

Why Preparing Schools for the Worst Case Scenario is the Best Case Scenario

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Law enforcement plays a critical role in safe schools. Sheriffs and local law enforcement are instrumental in creating proactive school safety strategies. To nurture healthy school communities, schools should collaborate with members of law enforcement agencies in building relationships, developing policies, and establishing effective response protocols that align with the modern landscape of school safety.

Key Components of a Comprehensive School Safety Strategy

A school safety plan requires a [layered, comprehensive approach](#).

These plans are built upon three pillars:

- Prevention
- Response
- Recovery

The prevention pillar identifies and addresses risks to safe schools to avoid emergencies. If you can't prevent an emergency, the response pillar reduces the negative effects of that situation. After an emergency, your school community will need to recover, and the final pillar supports a quick return to operations and meeting the community's emotional needs.

Your school safety strategy should be developed by a multidisciplinary team that relies upon evidence-based approaches. Members of the school community should also provide input. All of these inputs should be evaluated carefully and systematically to ensure that you're building on all three pillars.

The Role of Law Enforcement in a Comprehensive School Safety Strategy

Law enforcement personnel can help you create a comprehensive plan for safe schools.

Here are some specific areas where they can share their expertise:

- Extensive risk assessment
- Policy creation
- Technology integration
- Joint training sessions with school personnel



Extensive Risk Assessment

An [extensive risk assessment](#) identifies, assesses, and manages individuals or potential situations of concern. Those individuals could include students, faculty, or staff. The team assessing these risks must have the right training and expertise to recognize threats and intervene before they spiral out of control.

Law enforcement personnel have experience in recognizing and mitigating risks. By involving them in an extensive risk assessment, you can build a stronger safety strategy for your school.

Policy Creation

Law enforcement personnel also understand which policies will work and which policies aren't realistic. Their expertise in public safety can be invaluable when you're creating a plan for your school.

Technology Integration

The right technology can be crucial to the response pillar of your school safety strategy. Real-time alert systems reduce law enforcement response time in an emergency.

There's a push across the country to pass [Alyssa's Law](#). This law calls for the installation of silent panic alarms directly linked to law enforcement. In an emergency, law enforcement will arrive as quickly as possible to deal with a threat and triage victims.

Innovative school safety platforms can accelerate the process by integrating directly with real-time crime centers, 911 dispatch, and technology used by first responders.

Joint Training Sessions with School Personnel



Members of law enforcement agencies are used to running preparedness drills. Their expertise can benefit your school when you run joint training sessions.

Conduct regular, realistic drills for a variety of hazards at various times of the day. Collect feedback from law enforcement to understand what you're doing right and what you need to improve.

Advocate for Resources to Enhance School Safety

Law enforcement agencies and schools can collaborate to foster safe, secure learning environments. However, they need funding and resources to do so.

Securing funding can be a challenge. While there might be laws in place mandating safe schools, those laws don't always specify where schools can find the money to fund their new legal requirements.

That being said, the challenge can be overcome. There are sources of funding available to schools for safety platforms.

The following resources can help you track down grants:

- [SchoolSafety.gov Grant Finder Tool](#).
- The [COPS program](#), a collaborative effort between law enforcement agencies and schools to provide funding for school safety.
- [National Systems Contractors Association \(NSCA\)](#), a non-profit organization advocating for the needs of the commercial software integration industry. The NSCA tracks legislation like Alyssa's Law to help schools stay on top of what their legal requirements are and what grants might exist to help them meet those requirements.
- [FEMA](#) offers grants for school safety for public and private schools.
- The [Bureau of Justice Assistance's STOP School Violence Grant Program](#) provides funding to improve school safety by implementing evidence-based school safety programs and technology to prevent and respond to violence.

Your state might also offer funding for safety initiatives.

Applying for Grants: Best Practices

Stakeholders in the grant process might not automatically understand your core safety or security needs. The key to receiving funding lies in how you ask for it. You need to make a convincing case for why you need the funds and how you'll use them.

That's where working with law enforcement comes into play. Showing that you're working to build safety leadership reassures funders that their money won't be spent in vain.

You also need to explain which threats you face and how technology for safe schools mitigates those risks.

Some of those risks include:

- Visitor management to control who has access to the campus.
- Emergency response for faster resolution of high-risk situations.
- Incident mapping for school staff, law enforcement, and first responders to quickly locate those affected by emergencies for an accelerated response.
- Reunification to safely bring staff and students together after the situation has been resolved.

Emphasize that investing in these technologies enables the school to create a safe environment for learning and teaching.

Leaders that want to take advantage of grant funding but don't know where to start can get help from CENTEGIX's in-house funding specialist. Reach out to us today to get started.

Integrate Technology and Response Protocols for Rapid Crisis Response

Advanced safety technologies, such as wearable panic buttons and emergency alert systems, eliminate hand-offs and provide law enforcement with the ability to respond rapidly and effectively. The CENTEGIX Safety Platform™ is the foundation of schools' layered safety plans and is built for rapid incident response.

The following solutions are critical components of the Safety Platform:

- CENTEGIX Safety Blueprint™ is a dynamic digital mapping solution for rapid incident response from law enforcement and first responders.
- CENTEGIX CrisisAlert™ is wearable panic button technology that enables staff to quickly and discreetly request help to their exact location.
- CENTEGIX Visitor Management allows you to monitor who's coming onto your campus so you can let only authorized visitors in.
- CENTEGIX Reunification helps you reunite staff, students, and personnel after an emergency.

The Power of Wireless Panic Button Systems

Wireless panic buttons like CENTEGIX CrisisAlert give law enforcement and first responders the information they need to take immediate action in an emergency. Law enforcement personnel appreciate the benefits this solution delivers.

"First responders need to know exact locations and what they're arriving to. They need to know where the resources are," said former Phoenix Chief of Police Jeri Williams. Chief of Police, Tracey L. Whaley from Georgia commented, "I've spoken to several principals and several teachers throughout the entire district and everyone loves CENTEGIX. Everyone loves what they can do. What I hear mostly from staff members is they don't have to try to communicate an emergency to the administration. They can communicate an emergency through the system, and then that alerts the entire building."

These solutions facilitate effective emergency response. Police Chief David Vincent of Citrus Valley, FL, noted, "As a member of law enforcement, knowing where the problem is without having to communicate with

anyone is a game-changer...The ability to know there is a problem and then to be able to implement your protocols immediately—that's what preserves life.”

Having CrisisAlert as part of a layered safety plan fits into best practices. Chief Williams remarked, “Consistent, reliable, accurate communication through one medium, knowing exactly where a threat is located on campus, updated maps, and last but not least documentation [is] going to help you build better systems and close gaps.”