

# Safeguard Your School with Visitor Background Checks

**Using Visitor Management Software, enhanced with background check capability, ensures the safety of students, teachers and staff.**

In many school districts across the country, parent volunteers, facility contractors and other visitors sign in on a paper log sheet. While this method is quick and easy for busy office staff, it provides very little actual security.

A paper log sheet poses a number of other problems, as well. Specifically:

- The names are often illegible and, sometimes even false;
- In an emergency, such as a fire, it is impossible to quickly determine who is still in the building, especially because check-out times are seldom recorded;
- Confidential information regarding who has visited is readily available for other visitors or employees to review; and/or
- The paper log sheet and hand-written visitor badges are unprofessional and present the perception of lax security.

As the need for tangible security in schools increases, more and more administrators from districts of all sizes are implementing visitor management software, such as HID Global's EasyLobby® Secure Visitor Management (SVM™). These solutions provide web-based pre-registration, on-site visitor registration, background checks, badge printing, and more. The EasyLobby suite of products offers the ideal solution for streamlining visitor management workflow while also ensuring that students, teachers, and staff are safe and secure.

## ***How Does It Work?***

The main interface used by the operator is the EasyLobby SVM application is typically located at the reception desk. This application enables automated processes, making it quick and easy to register and issue a badge to an incoming visitor. It is so simple to use that the operator can complete the entire visitor enrollment process in less than 20 seconds, using the following three steps:

**1. Scan the ID.** Place the visitor's credential (driver's license, business card, passport, government or military ID, etc.) into the scanner. All information, including his/her photo, is automatically captured by the EasyLobby SVM and entered into the visitor form without any manual data entry.

**2. Capture other information, as needed.** Include other visual cues to the visitor's identity, such as a signature or photo (if the visitor doesn't have a license to scan), and enter any other information, such as the category of visitor, name of the person being visited, and reason for the visit (all presented as drop-down lists to choose from in the SVM).

**3. Print a customized visitor badge.** Click “check-in” and EasyLobby adds a time and date stamp to the visitor record, and then issues a badge specific to that visitor category (e.g., a visitor badge may need to look different than a contractor badge).

EasyLobby can store more than 300 custom badge templates and has the ability to issue three badge types: a black and white label on a monochrome printer; full-color badges on a color inkjet printer; or plastic ID cards on a secure ID badge printer. Badges can even be printed on self-expiring badge stock, which bleeds through a red stop sign after 12 hours to show the badge has expired.

Not only does the software greatly enhance the operational efficiency of managing visitors during their initial visit, it also retains their check-in information in the database, simplifying future visits.

### ***What Are the Benefits of Visitor Management Software?***

“When I worked for the Bibb County Public School System in Georgia, over 10 years, there were five incidents of adults with loaded handguns who came to elementary schools to kill a student or a staff member, or to take a student,” observes Mike Dorn, executive director of Macon, Georgia-based Safe Havens International, the world’s leading non-profit campus safety organization. “It’s a lot more common than people think, and it’s a lot more common than the situations shown in the media. What school officials must know is that the ‘bad guy’ will come to wherever the victim is, not caring if you’re a national School of Excellence or a parochial school.”

And that’s precisely where visitor management software enters the picture with its main benefit: control. EasyLobby allows you to control access to secured areas, know who’s on your campus and the reason for his or her visit. By pre-registering your visitors, you can guard against unwanted guests and perform background checks before allowing access to the school.

**1. Control access to secured areas.** The software integrates with a wide variety of access control systems to provide access cards to visitors directly from the visitor management station.

For example, a volunteer to a fifth-grade classroom can be issued an access card to that corridor, but denied access to other areas, such as the kindergarten corridor or an area where testing is taking place.

**2. Know who’s on campus.** With visitor management software, administrators know exactly who’s on campus, where, and why. This is especially useful in emergency situations where, with a single click, you can create an emergency evacuation report and share a list of all individuals in the school during a crisis with fire, police, and emergency response personnel.

**3. Pre-register visitors.** The ability of teachers and staff to pre-register their visitors via the Internet or school intranet allows for improved security and a streamlined visitor enrollment process. There is an added option of routing those requests for approval in order to more tightly control who is authorized to enter the school.

**4. Screen against unwanted visitors.** The software allows the ability to easily create internal watch lists to highlight specific visitors you do not want in your school. Individuals on your watch list might include non-custodial parents. “Life is a bit more complex today,” Dorn notes, “and school officials are challenged to face custodial issues. Visitor management software certainly makes it easier to identify situations.” Other individuals on your list may include disgruntled former employees or unscrupulous contractors. In addition to screening for unwanted guests, the watch lists can serve as a monitoring tool for such visitors as Board members or others whom you may want to give preferential treatment.

**5. Background checks.** As a further step, external watch list services allow administrators to screen for individuals on each state’s sex offender database or the Government Denied Parties database. The system alerts you to the arrival of an unwanted visitor within seconds of his or her sign-in via programmable security alerts delivered on the registration screen, or via email.

“We’re seeing a dramatic interest in this capability among our K-12 clients,” notes Mike Dorn. And it works. Dorn shares an experience where he was providing training, showing how to do a Geographic Information System (GIS) Mapping study to determine how many convicted sexual predators and killers are within one mile of a school. “After the training, one of the participants telephoned me,” he recalls. “Using the GIS mapping study approach, he identified a sexual predator living near the school. He took that information to the principal and learned that the man had been volunteering at the school three times a week for the last two years.” The ability to perform background checks stops convicted sexual predators before they come into contact with students.

### Getting Practical

Administrators want safe schools. They also have limited dollars to spend and limited staff to operate products. With that in mind, let’s look at visitor management software from a practical point of view.

First, parents want to know — need to know — that their children are safe. Visitor management software is tangible, credible evidence that you’re working to ensure just that.

Second, you will have visitors to your school, so you need a plan to manage their coming and going. Visitor management software allows you to do this and prevent many incidents from becoming a crisis.

Third, visitor management software does what it’s designed to do. “I’m not a technology gadget guy,” says Dorn. “The bulk of our safety and security recommendations focus on changing human behavior. But there are certain types of technology that I do think are valuable, and visitor management software is one. It doesn’t matter what kind of school or its risk level, the software makes sense. It’s a normal recommendation for us.”

Fourth, as Dorn observes, “When you compare the software’s cost in relation to how robust it is, it’s inexpensive. This is especially true when compared to technology that’s not always necessary, such as security cameras.”

Security must be a top priority for every school – small or large, urban or rural, public or private. The EasyLobby Secure Visitor Management solution provides administrators a host of benefits, including the ability to perform background checks on all visitors. The end results are knowing who is in your school and why; presenting a security-conscious and professional image to visitors; and allowing students, teachers, and staff to feel – and be – safe.



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