

NATIONAL SAFE SCHOOLS WEEK!

EVENT & ACTIVITIES PLANNING GUIDE



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Introduction to National Safe Schools Week

Each month, nearly 1 million students across America take a weapon to school. Every year, over 1.3 million students are injured or threatened with a weapon at school. Schools where students carry weapons and threaten one another are not safe for learning or for teaching.

National Safe Schools Week is held each fall to help students, teachers, parents and administrators raise awareness around the urgent need to protect our schools from violence. This year, National Safe Schools Week will take place from October 17-23, 2010.

During Safe Schools Week, schools and communities across America will focus their attentions on the importance of empowering youth to prevent violence in the places where they learn and socialize. With the support of several national organizations, including national leaders in the fields of education, violence prevention and school safety, National Safe Schools Week events bring together key school and community members, who are concerned about protecting youth.

The SPEAK UP campaign is dedicated to helping keep youth safe from weapon threats. **1-866-SPEAK-UP** is the first and only anonymous, national, 24-hour hotline for students to report weapon threats. The SPEAK UP campaign also includes a text message-based reporting component where students can use their custom community keyword to anonymously text tips to our trained counselors. In addition, SPEAK UP provides students with the tools and information they need to reduce weapon violence in their schools.

Email speakup@paxusa.org to request SPEAK UP materials for your school or community group.

What Can I Do?

For National Safe Schools Week 2010, students across the country can participate in a nationwide Student Design Project. This project is designed for students to express their fears and to offer solutions concerning the topic of school violence in America. Middle School students can design a t-shirt that contains a message promoting safety while High School students can submit a poem, story, song, or rap that expresses their thoughts on school violence and safety. The most outstanding t-shirt design will be printed and distributed to the designer's class and one author will be recognized for his/her literary work with an iPod shuffle. Both of the student's schools will also receive a School Safety Package worth \$2,500! More information about the details of this project can be found on the home page of the NSSW website (www.safeschoolsweek.org).

Schools and community organizations across the country can also make Safe Schools Week bulletin boards encouraging students to SPEAK UP to prevent violence. Please take a picture of the board or mural at your school or organization and we will post it on our website! We hope to get photos of fun, fabulous bulletin boards from all across America. These photos will serve as a testament to the dedication of educators and students all over the country to ending school violence. Feel free to use the suggestions in the Creative Arts Guide available for download in the For the Classroom section of safeschoolsweek.org or to make up your own design.

To educate yourself about the problem of weapons violence among young people, read through the **“Know the Facts”** section of this guide for national statistics and information. For information on weapons and violence at schools in your state or city, you may want to look at the CDC's Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System. Access this document online at www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/yrbs/.

There are a number of different ways to get students engaged in this issue. Turn to the section entitled **“Events & Activities Targeting Youth”** for in-depth suggestions on events and activities for students.

Violence at school is oftentimes a reflection of violence in the community. Get parents, community members and elected officials re-energized in their efforts to keep kids safe, healthy, and free from violence. See the **“Events & Activities Targeting Adults”** for ideas on how to engage adults in the community and get them working on this important issue.

The **“Event Strategy”** section contains some helpful planning guidelines for making sure that your event goes off without a hitch and the **“Spread the Word: Getting Press”** section will help you make sure that your efforts get the publicity they deserve.

The Appendix contains templates, documents and materials that are referenced throughout this guide. Please be sure to take a look at the materials in this section as you read through the guide.

Know the Facts

Read and share this information with others to highlight the importance of youth violence prevention in our schools and communities.

- Nearly one million high school students in America take a weapon to school at least once every 30 days. **
- 1.3 million high school students are threatened or injured with a weapon on school property at least once every year **
- 81% of school attackers tell someone of their plans beforehand ***
- 70% of youth said they would report another student who brought a weapon to school ****
- 83% said they would report another student if they could do it anonymously ****
- Over 50% said they would definitely or probably report even if people might think they were a snitch or a tattletale ****
- Only 3.3% said they would never report a weapon threat ****
- 52% of students know of an incident where someone brought a weapon to school. Of those, 61% did nothing about it *
- 52% of students could get a gun if they wanted one. 35% could get one in less than a week. 15% could get one in less than a day *
- Over 75% of students in homes with guns know where a gun is hidden *
- 52% of students could get a gun if they wanted one. 35% could get one in less than a week. 15% could get one in less than a day *

*[Data from Benenson Strategy Group student survey, 2001.]

