



2022 SCHOOL SAFETY SOLUTIONS

A GUIDE TO CLOSING GAPS AND SECURING YOUR CAMPUS

Is your district prepared for the moments that matter?





About the Guide

When it comes to school safety, teachers, students, staff and administrators want to know their community is prepared and protected, not only in the event of an extreme scenario but also for everyday incidents and medical emergencies.

A big part of that preparation (and the sense of security that it provides) is the school safety and emergency notification system. While a wide range of solutions, including mobile security apps, panic buttons and two-way radio systems, are available, each one has intrinsic limitations that introduce potential safety gaps.

As the number of incidents trend upward, and more products vying for your attention come to market, having access to transparent, accurate information is integral to making the right safety solution decision.

It's why this e-book was created — to serve as a guide to evaluating school safety solutions.

Whether you're a superintendent, school resource officer, principal, teacher, staff member or school board representative, you want to feel confident in your school safety decisions. You want to strengthen your response to any incident on campus, reduce the time spent worrying about security and deliver peace of mind to the entire community.

A properly designed and deployed school safety solution can be a force multiplier. A poorly designed and deployed solution can have catastrophic consequences.

Keep reading to learn about the pros and cons of different solutions and see what you should expect from your school safety partners.



GETTING STARTED

A Thoughtful Decision-Making Framework

This guide is meant to help you make an informed choice regarding school safety systems.

Whether you're implementing a new system or replacing or supplementing an existing one, this guide outlines ideal features. While ideal features are universal, your priorities and requirements are unique — you may choose to mix and match solutions or find a single solution is best.

It is for this reason we suggest going into this guide with a plan for evaluating solutions. To get started, we recommend you:

- ① Assess and prioritize the most likely risks and threats in your schools. Leverage your teachers, staff and incident reports to create a comprehensive list.
- ② Outline what a school safety system must do to best address the risks and threats you listed in the first step.
- ③ Referring to the information in this guide, consider the capabilities and limitations of the available solutions and map those capabilities to your school priorities and requirements.
- ④ Seek a solution that is fast, ready, reliable and available anytime, anywhere inside or outside of the building.

33%

of teachers reported being threatened or verbally harassed by a student during the 2020-2021 school year.

- American Psychological Association





5

Take inventory of and evaluate the tools your school already has in place (two-way radio systems, mobile security apps, etc.), and ask yourself if they can complement a more complete solution.

6

Finally, confirm that your whole school safety solution will meet all the priorities and requirements you outlined.

With this framework in mind, you can be confident that a solution you adopt isn't just any solution– it's the right solution.

WHY NOW?

Real-World Challenges Require Purpose-Built Solutions

Make no mistake, school safety incidents are on the rise, and news coverage only paints a partial picture. Protecting schools from extreme threats and incidents of violence is paramount, but extreme situations are not the primary threat facing schools.

Only 0.00008% of all K-12 schools have been the scene of mass shooting incident in the past 30 years, but, in schools across the country, teachers and staff are navigating emergencies such as behavioral issues, injuries and medical emergencies, elopements and the like as part of their day-to-day reality.

To support teachers and create safer learning environments, schools need quick, easy-to-use, accurate solutions built for the full range of real-world scenarios and challenges.

33% of teachers reported being threatened or verbally harassed by a student during the 2020-2021 school year

- American Psychological Association

40% of administrators reported being threatened by parents during the 2020-2021 school year

- American Psychological Association

5% of students ages 12-18 reported they were afraid of being attacked or harmed at school

- National Center for Education Statistics

3.5 million+ children are injured each year participating in sports or recreation activities

- Stanford Children's Health

775,000+ children are treated in emergency rooms for sports-related injuries each year

- Stanford Children's Health

215,000+ football-related injuries among children ages 5-14 each year

- Stanford Children's Health

200,000+ bicycling-related injuries among children ages 5-14 each year

- Stanford Children's Health

Among schools using CrisisAlert, the data provides additional visibility into the trends – a rise in medical and behavioral incidents.




