SchoolSafety.gov

FEDERAL AND STATE RESOURCES, GUIDANCE, AND TOOLS TO CREATE SAFER SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS

Introduction

SchoolSafety.gov is a collaborative, interagency website created by the Federal government to provide schools and districts with actionable recommendations to create a safe and supportive learning environment where students can thrive and grow. The site serves as a one-stop access point for the American public and school communities to find information, resources, guidance, and evidence-based practices on a range of school safety topics and threats. Through the site, members of the kindergarten through grade 12 (K-12) academic community can also utilize specific tools to prioritize school safety actions, find applicable resources, connect with state-specific and local school safety officials, and develop school safety plans.

School Safety Topics

On SchoolSafety.gov, the K-12 community can find the latest Federal government resources, guidance, and tools on a range of topics related to school safety, including:

- **Bullying and Cyberbullying**
- **Cybersecurity**
- **Emergency Planning**
- **Infectious Diseases and Public Health**
- **Mental Health**
- **School Climate**
- **Targeted Violence**
- **Threat Assessment and Reporting**

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Actionable Features and Tools

Specific resources and tools available on SchoolSafety.gov include:

Grants Finder Tool
Helps members of the K-12 school community more easily find, apply for, and ultimately receive school safety-related Federal funding
Link: schoolsafety.gov/grants-finder-tool

Safety Readiness Tool
Assists users in evaluating their respective school's safety posture across ten elements and provides a tailored Action Plan with options for consideration, aligned resources, and grant opportunities specific to their individual school's needs
Link: schoolsafety.gov/safety-readiness-tool

State Information Sharing Tool
Enables schools to locate and access state-specific school safety resources, programs, contacts, and opportunities
Link: schoolsafety.gov/state-search-tool

Resource Library
Provides actionable resources, guidance, training, and fact sheets that can be filtered by audience, intended application, and topics to help schools create and maintain a safe learning environment
Link: schoolsafety.gov/find-school-safety-resources

Calendar of Events
Features upcoming webinars, training sessions, and conferences for school safety personnel, administrators, educators, and parents
Link: schoolsafety.gov/events

Informational Webinar Series
Addresses emerging school safety topics, threats, and risks, and provides information on related Federal government resources, tools, and best practices
Link: schoolsafety.gov/events

Monthly School Safety Community Bulletin
Delivers regular updates on the latest school safety-related news, events, opportunities, and resources
Link: bit.ly/2XeJdAO

Communications Center
Provides a comprehensive collection of one-pagers, presentations, newsletter bulletins, and materials available from SchoolSafety.gov
Link: schoolsafety.gov/school-safety-communications-center

For additional SchoolSafety.gov news, resources, and events:

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Back to School Resources

Plan for a safe return to school by taking a holistic approach to school safety.

Back-to-school season is a time of excitement, anticipation, and at times, concern for the kindergarten through grade 12 (K-12) community. In addition to the academic and administrative complexities a new school year can present, schools and districts may also contend with ongoing and evolving security challenges and threats. Having the proper school safety plans, procedures, and systems in place is a critical priority for schools as they open their doors to students this fall.

While there isn't a one-size-fits-all approach to school safety, there are common elements schools should consider in creating and sustaining a safe learning environment. These span from planning and prevention activities to protection and mitigation measures, to response and recovery actions during and after an actual incident. By integrating these various school safety elements – and applying them to their individualized and unique needs, challenges, and settings – schools can create a safer campus on the first day of school, and year-round.

Key school safety issues and strategies to support a safe back-to-school season include:

Bullying and Cyberbullying

Bullying is widespread in the United States and can take many forms. The behavior can threaten students' physical and emotional safety as well as impact their social and academic success at school. Educators, school staff, and parents can help prevent bullying by talking about it, building a safe school environment, and creating a community-wide bullying prevention strategy. Districts and schools should also adopt school climate initiatives and support for digital citizenship and positive character development, as well as procedures for observing student behavior in school and online to identify at-risk behaviors and provide interventions before they create safety issues.

Cybersecurity and Online Safety

K-12 schools have experienced a significant increase in cyberattacks in recent years. These incidents can have costly and consequential impacts to a school's privacy, data, and technology systems needed to perform operational and educational functions. Students are also spending more time online than ever before, increasing their potential for exposure to online safety risks and threats. School communities can work towards strengthening cyber safety and security by promoting online safety practices, improving digital literacy and critical thinking skills, and implementing cybersecurity practices such as multi-factor authentication, regular software updates, and the use of strong passwords.

