All-Hazards Emergency Operations Planning Guidance

INTRODUCTION

Michigan's K-12 schools and school districts strive to provide healthy and safe learning environments for more than 1.4 million elementary and secondary school students throughout the state. Families and communities expect schools and school districts to keep students safe from threats, including naturally occurring and human-caused emergencies. The Michigan State Police (MSP), Grants and Community Services Division, Office of School Safety (OSS) offers this updated All-Hazards Emergency Operations Planning Guidance as a research-based tool encompassing best practices to support school safety. The work of the OSS is guided by the Final Recommendations of the School Safety Task Force,[1] published in November 2018. The Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) project addresses Recommendations 4, 5, 6 and 9 and supports the work that Michigan schools have done over the previous decade to implement building-based EOPs.

For this project, the OSS partnered with The "I Love U Guys" Foundation,[2] a nationally recognized non-profit known for its work on the Standard Response Protocol and Standard Reunification Method.

It is recommended that school planning teams responsible for developing and/or updating school EOPs use the information presented to guide their efforts. For questions regarding any of the material contained in the EOP Suite of Resources, please email MSP-SchoolSafety@michigan.gov.

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[1] For a complete list of the Final Recommendations of the School Safety Task Force, please visit https://www.michigan.gov/-/media/Project/Websites/msp/reports/Final_Recommendations_SSTF.pdf?rev=c3ca8761dee64b109c0bcf988463823e.

[2] More information on The "I Love U Guys" Foundation can be found at https://iloveuguys.org/. State of Michigan specific "I Love U Guys" documents can be found on the OSS EOP Suite of Resources.

[3] For more information on funding, programs, and initiates through the Bureau of Justice Assistance, visit https://bja.ojp.gov/.

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PLANNING

INTRODUCTION

The importance of adequately training school staff for emergencies becomes even more apparent when considering the valuable insights gained from past occurrences. Having a well-thought-out EOP is crucial to ensuring the safety of students, staff, and visitors. Despite not being traditional response organizations, schools play a pivotal role in implementing preventive and protective measures and minimizing the impact of emergencies.

Schools must work with local government and community partners to plan effectively for potential emergencies and create a comprehensive EOP. This collaborative effort makes them better prepared and equipped to handle any crisis.

During an emergency, the immediate response falls on school personnel. They must act swiftly, provide first aid, make notifications, and issue instructions until emergency responders arrive. School personnel must collaborate with district and community partners in these critical moments to ensure a cohesive and coordinated response.

One essential aspect of developing an effective EOP is for school administrators to consider their students' grade, age, and ability levels. Tailoring a plan to suit the necessities and capabilities of all students ensures emergency procedures can be followed and carried out more effectively.

By recognizing the significance of preparation, coordination, and cooperation, schools can become better equipped frontline responders to emergencies, safeguarding the well-being of students and staff.

GENERAL PLANNING CONCEPTS

The National Preparedness Goal,[4] a component of the Presidential Policy Directive 8 signed by the President of the United States in March 2011, defines national preparedness efforts, and marks a significant shift in the approach to readiness. It reflects a collective understanding, informed by experiences such as severe weather events and incidents of school violence. The National Preparedness Goal reflects the five mission areas of emergency management:

1. Prevention encompasses capabilities to avoid, deter, or halt imminent emergencies. It is the proactive approach taken to prevent an incident from occurring.

2. Mitigation involves reducing the impact of an emergency, thus lessening loss of life and property damage. It also includes actions to reduce the likelihood of threats or hazards from materializing.

3. Protection involves capabilities to secure schools against acts of violence and both human-caused and natural disasters. It focuses on continuous actions to safeguard students, teachers, staff, visitors, information networks, and property from threats.

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[4] Details of the National Preparedness Goal can be found through FEMA's website at https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-06/national_preparedness_goal_2nd_edition.pdf.

4. Response entails capabilities to stabilize an emergency, create a safe environment, save lives, protect property, and facilitate the transition to recovery once an incident has happened or is inevitable.

5. Recovery includes capabilities to assist schools affected by an emergency in effectively restoring the learning environment.

EOPs MUST COMPLY WITH THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT OF 1990

An EOP must comply with the *Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), Public Law 101-336, 108th Congress, 2nd session (July 26, 1990),*[5] among other prohibitions on disability discrimination, across the spectrum of emergency management services, programs, and activities, including preparation, testing, notification and alerts, evacuation, transportation, sheltering, emergency medical care and services, transitioning back, recovery, and repairing and rebuilding.

An EOP should include students, staff, families and caregivers of all needs and abilities. School EOPs must address the provision of appropriate auxiliary aids and services (e.g., interpreters, captioning, and accessible information technology (IT)) to ensure effective communication with individuals with disabilities. It must also ensure individuals with disabilities are not separated from service animals and assistive devices and can receive disability-related assistance (e.g. activities of daily living, administration of medications, and help with management of emotions and sensory reactions) throughout emergencies and comply with the law's architectural and other requirements.

PLANS MUST ADDRESS LANGUAGE ACCESS

Effective communication with individuals with limited English proficiency is essential to emergency planning and response. An EOP must comply with applicable legal requirements on language access, including the *Title VI* regulation of the *Civil Rights Act of 1964.*[6]

PLANNING PRINCIPLES

The ability to develop a comprehensive school EOP that addresses a wide range of threats and hazards relies on the following fundamental principles, as outlined in the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) *Guide for Developing High-Quality School Emergency Operations Plans*[7]:

1. **Lead from the top.** Effective planning requires strong support from administrators at both the district and school levels. Their endorsement and encouragement bolster the planning team's efforts and demonstrate a proactive approach to school safety and security.

2. **Regularly assess the school's needs.** Successful planning hinges on a continual and thorough assessment of the school community. This information forms the foundation for customizing the plans to fit the unique school building and resources. By diving into the specific needs, demographics, and dynamics, strategies can be created that address risks and leverage strengths. This process guarantees a finely tuned, adaptable plan that nurtures a safe and friendly space for learning and growth.

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[5] Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), Public Law 101-336, 108th Congress, 2nd session (July 26, 1990); https://www.ada.gov/.

[6] Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; https://www.justice.gov/crt/fcs/TitleVI-Overview.

[7] For the complete Guide for Developing High-Quality School Emergency Operations Plans, visit https://rems.ed.gov/docs/REMS_K-12_Guide_508.pdf.

3. **Take an inclusive approach to threats and hazards**. When planning, it is essential to account for potential threats and hazards in the school environment. By acknowledging and proactively addressing diverse scenarios, comprehensive emergency planning establishes robust safety protocols for many situations before, during, and after they occur.

4. **Address the needs of the whole community.** The EOP should account for the access and functional requirements of all students, staff, and community members, encompassing individuals with distinctive abilities and needs, as well as those from different religious, racial, and ethnic backgrounds.

5. **Focus on before, during and after the school day.** School EOPs must extend their scope beyond regular school hours and campus boundaries. Planning should encompass incidents occurring during and after school hours, as well as address off-campus activities such as sports events, performances, and field trips.

6. **Employ a collaborative process for model EOP creation and revision.** Creating and updating the EOP requires a collaborative approach. EOP guidelines are designed to be flexible, accommodating all school emergency planning teams.

PLANNING ASSUMPTIONS AND LIMITATIONS

The EOP should outline planning assumptions and limitations to provide a clear agenda. Assumptions set the context for a plan while acknowledging limitations, ensuring a realistic perspective on a crisis. This enables effective decision-making thereby enhancing response strategies and promoting adaptability when faced with unforeseen challenges.

Assumptions

Stating the planning assumptions within the EOP allows schools to deviate from the plan if certain assumptions prove false during operations. The EOP assumes:

1. Certain hazards associated with school operations will continue to create emergency situations that threaten the safety of the school's occupants.

2. A major incident can occur at any time and any place. While providing immediate notifications and implementing increased readiness measures may be possible, most emergencies arise with little or no warning.

3. In many instances, the affected school cannot and should not wait for direction from emergency responders. Immediate action is required to save lives and protect district/school property.

4. Following a major or catastrophic incident, the school may have to rely upon its own resources to be self-sufficient for up to 72 hours, as recommended by FEMA.

5. An incident may cause injuries of varying degrees of seriousness to students and staff. A rapid and appropriate response will reduce the number and severity of injuries.

6. Outside assistance from local emergency responders and emergency managers will be available in most serious incidents. However, requesting and dispatching external aid takes time. Therefore, it is essential for the school to be prepared to carry out initial response activities until emergency responders arrive.

7. Proper prevention and mitigation actions such as prioritizing physical building safety upgrades, creating a positive school environment, and conducting emergency preparedness drills and exercises may prevent or reduce incident-related losses.

8. Maintaining the school EOP and providing frequent opportunities for stakeholders (e.g., students, staff, caregivers, emergency responders, etc.) to exercise the plan will improve the school's readiness to respond to emergencies.

9. A spirit of volunteerism among district employees, students, families, and the community will result in these groups providing aid and support to incident management efforts.

Limitations

Within the framework of the EOP, it is essential to stress that while emergency plans are comprehensive, they do not guarantee flawless response procedures. The unknown dynamics of any given crisis could potentially overwhelm even the most prepared school personnel. Therefore, staff should manage the situation to the best of their abilities, leveraging all available training, resources, and information.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

Effective emergency planning and creating a school EOP requires collaboration and coordination. Schools must engage with the district staff, emergency responders, and community partners throughout the planning process. An effective school EOP is well supported at the district level and integrated with district, community, regional, and state plans. This collaboration ensures access to more resources and facilitates the seamless integration of all responders.

FORMING A COLLABORATIVE PLANNING TEAM

Learning from previous experiences has shown how valuable it is to approach emergency planning as a team effort. The steps for forming a collaborative team include:

1. Identify the planning team.

2. The planning team for a school EOP must be diverse and encompass representatives from various school personnel such as administrators, educators, school mental health professionals, nurses, facilities managers, coaches, transportation managers, safety and security personnel, and food service staff. The team should also include individuals and organizations serving and advocating for the interests of students, families and caregivers, and those with access and functional needs, as well as racial and ethnic minority groups and religious organizations. Their involvement ensures specific concerns in the early planning stages are addressed.

3. The planning team must also include community partners. These members represent local law enforcement, fire/emergency services, public and mental health practitioners, medical professionals, local emergency managers, and response organizations. Their expertise is vital in supporting the development, implementation, and refinement of the school EOP.

4. While the planning team should be small enough to facilitate close collaboration with emergency responders and community partners, it should also be large enough to adequately represent the school and community.

5. When organizing a team to develop the EOP, seek out members with diverse skills and qualities. Look for individuals with strong problem-solving, communication, and leadership abilities. Technical expertise in safety protocols and the capacity to collaborate and adapt are crucial.

6. Adopt a common framework for the plan.

7. Adopting a common framework empowers the planning team by providing a structured, consistent, and efficient approach to the planning process and enhances communication, coordination, and decision making.

8. School staff, emergency responders, and other officials each have their own unique language and methods of operating. The planning team should strive to adopt standard response protocols and standard terminology as outlined in the resources provided by the the "I Love U Guys" Foundation.

9. For additional information, please reference the "I Love U Guys" Standard Response Protocol and/or Standard Reunification Method in the OSS EOP Suite of Resources at www.michigan.gov/officeofschoolsafety.

10. Meet regularly to review and update the emergency plan.

11. Regular planning team meetings to review and update the EOP are important for maintaining preparedness. Evolving threats and circumstances require adjustments to the plan. These meetings allow for sharing insights, identifying gaps, and refining response strategies to incorporate best practices.

12. A thorough review of the EOP should be done before each school year, while periodic updates can occur as needed or when conducting an After Action Report (AAR). Remember to ensure staff members, emergency responders, and community partners are aware of any changes.

13. Key areas to regularly review:

14. Staff contact information and team membership

15. Class rosters and schedules

16. Role changes

17. Procedural changes

18. Lessons learned from previous drills, exercises, or real-life incidents

MITIGATION & PREVENTION

INTRODUCTION

Prevention and mitigation are key stages in emergency management that involve various proactive measures. These measures help the school lessen the chance of a crisis, be better prepared for unexpected situations, and ensure it is more resilient in the face of challenges.

In mitigation and prevention, the planning team anticipates and assesses potential school scenarios, evaluating risks and vulnerabilities. A robust school EOP prioritizes and addresses identified threats.

IDENTIFYING THREATS AND HAZARDS

The first step for the planning team is understanding the possible threats and hazards that could affect the school and its community. To achieve this, team members start by sharing their knowledge about past or expected issues. They can team up with local, state, and federal agencies to get historical information about community threats by working with emergency management, law enforcement, fire departments, utility companies, area businesses, and groups such as the American Red Cross or a local Community Emergency Response Team.

ASSESSING RISK

Gauging risk involves understanding key factors:

1. Likelihood of occurrence.

2. Anticipated impact.

3. Severity of consequences.

4. Lead time for notification.

5. Event duration.

Local emergency management experts can provide insights into known risks nearby (e.g., railroads transporting dangerous chemicals), aiding the team in assessing threats relevant to the school's environment and specific vulnerabilities.
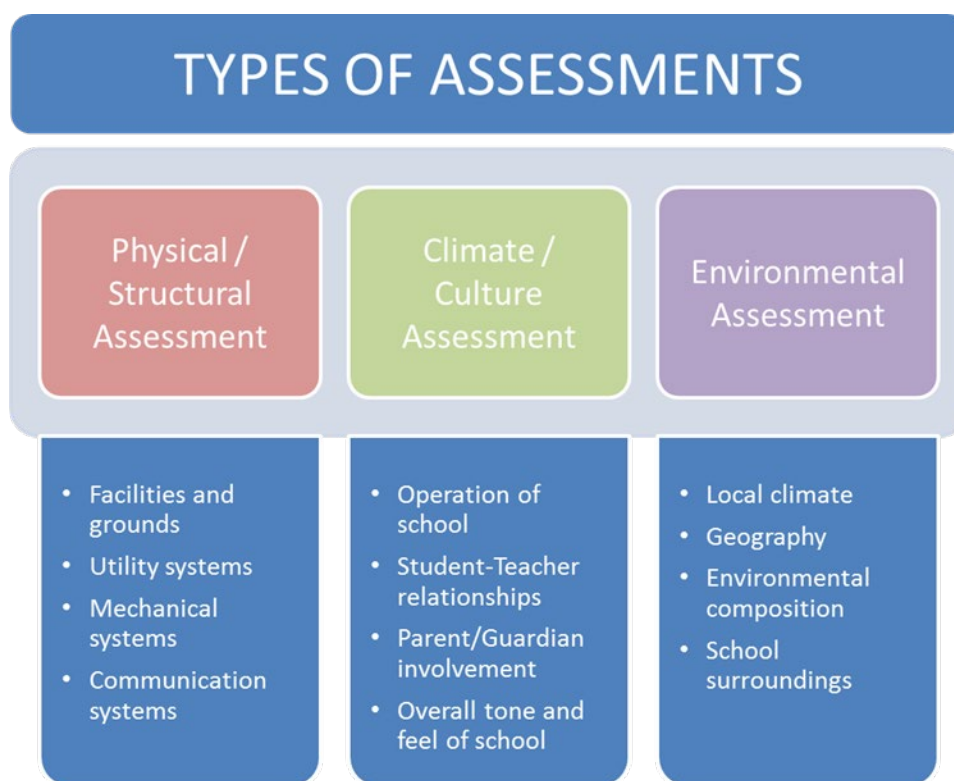
The term "vulnerabilities" refers to characteristics of the school (such as its structure, equipment, IT or electrical systems, grounds, and surroundings) that could amplify its susceptibility to threats and hazards (e.g. natural, technological, biological, and adversarial, incidental, and human-caused threats). The planning team should strategically address prioritized threats and hazards by assessing risk and vulnerability, ensuring a targeted and effective approach to providing a safe and secure school environment.

Assessment approaches include physical and structural evaluations, climate and culture assessments, and environmental appraisals. These assessments gauge risk and uncover resources and concerns that the EOP should address. Assessments may also unveil additional threats and hazards that warrant consideration by the planning team.

