



Checklist/Guidelines for School Health Programs to Prevent Injury

*Prepared by Douglas S. McCall, Executive Director
Canadian Association for School Health*

Injuries are the leading cause of death and disability for people aged 1 to 44 years in Canada. Twenty-five per cent of deaths in Canada are caused by unintentional injuries. In the United States, between 10% and 25% of child and adolescent injuries occur on school premises.

A [comprehensive school health approach](#) to injury prevention is strongly recommended. This approach places specific health problems within a broad understanding of health and recognizes that coordinated, multiple school-based and school-linked interventions by educators, other agencies and professionals as well as parents, youth and communities/municipalities is more effective than single, sporadic interventions. For more on this approach to injury prevention read the [Summary](#) also available on this web site.

The Center for Disease Control in the United States has published the [School Health Guidelines to Prevent Unintentional Injuries and Violence](#). These guidelines were developed in collaboration with experts from universities and national organizations and with federal, state, local, and voluntary agencies. They are based on an extensive review of research, theory, and current practice in unintentional injury, violence, and suicide prevention; health education; and public health. These guidelines have been adapted here into a Checklist for Schools on injury prevention.

This checklist can be used by volunteers and professionals who work with schools to assess the readiness of their local school to prevent unintentional injuries. Please note that many of the items in this checklist require cooperation with other agencies or support from the local school board or provincial/territorial education ministry.

Key Principles

- Unintentional injury programs for young people are most likely to be effective when they become a national priority and are reinforced by community-wide efforts in which school and community leaders, as well as families commit to implementing and sustaining comprehensive and coordinated policies, programs, practices, procedures.
- Unintentional injury prevention programs should be part of a [Comprehensive School Health](#) approach through which school personnel, students, families, community organizations and agencies, and businesses can collaborate to develop, implement, and evaluate injury prevention efforts.
- Unintentional injury prevention programs, practices and procedures should be guided by comprehensive policies that include implementation and reporting/evaluation components.
- The injury prevention programs and services should include a variety of coordinated interventions including curriculum and instruction, preventive and emergency services, changes to the physical environment, equipment and facilities, parent involvement and education, youth engagement activities such as student leadership, peer and special social marketing campaigns aimed at youth and those who work with youth.

School-based Action Checklist for Injury Prevention

The guidelines consist of four action areas (social environment, physical environment, instruction and preventive/first aids and emergency services) for schools. Action in these four areas can be further detailed for all schools and all students from pre-kindergarten through the 12th grade. These actions will help prevent injuries that occur on school property and elsewhere. Every recommendation is not appropriate or feasible for every school to implement. Schools should prioritize the recommendations on the basis of their needs and available resources.

1. Social Environment

Establish a social environment that promotes safety and prevents unintentional injury.

- Ensure high academic standards that focus on responsibility, caring and learning.
- Encourage students' connectedness to school.
- Designate a school safety coordinator.
- Establish a supportive climate that does not tolerate excessive risk taking.
- Develop, implement, and enforce written policies, including specific policies and procedures on safety and injury prevention.
- Infuse prevention strategies into multiple school activities and classes.
- Assess programs and policies at regular intervals.

2. Physical Environment

Provide a physical environment, inside and outside school buildings, that promotes safety and prevents unintentional injuries.

- Conduct regular safety and hazard assessments.
- Maintain structures, equipment, and grounds.
- Actively supervise all student activities.

3. Instruction

In Health Education

Include specific injury-related knowledge, skills, attitudes, self-knowledge/confidence, awareness of emergency services/procedures and willingness to advocate for safety measures within a comprehensive health education curriculum.

- Choose programs and curriculum supplements that are grounded in theory or have evidence of effectiveness.

- Use injury prevention programs and materials that consistent with provincial/territorial outcomes and standards.
- Employ teaching strategies and methods that encourage youth participation and cooperation.
- Encourage parent involvement in safety/injury prevention programs
- Provide adequate curriculum time, staffing and other resources.

In Physical Education & Physical Activity Programs

Provide safe physical education and extracurricular physical activity programs.

- Develop, teach, implement, and enforce safety rules in teaching about sports, games, recreation and dance.
- Promote injury prevention and nonviolence through physical education and sports participation.
- Include a specific safety component to the teaching of all sports and games.
- Ensure that spaces, equipment and facilities meet or exceed recommended safety standards.
- Hire physical education and activity staff trained in injury prevention, first aid, and CPR, and provide ongoing staff development.

