**ACTION: *Campaign for Crossing Guards***

**Campaign for Crossing Guards Toolkit**

**F A C T P O I N T**

**245 children under the age of 15 were killed in 2016 as pedestrians in motor-vehicle crashes, according to NHTSA.**[**\***](https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812493)



**Danger**  
A heavily-trafficked school zone intersection can be hazardous for kids to cross without supervision.

**Solution**  
Encourage the responsible government entity to place a crossing guard position at a local elementary or middle school.

**Action**Run a petition campaign to encourage the appropriate government bodies to place a crossing guard at a school zone intersection in your community. This could mean county or local government, or the school board.

An effective advocacy campaign often involves a number of different actions, so be sure to check out tools in other [Take Action Toolkits](https://www.safekids.org/take-action-toolkit-how-fix-unsafe-school-zone-your-community) for more ideas on ways to win your campaign for a crossing guard at your neighborhood school.

**Linked Action**Think about combining your efforts with a nomination for the America’s Favorite Crossing Guard Contest. See below for more details on this annual event brought to you by Safe Kids Worldwide and FedEx.

**Benefits of a Crossing Guard**In the school environment, a crossing guard has one of the most dangerous jobs, and their job is important. They can accomplish the following goals:

* Discourage kids from behaving unsafely in and around traffic, practices like crossing the street at mid-block or crossing against a traffic signal.
* Utilize traffic gaps to help students cross safely. But when the natural traffic flow is consistently busy, not allowing enough time for children to cross, a guard may need to create gaps by temporarily stopping traffic. The guard should always be the first person in the street and the last person to get out of traffic’s way.
* Alert drivers that pedestrians are crossing the street in a school zone’s intersection.

Report any incidents or situations that present a potential safety hazard to the school kids or the crossing guard.

**FAST LANE TO CAMPAIGN SUCCESS**

1. **Set clear goal:** Better protect kids in school zones with the assignment of a crossing guard.
2. **Straightforward rationale for action:** Why this is so important. For example, a 5th grader was hit in the intersection closest to the school by a driver who was driving 10 mph faster than the 35 mph speed limit which is already too high.
3. **Research and More Research:** This is the vital foundation of any advocacy campaign, just as it is for most of the work we do. Here are some examples of research needs:
   * What’s the data behind the problem?
   * How many crashes and near-misses? What’s the average speed of drivers during school hours?
   * What/who makes the decision?
   * How much will it cost and how much it can save? For example, the failure to have crossing guards has been the subject for litigation around the country.
4. **Human Face:** What are the stories of fatalities and saves that can help propel the campaign?

**Top Research Points**

1. In a 2016 study, researchers at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that the odds of having more than a quarter of students walk or bike to school were “significantly higher among schools with paid or volunteer crossing guards than among schools without crossing guards.” [\*](https://www.cdc.gov/pcd/issues/2016/15_0573.htm)
2. A 2003 report by the U.S. Federal Highway Administration found that installing flashers and improved signage had only limited success in reducing school zone speeds without the presence of a crossing guard.[\*](https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/research/safety/pedbike/03042/part3.cfm)
3. According to the Bloomberg Initiatives’ 2017 Global Street Design Guide, crossing guards are necessary because “children are less capable of judging speed than adults.” [\*](https://globaldesigningcities.org/publication/global-street-design-guide/)
4. A 2014 study published in the Journal of Transportation and Health found that deploying crossing guards leads to a significant increase in the number of children using supervised pedestrian routes on their way to and from school. [\*](http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2214140514000218)
5. Researchers at the University of Maryland and the University of Illinois-Chicago found in 2012 that policies requiring crossing guard placement at schools are particularly effective at facilitating students walking and biking to school. [\*](http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1353829211001341)

**Model Petition   
  
Placing A Crossing Guard at a Dangerous Intersection in Our School Zone**

We petition (Mayor/City Council/State Legislature) to institute a crossing guard safety program at (GREENLEAF AVE) and (YELLOW RD), a proven dangerous intersection near (GREENLEAF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL). I am a student/parent/teacher/neighbor/friend/former student/interested citizen, and I care deeply about (GREENLEAF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL) in (GREENLEAF BOROUGH). I am joining with others to urge the placement of a crossing guard at the intersection of (GREENLEAF AVE) and (YELLOW RD). Chaotic driving habits at this intersection during drop-off and pick-up times pose a serious threat to the safety of students biking and walking.