**[2009, Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System: US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention].

***[Data from "Safe School Initiative," developed by the US Secret Service and US Department of Education, 2002. For more information: www.ed.gov/offices/OSDSF/threatassessmentguide.pdf]

****["Will They Tell? Weapons Reporting by Middle-School Youth." *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice*, 2007.]

Events & Activities Targeting YOUTH

Below are some ideas for making Safe Schools Week fun and educational. You can also invite students to help organize Safe Schools Week events.

- **Make a SPEAK UP bulletin board:** A well-placed bulletin board can get the students' attention. Create your own design or use some of the ideas available in the SPEAK UP Creative Arts Guide. The Creative Arts Activities Guide can be downloaded from the "For the Classroom" section on safeschoolsweek.org.
- **Make a PA announcement:** This is probably the easiest and simplest way to be sure all the students at school hear the SPEAK UP message. You can also advertise any other events or activities taking place during Safe Schools Week. Create your own announcement or use the script available on page 11 of the Appendix.
- **Hold a poster or t-shirt contest:** Ask students to create a poster or design that expresses the importance of speaking up. Announce the contest 1-2 weeks in advance of Safe Schools Week so that those who want to participate have time to create a design. Display all of the submissions around your school or community center during Safe Schools Week. If funding is available, print copies of the winning poster to hang up or produce t-shirts with the winning design for all participants.
- **Dedicate a sporting event:** A school sporting event can capture the attention of both students and parents alike. Pick a sporting event most likely to have high attendance and ask the team to dedicate the game to violence prevention. Make a Safe Schools Week banner and hang it in a high visibility area. Ask the announcer to make announcements about SPEAK UP over the loudspeaker. Distribute SPEAK UP wallet cards to students at the event. This can be a good PR opportunity if the local press covers high school sports in your area.
- **Bring SPEAK UP into the classroom:** Set aside a class period or group meeting during Safe Schools Week to talk to students about the importance of violence prevention. You can use the Safe Schools Week workshop or the SPEAK UP lesson plans, which can be ordered from PAX by emailing speakup@paxusa.org. The workshop can be downloaded from www.safeschoolsweek.org in "For the Classroom" section.
- **Launch an email campaign:** Encourage students to email their friends and tell them about the importance of speaking up and the 1-866-SPEAK-UP weapon threats hotline. Have students compose their own email or provide them with the sample student email in the Appendix, page 15.
- **Write a newspaper article:** Encourage students to submit an article on school violence prevention and National Safe Schools Week to the school newspaper. There is a Sample Newspaper Article in the Appendix, page 16.

Events & Activities Targeting ADULTS

Below are some ideas for raising awareness of Safe Schools Week and enlisting the support of parents, educators and other community members. Materials to help with these ideas are available in the Appendix at the back of the guide.

- **Involve local businesses:** Local retailers are great partners in Safe Schools Week efforts. Ask local businesses to post SPEAK UP posters in their store windows during Safe Schools Week and after. Offer them SPEAK UP wallet cards to distribute to young customers. If possible, involve older students in these efforts. They will be the most effective at getting results and it will be a great learning experience. Local businesses are also often willing to donate items or gift certificates that can be used as Safe Schools Week contest incentives.
- **Organize a forum:** Invite the police chief, the superintendent, the school principal, student resource officers, health teachers, and student representatives to be on a panel. Host an event at which these panelists can speak and answer questions about school safety in your community. Open the event to parents, students and the wider public.
- **Make it official— approach your mayor:** Contact the mayor or city council in your area and ask him/her/them to make an official proclamation. You can do this by calling the mayor's office and asking to speak with the staff person in charge of requesting a proclamation. Most mayors' offices will ask that you submit a proposed proclamation with your request. Be sure to get the address to mail this request and the time frame for submitting the request for the recognition of the third full week in October as Safe Schools Week. In the cover letter, request that the mayor proclaim October 17-23, 2010 as Safe Schools Week for your city. A sample proclamation is available on page 12 of the Appendix.

Spread the Word: Getting Press

Getting press coverage of Safe Schools Week will increase the number of participants at your events, encourage community members to think about violence prevention, and raise awareness of the **1-866-SPEAK-UP** hotline and text messaging service among youth and parents who are in a position to SPEAK UP. Here are some ways to get press.