TYPES OF ASSESSMENTS

Effective assessments must take into consideration the needs of a diverse group of participants, including students, staff, caregivers, and those with varying access and functional needs. Every individual within the community plays a vital role. Assessments serve a dual purpose – they aid in formulating the initial plan and continue to guide its refinement over time. The following table offers additional insight into key assessments the planning team should undertake to ensure effectiveness.

The assessment process must be strategic. For example, a school located in a remote area may result in extended response times for emergency responders. In cases of prolonged response times, supplementary measures may be necessary to adequately address the situation.

TYPES OF ASSESSMENTS

Physical / Structural Assessment	Climate / Culture Assessment	Environmental Assessment
• Facilities and grounds • Utility systems • Mechanical systems • Communication systems	• Operation of school • Student-Teacher relationships • Parent/Guardian involvement • Overall tone and feel of school	• Local climate • Geography • Environmental composition • School surroundings

The above figure is adapted from the MI Ready Schools Emergency Planning Toolkit[8]

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[8] While figures were adapted from the *MI Ready Schools Emergency Planning Toolkit*, the reference material is no longer available.

Assessment Tools	Assessment Type	Sample Content Areas
Educational Facilities Assessment Checklist[9] (National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities)	Physical, Structural, Environmental	• Access/exits to buildings • Visibility/Surveillance • Structural integrity • Accessibility for disabled
MiPHY[10] (Michigan Department of Education)	Climate/Culture	• Risk and protective factors • Violence • Alcohol and other drugs • Suicide (not on MiPHY basic)
School Security Assessment Tool[11] (Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency)	Physical, Structural, Environmental	• Physical security system • Equipment and technology • Site and building design • School security personnel • Policies and procedures
Community Hazard Vulnerability Risk Assessment (Obtain from local emergency manager)	Environmental	• Weather patterns • Pollution • Local business hazards • Transportation hazards
Michigan Hazard Mitigation Plan[12] (MSP Emergency Management and Homeland Security Division)	Environmental	• Top Michigan hazards by county

All listed resources are no-cost.

PRIORITIZING THREATS AND HAZARDS

After vulnerability assessments, the planning team organizes the information and facilitates a comparison of identified threats and risks in a comprehensive assessment. This information can help the team better understand and associate the potential harm by doing a risk assessment. The information, shown below in a table format, should include:
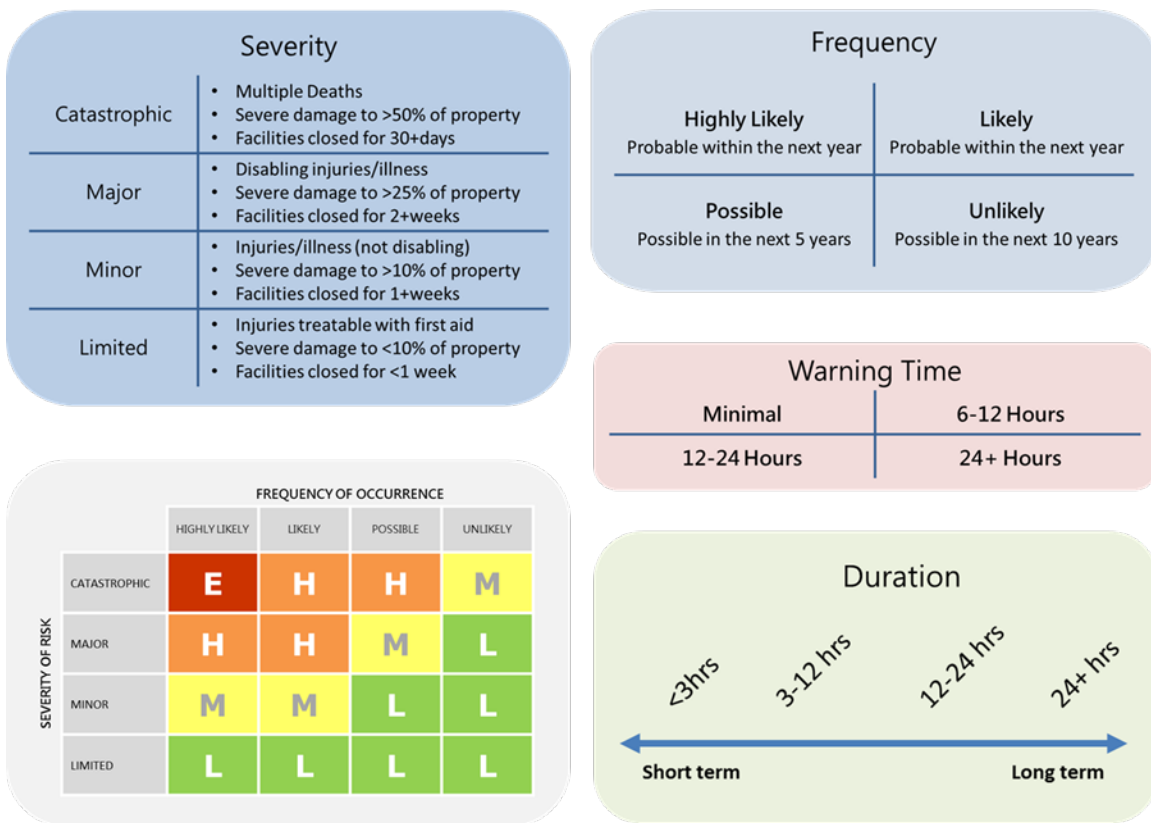
1. Severity

2. Frequency of occurrence

3. Warning time available to students, staff, and visitors

4. Risk priority

5. Duration

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[9] Educational Facilities Assessment Checklist; https://cdpsdocs.state.co.us/safeschools/Resources/NCEF%20National%20Clearinghouse%20for%20Educational%20Facilities/NCEF-checklist,0.pdf.

[10] For additional information on MiPHY, through MDE, please see http://www.michigan.gov/miphy.

[11] The School Security Assessment Tool can be completed through the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency website at http://www.cisa.gov/school-security-assessment-tool.

[12] To access the Michigan Hazard Mitigation Plan, please see http://www.michigan.gov/-/media/Project/Websites/msp/EMHSD/Publications/MHMP.pdf?rev=413bebf626fe450ca7a14aff78be314b.

Severity

Catastrophic	• Multiple Deaths • Severe damage to >50% of property • Facilities closed for 30+days
Major	• Disabling injuries/illness • Severe damage to >25% of property • Facilities closed for 2+weeks
Minor	• Injuries/illness (not disabling) • Severe damage to >10% of property • Facilities closed for 1+weeks
Limited	• Injuries treatable with first aid • Severe damage to <10% of property • Facilities closed for <1 week

Frequency

Highly Likely Probable within the next year	Likely Probable within the next year
Possible Possible in the next 5 years	Unlikely Possible in the next 10 years

Warning Time

Minimal	6-12 Hours
12-24 Hours	24+ Hours

FREQUENCY OF OCCURRENCE

SEVERITY OF RISK	HIGHLY LIKELY	LIKELY	POSSIBLE	UNLIKELY
CATASTROPHIC	E	H	H	M
MAJOR	H	H	M	L
MINOR	M	M	L	L
LIMITED	L	L	L	L

Duration

<3hrs   3-12 hrs   12-24 hrs   24+ hrs

Short term ◄─────────────► Long term

The figures above are adapted from the MI Ready Schools Emergency Planning Toolkit

Other details (such as information about challenges in the school environment) will need to be organized differently. All information must be presented clearly and be easily accessible.

The final step in the process is to compare and prioritize the risks from the identified threats and hazards. One method to do this is with the use of a numbering scale. With this method, the planning team will label threats and hazards as presenting an extreme, high, medium, or low level of risk.

For additional assistance and examples for vulnerability assessments, visit the FEMA National Risk Index map. [13]

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[13] To access the FEMA National Risk Index map, visit https://hazards.fema.gov/nri/map.

SECTION 3
PREPAREDNESS

INTRODUCTION

Preparedness is the phase of emergency management that occurs before the onset of an emergency and includes the plans or preparations made to help response operations and ultimately save lives. A school's EOP is an excellent example of preparedness. However, before preparations can begin, decisions must be made regarding how to prepare. A good starting point for this step is to identify the courses of action that will guide the planning process. The content for this section (below) was adapted from The Readiness and Emergency Management Technical Assistance Center's (REMS TAC) EOP Checklist. [14]

COURSES OF ACTION

Courses of action encompass the "who, what, where, when, why, and how" concerning each potential threat, hazard, and response action(s).

It is essential that the planning team assess each course of action's viability and gauge its suitability among the necessary stakeholders responsible for its execution. These courses of action incorporate specific benchmarks for determining the method and timing of each response which must be adaptable across diverse scenarios (i.e., specific threats and hazards). As a result, the planning team develops response protocols and procedures that establish the framework to build the EOP.

Develop Courses of Action

Procedures are developed specific to the threats and hazards the school may face.

1. **Depict the situation in which the school might need to respond.** Create a potential scenario based on the threats and hazards that would most likely affect the school.

2. **Determine the amount of time available to respond to that situation.** The timeframe for response will differ depending on the nature of the threat or hazard, as well as the specific circumstances surrounding it.

3. **Identify decision points.** Decision points mark specific moments as threats or hazards unfold, during which leaders foresee the need to make decisions regarding a chosen course of action.

4. **Develop courses of action.** The planning team can begin developing courses of action to achieve the school's goals and objectives by answering the following questions:

5. What are the actions needed to respond to the situation?

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[14] The REMS TAC EOP Checklist can be utilized by visiting https://rems.ed.gov/docs/SchoolEOPChecklist_508C.pdf.

6. Which member within the Incident Command System (ICS)[15] is responsible for initiating those actions?

7. When do the actions take place in the scenario?

8. How long do the actions take, and how much time is available to respond?

9. What has to happen before the actions can occur?

10. What happens after the actions occur?

11. What resources are needed to perform the actions?

12. How will the actions affect specific populations, such as individuals with access and functional needs requiring medication, wayfinding, assistance evacuating, or those who may experience severe anxiety during traumatic events?

Selecting Courses of Action

Once courses of action are developed, planners should evaluate the costs and benefits of each approach and ensure they align with defined goals and objectives. Plans frequently encompass several potential courses of action designed for a particular scenario, aiming to incorporate how the situation might unfold. For example, in response to a hazardous materials spill, a school's plan might outline distinct courses of action based on whether the spill happened outside or inside the building, resulting in a shelter or evacuation.

After choosing courses of action, the planning team identifies the resources required to execute each course of action, and whether or not the resource is immediately available. After listing all the requirements, the team aligns the available resources with these needs. This step allows planners to pinpoint any resource gaps that must be considered and addressed.

PREPARING, REVIEWING, AND APPROVING THE EOP

During this step, the planning team creates the school EOP using the action plans developed from Step 4. Under Michigan law MCL - Section 380.1308b - Michigan Legislature,[16] a school district, intermediate school district or public school academy must conduct a biennial review of its EOP in conjunction with at least one law enforcement agency with jurisdiction over the school or school district.

Formatting the Plan

A school EOP should be user-friendly and align with state and local plans and guidance. It should use simple language and visuals and follow a suggested format while allowing for customization. The OSS EOP Suite of Resources[17] provides an EOP template divided into five sections designed for ease of use:

Section 1: General Information and School Overview

Section 2: Action Plans

Section 3: Forms and Job Action Sheets

Section 4: Emergency and Hazard-Specific Procedures

Section 5: Reference Materials

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[15] A definition of Incident Command System, as well as roles and responsibilities, can be located on page 4-7 of this guide and in Section 3: Forms and Job Action Sheets of the EOP template.

[16] Michigan Compiled Law Section 380.1308b; https://www.legislature.mi.gov/Laws/MCL?objectName=MCL-380-1308B.

[17] Access the OSS EOP Suite of Resources at https://www.michigan.gov/msp/divisions/grantscommunityservices/school-safety.

Writing the Plan

As the planning team works through the draft, the members add necessary tables, charts, and other supporting graphics. The planning team circulates a draft to obtain the comments of stakeholders responsible for implementing the plan. The REMS TAC recommends writing plans following five rules:

Summarize important information with checklists and visual aids, such as maps and flowcharts. Employing checklists and visuals offers notable advantages. Lists provide a quick reference and ensure the comprehensive coverage of essential points. Visual aids such as maps and flowcharts act as navigational tools through intricate information, enhancing recall and clarifying complex processes. Their use facilitates improved learning, heightened retention, and enhanced clarity in conveying crucial information.

1. **Write clearly.** This simply means using plain and understandable language. Avoid jargon, minimize acronyms, and use short sentences.

2. **Use a logical, consistent structure.** Doing so will make it easier for readers to readily comprehend the reasoning behind the information's arrangement and quickly locate the information they need.

3. **Provide enough detail to convey an easily understood and actionable plan.** This entails offering clear and concise instructions, outlining key steps, procedures, roles and responsibilities, and including relevant information that empowers the user to grasp the plan's intricacies and execute it without unnecessary confusion or uncertainty.

4. **Organize content in a way that helps users quickly identify solutions and options.** Plans should provide guidance for carrying out standard courses of action while limiting the details only to immediate and necessary requirements.

5. **Develop user-friendly tools and documents.** Use appropriate auxiliary aids and services necessary for effective communication, such as accessible websites, convertible digital text-to-audio or Braille, text equivalents for images, and captioning any audio and video content.

Reviewing the Plan

FEMA's Comprehensive Preparedness Guide[18] for EOPs outlines measures that can help the planning team determine if the EOP is of high quality:

1. An EOP is *feasible* if:
    a. It identifies and addresses critical courses of action effectively.
    b. It can accomplish the assigned response actions.
    c. Its assumptions are valid and reasonable.
    d. The school can accomplish assigned actions and critical tasks by using available resources within the time considered by the plan.

2. An EOP is *acceptable* if:
    a. It meets the requirements driven by a specific threat or hazard.
    b. It meets cost and time limitations.
    c. It is consistent with the law.

3. An EOP is *actionable* if it:
    a. Incorporates all courses of action to be accomplished for all selected threats and hazards and identified functions.

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[18] Review FEMA's *Developing and Maintaining Emergency Operations Plans Comprehensive Preparedness Guide* by visiting https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fema_cpg-101-v3-developing-maintaining-eops.pdf.

b. Integrates the needs of the entire school community.

c. Provides a complete picture of what should happen, when, and at whose direction.

d. Estimates time for achieving objectives, with safety and security remaining as the utmost priority.

e. Identifies success criteria and a desired result.

f. Conforms to the planning principles outlined in this guidance.

Approving and Sharing the Plan

After finalizing the plan, schools should gain official approval and communicate response procedures to community partners and agencies. It is critical to safeguard sensitive information and track plan recipients and ensure compliance with state and local open records laws while protecting confidential information.

At this point, the school will have a fully developed and finalized EOP.

While portions of the plan may be shared, effective plans will contain sensitive information, such as response procedures, facility information and floorplans, contact information, etc., that should not be publicly accessible. Additionally, consider how staff will secure documents stored and shared electronically. The team should maintain a record of the people and organizations that receive a copy of the plan. When protecting the school plan, ensure staff comply with state and local open records laws. Section 13(1)(y) of the Michigan Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Act 442 of 1976, (15.2 MCL)[19] protects records or information of measures designed to protect the security or safety of persons or property, whether public or private, from unwarranted disclosure. This section directly references emergency response plans as applicable to this protection.

IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN

Emergencies can occur at any time and in various ways. Going beyond the minimum requirements of the standard lockdown, evacuation, and shelter drills is imperative in improving overall preparedness. Everyone involved in the plan must know their roles and responsibilities before, during, and after an emergency.

The REMS TAC[20] suggests the following can be additional training components to ensure the optimization of the school's response capabilities:

1. **Staff meetings.** At least once a year, familiarize all building-level staff regarding the content and concepts contained in the EOP. Ensure protocols are in place to train new staff that begin after the school year has started.

2. **Visit evacuation/relocation sites.** Show involved parties where evacuation sites are located and where the school will establish specific areas, such as reunification, media staging, and medical triage.

3. For additional information, please reference The "I Love U Guys" Standard Response Protocol and/or Standard Reunification Method in the OSS EOP Suite of Resources at www.michigan.gov/officeofschoolsafety.

