COMMON MISTAKES TO AVOID IN FORMAL SECURITY ASSESSMENTS

Obtaining a formal assessment for your school's safety and security is a valuable investment. The decisions your school community makes surrounding an assessment can serve to help or hinder the process in your community. Consider the following common pitfalls many school communities must navigate in order to succeed. Be ever-mindful that securing your school is a continual process, not a onetime task.

A Template Approach

To save money and time, schools sometimes make assessments based on checklists or templates. These tools alone cannot consider each school's unique characteristics and challenges.

Working in Silos

Meaningful improvement requires all hands--and perspectives--on deck. In the interest of efficiency, school communities often divide responsibilities according to traditional stakeholder groups: parents, teachers, administrators, law enforcement, and so on. Each group develops specific knowledge that is essential to school safety, but often goes unshared. It takes a diverse team, sharing information, expertise and knowledge, to effectively assess, act, and audit for improved school safety.

No Assessment

For a number of reasons, communities may not seek a formal assessment: a tight budget, denial, rationalization, a false sense of security or feeling overwhelmed. It is far more costly to realize the importance of assessment after a tragedy.

Guarantees and Quick Fixes

Avoid guarantees that a crisis will never occur, over-reliance on one product or plan, product-driven promises and generic, one-size-fits-all approaches.

Failure to Prioritize and Follow Through

An assessment is only as valuable as the actions it may catalyze to improve security. The key to sustainable action is creating a practical and affordable implementation plan that holds individuals and departments accountable for follow-through and properly organizes people, policies, systems, and architecture to work in concert to improve safety and security.

Letting a "Living Document" Die

Safety plans are useful only if they are reviewed on a regular basis. If these plans are viewed as living documents and not allowed to stay the shelf, they will be adapted to remain current and useful.

No Responsible Party

If there is no clear distinction of which staff member is responsible for safety and security issues it will be nearly impossible to maintain a continuously successful security and safety program.