In Family Studies/Home Economics

Provide family studies and home economics education that includes a strong emphasis on safety in the home.

- Develop, teach, implement, and enforce safety rules in teaching about cooking, sewing, purchasing, and family life.
- Promote injury prevention in skills related to home and family life.
- Include a specific safety component to the teaching of all home economics skills that use equipment such as stoves and sewing machines.
- Ensure that home economics spaces, equipment and facilities meet or exceed recommended safety standards.
- Hire family studies teachers and support staff trained in injury prevention, first aid, and CPR, and provide ongoing staff development.

In Science, Vocational/technical, Computer Science, Outdoor Education and Other Course

Provide instruction in these specialized courses with a strong emphasis on safety and injury prevention.

- Develop, teach, implement, and enforce safety rules in teaching in labs and specialized environments.
- Include a specific safety component to the teaching of all specialized courses using equipment such as Bunsen burners, drills, heavy equipment etc.
- Ensure that home economics spaces, equipment and facilities meet or exceed recommended safety standards.
- Hire teachers and support staff trained in injury prevention, first aid, and CPR, and provide ongoing staff development.

3. Preventive, First Aid and Emergency Services and Procedures

Provide or arrange for appropriate injury prevention and emergency response services and procedures.

- Provide preventive, first aid and emergency services related to injury prevention and ensure that all staff, volunteers, parents and students are aware of them. .
- Provide school-based preventive services such as early identification of hazards and “accident-prone students, first aid services, immediate emergency response and response services.
- Coordinate school-based prevention, first aid and emergency services with local fire, hospitals, clinics, police and other community resources. Ensure rapid response, case follow-up and post-emergency reviews.
- Identify and provide assistance to students in need. Include re-integration of injured students as quickly as possible back into the school
- Conduct risk assessments on the extent to which injuries occur on school property.
- Develop and implement emergency plans.
- Regularly review insurance coverage and liability

6. Emergency Preparedness and Crisis Response

Establish mechanisms for short- and long-term responses to crises, disasters, and injuries that affect the school community. Establish a written emergency preparedness and response plan that includes:

- A **Risk Assessment** that includes specific checks of equipment, facilities emergency evacuation routes and emergency communications in the case of fire, earthquake, floods, tornados, bio-hazards, infectious disease and other threats and power outages.

- A **Risk Mitigation Program** to reduce each of these risks by securing or changing equipment and installing additional safety measures,
- Developing an **Emergency Response Plan** for each of the risks that relate to your school, adjust that plan for all seasons and situations within the school (regular classes, assemblies etc) and coordinate that plan with local police, fire and other emergency response agencies. Train your staff, parent volunteers and students in those response plans and procedures
- Establish a **Emergency Communications Plan** that covers informing agencies, informing parents, designates a coordinator for emergencies and keeps telephone numbers and other contact information up to date.
- Establish a plan and access to appropriate **Post-Emergency Support** services and stress counseling for students, staff, volunteers and parents
- Establish a Resumption Plan for returning to normal school operations, including plans for keeping back ups of computer files off site, replacing essential staff while they recover or if they cannot return to work, alternative facilities or classrooms.

7. Family & Community Involvement

Integrate school, family, and community efforts to prevent unintentional injuries.

- Involve family members in all aspects of school life, ensuring that they are aware of school safety rules and emergency procedures.
- Educate and involve family members in prevention strategies. Use take home learning/parenting activities that help families to decrease the risks of injury in their homes and communities.
- Coordinate with school and community services, agencies and organizations in promoting awareness through local media, the school newsletters and web site and by participating in special school and community activities. .

8. Staff Development

For all school personnel, provide regular staff development opportunities that impart the knowledge, skills, and confidence to effectively promote safety and prevent unintentional injuries, violence, and suicide and support students in their efforts to do the same.

- Ensure that staff are knowledgeable and skillful about unintentional injury.
- Train all staff, including volunteers, maintenance, clerical and teaching staff in emergency procedures and first aid.
- Train all personnel to be positive role models for a healthful and safe lifestyle and support them in their efforts.