

PREPARE READY TRAIN RECOVER
ESTABLISH SECURE PROTECTION PROMPT
TEAM PROTOCOL PLAN PREVENT
RESPOND CODE REINFORCE ABLE
CALM ACCESSIBLE PRACTICE SOLUTION



NEMLEC STARS TOOLKIT

School Threat Assessment and Response System

2nd Edition - 2017



PLEASE NOTE

This document contains links to the companion website, www.StarsToolkit.org. It is best viewed in a digital PDF format.

We highly suggest that in addition to reading this document, that you visit the site and explore the resources that are available.

USING THE STARS TOOLKIT

The **NEMLEC STARS Toolkit 2nd Edition** should be used collectively by policy makers and planners representing a community’s school district, police and fire departments, emergency management agency, DPW, and public and mental health providers. The *Toolkit*, with its accompanying templates, sample documents, and [companion website](http://www.StarsToolkit.org), should serve as a guide for communities who recognize that a comprehensive safety and preparedness program should always be tailored for a school district’s unique considerations, including distinctive threats and vulnerabilities, as well as the community’s available resources.

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FOREWORD

In Massachusetts, the Northeast Homeland Security Planning Region is home to approximately 599 public schools (which includes all vocational, agricultural, charter, and special education schools), 192 non-public schools, 45 colleges and universities, and covers over 1,300 square miles. Within these schools the total student population is well over 2,023,000 students. The duty for protecting these facilities and their occupants is a tremendous responsibility for school leadership, faculty, their public safety partners, and other key stakeholders in our communities.



In recent years, a series of highly publicized incidents in our nation’s schools, as well as security concerns worldwide, have underscored the extraordinary need for change in the way we conduct the business of school safety and security. A great deal of progress has been made toward improving the overall level of safety and preparedness within our nation’s schools. The reality, however, is that much work still remains.

Since its inception in 1999, the **Northeastern Massachusetts Law Enforcement Council (NEMLEC) School Threat Assessment and Response System (STARS)** program has become a nationally recognized model, and has further expanded its response capabilities in the area of school-based mental health, including psychological triage and recovery. The **NEMLEC STARS** Team has also become a state leader in revamping lockdown recommendations, and is a major partner in bomb threat response protocol development and training across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

The team continues to advance its founding purpose, which is to provide overall school safety awareness, school crisis planning, hazard identification, and training, by adhering to the core concepts of the Emergency Management Cycle: *Prevent, Prepare, Respond, and Recover*. These tenets are shared and established by a strong and dedicated multidisciplinary group of volunteers from public

and private schools, colleges and universities, fire departments, hospitals, and police from local, state, and federal agencies.

Much has changed since the first version of the *Toolkit* was published in December of 2006. Several high-profile mass shootings have changed the way law enforcement, fire, and EMS train their personnel and respond to such tragedies. School systems have begun adopting dramatic changes in school preparedness and readiness planning, have engaged in more realistic training and drills, and have demanded significant improvements in building design and construction.

It is widely recognized that in order for a school environment to be conducive to learning, districts must employ a comprehensive, all-hazards approach to ensuring a safe and secure school environment. If staff and students do not feel safe, they can not perform to their greatest potential. To that end, we offer a model policy in this *Toolkit* for schools to utilize as a foundation as they create a new policy or revise an existing policy.

Whether you are starting from scratch or updating your plans, doing so without assistance can be an overwhelming task. The **NEMLEC STARS Toolkit 2nd Edition**, is a resource designed to assist school districts and their communities with crisis planning

and preparedness. It contains samples and templates that can be used to jump-start or update your community’s school preparedness program, as well as provide essential guidelines during a critical incident.

Among other things, this *Toolkit* includes guidance on the following:

- **Forming multi-disciplinary District Level Emergency Management and School Level Crisis Response Teams**
- **Developing an all hazards crisis plan**
- **Assessing threats and school preparedness**
- **Responding to bomb threats and other critical incidents**
- **Creating a “Go-Kit”**
- **Creating and conducting training and exercises**
- **Creating and disseminating standardized floor plans**

The **NEMLEC STARS Toolkit 2nd Edition** offers an in-depth look at some of the most problematic areas that schools may lack experience in handling, and provides the user with guidance to make planning, response, and recovery more comprehensive.

Nothing in the *Toolkit* or its accompanying supplementary website and documents should be construed as prescriptive. Instead, districts are encouraged to use this comprehensive resource as a starting point for collaborative discussion and planning.

NEMLEC and **NERAC** are committed to supporting communities across the Northeast Region. Our hope is that **NEMLEC STARS** can continue to serve as a role model for local cooperative partnerships, as well as other regional collaborations across the Commonwealth. We strongly encourage school, public safety, and public health professionals to use the **NEMLEC STARS Toolkit 2nd Edition**, among other available resources, and to collaborate in an effort to prepare our region’s schools and increase safety.

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School Threat Assessment and Response System

This document was prepared under a grant from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security – Federal Emergency Management Agency (DHS-FEMA). Points of view or opinions expressed in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official positions or policies of DHS-FEMA.

