



## Crossing Guards and School Safety Patrols

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### Background

Over the past several years the funding and program coordination for school crossing guards has changed dramatically. Many school districts that were previously provided services by outside agencies are now left to coordinate crossing guard services in-house. In addressing the need for crossing guards, school districts have either hired outside services, hired additional district staff, coordinated parent volunteers, assigned current district personnel to the task, or recruited students.

All of the above options are acceptable, with the exception of recruiting students. Students (minors of any age) should not be recruited or used as crossing guards under any circumstances. It stands to reason that if an area is deemed hazardous enough that students require assistance, providing that assistance via another student just doesn't make sense.

Although the California Education Code (sections 49300-49302) allows school districts to establish a pupil safety patrol "for the purpose of assisting school pupils in safely crossing streets and highways adjacent to or near school", ideally the role of the safety patrol should be to assist the adult crossing guard. Students acting as safety patrol should remain on the curb and assist the crossing guard as directed. Under no circumstances should the safety patrol members direct traffic or act unilaterally.

For many schools the most hazardous area associated with the school site are the student loading and crossing zones before and after school. Placing students in such a perilous situation as crossing guards with the expectation that they will be able to safeguard themselves and others is not appropriate or realistic.



### Rationale

According to the American Automobile Association (AAA) one-fourth of all children 14 years of age and younger who die in motor vehicle crashes are pedestrians. The majority of these pedestrian fatalities happen in the afternoon hours when school is letting out.

In addition, AAA notes that there are physical differences between children and adults that can make students vulnerable. These differences necessitate both the need for crossing assistance for students as well as reinforce why students are not the appropriate choice to provide the assistance. The key differences include:

- × Children's peripheral vision is one-third narrower than an adult's. This makes it more difficult for them to see a vehicle approaching from the side.
- × Children's smaller stature makes it harder for them to see a car and more difficult for drivers to see a child.

- × Children’s immature judgment makes it more difficult for them to judge a car’s speed or distance.
- × Children have misconceptions such as that cars can stop instantly and that if they can see a car the driver can see them. These misconceptions put students in greater danger as pedestrians.

### **Recommendation**

Because of the above, it is SISC’s position that students should not be used as crossing guards. However, in our opinion there is a distinction that can be drawn between crossing guards and school safety patrol.

There is evidence to support that the role of a student safety patrol member is only to assist the adult crossing guard. SISC supports this position. In this scenario the crossing sequence would occur as follows:

1. The crossing guard assisted by the safety patrol holds the students in a group on the sidewalk until the crossing guard determines it is safe to cross.
2. The crossing guard moves to the center of the crosswalk with the hand-held stop sign in the raised position.
3. The crossing guard directs the safety patrol to release the waiting students into the crosswalk to cross the street.

Note that in this scenario only the adult crossing guard enters the street/crosswalk, the student safety patrol remains on the curb.

According to the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) there are two types of school crossing supervision:



1. Adult control of pedestrians **and vehicles** with adult crossing guards or police officers.
2. Student control of **only** pedestrians with School Safety Patrol.

We believe the above scenario fits within the Caltrans parameters. The Caltrans Traffic Manual provides the following:

“School Safety Patrols aid school pedestrians at crossings near elementary schools. They are a supplemental technique rather than a traffic control device as defined in Section 440 of the California Vehicle Code ...”

“School Safety patrols may be used to direct and control children at signalized intersections where turning movements are not a problem and to assist adult crossing guards in the control of children at crossing locations used by large numbers of children.”

“School Safety Patrols should not direct vehicular traffic.”

### **Miscellaneous Considerations**

School districts that decide to create and maintain School Safety Patrols have several issues that must be considered and addressed. Those issues include the following:

**Insurance** – The SISC memorandum of coverage does not provide liability coverage for students. Therefore, all students would have to be officially designated as volunteers of the district in order to be acknowledged under the policy as an insured. In addition, in acknowledging the students as volunteers this extends the district’s workers’ compensation insurance coverage to the student in the event the student is injured while performing his or her duties.

**Permission** – prior to the district allowing a student to participate as part of the safety patrol, the parent or guardian must sign a permission slip that provides approval. A model form is included at the end of this document.

**Selection** – all safety patrol members must be at least 5<sup>th</sup> grade or higher and shall be at least 10 years of age.

