

Practical Information on Crisis Planning: A Guide for Schools and Communities

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Preparing Your School for a Crisis

Taking action now can save lives, prevent injury, and minimize property damage in the moments of a crisis. If you do not have a crisis plan in place, it is time to develop one. If you have one, review, practice, and update your plan. This brochure is designed to assist schools and communities in either situation. Although every school's needs and circumstances are different, these checklists provide general guidance that can be adapted as appropriate to each district's or school's circumstances.

If you would like additional, more detailed information on how to prepare your school or district for a crisis, you can order a free copy of *Practical Information on Crisis Planning: A Guide for Schools and Communities*, from which these checklists have been taken, on the U.S. Department of Education Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools' emergency preparedness Web site: www.ed.gov/emergencyplan. This Web site contains many other crisis planning resources as well.

Additional Web Sites

- www.ed.gov/emergencyplan
- <http://www.ready.gov/>
- www.fema.gov/kids/
- www.redcross.org/services/disaster
- www.nasponline.org

Mitigation and Prevention

The goal of mitigation is to decrease the need for response as opposed to simply increasing response capability.

- Connect with community emergency responders to identify local hazards.
- Review the last safety audit to examine school buildings and grounds.
- Determine who is responsible for overseeing violence prevention strategies in your school.
- Encourage staff to provide input and feedback during the crisis planning process.
- Review incident data.
- Determine major problems in your school with regard to student crime and violence.
- Assess how the school addresses these problems.
- Conduct an assessment to determine how these problems—as well as others—may impact your vulnerability to certain crises.

Preparedness

Good planning will facilitate a rapid, coordinated, effective response when a crisis occurs.

- Determine what crisis plans exist in the district, school, and community.
- Identify all stakeholders involved in crisis planning.
- Develop procedures for communicating with staff, students, families, and the media.
- Establish procedures to account for students during a crisis.

- Gather information about the school facility, such as maps and the location of utility shutoffs.
- Identify the necessary equipment that needs to be assembled to assist staff in a crisis.

Response

A crisis is the time to follow the crisis plan and make use of your preparations.

- Determine if a crisis is occurring.
- Identify the type of crisis that is occurring and determine the appropriate response.
- Activate the incident management system.
- Ascertain whether an evacuation, reverse evacuation, lockdown, or shelter-in-place needs to be implemented.
- Maintain communication among all relevant staff at officially designated locations.
- Establish what information needs to be communicated to staff, students, families, and the community.
- Monitor how emergency first aid is being administered to the injured.
- Decide if more equipment and supplies are needed.

Recovery

During recovery, return to learning and restore the infrastructure as quickly as possible.

- Strive to return to learning as quickly as possible.
- Restore the physical plant, as well as the school community.
- Monitor how staff are assessing students for the emotional impact of the crisis.
- Identify what follow up interventions are available to students, staff, and first responders.
- Conduct debriefings with staff and first responders.
- Assess curricular activities that address the crisis.
- Allocate appropriate time for recovery.
- Plan how anniversaries of events will be commemorated.
- Capture “lessons learned” and incorporate them into revisions and trainings.