



*Safe Communities ~
Safe Schools*

FACT SHEET

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A Blueprint for Safe Schools

A safe school plan is a framework for action that can be used as a guide for current and future planning. It addresses both the behavioral and property protection aspects of violence prevention. The goal of safe school planning is to create and maintain a positive and welcoming school climate, free of drugs, violence, intimidation, and fear—an environment in which teachers can teach and students can learn. Establishing a safe school plan is a long-term, systematic, and comprehensive process. As with most successful violence prevention interventions, the best safe school plan involves the entire community.

Components of a Safe School Plan

1. Convene a Safe School Planning Team

The planning team is the driving force behind the planning process and should consist of a variety of representatives from all aspects of the community including students (if age appropriate), parents, teachers, administrators, Board of Education members, government representatives, business representatives, religious leaders, law enforcement officials, etc.

2. Conduct a School Site Assessment

An annual school site assessment should be conducted and used as an evaluation and planning tool to determine the extent of any school safety problems and/or school climate issues.

3. Develop Strategies and Implement Violence Prevention Programs to Address School Safety Concerns

In an effort to meet the needs identified in the annual school site assessment, some strategies to consider are:

- Establish a clear Code of Behavior that includes the rights and responsibilities of both adults and students within the school community.
- Include all youth in positive, rewarding activities and relationships at school.
- Review federal, state, and local statutes pertaining to student management and school order with the school district lawyer as well as review relevant school and district policies.
- Control campus access and establish uniform visitor screening procedures.
- Keep an accurate and detailed record of all school crime incidents.
- Promote an ongoing relationship with local law enforcement authorities, local businesses, and other community organizations.
- Provide a school or district hotline that can be accessed anonymously to report a threat or pending violent incident.
- Establish guidelines and procedures for identifying students at risk of violence toward themselves or others. See The U.S. Department of Education's *Early Warning Timely Response: A Guide to Safe Schools*.

- Identify effective violence prevention programs that meet the needs of the school community, including both in-school programs and community programs appropriate for referring students and families. Examples include the following Blueprints for Violence Prevention Model and Promising programs:
 - The Incredible Years
 - Life Skills Training (LST)
 - Midwestern Prevention Program
 - Olweus Bullying Prevention Program
 - Project Toward No Drug Abuse (Project TND)
 - Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS)
 - ATLAS (Athletes Training and Learning to Avoid Steroids)
 - Behavioral Monitoring and Reinforcement Program
 - FAST Track
 - Good Behavior Game
 - I Can Problem Solve
 - Perry Preschool Project
 - Project ALERT
 - Project Northland
 - School Transitional Environmental Program (STEP)
 - Seattle Social Development Project
 - Strengthening Families Program for Parents and Youth 10-14

4. Establish a Social Support Team

The purpose of this team is to help improve the social climate of the school. Members, including teachers, parents, students, counselors, mental health workers, and law enforcement provide information necessary to identify which students are at risk and the most appropriate support for that student.

5. Develop a Crisis Response Plan

In the event of a natural disaster or emergency at school, a crisis response plan outlines specific procedures for teachers and staff during various emergencies, including responding to a violent incident. Having a plan in place can save time and energy and can maintain commitment when unforeseen problems arise.

This is only a blueprint for a safe school plan. No two safe school plans are exactly the same. Each school community must identify its own needs and the strategies necessary to meet those needs. A safe school plan is not static; it is an ongoing process, created by multiple components. Whether the violence in your district is presently alarming or not, now is the time to institute a school/community-developed and implemented safe school plan to ensure a peaceful environment for children to grow and learn. Remember that the key to a safe school is creating a welcoming, friendly, supportive environment with clear guidelines for appropriate behavior that are enforced fairly and consistently.

References

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- Elliott, D.S., Hamburg, B.A., & Williams, K.R. (1998). *Violence in American Schools: A New Perspective*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.