Communicating Is Key to Success

Communication is critical to a school crime watch program. Students report crime because it is a serious issue—not to get someone they don't like into trouble. Not reporting can place a student in a threatening situation. It is a school crime watch's responsibility to keep all reports confidential. If students start finding out about who reported on whom, people won't continue to participate in the program. Students reporting must know that they will be anonymous.

Helping Out Builds Momentum for the Program

A school crime watch goes beyond just watching out for its fellow classmates. Activities such as drug- and alcohol-free parties, date rape/rape awareness days, newspaper columns in the school or local paper, and crime and drug abuse prevention tips announced on the P.A. system are ways to build interest in your program. Longer term projects that promote student well-being include conflict resolution projects, cross-age teaching and mentoring, vandalism prevention, even bus safety.

Examining the Results

Do school crime watch programs work?

Yes!

Crime dropped 45 percent at one high school in Florida within a year of initiating a school crime watch!

Active school crime watch programs have been able to reduce violence, guns, drug use, and many other crime-related activities in schools across the country. The schools with active watches are happier, safer places.

Resources

Youth Crime Watch of America
9300 South Dadeland Boulevard, Suite 100
Miami, FL 33156
305-670-2409 (phone)
305-670-3805 (fax)
www.ycwa.org

TAKE A BITE OUT OF CRIME®

Crime Prevention Tips From
National Crime Prevention Council
1700 K Street, NW, Second Floor
Washington, DC 20006-3817
www.weprevent.org

and

Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department
Web Site: www.lasd.org

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Stand Up and Start a School Crime Watch Today!

National Crime Prevention Council

Are you tired of graffiti on your school's walls? Have some students started bringing weapons to school? Is fighting on school property giving you the blues? Are there days when you are afraid to go to school? Maybe your school is fine and you want to prevent crime before it becomes a problem? If you answered "yes" to any of these questions or your school is struggling with other crime problems, then a school crime watch might be an answer.

What Is a School Crime Watch?

Based on the Neighborhood Watch concept, a school crime watch encourages students to watch out **and** help out each other to make the entire school a safer and more enjoyable place. It's a student-led effort that helps youth take a share of responsibility for their school community. Students learn how to keep themselves from becoming victims of crime and how to report suspicious activities. In some cases there's an organized patrol that helps ensure the school's public areas are watched appropriately. The attractiveness of a school crime watch program is that a school of any size, in any type of community—rural, suburban, inner-city—can adopt its principles at minimum cost!

Starting a School Crime Watch

A group of dedicated teens willing to work together to bring the entire student body into a "crime watch" way of life can start a school crime watch program by

- researching what crime problems (vandalism, assault, theft, etc.) are most common at the school and what prevention strategies could prove effective;
- working with the school authorities including the principal and the person in charge of security to get their support for the program;
- establishing an advisory board made up of students and adults;
- talking to your local crime prevention officer about starting the program, and
- setting up a central group of individuals in charge of the crime watch—sometimes called the core group (This group must be made up of students from all kinds of groups, so that no group will feel excluded.);
- deciding how you will launch the program. An exciting way to kickoff the program is through an all-school assembly or rally. This will help build support and generate interest;
- advertising your first school crime watch meeting through fliers, posters, morning public address announcements, even e-mail;
- holding your first meeting to discuss the make up of the crime watch, the issues that need to be addressed, and the need for a school patrol. If you choose to have a school patrol your committee will need to identify sites to monitor;
- telling the adult community that your school is starting a school crime watch;
- planning your calendar of crime watch events.

What is a Student Patrol?

One powerful component of a school crime watch can be a student patrol. This moves the program from an information and teaching mode into action. Patrol activities include monitoring the halls and parking lots between classes and during lunch. This action can reduce the number of crime-related incidents in the patrolled areas.