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- American Psychological Association

An analysis of CrisisAlert data comparing Fall 2020 to Fall 2021 shows that schools experienced:

- 
- 250% increase** in student behavior incidents (comprising 75% of all alerts)
 - 130% increase** in medical incidents
 - 150% increase** in safety incidents per school
 - 100% increase** in the number of staff who requested help

To equip teachers and staff to respond to the growing challenge, a school safety solution must be prepared for and address a wide range of incidents. Whether it's a behavioral situation, a medical emergency or an extreme safety threat, all systems that act as the first point of alert must be quick, easy to use and accurate.



TYPES OF SOLUTIONS

There's an App for That ... But Is It Enough?

When you are overwhelmed and under pressure to strengthen your school's safety response, it's crucial to secure your campus, reassure your community and deliver a sense of calm. Many of today's traditional solutions can help.

When it comes to traditional, established school safety solutions, there are three primary types:

1. Mobile Security Apps
2. Fixed, Wall-Mounted Panic Buttons
3. Two-Way Radio Systems

While each of these systems have been successfully deployed in schools across the country — and bring certain advantages — each platform has unique drawbacks that create gaps in safety.

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MOBILE SECURITY APPS

A growing number of schools have adopted app-based solutions for school safety because phones and tablets are nearly always at-hand and can be used to send a panic signal during an emergency.

Thanks to the near ubiquity of mobile devices and the universal familiarity with app design/use, mobile device systems are attractive solutions. An app-based solution could save your school from having to purchase any additional hardware or carry out any installations.

However, there are practical considerations that challenge an app-based approach – a mobile-only solution introduces four potential points of failure.

- **Restrictions on Device Usage:** While most people carry a mobile device with them, not everyone does – some schools even have policies that require all mobile devices to be out of sight.
- **Difficulty Using the Application:** In a moment of stress, keying in a PIN or authenticating with a fingerprint could prove difficult and add seconds to an emergency when every second counts.
- **Wi-Fi and/or Cellular Dead Zones:** Emergencies can materialize anywhere. Hallways, stairwells, internal offices, locker rooms, practice fields and parking lots don't have reliable coverage, creating a potential point of catastrophic failure.
- **Limited Location Accuracy:** Even when leveraging GPS, something as granular as room number or floor is outside the capabilities of an app-based system.

Despite the upsides, the potential points of failure in an app-based system should be considered before you adopt such a solution. You must consider where a mobile app solution fits in your overall approach and whether it can serve as a reliable first point of alert in an emergency.

2/3

*of school shootings
are over in two
minutes, and half
of them last only 60
seconds or less.*

- National Threat Assessment Center



FIXED, WALL-MOUNTED PANIC BUTTONS

Another popular safety solution that has been adopted by nearly 30% of schools, according to a 2019 U.S. Department of Education report, is fixed, wall-mounted panic buttons.

While wall-mounted solutions avoid some of the pitfalls of mobile, app-based systems — they do not depend on a wireless signal and are not reliant on staff-supplied devices — they also have their own unique points of concern.

The fixed nature (and therefore access) is the primary point of potential failure for wall-mounted solutions. Like the physical access disadvantages of an app-based systems, personnel must be within reach of a fixed panic button for it to be useful.

Consider these scenarios:

- A teacher is confronted in a classroom — while at their desk — and is unable to reach the wall-mounted panic button.
- A coach on the field attending to an injured player is not near a panic button.
- A staff member who sees a fight in the cafeteria is not near a panic button.
- A teacher that spots a weapon in the school parking lot is not near a panic button.

Panic buttons must be accessible immediately to be useful. Like app-based systems, wall-mounted units only work if circumstances align perfectly, which is rarely the case.





TWO-WAY RADIO SYSTEMS

Two-way radios can provide fast, reliable connections, but when used as the sole means of school safety, they are prone to error.