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DEDICATION

The work that many volunteers invested in this project over a four-year period was driven by a passion - a passion that is fueled by the unquenchable desire to help other human beings. Truly there is no greater reward than helping others. Such is the cornerstone of the **NEMLEC STARS** program. Since 1999, many wonderful men and women have served in various roles and from various disciplines, including education, public safety, and mental health, collaboratively and for one purpose: to help make our school communities safer.

We thank the many school superintendents, police chiefs, fire chiefs, and other government executives that have contributed personnel, funding, and equipment to the team over the years. Without your support, there would be no team. Your unwavering commitment has allowed many talented professionals to respond in a community's time of crisis, and help them through the unimaginable.

To all **NEMLEC STARS** personnel, past and present – THANK YOU. Your sacrifice in the name of volunteerism, your commitment to making schools safer, your hard work and dedication in serving all **NEMLEC** communities is inspiring, and is a model for how “many hands make light work.” You have done, and continue to do, amazing work.

Finally, and most importantly, this project was inspired by, and is dedicated to: every school community, every educator and school employee, every student, every parent, every first responder, every family member and friend, and anyone that has been impacted by a critical incident in a school community. It is important that those impacted by tragedy know that we remember their stories and the lessons learned in crisis. We all learn from these stories and lessons, and take steps to enhance our preparedness and improve our response and recovery efforts. We dedicate this entire project to you – those we have lost in tragedy, and the survivors that carry the heavy burden of picking up the pieces in the aftermath.



NEMLEC STARS - HISTORY AND PURPOSE

Northeastern Massachusetts Law Enforcement Council School Threat Assessment Response System.

The highly successful *STARS* program was developed by the [Northeastern Massachusetts Law Enforcement Council](#) (**NEMLEC**) in 1999, as a regionalized model focusing on preparation, assessment, response, and prevention of threats of violence and other incidents in schools. Since then, *STARS* has provided school systems and municipalities with valuable resources for responding to and de-escalating threatening situations in schools.

The *STARS* program was established by **NEMLEC**, in partnership with affiliated fire and public school departments, to ensure professional and effective violence prevention, assessment, and response with respect for the mission of each agency. The system is based on mutually agreed-upon procedures and guidelines that determine the need for additional assistance beyond the individual capabilities of any one school, department, or community. With support from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety, **NERAC** and **NEMLEC** have partnered to bring the *STARS* program to communities across the Northeast Region and continually provide updated resources for school districts within the **NEMLEC** region.

This regional task force is comprised of specially-trained law enforcement officers, educators of all levels, firefighters, local hospital personnel, community-based mental health professionals, and school-based mental health professionals such as social workers, guidance/school counselors, adjustment counselors, and school psychologists. Members of the team serve as volunteers, and at the discretion of leadership from their contributing agency.

The *STARS Task Force* was created in the wake of a number of violent school events in the late 1990s. Team members have consulted with and responded to schools and public safety agencies in thousands of incidents since its inception. These incidents range from threats of violence, such as bomb threats and threats through social media, to sudden deaths and traumatic deaths such as suicides, homicides, accidents, and other similar incidents. The typical team response can vary from phone consultation to partial or full team activation with trained personnel, specialized equipment, and services – depending on the local jurisdiction's request.

During this time, local police chiefs and school superintendents from the **NEMLEC** region came together after the tragedy at Columbine High School and created a unique program utilizing talented local resources, an established threat assessment protocol, multi-hazard school training, **NIMS/ICS** crisis management, and a mental health consulting/training component.

From the outset, the *STARS* model has been, and will remain, "Local Control."

THE TEAM DOES NOT SELF-DISPATCH, NOR DOES IT ARRIVE WITHIN A DISTRICT AND ASSUME CONTROL OVER THE SITUATION.

Instead, they respond quietly and professionally at the request of the receiving communities, providing recommendations, based on experience and best practices, so that local district leadership can make informed decisions that help restore that school community back to a sense of normalcy.

PARTICIPANTS

Through **NEMLEC** affiliated police department membership fees, [NERAC \(Northeast Homeland Security Regional Advisory Council\)](#) support, state and federal grants, and **NEMLEC** Charitable Foundation support; the **NEMLEC STARS** team offers guidance and consultation based on experience and best practices, specialized equipment, personnel, and threat assessment assistance using the U.S. Secret Service/U.S. Department of Education and FBI threat assessment models.

The task force has grown to over 60 team members, representing schools, mental health, fire, medical services, and police. Team members are trained in threat assessment protocols, psychological first aid, and other areas of critical support. Many team members are qualified Individual and Group CISM trained peers, as well as being certified through the [National Association of School Psychologists'](#) [PREPaRE](#) curriculum. A growing number of team members are also licensed *PREPaRE* Instructors.

Partnerships have been formed with federal, state, county, and local law enforcement agencies, K-12 public and private schools, colleges, universities, fire service agencies, hospitals, and grief and loss specialists within 61 member communities, as well as two Sheriff's departments.

The *STARS Task Force* works closely with the Northeast Homeland Security Regional Advisory Council (NERAC). These groups have collaborated on creating and distributing both the 1st and 2nd Edition of the *STARS Toolkit*, a crisis planning resource for all

schools and communities. Additionally, through state and federal grant funding, highly detailed school floor plans have been created, implemented and utilized by many of the schools throughout the **NEMLEC** and **NERAC** region, for planning, training, exercise, and emergency response.