Emergency Planning

Emergencies at schools can happen at any time and can include man-made incidents such as targeted violence attacks as well as natural disasters and accidents. Planning for these events – and knowing how to respond – is a critical component of school safety. Every district or school should develop and implement a comprehensive school Emergency Operations Plan that describe the actions that students, teachers, and school staff should take before, during, and after emergency events. Training, exercises, and drills are also essential to help ensure there is a common understanding of emergency policies and responsibilities; to test emergency response protocols and plans; and to practice the actions everyone will take in the event of an incident.

Infectious Diseases and Public Health

The rapid onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and its significant impact to our daily lives underscores the importance of preparing for sudden infectious disease outbreaks and other public health emergencies. Sustaining safe in-person learning, ensuring proper hygiene, and managing daily operations are all important for keeping a safe school environment amid a health crisis. Schools are encouraged to implement layered prevention strategies – multiple strategies for prevention that are used together consistently – to protect students, teachers, and staff during an outbreak. They can also work with local public health officials, consistent with applicable laws and regulations, to determine additional prevention strategies needed in their area based on levels of community transmission and other factors.

Mental Health

Students often come to school with complex mental health concerns or social service needs. Schools are essential partners in supporting the mental health and well-being of students and can fill a critical role in both identifying children and adolescents who have or are at risk for mental disorders and connecting them with treatment. By providing access to mental health services and supporting students who are experiencing mental health challenges, schools can help foster a sense of safety, prevent the worsening of mental health conditions, and create better outcomes for students.

School Climate

School climate is a broad, multifaceted concept that involves many aspects of the student's educational experience. Research suggests that a positive school climate can lead to a significant decrease in the likelihood of crime, aggression, and violent behavior, as well as result in improved behavioral and academic outcomes for youth. Developing students with strong character who are connected to their peers, educators, and communities in meaningful ways can help improve school climate. Schools and districts should also implement social, emotional, and behavioral support systems, as well as engage in a routine school climate improvement process, to create an environment that supports and responds to student behavior.

Targeted Violence

Targeted violence refers to violence that is premeditated and directed at specific individuals, groups, or locations. It is distinct from violence that is impulsive, random, or spontaneous and is often distinguished by pre-attack behaviors that suggest violence as a possible outcome. Schools can work to prepare for potential acts of targeted violence by improving their campuses' physical security and involving school personnel who are trained to prevent, recognize, and respond to threats of violence, as well as implementing other violence prevention strategies. Conducting site assessments and developing building security plans can also identify existing vulnerabilities and enhance overall school security.

Threat Assessment and Reporting

Identifying and addressing threatening or concerning behaviors can help prevent and reduce targeted violence at K-12 schools. The use of a multidisciplinary threat assessment team comprised of the appropriate school staff can help identify, assess, and intervene with students who may pose a risk of harm to themselves or others. Schools should also establish a reporting system that is continually monitored and allows anonymous reporting to help provide school officials with the information they need to stop violence before it occurs.

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Cybersecurity Action Steps for the K–12 Community

Take proactive steps to defend against cybersecurity threats to your school.

Our growing dependence on technology systems – coupled with emerging, evolving, and increasingly deceptive cyber threats – demands enhanced awareness and vigilance when it comes to our online world. All educational institutions are at risk of falling victim to a cyberattack, and in recent years, K-12 schools have been an increasingly frequent target. These attacks can impact a school's ability to carry out its educational obligations, protect sensitive student and staff data, and provide a safe and secure learning environment for our nation's youth.

Defending against cyber threats takes teamwork, and every individual in the school setting, no matter their role, can play a part. Students, educators, administrators, and school personnel should 'see themselves in cyber' by taking simple, proactive steps to better protect themselves and their school systems online.

School communities can take four simple action steps to reduce their cybersecurity risk posture.

Enable Multi-Factor Authentication

Adversaries are increasingly capable of phishing or harvesting passwords to gain unauthorized access to information systems. Multi-factor authentication (MFA) is a layered approach to securing online accounts and the data they contain that requires users to provide two or more authenticators to verify their identity. Users who enable MFA are significantly less likely to be hacked because even if a password is compromised, unauthorized users will not be able to meet the second authentication requirement, stopping them from gaining access to online systems and data.

Use Strong Passwords

Passwords are the most common means of authentication, and many systems have been successfully breached because of non-secure and inadequate passwords. Tips for creating a strong password include applying a combination of varying character types; avoiding common words, numerical patterns, and personal information; and using the longest password or passphrase permissible. School staff can also consider using a password manager program, which stores randomly generated passwords across multiple accounts and is only accessible with a master password.