A Safe Kids Worldwide research study involving over 39,000 observations of student pedestrian behavior saw that almost 80 percent of kids crossed the street in an unsafe manner, such as while texting or crossing mid-block. These facts, combined with dangerous driving habits exhibited by drivers, make the presence and supervision of an adult crossing guard critically important. This is consistent with what we see every day at (GREENLEAF AVE) and (YELLOW RD).

By posting a crossing guard at this intersection near (GREENLEAF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL), we can improve routes for kids to walk and bike to school.

**Call to Action Message**(GREENLEAF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL) parents, pupils, teachers, administrators, neighbors, alumni and concerned citizens.

**If there’s been an incident, share it in your letter. It could be a fatality, or better yet, the story of a crossing guard saving a child’s life.**

**A D V O C A C Y T I P**

Please sign our petition asking for a crossing guard to make the intersection of (GREENLEAF AVE) and (YELLOW RD) near (GREENLEAF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL) zone safer. Developmentally, children under 10 years old are unable to judge the speed and distance of an oncoming car, meaning they cannot make accurate decisions about whether or not the road is safe to cross. Also, the school zone is frequently plagued by distracted, aggressive drivers who are not looking out for small children. A crossing guard will protect our kids from these hazards as they cross the street. At (GREENLEAF AVE) and (YELLOW RD), there are no signs, crosswalk markings or other ways to calm traffic and allow children ages 5 to 11 to walk across the street safely. A crossing guard represents an immediate, effective way to address the dangers at our school.

Together, we need to make change. Please sign our petition in favor of placing a crossing guard at (GREENLEAF AVE) and (YELLOW RD).

**Build Momentum for your Petition**

You need to make your petition go viral. That doesn’t mean you need to get thousands of signatures. Because you’re working on such a local matter, it might mean 300-400 signatures will send a powerful message. But it’s not easy. Here are some ideas to build the momentum you need:

* Get as many parents to send the petition to everyone they know. They need to make it personal. “My kids go to Greenleaf. Please help me keep them safe.”
* Establish a physical presence. Armed with a tablet, solicit signers at shopping malls, supermarkets, the drop-off/pick-up zone at the school.
* Recruit small businesses to make the petition available at their store.
* Go beyond parents as potential signers. Other high-value targets include neighbors of the school, teachers or schoolchildren.
* Think about who might have a stake in the outcome. For example, homeowners close to the school might like having live eyes on the street to deter crime.

**Town Hall Meetings**

Once you’ve gathered a base of support through your petition drive and other outreach measures, hosting a town hall meeting is a great way to strengthen connections and take the momentum to the next level. When organizing the meeting, be sure to develop a lively agenda to make the most of your time. This will also help you identify speakers with expertise who can lead specific discussions. A crossing guard from a neighboring school or district could speak as an expert on the important role they play in child safety. Breaking down your meeting into two sections, one describing the problem and the other discussing potential solutions, can help bring in speakers who might be experts on the issue but are not comfortable advocating for specific solutions. Another good idea is to invite a sympathetic policymaker as a guest speaker. Such a role gives them an opportunity to connect with constituents and to get valuable press if you can get media outlets to cover your meeting.

**Examples of School Zone Danger**  
Storytelling is one of the most powerful tools available to you to propel your campaign. Perhaps there was a specific incident that inspired your action to campaign for a crossing guard. A story puts a human face on the issue and how smart policy can affect it. It can create a human connection with policymakers that can spur them in to action. The following stories show the very real dangers in school zones, where crossing guards and students have been injured or killed.

**The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found students who walk or bike to school are 25 percent better when schools have crossing guards, either paid or volunteers.**

