WHY THE VISITOR SIGN-IN SHEET WENT THE WAY OF



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Pencil and Paper Sign-In Sheets Are No Longer Enough

It is both amazing and disturbing that more than 80% of K-12 schools in the United States still rely on handwritten logs to manage campus visitors. There are many inherent security flaws in this approach, not the least of which is that visitors can write down a name other than their own (and many do). Even if they write their own name legibly, campus personnel still know nothing about their background or whether they should be allowed to enter the school.

750K

There are more than 750,000 registered sex offenders in the United States. Raptor software alone has flagged more than 25,000 entering schools in the last 14 years. How many have slipped through the cracks at schools using pencil and paper sign-in sheets?

5X

Custody issues present schools with ongoing security concerns and information management burdens that show no sign of decreasing. The FBI reports that the number of custody-motivated abductions increased by more than five times between October 2010 and June 2013.

$2.8M

Custody issues can have huge financial implications for schools, such as the $2.8 million judgment holding a school district in California responsible for releasing a student to a non-custodial adult who kidnapped the student.

Traditional Front Office Safety

Even if you have taken steps to limit access through a single point of entry, traditional visitor sign-in sheets aren't enough to monitor and manage visitors on school grounds. Along with all of their other responsibilities, how can front desk staff:

- Quickly determine if a visitor is a student's authorized guardian?
- Be alerted if there are court ordered custody restrictions?
- Know if an individual is a registered sex offender—or even if they are who they say they are?
- Request assistance at the front desk instantly and discreetly?

In case of events like fires or other emergencies that require buildings to be evacuated or result in the destruction of physical property, traditional paper sign-sheets become virtually useless. In the commotion, they will most likely be left behind, lost or damaged, leaving no record of who was on school premises or any way to determine if all guests have been safely accounted for. In addition, sign-in sheets can't be accessed remotely by first responders before they arrive at the scene.

There Is A Better Way

An alternative to paper sign-in sheets is visitor management software. These automated systems allow front desk staff to confirm that visitors are who they say they are by using government-issued identification. They also instantly check names against registered sex offender lists. They can provide alerts related to issues like child custody or court orders, and, when appropriate, send instant alerts via text and email to a customized list of recipients, such as School Resource Officers and Principals.

"When I walk into a school to perform a security assessment, I usually sign in as Mickey Mouse or Elvis.

Nobody has ever said anything to me."

Paul Timm
President of RETA Security and author of
School Security: How to Build and Strengthen a School's Safety Program.

Five Ways Automated Systems Improve Visitor Management

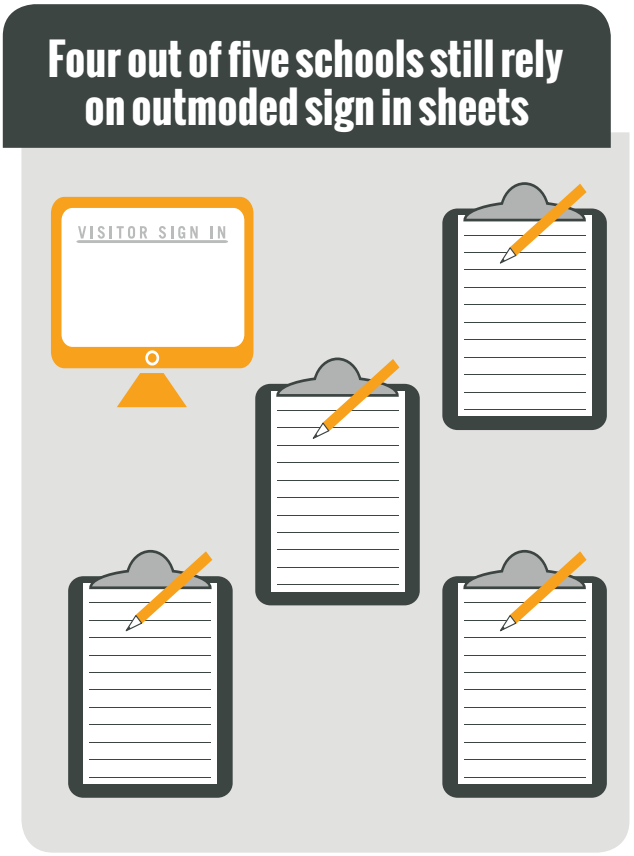
Today only about 20,000 schools in the U.S. currently use automated systems, leaving more than 100,000 that still rely on pencil and paper visitor records. If you are among the majority without visitor management software, you may find this paper helpful. It outlines five critical factors you should consider when assessing visitor management systems. It may also help you determine if your existing system (manual or electronic) is providing your staff and students with adequate protection.

1. Automated ID Data Capture

Recording handwritten names or even allowing visitors to manually enter their own identification information leads to unintended mistakes and opens the door to intentional falsification. Instead, schools should rely on data read from government-issued identification cards (like a driver's license) through an ID scanner. For privacy purposes, schools should use systems whose scanners compile only the data necessary for screening and do not keep a photocopy of the ID.