Recognize and Report Phishing

Phishing attacks use email or malicious websites to solicit personal information by posing as a trustworthy organization. Common signs of a phishing attempt include suspicious sender addresses, generic greetings and signatures, spoofed hyperlinks and websites, misspellings, poor grammar and sentence structure, and suspicious attachments. Schools can reduce the risk of phishing emails by enabling strong spam filters and implementing a cybersecurity awareness and training program to educate students and staff on the ways to recognize and report suspicious activity.

Update Your Software

Outdated software can contain vulnerabilities that can be exploited by threat actors. When vendors become aware of vulnerabilities in their products, they often issue patches. Schools and districts should install updates as soon as possible to protect their systems, as well as enable automatic software updates whenever possible.

Sources: cisa.gov/ | schoolsafety.gov/cybersecurity/

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Emergency Preparedness and School Safety for K–12 Schools

Take a comprehensive approach to school emergency planning by using the five preparedness mission areas.

Families and communities expect schools to keep their children safe from a range of emergency events, including natural disasters, crime-related incidents, and accidents. Emergency planning is a key component of school safety that can include large-scale actions or everyday activities that help build a safe school environment.

Elements of emergency planning include creating a comprehensive school Emergency Operations Plan (EOP), holding tabletop exercises to test procedures and protocols, and conducting developmentally appropriate drills so that all members of the school community can practice the actions they would take before, during, and after an emergency. Though emergencies can happen at any time, schools can often limit their impact through effective emergency planning, and a comprehensive approach that effectively integrates the five preparedness mission areas – prevention, protection, mitigation, response, and recovery.

Preparedness Mission Areas

The five preparedness mission areas are all connected and directly address the greatest risks of an emergency event.

Prevention

Prevention is the action schools take to prevent a threatened or actual incident from occurring and includes the capabilities necessary to avoid, deter, or stop an emergency. Efforts to prevent emergencies may include a range of activities, including assessing and addressing the safety, security, and maintenance of school facilities and grounds; educating students and school staff on appropriate behaviors; and fostering a positive school climate, supporting student mental health, and addressing bullying.

Protection

Protection means the capabilities to secure schools against acts of violence and man-made or natural disasters. Protection focuses on ongoing actions that protect students, teachers, staff, visitors, networks, and property from a threat or hazard. Even if a school is at a high state of readiness, there will always be a need for continued emergency management. Schools may consider establishing policies that help create a safer and more secure campus; training the school community on appropriate response activities; conducting exercises and drills; and maintaining relevant supplies to support emergency response.

Mitigation

Mitigation means the capabilities necessary to eliminate or reduce the loss of life and property damage by lessening the impact of an event or emergency. No matter how much a school prepares, some incidents cannot be prevented. To support mitigation efforts, schools can conduct assessments to reduce or eliminate potential hazards and identify areas for improvement; conduct exercises to practice emergency response and strengthen internal and external partnerships; and take measures to protect against injury and/or damage to the school environment.

Response

Response means the capabilities necessary to stabilize an emergency once it has already happened or is certain to happen in an unpreventable way; to establish a safe and secure environment; to save lives and property; and to facilitate the transition to recovery. A response can be faster and more effective through pre-planning. To respond to an emergency, schools should consider activating their EOP; providing directives for taking immediate protective actions; notifying and coordinating with first responders; documenting actions taken; and communicating regularly with their communities.

Recovery

Recovery means the capabilities necessary to assist districts and schools affected by an event or emergency in restoring the learning environment. Emergencies can disrupt the worldview of students, staff, and family members, so thoughtful planning for the recovery process is key in restoring the mental, academic, physical, and social well-being of those affected. In the wake of an emergency, schools can repurpose facilities for instruction or adopt a blended learning framework, offer expanded mental health services, and request emergency funding to help facilitate a smoother recovery. Schools can also embark on after action activities to review the effectiveness of their EOPs, and to make necessary updates using lessons learned.

Sources: rems.ed.gov/ | fema.gov/emergency-managers/national-preparedness | schoolsafety.gov/emergency-planning | rems.ed.gov/docs/REMS_K-12_Guide_508.pdf

For additional information and resources on emergency planning and school safety, visit SchoolSafety.gov.

For technical assistance, guidance, training, and other products and services related to emergency operations planning for education agencies, visit the Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (REMS) Technical Assistance (TA) Center.

