SCHOOL SAFETY

Safer Schools in Iowa by Design

Recent events at educational facilities throughout our country have magnified and heightened safety concerns for students, faculty, and community participants at these institutional facilities. Beyond the legislation recently passed to have school districts evaluate and address emergency management and response protocols with first responders and law enforcement entities, the design and configuration of educational facilities and security infrastructure considerations remain. We, as architects, believe there is a need to establish and adopt comprehensive guidelines in the State of Iowa that develop and promote safer schools by design.

Defining and establishing guidelines in Iowa is intended to assist school districts with this complicated issue, so district priorities can be determined. It is critical that educational buildings provide for an exceptional learning experience which recognizes and incorporates the physical and operational considerations that each of our learning environments has. By establishing safe school guidelines, architects can help establish educational standards in Iowa that promote our communities, our collective well-being, in a way that integrates safety standards and practices into each of our educational facilities.

Recommendations for Action:

1. AIA Iowa Safe Schools Initiative, establish the four essential considerations important to promote school safety across all Educational Facilities in Iowa.

2. Continue to uphold SAVE Funds and new as well as existing funding streams to be dedicated to school safety facility improvements across Iowa.

Current Iowa Initiative:

Continue to Support Secure an Advanced Vision for Education (SAVE): This funding stream was formerly known as the statewide school infrastructure sales and services tax and also known as the local option sales and services tax for school infrastructure.

For more information contact AIA Iowa at 515-244-7502 or info@aiaiowa.org
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AIA Iowa Safe Schools Initiative

1 Prevent – Essential to creating a safe and supportive school climate:
   Take steps to avoid incidents, minimize the impacts of occurrences.
   • Involve a variety of community agencies and organizations to impact a
     positive school culture to create a connected community with open dialogue
     and a physical environment that supports these goals.
   • Break down facilities into more manageable, smaller learning communities to
     create better visibility to public areas for safety and awareness.

2 Prepare – Essential to action in an emergency:
   Take steps to organize response prior to an incident.
   • Train students, staff, and community members for potential events and
     create a process of planning, practicing, and evaluating actions aimed at
     effective response to potential incidents.
   • Train for a variety of incidents including weather, fire, and intrusions.

3 Protect – Essential to the success of action plans in facilities:
   Take steps to develop conditions which shield occupants from dangers.
   • Thoughtful planning or alteration of critical infrastructure that reinforces
     prevention and preparedness strategies.
   • Access to limited and controlled entry points and/or the creation of safe
     haven areas to secure against a variety of hazards.

4 Plan – Essential to recovery when a crisis occurs:
   Take steps to restore pre-event conditions after an incident occurs.
   • Planning for the mending of physical and emotional health of the facility and
     learning environments.
   • Identify temporary facility planning and counseling support to make a
     difficult time less so.

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