CYBERSECURITY & INFRASTRUCTURE SECURITY AGENCY

K-12 SCHOOL SECURITY GUIDE

COMPANION PRODUCT FOR SCHOOL-BASED LAW ENFORCEMENT AND SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS

JULY 2024

Trained law enforcement officers with sworn authority, such as **school-based law enforcement (SBLE) or school resource officers (SROs)**, work with school officials and community-based organizations to protect K-12 schools from safety and security threats. SBLE and SROs may also serve as educators, informal counselors and mentors, as well as be members of **multi-disciplinary school safety teams** to help devise and implement security plans for K-12 schools and school districts within their jurisdiction.

The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) created this **K-12 School Security Guide Companion Product** to provide SBLE and SROs with a high-level overview of how they can support school physical security planning and implementation efforts through the key concepts and principles outlined in CISA's **K-12 School Security Guide, 3rd Ed. (Guide)**. This companion publication also includes information on how SBLE and SROs can use the Guide and its associated resources[1] to assess vulnerabilities, improve physical security and better protect against a range of targeted violence and other threats.

SBLE AND SRO ROLES IN THE FIVE CORE ELEMENTS

SBLE and SROs may have multiple roles in school physical security systems. SBLE and SROs may advise school safety teams on physical security planning, including best practices regarding security measures. Below are the **five core elements** identified in the Guide that comprise a school's physical security system and corresponding examples of how SBLE and SROs can play an active role in each:

Physical Security Equipment and Technology: Physical or technological measures designed to improve security, such as door-locking features, closed-circuit television (CCTV) and electronic alarm systems. SBLE and SROs can provide advice on how certain technologies may support school security, aid in investigative incidents or perform door checks on building exterior doors.

School Security Personnel: Human elements and efforts to secure schools, including school security planning teams, patrols and visitor access management. SBLE and SROs can serve on planning teams or oversee visitor management and assessment at points of entry.

Security Policies and Procedures: Plans that determine how personnel, equipment or technology integrate and operate within a school's physical security system, such as policies on how to monitor entry areas and CCTV video feeds. SBLE and SROs can advise on the development of protocols and procedures when a threat is detected or in response to an incident.

Site and Building Design: Building designs and campus features that incorporate school safety measures, such as access controlled entrances, open sight design to enable surveillance or rapid emergency egress points. SBLE and SROs can advise administrators on features that may support safer school buildings, such as access control management or removal of certain mobile obstructions that limit open sight and threat detection.

Training, Exercises and Drills: Tabletop exercises, staff trainings and developmentally appropriate drills help schools review and update their emergency response procedures. SBLE and SROs can provide first responder insight during the planning phase of these activities and help inform updates to emergency planning policies as needed.

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[1] *See page 4 for a list of resources within the product suite.*

THE GUIDE'S APPROACH TO SCHOOL PHYSICAL SECURITY

A core mission of K-12 schools throughout the United States is to create safe and secure environments to help promote the achievement of schools' education objectives. As schools strive to achieve this education mission, one of the challenges they face is minimizing the risk of acts of crime and violence. The Guide provides information and guidance on how schools can address these threats by planning for and implementing a **systems-based approach** to layered physical security. The Guide includes the following key concepts that can help support SBLE and SROs in strengthening school physical security:

Taking a **"systems-based approach"** means ensuring that various security measures across a school campus work together in an integrated way, and that planning incorporates the relevant policies and training programs that must also be in place for the entire system to function effectively.

» **Physical security is a holistic system of interrelated elements.**
SBLE and SROs can play key roles to address the needs of **physical security's five core elements:** equipment and technology, school security personnel, security policies, site and building design, and training, exercises and drills.

» **A layered approach to school physical security helps prevent single points of failure.** Different security measures perform functions to detect, delay and respond to threats at specific layers of schools' campuses (Fig. 2). A layered approach to school physical security lets the system work in an integrated way **and helps prevent single points of failure**. As part of the systems-based approach, SBLE, SROs and the school security planning team should evaluate how their physical security system is distributed across the four layers of a campus:

1. **Grounds Perimeter Layer:** Outer boundaries of a school, such as perimeter fencing or hedges.
2. **School Grounds Layer:** Athletic fields, parking lots, playgrounds and other outdoor spaces.
3. **Building Perimeter Layer:** Walls, entrances or materials that enclose the inside of school buildings.
4. **Building Interior Layer:** Spaces inside school buildings, such as classrooms, offices, cafeterias and hallways.