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[19] Section 13(1)(y) of the Michigan Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Act 442 of 1976, (15.2 MCL); https://www.michigan.gov/mpsc/consumer/emergency-preparedness/exemption-to-the-freedom-of-information-act.

[20] Further information for implementing the plan can be found in the *Guide for Developing High-Quality School Emergency Operations Plans* at https://rems.ed.gov/docs/REMS_K-12_Guide_508.pdf.

4. **Give involved parties appropriate and relevant literature regarding the plan, policies, and procedures.** Providing all parties with quick reference guides[21] that remind them of key courses of action may also be helpful.

5. **Post essential information throughout the building.** Students, staff, and visitors must be familiar with and have easy access to information such as evacuation routes and shelter locations. Ensure this information is effectively communicated to persons of all abilities.

6. **Familiarize community partners with the plan.** Bringing partners into the school to discuss the plan includes the following benefits:

   a. Coordination during emergencies

   b. Resource sharing

   c. Improved communication

   d. Tailored support

7. **Train staff in the skills necessary to fulfill their roles.** Staff members must be assigned specific roles and positions supporting the ICS. The ICS framework organizes and directs on-site responses to specific events. ICS roles may require special skills, such as first aid, assessing threats, and providing personal assistance services for students and staff with access and functional needs. Consider training new hires on the plan as part of the onboarding process. Guest/substitute teachers should also be familiarized with the plan and their roles.

REVIEWING, REVISING, AND MAINTAINING THE SCHOOL EOP

The team didn't write the plan to place it on a shelf and allow it to collect dust. Emergency planning is a continuous cycle of review and refinement. Plans should evolve as the school learns lessons, obtains new information and insights, and updates its priorities.

Schools should consider reviewing and updating the plan after:

1. An actual emergency occurs.

2. Changes occur to policies, personnel, organizational structures, processes, facilities, resources, etc.

3. Formal updates of planning guidance or standards have been published.

4. Formal exercises have taken place.

5. Changes in the school and surrounding community have occurred.

6. Threats or hazards change, or new ones emerge.

7. Ongoing assessments identify new information or vulnerabilities.

Whenever updates occur, ensure that all partners have the most current version of the EOP.

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[21] Classroom quick reference guides are available in the OSS EOP Suite of Resources at
https://www.michigan.gov/msp/divisions/grantscommunityservices/school-safety.

TESTING THE SCHOOL EOP

A school can significantly increase the effectiveness of its EOP through repeated practice and comprehensive staff training. Training ensures a proactive and efficient response before, during, and after an emergency. Conducting drills and exercises presents opportunities for the school to practice response procedures and identify gaps and weaknesses in the plan. Additionally, a certain number of drills are required each school year, per Michigan Compiled Law. [22]

The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP)[23] has provided guidance on how to conduct developmentally appropriate and trauma-sensitive drills and exercises.

FEMA's Guide for Developing High Quality EOPs[24] distinguishes between discussion based and operations-based practice procedures.

Discussion-based include:

Orientation seminars	• Overview of EOP • Review roles and responsibilities • Can be part of regularly scheduled staff meeting
Workshops	• Teach skills • Share information, obtain perspectives • Test ideas, policies, and procedures
Tabletop exercises	• In-depth problem-solving practice with hypothetical scenario • Identify areas to improve • Typically 1-4 hours

Operations-based include:

Emergency drills	• Practice • Can involve community agencies/first responders • A few minutes to several hours
Functional exercises	• Practice response protocols with realistic crisis simulation • Tests functional or threat- and hazard-specific annexes
Full-scale exercises	• Most complex • Simulates specific emergency in real-time • Deploys all necessary resources • Multiple agencies and multi-jurisdictional • Required careful planning, notification, and permission

Effective emergency preparedness practice includes:

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[22] Michigan Compiled Law Act 207 of 1941, Section 29.19; https://www.legislature.mi.gov/Laws/MCL?objectName=mcl-29-19. School drill documentation forms are available through the Office of School Safety website at https://www.michigan.gov/msp/divisions/grantscommunityservices/school-safety.

[23] For the National Association of School Psychologists' Best Practice Considerations for Armed Assailant Drills in Schools, visit https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-safety-and-crisis/systems-level-prevention/best-practice-considerations-for-armed-assailant-drills-in-schools.

[24] The FEMA Guide for Developing High-Quality School Emergency Operations Plans can be located by visiting https://rems.ed.gov/docs/REMS_K-12_Guide_508.pdf.

1. Participation from local partners such as emergency responders and emergency management.

2. Communicating rules and critical information in advance to avoid confusion and concerns.

3. Exercising under different and non-ideal conditions, including passing times, before and after school, weather events, and points in the academic calendar, as well as during the absence of key personnel and various school events.

4. Consistency in using common language and terminology.

5. Debriefing and developing an AAR that evaluates results, identifies gaps or shortfalls, and documents lessons learned.

6. Discussing the modification of emergency plans and procedures, if needed, and specifying responsibility for any modifications.

EMERGENCY SUPPLIES

Every school should store emergency supplies in preparation for an incident requiring students and staff to evacuate the school or shelter/lockdown for an extended period. Selected supplies should address the needs of the school, its population, climate, and resources. Because emergency supplies are so essential, the EOP should reference the supplies to store and the staff members responsible for the inventory, stocking, and replenishing of emergency supplies.

Emergency "Go-Kits"

Classroom, crisis team, administrator, and mental health team go-kits should be created. A Go-Kit[25] contains essential items (e.g., first-aid kits, radios, class rosters, whistles, colored vests, and more) designed to assist staff and students during an emergency, whether they evacuate or remain in the building. It is highly recommended there be two crisis team/administrator go-kits with one kept in an off-campus location in case the one in the school is not accessible during the crisis

The school's EOP should identify Go-Kit contents, as well as the staff or other personnel responsible for its inventory, stocking, and replenishing. Go-Kit contents should reflect consideration of the school's circumstances and resources. It is recommended that contents remain consistent from classroom to classroom. Additionally, there is no standard regarding the type of container used as a Go-Kit (e.g., backpack), however if the go-kit needs to be transported, a bag with wheels is highly recommended. Go-kits should be consistent in size and color throughout the school to be easily recognizable and kept in the same general area of each room or office, such as near the classroom door. Main office areas, as well as cafeterias, gymnasiums, stadiums, etc., would benefit from rolling storage boxes as they have more significant supply requirements than individual classrooms.

Additional Emergency Supplies

Every school, before and after school care center, and daycare center should store emergency supplies in preparation for an emergency requiring students and staff to shelter in place for up to 72 hours, according to FEMA.

The planning team should select emergency supplies that address the needs of the specific school, its population, climate, facilities, and resources. Much like the Go-Kit contents, the school EOP should reference the supplies to be stockpiled and the staff responsible for inventorying and replenishing.

Schools may also wish to coordinate emergency supply plans with the American Red Cross or other organizations that provide mass care in a crisis. In some cases, the school may have already been designated as an emergency shelter with plans for storing cots, blankets, supplies, etc.

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[25] Sample Go-Kit checklists are included in the EOP template in Section 1: General Information.

While most emergency supplies are standard and storable for extended periods, complications may arise with some items such as prescription medications. The planning team should discuss this issue with the superintendent/principal and include school medical staff and caregivers in the conversation.

EMERGENCY PLANNING FOR PERSONS WITH ACCESS AND FUNCTIONAL NEEDS

Emergency planning for schools includes consideration for persons of all abilities. Schools must take the following into account when developing an EOP to ensure the appropriate action is taken to address specific needs.[26] Ensure planning encompasses all phases of preparedness to ensure the consideration of students and staff with access and functional needs, and the implications of an emergency response.

The school planning team should:

1. Include a specialist who can provide the proper guidance on and effectively address the functional needs of students and staff, such as speech pathologists, physical therapists, occupational therapists, and other school-based professionals.

2. Identify and maintain a confidential roster of persons with access and functional needs. This roster could include the student's specific needs, teachers, classrooms, schedules, and any requirements needed during a response. Access to this roster should be limited only to authorized persons and used only during an emergency.

3. Consider working with students and staff with access and functional needs to ensure they are familiar with the EOP and its procedures, as well as providing this information to emergency responders. Inviting emergency responders and allowing persons with access and functional needs to participate in all drills and exercises will assist in identifying any specific requirements or actions needed during an actual emergency.

Additional Resources:

- *Disability and Health Emergency Preparedness* (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

- *Resources for Emergency Management Professionals* (National Organization on Disability)

- *Emergency Preparedness and People with Disabilities* (American Association on Health and Disability)

- *Saving Lives: Including People with Disabilities in Emergency Planning* (National Council on Disability)

BEFORE- AND AFTER-HOURS EVENTS

Emergency planning for before- and after-hours events on school property (e.g., athletic events, community use, etc.) should reflect current school/district emergency procedures and protocols. Designated district personnel should know the groups that are using the facilities, the activities that are taking place, as well as specific rooms/locations being occupied within buildings. Additionally, personnel should be well-versed in current emergency procedures.

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[26] For further information on planning for persons with access and functional needs, please see Safe and Sound Schools' *Especially Safe: Planning & Preparation Guide* at https://safeandsoundschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Especially-Safe-Planning-Prep-Guide.pdf.

Administrators should take the following steps in creating an emergency plan for before- and after-hours events:

1. Develop a safety/security packet for group leaders. The procedures provided should reflect reasonable precautions and be kept simple. The packet should contain:

    e. Contact information:

        i. Key leaders/district personnel within the building.

        ii. Other key school/district personnel.

        iii. Utility emergency numbers.

        iv. Poison control.

        v. Others, as needed.

    f. Basic emergency procedures as outlined in the Classroom Quick Action Guide provided in the EOP Suite of Resources.

    g. The location(s) of phones, radios, first aid kits, AEDs, Epi-pens, emergency supplies, etc.

2. Consideration should be made for voluntary Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training for staff and Teen CERT for high school students Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) | FEMA.gov.

CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS PLAN (COOP)

A COOP aims to ensure the school has procedures to maintain and rapidly resume essential operations after an incident has disrupted normal school operations, activities, or services. A COOP is critical to safety planning and includes the continuity of facilities, business, learning, and IT services.

The plan should anticipate a full range of potential incidents from those that could cause a temporary interruption of school operations to those causing a complete shutdown of the school, requiring suspension of non-essential functions and relocation of essential functions for some period of time. FEMA recommends full operational capacity for essential functions within 12 hours after activation of the COOP and the ability to sustain these functions for up to 30 days.

Key elements of a COOP, as recommended by FEMA[27]:

1. Key personnel and their roles and responsibilities

2. The identification of essential functions

3. Delegations of authority

4. Orders of succession

5. Communications requirements

6. Essential records

7. Alternative learning locations or remote learning plans

8. Human capital management

9. Reconstitution

10. Specific considerations and plans for managing continuity during a pandemic

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[27] More information on Continuity of Operations Plans can be found through FEMA at https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/national-preparedness/continuity, and REMS TAC at https://rems.ed.gov/docs/Resources/COOP_factsheet.pdf.

Key Personnel and Their Roles and Responsibilities

Designated personnel, in conjunction with key school/district decision-makers, may perform the sample essential functions listed below:

Superintendent, Principal, or Designee	1. Determine when to close schools and/or send students and staff to alternate locations or institute remote learning.
	2. Communicate with caregivers, the media, and the larger school community.
	3. Identify a line of succession, including who is responsible for restoring business functions for the school.
	4. Identify relocation areas for classrooms and administrative operations if using a physical site.
	5. Brief and train staff regarding their additional responsibilities.
	6. Secure and provide needed personnel, equipment and supplies, facilities, resources, and services for continued operations.
	7. Identify strategies to continue learning and re-evaluate the curriculum, if necessary.
School Resource Officer/Security Personnel	1. Act as the point of contact between the school and emergency response agencies.
	2. Assisting in the procurement and distribution of emergency supplies and equipment.
	3. Assisting in managing and de-escalating conflicts or crises following an incident.
	4. Providing support and resources for students and staff affected by emergencies.
Facilities	1. Work with local government officials to determine when it is safe for students and staff to return to the school buildings and grounds.
	2. Manage the restoration of school buildings and grounds (debris removal, repairing, repainting, and/or re-landscaping).
Office Staff	1. Maintain inventory of supplies.
	2. Maintain essential records.
	3. If possible, ensure redundancy of records (i.e., copies of documents are kept at a different physical location).
	4. Restore administrative and record-keeping functions such as payroll, accounting, and personnel records, as applicable.
	5. Retrieve, collect, and maintain personnel data, as applicable.
	6. Provide accounts payable and cash management services, as applicable.
Teachers	1. Identify required classroom equipment, books, and materials.
	2. Adjust teaching plans as needed.
School Psychologists, Counselors, Social Workers, and School Nurses/Health Assistants	1. Establish academic and support services for students and staff.
	2. Implement additional response and recovery activities according to established protocols.

| Food Service/Cafeteria/ Transportation Director | 1. Determine how transportation and food services will resume. |

Communication requirements: The superintendent/principal will activate the school EOP communication plan (e.g., telephone tree, cell phone, text message, hotline, automated notification system, etc.) to notify students and staff of COOP activation and provide relevant situational information. Families and caregivers should also be notified of COOP activation and provided essential information as it becomes available.

Essential records: Essential records are either electronic or hard copy documents that are needed to support the essential functions and operations of a school, including legal and financial records such as student/staff records, payroll records, insurance records, and contract documents.

Alternative learning locations or remote learning plans: The school should work with the district to identify alternate sites to maintain or restore operations and essential functions disrupted by an incident. Every school should identify more than one potential alternate site. One site should be accessible by walking, if appropriate, and another site(s) by transportation services. Sites must have reliable logistical support, services, and infrastructure systems to sustain operations for up to 30 days. Consideration should also be given to essential functions or services that may be conducted remotely, if necessary. Memorandum of Understanding (MOUs) should be established and maintained between the school district and alternative sites.

Human capital management: School personnel responsible for essential functions should be cross trained to ensure effective implementation of continuity procedures:

1. All COOP designated personnel and senior staff will undergo annual training on executing COOP procedures. Training will be designed to inform each participant of their responsibilities (and those of others) during the implementation of continuity procedures. Training should include specific protocols for identifying and assisting employees with disabilities.

2. Designated continuity personnel or IT staff will participate in exercises to test facilities, business, learning, and IT services systems. Training will include testing the IT systems and backup data, as well as testing offsite backup system data and IT operating systems.

3. All school personnel need to be informed of when they are expected to return to work and/or if they are being recalled to support school continuity efforts.

Reconstitution: In most instances of COOP implementation, reconstitution will be a reverse execution of those duties and procedures listed above, including:

1. Inform staff that the threat or incident no longer exists and provide instructions for resuming normal operations.

2. Supervise an orderly return to the school building.

3. Conduct an AAR of COOP and effectiveness of plans and procedures.

Pandemic response: The COVID-19 pandemic taught school leaders important lessons regarding preparedness. The Michigan Department of Education has published significant resources to support schools in the event of a future health crisis.[28]

A comprehensive pandemic preparedness plan for a school should address various aspects to ensure the health and safety of students, staff, and the broader community. Key components to include in a pandemic preparedness plan are:

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[28] Additional pandemic response resources from the Michigan Department of Education can be found at https://www.michigan.gov/mde/resources/coronavirus.

1. Assessment of potential pandemic threats.

2. Protocols for internal and external communication during a pandemic.

3. Contact information for key staff and stakeholders.

4. Guidance from health authorities and government agencies.

5. Hygiene practices, social distancing, and other preventive measures.

6. Procedures for monitoring and reporting cases within the school community.

7. Criteria for identifying individuals with symptoms.

8. Isolation procedures for suspected or confirmed cases.

9. Criteria for school closure and reopening.

10. Plans for remote learning and continuity of education during closures.

11. Roles and responsibilities of staff during a pandemic.

12. Training programs on pandemic response and safety measures.

13. Clear communication channels for informing students, families and caregivers.

14. Guidance for families and caregivers on recognizing symptoms and reporting cases.

15. Identification and allocation of resources such as personal protective equipment (PPE), sanitizers, and medical supplies.