NEMLEC STARS personnel are highly trained and uniquely qualified to help guide communities through all stages of the Emergency Management Cycle: Prevent, Prepare, Respond, and Recover; in all aspects of school safety and security. Beyond the emergency responses, team members are often asked to utilize their expertise, speak at special events and conferences, and assist member communities in school safety trainings and drills. Members also assist with creating local school district safety and security plans.

Additionally, members have been appointed to special boards and working groups related to school crisis response and preparedness, throughout the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. In 2013, one member was appointed to the Governor's School Security and Safety Task Force. Another member was later added to the group as a consultant. In July 2014, the [report](#) generated by that task force was released, throughout Massachusetts, to schools, and police and fire departments as a framework for all communities in the Commonwealth to develop safe school procedures and plans. Within that framework, the **NEMLEC STARS** program was cited as a model program to be emulated throughout the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.



GOALS

- The goal of STARS is to help schools prevent, prepare, respond, and recover from school-based critical incidents. Additional goals include:
- Address incidents and threats through response classifications involving varying degrees of consultation, readiness, and intervention.
 - Provide additional resources to NEMLEC communities through:
 - » NEMLEC STARS Toolkit 2nd Edition.
 - » Safe Schools Floor Plans.
 - » School Safety Equipment including, metal detectors, x-ray machines, and hand-held wands for controlled entries/exits.
 - » Assistance in coordinating explosive detection K-9s for bomb threats when assessment dictates a need.
 - » Crisis Recovery Team for psychological triage and first aid after high-impact incidents that overwhelm the local district's recovery capabilities.
 - » Incident Briefing and After-Action Recommendations.
 - Assist in implementing Enhanced Lockdown Education.
 - Provide and maintain a specialized unit, composed of a highly trained and skilled cadre of professional police officers, firefighters, educators, hospital personnel, and mental health professionals, all identifiable by identification badges on STARS lanyards and/or team jackets which indicate their specialized branch.
 - Supplement and enhance the skills and abilities of the local community in times of crisis.
 - Ensure STARS team personnel are equipped with the necessary assets, resources, and training, to enable STARS to maintain a constant state of readiness to respond to critical incidents.

STARS ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

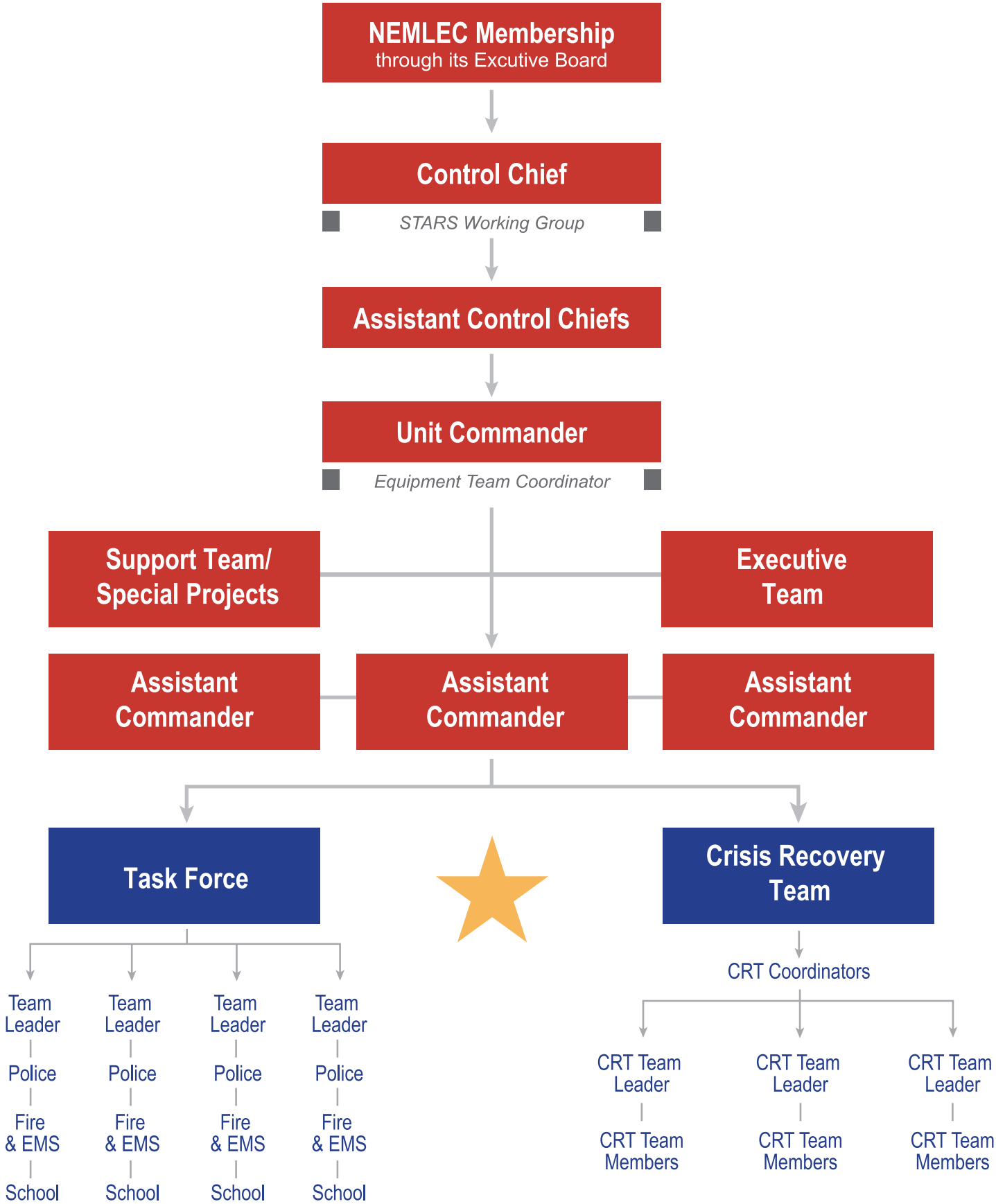
The NEMLEC STARS team is managed by two key teams: the STARS Working Group and the STARS Executive Team. The Working Group meets monthly and acts as a steering, planning, and review group, assisting in long-term planning for the team. It is comprised of police chiefs, school superintendents, and other law enforcement, school, and fire personnel.