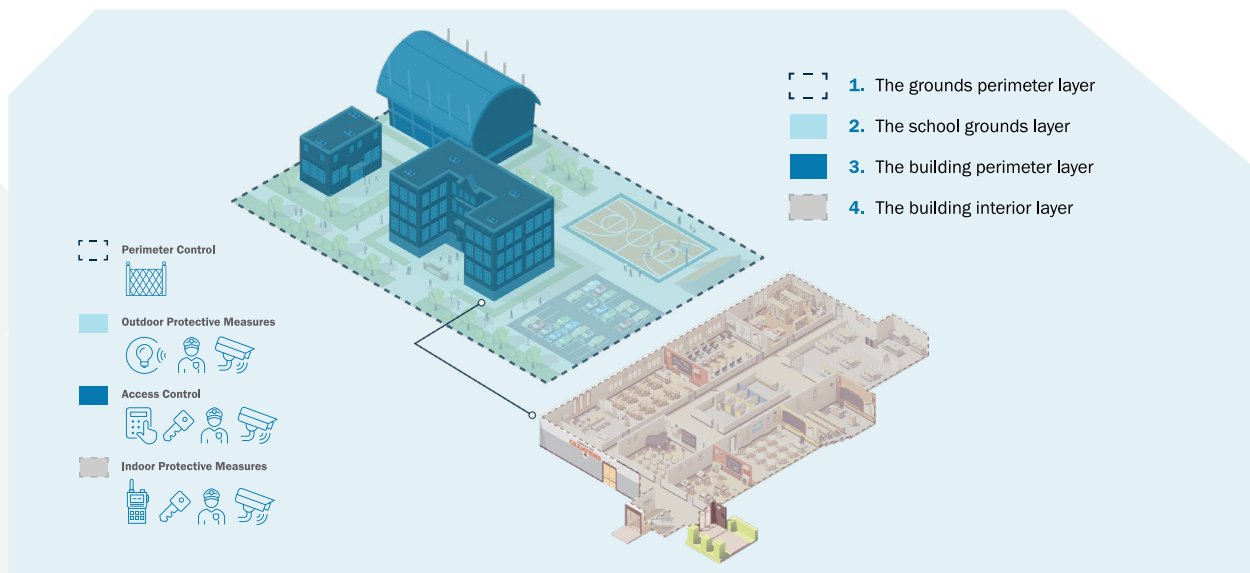1. The grounds perimeter layer
2. The school grounds layer
3. The building perimeter layer
4. The building interior layer

Perimeter Control

Outdoor Protective Measures

Access Control

Indoor Protective Measures

FIGURE 1 - **School Physical Security Layers**

Physical Security Strategy	Measure Definition	Examples
Detect	» Measures that communicate that a safety-related incident is occurring or about to occur	» Monitored CCTV; security guard patrols; open-sight designs allowing for natural surveillance
Delay	» Measures that increase the level of effort, resources and time necessary for a safety-related incident to occur	» Fencing; reinforced windows or doors; staff patrols; automatic lock mechanisms at entrances and interior doors
Respond	» Measures that contribute to overcoming a threat or limiting the damage caused by a threat	» SBLE, SROs or security guards; communication and notification equipment; first aid kits

K-12 SCHOOL SECURITY ASSESSMENT TOOL

SBLE and SROs can use the Guide in conjunction with the **School Security Assessment Tool (SSAT)**, a web-based tool that provides further guidance on school physical security planning and implementation. The tool enables SBLE, SROs and school security teams to take stock of current security measures in place across their campus and offers suggestions about where to make improvements in their school physical security system.

The SSAT is portable and works on mobile devices, so SBLE, SROs and members of the planning team can navigate the assessment together to guide planning discussions and to record current security measures. The SSAT provides recommendations based on five steps:

1. Detailing the **physical layout and features** of the school campus.
2. **Choosing a scenario** to help detect gaps in the school's security system relating to a specific incident.
3. Providing information about **existing safety and security measures.**
4. Answering questions about **school policies and confidence levels** of security measure performance.
5. Receiving results with **specific physical security recommendations** about a discreet set of vulnerabilities that could be considered for implementation.

Because each school campus is unique, SBLE and SROs can use the SSAT to tailor the layered, systems-based approach to support the individual needs of their school, regardless of geographical context or level of maturity when it comes to the school security planning process.
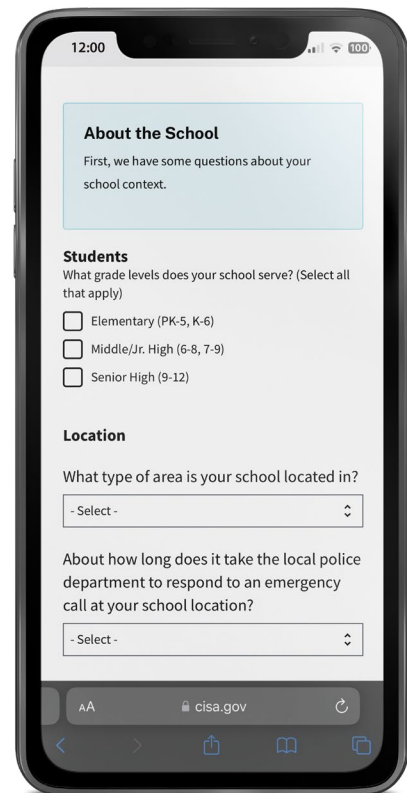

