

Issue talking points

The American Institute of Architects

For use by AIA components

School safety

KEY MESSAGE

Support safe school design for new and existing schools that keeps them positive learning environments.

THE ASK

AIA urges Congress to:

- Make design services eligible for existing federal grant funding.
- Establish a federal clearing-house of resources on school design best practices.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT

Kara Kempfski
(202) 731 8462
karakempfski@aia.org

The American Institute of Architects
1735 New York Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20006-5292

INTRODUCE THE ISSUE AND DELIVER YOUR KEY MESSAGE

- One of The American Institute of Architect's (AIA) top federal priorities this Congress is to support a design-centered approach to address school violence.
- In the same way that all three levels of government have made building design a central part of the solution of mitigating terrorist threats since 9/11, AIA believes the same approach can and should be taken to address school violence.
- Just like the threat of terrorism, school violence is a national crisis and AIA is eager to be a resource to Congress as it confront this issue.

DELIVER INFORMATION TO BACK UP YOUR KEY MESSAGE

- As architects, we are the first to say that design cannot prevent school violence.
- Design is part of the solution. There are school design best practices that can mitigate violence and maintain a positive learning environment for students and teachers.
- Security measures should be incorporated into the overall design to keep them as passive—or invisible—as possible to the student body.
- This minimizes the disruption to the learning environment while also making each security measure more difficult to circumvent.
- There is no single thing that all schools can do to keep students safe—and what might make sense for one school won't necessarily work for another.
- Architects can help by looking at the whole picture: school size and location, age of the students, campus layout, lighting, distance from the police department, lines of sight, etc.
- Furthermore, security measures should be layered, in keeping with the design principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED).



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- An important aspect of the “deter” goal of CPTED is to create a positive environment, with greater transparency and less anonymity. Fostering a healthy and emotionally supportive learning environment is, and must continue to be, the primary goal when designing a school.

DELIVER “THE ASK”

- AIA believes that these design decisions need to be made at the local level, but there is still a vital role the federal government can, and must, play.
- As school officials determine their appropriate response to the threat of violence, many are unfamiliar with where to begin or what sources of information they can trust.
- To support school officials in making design-centered security decisions that will maintain a positive learning environment, we urge Congress to take two important actions:
 - Authorize design services to be an eligible use of funding in any existing federal grants that support school security. This will help schools to develop a comprehensive and holistic plan for their campus security needs.
 - Establish a federal clearinghouse of resources and school design best practices for school officials to access. This will help them identify trusted and current information to best inform their decisions—both before and after school violence occurs.

**Will you work with your colleagues to prioritize these requests this Congress?
How can we support you?**