The NEMLEC STARS Executive Team meets quarterly to discuss and plan short-term goals, such as training, team scheduling and logistics for the Task Force and CRT, as well as to review best practices and discuss team concerns regarding security and safety threats and trends affecting school districts. This team is comprised of the Officer-in-Charge, three Assistant Commanders, CRT Coordinators, Equipment Team Leader, and other Task Force Team Leaders, and Crisis Recovery Team Leaders.

The NEMLEC STARS Task Force is comprised of four teams. Each team has a Team Leader, and is comprised of multi-disciplinary personnel such as police, fire, school administration and EMS/hospital personnel. Task Force teams deliver prevention, planning, and response services in accordance with unit objectives. Each team is on-call every four weeks, from Saturday through Friday.

The NEMLEC STARS Crisis Recovery Team (CRT) is comprised of three response teams of volunteer mental health professionals from area school districts. Team members offer support to students, faculty, staff, and families before, during, and following a traumatic event. The Crisis Recovery Team includes school psychologists, social workers, adjustment counselors, guidance counselors, and other appropriately-trained officials from the NEMLEC communities. Each team is on call every three weeks, from Saturday through Friday.

FIGURE 1
STARS ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



COMPONENTS OF A LOCAL ALL-HAZARDS APPROACH



PREPARE PROMPT READY ABLE RECOVER
ESTABLISH CALM SECURE PROTECTION ACCESSIBLE
TEAM PROTOCOL SOLUTION PLAN PREVENT
RESPOND CODE REINFORCE TRAIN PRACTICE

THE NEMLEC STARS MODEL

The School Threat Assessment and Response System (STARS) is a regional, comprehensive, all-hazards approach to ensuring a safe and secure school environment that is conducive to learning. The intent of the STARS initiative is to help schools prevent, prepare, respond, and recover relative to such events as violence or other crises in schools.

Under STARS, the participating fire, police, and school departments agree to address and respond cooperatively and effectively to threats of violence, or any activity which could lead to acts of violence or a breach of security and safety in their school districts. This joint partnership focuses on activities that take place within the school facilities, on school grounds, at school-sponsored events, and/or at locations that have the potential to cause negative repercussions in maintaining a safe-school environment.

Although NEMLEC STARS is a regional model, *this initiative can be replicated locally to ensure the highest level of cooperation before, during, and after an incident.* It is imperative that strong local relationships are forged and that community leaders meet regularly and get to know each other on a first-name basis. These stakeholders should exchange important contact information with one another *in advance of a crisis.*

It is understood that local school districts may not be practiced in the skill set of crisis response, as severe critical incidents are not experienced on a daily basis. A pre-planned, coordinated response can decrease the recovery time of the district and increase the overall chances of a healthy recovery system-wide.

School districts may have varying capacities for managing events at all levels. Although critical

incidents are uncommon, they can have a significant impact on the school and the community. Impactful events take many forms, and an event that may have a high impact on one district, may be less impactful on another district. This is linked, in great part, to how any given district prepares in advance of a potential crisis, both inside and outside the school. Critical incidents that occur within the school are given great weight, but critical incidents involving students and staff outside of the school can be just as upsetting to the school community.

IN EACH NEMLEC COMMUNITY, PARTICIPATING FIRE, POLICE, AND SCHOOL DEPARTMENTS ARE REQUIRED TO SIGN A MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT (MOA).

This should be executed between the Chief of each respective department and the Superintendent of Schools. In conjunction with the execution of the [MOA](#), the respective police, fire, and school departments of each community should provide training and information to their staff, designated personnel, and/or other community members including, but not limited to, Mayor/Town Manager, Public Works, Emergency Management, and Public Health, to inform them of policy and procedural guidelines relative to school safety planning and response. This information and training should be provided on an ongoing basis to ensure personnel receive the most up-to-date information, and that new staff are not omitted from receiving training. Communities are reminded that with the hiring of any new police chief, fire chief, or school superintendent, the group must reconvene and a new MOA must be executed. This best practice is consistent with [Section 363 of Chapter 159 of the Acts of 2000](#) and the development of local relationships that are crucial to preventing, preparing, responding, and recovering.

