

Making Schools Safer:



Ten Things Caregivers Can Do

Help prevent school violence and make your child's school safer with this starter list of ideas. Some require only individual action; some require actions by many people. Some address immediate crises; others address the basic problems that cause violence. Consider this list a launching pad – there's lots more that can be done.

1. Take an active role in your child's school. Talk regularly with teachers, staff, and other caregivers. Volunteer in the classroom or library, or after-school activities. Work with parent-teacher-student organizations. Getting involved will help you better understand the school's strengths and weaknesses, as well as how you can help change occur.
2. Find out what is already being done at your child's school. Try to learn more about the school's overall approach to safety and security. Does the school address ways to prevent as well as respond to violence and other crimes? How is safety addressed throughout the school – in the cafeteria, hallways, locker rooms, classrooms, etc.?
3. Get organized. Does your child's school already have a safety committee? Is it concerned with preventing as well as responding to crimes? If so, join. If your school doesn't have such a group, ask the principal how you can work together to organize one.
4. Make it clear that you support school policies and rules that help create and sustain a safe place for all students to learn. If your child feels a rule is wrong, discuss his or her reasons and what approach might work better.
5. Listen to and talk with your children regularly. Bullying, fist fights, and shoving are the most common safety and security issues kids face at school; theft is the most common school crime. Ask your child what problems and concerns he or she has. They may bring up small problems that you can help your child solve without involving school officials.
6. Find time for two-way conversations with your children—lots of listening, no lecturing. Try to make this kind of communication a daily habit, not a reaction to crisis. Help your child learn how to identify and solve problems. Kids who know how to approach a problem and resolve it effectively are less likely to be angry, frustrated, or violent.
7. Communicate your standards clearly. Explain that you won't tolerate violent behavior. Discuss what violence is and is not. Discourage name-calling and teasing. These behaviors often escalate into fistfights (or worse). Whether the teaser is violent or not, the victim may see violence as the only way to stop it.
8. Insist on knowing your child's friends, whereabouts, and activities. It's your right. Make your home an inviting and pleasant place for your child and his or her friends; it's easier to know what they're up to when they're around. Know how to spot signs of troubling behavior in kids – yours and others.
9. Work with other caregivers to develop standards for school-related events, acceptable out-of-school activities and places, and required adult supervision. Talk with each other about safety-related problems in your school and community, sources of help to strengthen and sharpen parenting skills, and similar issues.
10. Play it safe. Recognize that keeping guns in your home may put you at legal risk as well as expose you and your family to physical harm. If you do choose to keep guns at home, ensure that they are securely locked, that ammunition is locked and stored separately, and that children know weapons are never to be touched without your supervision.

Check out www.ncpc.org/besafe to learn more about what you can do to make schools safer and stop school violence.



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