- **Send a press release:** Spread the word about the SPEAK UP campaign and your Safe Schools Week events by sending press releases to your local newspapers, radio and television stations. Write your own or use the sample press release in the Appendix, page 13.
- **Organize a press conference:** If you get the Mayor to sign a proclamation, request that s/he sign the proclamation publicly at a press conference. If you can get him/her to do so, arrange a press conference to announce the proclamation. Send a press release to publicize the event. See the sample press release in the Appendix, page 13. If the mayor cannot attend the press conference, try to make sure that at least one high profile official (superintendent, police chief, etc.) will speak.
- **Write a letter to the editor:** Submitting a letter to your local newspaper's editor is a great way to raise awareness of the SPEAK UP hotline and text messaging component, events you are hosting during National Safe Schools Week and the importance of violence prevention in your community. In your letter, it is important to include anecdotes about incidents of violence that have occurred in your community and any statistics you may have about school violence from your state, city, or school district. Use the sample Letter to the Editor available in the Appendix, page 11.
- **Launch an email campaign:** Starting an email campaign isn't getting press in a traditional sense but it can be a very effective way of raising awareness of the SPEAK UP campaign. Send an email to friends telling them about the week, the planned events and encouraging them to tell their kids about the SPEAK UP hotline. Be sure to include the safeschoolsweek.org and speakup.com websites in the email and add any relevant facts or statistics about your violence in your community. Compose your own email or use the sample email available in the Appendix, page 15.
- **Place radio public service announcements (PSAs):** Contact your local radio station and ask them to read a "PSA" live on the air during Safe Schools Week or to play a pre-recorded version of the National Safe Schools Week PSA. The MP3 of the radio PSA can be downloaded from the MATERIALS section of safeschoolsweek.org. Burn it onto a blank CD and provide it to the station. If you are requesting a live read of a PSA, provide the station with a script that tells listeners about the 1-866-SPEAK-UP hotline and encourages them to attend any Safe Schools Week events. See the sample Radio PSA Scripts in the Appendix, page 14.

Event Strategy

If you are planning a Safe Schools Week event, read through the event planning suggestions below. Some of them may seem obvious, but they are all important things to keep in mind when creating an event that will affect change in your community.

➤ **Who will deliver your message?**

- Youth can voice how violence has affected their own lives and how they want to be safe at school.
- Parents can highlight personal concerns for their child's safety.
- Community partners can speak about the effectiveness of the SPEAK UP campaign in their community.
- Educators and school administrators can discuss the need for SPEAK UP's message in their school and can talk about safety problems specific to that school or school district.
- Local celebrities or community leaders are a great way get the message out to a wider audience and to get press for your event.

➤ **Who should you invite?**

- Parents and families
- Youth
- Community partners
- Community leaders
- School staff, administrators and school board members
- Local celebrities
- Press, press, press!

➤ **Where will the event take place?**

- Park or other public outdoor spaces
- School gym or auditorium
- Space owned by community-based organizations
- Community theater space
- Public library
- City Hall

➤ **When will you host the event?**

- Pick a time that allows the maximum amount of people to attend, such as on the weekend, after school hours (post-3:00 p.m.) or after regular work hours (post-5:00 p.m.).
- If your event targets adults, an evening or weekend event will likely be more convenient for many attendees.
- Plan the time a few weeks in advance so that you can reserve the space where you want to host your event and so that you will have time to advertise.

APPENDIX: Sample Materials

Sample PA Announcement

Hey students – are you concerned about violence at school? Do you know another student with a weapon or threatening to hurt someone? Well, there’s something you can do about it. Just call 1-866-SPEAK-UP to report a weapon threat. The call is free and completely anonymous. If you know about a student carrying a weapon or threatening violence, don’t take chances, call 1-866-SPEAK-UP. That’s 1-866-SPEAK-UP. It could be the most important call you’ll ever make. [Insert date] is National Safe Schools Week. [Provide event details here.]

Sample Letter to the Editor

As a student [or “teacher,” “administrator,” etc.] at _____ School, I feel that something must be done about the harsh reality of youth violence that we face every day across the country. **[Consider inserting a personal story about youth/school violence experiences here.]** Knowing that violence in our schools is an ongoing concern, it is important to raise awareness of readily available solutions. We, the students, want to dispel the myth that we cannot make changes in our world. That is why I support and participate in National Safe Schools Week, which is taking place [insert date].

Over 1,000,000 students across America take a weapon to school each month, endangering the lives – and educations – of other students. That’s why PAX / Real Solutions to Gun Violence created the SPEAK UP Campaign – to empower students with the tools to keep our schools and communities safe.

