



BE SAFE & SOUND

An Initiative of the National Safety and Security Council

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School Safety and Security Is Everyone's Business

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The 2002–2003 school year ended with a number of tragic events on campuses in three states. School shootings in Washington, DC, New Orleans, LA, and York, PA, highlighted the need to address violence in our nation's schools. Yet events such as these are often the culmination of years of built-up anger and frustration, with the roots planted long before the violence happens.

Although reports of school shootings dominate the media, we must remember that other less dramatic and less deadly outbreaks of violence take place in schools across the country every day. These events may seem insignificant compared to the horror of the well-publicized shootings, but they are symptoms of problems that should be addressed and dealt with. Bullying, intimidation, and harassment can serve as the foundation for more lethal events in the future. Some students may view such acts as rites of passage, but educators are now considering them to be predictors of more serious crimes in schools and elsewhere.

The *Be Safe & Sound* campaign mobilizes parents, policymakers, school officials, and students to take action to prevent violence in our schools by enhancing school safety and security in communities across the nation. The campaign is an initiative of the National Safety and Security Council (NSSC), a program of the National Crime Prevention Council and its corporate partners (The Allstate Foundation, ASSA ABLOY Group, Security Industry Association, and Verify Systems).

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Be Safe & Sound addresses two major aspects of school violence prevention: safety and security. Safety focuses on the “soft side” of school safety—students’ attitudes and beliefs and the programs that affect school climate. Do the students feel safe when they are at school? Is a crisis plan in place? Are visitors logged in and monitored? Security refers to the “hard side” of school safety—technology, environment, and hardware. Are the locks effective? Is the lighting sufficient to deter vandalism? Are there potential hiding places for bullies, intruders, and drug dealers?

The *Be Safe & Sound* campaign seeks to involve parents and caregivers in an effort that focuses on these two aspects to create an environment for children that is both safer and more conducive to learning. To test the effectiveness of this approach, NSSC launched a *Be Safe & Sound* program at two pilot schools—Woodford County High School in Versailles, KY, and Edwin M. Stanton Elementary School in Philadelphia, PA. These pilot schools serve as examples of the positive changes that can result when parents become involved in the effort to ensure that their children’s schools are safe and secure. (See page 7 for NSSC news and page 4 for an update on the two pilot schools.)

With the assistance of its corporate partners, *Be Safe & Sound* also provides publications to help parents and caregivers who want to become involved in school safety and security issues. The new *Caregivers’ Guide to School Safety and Security* will be distributed via state school safety centers and other national and state-level organizations. (See page 3 for more information about the guide; see page 5 for more about state school safety centers.) The *School Safety and Security Toolkit: A Guide for Parents, Schools, and Communities* will be published this fall. The toolkit will give parents the instruments they need to work with school personnel and policymakers to examine school safety and security policies and procedures and to determine the actions that will enhance safety and security in schools and communities.



The goal of the *Be Safe & Sound* campaign is to bring the issue of school safety to the forefront of the nation's agenda; it is clear that no community is immune to the tragic effects of school violence. The seeds of these events are being sown in our communities every day, and it is everyone's responsibility—parents, educators, students, policymakers, and citizens—to address this situation. The well-being of our children depends on it. For without safety and security within our schools, it is difficult for children to reach their academic potential. Children who are afraid, who are bullied and intimidated, will find it difficult to concentrate on academic objectives. But children who feel safe and secure, who know that they are treasured and protected, will prosper and learn; they will become the caring and responsible citizens of tomorrow.

To learn more about this important initiative, contact the National Crime Prevention Council at 202-466-6272; email besafe&sound@ncpc.org; or visit our website, www.ncpc.org/besafe.

America's Safe Schools Week: October 19–25, 2003

America's Safe Schools Week is sponsored by the National School Safety Center and by state governors and school superintendents across the nation. Its goal is to engage policymakers, parents, students, and other community members in advocating for school safety. For more information and ideas for observing Safe Schools Week, visit the National School Safety Center's website at www.nssc1.org/safeweek/safe.htm.