The South Florida Sun Sentinel article, “It was dead air’: Radio collapse crippled Parkland shooting response,” outlines just how unreliable a two-way radio system can be. The article not only describes the collapse in Parkland — the radios just stopped functioning — but an identical failure of the exact same two-way system during a mass shooting at the Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport one year prior.

These specific instances aside, two-way radios present five challenges in an emergency.

- Even with a working radio, a person in an emergency may not be able to provide their location.
- Systems and responder organizations might not be connected, reducing their ability to effectively communicate across channels and jurisdictions.
- Multiple voices on a two-way radio system can create confusion in an emergency.
- Some two-way systems are half-duplex, meaning only one person can speak at a time.
- Two-way radios are useless if they’re not charged or if the battery dies during an emergency.
- Many two-way radio handsets can be impractically large.



30%

of schools have adopted fixed, wall-mounted panic buttons.

- U.S. Department of Education

EVALUATION CRITERIA

5 Non-Negotiables of Your School Safety Solution

Emergencies are never planned, nor are they linear. Choosing a solution with zero points of failure – in any situation – is critical to alerting first responders and communicating with staff in urgent situations.

When comparing your options, ask these questions and look for the following criteria:

1. Where is it available?
2. What situations can it be used in?
3. How easy is it to use?
4. How does it communicate?
5. Who is notified?

① **It's Available to Everyone, Everywhere – Always**

According to U.S. Government Accountability Office, 61% of the school shootings between 2009 and 2019 occurred outside the school building. And other response events – accidents, injuries, fights – can also happen anywhere on campus.

A school safety system must have wide geographic coverage and wide personnel coverage. All teachers, staff members and administrators must have the ability to trigger the system at a moment's notice independent of a Wi-Fi signal, their own location on campus or a device they may or may not have on their person.

② It Can Be Used in All Types of Emergencies, Incidents and Crisis Situations

As a result of their extreme nature and the horrifying display of violence, communities and school leaders tend to think first about how best to prevent and respond to school shootings. Yet, incidents of crime (fights, thefts, etc.), scenarios involving health (medical emergencies, accidental injuries, etc.) and natural disasters (inclement weather, fires, earthquakes, etc.) are more common.

Ultimately, your school safety solution must be capable of handling all these scenarios and prove effective in the unlikely event of an active shooter scenario.

An effective school safety solution will:

- a.** Let staff quickly respond to a student experiencing a medical emergency or a physical altercation outside of school walls.
- b.** Permit front desk personnel to request help without immediate escalation, such as when a parent becomes irate or hostile.
- c.** Enable a swift response if a domestic dispute erupts in the parking lot during a student pickup.
- d.** Empower staff to quickly respond to a threat of violence with accurate, immediate information.





③ It's Simple and Fast to Use

Every second saved in an emergency improves the chances for a positive outcome. An effective school safety system should make calling for help or triggering a lockdown easy.

Consider these real-life scenarios:

- a. Approximately two-thirds of school shootings are over in two minutes, and half of them last only 60 seconds or less, according to the National Threat Assessment Center.
- b. For every one minute someone in cardiac arrest is left untreated, chances of survival fall 7% to 10%, according to the American Heart Association.
- c. Anaphylaxis (an allergic reaction) can be fatal within minutes if left untreated, according to the National Library of Medicine.

Ideally, your school should invest in a system that has one-touch, single-button activation because it's faster than retrieving a device, turning it on, authenticating and launching an app — especially under duress.





④ **It Automatically Communicates Key Information**

Quickly and accurately relaying basic information to first responders in the event of an emergency is table stakes. This is objectively harder to do during moments of extremes stress.

An effective school safety system should automatically identify the person who is requesting help, accurately pinpoint the exact location of the emergency, including room and floor, and automatically relay it to first responders.