SPEAK UP features the first-ever anonymous national hotline (1-866-SPEAK-UP) and completely anonymous text messaging component for students to report weapon threats 24 hours a day which is supported by a powerful public service advertising campaign. Youth violence is preventable, and we students are capable of taking action to prevent school violence.

We want to make sure every student in **[name of our city or town]** knows about this potentially life-saving resource, and that as we worry about all the threats of violence we may face in our lives, there is at least one very real thing we can do to keep ourselves safe. So if you know about a threat of weapon-related violence, please call 1-866-SPEAK-UP. It’s anonymous and free – and it could save somebody’s life!

[Add any information about Safe Schools Week events or activities that you have planned as well.]

For more information, visit www.SafeSchoolsWeek.org or contact SPEAK UP by visiting www.speakup.com.

Sample Proclamation

WHEREAS, schools make substantial contributions to the future of America and to the development of our nation's young people as knowledgeable, responsible, and productive citizens; and

WHEREAS, excellence in education is dependent on safe, secure, and peaceful school settings; and

WHEREAS, the safety and well-being of many students, teachers and school staff are unnecessarily jeopardized by crime and violence in our schools; and

WHEREAS, it is the responsibility of all citizens to enhance the learning experiences of young people by helping to ensure fair and effective discipline, promote good citizenship, and generally make school safe and secure; and

WHEREAS, all leaders, especially those in education, law enforcement, government and business should eagerly collaborate with each to focus public attention on school safety to develop and promote innovative answers to these critical issues; and

WHEREAS, numerous schools and school districts throughout the county, along with national programs, are among those innovative answers; and

WHEREAS, the SPEAK UP campaign urges students to speak up and call 1-866-SPEAK UP to report weapon threats, offering a real solution to save young lives based on public concern about school safety; and

WHEREAS, the observance of National Safe Schools Week will substantially promote efforts to provide all our nation's schools with positive and safe learning climates;

RESOLVED, that the **[State/City/County]** of **[Name]** therefore does hereby proclaim **[Insert date]** as

[State/City/County]'s SAFE SCHOOLS WEEK

and calls upon the people of **[State/City/County]** to recognize this special observance with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

Sample Press Release

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
Date

CONTACT: [your name]
PHONE: XXX-XXX-XXXX

SAFE SCHOOLS WEEK:

SPEAK UP ENCOURAGES STUDENTS TO REPORT WEAPON THREATS AT SCHOOL, IMPORTANT AND PRODUCTIVE WAYS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE OF GUN VIOLENCE IN OUR COMMUNITY

[Your City, State] – Over 1 million students across America take a weapon to school each month, and gun violence kills 8 children and teens every day. Bearing in mind that young people themselves are most capable of preventing youth violence, PAX / Real Solutions to Gun Violence created the SPEAK UP Campaign to empower students with tools to keep their schools and communities safe. SPEAK UP features the first-ever anonymous national hotline for students to report weapon threats 24 hours a day, 1-866-SPEAK-UP.

As a part of Safe Schools Week, [insert date], we, the students **[or teachers, administrators, etc.]** at _____ School in (your city) have decided to hold a community meeting to discuss the issue of youth violence and the ways in which we can join together to actively prevent violence. **[Consider inserting a quote from a student or other school leader.]**

DETAILS:

What: _____ **[Name any events you have planned]** _____
Who: _____
When: _____
Where: _____
Contact: _____

Safe Schools Week is dedicated to helping students, teachers, parents and administrators raise awareness of the urgent need to keep our schools free from violence. For more information, visit SafeSchoolsWeek.org.

Sample Radio PSA Scripts

:30 Radio PSA Script

Hey students – are you concerned about violence at school? Do you know another student with a weapon or threatening to hurt someone? Well, there’s something you can do about it. Just call 1-866-SPEAK-UP to report a weapon threat. The call is free and completely anonymous. If you know about a student carrying a weapon or threatening violence, don’t take chances, call 1-866-SPEAK-UP. That’s 1-866-SPEAK-UP. It could be the most important call you’ll ever make.

[Insert date] is National Safe Schools Week. To learn more about what you can do at your school go to SafeSchoolsWeek.org.

:60 Radio PSA Script

Hey students – are you concerned about violence at school? Do you know another student with a weapon or threatening to hurt someone? Well, there’s something you can do about it. Just call 1-866-SPEAK-UP to report a weapon threat. The call is free and completely anonymous. Just call 1-866-SPEAK-UP. It could be the most important call you’ll ever make.