16. Collaboration with local health agencies for resource support.

17. Strategies for addressing the mental health and well-being of students and staff.

18. Access to counseling services and resources.

RESPONSE

INTRODUCTION

Response is the phase of emergency management in which immediate action is taken to save lives and prevent further property damage in an emergency. It is the moment when preparedness protocols are implemented. Response capabilities improve when schools understand EOP implementation. An expedient response mitigates traumatic impact and increases physical and psychological safety.

GENERAL EMERGENCY GUIDELINES

When establishing emergency response protocols for the school EOP, the planning team should incorporate general guidelines when responding to most situations. For example, regardless of the emergency that occurs, school staff should understand and always abide by the following:

1. Anyone can call 9-1-1 or activate building alarm systems.

2. Remain calm and follow procedures, protocols, and instructions to the best of their ability.

3. Use the best emergency response protocol appropriate for the emergency.

4. Know the nearest exits and alternate ways out of the school.

5. Immediately evacuate the building when conditions are safe.

6. Do not use elevators.   Even if it is safe to do so, emergency responders may need them to assist others.

7. After evacuating the building, immediately report to the nearest designated assembly area[29] and obtain accountability of students, staff, and visitors. Remain at this location until advised of further action by either administrators or emergency responders.

8. If making announcements to the school, speak clearly, concisely, and do not use code words. Convey information as available and as appropriate. Do not provide unnecessary details.

9. Stop rumors and avoid social media so as not to lead to confusion and/or conflicting information.

10. No one is expected to risk personal safety to perform response activities for which they are neither properly trained nor equipped.

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[29] A definition of designated assembly area can be located on page A-5 of this guide.

OPTIONS-BASED RESPONSE

An options-based response is an approach that provides those reacting with a range of choices or strategies to address specific aspects of an emergency. Instead of relying on a one-size-fits-all solution, this approach recognizes that different emergencies may require different actions, and it allows for flexibility in responding to the unique circumstances of each situation.

For example, a specific step in a procedure may tell a staff member to do something when they know that doing so under the current circumstances may seriously jeopardize safety. However, individuals might feel compelled to follow established procedures and proceed with that course of action, either due to a lack of awareness of alternative approaches or because they've been advised to do so by others. These outcomes stem from a *mandated* response protocol. While procedures and protocols are written to provide the best courses of action during an emergency, they should ***never*** be interpreted as strict policies meant to override reasonable decision-making.

SPECIFIC RESPONSE ACTIONS

When a serious emergency occurs, schools will be driven to initiate one of these five primary response protocols:

1. Hold
2. Secure
3. Lockdown
4. Evacuate
5. Shelter

These protocols may occur independently or in combination, depending on the circumstances. For additional information, please reference The "I Love U Guys" Standard Response Protocol and/or Standard Reunification Method in the OSS EOP Suite of Resources at https://www.michigan.gov/msp/divisions/grantscommunityservices/school-safety.

Hold

The Hold action is used in situations that require students to remain in their classrooms or area. For example, an altercation in the hallway may require keeping students out of the halls until it is resolved. A medical issue may require only one area to be cleared, with halls still open in case outside medical assistance is required. There may be a need for students who are not in a classroom to proceed to an area where they can be supervised and remain safe.

Secure

The Secure action is used when there is a threat outside of the school, such as criminal activity in the surrounding neighborhood. When Secure is called, students are brought inside, exterior doors and windows are locked, with no outside activities being conducted although activities within the building may still occur. Secure is typically called for by law enforcement or the District Administration. The goal is to ensure all students, staff, and visitors are securely inside the building and the threat is kept outside.

Lockdown

A lockdown occurs when a person or situation threatens the safety of individuals in or near a school building. The primary objective of a lockdown is to swiftly secure everyone in rooms that are safe from impending danger. In the process of planning for a lockdown, it's essential to consider the following factors when setting goals, objectives, and courses of action:

1. Understanding how the design characteristics of classrooms and offices, such as doors, windows, and connected spaces, can affect the effectiveness of the lockdown.

2. Identifying how to quickly lock doors while keeping safety and security in mind.

3. Deciding when it is appropriate to use lockdown or secure protocol. These levels and the associated protocols may differ based on whether the threat (or incident) occurs inside or outside the school.

While the overall purpose of a lockdown is to get everyone safe and secure as quickly as possible, the procedure should not end once the door is locked. The next step should be to begin barricading the door immediately. Occupants can accomplish this task by quickly moving large objects (e.g., desks, chairs, bookcases, etc.) in front of the door opening. Doing so creates an additional barrier to entry and further protects those inside the room.

Once the above tasks are completed, occupants can move on to other protective measures such as turning off lights, silencing communication devices, and covering windows – but only if time permits and it is safe. The primary objective of a lockdown should always be to secure the door first.

Evacuate

An evacuation occurs when a situation arises where it's safer to be outside than inside a building. Everyone, including students, staff, and visitors, should immediately exit the building.

In the process of planning for an evacuation, the planning team should consider the following factors when setting courses of action:

1. Ensuring the safe movement of students, staff, and visitors from various areas like offices, classrooms, outdoor spaces, cafeterias, and other school locations to designated assembly areas.

2. Establishing procedures for evacuating students who may not be with a teacher or staff member.

3. Developing alternate evacuation routes when the primary route is blocked or unavailable.

4. Developing a process to confirm that the assembly area outside is safe and free from additional hazards.

5. Planning for the evacuation of persons with access and functional needs, along with service animals and assistive devices, such as wheelchairs. This includes addressing potential language, transportation, and medical needs.

    a. In the event of a lockdown, initiate evacuation protocols after:
    b. Law enforcement has secured the building.
    c. Teachers have confirmed attendance.
    d. Buses are enroute to predetermined pick-up points (if relocation is necessary).

Developing Evacuation Guidelines for Individuals with Access and Functional Needs

During an evacuation, it is essential to consider the needs of individuals with access and functional needs. Establishing a "buddy system" to assist these individuals is highly recommended. Only individuals with emergency assistance training or someone who is in immediate danger and cannot wait for emergency services should attempt an emergency evacuation.

If possible, consult with individuals with access and functional needs (or their families, caregivers, teachers, and assigned paraprofessionals, etc.) on how best to assist them during an emergency evacuation and develop an Individualized Emergency/Evacuation Plan. Seek guidance on how they can be safely aided or moved and whether any specific considerations or items need to accompany them. This knowledge will greatly improve the effectiveness of response procedures.

The planning team should also consider the following, based on specific concerns:

1. Persons with Visual Impairment
    a. Provide verbal instructions indicating the safest route or direction using simple directions, estimated distances, and directional terms (including landmarks, if possible).
    b. Avoid grasping the arm of a person with visual impairment. Ask if they want to hold onto your arm as you exit, especially in crowded or debris-filled areas.
    c. Offer additional verbal instructions or information, such as the inability to use elevators.

2. Persons with Hearing Impairment
    a. Establish eye contact to get the attention of someone with a hearing impairment. If their back is turned, tap them on the shoulder to gain attention. Clearly state the issue.
    b. Gestures and pointing can be helpful but be ready to write a brief statement if communication is not fully understood.
    c. Use visual cues to indicate the safest route or direction by pointing toward exits or evacuation maps.

3. Persons with Physical Impairment
    a. Clear the exit routes of debris, if possible.
    b. If individuals with mobility impairments cannot exit, move them to a safe area.
    c. Immediately alert 9-1-1 or emergency responders regarding anyone still in the building and provide their location if known. Emergency responders will decide whether these individuals should stay put or be evacuated.
    d. If immediate danger exists, and waiting for assistance is not an option, consider using an evacuation chair or other carry technique to evacuate individuals safely.

Shelter

When it is safer inside the school than outside, occupants should follow the Shelter protocol. For example, in severe weather situations, students and staff will remain in secure areas, such as interior rooms or basements, and keep away from windows. In the event of an outdoor hazardous material release with toxic vapors, students and staff should stay in their classrooms, seal windows and doors, and facility personnel should shut down ventilation systems. Limited movement may be allowed, depending on the situation.

Depending on the specific threat or hazard, students and staff may need to move to rooms that can be sealed, such as in the event of a chemical or biological hazard, or to rooms without windows. They may also need to move to a designated weather shelter, such as during a tornado.

Planning Considerations (for Shelter)

Planners should take the following factors into account when formulating courses of action for Shelter:

1. Identify the safest areas of the school to protect students and staff from severe weather events, such as a tornado.

2. Identify the necessary supplies for sealing rooms and meeting the needs of students and staff who may have to remain in the school for an extended period.

3. Analyze the impact of sheltering on individuals with access and functional needs who may require regular medication, durable medical equipment, and personal assistant services.

OTHER SPECIFIC RESPONSE ACTIONS

While *Hold, Secure, Lockdown, Evacuation, and Shelter* are the primary response actions a school may take during an emergency, there are a few other protocols applicable to most situations that staff should be familiar with conducting. These actions also have a definitive place within the school EOP, and the planning team should develop individual procedures to address them.

1. Calling 9-1-1
2. Conducting accountability of students, staff, and visitors

Calling 9-1-1

While it might appear obvious that dialing 9-1-1 to alert emergency responders is the immediate action to take during a crisis, it's essential to recognize that not all staff members may feel confident or clear about their role in such situations. This uncertainty can stem from various factors and misperceptions, ultimately hindering response efforts.

The planning team can address these issues and ensure a quick and appropriate response by establishing clear and well-communicated protocols. These protocols should outline who may call 9-1-1 and under what circumstances. Additionally, staff training should incorporate recognizing the signs of emergencies and understanding when outside assistance is necessary. It is also critical to test the phone systems periodically and particularly after there are phone system updates to ensure all systems are operating.

9-1-1 Information Sheets

In the chaos of an emergency, staff members and students may likely forget simple yet vital information. Schools can enhance preparedness by strategically positioning concise information sheets near all phone systems (or in other frequently accessed locations) throughout the building to address this challenge. These reference sheets provide callers with instant access to accurate details, enabling them to promptly convey essential information to emergency responders and, in turn, conserve valuable time.

The illustration below provides an example of a 9-1-1 Information Sheet, and a template can be found in the EOP template within the EOP Suite of Resources. Planning teams may customize it to meet the school's needs.

Emergency 9-1-1 Information Sheet	
Place in the immediate proximity of all landline telephones	
To call 9-1-1 from this phone:	**Direct dial**
School name:	**Woodward Elementary School**
Room number:	**207**
Room location:	**2nd floor, northeast side**
Students in room:	**17**
Grade level:	**First**
Staff in room:	**1**

Example Emergency 9-1-1 Information Sheet

Accountability

In any emergency, the highest priority should be accounting for the location of students, staff, and visitors. Emergency responders rely on this information to plan their course of action.

Applying the following provisions will assist the planning team in developing school-specific protocols within the EOP that will allow staff to quickly account for everyone in the school during an emergency.

Student Safety and Accountability: The safety and whereabouts of students must be the highest priority. This often involves taking daily attendance records and cross-referencing them with emergency rosters to identify discrepancies. An Accountant and/or Accountability Team should be assigned for this purpose. If the number of staff assigned to the Accountability Team exceeds three persons, an Accounting Team Leader should be assigned. The Accountant or Accounting Team Leader is responsible for:

- Assigning roles and responsibilities to help with accounting of student, staff, and volunteers.

- Establishing, activating, and overseeing the accounting procedures.

- Communicating accounting data to the Incident Commander[30] and Operations Section Chief. [31]

- Coordinating with the Reunification Team Lead. [32]

- Facilitating attendance procedures.

- Documenting attendance as reports are received.

- Verifying all attendance lists.

- Accounting for medical transportation.

- Providing information on who is missing, unaccounted for, and/or reported as deceased.

Assigning designated personnel to handle this task, such as front office/attendance staff, teachers, administrators, or safety officers, can streamline the process.

Visitor Tracking: Protocols should include a method for tracking and identifying visitors during an emergency. Visitor logs or electronic check-in systems can be used to identify and locate these individuals quickly.

Communicating Accountability Information: Effective communication is vital in tracking and ensuring the safety of everyone involved. Schools should have reliable communication systems, including two-way radios, intercoms, designated phone lines, and/or emergency phone apps to facilitate the exchange of accountability information among staff and emergency responders.

Designated Assembly Areas: Establishing predetermined assembly areas where individuals should gather during an evacuation or emergency can simplify accountability. These areas should be well-marked and known to all building occupants.

Missing Persons Protocols: In cases where someone is unaccounted for, there should be clear protocols for reporting and responding to missing individuals. This may involve conducting thorough searches within the school or coordinating with external search and rescue teams and reporting the status of findings to the student accountability specialist.

It's essential for school staff to regularly practice these accountability procedures to maintain proficiency, just as they do with all emergency drills.

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[30] A definition of Incident Commander, as well as roles and responsibilities, can be located on page A-6 of this guide.

[31] A definition of Operations Section Chief, as well as roles and responsibilities, can be located on page A-7 of this guide.

[32] A definition of Reunification Team Leader, as well as roles and responsibilities, can be located on page A-8 of this guide.

SCHOOL INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM

The Incident Command System (ICS) is a standardized management structure that facilitates effective coordination and response to incidents, emergencies, and disasters. The ICS provides a systematic and organized approach to managing incidents, ultimately contributing to the safety and well-being of students, staff, and the school community. ICS principles can be adapted for use in schools to enhance the management of incidents ranging from natural disasters to school security issues.

Implementing the ICS begins with establishing a clear organizational structure in a school setting. Key personnel, including administrators, teachers, security staff, and other relevant stakeholders are assigned specific roles within the ICS framework. The incident commander, typically a school administrator or designated leader, coordinates the response efforts.

The ICS structure is organized into functional units, each responsible for a specific response aspect. These units may include Operations (addressing immediate response actions), Planning (developing response strategies), Logistics (managing resources and support), and Finance/Administration (handling financial and administrative aspects).
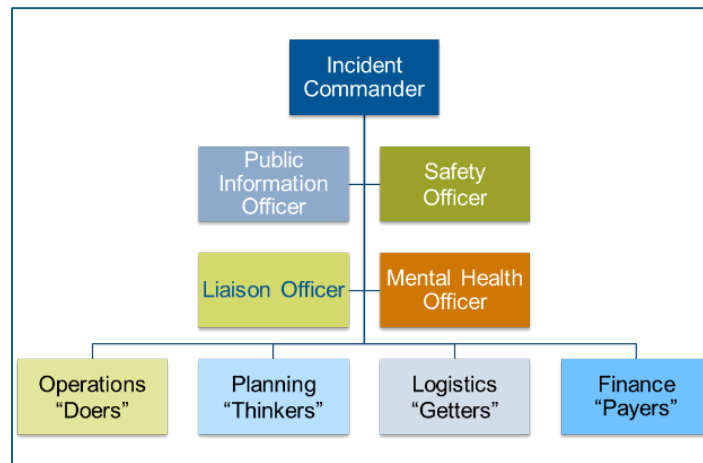
Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined within the ICS framework, allowing for a swift and organized response. For example, teachers may be responsible for the immediate safety of students, while a superintendent, principal, or a designee manages communication with families, caregivers and external agencies.

Defined below are the main roles within the ICS framework and their primary responsibility during an emergency.

1. Incident Commander (IC):
   a. Overall responsible individual for managing the incident.
   b. Directs and coordinates all activities.
   c. Makes key decisions regarding response actions and resource allocation.
   d. Interfaces with external agencies and authorities.

2. Public Information Officer (PIO):
   a. Serves as the official spokesperson for the school district during the incident.
   b. Provides accurate and timely information to the media, caregivers, staff, and community.
   c. Coordinates with the IC to ensure consistency in messaging.
   d. Manages the dissemination of information through various channels.

3. Safety/Security Officer:
   a. Assesses and addresses safety and security concerns during the incident.

b. Coordinates with law enforcement and emergency services for security measures.

   c. Implements procedures for all standard response protocols, including lockdowns and evacuations as necessary.

   d. Oversees the safety of students, staff, and visitors.

4. Mental Health Officer:

   a. Facilitates the coordination between community mental health and school mental health providers.

   b. Assists with emergency response model to facilitate a common approach.

   c. Monitors and coordinates mental health supports for emergency responders.