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- U.S. Government Accountability Office

⑤ **It Effectively Communicates to the Entire School Community**

In an emergency, it is crucial that the entire school community stays informed, including people off campus or those just coming to campus. The key is to maximize awareness and information to all those affected.

Your school safety solution should:

- a.** Have a full set of strobe lights (interior and exterior) that alert people everywhere that an incident is in progress.
- b.** Include a remote communication interface so administrators can respond to and coordinate with authorities during an emergency, even if they are off campus.
- c.** Tie into automated intercom announcements, computers and phone systems to quickly broadcast pertinent information.
- d.** Display instructional messages on computers and smartphones to those on campus not well versed in safety protocols, such as substitute teachers, volunteers and visitors.
- e.** Allow personnel to communicate directly with local authorities.

WHY CRISISALERT

A Solution That Checks All the Boxes

CENTEGIX's award-winning CrisisAlert solution checks all the boxes when it comes to non-negotiable criteria.

CrisisAlert not only equips all teachers and staff with the fastest and easiest way to request help in an emergency, but also it delivers a precise alert location and seamlessly integrates into existing notification systems (phones, public address, etc.). With the simple push of a button on a wearable badge, an alert instantly reaches administrators and responders.

The CrisisAlert system empowers teachers and administrators to act and respond with confidence in every situation, from the everyday to the extreme. When educators and students feel safe and secure, they can get back to focusing on their goals: learning and academic achievement.

To talk with an expert about CrisisAlert or to simply discuss school safety trends, solutions, or funding opportunities, connect with us today at centegix.com/education.





CRISISALERT SPOTLIGHT

Alyssa's Law Compliance in Florida

Signed into law in Florida in July 2020 and New Jersey in February 2019, Alyssa's Law is the school safety statute named after Parkland shooting victim Alyssa Alhadeff.

- **In Florida**, the law requires all public and charter schools in the state to install a panic alarm system that directly notifies first responders of emergencies. In addition, the system must be activatable via a mobile device, not a fixed, wall-mounted unit.
- **In New Jersey**, the law requires all primary and secondary schools in the state to install at least one silent, manually activated panic alarm that directly notifies first responders. Schools can opt to install an alternative system if it is approved by the Department of Education.

Variations of Alyssa's Law are making their way through state legislatures in New York, Nebraska, Arizona, Texas and Virginia, and another version of Alyssa's Law has been proposed at the federal level.

CrisisAlert by CENTEGIX is among the few fully compliant solutions. As a state-approved provider in Florida, CrisisAlert has been installed in over 600 schools with a 100% adoption rate.



What makes CrisisAlert different?

- It can be used in all types of emergencies thanks to its simplistic two-tier notification method that allows responders to easily request routine assistance or initiate a lockdown from the same device.
- It's available to everyone, everywhere, anytime, always thanks to the unobtrusive, one-button, identification card-style design that can be worn on a lanyard or clipped directly to clothing.
- It's wearable, simple and fast to use with only a single button to operate — no navigating apps, reaching for fixed, wall-mounted panic buttons or fumbling with radios.
- It will automatically relay key information to responders including room and floor location — it also operates independently of Wi-Fi or cellular signals and can operate during a blackout.
- It will effectively communicate to the entire school community as it seamlessly integrates into existing systems.

CENTEGIX's CrisisAlert school safety solution delivers where other systems fail. In fact, CrisisAlert has empowered schools in the most important ways — teachers report that incident response times have improved and that they feel safer and more supported.

During the first 60 days of usage under Alyssa's Law requirements, Centegix gathered the following data:

97% of CrisisAlert usage *was in response to everyday emergencies (behavior, elopement, medical, physical altercation, suspicious behavior)*

74% of incidents *were behavior related (general behavioral issues, elopement, physical altercations)*

19% of incidents *were medical*

While the sheer number of alerts establish the value and necessity of the CrisisAlert system, the data makes clear what we already knew — schools need a solution that can handle the extreme and the routine

