

## ***Six Tips for Enhancing Safety and Security***

Providing a safe and secure environment is top priority for educators throughout the United States. Through careful evaluation, planning and communication, you can help maintain a safe learning environment. Here are six tips that can help:

- 1. Make safety policies and procedures readily available to students and parents.*** Communicating district safety policies is just as important as setting them. Students and parents need to know your district's policies regarding student standards of conduct and consequences for violations. This information can be provided through a Web site, voicemail information boxes, student agendas and other communication vehicles already in place.
- 2. Provide open lines of communication for students and parents.*** Students may be able to help identify potential danger points. Find ways to communicate with them while protecting their identity. Some schools have found safety surveys to be of value – these surveys can be conducted several times a year with different groups of the student body. Have a communication vehicle that allows parents to share information with school officials. Voicemail and e-mail to a designated box or address will ensure information is received in a timely manner. Both can be set up to page the school's safety officer when a message is left.
- 3. Educate parents, teachers and staff on the warning signs of troubled child.*** Teachers and staff must know the warning signs of troubled youth and how to respond to a variety of situations. Ensure they are aware of the "17 Early Warning Signs" and "Six Imminent Warning Signs" listed in the United States Department of Education publication, "Early Warning -- Timely Response -- a Guide to Safe Schools" at [www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/OSEP/earlywrn.html](http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/OSEP/earlywrn.html). For information on violence prevention go to the National Crime Prevention Council web site at [www.ncpc.org](http://www.ncpc.org). This site provides information on how to combat teen dating violence, get help for victims of domestic violence, establish and enforce drug-free school zones and access "McGruff's List of Web Links" for children, teens, parents and law enforcement.
- 4. Know the juvenile laws in your state and Federal privacy laws.*** State laws regarding juvenile crime vary greatly. Your State Department of Education or local law enforcement agency may be good resources for understanding these laws. The U.S. Department of Justice provides links to most state justice departments at <http://www.usdoj.gov>. The Department of Justice information sharing guide, "A Guide to the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act and Participation in Juvenile Justice Programs," is also a good reference. You can download this guide at [www.ed.gov/offices/OM/ferpa.pdf](http://www.ed.gov/offices/OM/ferpa.pdf).
- 5. Anticipate behavior problems through behavior profiling.*** Profiling student behavior can help identify potential incidents before they occur. One idea is to document why students are sent to the office, analyze the information and build a computerized relational database. Profiling incidents will help identify when and where the next incident might occur as well as who might be involved. It may also identify problems administrators are unaware of such as poor traffic control, bell schedules and inconsistent enforcement of standards of conduct.

6. **Conduct annual "safe schools" training for staff and faculty.** In addition to new employee training, you may want to conduct yearly refresher training sessions for all school personnel. Training should be site-based because every environment is different and provides unique safety challenges. Training topics may include policies and procedures, state and local laws, warning signs, methods for students and parents to communicate with the school and crisis management planning. The U.S. Department of Education's web site at [www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/SDFS/publications.html](http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/SDFS/publications.html) is an excellent resource site for training program development. The National Alliance for Safe Schools at [www.safeschools.org](http://www.safeschools.org) also has a good resource guide covering most training topics.