



Increase Student Safety

By Creating Supportive School Environments and Addressing the Behavioral Health Needs of Students

All Kentucky children deserve a safe environment in which to learn. Kentucky schools are safer when the focus is on connecting students with caring adults, addressing students' behavioral health needs, and utilizing proven strategies to address other safety measures within school buildings.

Kentucky kids are safest when their schools take a comprehensive approach to supportive learning environments and address behavioral health needs:

Increase students' access to behavioral health services

Students need quality behavioral health care to address issues like depression, anxiety, and trauma. When students have access to high-quality behavioral health services in the school building, including clinically trained professionals, students receive preventive treatment to address challenges before they get more serious, require more costly interventions, and potentially put other students at risk. To fund some of these services, the state can leverage federal dollars to allow schools to bill Medicaid for behavioral health and other health services so that schools can hire additional health professionals.

Foster supportive learning environments

Nurturing environments, including reinforcing positive behaviors, and ensuring students have trusted adults to whom they can turn are proven prevention strategies to end school violence. While some research suggests stronger School Resource Officer (SRO) presence increases feelings of safety and positive relationships, schools must establish clear processes to ensure the role of SROs and other law enforcement in schools promotes a strong relationship with all students and does not extend to handling common discipline matters. Supportive environments foster relationships where students feel comfortable reporting risks and concerns to school staff who can assess and respond to the situation appropriately.

Use proven strategies when addressing physical safety

When paired with prevention strategies like behavioral health services and strong connections to adults, safety measures to the physical building may strengthen school safety. Those measures should utilize proven methods, like locking external doors and buzzer entry systems, and should not have unintended consequences that could increase student fear or reduce the perception of safety.

Blueprint for Kentucky's Children Solution:

Increase student safety in Kentucky schools through comprehensive approaches that include creating safe, supportive school environments and addressing the behavioral health needs of students.