5. Operations Section Chief:

   a. Develops and implements response strategies based on the incident's objectives.

   b. Manages resources deployed to address the incident.

   c. Coordinates with various teams such as search and rescue, medical, and facilities.

6. Logistics Section Chief:

   a. Procures and maintains necessary resources and supplies.

   b. Establishes facilities for command posts, shelters, and resource staging areas.

   c. Manages transportation, equipment, and personnel support.

   d. Coordinates with external agencies for additional resources if needed.

7. Planning Section Chief:

   a. Collects, evaluates, and analyzes incident information.

   b. Develops incident action plans and ensures they are implemented effectively.

   c. Maintains documentation and records of incident activities.

   d. Conducts ongoing assessment and planning for incident response.

8. Finance/Administration Section Chief:

   a. Tracks costs associated with the response, including documentation for insurance claims.

   b. Manages procurement and reimbursement processes.

   c. Maintains personnel records and tracks personnel time.

   d. Coordinates with finance departments and external agencies for funding and support.

It should be noted that the Mental Health Officer is not a formal role within the ICS structure. The NASP has recommended this role be added based on experience in responding to and consulting in larger scale crisis where the mental health crisis response has lacked organization and/or there was confusion regarding who had the authority to make decisions about the mental health crisis response.

Additional roles may include:

9. Resource Unit Leader (Planning Section):

   a. Maintains a current inventory of available resources.

   b. Tracks the status and location of personnel, equipment, and supplies.

   c. Requests additional resources as needed and allocates them appropriately.

10. Communications Unit Leader (Logistics Section):

   a. Establishes and maintains communication systems for incident command.

b. Manages internal and external communication channels.

c. Ensures effective communication among response teams and stakeholders.

d. Monitors media coverage and provides updates to the PIO as necessary.

11. Medical/Health Services Unit Leader (Logistics Section, may also report to Safety Officer):

a. Coordinates medical response and triage efforts.

b. Establishes medical treatment areas and provides first aid.

c. Arranges for additional medical support if necessary.

d. Ensures the well-being of students, staff, and any injured individuals.

In the event of an incident, the IC activates the ICS and communicates the situation to all relevant stakeholders. The system promotes a standardized approach to managing resources, ensuring efficient communication, and fostering collaboration among external agencies and authorities.

Regular briefings and updates are conducted within the ICS structure to keep all personnel informed about the incident's status, response efforts, and any changes in strategy. This ensures a cohesive and synchronized response among all stakeholders.

The flexibility of the ICS allows for scalability based on the size and complexity of the incident. Whether dealing with a localized emergency or a larger-scale crisis, the ICS structure can adapt to the situation's needs.

Training and drills are essential to implementing the ICS in schools. Regular exercises help familiarize staff with their roles, enhance coordination, and identify areas for improvement in the response process.

STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES

Successful emergency operations depend on a coordinated effort from various personnel. While school principals and assistant principals play significant roles, they cannot handle every aspect of an incident alone. Therefore, other essential personnel must be mobilized to ensure student and staff safety during crises or critical incidents. Roles should be pre-assigned based on training and qualifications to address the challenges of forming teams during crises. Each staff member and volunteer should be familiar with their roles and responsibilities well before any incident.

Additionally, it's important to consider scenarios where staff members may need to remain onsite to assist with an incident. In such cases, staff will be assigned roles within the ICS based on their expertise, training, and the demands of the incident.

Outlined below are examples of potential staff primary responsibilities during an emergency:

1. Superintendent/Principal: May assume IC role and control of the emergency response.

a. Collaborating with the superintendent to ensure timely and accurate public communication during emergencies.

b. Carrying out assignments as directed by the IC

c. Ensuring alignment of the school's EOP with district-wide plans and policies.

d. Appointing selected staff members to the ICS team to implement the school's crisis plan.

e. Ensuring the availability of ICS team members and providing substitutes for serving teachers as needed.

2. Office Personnel: Aiding the principal

a. Answering phones and providing consistent information to callers.

    b. Ensuring the safety of essential school records and documents.

    c. Executing assignments as directed by the IC.

    d. Monitoring emergency radio broadcasts.

    e. Assisting with health incidents, as needed.

3. Emergency Response Personnel (All Sections):

    a. Providing support and care for school employees, students, and visitors

    b. Collaborating with district and local emergency services to execute the EOP.

    c. Organizing team response activities.

    d. Executing assignments as directed by the IC.

    e. Providing information to staff, students, and the community regarding emergency procedures

    f. Aiding during emergencies according to designated roles.

    g. Conducting debriefings to evaluate the effectiveness of the emergency response plan.

    h. Performing necessary functions such as building evacuation, first aid, student/caregiver reunification, student supervision, and support/security, ensuring the safety of team members.

4. Security Personnel (Logistics Section, Safety Officer)

    a. Implement security protocols and procedures as directed by the IC.

    b. Monitor and control access points to the school premises.

    c. Coordinate with law enforcement agencies and security personnel to ensure a unified response.

    d. Provide guidance and assistance to students, staff, and visitors to ensure their safety.

    e. Establish and maintain communication channels with the IC, other security personnel, and relevant stakeholders.

    f. Assist in the implementation of incident response plans and procedures.

    g. Provide support to emergency responders and other agencies involved in the response effort.

5. Teachers/Instructional Assistants (Operations Section): Ensuring the safety of students and staff.

    a. Supervising students under their care.

    b. Directing students to assembly areas according to established procedures.

    c. Giving appropriate commands during incidents.

    d. Taking attendance during evacuations.

    e. Reporting missing students to the Student Accounting Specialist(s) and Team Leader

    f. Obtaining first aid for injured students.

    g. Providing first aid if necessary.

6. School Counselors, Social Workers, and Psychologists (Operations Section): Ensuring the safety of students and staff.

    a. Directing students according to established procedures.

    b. Providing first aid if necessary.

    c. Assisting in transferring students and staff when safety is threatened.

    d. Executing assignments as directed by the Site Incident Commander.

    e. Providing crisis mental health supports.

7. School Nurses/Health Assistants (Operations Section): Administering first aid or emergency treatment.
   a. Supervising first aid administration.
   b. Organizing first-aid and medical supplies.
   c. Executing assignments as directed by the IC or ICS supervisor.

8. Facilities Personnel (Logistics Section): Assisting in resource management.
   a. Reporting building damage to the IC or Operations Section Chief.
   b. Controlling main shutoff valves for utilities.
   c. Providing damage control.
   d. Keeping the IC informed of the school's condition.
   e. Maintaining up-to-date floor/school layouts.

9. Food Service Personnel (Logistics Section): Rationing and serving food and water during emergencies.
   a. Bus Drivers (Logistics Section): Supervising students on buses during emergencies.
   b. Transferring students to new locations as directed.
   c. Executing assignments as directed by the IC.

10. Other Support Staff (Operations Section): Ensuring safety by following incident management protocols.
    a. Supervising students.
    b. Directing students to assembly areas.
    c. Taking attendance during evacuations.
    d. Reporting missing students.
    e. Obtaining first aid for injured students.
    f. Providing first aid if necessary.

11. Families and caregivers also serve important roles. It is important they are following instructions and guidance provided by emergency responders and do the following:
    a. Stay informed about school emergency procedures, policies, and communication protocols.
    b. Provide accurate contact information to the school to ensure timely communication during emergencies.
    c. Maintain open lines of communication with school staff and administrators regarding any safety-related issues or incidents.
    d. Educate children about basic emergency preparedness and safety measures to follow both at home and at school.
    e. Aid school staff and students during emergencies, such as providing transportation or temporary shelter if needed.
    f. Follow school instructions and guidance provided during emergencies, including procedures for early dismissal, reunification, and other related directives.

RELOCATION & REUNIFICATION

INTRODUCTION

Relocation and reunification planning is a specific type of emergency preparedness and response strategy to address situations where a school must be evacuated due to emergencies, disasters, or other critical incidents and cannot immediately reoccupy the campus.

Relocation occurs when immediate circumstances require transferring students and staff to another facility due to unsafe conditions at their primary building.

Reuniting students with their families is a school's top priority after emergencies like fires, natural disasters, or violent incidents. This process, called *reunification*, aims to swiftly connect children with verified and authorized family members and caregivers amidst the chaos of such events.

It is important not to confuse relocation activities with continuity of operations, as they are not the same regarding emergency response. An immediate need may arise that requires students and staff to relocate. Yet, they may still be able to return to the impacted school within a day or two.

Formal relocation and reunification activities are not just an exercise in quickly dismissing students. They take time. Both involve significant coordination with district administrators and outside agencies. Relocation requires accountability, transportation coordination, and a safe environment before it can begin. Reunification requires messaging families and caregivers, site coordination and setup, processing students, validating family members, and on-site emotional supports during reunification. The entire process can take several hours, if not longer.

CRITICAL ASPECTS OF RELOCATION AND REUNIFICATION PLANNING

Relocation and reunification activities typically take place once the initial response has occurred and are two of the areas of emergency response where schools can fully engage their emergency response teams utilizing the ICS.

Formal relocation and reunification planning typically occur at the district level, and schools often rely on their administration to collaborate closely with local authorities, emergency services, and disaster management agencies during these activities. In many cases, these agencies are better equipped to handle large-scale crises, and schools may defer to their expertise and guidance when responding to incidents that extend beyond their immediate capability.

Identifying the School Relocation Team

The school relocation team will be responsible for safely escorting students and staff members to a designated site where reunification with caregivers will occur. These actions can range from walking groups of students down the street to, if necessary, coordinating bus transportation.

Identifying the School Reunification Team

The school reunification team will be responsible for the final step in the process – successfully reuniting students with their caregivers. While it may seem logical to assign staff members from the

affected school to the reunification team, doing so may be unproductive if they are significantly impacted themselves or if they are needed at the crisis site. The severity of the incident and nature of the emergency will determine the usefulness of school staff during the process.

Assigning staff from another school (or district facility) to conduct reunification with students and family members during an emergency can be a practical and strategic decision for several reasons:

1. **Objectivity and emotional distance.** Staff from another school may not have the same emotional connections to the students and families involved in the emergency. This objectivity can be valuable in maintaining composure and making clear-headed decisions during a high-stress situation.

2. **Unbiased decision-making.** An external team can provide impartiality when verifying the identity of family members, ensuring that students reunite with the right individuals. This neutrality reduces the potential for favoritism, conflicts of interest, and/or or personal relationships making it difficult to hold firm regarding emergency protocols.

3. **Resource allocation.** It may be more efficient to deploy external staff to manage reunification at one (or more) locations to provide extra resources while the impacted school staff focus on other critical tasks and/or support services.

4. **Rapid deployment.** External staff members may already be in the designated relocation site and can quickly begin establishing reunification stations, usually before students arrive from the affected location.

It is important to note that staff members with assigned students during the emergency should **always** remain with their students unless otherwise directed.

IDENTIFYING REUNIFICATION SITES

Schools should work closely with district administrators to determine primary and secondary reunification sites. It is important to weigh the benefits of using another school where that learning environment may be disrupted versus an off-site location which can mitigate academic disruption for other schools but requires more planning and collaboration with non-school entities. If using another school, high schools make for the best options as they are often the largest buildings in the district and usually have adequate parking and staging areas to support those arriving for reunification.

Reunification Site Stations

Schools identified as reunification sites should consider establishing the following stations, listed below. Examples of locations are shown in parentheses; however, the exact layout of the building and the desired flow of people will influence the preferable areas for each.

1. Command Center (main office)

2. Greeting Area (path to main entrance)

3. Counseling (established counseling offices)

4. First-Aid Stations (health/nurse's rooms)

5. Check-in Area (outside main entrance)

6. Family and caregiver Waiting Area (adjacent to check-in area)

7. Student Entrance (rear of school)

8. Student Assembly Area (gym or cafeteria)

9. Staff Briefing/Rest Area (teacher's lounge)

10. Reunification/Release Point (exits near student assembly areas)

Considerations for Establishing Reunification Sites

Schools should create reunification sites designed for efficient flow and a secure process. This approach helps prevent issues such as attempts to bypass procedures and remove students prematurely or students inadvertently leaving with unauthorized individuals.

STAGING RESOURCES

Successful reunification activities demand substantial resources. Schools must be well-prepared in advance, ensuring they acquire and organize essential items for rapid deployment. The process involves thorough planning and foresight to stockpile the necessary supplies and materials, including emergency kits, first-aid supplies, and communication devices. This preparedness significantly contributes to a smoother, more coordinated reunification process.

A sample list of resources is shown below; schools should determine their specific requirements and quantities.

✓	Item
❑	Station and Directional Signs - Caregiver Parking - Caregiver Check-in Area - "Have Photo ID Ready" - Counseling - First Aid Station - Reunification Area - Caregiver/Student Exit - Command Center
❑	Pens
❑	Reunification forms: English and other languages as needed
❑	Colored vests
❑	Duct tape
❑	Laminated alphabet sheets: A-Z
❑	Laminated grade-level sheets: PK-12
❑	Bungee cords
❑	Notepads
❑	Yellow "Caution" tape
❑	Power strips
❑	Extension cords

Specific information regarding The "I Love U Guys" Foundation's recommended reunification kit is available in the OSS EOP Suite of Resources at www.michigan.gov/officeofschoolsafety.

Other useful items:

- Copies of the School/District Relocation and Reunification Plan
- Folding tables/chairs
- Cones
- Retractable stanchion barriers
- Automated External Defibrillator
- First-aid kits
- Handheld radios with chargers
- Bullhorn
- Batteries
- Laptop computers
- Portable first-aid kits
- TVs/projector/screen
- Age/grade-appropriate activities
- Water
- Snacks

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

The planning team should consider the following when developing or customizing relocation and reunification protocols:

1. Identifying the safest method for moving students to the new location.

2. Creating protocols to assist individuals with specific needs, such as those requiring support with transportation, communication, or medical care.

3. Directing students and staff remain in a secure lockdown until law enforcement or school administrators authorize a safe evacuation.

4. Establishing formal written agreements with public or private buildings to ensure their availability as relocation sites.

5. Ensuring families and caregivers are informed about the reunification process in advance and are provided with clear explanations of their responsibilities.

6. Establishing procedures for verifying if an adult is authorized to take custody of a student.

7. Safeguarding the privacy of students, staff, families and caregivers from media attention.

8. Determining how frequently the school/district will provide information updates to families.

9. Providing support to overcome language barriers during the reunification process.

10. Establishing separate spaces for the verification of family member or caregiver identification and the actual pick-up of students.

RECOVERY

INTRODUCTION

Recovery within emergency management is focused on returning to a state of routine or even enhanced safety following a crisis. This involves restoring classrooms to their usual activities and supporting individuals in managing the emotional aftermath of a traumatic event.

RECOVERY ROLES FOLLOWING AN EMERGENCY

Following an emergency, the recovery phase is crucial to ensuring the well-being of students, staff, and the entire school community. In this phase, designated recovery roles come into play to coordinate efforts to assess damages, facilitate repairs, provide support services, and reestablish educational activities. These roles may include personnel responsible for conducting damage assessments, coordinating with external agencies for assistance, addressing psychological and emotional needs through crisis supports, managing financial aspects of recovery, and overseeing the restoration of facilities and resources.

The list below addresses key roles in the recovery process.

Superintendents/Principals

1. Collaborate with emergency responder agencies within the ICS.

2. Be visibly present, accessible, and supportive to all involved.

3. Share accurate information to counteract rumors.

4. Reach out to the families of victims affected by the incident.

5. Continuously update and inform all stakeholders.

6. Guide staff on the next steps and help them communicate with students.

7. In collaboration with school mental health professionals, create developmentally appropriate written statements teachers can use in class. Do not share unnecessary information.

8. In collaboration with the PIO and school mental health professionals, develop written statement(s) to send to caregivers. Reinforce physical and psychological safety efforts.

9. Ensure school (and possibly community) mental health professionals are available to assist students and staff in managing their emotional reactions.

10. Maintain communication with the District Office and the school board.

11. Coordinate with the Mental Health Officer to implement plans for providing mental health supports, additional healthcare services, and resources for short- and long-term needs.