**D A T A P O I N T**

* Carol Leviner worked as a crossing guard for 28 years in Hempstead Village, on Long Island, New York. She was a fixture to the children she looked out for, who affectionately knew her as “Miss Carol.” One morning at her post, she witnessed a 14-wheeler truck enter the intersection at a fast pace, even though schoolchildren were crossing. Miss Carol ran out into the street, pushing 10-year-old Juella Bynoe out of harm’s way. She was struck by the truck instead and was killed. In memory of her sacrifice, the community renamed the street on which she worked for so many years “Carol Leviner’s Way.” [\*](https://www.nbcnewyork.com/news/local/Hero-Crossing-Guard-Hit-Killed-Tractor-Trailer-Saves-Child-Honored-Street-Name-Carol-Leviner-Way-Hempstead-Long-Island-405058605.html)
* In Leonia, New Jersey , crossing guard Charlie Lee works every school day at the intersection of Fort Lee Road and Broad Avenue, his post for over 15 years. When he saw a car speeding towards Jamie Sclafane as she crossed the street with her daughter in a stroller, Lee jumped in front of them without hesitation. Risking his own life to protect theirs, he shouted to the driver to halt, and made them stop. [\*](http://newyork.cbslocal.com/2016/01/15/leonia-crossing-guard-saves/)
* One October morning, Bob Fabrizio, a crossing guard in Plainville, Connecticut, was at his post as a crossing guard on Cooke Street. Suddenly, he saw a car move into the crosswalk as a child began to cross the street. Thinking fast, he grabbed the child and pulled him out of the way to safety. The child’s father, witnessing the incident, was so impressed by the action that he contacted the local police department, who recognized Fabrizio with a plaque. [\*](http://www.wfsb.com/story/34197152/crossing-guard-credited-with-saving-child-from-being-hit-by-car)
* Dan Walsh, a longtime crossing guard in Malden, Massachusetts, works a post with a special meaning to him. At the intersection of Route 99 and Hunting Street, it is the place where he was struck by a car as a child on his way to church. As he helped one of his regular students cross the street, second grader San’ya McKinney, he saw a car “come out of nowhere.” Instinctively, he protected the girl, allowing himself to be hit instead. Fortunately, Walsh escaped without major injuries, and says he would do it again any day. [\*](http://www.wcvb.com/article/crossing-guard-saves-girl-from-car/8167933)
* Twice a day, every day, Rosalie Garcia can be found working as a crossing guard outside of Sundance Elementary School in Albuquerque, New Mexico. With her stop sign and neon vest, Garcia was helping 8-year-old Ryan Acosta cross the street on his scooter one morning, when suddenly an SUV blew through the intersection. Garcia shouted to the child, who stopped and narrowly avoided being hit. Ryan’s mother Michelle Acosta, who witnessed the event, said “I can’t wait to see [Garcia] to tell her Thank You.” [\*](http://www.koat.com/article/albuquerque-crossing-guard-saves-child/5039910)
* Adrian Young was working her afternoon shift at Alexandria Avenue Elementary School in Louisiana, where she had been a crossing guard for more than 15 years, when she decided to stay later. That day, her presence proved vital, as she witnessed a woman attempt to kidnap one of the school’s students. Hearing the child’s cries for help, Young “went into mother mode” grabbing onto her arm and freeing the girl. At a ceremony to recognize Young’s bravery, city councilman Mitch O’Farrell credited her diligence, training and awareness with saving the child. [\*](https://www.nbclosangeles.com/news/local/Crossing-Guard-Rescued-Kidnapping-Honored-394402391.html)

**Argument for Decision-makers: Considering Costs of An Injury**

When we engage in advocacy, the most common question from decision-makers is, “How much is it going to cost?” Part of the answer is risk reduction; although installing a crossing guard costs money, their presence reduces the risk of an accident which can incur far greater costs. Below are examples of school districts and municipalities which have been sued for the failure to have crossing guards. Not all the lawsuits are successful, but even in cases in which the school wins there are still substantial costs of litigation to the defendants. Besides the costs of litigation, the cost of a child’s injuries to the state should they be hit can be immense, especially if they lack health insurance coverage. It’s worth seeing if you can get information on local injuries and their costs.

* A Bensalem, Pennsylvania family sued the school district, township government and police department for six-figure damages after their son was struck and killed at his bus stop without a crossing guard. [\*](https://pennrecord.com/stories/510554267-parents-of-teen-struck-and-killed-by-car-sues-township-school-district-for-wrongful-death)
* The City of Anaheim and Magnolia School District in California paid $15.9 million in a settlement with the family of a girl severely injured after being struck by a car in a crosswalk on her way to a school breakfast program. [\*](http://www.ocregister.com/2017/03/28/anaheim-girls-family-to-get-15-9-million-for-care-after-she-was-hit-by-a-car-on-way-to-school/)
* Zion School District in Zion, Illinois was sued for failing to have a crossing guard present after a 7-year-old was struck crossing an intersection. [\*](http://www.lib.niu.edu/1993/im931115.html)
* The City of Salt Lake, Utah and the Salt Lake City School District were sued for failing to place a crossing guard by a student who was struck in an intersection while on his way to a parent-student-teacher conference. [\*](http://caselaw.findlaw.com/ut-supreme-court/1340242.html)
* Hillsboro School District in Oregon faced a $9.5 million lawsuit brought by a woman who was struck with her two children in a school zone crosswalk without a crossing guard. The suit claimed that the lack of a crossing guard created “an unreasonable risk” to the safety of students. [\*](http://portlandtribune.com/ht/117-hillsboro-tribune-news/375949-261487-family-files-lawsuit-against-city-school-district-after-crash)

**America’s Favorite Crossing Guard Contest**

The job of a crossing guard is one of the most dangerous in and around schools. They are brave heroes and deserve to be championed. Safe Kids, with support from FedEx, is supporting them.