Commonwealth of Massachusetts Section 363 of Chapter 159 of the Acts of 2000, as enacted by the State Legislature

Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, the superintendent of each school district shall, prior to the beginning of the school year, meet with the fire chief and police chief of the city, town or district to formulate a school specific "Multi-hazard evacuation plan" for each school under the superintendent's supervision. Said multi hazard evacuation plan shall encompass, but not be limited to, evacuations for fires, hurricanes and other hazardous storms or disasters in which serious bodily injury might occur, shootings and other terrorist activities, and bomb threats. Said plan shall be designed for each school building after a review of each building. Said plan shall include, but not be limited to:

1. Establishment of a crisis response team
2. A designation as to who is in charge of said team and designated substitutes
3. A communication plan
4. Crisis procedures for safe entrance to and exit from the school by students, parents and employees
5. Policies for enforcing school discipline and maintaining a safe and orderly environment during the crisis

KEY ASPECTS OF A HEALTHY, LOCAL DISTRICT LEVEL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT TEAM/PLAN

- **City or Town Level Emergency Management Team All-Hazards Emergency Response and Crisis Management Plan:** The team often consists of the school superintendent, police chief, fire chief, emergency management director, and mayor/town manager. Larger districts with a separate Emergency Medical Services (EMS) department include the EMS director as a member. In communities with more than one fire or police district, the chiefs of those districts must cooperate to ensure the school district receives adequate leadership in that area. Pursuant to Massachusetts Law (**Commonwealth of Massachusetts [Section 363 of Chapter 159 of the Acts of 2000, as enacted by the State Legislature](#)**), all school districts are required to formulate specific school emergency plans. This law requires all school districts to prepare for and respond to events such as fires, hurricanes and other natural hazards, and incidents in which bodily injury might occur as a result of a shooting, bomb threat, or other terrorist-related event. Please note: if you have a school within an evacuation zone near a nuclear power plant, or the regional natural gas pipeline, you will need to refer to your community's specific

evacuation and emergency response procedures and incorporate them into any district-wide plans you will develop. The [FEMA Radiological Emergency Preparedness Program](#) may be a helpful resource.

- **District Level Emergency Management Team:** This school district-based team consists of school superintendent, school principals, police and fire representatives, facilities management, business manager, mental health and/or special education coordinators, transportation representative, food service representative, technology representative, media/communications person, professional educators, school safety coordinator (if applicable), and nursing supervisor or designee. This team oversees all aspects of a school district's emergency management process. It provides directives for the district's building-level School Emergency Operations Plan (SEOP), including district-wide policies and procedures, as well as guidance on tailoring a plan to meet a school's particular circumstances.
- **School Level Crisis Response Team:** Responds to any incident impacting the school and works with first responders to increase the effectiveness of the response and to enhance communications. It also takes responsibility for

developing and reviewing each individual school and/or district SEOP. Members include the school principal, assistant principal, administrative assistant, teachers, paraprofessionals, school resource officer, nurse, school behavioral health professional, and maintenance staff. The team plans, executes, and reviews drills and procedures. All team members are trained in the basics of the [Incident Command System \(ICS\)](#) to increase their capacity to work with first responders. Each School Level Crisis Response Team has a management structure to designate the roles of each member, including the person in command. Successive alternates are identified for each role.

- **Crisis Recovery Team (CRT):** is comprised of district mental health professionals. Team members offer support to students, faculty, staff, and families before, during, and following a traumatic event. The Crisis Recovery Team includes school psychologists, social workers, adjustment counselors, guidance counselors, and other appropriately-trained officials from the district. Not all communities are large enough to staff this team but larger communities would benefit from having this important response team.
- **Formalized Threat Assessment and Response Protocols:** Under the *STARS* initiative, the fire chief, police chief, and school superintendent, or their respective designees, agree to address incidents and threats through response classifications involving varying degrees of consultation, readiness, and intervention. *STARS* classifies threat assessment levels; assigning low, medium, and high levels of risk that a particular threat may be carried out.
- **Standardized Floor Plans and Door Numbering System:** In a crisis, emergency responders need to know the location of everything in a school. As a component of the local initiative, floor plans for each school facility should be developed and provided to local public safety and school officials in both hard copy and electronic format. An evolving trend is that companies provide floor plans through a web portal as a stand-alone, or part of a more comprehensive school safety platform. This ensures that officials needing to

relocate during a crisis maintain access to their plans. A standardized system for numbering the inside and outside of school facility doors should also be followed.

- **Comprehensive Training and Exercise Program:** Local stakeholders must be trained on all policies and procedures to ensure success. Furthermore, it is essential to assess the knowledge and preparedness gained through tabletop and functional exercises and drills. It is through this process that districts can ensure the highest level of preparedness.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES SHOULD BE REVIEWED ANNUALLY, AND REVISITED IMMEDIATELY AFTER EVERY CRISIS, AS A SERIES OF CHECKS AND BALANCES TO DETERMINE WHAT WORKED WELL, AND WHAT AREAS NEED IMPROVEMENT.

MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT (MOA)

To formalize the partnership between the participating school district, police department, and fire department, and to demonstrate a commitment by each executive and their respective organizations, the *STARS* program uses a Memorandum of Agreement. This document sets forth:

- » General principles for the school safety program
- » Designated representatives for each organization
- » Procedural guidelines
- » Coordination and responsibility protocols
- » Implementation and training

Each executive serves as a signatory for the [MOA](#), formalizing the relationship and program for the community.

STRONG PARTNERSHIPS WITH LOCAL FIRE AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT OFFICIALS ARE KEY, SO THAT ALL PARTICIPATING ENTITIES USE COMMON LANGUAGE AND SHARE THE SAME UNDERSTANDING OF CRITICAL PLANS.





Massachusetts law requires that school districts, in coordination with their local police and fire departments, develop emergency plans. These plans must be designed with the assistance of local police and fire departments for each individual school, to be reviewed and updated annually. These, and other mandates outlined by the Legislature, are critical to the preparedness of school districts across the Commonwealth. But these requirements are just a start. National standards and best practices related to crisis response planning for schools provide for a wealth of information that can assist school districts with their crisis response planning. Much of this information is included within this section, and throughout the **NEMLEC STARS Toolkit 2nd Edition**.

With the assistance of the local police and fire departments, each district should annually review and update as appropriate, these plans. At the beginning of each school year, students at each school should receive instruction on the plan that is developed.

GOOD PLANS ARE ALWAYS A “LIVING DOCUMENT,” MEANING THAT THEY ARE ADAPTABLE AND EVER-CHANGING BASED ON THE NEEDS OF THE ORGANIZATION, THE CULTURE OF THE ORGANIZATION, EXPERIENCE, AND CHANGING VULNERABILITIES.

THE CYCLE OF CRISIS PLANNING

The Emergency Management Cycle (EMC) helps to provide a framework to understand the cycle of crisis planning. The four phases include:

- Prevent
- Prepare
- Respond
- Recover

Crisis management is a continuous process, during which all phases of the plan are reviewed and revised (see Figure 2). Plans may be updated based on experience, research, and changing vulnerabilities.

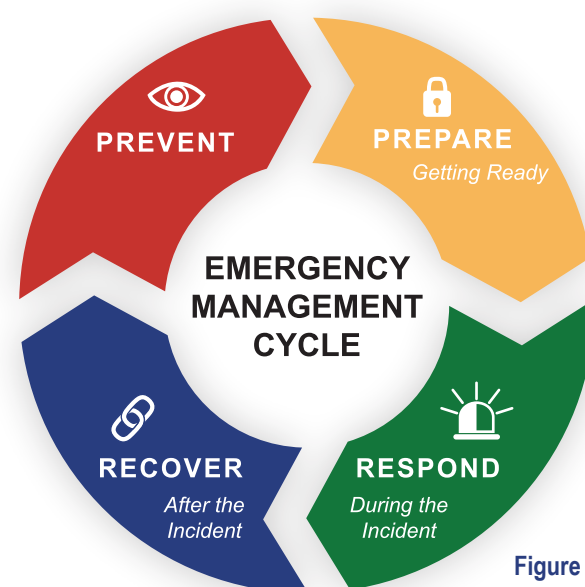


Figure 2

PREVENT

Prevention refers to the creation and implementation of plans to prevent a threatened or actual incident from occurring. Although schools have no control over some of the hazards that may impact them, they can take actions to minimize the impact of incidents. Schools cannot always control fights, bomb threats, and school shootings. However, they can take actions to reduce the likelihood of such events.

SCHOOLS SHOULD CONSIDER THE FULL RANGE OF WHAT THEY CAN DO TO AVOID CRISES OR LESSEN THEIR IMPACT.

Schools may institute policies, implement violence prevention programs, and take other steps to improve the culture and climate of their campuses. To assist with this, consult the companion web site for the document [NASP PREPaRE: Developing Resilience and School Connectedness](#).

School safety and emergency management experts often use the terms *prevention* and *mitigation* differently. *Mitigation* is any sustained action taken to reduce long-term reduction of hazard vulnerability. Mitigating emergencies is also important from a legal standpoint. If a school, district, or community does not take all necessary actions in good faith to create safe schools, it could be vulnerable to liability. It is important to make certain that the physical plant adheres to local codes, as well as federal and Massachusetts laws.

Crisis experts encourage schools to consider the full range of what they can do to avoid crises (when possible), or lessen their impact. Assessing and addressing the safety and integrity of facilities (window seals, HVAC systems, building structure), security (functioning locks, controlled access to the school, cameras, and keyless entry), and the culture and climate of schools through policy and curricula are all important for preventing possible crises. For example, ensuring your school is compliant with anti-bullying legislation ([Chapter 92 of the Acts of 2010](#)) is critical to a safe school environment.

