

Top 11 ways to prevent unauthorized access to your school building

Visitor management programs

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From the delivery person to the volunteer parent, people visit school facilities every day. Often, regular visitors become familiar to school staff, faculty, even students. But with increased security, familiarity is no longer an acceptable method of managing visitors to school facilities.

School security and safety measures call for well-planned visitor management programs. These programs spell out measures endorsed by the school or district to monitor who enters the building and how they gain access to various facilities or areas.

Today, nearly all schools require visitors to sign or check in when entering the school building. Some states, including Florida and California, require criminal background checks for anyone working or regularly visiting a school. When it comes to managing visitors, everyday actions can make a significant difference. Here are 11 ways to manage visitors to your schools:

1. Visitor badging

Most schools use some form of visitor badge to identify visitors to the building. The badges, when displayed properly, help school staff, faculty, and even students easily identify whether someone whom they do not recognize is authorized to be in the school. Visitor badge programs also make identifying people who are not wearing badges more noticeable.

Badges come in a variety of forms and sizes. Some schools print visitor badges from a computer. Other schools require visitors to leave an identification card or valuable (i.e., car keys) when they sign a visitor log. More advanced systems may check fingerprints, sex offender registries or school-maintained databases before authorizing entry into the building.

2. Limited entrance/exit sites

The security industry strongly supports efforts by schools to designate a single entrance/exit door in a facility. The main entrance should be clearly marked by signage with directions to a visitor management center.

3. Retrofit doors and locks

Older doors and locks can be retrofitted with newer door hardware and locking systems.

4. Physical access control

Electronic magnetic release of door locking mechanisms coupled with video and intercom systems enable interior monitors to screen visitors prior to allowing entry to the school. Visitor badges and registration allow accountability for those persons presently in the school and record of those persons who have been in the school.

5. Video surveillance systems

Digital video camera systems offer state-of-the-art resolution, tracking and Internet access to internal space monitoring and control. School safety surveys show most K-12 school districts use security cameras to monitor parts of their facilities or campuses. The most common use for security cameras is for entrances and exits, gathering areas, and parking lots.

6. Two-way communication devices

Two-way radios allow school staff to communicate on and off campus and enable them to communicate with other agencies, if equipment is programmed in such a manner.

7. Access control

Visitor management programs identify and record visitors to schools. The most basic programs use sign-in logs and identification badges for visitors to the facility. More advanced security, rely on electronic access control devices, such as proximity or swipe card readers.

8. Collaboration with local emergency response agencies

School districts can enable local agencies, such as police, fire or emergency responders, to view security camera footage in real time.

9. Mass notification systems

Automated phone messages, e-mail alerts, text message alerts, sirens and loud speakers top the list of systems used by most districts. The systems are used primarily to alert faculty, staff and school administration of important information. As reliance on the systems grows, more districts are considering expanding their mass notification procedures to include parents/guardians, students and local emergency response groups.

10. Law enforcement

Periodic police presence helps to deter potential risks from intruders or violent persons. Some schools park a clearly visible police vehicle in front of the school during different times of the day as a deterrent.

11. Visitor communications

Communicating a Visitor Policy to all parents and guardians helps ensure that everyone supports and complies with the access plan. The policies can be distributed through a parent letter, web page, e-mail message or take-home flier. Visitor policies also should be included in student handbooks and signatures required, indicating that parents have read the policy.

Learn more about visitor management techniques

For more information about managing access to your school, please contact a professional security consultant in your area by calling **888.758.9823** or fill out the **Contact Us** form on our website at allegion.com.

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