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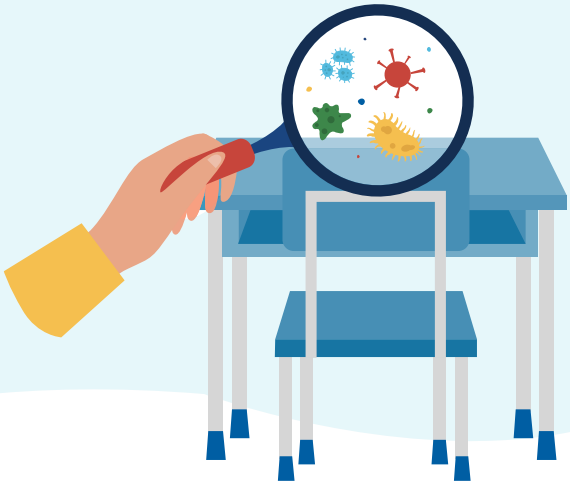
Infectious Diseases and Public Health Resources



Help prevent the spread of infectious diseases in schools through a variety of strategies for everyday operations.

Kindergarten through grade 12 (K-12) schools are an important part of the infrastructure of communities as they provide safe, supportive learning environments for students and children and offer critical services that help to mitigate health disparities. The ability for schools to remain open and practice in-person instruction is critical both for students' learning and education, as well as for the opportunities they provide for youth health, well-being, and development. Throughout the year, however, schools can face challenges to sustaining safe and healthy in-person learning due to potential outbreaks of infectious diseases like COVID-19, influenza (flu), and others.

While infectious disease outbreaks and other public health concerns may be unpredictable, K-12 schools should put in place a core set of prevention strategies as part of their normal operations. These include teaching and reinforcing proper hand hygiene, cleaning and disinfecting surfaces, optimizing ventilation and maintaining improvements to indoor air quality, promoting equitable access to vaccinations, and encouraging students and staff to stay home when they are sick. School and district administrators should also work with local health officials to consider other local conditions and factors when deciding to implement prevention strategies.

There are a variety of actions schools can take every day to help prevent the spread of infectious diseases, including:

Hand Hygiene

One of the most important steps to keep staff and children in schools healthy is ensuring proper hygiene, including cleaning hands to prevent the spread of infectious diseases. Schools should encourage hand hygiene among students and staff through education, scheduled time for handwashing, and by providing appropriate supplies. Actions include monitoring handwashing and promoting these behaviors, especially during key times in the day such as before and after eating, and after using the restroom. Schools should also teach and reinforce covering coughs and sneezes to help keep individuals from getting and spreading infectious diseases. Resources include:

- Clean Hands and Spaces: Web-Based Training: This training for educators, administrators, and school staff consists of four modules designed to equip school communities with knowledge and skills to encourage good hygiene practices.
- Hand Hygiene at School: This webpage highlights the importance of hand hygiene and outlines ways school personnel can promote hand hygiene in school to keep staff and children healthy.
- Handwashing in Communities: Health Promotion Materials: This webpage features printable posters that can help raise awareness about handwashing in highly visible public areas, such as school hallways and restrooms.
- When and How to Wash Your Hands: This webpage provides information on how germs spread and guidance on when and how to wash your hands to prevent the spread of infections.

Cleaning and Disinfecting

Cleaning and disinfecting are part of a broad approach to preventing infectious diseases in schools by lowering the number of germs on surfaces or objects to a safe level. Cleaning removes germs, dirt, and impurities, whereas disinfecting kills germs by using chemicals. Schools should follow their standard procedures for routine cleaning and disinfecting, including daily sanitizing of surfaces and objects that are touched often, such as desks, door and faucet handles, computer keyboards, and other hands-on learning items. Resources include:

- Commit to Clean: Classroom Checklist: This checklist is designed to help with routine school cleaning to keep classrooms and shared spaces clean for the well-being of students and staff.
- Environmental NPIs: Surface Cleaning: This webpage features information on environmental nonpharmaceutical interventions (NPIs) like routine surface cleaning that help to eliminate the flu virus from frequently touched surfaces and objects in schools and other settings.
- How To Clean and Disinfect Schools To Help Slow the Spread of Flu: This webpage offers tips on how to clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces and objects, how to use cleaning products safely, and how to handle waste properly to slow the spread of flu.

