



Media Release

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Disaster Drills Are Only One Way to Be Prepared This School Year

CHICAGO – As students head back into classrooms across Illinois, the Illinois Emergency Management Agency and Office of Homeland Security (IEMA-OHS) is encouraging families to think about all the ways your children can be prepared. Each year, schools must deal with severe weather, transportation problems, digital safety, and even violence.

“The Safe2Help initiative reflects our commitment to fostering a culture of safety and vigilance across the state, ensuring every student has the opportunity to thrive in a secure environment. Safe2HelpIL is an essential tool in our ongoing efforts to protect and support the wellbeing of Illinois students and communities.,” said **Homeland Security Advisor to Governor JB Pritzker and IEMA-OHS Director Alicia Tate-Nadeau.**

“School-age children in Illinois have [Safe2HelpIL](#) as a tool to help keep them safe,” explained **Deputy Homeland Security Advisor to Governor Pritzker and IEMA-OHS Deputy Director of the Office of Homeland Security Claire Moravec.** “This program, included in hundreds of schools in the State, helps children who experience bullying, mental health struggles, or those who see their peers may be struggling and have nowhere to turn. My hope is that Safe2HelpIL ends the culture of silence and stigma surrounding these important issues for our students.”

Students can confidentially reach out to Safe2Help several ways:

- Call 1-844-4SAFEIL (723345)
- Text SAFE2 (72332)
- Online at <https://app.safe2helpil.com/>
- Email HELP@Safe2HelpIL.com
- Download the Safe2HelpIL app (Android or iOS).

Since its 2021 inception, over 3,000 incidents have been reported. The program saw an approximate 10 percent increase in bullying/harassment reports from 2022 to 2023 and increases in reports of cyberbullying during the summer months.

For other adverse events, weather alerts on cell phones, [communication plans](#) with family members, and drills at school are all helpful if students are at school during a tornado or other damaging weather event. Parents should find out the cell phone policy for their children's schools because that would change how students get information.

In terms of digital security, students should have strong [passwords](#) on their devices and be extremely careful about what applications they use and with whom they share information. Families should discuss what that means with their children to make the school year a bit easier.

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