FIGURE 3 - **SSAT Mobile Interface**

SBLE AND SRO ROLES IN PHYSICAL SECURITY SYSTEM PLANNING

SBLE and SROs can serve in important roles in assisting K-12 stakeholders with creating and implementing physical security plans. By participating in the school security planning process (Fig. 4), SBLE and SROs can help bridge relationships between K-12 schools and community partners to build productive school physical security systems and plans. If applicable, SBLE and SROs can be considered as direct contacts for other local law enforcement, first responders or K-12 stakeholders to help integrate school security policies and procedures in alignment with local requirements. SBLE and SROs can also encourage schools to revisit and update school security planning processes on an annual basis to help address any gaps and strengthen the overall security system.

FIGURE 4 - **Steps in the School Security Physical Planning Process**

STEP 1.

FORM A PHYSICAL SECURITY PLANNING TEAM

Identify and include relevant school staff and stakeholders, such as community organizations, local law enforcement, and families.

STEP 2.

GATHER RELEVANT LOCAL DATA

Gather local data about safety incidents at schools and the consequences of such events.

STEP 3.

THREAT ANALYSIS

What types of safety incidents are a concern for a school, and how likely are they to occur?

STEP 4.

VULNERABILITY ANALYSIS

What safety and security measures are already in place at the school?

STEP 5.

RISK ANALYSIS

What are the potential consequences of each of the identified safety incidents based on the security measures in place at the school? How do security measures reduce risk? What risk remains?

STEP 6.

CREATE A SECURITY PLAN

Which of those remaining risks are a concern, and what are the most practical and effective additional safety and security measures to address them?

*SOURCE: Adapted from **Steiner et al., 2021.***

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND CALL-TO-ACTION

The Guide includes further information on the key concepts outlined in this companion, as well as additional best practices that can help support school physical security planning and implementation.

SBLE and SROs can also access the other products and resources available through the suite, including:

» Guide Training Companion Course: Helps end users understand what physical security looks like in K-12 schools.
» Train the Trainer Companion Course: Provides those advising school security personnel staff with an overview of the K-12 School Security Guide Product Suite.
» SSAT How-To Video: Describes key features of the SSAT and tips on how to easily navigate the tool.

FIGURE 5 - CISA K-12 School Security Guide Product Suite

OTHER HELPFUL LINKS

CISA and its partners offer the following resources, programs and tools to help SBLE, SROs and other school personnel develop individualized school safety plans that prevent, protect against and mitigate security threats, risks and emergency situations.

» **CISA School Safety**: A collection of CISA's programs and capacity-building products, training and tools specific to strengthening protection and mitigation measures and capabilities in K-12 schools.

» **CISA Tabletop Exercise Packages**: A comprehensive set of resources designed to assist stakeholders in conducting their own exercises.

» **CISA Security Advisors**: A cadre of local and regional personnel who can provide a variety of risk management and response services.

» **SchoolSafety.gov**: A collaborative, interagency website created by the federal government to provide schools and districts with actionable recommendations to create safe and supportive environments for students and educators.

WHAT YOU CAN DO NEXT

» Download the **Guide** to further explore concepts in this companion and access additional action-oriented physical security practices.

» Utilize the **SSAT** to identify ways to improve physical security and prioritize future enhancements.

» Explore additional trainings including the **K-12 School Security Guide Companion Courses**.

» Coordinate with **regional experts**, like CISA Protective Security Advisors, who can assist with security assessments.

» Consider joining or partnering with a school security planning team in your area or jurisdiction.

» Work with K-12 administrators, school leaders or other staff to build upon school safety plans.

» Leverage **additional resources** that expand on physical security best practices.
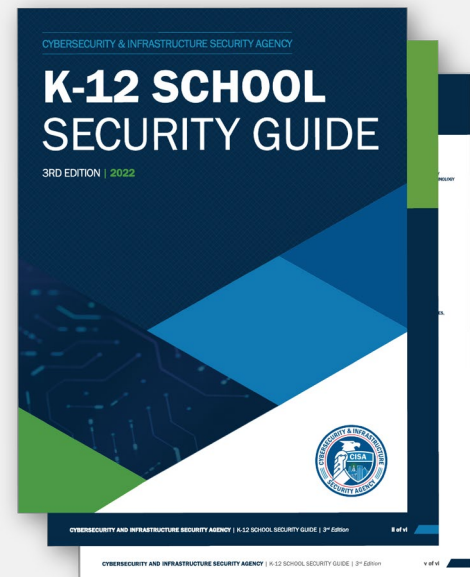
K-12 School Security Guide, 3rd Edition, 2022.

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