

Recently, St. Francis Parish has been dealing with a heightened level of concern over security and safety of persons, particularly children, on their campus. This concern resulted when a young man who entered the church with a backpack and was feared to be a threat to security by those present. Lacking information or feedback to the contrary, preschool parents and others took to social media to discuss their perceptions of what had occurred and raised concerns that the overall security of children on campus may be inadequate. Particular concerns were raised regarding the safety of children when outside the school's secure area, such as during mass or in the Parish Hall and for children attending preschool. To address these concerns, leadership determined that a formal site security assessment would be conducted, along with appropriate follow up and information to all stakeholders.

St Francis contracted with JHC Associates, LLC and from April 29th – May 3rd, St Francis of Assisi parish leadership, staff, volunteers, parents, and community partners participated in a comprehensive site security assessment of their campus. The overall goal of this assessment was to: 1) identify real or perceived security related concerns; and, 2) using a collaborative process, determine recommended action steps and an associated timeline to address these concerns.

The site security objectives included:

1. Assessment of the security of St Francis of Assisi (SFA) elementary school, preschool, kids care, and all areas used by students
2. Assessment of the security of SFA worship facilities and public access portions of the campus to determine the current status of security as well as the need for modifications to the current system and provide appropriate recommendations
3. Assessment of the school policies and procedures related to security systems and access to parish grounds
4. Review existing parish Crisis Management Plan (CMP) and recommendations to improve security
5. Review existing school Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) to assess security policies and procedures and determine adherence to Iowa Administrative Code 280.30

The Site Security Assessment was a full five-day process conducting using identified governmental and private sector best-practices. This included:

- A review of all plans, policies and procedures and interviews with staff to determine staff adherence with protocols.
- A walk-thru of all facilities with staff and volunteers, looking specifically at all aspects of the physical security of the building and identifying areas of known concern.
- An after-hours walk-thru of the campus, internally and externally, to identify addition security issues.
- Program-level Survey Interviews with leadership and program directors to further identify security level ratings.
- Meetings with parents to discuss specific concerns and assure the inclusion in the process of assessment.

The information-gathering portion of the assessment resulted in approximately 50 security-related items that required some form of follow up or action. St Francis leadership, program directors and staff, volunteers, and community stakeholders participated in a fully collaborative session of "brainstorming" to review and identify specific action steps and assign a timeline

criteria for addressing each item. The parameters recommended for the timeline criteria included:

- Immediate (I)
- Short Term (ST)
- Mid Term (MT)
- Long Term (LT)

The assessment team recognizes that implementation of some action steps and the associated timeline may be based on funding, manpower, resources, normal daily activities, changes in security posture and other considerations. Given this, the assessment team strongly urges parish leadership to adhere to the action step recommendations and timelines as much as feasibly possible and ensure that any significant adjustments are clearly communicated to all staff and stakeholders.

The final printed and non-transmitted electronic versions of the Site Security Assessment Report along with supporting documents and data were delivered to parish leadership as confidential documents. The security of St Francis of Assisi is dependent upon not only the physical existence of security measures, but also on the adherence to security policies and protocols. Any public reporting of weaknesses in physical security and/or protocols further compromises overall security by exposing actual or perceived areas that may be vulnerable. The assessment team strongly encourages the leadership and staff to maintain the confidentiality of the report to avoid compromising campus security. The assessment team urges the parishioners to respect this confidentiality in reporting, but encourages the sharing of information as deemed appropriate by circumstances. The team also believes that as the action items on the list are addressed, parishioners and parents should see clear indications that their needs and concerns were heard and that parishioners and parents should receive follow up information as items are completed.