



WEB EXCLUSIVE: It Can't Happen Here, Can It?" Now Is The Time To Assess Your School's Safety And Security Protocols

Insights

3.01.18

Recent events at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida have caused many in the education community to think about their own campuses and the safety and security measures they have employed over the years. When violence strikes close to home, school administrators need to take the time, both immediately and over the course of the next couple of years, to evaluate the safety and security processes of their campus.

In the hope of raising your awareness to avoid a tragic situation at your school, Fisher Phillips has collaborated with security expert Wayne Black, CEO of Wayne Black & Associates, to provide some guidelines on security issues schools should consider as they evaluate their campuses.

Some of the items listed below are costly (gates, fencing, cameras, etc.), while others can be easily implemented or adapted at little or no cost. Rather than starting with a budgeted number for security enhancements, your team should determine what your school most urgently *needs* for the safety of the children, and then find a way to obtain the money to fix the immediate issues. Then plan for the next phases of security improvements that may be more costly and require budgeting plan, recognizing that security is always going to be a work in progress.

These guidelines are not listed in any type of priority. Each administrative team will have to prioritize for their individual school.

Assessment Checklist

- Does your school have a written lockdown plan for such events as active shooters, bomb threats, trespassers on campus, and similar threats? If so, has your school drilled on the plan? You want to drill on the various types of emergencies to develop muscle memory on each individual's responsibility during the event. The first few drills should be done with staff. You should also invite law enforcement so they can see your campus, meet your employees, and give you honest feedback about your process. At some point, you might want to consider whether to involve children of an appropriate age to practice the drills with your staff.
- Is there a flip chart or reference guide in every room that covers lockdown procedures, strangers on campus, health and safety policies, fire drills, emergency procedures (such as 911 calls), tornados, severe weather, etc.? You want employees and visitors to be able grab a copy of

your procedures quickly, wherever they are, to look up who to call and what to do in the immediate aftermath.

- Do you remind your community (parents, students, employees) to immediately report suspicious behavior to both the school and to local law enforcement? Are students asked to be aware of other students' activities on social media and to report concerns with guns, threats, videos of blowing up schools, etc.?
- Have you made clear that any threat or comment about shooting someone or bombing the school will be taken seriously, even if the comment was made in jest? Your students should clearly understand that, just like the airport, there is no room in the school for any type of comment, behavior, post, text, or possession of any type of threat.
- Do you have appropriate policies that permit you to search bags, backpacks, computers, iPads, phones, vehicles, or any other personal items, and any place on school property? Have you considered requiring clear backpacks so everyone can see the contents at a glance?
- Do classrooms properly lock from the inside? Have you practiced and had timed locking drills? From the time you call a lockdown, do you know how long it takes for the full school to be locked down? Many schools start out with a 12-minute process and, with practice drills, get the timing down to three to four minutes. It could save lives.
- Do you have a closed campus? Is it fenced (first layer of your layered security)? Are there limited manned entrances or gates as a second layer of security?
- Do buildings have limited and controlled points of entry and exit (choke points) as a third layer of security? Are other doors locked against entry from the outside? Any open door should be monitored by an actual person. You should not have the doors open or unlocked even for drop-off and pickup. It might inconvenience students and parents at the end of the day, but may save lives.
- Have you had a threat assessment in the last year? This can be done by law enforcement or an outside security consultant. You should understand that if you ask law enforcement to do the assessment, any written report will be subject to discovery. If you do it through a consultant hired by your attorney, the report will fall under attorney-client privilege and is not subject to discovery.
- Are there off-duty police officers or armed private security present while children are on campus? Do you know your state law on armed personnel on campus? Are your armed private security personnel getting regular qualification training?
- Is the campus swept for foreign objects each morning? When the school is opened in the morning, is anyone assigned to look for boxes, backpacks, bags, etc. that someone other than students may have deposited?
- Is someone assigned to properly lock the school at the end of each school day and to re-verify the locking of all doors?
- Is there a control process for access devices (keys, key cards, pass cards, etc.)? Do you keep a log of who has what key or access device? Are metal keys left at school or do employees take

them home?

- Have you met with first responders? Have you had regular meetings with police, fire rescue, or the local sheriff? This will give first responders a chance to know you and know your campus. Invite them to train on your campus or at your school on weekends or after hours.
- Are there up-to-date drawings of your campus and buildings? Are the buildings numbered large enough for first responders to see? Copies of these drawings should be provided to law enforcement and first responders.
- Have there been prior incidents or security breaches at your school? Have you audited the incidents to analyze what was involved—crimes, intruders, trespassers, or threats? Where are they coming from? Students? Prior students? Parents? Third parties? What steps do you need to take to further secure your campus against these breaches?
- Do you have proper CCTV coverage and a video management system (VMS)? Is the camera system inspected on a regular basis to ensure that the time and date generators are accurate? Are you recording on motion or dead space (which impacts the volume of recording you can store in memory)? Can you retain the video for 30 to 90 days?
- Do all teachers and administrators have portable radios to immediately communicate with security and the office? You can purchase point-to-point radios for approximately \$15 each.
- Do you have cameras in the classrooms and hallways? Are they on a closed system? Are you certain that only the school personnel can access them internally and from the internet?
- Do you have hurricane windows or other barriers?
- Do you have bollards or planters (barriers) to prevent vehicle intrusion over the sidewalk and into the school? Even stopping a vehicle for a few moments can make a difference.
- Do students and staff feel safe? Are there regular meetings regarding security and safety? Are you asking for community input?
- Is training offered for AED, first aid, and CPR? Is your entire staff certified?
- Does the school have AEDs, trauma kits (distinct from first aid kits) with tourniquets, airways, etc.? Does your flip chart reflect where these items are located?
- Do you have a visitor management system, like Raptor, that requires all visitors to tender their driver's license so security can run it for open arrests and against the sex offender list?
- Should you have metal detectors? Although metal detectors (for people and packages) are utilized in airports, courthouses, and some special events, they are incredibly expensive, difficult to calibrate, and require at least two people to man each metal detector. However, you could consider a package-only metal detector that is less expensive and only requires one trained technician to operate.

Conclusion

These guidelines are a good starting point for any school to begin a discussion with your security

and administrative teams about what may be missing from your plans and where you should obtain additional information. As time moves forward, you will hear many more recommendations from other schools and consultants. This is the time to absorb and consider all options to determine what steps may be best for your school.

If you have questions, please contact the authors at sbogdan@fisherphillips.com (954.847.4705) or wbb@wbgroup.us (305.525.8013).

Related People



Suzanne K. Bogdan

Partner

954.847.4705

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