Caregivers' Guide Gives Parents Information To Increase School Safety and Security

A checklist enabling parents and caregivers to assess the safety and security of their children's school is one of the useful tools included in a new publication developed by the *Be Safe & Sound* campaign. The *Caregivers' Guide to School Safety and Security* provides 24 pages of information on how to work with school administrators to increase safety and security. "Successful, safe, and effective schools are those with high levels of parent and caregiver involvement," remarked Jan Epstein, executive director of The Allstate Foundation. "This guide provides parents like me with the right questions to ask administrators and helps us understand how to work together with the school to create the safest, most secure learning environment for our children."

The guide is a call to action that outlines four things parents and caregivers can do to improve school safety and security:

1. Listen to their children’s concerns.
2. Become educated about school safety and security.
3. Become involved in efforts to improve and strengthen school safety and security.
4. Advocate for and effect change.

The guide also includes an overview of school safety and security principles and an action-planning tool.

“Research and experience show us that a school’s response to safety issues should be comprehensive and include a variety of options since the problems themselves are complex and sometimes deeply rooted,” commented Jack Calhoun, president and CEO of the National Crime Prevention Council. “Both a school’s physical environment and its social climate need to be considered; this guide clearly addresses both.”

To order your free copy of the *Caregivers’ Guide*, call the NCPC Fulfillment Center at 800-627-2911. Guides are available in bulk quantities for the cost of shipping.

Initiatives in Motion: *Be Safe & Sound* Pilot School Update

Woodford County High School Versailles, Kentucky

In spring 2002, parents, staff, and students at Woodford County High School (WCHS) met to discuss areas of school safety and security that needed improvement. “We feel that we are in the early stages of implementing change,” said Sam Watkins, head principal. “We have identified areas that need targeting, including some changes to the physical environment and training for our teachers in meeting the needs of a diverse student population.” More recently, a smaller group convened to focus on the physical and programmatic needs of the school.

“At this point the high school is ready to move forward,” continued Watkins. “In early August, before the new school year began, WCHS faculty received professional development in building relationships with students, as that is so critical to the climate of schools.” The school will also implement a policy requiring identification badges for students, faculty, and staff so that visitors—and intruders—can be quickly identified. In the near future, as training and implementation continue, the school will begin to address some of its physical plant issues.

Edwin M. Stanton Elementary School Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Shortly after the *Be Safe & Sound* kickoff at Edwin M. Stanton Elementary School (Stanton School) in October 2002, the school received word that it would be permanently closed the following June. Empowered parents organized the Save Stanton Coalition and sent representatives to meet with school district officials and local politicians. Their efforts—and those of other supporters—paid off; in April the school was notified that it would remain open.

In the interim, the *Be Safe & Sound* campaign continued as planned at Stanton School. School climate surveys and a comprehensive security audit were performed. After reviewing the survey and audit results, school administrators and parents identified several physical and behavioral issues that required attention. Physical security issues will be addressed during the 2003–2004 school year; in the meantime, Diane Highsmith, principal at Stanton School, said, “We felt strongly that professional development and a schoolwide behavior program would be most effective” in reinforcing positive behaviors of students.

In June the school sent a team (four teachers, a counselor, and a parent) to attend the Behavior Instruction Academy offered by the Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN), a program of the Pennsylvania Department of Education. With the assistance of PaTTAN consultants, the team analyzed disciplinary referral reports to identify patterns and develop procedures to be followed throughout the school building. “[Once we have] established a routine and consistently enforced positive rules, it is our hope that students will eventually be able to manage their own behaviors,” Highsmith explained. “We are anxious to further develop this major initiative and implement, monitor, and evaluate the plan throughout the coming school year.”

For more information about the Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN), visit www.pattan.k12.pa.us/.

School Safety Centers Enhance the Safety and Security of America’s Schools

The *Be Safe & Sound* campaign has engaged the school safety centers in Kentucky and Pennsylvania to assist in the pilot program. School safety centers can be found in 20 states, and, although some are more active than others, they share a common mission: to provide school districts and staff, parents, and students with training, tools, and technical assistance to enhance the safety and security of America’s schools. A comprehensive list of school safety centers is available on the *Be Safe & Sound* website

(www.ncpc.org/besafe). Below is an overview of the recent activities of school safety centers in the *Be Safe & Sound* pilot states, Kentucky and Pennsylvania.