"To create a safer school entrance we need to control and monitor visiting parents, volunteers, caregivers, even substitute teachers, fieldtrip chaperones, vendors and college sports recruiters."

Michael Ghilani
Principal,
Upper St. Claire High School



This automated process is not only more efficient and reliable, but the system also allows you to create an electronic record that is accessible (even off-site) by web-based systems in case of emergency or evacuation.

2. Instant and Automatic Screening

The importance of being able to instantly check names against national sex offender registries and custody orders is obvious. However, it is nearly impossible to do this manually. It takes at least a full minute to check just your own state's database—not to mention the time required for each of the 49 others. And there's a high likelihood of errors when manually entering a visitor's name and date of birth. The Department of Justice's nationwide database introduces more complications since it does not screen by date of birth. That can cause common names to generate hundreds of potential matches.

Moreover, any screening that requires more than a few mouse clicks means that busy front desk personnel who are already juggling multiple responsibilities—including a line of visitors waiting for help—are likely to avoid taking those extra steps. And even a high quality solution is useless if it isn't used consistently.

Appropriate visitor management software addresses these complications by automating every step:

- ☑ Screening/scanning of IDs is a simple, intuitive, single-click process, which reduces staff learning curves and encourages consistent use for each and every visitor.
- ☑ Processing occurs quickly "in the background" so visitors are not inconvenienced or made to feel that they are being scrutinized.
- ☑ The system provider should maintain registry databases that are accessed instantly and automatically with each screening and are updated frequently.
- ☑ The system provider should also allow local schools/districts to create their own customized alerts for issues such as custodial orders or banned visitors.

3. Appropriate Data is Visible on Visitor Badges

Once visitors have been screened, it is essential that the system creates on-site identification clearly indicating that they have been officially authorized to visit. Each temporary "visitor badge" must include:

- ☑ **Visitor Photo**
  Prevents badges from being shared with anyone else.
- ☑ **Visitor Name**
  Indicates that the individual has been screened and cleared.
- ☑ **Issue Date & Time**
  Allows access only for the approved date and time.
- ☑ **Authorized Destination**
  Indicates access only to a pre-approved location.



What's Wrong with Sign-In Sheets?

- ✗ Signatures are often illegible.
- ✗ Staff cannot easily verify a visitor's name or identity.
- ✗ In an emergency evacuation, the sign-in sheets will most likely be left behind.
- ✗ District staff has no access to visitor data from the administration office.
- ✗ Reports cannot be run without retyping all of the data.
- ✗ Sign-in sheets offer no added benefits, such as tracking custody issues.

4. "Smart" Alert Notification

In the event of a match with a name on either the national sex offender registry or a local custom alert, your visitor management system needs to do more than flash a warning on a screen at the front desk. Your solution should provide two key features so that effective measures can be taken:

- **Customizable alert lists**
  The system should allow you to tailor different notification lists to suit established district policies since recipients may be different depending on the type of alert sent out. For example, along with on-site security and the principal, school counselors might be included for custody incidents but not for sex offender alerts.

- **Instant alerts**
  Contacts on alert lists should receive instant notification via both text and email. Discreet notification facilitates a rapid response without advance warning to someone who may be actively trying to evade security measures.



Consistency Is Key

Even in close-knit communities, "schools today are too big for the staff to know everybody's background," according to Paul Timm, president of RETA Security and author of *School Security: How to Build and Strengthen a School's Safety Program*. That's why it's important to take steps to build support in the community and to enforce screening for every visitor, every time. Timm recommends sending letters to families so they know what to expect when they visit, as well as posting signs to remind parents of ongoing screening and to deter anyone considering unauthorized access to the campus.



5. Cloud-based Access

Systems that reside on a "local" computer are less effective in case of emergencies and evacuations. By contrast, software accessed online provides distinct operational advantages:

- In the event of emergencies that require evacuation or result in physical damage to the front office, electronic visitor logs can still be accessed from any Internet connection.
- "Cloud-based" services are maintained by the service provider, who assumes responsibility for system updates and ongoing maintenance. Schools can maintain their focus on education and administration without having to also manage the technology.
- To monitor compliance, archived visitor logs can automatically generate reports for an entire district rather than requiring collection of data from each individual school.

Why Choose Raptor Technologies As Your Visitor Management Provider

The five critical factors noted above should be "table stakes" for any visitor management system that you consider. And they only touch the surface of the capabilities offered by Raptor Technologies.

Since 2002, the Raptor Visitor Management System has provided effective, automated visitor management software that does more than instantly compare visitors' government-issued identification against a comprehensive national list of registered sex offenders. It also accommodates customized private alerts related to child custody, court orders, known gang members or other individuals who are not allowed on school grounds.

The Raptor system protects more than 16,000 K-12 campuses across the United States and serves more K-12 districts of all sizes than any other visitor management system.

For more information on how Raptor's expertise can help improve visitor management at your school call toll free 1-877-7-RAPTOR or email Raptor at info@raptortech.com.

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