

# SELECTING PHYSICAL SECURITY MEASURES

Physical security measures are technology or equipment that can be installed to try to reduce school violence. These security measures are one piece of creating a safe school. This document highlights considerations when using physical security measures, and highlights the evidence-base for commonly used physical security measures.

Physical security measures may include:



security cameras



door locks



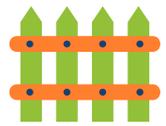
metal detectors



panic buttons



lighting



fencing

## Key Considerations



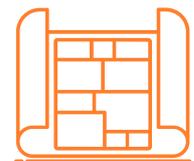
Physical security measures can seem like a quick fix, but researchers have found that it is just one of the necessary components of school safety. A **positive and supportive school climate** is one of the most important parts of prevention, and school climate and physical security have been found to be directly related.<sup>1-6</sup>

Many researchers have found that school security measures can result in students and parents **perceiving school as less safe**. A survey of 3,780 students in the United States showed that every increase in security measures increased the odds of students feeling fearful by 23%.<sup>1,4,7-12</sup>



Physical security measures can **find objective and visible behaviors**, like fighting and stealing. However, they are not as effective in handling other forms of violence, like bullying or threats.<sup>4, 13, 14</sup>

**Environmental design** can play a role in safety. The principles of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) can apply in schools as well. Even having adequate lighting throughout the building can deter delinquent behaviors.<sup>15-17</sup>



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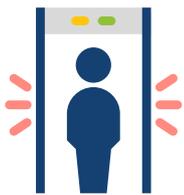
## Considering Specific Measures

*This section provides considerations for implementing the most common research-based physical security measures- security cameras, interior door locks, and metal detectors.*



**Security cameras** need dedicated staff to monitor and respond throughout the school day. Using security cameras inside schools has been associated with students feeling less safe. Yet, researchers report evidence that some use of cameras on the outside of the school buildings increase students' feelings of supportiveness in schools. Careful placement and considerations of school climate are important before installing.<sup>8, 18</sup>

**Interior door locks** can be effective during an active shooting event at keeping people safe and should be paired with drills that ensure those in the building and first responders know the process for using them.<sup>19, 20</sup>



Researchers report some evidence that **metal detectors** deter students from bringing weapons to school and can detect and prevent weapons from entering schools, but they can also increase other forms of violence by making the school a less welcoming environment. School climate should be considered before installing.<sup>9, 10, 12-14, 20</sup>

Remember that physical security measures are one piece of an effective safety plan. No matter what physical security measure you are considering, think about how it fits into your comprehensive plan. Make sure you consider how to communicate about your chosen measures with school community members including students, teachers, and parents. They will need to know how those measures work in order to use them effectively.



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## Talking With Vendors

*This section suggests topics and specific questions to ask a vendor before implementing a safety intervention.*

### Maintenance

- What if it breaks?
- How quickly can you repair it?
- Do I need to buy a subscription?
- How often do I need to renew my subscription?
- What is included with my subscription?
- Can I bundle services?
- How burdensome is it to operate/train?

### Research

- Are there studies you can share with me?
- Is there data that suggests effectiveness?
- Is that data based on grade level?
- How do different students feel about the product?
- How do school personnel feel about it?

### Installation

- How much construction is required?
- How disruptive will it be?
- Can it be scheduled during off hours or summer?
- What are my options as far as placement?
- For cameras and metal detectors, where should they be installed?
- If I want to see a certain location, how can I do that?

### Training

- Is training required?
- How much training is needed?
- Who needs to be trained?
- Do you offer training?
- How often will people need to be trained?
- Is there training for students?
- Is there training you will give me to give to students?

### Satisfaction

- What if we're not satisfied with the service?
- Are there testimonials you can share with me?
- What do other schools say about this?
- What kinds of positive and negative feedback have you received?

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# SELECTING PHYSICAL SECURITY MEASURES

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