Kentucky Center for School Safety

In March 2002 the Kentucky Center for School Safety (KCSS), in conjunction with three key state educational agencies, assessed the school safety planning efforts of a number of Kentucky school districts. The collaborative team used an assessment process that focused on the mitigation and prevention of risk factors that are known to affect learning environments. The process included an examination of the physical campus as well as the internal policies and procedures, particularly those that impact the culture and climate of the school. Participating districts, all of which had requested the assessment, responded positively to the results.

Since the completion of the first formal assessment in March 2002, the KCSS process has evolved. It now incorporates several data collection strategies that result in the development of a comprehensive written summary, which is provided to the school. What makes the KCSS approach unique is the attention given to both the physical environment of the school and the internal policies and practices that impact the learning environment. This assessment process has the potential of reducing insurance premiums paid by local school districts and, even more important, enabling Kentucky schools to avoid being identified as “persistently dangerous” under the No Child Left Behind legislation.

For more information about the Kentucky Center for School Safety, visit www.kysafeschools.org, or contact Jon Akers, director, toll-free at 877-805-4277.

Pennsylvania Center for Safe Schools

In 1995 the Pennsylvania Center for Safe Schools was created to assist schools with the development of comprehensive safe school planning, which includes prevention, intervention, emergency preparedness/crisis response, and support services. The Center provides grant management and technical assistance for the Safe Schools Initiative Grant Program of the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE); the program provides opportunities for public schools, intermediate units, career and technology centers, and charter schools to develop comprehensive safe school plans. To aid in the improvement of school climate, the Center coordinates Pennsylvania’s Bullying Prevention Network, a cadre of trainers who are available to assist schools with the implementation of bullying prevention programs.

To inform educators on how to manage threat assessment in the schools, the Center coordinated two regional trainings by the U.S. Secret Service on the findings of its Safe

School Initiative. The Center partners with the PDE by serving on the Crisis Response Planning Committee, which works to develop and disseminate crisis response information. In partnership with the PDE, the Center provided educators and community partners with additional learning opportunities through “Keeping Our Children Safe,” a statewide conference that featured safe schools experts and prominent national speakers.

For more information about the Pennsylvania Center for Safe Schools, visit www.safeschools.info, or contact Lynn Cromley, director, at 717-763-1661.

NSSC Partners Welcome Verify Systems

Three years ago, the National Crime Prevention Council and several of its corporate partners, The Allstate Foundation, ASSA ABLOY, and Security Industry Association, formed the National Safety and Security Council (NSSC) to develop a holistic approach to safety and security in our nation’s schools, homes, businesses, and public places. NSSC developed the *Be Safe & Sound* campaign, an initiative that seeks to educate people about safety and security issues, advocate for safety and security improvements, and challenge those environments where people are potentially at risk. Initially, *Be Safe & Sound* has focused on engaging and educating parents and caregivers, school administrators, policymakers, law enforcement, and students on issues of school safety and security.

The NSSC founding partners recently welcomed a new member, Verify Systems. Although new to the initiative, Verify Systems is already assisting school districts in the areas of security and safety. The company’s flagship product, iVerified for Schools™, was developed in response to the desire of parents and schools to protect the youth of America before, during, and after school.

This product keeps track of the location of students and school buses through intelligent identification badges, GPS (global positioning system), and an interactive website. This means that parents and administrators can determine where students are from the moment they step on the bus in the morning to the time they return home after school. School administrators can use this information for detailed and comprehensive reports in potential crisis situations as well as for fiscal reimbursement. It can be used for routing buses, time and attendance reporting, and more.

Pilot programs of iVerified for Schools are currently being conducted throughout the United States. Because of its low-cost, nonintrusive technology, iVerified for Schools is being readily accepted by the educational, parent, and law enforcement communities.

For more information about iVerified for Schools, contact Verify Systems, toll-free, at 866-837-4398, ext. 86, or visit www.verifysystems.com.



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