Ventilation

Good ventilation can reduce the number of virus particles in the air and, along with other preventive actions, can reduce the likelihood of spreading disease. Schools should be aware of air quality and ventilation measures and should optimize ventilation and maintain improvements to indoor air quality to reduce the risk of germs and contaminants spreading through the air. Resources include:

- Creating Healthy Indoor Air Quality in Schools: This webpage includes resources for schools to promote a safe, healthy learning environment by improving indoor air quality and breathability.
- Healthy Indoor Environments in Schools During the COVID-19 Pandemic and Beyond: This webpage contains links to resources and guidance from federal agencies about indoor air considerations for schools, as well as resources to help create, maintain, and improve healthy learning environments beyond the pandemic.
- Interactive School Ventilation Tool: This interactive tool can be used to see how particle levels change as you adjust ventilation settings in your school, and how to decrease particle levels.
- Ventilation in Schools and Childcare Programs: This webpage highlights ways you can improve ventilation in your school, through strategies such as opening windows, using portable air cleaners, and improving building-wide filtration.

General Guidance

- Guidance for School Administrators to Help Reduce the Spread of Seasonal Influenza in K-12 Schools: This webpage provides guidance to help reduce the spread of seasonal flu among students and staff in K-12 schools.
- Operational Guidance for K-12 Schools and Early Care and Education Programs to Support Safe In-Person Learning: This updated version of COVID-19 guidance for school administrators outlines strategies for K-12 schools to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and maintain safe operations.
- Seasonal Flu: Information for Schools & Childcare Providers: This webpage provides information, materials, and tools to help reduce the spread of seasonal flu among students and staff in K-12 schools and also links to resources on common flu topics for school administrators, school staff, and parents.

Sources: CDC.gov/coronavirus | CDC.gov/flu | CDC.gov/handwashing | CDC.gov/ventilation

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Mental Health Resources

We can make schools safer by improving school connectedness and access to mental health services.

Students often come to school with complex physical and mental health concerns or social service needs. Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, rates of psychological distress among young people, including symptoms of anxiety, depression, and other mental health disorders, have increased.

According to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data, a sense of being cared for, supported, and belonging at school — called "school connectedness" — had an important effect on students during a time of severe disruption. Youth who felt connected to adults and peers at school were significantly less likely than those who did not to report persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness.

Schools are critical partners in supporting the mental health and well-being of students. In addition to education, they provide opportunities for academic, social, mental health, and physical health services that can help protect against negative outcomes. By supporting students who are experiencing mental health challenges, schools can help foster a sense of safety and support, prevent worsening of mental health conditions, and create better outcomes.

Facts and Figures

1 out of 5 children living in the United States experience a mental disorder in a given year. [1]

Fewer than half (47%) of youth reported feeling close to people at school during the pandemic. [2]

More than a third (37%) of high school students reported they experienced poor mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic. [2]

Sources: [1] National Research Council and Institute of Medicine | [2] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Resources

SchoolSafety.gov offers a variety of resources, programs, and tools school communities can reference on mental health, including:

- Classroom WISE: This training package assists K-12 educators in supporting the mental health of students in the classroom and offers evidence-based strategies and skills to engage and support students experiencing adversity and distress.
- Guidance to States and School Systems on Addressing Mental Health and Substance Use Issues in Schools: This bulletin provides states, schools, and school systems with information about addressing mental health and substance use issues in schools, including examples of approaches and best practice models to implement related services for students.

- Health Education Curriculum Analysis Tool: Mental and Emotional Health Curriculum: This assessment tool module helps school systems conduct a clear, complete, and consistent analysis of curricula that are intended to promote mental and emotional health.
- Helping Children and Adolescents Cope with Disasters and Other Traumatic Events: What Parents, Rescue Workers, and the Community Can Do: This guide provides parents, educators, and other professionals with information and resources to help children cope with traumatic events, such as psychological trauma after mass violence, terror, or natural disasters.
- National School Mental Health Best Practices: Implementation Guidance Modules: These resources – which include modules containing trainer and participant manuals, slide decks, and recorded virtual learning sessions – are designed to help states, districts, and schools advance comprehensive school mental health, as well as engage in a planning process around implementation of services.
- Protecting Youth Mental Health: This U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory offers recommendations for supporting the mental health of children, adolescents, and young adults, including essential recommendations for the institutions that surround young people and shape their day-to-day lives such as schools.
- Psychological First Aid: Addressing Mental Health Distress During Disasters: Psychological First Aid (PFA) can help responders promote an environment of safety, calm, connectedness, self-efficacy, empowerment, and hope. This webinar provides a brief overview of PFA and connects viewers with both online and in-person training resources.
- Ready, Set, Go, Review: Screening for Behavioral Health Risk in Schools: This toolkit is designed to help schools through the process of developing comprehensive screening procedures, as well as provide readily available resources to facilitate the implementation of effective behavioral health screening in schools.
- Responding to COVID-19: Anxiety and Return to Work/School: This webpage offers a compilation of resources for individuals experiencing stress and anxiety during the return to in-person school after the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Responding to COVID-19: School Mental Health: This webpage provides products, resources, and training to address the pandemic's impact on the mental health of students, teachers, and school personnel.
- School Connectedness: Strategies for Increasing Protective Factors Among Youth: This webpage contains fact sheets and training materials on strategies for increasing school connectedness for school administrators, teachers, and families.
- School Health Assessment and Performance Evaluation (SHAPE) System: This web-based platform offers schools, districts, states, and territories a workspace and targeted resources to support school mental health quality improvement.
- Trauma-informed Care for Schools Before, During, and After Possible Emergency Events: This webinar recording provides an overview of trauma and retraumatization, discusses manifestations of trauma in students, explores a trauma-informed approach, and reviews considerations for preparedness planning and how schools can address trauma in their emergency operations plans.

