



School Safety News

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Integrating Safety and Security Plans for the Disabled

THE KEY ELEMENTS OF ANY COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL SAFETY PLAN

During the 2013-2014 school year, the U.S. Department of Education reported 6,560,899 students as having a disability -- that constitutes an overwhelming 13% of our nation's students from grades K-12. Students with disabilities are considered those with at least one of the following conditions: a specific learning disability, a visual handicap, hard of hearing, deafness, a speech disability, an orthopedic handicap, or a health impairment. Educational mainstreaming for students with disabilities has presented new challenges for educators and youth-serving professionals, not the least of which involves effectively planning in order to ensure the safety of those requiring special care and attention during an emergency.

There are primarily three federal laws in place to protect the rights of disabled students. These laws include the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. One common factor among the three laws is protection of legal rights for those with disabilities (which may include accommodations, equal access to education, etc.). Therefore, every school is required to accommodate students with any type of disability -- meaning there is nothing a non-disabled student can do that a disabled student cannot do on account of the school's physical structure or discriminative policies.

During emergencies, therefore, it is the school's legal and ethical responsibility to ensure that handicapped students and staff may be transported to a safe place just as safely and readily as non-handicapped individuals. Furthermore, the IDEA and 504 regulations establish procedural safeguards for handicapped students, whereby schools are required to explicitly state what services they can and cannot provide to each disabled student and his or her family. Under this provision, it is essential that schools express the services they will and will not be equipped to provide during emergency situations.



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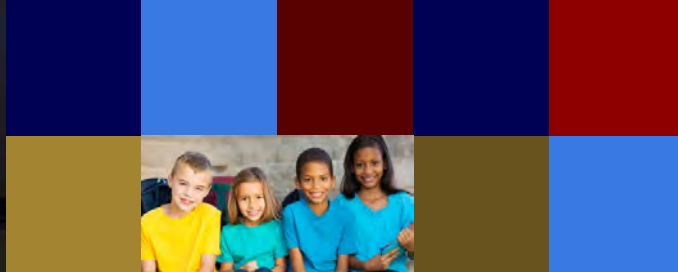
Mutualink Partners with School Safety Expert in Shared Mission to Speed Response Time during School Emergencies

WALLINGFORD, Conn.--(BUSINESS WIRE)--Mutualink today announced an alliance with one of the Nation's top school safety and security experts, William "Bill" Smith, to improve schools' preparedness and response in emergency situations through advanced communications technology. As the founding member of American School Safety.com, LLC and principal of Jennings Smith Associates, Mr. Smith brings over thirty years of experience as a security consultant and is a renowned authority on US school safety and security issues.



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Integrating Safety and Security Plans for the Disabled

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However, despite these federal regulations, our team has conducted security audits and assessments at schools across the country, and we have found wide disparities in safety, security and emergency management protocols for handicapped students, teachers and staff. Our focus has always been to evaluate site-based safety and security planning by utilizing the triad principal of People, Products, and Policies/Procedures.

Interviews of all relevant parties – including the handicapped individuals, their caregivers, medical staff and emergency responders – should be conducted thoroughly in order to solicit their insight and concerns regarding safety and security in the event of a crisis. The following questions should prove helpful to our members in addressing these critical issues and highlighting the necessity of implementing consistent and effective security policies to protect the handicapped in times of need.

People: How many disabled students, teachers or staff are in the school or facility during and after class hours? What is their location? What is the type and nature of their disability? Have the handicapped individuals previously participated in any emergency drills (i.e., fire drills, evacuations, shelter-in place, and lockdowns)? Do they have permanently assigned caregivers, aides, or medical assistants? If so, are they familiar with the school's safety plan? Do they have any concerns regarding the safety and security protocols in place at the facility? Have their concerns been addressed? Were emergency drills that included handicapped individuals monitored by local first responding agencies?

Products: Can handicapped occupants be safely transported from the building or to the designated shelter by use of a wheelchair, backboard, stretcher or other medically approved devices? If these products are required, will they be pre-positioned and readily available for easy access by assigned personnel? Will the disabled party need medication, medical supplies, batteries, consumables or personal care items after the evacuation? Are these supplies available in a medical "Go Kit" which is maintained by the care giver, aide or medical assistant? Are the supplies routinely checked to insure all needed items are within date codes and appropriate for use?

Policies and Procedures: Have policies addressing the needs of the handicapped been adopted by the Board of Education or Safety and Security Committee? Are they documented and included in the index of the District's Safety and Security Master Plan? Has the policy been disseminated to all facilities (i.e., schools, administrative offices and satellite facilities)? Have procedures been adopted and incorporated in each site-based safety and security plan and cascaded to all teachers, administration and support staff? Have those plans been practiced under the supervision of district leadership as well as representatives from all local emergency response agencies?

By intensifying focus on the needs of the handicapped, your district will be better prepared to train all staff and care givers responsible for responding and reacting proficiently during any site-based emergency and, consequently, ensure that the most vulnerable youths and educators in the community will be safe at school.

Additional Information: To learn more about integrating safety and security plans for the disabled call 866-531-6560 or [click here](#) to have American School Safety contact you.

American School Safety Crisis Response Kit

U.S. PATENT #7628275



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