Prevention requires taking inventory of the dangers in a school and community, and identifying actions to prevent and reduce injury and property damage. For example:

- Establishing access control procedures for the school, including but not limited to; buzz-in, sign-in, visitor badges, and escorting to and from desired locations and providing IDs for students and staff might prevent unauthorized access by unwanted parties and prevent them from entering the school building.
- Establishing procedures for [faculty and staff to sign in and out for daily attendance](#) and for [leaving and/or returning during the school day](#). These procedures and the information that they provide are vital to establishing a quick and reliable way to track attendance during an emergency. The main office of every school should also use the following logs: [Visitor Sign In and Out](#), [Student Dismissals](#), and [Student Tardies](#).

- [Ensuring Physical Health and Safety within the Special Needs Population](#) must be a priority for all safety planning and can help to prevent unnecessary trauma and/or injuries.
- Knowing the school building and assessing potential hazards on campus; conducting regular safety audits of the physical plant.
- Planning responses to and training for incidents involving hazardous materials (important for schools near highways, rail lines, major gas pipelines, nuclear power plants, and other facilities containing hazardous materials, including schools with chemical labs). [FEMA Radiological Emergency Preparedness Program](#)
- When planning for Fire Prevention, it is recommended that you consult the [Fire Prevention in Schools Brochure](#) from the State Fire Marshal's Office for helpful information. The brochure is available at the companion website.
- Planning a relocation or reunification site.
- Regularly conducting evacuation, shelter-in-place, lockdown and/or enhanced lockdown drills, and establishing clear evacuation procedures for different areas of the school building, resulting in a more orderly evacuation during a crisis.
- Establishing clear and consistent means of communication within the school (ie: protocols for alerts, radios, etc.).
- Establishing clear lines of communication between agencies and organizations to work together and share information.
- Allowing access to and encouraging first responder participation in on-site training exercises.
- [Creating Medical Emergency Response Plans. \(MGL C6 8A Medical Emergency Response Law\)](#). All public schools in Massachusetts are required to have a Medical Emergency Response Plan for each school. This plan is to be updated and sent to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education offices every three years. An example of a [K-8](#) and [high school](#) plan is given in our companion website. The [posting](#) for all areas of the school, and an [AED Incident form](#) are located in the resource section of this *Toolkit*.

- Create a radio and communications plan – [MGL C 284 537R An Act Relative to the Reduction of Gun Violence: Communications and Radio Communications for Administrators and Public Safety](#).
- Establish [Threat Assessment Protocols](#), which includes identifying students, or staff, who may pose a danger to themselves or to others, is an essential component of prevention. The results of a threat assessment can guide prevention efforts, which may help avoid a crisis. This *Toolkit* provides an overview of the STARS threat assessment and response protocol.

Curricula and programming are also useful prevention methods. Many schools have curricula and programs aimed at preventing children and youth from initiating harmful behaviors. Social problem-solving or life skills programs, anti-bullying programs, and school-wide discipline efforts are common as a means of helping to reduce violent behavior. The staff in charge of prevention in a school (counselors, teachers, health professionals, administrators) should be part of the School Level Crisis Response Team.

When a school system is planning to build a new school it is recommended that you refer to the [Primer to Design Safe School Projects in Case of Terrorist Attacks and School Shootings, 2nd Edition](#) document prepared by FEMA. This primer is a revised and expanded version of FEMA 428. BIPS 07 provides the design community and school administrators with the basic principles and techniques to design a school that is safe from potential physical attacks and, at the same time, offers an aesthetically pleasing design that is functional and meets the needs of the students, staff, administration, and general public. This second edition of FEMA 428 focuses on the threats posed by physical attacks on a school by terrorists or targeted shootings. The manual is intended for use by schools who feel they are at risk to attack and is designed to meet the needs of all schools, including those with serious security concerns.

GOOD PLANNING WILL FACILITATE A RAPID, COORDINATED, EFFECTIVE RESPONSE WHEN A CRISIS OCCURS.

PREPARE

Crises have the potential to affect every student and staff member in a school building. Despite our best efforts at crisis prevention, it is probable that schools will be impacted by a crisis in one form or another at some point.

Being well-prepared involves an investment of time and resources. However, the potential to reduce injury and save lives is well worth the effort. Allowing local law enforcement, EMS, and fire to drill in the school building will allow all partners involved to develop familiarity to each other's protocols and expectations, and facilitate communication.

Every school needs a crisis plan that is tailored to its unique characteristics. Within a school district however, it is necessary for all plans to have certain commonalities.

WHILE IT MAY BE IMPRACTICAL FOR ALL SCHOOLS TO WORK INDIVIDUALLY WITH EMERGENCY RESPONDERS AND OTHER LOCAL AGENCIES, SCHOOL STAFF SHOULD MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO MEET THE PEOPLE WHO WILL RESPOND TO A CRISIS BEFORE ONE HAPPENS.

It is important to set a realistic timetable for the preparation process. While it is understandable to feel a sense of urgency about the need to be prepared for a crisis, a complete, comprehensive crisis plan cannot be developed overnight. Take the time needed for collecting essential information, developing the plan, and involving the appropriate people. Successful teams utilize drills and [tabletop](#) exercises to work out issues and problem solve before an incident occurs. To assist **NEMLEC** communities in developing school crisis response plans, a template of a comprehensive [School Emergency Operations Plan](#) is included on the companion website.