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Online Safety Resources

The Department of Homeland Security's Office of Intelligence and Analysis and the Center for Prevention Programs and Partnerships believe that the threat of targeted violence in schools will remain as more children return to school full-time. Recently, the Surgeon General warned of an increasing youth mental health crisis, as educators, teachers, students, and schools work to mitigate the impacts of prolonged social isolation, loss of social connection, financial hardships, and other potential risk factors that may make an individual more susceptible to radicalization to violence.

Individuals who engage in targeted violence can be affected by a range of online elements and in some cases, online activity can lead to physical violence. Current harms in the digital space, including risks to privacy, security, cyberbullying, and hate speech, cannot be overlooked.

Schools, educators, and parents can help build resilience against online hate and violence, as well as foster digital ecosystems that are safe and secure for students. Through promoting online safety practices, improving digital literacy and critical thinking skills, and enhancing cybersecurity and technology systems, the kindergarten through grade 12 (K-12) community can help reduce certain risk factors among youth.

Resources

SchoolSafety.gov offers a variety of resources, programs, and tools that school communities can use to bolster and enhance student online safety, including:

- Bug Bytes: This graphic novel communicates the dangers and risks associated with threat actors using social media and other communication platforms to spread mis-, dis-, and malinformation (MDM).
- Cyber Safety Considerations for K-12 Schools and School Districts: This fact sheet includes information on the most common online threats students face, including cyberbullying, and describes how school and school district administrators can prepare and respond to online threats.
- Cyber Safety Video Series: This series of videos and accompanying fact sheets highlights common potential threats students and K-12 schools are likely to face online, as well as proactive steps individuals and institutions can take to stay safe.
- Electronic Media and Youth Violence: A CDC Issue Brief for Educators and Caregivers: This report educates the general public on the phenomena of electronic aggression, which is defined as any kind of aggression perpetrated through technology, and its role in public health, including among the school community.
- Preventing Violent Extremism in Schools: This guide serves to educate school personnel about at-risk behaviors and activities that assist students with reducing social and psychological commitment to violence as a method of resolving a grievance.
- StopBullying.gov: This website contains resources for youth, parents, schools, and others to better understand bullying and cyberbullying, including the warning signs, those particularly at risk, and prevention tips.
- Technology and Youth: Protecting Your Child from Electronic Aggression: This tip sheet provides a general overview on what comprises electronic aggression, and what parents and caregivers can do to address and help prevent it.

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Physical Security Resources

Protect against potential acts of targeted violence and other threats by improving the physical security of schools.

In today's environment, kindergarten through grade 12 (K-12) schools face a range of threats, including acts of violence, natural disasters, and emergency situations. Schools can work to prepare for and protect against these threats by taking proactive measures to improve the physical security of school grounds, buildings, and classrooms. From the physical design of schools and campuses to the development and ongoing maintenance of preparedness plans, security and resilience should be at the forefront of schools' safety efforts.

Physical security measures can also mitigate external threats and reduce the amount of harm inflicted if incidents occur. Conducting a site assessment can help schools identify existing vulnerabilities, integrate future security practices, and inform the development of building security plans. Schools can also drive down risk and build resilience by working with district and community partners to share information about best practices, potential threats, and mitigation strategies.

Visit SchoolSafety.gov and follow @SchoolSafetyGov on Twitter for additional physical security resources.