[Insert an announcement here about National Safe Schools Week activities at your school or community center.]

i.e. Come see the _____ High School **[Insert sport]** team play a benefit game on **[Insert date/time]** to support National Safe Schools Week and keep our schools safe! For more information call XXX-XXXX.

Or

_____ School is hosting a violence prevention conference on **[Insert date/time]** in the gym. Students, teachers and administrators will be speaking and student art will be on display! Please come and bring ideas about how to keep our school safe! For more information call XXX-XXXX.

[Insert date] is National Safe Schools Week. To learn more about what you can do at your school go to SafeSchoolsWeek.org.

Sample Adult Email

To: friends, family, community members [**consider modifying content of email depending on audience**]

From: your name

Subject: Keeping Our Kids Safe (Please forward this important message to your friends, co-workers and relatives!)

In 81% of school shootings, the attacker tells someone about their plans first. The SPEAK UP Campaign urges teens to report weapon-related threats in schools and in their communities. Tell your kids to SPEAK UP by telling a trusted adult or calling 1-866-SPEAK-UP if they know someone who is threatening violence. The call is anonymous and free. It may be the most important call your child ever makes. For more information, visit www.speakup.com.

This week is National Safe Schools Week. Help raise awareness of the importance of speaking up to prevent violence by attending [**enter event details here**]. As school violence threatens the safety of our youth, we have a responsibility to get involved. We must give youth the tools they need to keep their schools safe.

Please forward this along to anyone with kids!

Thanks,
[**your name**]

Sample Youth Email

To: friends, family, peers

From: [**your name**]

Subject: Preventing School Shootings

Hey!

Did you know that in 81% of school shootings, the attacker tells somebody about their plans first? We have the power to keep something terrible like that from happening at our school. If you know that somebody is bringing a weapon to school or planning to do something violent, tell an adult before it is too late! If you don't feel comfortable talking to your parents, teachers or the police, you can call 1-866-SPEAK-UP. 1-866-SPEAK-UP is an anonymous hotline that exists just to report weapon threats at school and in your neighborhood. You can call for free, 24 hours a day, 365 days and year and absolutely no one will know that you called. It might be the most important call you ever make.

Check out speakup.com and add SPEAK UP as a friend on MySpace (myspace.com/speakup_pax) or on Facebook (search names for SPEAK UP).

Most importantly, forward this to everyone you know. We can use our voices to save lives. The more people who know about the hotline, the safer we all will be.

Thanks!

[your name]

Sample Newspaper Article

[Insert Headline]

Across the country, incidents of youth violence are a frequent reminder that much more needs to be done to protect America's youth. From high profile school shootings like Columbine and Virginia Tech to everyday acts of violence in our neighborhoods and schools, violence and threats of violence endanger the lives and livelihoods of children and teens. **[Consider including in this paragraph your own account of an experience with violence.]**

The numbers are startling: gun violence kills 8 children and teens every day and more than 1 million students take a weapon to school each month. As a result, over 1.3 million students are injured or threatened with a weapon each school year, and each month, over 995,000 students feel too unsafe even to go to school. (Source: CDC Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System, 2005) **[Consider adding any relevant local statistics that you may have found here.]**

In response to these concerns, SPEAK UP features the first-ever anonymous national hotline for students to report weapon threats 24 hours a day – 1-866-SPEAK-UP – that is supported by a text messaging component as well as a powerful public service advertising campaign. Based on the fact that when weapons are confiscated in school the tips come from peers 93% of the time and that in 81% of school shootings the attackers tell other students about their plans, SPEAK UP inspires and provides a powerful opportunity for students to be proactive about preventing violence (Source: "Safe School Initiative," developed by the US Secret Service and US Department of Education, 2002).

Once a report is made, the school principal and local law enforcement are immediately contacted so that the threat can be safely resolved. Since its launch in 2002, the 1-866-SPEAK-UP hotline has received over 20,000 calls, resulting in the almost certain prevention of numerous tragedies.

National Safe Schools Week is taking place **[Insert date]** this year, and the focus is on empowering youth to prevent violence. We students have the power to do just that. **[Provide information about what your school is doing for National Safe Schools Week. Give the times, dates and locations of any events. Interview anyone who is involved with organizing Safe Schools Week activities. Interview the principal or a student resource officer.]**