as well as the United States Secret Service and Federal Emergency Management Agency, components of the Department of Homeland Security.

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SAMPLE BUILDING ACCESS PLAN POLICY CHECKLIST

When an employee leaves or is terminated from a position, a review of their facility access should be completed and all access hardware such as keys should be obtained before they leave the grounds. All combination door locks should have the codes changed, and the new codes provided to all existing employees.

A review of all points of access should be made to determine how they are controlled and who has access through these entryways. How is access controlled and by what means:

- Key cards?
- Keys controlled?
- Combination pads?
- Etc.

These access points should then be listed and reviewed in an ongoing basis. Positioning of these areas should be reviewed and evaluated for types of controls that should be in place. Some of suggested controls are:

- Panic buttons
- Individual buildings or remote locations?
- Communications by walkie-talkies or other devices?
- Auxiliary source of power?
- Manual back-ups for automatic systems
- Walk-through metal detectors
- Metal detectors manned by guards
- Hand held metal detectors

Not all of these controls are suitable for all facilities. Stationary metal detectors are fine for courthouses and other municipal facilities where access is controlled through a central point. Schools should concentrate on hand held detectors and a visible presence at entryways, as well as, on the grounds during changing of classes, the start and end of the day and during school wide activities.