Resources

SchoolSafety.gov offers resources, programs, and tools school communities can use to enhance their physical security, including:

- Assessing Your School Site: This course was designed to help K-12 schools and districts understand what site assessments are and how they can be used to inform school emergency operations plans and safety, security, emergency management, and preparedness programs.
- Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) School Assessment: This tool assesses the use of CPTED principles in three areas of schools: grounds, buildings, and interiors. It includes the principles of natural surveillance, access management, territoriality, physical maintenance, and order maintenance.
- Designing for Safety, Designing for Learning: This journal article covers the use of and principles related to CPTED to help reduce the number of triggering events that contribute to school violence.
- Exercise Starter Kits: These self-conducted tabletop exercises, tailored for the academic community, include a set of scalable tools aimed to test existing emergency plans, protocols, and procedures, while also strengthening preparedness, response, and recovery capabilities.
- K-12 School Security Guide Suite: This set of products is designed to inform safety and physical security planning for K-12 schools. It includes the K-12 School Security Guide (3rd ed.), which provides a comprehensive doctrine and systems-based methodology for vulnerability assessment and planning, and the School Security Assessment Tool, a web-based assessment that walks users through a tailorable vulnerability analysis.
- Partner Alliance for Safer Schools (PASS) Safety and Security Guidelines: These guidelines provide best practices specifically for securing K-12 school facilities, including elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools. The PASS School Security Checklist allows users to assess the current state of safety and security efforts in their school or district compared to nationwide best practices.
- Security and Resiliency Guide for Countering Improvised Explosive Devices (C-IED): This guide is intended to help communities, individual organizations, and facility owner/operators plan and implement C-IED activities within their overall public safety and emergency management approach.
- SITE ASSESS: This mobile app allows school personnel to walk around buildings and grounds and examine their safety, security, accessibility, and emergency preparedness.

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School Climate Strategies and Resources

School climate is a broad, multifaceted concept that involves many aspects of the student's educational experience.

While the circumstances that lead to violence are complex and far-ranging, research suggests that a positive school climate can lead to a significant decrease in the likelihood of crime, aggression, and violent behavior. Developing students with strong character who are connected to their peers, educators, and communities in meaningful ways can improve school climate, help prevent acts of violence, and lead to improved behavioral and academic outcomes.

School leaders and teachers can make character development a priority by supporting practices in the classroom and school, as well as collaborating with families and community organizations. Schools and districts should also implement social, emotional, and behavioral support systems to create a climate that supports and responds to student behavior. By engaging in a school climate improvement process, education leaders at the state, district, and school levels can increase the safety and success of all members of the school community.

Strategies to Consider

Conduct a school climate survey and collect data: Measuring school climate is critical for improvement because high-quality data allows schools and districts to better understand the perceptions of its students, staff, and parents; monitor progress; make data-driven decisions; involve stakeholders; and adapt to shifting needs related to school climate.

Identify measures and programs that are best suited for your school and implement them: Once schools have identified areas of school climate and conditions for learning that need to be addressed, they must apply their data to make an informed decision about which programmatic interventions should be implemented to improve student outcomes. Implementation involves putting a plan into effect, including the process of monitoring progress, making adjustments, and evaluating impact.

Consider expanding beyond school climate to incorporate social and emotional learning (SEL) and provide students access to treatment programs or professionals: Social and emotional learning involves the processes through which children acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions. A growing body of research indicates that school-based efforts to promote students' SEL represent an effective approach to enhance children's success in school and life.

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Resources

SchoolSafety.gov offers a variety of resources, programs, and tools that school communities can use to foster a positive school climate, including:

Guides and Reports

- Creating and Sustaining a Positive and Communal School Climate: This report provides four recommendations to parents, administrators, and principals for creating and sustaining a positive and communal school environment.
- Parent & Educator Guide to School Climate Resources: This guide provides parents, teachers, administrators, and other interested parties general information about the concept of school climate improvement, suggestions for leading an effective school climate improvement effort, and additional resources for those interested in more information.

Resources and Tools

- School Climate Improvement Resource Package: This resource package includes a variety of items to meet a range of needs among public schools and districts interested in improving school climate, including a reference manual, action guides, data resources, and online modules.
- School Climate Surveys: These adaptable surveys and associated web-based platform allows states, local districts, and schools to collect and act on reliable, nationally-validated school climate data in real-time.

Strategies and Tips

- Build a Safe Environment: This webpage offers information for schools and teachers on how to create a safe and supportive school climate to help prevent bullying.
- School Connectedness: Strategies for Increasing Protective Factors Among Youth: This webpage contains fact sheets and training materials on strategies for school administrators, teachers, and families on increasing school connectedness – the belief held by students that adults and peers in the school care about their learning as well as about them as individuals.

