

Injury burden to school-age students

Analysis of New Zealand (NZ) child and young people injury data indicates that:

- ⇒ Injury is the greatest threat to the health of children & young people in NZ;
- ⇒ Injury is the leading cause of death for ages 1-19 years with an average of **3** deaths per week;
- ⇒ An average of **346** children and young people under 19 years are hospitalised for 24 hours or more per week as the consequences of a serious injury;
- ⇒ Countless others receive treatment for an injury at ED & GP clinics; and
- ⇒ Across all age groups, the social & economic cost of injuries is high, estimated to be between 6-7 billion dollars per annum.



From routinely collected data we know that injuries to students occur in a variety of settings. For example:

- ⇒ Burns and scalds from fires;
- ⇒ Injuries from motor vehicle traffic crashes;
- ⇒ Serious dog bites;
- ⇒ Falls among children and young people;
- ⇒ Drowning while swimming or boating;
- ⇒ Cutting and piercing;
- ⇒ Injuries as a result of alcohol or drug misuse;
- ⇒ Bullying and violence;
- ⇒ Sports related injuries; and
- ⇒ Self-directed injury.





Injuries take lives, destroy families and ruin futures. Many people think that events that lead to injury or death are "accidents", and lack the perception of the extent of the problem. Injuries are not unavoidable accidents. In fact injuries are predictable, and therefore, preventable. In at least 80% of injury incidences, there is a factor leading up to the event that if changed or altered, could have prevented the injury from occurring.

Why are schools so important in preventing injuries?

Consider these real life examples:

- ⇒ A child drowns while swimming at a school camp.
- ⇒ A child breaks her leg in the playground.
- ⇒ A teenager driving his car home from school crashes into an elderly pedestrian.
- ⇒ A teenager falls after the school ball following consumption of alcohol and breaks her skull.
- ⇒ A teacher trips on an uneven footpath breaking a hip.
- ⇒ A student burns her hand in a science lab.
- ⇒ Bullying is occurring within the playground area.
- ⇒ Netball players are taking time out of schoolwork due to injuries to the hand.
- ⇒ A young male student commits suicide.

 Schools have a leading role in ensuring that these kinds of situations are avoided and when they do occur, coordinating all steps to prevent them from happening again.

 Schools provide a unique opportunity to reach children and young people with safety promotion messages in an environment which is conducive to learning as:

- ⇒ Children and young people's behaviours are often based on their attitudes about safety and wellness;
- ⇒ If they value safety they will be more likely to act in a safe manner when risky situations arise; and
- ⇒ Schools therefore have an important role in contributing significantly to developing a positive safety culture.

Why would you want to set up a Safe Schools Programme?

International Safe Schools (ISS) was developed out of the World Health Organisation (WHO) Safe Communities Network and is a system for schools to use to become safer places to learn, work, live and play.

While there currently exists a large number of initiatives focused on improving the health and well-being of students, the way that such initiatives support a coordinated and systematic approach to school safety is unclear. Having multiple, and often competing agencies within school settings, also makes the task of working effectively with schools very challenging.

The ISS designation process is supportive of a cross-sectoral, collaborative approach to school safety. A cross-sectoral approach, or in more simplistic terms, bringing as many stakeholders, (those who have an effect on the individual/student), together to look at the data/information on the incidents of injuries, their causes and effects to make choices on how (given the particular situations of that school environment) to change the environment to lessen the quantity and types of injuries, is essential.

Former Surgeon General C. Everett Koop said:

"If disease was killing our children in the proportions that injuries are, people would be outraged and demand that the killer be stopped."



Why be a designated International Safe School?

The International Safe Schools Accreditation Programme www.intlsafeschools.com is recognised as an effective, beneficial & sustainable way to promote safety & reduce injuries within the school environment. It supports the creation of safer school environments by applying scientifically proven practices to achieve systematic change. Schools work through an accreditation procedure, where indicators & benchmarks described in the programme are designed to be adapted to individual countries taking into account cultural & geographical differences.

The term Safe School does not imply that the school is in itself a perfectly safe environment, or that its students are managing risk appropriately. However, being accredited as an International Safe School means that the school, & its surrounding community, are committed to continually striving to build a safer environment & to developing a culture of appropriate risk management for young people in New Zealand.

Evidence suggests that adopting a comprehensive Safe Schools approach & achieving the criteria for designation, impacts on the social & physical environment of the school which in turn is likely to raise academic achievement scores.



*Safety Promotion &
Injury Prevention
lasts a lifetime*

*Think Safe
Feel Safe
Act Safe
Be Safe*

Benefits of improved safety for:

Children, young people and families/whanau:

- ⇒ Continued quality of life;
- ⇒ Ongoing participation in school, work, play, sport, leisure, and educational activities; and
- ⇒ Preservation of future incomes and assets.

Schools, organisations and business:

- ⇒ Minimising disruption to school operations;
- ⇒ Increased learning outcomes and productivity;
- ⇒ Retention of valued staff; and
- ⇒ Reduced ACC levies.

The wider community:

- ⇒ Safer, happier and more productive children, young people and populations; and
- ⇒ Decreased demands on the healthcare system.

How to get started?

Introduce concept to your school and raise interest about becoming an International Safe School by:

1. Arranging for SCFNZ to provide a **short and punchy presentation** to your Board of Trustees or staff about the benefits of Safe Schools;
2. **Map out** your school's current injury prevention and safety promotion activities to identify gaps. SCFNZ is available to facilitate this process;
3. Appoint a **liaison person** to develop partnerships and programmes and to help coordinate a Safe Schools programme; and
4. Signify your **school's commitment** to the process by submitting a letter of intent.

For further information and support contact:

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Resource Number Four: Updated October 2006



An introduction to Safe Schools



*SCFNZ is a:
Certifying Centre and
Affiliate Safe Community Support Centre of the WHO
Collaborating Centre on Community Safety Promotion.
Affiliate Centre with Certifying Authority of the
International Safe Schools Movement.*