12. Consider the needs of individuals with specific needs, such as individuals requiring translation services, and those with access and functional needs.

13. Establish and maintain an information hotline for victims and their families.

14. Stay in close contact with injured victims and their families.

15. Keep caregivers informed about the available support services for their children.

16. Provide resources to assist caregivers in helping their children cope with their emotional responses to the situation.

Below are additional responsibilities of the principal including managing the school environment, communicating with family members, conducting remembrance events, and identifying lessons learned to successfully move forward.

Managing the School Environment

1. Collaborate closely with investigative authorities to support their efforts and streamline investigations, reducing potential complications.

2. Address sensitive matters related to empty chairs, lockers, or desks of deceased students and staff.

3. Address the school's physical safety and security prior to the return of students and staff.

4. Assess the approach for handling the areas of the school impacted by the incident when students and staff return. This evaluation should involve input from the victims' families, the school community, and school mental health professionals to ensure a trauma-informed lens is exercised.

Communicating with family members about a missing, injured, or deceased loved one

1. When it is not possible to reunite families due to a child being missing, injured, or tragically lost, the method and timing of conveying this information becomes paramount. Before any emergency, the planning team should establish a clear protocol for informing loved ones of this information. While law enforcement typically handles death notifications, it's crucial for all parties involved to understand their roles and responsibilities. This ensures that caregivers and loved ones receive accurate and compassionate information promptly.

2. Adherence to law enforcement and medical examiner procedures is essential, but families should receive accurate information as soon as possible. Having trained personnel available to communicate such sensitive matters with clarity and compassion is vital. Mental health professionals should be on hand right away to provide support to family members. It is important to be aware of and respect personal belief systems as some religions have objections to certain medical procedures, such as autopsy. Some religions have specific burial requirements, including when the body should be buried, how it should be prepared, and other funeral practices.

3. Within the school's EOP, there should be pre-identified points of contact, such as mental health professionals and law enforcement officers, who can work with and support family members. These points of contact should connect with families as early as possible, even while children are still missing, and certainly before any victims are positively identified. After an incident, it is critical to confirm that each family is receiving the necessary support, including over the long term.

4. The school's EOP should also consider resources to assist families in recognizing and seeking help for various emotional reactions that they or their loved ones might experience during and after an emergency. Often, families who have lost a child may have other children attending the school. It is imperative to provide support to these families and loved ones as they navigate the grieving process while also caring for their surviving child or children.

5. Furthermore, the school's EOP should explicitly outline how affected families and children will be supported if they choose not to engage with the media. This includes strategies for keeping the media separate from families and students while the emergency is ongoing, as well as aiding families who may encounter unwanted media attention at their homes.

Memorials, Funerals, and Anniversaries

1. Attend funerals and memorial services, permit excused absences, and offer time off to accommodate students and staff who wish to attend funerals and memorials.

2. Collaborate with families involved in planning memorials and activities to honor victims.

3. Whenever feasible, avoid hosting funerals on school premises.

4. Assess the suitability of establishing memorials on school grounds, especially when considering religious memorials. It is also important that on-site memorials do not re-traumatize with daily reminders.

5. Explore alternative options such as a memorial fund that can be invested in prevention programming.

6. Engage students, staff, victims' families, and the wider community in planning memorials.

7. Have guidelines in place regarding recognition at events like graduation ceremonies, assemblies, in yearbooks, or on anniversary dates. Recognition is not recommended when death occurs by suicide.

8. Prepare for the emotional needs of the school community and the potential media attention surrounding the first anniversary of the incident, as well as subsequent anniversaries.

9. Be considerate of the distinct needs of the families of those directly involved in the incident.

10. Ensure that law enforcement is available at the homes of deceased victims and offenders during funerals and memorials to prevent potential burglary and vandalism.

Memorial Best Practice Guidelines

1. Develop a school- or district-wide policy concerning memorials.

2. Suggest having a written "memorial procedures" plan.

3. Designate a memorial committee and committee chairperson to make decisions.

4. Involve all important stakeholders (students, staff, parents, and community members).

5. Be proactive in working with families and students to create appropriate memorials.

6. Follow the maxim of "do no harm." Memorials should not retraumatize.

7. Do not make memorial creation or attendance mandatory.

Memorials After a Suicide

Memorials following a suicide are particularly important to monitor. The following approaches are recommended:

1. Do not make a permanent memorial following a suicide.

2. Do not glorify, highlight, or accentuate the event in any way.

3. Choose memorials that are temporary, nonrenewable, or in the form of a living memorial, such as a monetary donation to charity or research, or purchase of a suicide prevention program for

students. These memorials will positively affect surviving students as opposed to glorifying suicide, which increases the risk that others will copy the act.

For additional memorial guidance, see:

- NASP Mental Health Resources
- National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement

Moving Forward

1. Seek input from mental health professionals, students, and staff to identify when it is appropriate to return to the learning environment and resume regular school activities.

2. Consider holding a meeting for families and caregivers to assist in the process of reintegration back to daily routines.

Capturing Lessons Learned

1. Organize meetings with relevant personnel at the building and district levels to analyze and gain insights from the experience.

2. Facilitate debriefing sessions to evaluate the effectiveness of safety plans considering the lessons learned.

3. Implement any required modifications to the plans based on the knowledge acquired.

4. Extend appreciation by sending expressions of gratitude, such as "thank you" notes, to school and community resource individuals who helped during the incident.

To facilitate reintegration back into the academic environment, the following actions must be considered:

Administration and Staff

1. Assist victims and fellow students as they reintegrate into the school environment.

2. Provide accurate information to students to dispel any rumors.

3. Offer activities to reduce stress and address trauma, such as art, music, and writing; extracurricular clubs and activities can also help to reconnect with social supports.

4. Lead by example by responding appropriately to the crisis and allowing students to express their emotions.

5. Adapt the curriculum and, when necessary, postpone local and state testing.

6. Ensure the school library and school mental health professionals have access to books and resources to help manage grief and other reactions to crisis situations.

7. Train teachers and staff to identify signs of grief and depression.

8. Provide training for teachers and staff on strategies for addressing the various emotional responses of students during crises, such as Mental Health First Aid.

9. Facilitate classroom discussions about the incident and coping strategies for its aftermath.

10. Exercise caution when using television broadcasts in the classroom, as they may rekindle trauma.

11. Seek support and assistance in managing your personal emotions related to the incident.

School Counselors, Psychologists, and Social Workers

1. Be accessible by establishing free blocks of time and setting aside spaces for counseling.

2. Visit the classrooms of any seriously injured or deceased students.

3. Organize and provide counseling, one-on-one and in group settings, as needed for students and staff. Use a multi-tiered approach to crisis intervention as opposed to a one-size-fits-all approach.

4. Extend counseling support and offer guidance to caregivers of affected students.

5. Collaborate with mental health professionals from neighboring schools and within the community for additional support.

6. Ensure that referral forms are easily accessible and establish procedures for self-referrals.

7. Offer mental health services to the crisis team and emergency responders.

8. Maintain records of students affected and provide ongoing assistance as required.

For additional guidance on using a multi-tiered approach to crisis intervention, and/or to find a PREPaRE trainer, see the NASP PREPaRE training curriculum. [33]

Families and Caregivers

1. Be attentive to children's responses and help them manage their reactions, including common responses such as guilt and grief, excessive worrying about the future, irritability, difficulty sleeping, physical ailments, or increased distractibility.

2. Support and promote reaching out for help and open conversations with trusted adults so that children can address their emotions related to the incident.

3. If necessary, accompany children to school if they are apprehensive about returning to class.

4. Prioritize personal well-being by seeking support when needed to ensure physical and emotional health and ongoing support for children.

The Community

1. Contribute time and resources to support individuals affected by the situation.

2. Offer services to address the specific requirements of the victims.

3. Establish a central hub, such as a family assistance center, where community members can access information regarding available assistance and needs.

Emergency Responders

1. Conduct a comprehensive investigation, including interviews with all individuals present during the incident.

2. Advocate for establishing and utilizing regional Critical Incident Stress Debriefing Teams for emergency personnel involved.

3. Collaborate with schools to coordinate the release of information to the public.

4. Designate a primary contact within each agency for schools to seek information and express concerns.

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[33] NASP PREPaRE training curriculum; http://www.nasponline.org/professional-development/prepare-training-curriculum.

5. Arrange meetings involving teachers, students, caregivers, etc., to review and discuss the handling of the incident.

6. Organize a review meeting to evaluate the emergency response following a significant incident, pinpointing areas requiring improvement.

RECOVERY TIMELINE

The recovery timeline summarizes the guidelines previously discussed and is a crucial component of the recovery section in an EOP. This approach involves a systematic, step-by-step process designed to restore baseline functioning in the aftermath of a crisis or disaster. The National Association of School Psychologists[34] recommends breaking down recovery efforts into chronological sequence. By doing so, schools can more effectively address immediate needs, stabilize operations, and implement long-term solutions to ensure a safe and supportive environment for students and staff. Each stage of the timeline is tailored to manage specific challenges and leverage available resources, facilitating a comprehensive and resilient recovery.

First two hours/Immediate Response

1. Identify and account for all individuals involved, coordinating with relevant authorities.

2. Ensure physical and psychological safety for everyone.

3. Gather the emergency response team members, including key personnel such as administrators, security staff, facilities managers, and mental health professionals, for immediate planning.

4. Locate the EOP and review the initial steps with the response team.

5. Coordinate with other jurisdictional members such as police, fire departments, city managers, and state or federal authorities through the ICS.

6. Activate support services such as transportation, food, and temporary accommodations as needed for students, staff, and emergency responders.

7. Manage communications and the media.

8. Establish a location for media gatherings away from the affected site.

9. Designate a spokesperson for media communications, typically a PIO.

10. Ensure consistent, coordinated, and clear messaging among administrators, law enforcement, and medical personnel.

11. Communicate with students and their families, informing them about available supports and safety protocols.

12. Communicate with staff in other locations, as they may also be affected.

13. Reunite individuals with their families through an organized process at a designated reunification center (if applicable).

14. Identify space and staff members to provide immediate crisis counseling services, preferably by employed mental health professionals.

15. Conduct initial crisis counseling to those affected.

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[34] To access NASP's guidance on *Responding to a Mass Casualty Event at a School*, please visit https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-safety-and-crisis/school-violence-resources/responding-to-a-mass-casualty-event-at-a-school-general-guidance-for-the-first-stage-of-recovery.

16. Designate a mental health professional to manage and respond to outside support resources that arrive or offer help.

First 24 Hours

1. Maintain effective communication and manage media interactions according to established protocols.

2. Ensure consistent and clear communication among key stakeholders such as emergency responders, law enforcement, medical personnel, students, and families and caregivers.

3. Verify and counteract rumors as necessary to maintain accurate information dissemination.

4. Monitor social media responses to official communications and address any community posts that require attention.

5. Provide ongoing support to individuals and families affected by the emergency across all relevant locations.

6. Use a structured triage model to assess and address any affected individuals. Individual needs will be different and supports should be provided based upon demonstrated need,

7. Prioritize the physical well-being and safety of everyone involved. Provide accurate updates on the emergency, minimize exposure to affected areas, and conduct thorough site assessments to ensure physical and psychological safety.

8. Allocate additional resources and personnel as necessary to support immediate emergency response efforts.

9. Collaborate with local community mental health resources to supplement internal support services. Screen external offers of assistance to ensure reliability, authenticity, and credibility of skill sets.

10. Acknowledge that recovery from emergencies can be lengthy and variable depending on the circumstances and available resources.

First two weeks

1. Ensure the safety of the emergency site before any affected individuals return.

2. Establish protocols for decision-making authority regarding financial and legal matters at the district level.

3. Continue to provide ongoing mental health support services.

4. Offer mental health support to individuals affected by the emergency while preparing for their return to normal activities.

5. Establish MOUs with agencies to ensure consistent and intensified service delivery outside the immediate emergency response.

6. Develop a structured process for returning personal belongings to those impacted by the emergency, with assistance from relevant authorities in handling evidence.

7. Maintain communication and support for those affected and their families, ensuring access to long-term resources such as counseling, financial aid, and victim's assistance, and community support services.

8. Address emotional reactions among individuals, particularly children, acknowledging the varied responses like shock, grief, and fear, and provide appropriate mental health interventions as needed.

9. Utilize local shelters and community resources to aid in recovery and ongoing support for those affected by the emergency.

10. Publicize available local services including housing, healthcare, mental health support, financial aid, legal assistance, and other essential resources.

11. Promote self-care among staff and those in leadership roles to sustain effective support and recovery efforts.

12. Maintain clear and effective communication strategies while managing media interactions to ensure accurate and timely information reaches the community.

13. Address individual concerns promptly and transparently through direct communication channels and community updates.

14. Inform the public about ongoing emergency operations and recovery efforts using various communication platforms.

15. Monitor and respond to social media activity, providing information and avoiding confrontational or defensive responses.

16. Highlight progress and resilience within the community to foster a sense of unity and support during the recovery process.

17. Plan for the gradual return to pre-crisis operations, including the reopening of facilities and resumption of services, ensuring safety and readiness for all stakeholders.

18. Coordinate alternative arrangements for services if necessary, collaborating with local authorities to secure temporary facilities or implement remote learning options as needed.

19. Collaborate with community partners, emergency relief agencies, and businesses to secure essential supplies and support services for ongoing recovery efforts.

Support the Students' Return to School

1. Ensure that staff members have received necessary mental health support before students return, allowing them the opportunity to reenter the building ahead of students if needed.

2. Provide school staff with information about recognized triage factors related to psychological trauma during a staff meeting or similar gathering. Engage their participation in the ongoing triage process of the mental health response team. Establish a system where teachers and staff can refer affected students for mental health services or seek assistance for themselves.

3. In cases of severe building damage, establish procedures to access essential records such as attendance, special education, and cumulative records. Determine protocols for processing records for new students or those who relocate or are displaced from the district.

4. Communicate effectively with schools where students may have been relocated, ensuring seamless transfer of records, and providing a point of contact for inquiries or concerns regarding specific students.

Gradual Return to School

1. Emphasize the importance of restoring routines while acknowledging that returning to complete normalcy may not be feasible.

2. Reintroduce routines as soon as possible to provide stability and support to students and staff. Flexible day-to-day expectations should be maintained to accommodate evolving recovery needs.

3. Address logistical challenges.

4. Review and adjust the school schedule as necessary, including start and end times and accommodation for students with access and functional needs.

5. Assess transportation capabilities and designate a team to develop transportation strategies.

6. Reintroduce students to the school environment by organizing an open house or similar event on the first day back, welcoming students, staff, and families.

7. Consider implementing a phased return, such as starting with half-days initially and potentially adjusting bell schedules.

8. Gradually reintegrate academics, initially with lighter expectations for assignments and performance.

9. Establish temporary guidelines for grading and homework, considering the impact of the event on student learning and behavior. The duration of these adjustments should align with student needs and the timing of the incident in the school year.

10. Provide training for staff on how trauma affects teaching, learning, and behavior to support effective classroom management.

11. Prioritize ongoing support for staff members, allowing them additional time to connect and discuss their needs during the recovery process.

One Month

1. Acknowledge the potential need for an extended period to restore a sense of normalcy following the emergency.

2. Ensure ongoing access to support and care for individuals most affected by the incident and those with prior trauma experiences.

3. Establish MOUs with agencies capable of providing additional personnel to maintain essential services.

4. Train staff to recognize and refer individuals in need of mental health services, facilitating effective monitoring and follow-up.

5. Educate both students and families about potential ongoing impacts of the emergency, including the risks associated with media and social media exposure.

6. Foster community solidarity and resilience throughout the recovery process.

7. Integrate mental wellness activities and stress-reduction practices into daily routines and school programming.

8. Address challenges stemming from disrupted schedules when planning future activities, involving student leaders in promoting normal routines where possible.

9. Establish a clear timeline for resuming operations if the facility remains closed, recognizing the importance of schools as supportive environments during crises.

10. Avoid conducting highly sensory drills following a major emergency, as these can be traumatic for both staff and students. Gradually reintroduce developmentally appropriate and trauma-sensitive drills with caution.