Technical Assistance Centers

- National Center on Safe and Supportive Learning Environments: The Center offers information and technical assistance to states, districts, schools, institutions of higher learning, and communities focused on improving school climate and conditions for learning.
- Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports Technical Assistance Center: The Center helps schools, districts, and states build a multi-tiered approach to social, emotional, and behavioral support that can improve school climate, safety, and academic outcomes for students, including students with disabilities and students from underrepresented groups.

Trainings

- Creating a Safe and Respectful Environment in Our Nation's Classrooms: This training is designed to aid classroom teachers, other educators, and support personnel to reduce instances of bullying behavior and to build a supportive classroom climate in which bullying is less likely to occur.
- Trauma-Sensitive Schools Training Package: This training package offers school and district administrators and staff a framework and roadmap for adopting a trauma-sensitive approach school- or district-wide. It includes a variety of resources for educating school staff about trauma and trauma-sensitive practices and for providing school leaders with a step-by-step process for implementing a universal, trauma-informed approach.

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Youth Violence Prevention Resources

Youth violence is a significant public health problem that affects thousands of young people each day.

During the 2017–18 school year, **80 percent of public schools** recorded that one or more incidents of violence, theft, or other crimes had taken place, amounting to **1.4 million incidents.**

In 2019, students ages 12–18 experienced **764,600 victimizations at school**, translating to a rate of 30 victimizations per 1,000 students at school.

In 2019, **5 percent of students ages 12–18** reported that they had been afraid of attack or harm at school.

Source: Report on Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2020, National Center for Education Statistics

These incidents can have lasting effects on the physical, mental, and social health of young people as well as impact families, schools, and the broader community.

The factors that contribute to youth violence are complex and far-ranging and are often the culmination of months and years of individual experiences. Research shows that prevention efforts by teachers, administrators, parents, community members, and even students can reduce violence and improve the school environment.

Proactive measures to prevent school violence include:

- fostering a positive school climate.
- ensuring access to mental health support.
- addressing bullying and cyberbullying.
- implementing physical safety and security measures at schools.
- promoting family environments that support healthy development.
- creating protective community environments.
- intervening to lessen harms and prevent future risk.

A comprehensive approach that simultaneously targets multiple risk and protective factors is critical to having a broad and continued impact on youth violence.

Resources

SchoolSafety.gov offers a variety of resources, programs, and tools school communities can use to prevent youth violence, including:

- Addressing the Risk of Violent Behavior in Youth: This presentation helps teachers and school personnel identify common risk factors and warning signs associated with violent behaviors as well as strategies to effectively respond to situations of concern.
- Averted School Violence (ASV) Database: 2021 Analysis Update: The ASV database collects information on school attacks – completed and averted – with the goal of mitigating and preventing future injuries in educational institutions. This report reflects an analysis of 170 averted attacks in the database and concludes that positive school environments that offer violence prevention programs, foster trust among students and staff, provide support to all students, and encourage early intervention are key to averting school attacks.
- Averting Targeted School Violence: A U.S. Secret Service Analysis of Plots Against Schools: This report examines 67 recent plots to conduct a school attack that were averted and identifies key findings and commonalities across potential targeted violence incidents.
- A Comprehensive Technical Package for the Prevention of Youth Violence and Associated Risk Behaviors: This technical package represents a select group of strategies based on the best available evidence to help communities and states sharpen their focus on prevention activities with the greatest potential to prevent youth violence and its consequences.
- Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) and School Violence: This resource provides an overview of how CPTED, an approach that focuses on improving the design of the built environment to help reduce opportunities for disputes and violence and promote positive behavior, can be incorporated at schools.
- Mitigating the Threat of School Violence as the U.S. "Returns to Normal" from the COVID-Pandemic and Beyond: This bulletin raises awareness of potential risk factors and indicators for targeted violence in schools, raises awareness of the likelihood that students may have been exposed to multiple risk factors during the COVID-19 pandemic, and provides resources to become an engaged bystander as part of a comprehensive local prevention framework.
- Preventing School Violence: This webpage provides information on the issue and prevalence of youth and school violence and provides access to additional resources, technical packages, and articles on violence prevention.
- Report on Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2020: This annual report presents data on crime at schools from the perspectives of students, teachers, principals, and the general population from an array of sources. It covers topics such as victimization, bullying, school conditions, fights, the presence of security staff at school, and student perceptions of personal safety at school.

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