



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS



School Social Work
Association of America



A Framework for Safe and Successful Schools

Executive Summary

This joint statement provides a framework supported by educators for improving school safety and increasing access to mental health supports for children and youth. Efforts to improve school climate, safety, and learning are not separate endeavors. They must be designed, funded, and implemented as a comprehensive school-wide approach that facilitates interdisciplinary collaboration and builds on a multitiered system of supports. We caution against seemingly quick and potentially harmful solutions, such as arming school personnel, and urge policy leaders to support the following guidance to enact policies that will equip America's schools to educate and safeguard our children over the long term.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS TO SUPPORT EFFECTIVE SCHOOL SAFETY

1. Allow for blended, flexible use of funding streams in education and mental health services;
2. Improve staffing ratios to allow for the delivery of a full range of services and effective school–community partnerships;
3. Develop evidence-based standards for district-level policies to promote effective school discipline and positive behavior;
4. Fund continuous and sustainable crisis and emergency preparedness, response, and recovery planning and training that uses evidence-based models;
5. Provide incentives for intra- and interagency collaboration; and
6. Support multitiered systems of support (MTSS).

BEST PRACTICES FOR CREATING SAFE AND SUCCESSFUL SCHOOLS

1. Fully integrate learning supports (e.g., behavioral, mental health, and social services), instruction, and school management within a comprehensive, cohesive approach that facilitates multidisciplinary collaboration.
2. Implement multitiered systems of support (MTSS) that encompass prevention, wellness promotion, and interventions that increase with intensity based on student need, and that promote close school–community collaboration.
3. Improve access to school-based mental health supports by ensuring adequate staffing levels in terms of school-employed mental health professionals who are trained to infuse prevention and intervention services into the learning process and to help integrate services provided through school–community partnerships into existing school initiatives.
4. Integrate ongoing positive climate and safety efforts with crisis prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery to ensure that crisis training and plans: (a) are relevant to the school context, (b) reinforce learning, (c) make maximum use of existing staff resources, (d) facilitate effective threat assessment, and (e) are consistently reviewed and practiced.

EXHIBIT E-2 - EDUCATION

Document consists of 16 pages.

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Executive Summary only.

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5. Balance physical and psychological safety to avoid overly restrictive measures (e.g., armed guards and metal detectors) that can undermine the learning environment and instead combine reasonable physical security measures (e.g., locked doors and monitored public spaces) with efforts to enhance school climate, build trusting relationships, and encourage students and adults to report potential threats. If a school determines the need for armed security, properly trained school resource officers (SROs) are the *only* school personnel of any type who should be armed.
6. Employ effective, positive school discipline that: (a) functions in concert with efforts to address school safety and climate; (b) is not simply punitive (e.g., zero tolerance); (c) is clear, consistent, and equitable; and (d) reinforces positive behaviors. Using security personnel or SROs primarily as a substitute for effective discipline policies does not contribute to school safety and can perpetuate the school-to-prison pipeline.
7. Consider the context of each school and district and provide services that are most needed, appropriate, and culturally sensitive to a school's unique student populations and learning communities.
8. Acknowledge that sustainable and effective change takes time, and that individual schools will vary in their readiness to implement improvements and should be afforded the time and resources to sustain change over time.

Creating safe, orderly, and welcoming learning environments is critical to educating and preparing all of our children and youth to achieve their highest potential and contribute to society. We all share this responsibility and look forward to working with the Administration, Congress, and state and local policy makers to shape policies based on these best practices in school safety and climate, student mental health, instructional leadership, teaching, and learning.