All children have the right to be educated in a safe environment. Research shows that they cannot learn in an atmosphere of fear. Administrators, teachers, caregivers, students, law enforcement, and community leaders—working together and sharing responsibility—can create safer school environments so learning can occur.

Regardless of the role you play in a student's life, schools need your help in devising solutions to safety and security issues. You can start by listening to students' concerns; educating yourself about school safety and security; working with school staff, parents, and others in the community to assess school safety and security issues; and advocating for improvements when necessary.

Three primary issues affect school safety: the social environment or "climate" of the school, the layout and organization of the school, and the physical security of the school building.

## School Social Climate

Bullying, fistfights, and shoving are the most common safety and security issues that kids face at school, while theft is the most prevalent type of school crime. Some problems, such as gang activity and drugs, can have a huge negative impact on a school.

You will need to work in partnership with the school principal and others to identify problems and develop solutions to social problems in your school. As you do so, keep in mind these important characteristics of safe schools:

- *A positive school* climate and atmosphere
- *Clear and high expectations* for student performance and behavior
- *Identification badges,* office keys, and codes are protected and monitored, and a process for reporting lost or missing badges and keys is in place.


NATIONAL CRIME PREVENTION COUNCIL

*Crime Prevention Tips From*

**National Crime Prevention Council**
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Washington, DC 20036-5325
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www.ncpc.org

*and*

**Missouri Crime Prevention Information Center**
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BJA Bureau of Justice Assistance
Office of Justice Programs ■ U.S. Department of Justice

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ADT

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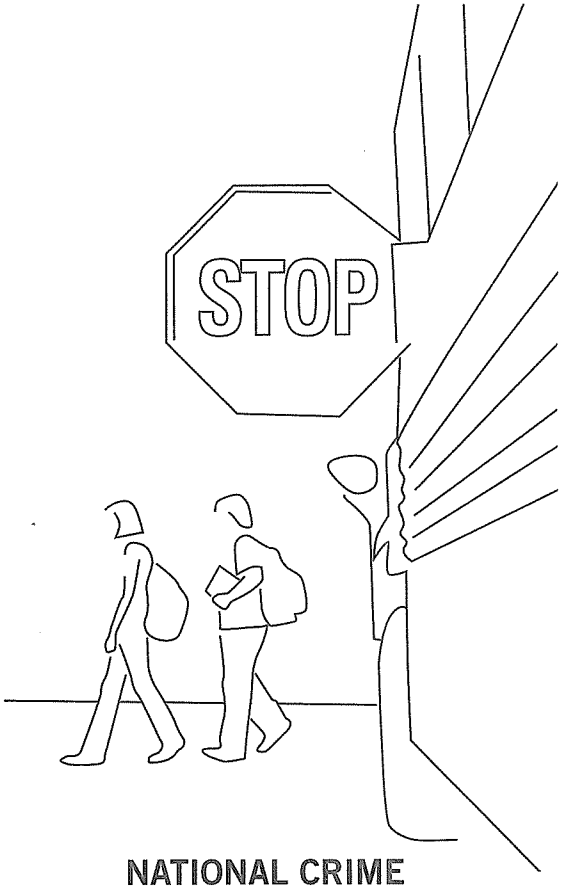
# A Guide to Improving School Safety and Security

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- *High levels of both student* participation and parent involvement
- *Opportunities* for students to learn life skills and develop socially
- *Values and practices* that make everyone feel included
- *A culture that encourages* respect and an appreciation of diversity
- *A principal and school board* that respond promptly to concerns

All schools should include crime prevention in their curricula. Students should learn how to settle disputes without violence, control their anger, embrace diversity, and solve problems. Students can also benefit from programs that build social skills, increase self-esteem, teach assertiveness, and assist with stress management.

## School Layout and Organization

Preventing crime and violence can extend beyond changing student behavior to taking a good look at the physical nature of the school. You should advocate that your school administrators apply Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles to the school campus. The principles of CPTED center on three areas: controlling access, improving natural surveillance, and increasing definition of school boundaries.

Controlling unauthorized access to buildings and grounds can include the following:

- *Having a single access point* or entrance for visitors
- *Screening visitors* and requiring them to wear ID tags
- *Monitoring entry* to the school from a single point

Improving surveillance of the school buildings and grounds can include the following:

- *Ensuring clear lines* of sight by removing unnecessary obstacles and trimming vegetation
- *Limiting hiding places* and improving lighting
- *Examining opportunities* to use electronic surveillance to enhance visibility or detect intruders

Enhancing school boundaries for better control can include the following:

- *Clearly defining* the edges of school property with tree plantings or fences to enforce recognition that the school is not a general public-access space
- *Individualizing areas* of the school (e.g., arts department, science department) to promote boundaries, "ownership," and pride in the school as well as to aid identification of unauthorized individuals
- *Keeping up good maintenance*—a clean, well-cared-for school fosters school pride and orderliness and helps keep repair costs in check.

## Physical Security: Locks, Alarms, and More

Prevention programs and CPTED improvements are not enough to ensure a safe environment. Security—the reinforcement of the school facility using hardware components with the proper procedural elements—reduces the risk of crime and school violence by allowing the administration to control and monitor access to any area of the facility.

Physical security enhancements make it more difficult for criminals to strike. This "target hardening" might include such things as installing video cameras, metal detectors, or alarm systems. To increase the security of students, faculty, and staff, safe and secure schools follow these guidelines:

- *Visitors are required* to enter at one place, to sign in, and to show proper identification.
- *Unmonitored doors* stay locked at all times to prevent unauthorized persons or items from entering the building.
- *Students entering* and exiting the school property can be easily monitored from the school building.
- *All doors have high-security locks* or electronic access control units. This applies especially to outside doors, basements, and closets that have private information or hazardous materials.
- *Electronic access control* units are protected from unauthorized mechanical override with secure key bypass using patented control of duplication of keys.
- *All doors are solid.* Look for sheet steel on both sides of back and basement doors.
- *Door frames and hinges are in good condition* and strong enough that they cannot be pried open.
- *All windows* are secure.
- *Upon change of staff* or administration, locks are changed or cylinders are rekeyed.
- *Motion-sensitive* as well as constant lights are used outdoors.
- *Stairwells and out-of-the-way* corridors are well lighted and frequently monitored.
- *The receptionist or secretary* is equipped with a panic button for emergencies, a camera with a monitor at another location, and a high security lock on the front door that can be controlled from the reception desk.