11. Provide training and resources for caregivers to manage their own reactions effectively, including access to employee assistance programs and external support services.

12. Initiate a comprehensive long-term recovery plan, assessing needs and identifying resources necessary for effective long-term recovery efforts.

How Children Respond to a Crisis

Children's responses to traumatic events can be classified into four primary areas. They may express concern about the future and be uncertain about what lies ahead. Some children may revert to earlier behavioral patterns, perhaps seeking comfort in familiar routines or habits. There may be a noticeable decline in academic and behavioral performance as they struggle to concentrate or process emotions. Lastly, some children may experience nightmares or night terrors, indicative of internal distress. These reactions indicate the event's emotional impact and highlight the need for appropriate support and intervention strategies.

SECTION 7
MENTAL & BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

INTRODUCTION

In schools, crises can occur if mental health needs are overlooked. Emergency planning teams must collaborate to identify and address mental health and substance use issues promptly. Comprehensive EOP development involves considering the school environment and engaging the community, including law enforcement, community mental health professionals, families and caregivers, and students. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration recommends prioritizing school safety, substance use prevention, mental health services, and social-emotional learning for young children.

Some of the mental health-associated emergencies to consider in the school climate include:

1. Drug overdoses

2. Suicide attempts

3. Completed suicides

4. Peer aggression/bullying

5. Active violence

6. Neighborhood violence

Mental Health First Aid for Schools

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA)[35] is a vital intervention model integrated into school EOPs to provide immediate support to students, staff, and families following emergencies. Grounded in evidence-based practices, MHFA offers adaptable strategies that any trained staff member or community partner can implement.

MHFA assists students, staff and families and caregivers by:

1. Establishing a positive connection in a non-intrusive, compassionate manner.

2. Enhancing immediate and ongoing safety and providing physical and emotional comfort.

3. Calming and orienting those who are emotionally overwhelmed or distraught.

4. Helping to identify their immediate needs and concerns and offering practical assistance and information to help address these needs and concerns.

5. Empowering individuals to actively participate in their recovery by acknowledging their coping efforts, strengths, and supporting adaptive coping.

6. When appropriate, linking those in need to other relevant school or community resources such as school counseling services, peer support programs, afterschool activities, tutoring, primary

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[35] Training resources in Mental Health First Aid can be accessed by visiting http://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/.

care physicians, local recovery systems, mental health services, employee assistance programs, public-sector services, and other relief organizations.

Staff Training in MHFA

As MHFA does not constitute psychotherapy, extensive treatment, or a standalone mental health intervention, any trained staff member, regardless of formal mental health training, can deliver aspects of MHFA and contribute to school recovery within the MHFA framework.

Similarly, trained members of community emergency response agencies and mental health professionals may offer MHFA support. During and after an emergency, teachers and other staff are critical in promoting resilience, identifying signs of traumatic stress, and assisting students and their families in restoring a sense of normalcy.

Crisis Response Training for School and Community Mental Health Professionals

MHFA training provides basic training for educators and those who interact daily with students to provide initial supports. It also emphasizes referral to a mental health professional if additional supports are needed. Thus, it is critical for school mental health professionals (and community mental health professionals who may work with schools) to have high quality training in providing school crisis response. Crisis response is different than therapeutic counseling.

It is also strongly recommended that a comprehensive multi-tiered approach is employed. Waiting for students (and staff or caregivers) to self-identify and/or come down to a large room full of mental health professionals they may not know is ineffective. In a crisis where multiple individuals may need supports, a large room may lead to emotional contagion or secondary trauma as individuals are exposed to the strong reactions of others. Others may be ashamed if others see them or are afraid to ask for help. Some do not want to go to a room and talk to strangers they do not know. While it is important to always have a space for individuals to self-report if needed, a multi-tiered approach allows school/community mental health professionals to proactively reach out to students, staff, and caregivers to provide group and individual supports based upon demonstrated need. This can mitigate traumatic impact and minimize the need for more intensive, individualized supports. In addition, this fosters social support connections which is one of the most powerful indicators to healthy recovery.

The NASP PREPaRE School Crisis Training Curriculum[36] teaches this multi-tiered crisis intervention approach. *WS2: Mental Health Crisis Interventions: Responding to an Acute Traumatic Stressor in Schools*, trains school and community mental health professionals how to deliver multi-tiered school crisis interventions in the immediate aftermath of a crisis. This is an evidence-based curriculum developed by school mental health professionals who have direct experience responding and consulting to a variety of crises in schools. Thus, it is specifically designed for the school setting with school mental health professionals taking the leadership role but allows for community mental health supports to engage when needed. PREPaRE is also featured in the Best Practices Registry of the Suicide Prevention Resource Center[37] and aligns with other multi-tiered frameworks being implemented in schools

The PREPaRE WS2 curriculum teaches how to conduct psychological triage in order to identify who may be most impacted, thus delivering supports based upon demonstrated need. There is harm in over- and under-responding, thus appropriate identification of impact is critical. The curriculum then teaches how to deliver multi-tiered supports, with each intervention below having a specific protocol/process to follow:

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[36] Details on NASP's PREPaRE School Safety and Crisis Preparedness Curriculum, including available workshops, can be located by visiting https://www.nasponline.org/professional-development/prepare-training-curriculum.

[37] The Suicide Prevention Resource Center's Best Practices Registry is accessible at https://bpr.sprc.org/.

Tier 1:

- Prevention of Psychological Trauma
- Reaffirmation of Health & Welfare
- Ensuring of Perceptions of Security and Safety
- Evaluation of Psychological Trauma
- Reestablishing of Social Support
- Informational Bulletins, Flyers, and Handouts
- Caregiver Trainings
- Classroom Meetings

Tier 2:

- Individual Crisis Intervention
- Group Crisis Intervention
- Stabilization
- Student Psychoeducational Groups

Tier 3:

- Referral for Psychotherapy
- Psychological Recovery

Additional suicide prevention training resources can be found throughout the State of Michigan. 38

SCHOOL CLIMATE

School climate refers to the overall atmosphere and environment within educational institutions, comprising of a wide range of factors that shape the experiences of students, staff, and visitors. Schools and institutions that provide positive climates to prevent and mitigate risk often feature the following:

1. **Safety protocols:** Implementing robust safety protocols and measures to ensure the physical and emotional well-being of students and staff, thereby creating an environment free from threats and hazards.

2. **Supportive relationships:** Cultivating trusting, respectful, and inclusive relationships among students, teachers, administrators, and families, fostering a sense of belonging and community within the school.

3. **Engaging environment:** Creating an engaging and stimulating academic environment encourages active participation, critical thinking, and collaboration among students, contributing to their overall success and personal development.

4. **Effective communication:** Establishing channels for open and transparent communication among all stakeholders, facilitating dialogue, feedback, and collaboration to address concerns and improve the school climate.

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38 For additional Michigan based suicide prevention training resources visit https://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/safety-injury-prev/injuryprevention/programs/suicide-prevention-a/suicide-prevention/trainings-and-trainers.

5. **Equity and inclusivity:** Promoting equity and inclusivity by recognizing and respecting the diversity of the school community, ensuring that all students and staff feel valued, supported, and empowered to succeed.

6. **Positive discipline practices:** Implementing fair and consistent discipline policies prioritizing positive behavior reinforcement, conflict resolution, and restorative justice approaches, creating a supportive and nurturing learning environment.

7. **Well-being supports:** Providing comprehensive social, emotional, and mental health support and resources to address the holistic needs of students, staff, and caregivers, promoting their emotional resilience and well-being.

8. **Physical environment:** Maintaining clean, safe, and aesthetically pleasing facilities that contribute to a positive learning environment and support the overall health and well-being of students and staff.

9. **Collaborative community engagement:** Engaging caregivers, community partners, and other stakeholders in school initiatives and decision-making processes, fostering a sense of ownership and collective responsibility for the school's success.

10. **Continuous improvement:** Committing to ongoing assessment, evaluation, and improvement efforts to enhance the school climate, address emerging challenges, and meet the evolving needs of the school community.

Additional resources are available at the National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments. [39]

The Role of School Climate in the Phases of Emergency Preparedness

Prevention

Positive school climates play a crucial role in preventing emergencies by reducing behaviors that may contribute to crises, such as violence, bullying, harassment, and substance abuse. Furthermore, these climates foster strong relationships between students and staff, encouraging students to tell trusted adults within the school promptly about any potential threats.

Protection

Protection initiatives help to safeguard against crises and include addressing both physical and psychological safety initiatives. A positive school climate fosters a sense of safety, trust, and belonging (psychological safety) among members of the school community, which are foundational elements for preparedness efforts. Schools with positive climates are also more likely to have established protocols, clear communication channels, and supportive networks, enabling them to proactively plan and prepare for emergencies. Additionally, a positive school climate promotes collaboration, engagement, and collective responsibility, encouraging stakeholders to actively participate in preparedness activities such as drills, training sessions, and the development of emergency response plans (physical safety).

Mitigation

A positive school climate fosters resilience, cooperation, and a sense of collective responsibility among students, faculty, and staff, creating a foundation for proactive risk reduction measures. Schools with positive climates are more likely to prioritize safety initiatives, such as implementing preventive measures, conducting hazard assessments, and enhancing infrastructure to mitigate potential risks. Moreover, a supportive and inclusive school climate encourages open communication, collaboration with community partners, and active participation in mitigation efforts. Thus, a positive school climate helps to mitigate traumatic impact if a crisis cannot be prevented.

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[39] For more information on improving school climate, and for school climate self-assessments, see the National Center on Supportive Learning Environments' School Climate Improvement Resource Package at https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/scirp/about.

Response

Schools with positive climates equip students with the social and emotional competencies to manage emotions and respond effectively during emergencies. Educators and staff undergo regular training on child and adolescent development, enabling them to de-escalate aggressive behavior and respond appropriately to various student behaviors, thereby enhancing school safety. If schools are building these social-emotional skills, then students and staff have "tools" already in their toolkit to help manage stress reactions to crisis exposure. Evidenced-based crisis interventions can further enhance (or teach) these skills to mitigate traumatic impact and facilitate healthy recovery.

Recovery

Positive school climates facilitate recovery from emergencies by prioritizing emotional and mental health services and support for all members of the school community. These climates create an environment that values social and emotional well-being, support the recovery of individuals, facilitate social supports, and acknowledge the diverse needs that may arise in the aftermath of an emergency.

Multi-Tiered System of Supports

Mental health and substance-related services in schools can be structured within a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS), offering varying levels of intervention based on individual needs. MTSS encompasses a comprehensive approach to meeting all students' needs, integrating tiered behavioral and academic supports within a school-based mental health system. It operates as a data-driven, prevention-oriented framework, employing evidence-based practices and systems to enhance student learning outcomes.

This framework typically consists of three tiers:

1. Universal interventions and school-wide support aim to cultivate positive behaviors, social-emotional skills, and prevent behavioral issues.

2. Targeted interventions at the second tier focus on addressing the needs of specific groups of students who may be at higher risk or exhibiting problematic behavior, such as bullying. These interventions are more effective when built upon a strong school-wide foundation.

3. Individualized interventions at the third tier address the unique needs of students, including those who have experienced trauma and require additional academic and social-emotional support.

Addressing the needs and behaviors of students at higher risk levels should focus on remedying problematic issues and developing skills that promote overall well-being and resilience during crises. Research indicates that an evidence-based, multi-tiered behavioral approach can enhance school climate by reducing negative behaviors like bullying, substance abuse, and absenteeism while fostering a safer environment and improving academic outcomes. Implementing such a framework school-wide offers a structured framework for customizing and organizing various practices and programs to meet students' diverse needs. Additionally, it can aid schools in identifying and supporting students grappling with trauma post-event by facilitating the selection of appropriate interventions for their recovery. For further information on multi-tiered behavioral frameworks, visit the Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports. [40]

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[40] Access the Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports at www.pbis.org.

Promoting Social and Emotional Competencies

Social and emotional learning (SEL)[41] forms a fundamental aspect of individual development, encompassing many essential skills beyond academic achievements. Through SEL, individuals acquire the ability to comprehend and manage their emotions, navigate intricate social dynamics, and make well-founded decisions. By fostering SEL competencies[42], individuals cultivate the capacity to pause and deliberate before acting impulsively, fostering heightened self-awareness and emotional strength. Furthermore, SEL fosters the cultivation of supportive relationships and empathy, establishing a nurturing and inclusive community conducive to individual growth.

SEL is pivotal in equipping individuals with the skills to effectively address unforeseen challenges. By instilling attributes such as composure, collaboration, and adaptability, SEL empowers individuals to confront emergencies with resilience and ingenuity. Additionally, SEL enhances individuals' sensitivity to their own needs and those of others, facilitating swift and appropriate responses during crises. When educators and caregivers exemplify SEL skills and cultivate a supportive environment conducive to development, students are more inclined to internalize these skills and apply them in real-world scenarios, thereby contributing to a resilient and empathetic community.

Training and Resources

Resources that can assist school planning teams with developing a culture of safety:

- MHFA courses
- State Resources
- Integrating Mental Health in Schools Toolkit
- Coordinated School Health
- Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports
- National Child Traumatic Stress Network Training and Education Information
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
- Screening and Assessment for Suicide Prevention

Situational Awareness and Pre-Incident Indicators

Situational awareness and identifying pre-incident indicators are fundamental aspects of a comprehensive school emergency preparedness program, serving as proactive measures to enhance preparedness and response capabilities in the face of potential threats and emergencies.

Situational awareness involves continuously monitoring and assessing the school environment to identify emerging risks, hazards, or suspicious activities that may compromise the safety and security of students, staff, and visitors. School personnel can effectively recognize abnormalities by maintaining a state of heightened vigilance and attentiveness. The following list provides examples of situational awareness within a school setting.

1. Recognizing unusual behavior or individuals loitering around the school premises who do not belong there.

2. Noticing any changes in the physical environment, such as broken locks on doors or windows, which could pose security risks.

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[41] For additional information on how social and emotional learning may be integrated into a multi-tiered framework, visit www.pbis.org.

[42] More information about teaching SEL competencies is available by visiting https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/.

3. Being aware of any unusual sounds or disturbances within the school building that could indicate a potential threat, such as loud banging or shouting.

4. Monitoring student interactions and noticing any signs of bullying or conflict that may escalate into a safety concern.

5. Observing changes in weather conditions that could impact outdoor activities or pose risks to students' safety, such as sudden storms or extreme temperatures.

6. Identifying any unauthorized access to restricted areas of the school, such as laboratories or storage rooms, which could lead to theft or other security breaches.

7. Noticing any suspicious packages or items left unattended in common areas or classrooms, which could be potential hazards.

8. Monitoring student arrivals and departures from school buses or other vehicles to ensure their safety during drop-off and pick-up times.

9. Being alert to any signs of distress or unusual behavior among students which could indicate underlying mental health issues or emotional crises.

10. Recognizing any signs of potential violence or threats, such as students displaying aggressive behavior or making concerning statements and taking appropriate action to address the situation.

This proactive approach allows for early detection and intervention, enabling schools to implement appropriate measures to mitigate risks and prevent potential incidents from escalating.

Pre-incident indicators of targeted violence encompass observable cues or behaviors exhibited by individuals that may indicate an impending crisis or harmful intent. These indicators can range from verbal threats and aggressive behavior to expressions of hostility or an unusual interest in weapons. Promptly recognizing and responding to these warning signs is essential for intervention and prevention efforts. Pre-incident indicators may include:

1. **Changes in behavior:** Sudden or significant changes in behavior, mood swings, or unusual emotional reactions.

2. **Social isolation:** Withdrawal from social interactions, increased loneliness, or disengagement from peers and activities.

3. **Expression of anger or resentment**: Frequent expressions of anger, hostility, or resentment towards others, including classmates, teachers, or school staff.

4. **Obsession with violence:** Obsessive interest in violent themes, including fascination with weapons, violent movies, or video games.

5. **Threatening language:** Use of threatening language, including verbal threats or written statements expressing intent to harm oneself or others.

6. **Significant stressors:** The presence of significant stressors in the individual's life, such as family conflict, academic pressure, personal crises, and/or losses.

7. **Substance abuse:** Increased use of alcohol or drugs, which may indicate an attempt to cope with emotional distress or mental health issues.

