

How Parents Can Help Make Schools Safer

The Department of Education's 1998 publication, *Early Warning, Timely Response* offers the following suggestions for parents who want to create safer schools:

Discuss the school's discipline policy with your child. Show your support for the rules, and help your child understand the reasons for them.

Involve your child in setting rules for appropriate behavior at home.

Talk with your child about the violence he or she sees on television, in video games, and possibly in the neighborhood. Help your child understand the consequences of violence.

Teach your child how to solve problems. Praise your child when he or she follows through.

Help your child find ways to show anger that do not involve verbally or physically hurting others.

When you get angry, use it as an opportunity to model these appropriate responses for your child and talk about it.

Help your child understand the value of accepting individual differences.

Note any disturbing behaviors in your child. For example, frequent angry outbursts, excessive fighting and bullying of other children, cruelty to animals, fire setting, frequent behavior problems at school and in the neighborhood, lack of friends, and alcohol or drug use can be signs of serious problems. Get help for your child. Talk with a trusted professional in your child's school or in the community.

Keep lines of communication open with your child even when it is tough. Encourage your child always to let you know where and with whom he or she will be. Get to know your child's friends.

Listen to your child if he or she shares concerns about friends who may be exhibiting troubling behaviors. Share this information with a trusted professional, such as the school psychologist, principal, or teacher.

Be involved in your child's school life by supporting and reviewing homework, talking with his or her teacher(s), and attending school functions such as parent conferences, class programs, open houses, and PTA meetings.

Work with your child's school to make it more responsive to all students and to all families. Share your ideas about how the school can encourage family involvement, welcome all families, and include them in meaningful ways in their children's education.

Encourage your school to offer before- and after-school programs.

Volunteer to work with school-based groups concerned with violence prevention. If none exist, offer to form one.

Find out if there is a violence prevention group in your community. Offer to participate in the group's activities.

Talk with the parents of your child's friends. Discuss how you can form a team to ensure your children's safety.

Find out if your employer offers provisions for parents to participate in school activities.