**Uniform** – only the School Safety Patrol uniform specified in Education Code section 576 shall be used. Specifically, the basic standard uniform for patrol members is the white or fluorescent orange Sam Browne belt and either an overseas type federal yellow or fluorescent orange cap or a yellow or fluorescent orange helmet. Optional additions to the basic standard uniform are any or all of the following:

- Colored piping on the federal yellow cap
- Colored striping on the yellow helmet
- A red or fluorescent orange upper garment
- Insignia or a special badge identifying the organization, to be worn on the left breast, left arm, or cap



The rainy-day uniform is a federal yellow raincoat and a federal yellow rain hat. The Sam Browne belt may be worn over the raincoat.

The insignia, or special badge and cap shall be worn only during official school safety patrol duty, except that the governing board may authorize members of the school safety patrol to wear the uniform and insignia for special school safety patrol functions.

### Training/Education

Both adult crossing guards and student safety patrol members need formal training before they are assigned to duty. This training and education element is vital in helping ensure the

safety of the pedestrian students as well as the safety of the crossing guard and patrol member.

School districts that utilize in-house personnel as crossing guards should have written procedures (such as below) and material that can be used for training purposes. All training should be documented.

### Procedures for Crossing Students

The following information includes some of the basic elements and can be customized and expanded to fit a district's needs. Please note that the following procedures are for crossing guards only, it is not intended nor should be used for safety patrol instruction.



- † Do not stand in the street until you are in the act of stopping traffic. Raise the stop sign as you step off the curb and do not lower it until you step back on the curb. Require all children to remain on the curb until you direct them to cross.
- † Always look both ways before leaving the curb. At intersections, extra caution is required for vehicles turning onto the street you desire to cross. Watch for breaks in traffic and take advantage of such periods to stop traffic, thus preventing a “sudden interruption” of the traffic flow which could cause a serious traffic accident.
- † The hand held stop sign provided shall be used at all times when children are crossing. An orange vest is provided to increase your visibility to traffic. You may also request a whistle for use to notify student to begin crossing.
- † NEVER take for granted approaching traffic will stop even though you are displaying the hand held stop sign. Be alert for vehicles that do not appear to be reducing speed in preparation to stop.

† When a break in the flow of traffic is observed, the guard shall then raise the stop sign to eye level; advance to a position in the center of the roadway, and require all traffic to halt. When all traffic movement has ceased, the guard shall make a clear and distinctive signal for children to cross. Avoid using hand signals to motions student to begin crossing. If hand signals must be used they shall be given with the arm extended toward the children and then brought across the body in a sweeping motion in conjunction with a verbal command or one blast of the whistle.

† DO NOT allow children to run across the street.

† DO NOT allow children to ride bicycles across the street. Require them to dismount and walk their bicycles across.

† NEVER allow children to cross by themselves. You MUST cross students even if their parents are with them. Even if no vehicles are approaching, always use the same procedure to cross.

† Require children to stay within the marked crosswalk area when crossing.

† Never put down the stop sign until all children have crossed the street.

† Do not change direction suddenly or make any unexpected moves. For example, do not walk across the street, suddenly turn around and start back. You may “follow” your students crossing after they have passed you and they are almost to the curb, and you are sure no other children will begin to cross.

† Remember, you are not a traffic director.

Additional language should be added to address specific district requirements.

### Sample Permission Form

Dear parent/guardian, your child has expressed an interest in volunteering to serve on the school safety patrol. At the start and end of each school day, patrol members take direction from adult crossing guards to help other students safely cross the street.

It will require that your child come a little early to school when assigned to a morning shift, or stay a little late after school when assigned to an afternoon shift. Your child will receive safety patrol training before being assigned to a post. While on duty, your child will wear a fluorescent safety patrol uniform, which will help make him or her more visible.

Participation in the patrol provides students with pedestrian safety training and an experience in good citizenship and teamwork. Students must have parent or guardian permission in order to serve on the patrol. If you decide to allow your child to apply for safety patrol membership, your cooperation with ensuring your child is on time to his or her post will be greatly appreciated.

Approval of parent or guardian

I understand the duties and responsibilities of the Safety Patrol as outlined above and give my consent for my child to serve as a member of the school safety patrol. Although training is given, I understand this activity is not without risk.



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Name of student

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Parent/guardian signature \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

### Web Info

The Otto Club Web site ([www.ottoclub.org](http://www.ottoclub.org)) was designed by AAA traffic safety experts. Children play and learn important safety lessons presented in fun and creative ways. The site also offers information for teachers.