8. **Decline in academic performance**: Sudden decline in academic performance or attendance, indicating potential distress or disengagement from school.

9. **Access to weapons:** Known access to weapons or discussions about obtaining weapons.

10. **History of violence:** Previous involvement in violent incidents or a history of aggression towards others.

11. **Changes in appearance:** Noticeable changes in appearance, hygiene, or grooming habits.

12. **Expressions of hopelessness**: Expressions of hopelessness, despair, or a lack of purpose in life.

13. **Interest in extremist ideologies:** Engagement with extremist ideologies or involvement in hate groups.

14. **Disturbing art or writing:** The creation of disturbing art or writing may hint at violent or harmful intentions.

15. **Seeking attention or notoriety:** Desire for attention or notoriety, including posting concerning content on social media platforms.

OK2SAY

Schools are encouraged to educate staff, students, and caregivers on the availability of OK2SAY, Michigan's Student Safety Program. More information about OK2SAY, resources, and requesting an OK2SAY presentation, is available at www.ok2say.com.

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH/THREAT ASSESSMENT

Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management (BTAM)[43] is crucial in ensuring the safety and well-being of students, faculty, and staff. This section provides the methodologies and guidelines for recognizing, assessing, and addressing behavioral concerns and potential threats to prevent violence and proactively reduce risks.

Creating a supportive and inclusive school environment encourages open communication and early intervention for students facing distress or behavioral challenges. This involves offering counseling services, introducing social-emotional learning programs, and setting up peer support systems to meet varying student needs and promote positive mental health results.

In addition to focusing on behavioral health, the EOP should include threat assessment protocols essential for identifying and responding to potential acts of violence or harm within the school community. Threat assessment teams, consisting of multidisciplinary members, are responsible for evaluating reported threats or concerning behaviors to assess risk levels and develop suitable intervention strategies. Using the United States Secret Service National Threat Assessment Center (NTAC)[44] model, multi-disciplinary school/district teams can conduct comprehensive threat assessments, gather relevant data, and collaborate with law enforcement and mental health professionals to determine threat credibility and effectively implement interventions to mitigate risks. The goal of threat assessment is to engage interventions and supports, not discipline. If discipline is appropriate or required—such as when a student brings a weapon on campus—there must be consequences paired with supports.

The first steps to building a BTAM program following the NTAC model includes:

1. Establish a multidisciplinary team.

2. Define prohibited and concerning behaviors.

3. Create a central reporting mechanism.

4. Define threshold for law enforcement intervention.

5. Establish threat assessment procedures.

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[43] More information on Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management is available at https://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/-/media/Project/Websites/mdhhs/Folder50/Folder8/BTAM.pdf?rev=b174237d7d27401b865a9bb351ad6100. For available BTAM training opportunities through the Office of School Safety, please visit www.michigan.gov/officeofschoolsafety.

[44] Find additional information on the United States Secret Service National Threat Assessment Center website by visiting https://www.secretservice.gov/protection/ntac.

6. Develop risk management options.

7. Create and promote safe school climates.

8. Conduct training for all stakeholders.

Provided below are additional BTAM resources:

- Enhancing School Safety Using a Threat Assessment Model: *An Operational Guide for Preventing Targeted School Violence*

- Averting Targeted School Violence: *A U.S. Secret Service Analysis of Plots Against Schools*

REFERENCE MATERIALS

MICHIGAN LAWS PERTAINING TO EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLANNING IN SCHOOLS

Public Act 442 of 1976: Freedom of Information Act. <u>MCL – Act 442 of 1976 – Michigan Legislature</u>.

Public Act 102 of 1999: Incident Reporting. <u>MCL – Section 380.1310a – Michigan Legislature</u>.

Public Act 183 of 2013: Student Safety Act.

Public Act 12 of 2014: Emergency Drills and Reporting. <u>MCL – Section 29.19 - Michigan Legislature</u>.

Type of Drill	Number/Schedule
Fire	Five drills – Three must be completed by December 1
Tornado	Two drills – One must be completed in March
Safety/Security	Three drills – One must be completed prior to December 1 and one after January 1 • One drill shall include security measures that are appropriate to an emergency, such as the release of a hazardous material. • One drill shall include security measures of a potentially dangerous individual on or near the school premises. • Seek input from the administration of the school and local public safety on the nature of the drill.
Note - At least one of the drills must be conducted during a lunch or recess period, or at another time when students are gathered but not in classrooms.	

Public Act 551 of 2018: Active Violence Training. <u>House Bill 5851 of 2018 – Michigan Legislature</u>.

Public Act 436 of 2018: Emergency Operations Plan Act. <u>MCL – Section 380.1308b – Michigan Legislature</u>.

Public Act 401 of 2020: Student Safety Act. (Amends 2013 PA 183). <u>House Bill 1200 of 2020 – Michigan Legislature.</u>

Public Act 257 of 2022: Critical Incident Mapping. <u>House Bill 6042 of 2022 – Michigan Legislature.</u>

Public Act 48 of 2022: Temporary Door Locking Devices for Schools. <u>House Bill 5701 of 2022 – Michigan Legislature</u>.

Public Act 37 of 2024: Cardiac Response Plan, Requirement for Training for School Staff. <u>MCL – Section 380.1319.added – Michigan Legislature</u>.

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The "I Love U Guys" Foundation

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"I Love U Guys" Foundation. (2023). The Standard Reunification Method: A Practical Method to Unite Students with Caregivers After an Evacuation or Crisis.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

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Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

Federal Emergency Management Agency. Continuity Resource Toolkit.

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Federal Emergency Management Agency. (2022). National Incident Management System Emergency Operations Center How-to Quick Reference Guide.

Federal Emergency Management Agency. (2013, November). Post-Disaster Reunification of Children: A Nationwide Approach.

Federal Emergency Management Agency. (2011). Sample School Emergency Operations Plan.

U.S. Department of Education (DOE)

U.S. Department of Education. (2008). A Guide to School Vulnerability Assessments: Key Principles for Safe Schools.

U.S. Department of Education, Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools Technical Assistance Center. Developing a Continuity of Operations (COOP) Annex for K-12 Schools and School Districts.

U.S. Department of Education. (2023). Guiding Principles for Creating Safe, Inclusive, Supportive, and Fair School Climates.

U.S. Department of Education. (2019). The Role of Districts in Developing High-Quality School Emergency Operations Plans.

U.S. Department of Education, National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments. School Climate Improvement Resource Package.

U.S. Department of Education, Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools Technical Assistance Center. (2022, September). School District Planning and Response Teams: Developing and Enhancing the School Emergency Operations Plan.

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Accountant: A crucial member of the Emergency Response Team responsible for accounting for students and staff and identifying missing individuals.

Active Threat: An incident involving armed perpetrators where violence is ongoing, and a delayed police response could result in death or significant bodily harm to victims.

After-Action Review (AAR): A process for assessing the outcomes of training exercises and real-world emergency responses to identify strengths and areas for improvement.

American Red Cross: A humanitarian organization that provides emergency assistance, disaster relief, and education.

Americans with Disabilities Act: A federal civil rights law prohibiting the discrimination of people with disabilities in public life, including, but not limited to, jobs, schools, and transportation.

Assessment: The evaluation and interpretation of measurements and other information to provide a basis for decision-making.

Automated External Defibrillator (AED): A portable device that checks the heart rhythm and can send an electric shock to the heart to try to restore a normal rhythm.

Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR): An emergency procedure that combines chest compressions with artificial ventilation to manually preserve intact brain function until further measures are taken to restore spontaneous blood circulation and breathing.

CBRN: Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear.

Civil Rights Act of 1964: A federal law prohibiting discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex or national origin.

Communications: An emergency response role responsible for facilitating communication needs, including radios. This role may be identified as the Public Information Officer.

Continuity Plan: A plan to help ensure that business processes can continue (for an extended period) during a time of emergency or disaster.   Such emergencies or disasters might include a fire or any other case where business is not able to occur under normal conditions.

Control Measure: An action taken to reduce the potential exposure to a hazard or threat and/or reduce the risk of injury or bodily harm.

Designated Assembly Area: A predetermined assembly location where individuals should gather during an emergency and/or evacuation.

Disaster: An event involving significant casualties and/or widespread property damage beyond the capability of the local government to handle with its resources.

Drill: A coordinated, supervised activity used to validate a specific function or capability in a single agency or organization.

Emergency: Any incident, human-caused or natural, that requires responsive action to protect lives and property.

Emergency Medical Services (EMS): Refers to the system of emergency medical care provided to individuals who experience medical crises or injuries.

Emergency Operations Plan (EOP): A comprehensive plan to address emergency situations, ensuring the safety of students and staff.

Emergency Response Team: A group of school staff members tasked with establishing and coordinating response efforts to an emergency situation.

Essential Records: Electronic or hard copy documents used to support essential operations of a school, such as student and staff records.

Evacuation: Organized, phased, and supervised dispersal of people from dangerous or potentially dangerous areas.

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA): A U.S. government agency responsible for coordinating the federal government's response to natural and man-made disasters. FEMA provides disaster relief, manages emergency preparedness programs, and supports state and local emergency management efforts.

First Responder: An individual who is among the first to arrive at the scene of an emergency. This group typically includes police officers, firefighters, and emergency medical personnel who provide immediate assistance and care.

Freedom of Information Act (FOIA): A U.S. federal law that grants the public the right to request access to records from any federal agency. It aims to promote transparency and accountability in government operations by allowing individuals to obtain information about government activities.

Full-Scale Exercise: A comprehensive, realistic simulation of an emergency scenario designed to test and evaluate the effectiveness of response plans, coordination, and resources. Full-scale exercises typically involve multiple agencies and participants operating in a simulated environment that mirrors real-world conditions.

Go-Kit: An emergency kit that contains essential items designed to assist staff and students during a crisis.

Hazard: A potential source of harm or adverse health effect on a person or persons.

Hazard Analysis: The process of identifying potential hazards, assessing their likelihood and impact, and prioritizing them to better prepare and respond to potential threats.

Hazardous Material: Any substance or material that poses a risk to health, safety, or the environment due to its chemical, physical, or biological properties. Hazardous materials include chemicals, explosives, radioactive substances, and biological agents that require special handling and disposal procedures.

Hold: A response protocol utilized when hallways need to be cleared of people.

Impacted Site: The location where an emergency incident occurs.

Incident: An occurrence, natural or human-caused, that requires a response to protect life or property.

Incident Command Post: The central location from which the incident commander and their staff manage and coordinate response efforts during an emergency. The ICP serves as the hub for information gathering, decision-making, and communication among various response agencies.

Incident Command System (ICS): A standardized, on-scene management system used for organizing and coordinating emergency response operations. ICS provides a hierarchical structure with clearly defined roles, responsibilities, and processes to ensure effective incident management and resource allocation.

Incident Commander: The role responsible for the overall management of an incident, including determining roles and staffing, approving action plans, coordinating with section chiefs, and providing overall leadership of personnel.

Job Action Sheet: A document used in emergency management to outline specific tasks, responsibilities, and procedures for personnel assigned to roles during an emergency. Job action sheets help ensure that individuals understand their duties and can perform them efficiently under the incident command system.

Lockdown: The response protocol used for securing rooms and keeping students, staff, and visitors quiet and in place during an emergency.

Logistics Section: The section responsible for providing facilities, services, and material support for an incident.

Mental Health First Aid: A training course for individuals to learn how to identify and respond to a mental health crisis.

Mitigation: Activities designed to reduce or eliminate risks to persons or property or to lessen the actual or potential effects or consequences of an incident.

Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS): A framework and approach for schools to ensure students with varying needs have access to support, including academic and behavioral strategies, and interventions.

National Association of School Psychologists (NASP): A professional organization that provides support and recommendations for boosting mental health and educational competence for all students.

National Incident Management System (NIMS): A standardized framework developed by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to guide the coordination and management of incidents. NIMS provides a common organizational structure, terminology, and procedures for responders to effectively manage emergencies and disasters across all levels of government and private sector organizations.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA): A U.S. federal agency responsible for monitoring and forecasting weather, climate, and ocean conditions. NOAA provides essential information on severe weather events, climate changes, and environmental hazards, including issuing weather warnings and advisories.

National Preparedness Goal: A comprehensive goal or standard for emergency preparedness with five mission areas, including prevention, protection, mitigation, response and recovery.

Operations Section: The section responsible for developing and implementing response strategies, managing resources, and coordinating with various teams, including emergency services.

Operations Section Chief: The role responsible for managing operations of an incident, including developing and supervising strategies to carry out objectives and organizing resources necessary to manage the incident.

Planning Section: The section responsible for the collection, evaluation, dissemination, and use of information about the development of the incident and the status of resources.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE): Gear and clothing designed to protect individuals from hazards and injuries in various environments. PPE includes items such as helmets, gloves, masks, goggles, and gowns, and is used in both emergency response and general safety settings to minimize exposure to potential risks.

Preparedness: The process of planning, training, and organizing resources to effectively respond to and recover from emergencies and disasters. Preparedness involves developing response plans, conducting exercises, and ensuring that systems and personnel are ready to handle potential threats.

Protective Measures: Actions and strategies implemented to safeguard individuals, property, and the environment from harm. Protective measures include evacuation plans, shelter procedures, and the use of PPE to reduce the impact of hazards and emergencies.

Prevention: The steps or actions taken to stop an incident from occurring and involves addressing safety and security needs of school facilities.

Protection: Ongoing emergency preparedness actions that secure schools and keep individuals safe from natural or man-made disasters or violent acts.

Public Information Officer: The role responsible for communicating and disseminating information for the school during an emergency incident, including to the media, caregivers, and community members.

Recovery: The phase of emergency management focused on returning to a state of routine following a crisis and is crucial to supporting the well-being of students, staff, and the whole school community.

Response: The actions taken to address and manage the immediate effects of an emergency or disaster. Response includes activities such as providing medical care, conducting search and rescue operations, and restoring essential services to stabilize the situation and protect lives.

Reunification: The protocol for reunifying students with their families following an emergency.

Reunification Team Leader: A role responsible for coordinating priorities and actions for reunifying students with their families.

Risk: The likelihood or probability of a negative event occurring, combined with the potential impact or severity of that event. Risk assessment involves evaluating hazards, vulnerabilities, and consequences to determine the level of risk and prioritize mitigation efforts.

Scribe: A role responsible for documenting events during a crisis and emergency response.

Secure: The protocol utilized to safeguard individuals inside the school building.

Shelter: A protocol and safety measure to protect individuals during a hazard-specific event.

Site Vulnerability Assessment: A process for evaluating the vulnerabilities and risks associated with a specific location or facility. SVA involves identifying potential threats, assessing the impact of those threats, and recommending measures to mitigate vulnerabilities and enhance security.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA): A U.S. federal agency focused on improving the quality and availability of mental health and substance use disorder services. SAMHSA provides funding, training, and resources to support mental health and substance abuse treatment and prevention programs.

Tabletop Exercise: A type of simulation exercise conducted in a discussion-based format, where participants review and discuss their roles and responses to a hypothetical emergency scenario. Tabletop exercises focus on exploring decision-making processes and coordination strategies without physical deployment of resources.

Threat: Any potential cause of an unwanted or harmful event, such as a natural disaster, human activity, or technological failure. Threats are assessed to determine their potential impact and likelihood, guiding risk management and response planning.

Unified Command: An incident management structure that allows multiple agencies or organizations to work together effectively under a single command framework. Unified Command ensures coordinated decision-making and resource allocation among different entities involved in responding to an incident.

U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS): A federal department responsible for public security.

U.S. Department of Education (DOE): The federal department responsible for education.

Utility Control: The operation of shutting down primary utility connections to mitigate the severity of an emergency.

Vulnerability: Characteristic(s) of a school that could amplify susceptibility to threats and hazards.

Watch: An advisory issued by weather or emergency management agencies indicating that conditions are favorable for the development of severe weather or hazardous events. A watch means that people should be prepared and stay informed, but a specific event has not yet occurred.

Warning: An alert issued by weather or emergency management agencies indicating that a severe weather event or hazardous condition is imminent or has already begun. A warning means that immediate action should be taken to protect life and property.