We developed this seventh campaign toolkit as we mounted our third annual America’s Favorite Crossing Guard Contest. You can nominate an outstanding crossing guard in your community as the best in the nation for a chance to win a prize and a grant to the school they represent. This contest is a terrific way to facilitate student involvement in community advocacy, and to give students a chance to show their appreciation. To submit your nomination for [America’s Favorite Crossing Guard](https://www.safekids.org/crossing-guard), follow the link and remember to include a photo and text explaining why he or she is the best crossing guard in the country. Once nominations are closed you can vote online to support your candidate, with the contest winner being selected from the top 5 vote earners by our panel of judges.

**Online Resources: Free Petition Sites**

* Care2 [\*](http://www.thepetitionsite.com/create-a-petition.html)
* Causes [\*](https://www.causes.com/)
* Action Network [\*](https://actionnetwork.org/)
* WordPress: SpeakOut! [\*](https://wordpress.org/plugins/speakout/)
* Change.org [\*](https://www.change.org/start-a-petition)
* Petition effort in favor of school bus cameras [\*](https://www.change.org/p/new-york-state-legislature-enact-legislation-to-allow-stop-arm-cameras-on-school-buses-in-new-york-to-identify-and-penalize-drivers-who-pass-stopped-school-buses-2)

**Online Resources: Expertise on Petitions**

* 9 Tips to Run a Successful Petition Campaign (based on change.org)[\*](https://savingplaces.org/stories/preservation-tips-tools-9-tips-for-creating-successful-petitions-on-change-org#.Wfdz4bpFyHk)
* How to Write a Winning Petition by change.org Leader[\*](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/05/21/changeorg-petition_n_5360209.html)
* Conducting a Petition Drive by Community Toolbox[\*](http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/advocacy/direct-action/petition-drive/main)
* How to Organize an Effective Petition Campaign by American Association of University Women[\*](http://www.aauw.org/resource/how-to-start-a-petition/)
* 5+ Petition Templates on template.net[\*](https://www.template.net/business/word-templates/petition-template/)
* How to Write a Petition (international site, gopetition.com)[\*](https://www.gopetition.com/how-to-write-a-petition)
* Petition examples from gopetition.org[\*](https://www.gopetition.com/petition-examples)
* Sample letter to legislators on school zone safety issue (school bus cameras)[\*](https://www.change.org/p/new-york-state-legislature-enact-legislation-to-allow-stop-arm-cameras-on-school-buses-in-new-york-to-identify-and-penalize-drivers-who-pass-stopped-school-buses-2)

**Six Ways to Get Your Way!**

1. **Goal:** Set a goal of how many signatures you need to get the point across, and make the goal challenging and achievable but not unattainable. You might ask a local politician for their opinion on how many signatures would be convincing to her or him.
2. **Building Your Coalition:** Think about local stakeholders like religious communities, neighbors to the school, local businesses and parent-teacher associations who can expand the reach of your petition. Enlist senior citizens if there’s a center for them near the school. People who live near the school may be especially receptive to a crossing guard as more “eyes on the street” can prevent crime. Another way to get a broad base of signatures is to hold petition drives in busy public places like a local shopping center.
3. **Story Telling:** Storytelling is a vital component in advocacy, often making the difference in convincing policymakers to act. It’s important to identify storytellers early, so their experiences can be leveraged throughout the advocacy process. Be sure to consider your audience and who can best tell them these stories. Consider having kids from the school tell about the dangers they face at the intersection; their voice can be especially effective. When thinking about how to present them, remember that the best stories have three components: emotion, connection, and a call to action.
4. **Find One or Two Words** thatembraces your effort. One example is “CROSS SAFE” as a headline for the petition, accompanied by a Twitter hashtag like #crosssafe. Or “Guard Our Kids.”
5. **Ready for Your Close-up?** Social media videos offer a way to promote petitions, raise awareness, and engage in storytelling with a broad audience at very low cost. Consider filming a diverse group of kids from the school talking about how the presence of a crossing guard makes for a safer experience walking to school. Remember to include a call to action in every video you make! (Important: Make sure to inform the school and to get releases from parents).
6. **Don’t be Scary:** The issue *is* scary, but don’t repel people with frightening images or videos.

Let us know how it goes at [advocacy@safekids.org](mailto:advocacy@safekids.org).  
Or tweet your involvement using these tools.

Our community used @SKWAdvocate #safeschoolzone toolkit to   
make our streets safer for our kids.