KEY PRINCIPLES FOR EFFECTIVE CRISIS PLANNING

The following principles, developed by the US Department of Education, are crucial to the planning process:

- Effective crisis planning begins with top leadership. Top leadership helps set the policy agenda, secures funds, and brings the necessary people together across agencies.
- Crisis plans should not be developed in a vacuum. They are a natural extension of ongoing school and community efforts to create safe learning environments. Coordination will avoid duplication and mixed messages, as well as reduce burden on planners.
- School districts should open the channels of communication with local police and emergency services agencies, well before a crisis. Relationships should be built in advance so that emergency responders are familiar with your school.
- Crisis plans should be developed in partnership with others, including law enforcement, fire safety officials, emergency managers, and emergency medical services, as well as health and mental health professionals.
- School districts should tailor crisis plans for each school, to meet individual school needs.
- Plan for the diverse needs of children and staff. Often, crisis plans fail to address needs of children or staff with physical, sensory, motor, developmental, or mental health, and/or intellectual disabilities. Please see an example of [Evacuation Plan for Individuals with Mobility Issues, Visually Impaired, or Hearing Impaired](#) on our companion website.
- [A Community Outing Protocol](#) can be found on the companion website. This can be used for those classrooms that are self-contained and venture out into the community. If a child must be restrained, or has the potential for emotional incidents,

this protocol is imperative to preparing for the community outing before, during, and after the trip.

- Establish several [scenarios for drills](#), examples of which can be found in the companion web site. [Sample announcements](#), for both school and home, which can be used during and after drills, can also be found on the website.
- Whether during a drill, or in a real emergency, it will be vital to quickly establish the whereabouts of all staff and students. Two documents should be used in all learning areas and locations for this purpose. These documents, entitled [Extra Students and Staff](#) and [Missing Students and Staff](#) can quickly be collected and referenced so that the location of all parties can be determined. Many schools install a wall pocket in all locations with students and staff and place the flip chart and these two documents in the wall pocket so that they are readily available.
- Special attention is also needed for children with limited English proficiency. As much as possible, documents sent home and/or posted on school/district websites should be translated to meet the needs of individual communities before an incident occurs.
- Provide teachers and staff with ready access to the plan so they can understand its components and act on them. People who have experienced a crisis often report that they go on "autopilot" during an incident. They need to know what to do in advance to not only to get them through an incident, but also to help alleviate panic and anxiety. Refer to the resources section in the companion website for a sample [flip chart](#), that can be provided to each staff member and displayed in a wall pocket in every learning area and office in the district.
- Communication among the School Level Crisis Response Team is essential. Refer to the resources section for [radio protocols](#), [guidelines](#), and [sign-out sheet](#) examples.

TRAINING AND PRACTICE ARE ESSENTIAL FOR THE SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF CRISIS PLANS. CRISIS PLANS ARE LIVING DOCUMENTS. THEY NEED TO BE REVIEWED AND REVISED REGULARLY. THE PLAN MUST BE SHARED THROUGH ADEQUATE TRAINING, AND ITS CONTENT MUST BE MADE KNOWN TO ALL STAKEHOLDERS.

Benefits of Effective School Crisis Planning

Like many districts, the Malden Public Schools had very little in terms of being prepared for a school emergency. Over a four-year span, the district has developed policy, procedures, an operation manual, flip charts, posters for learning areas, keyless entry, cameras, door jamb security for a quicker and more efficient lockdown, training for staff and students, drills, implementation of an a web based application that allows for instant communication with emergency responders, staff, and parents called CrisisGo, and other vital components to an effective emergency school response plan.

Summary: The successful and quick response to a serious school emergency was possible due to the implementation of an established crisis plan created in conjunction with school administrators, teachers and staff, local first responders, and the district school safety coordinator.

Description: The following document is the Malden Public Schools School Safety Timeline. In the resources section, you can find an example of [The Malden Public Schools School Safety Policy](#), [posters](#) and a [flip chart](#) to be placed in learning areas and offices throughout the district. Below you will find a timeline of how Malden implemented necessary policies and procedures over a four year period. This should be very helpful to districts that are beginning from scratch or redeveloping a comprehensive School Emergency Operations Plan. Also included in the companion website are examples of forms that will be needed in classrooms for evacuations.

Malden Public Schools Safety Timeline

The following timeline is established for where they have been and where they are going as a district in the area of school safety.

2012

JANUARY 2012

- Initial meeting with Superintendent and School Safety Coordinator for permission to look at school safety for the district.
- Received plans from other schools to make an assessment and develop the district’s materials and response.

FEBRUARY 2012

- School Safety Coordinator completed a rough draft of the flip chart.

MARCH 2012

- Joint meeting between Chief of Police, Deputy Fire Chief, Superintendent, Director of Board of Health, and School Safety Coordinator to discuss working together on school safety.
- School Safety Coordinator presented binders to all parties of examples of what he would like to do for the school department.

AUGUST 2012

- Medical Emergency Law procedures completed by School Safety Coordinator and Nursing Supervisor. Document submitted to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

SEPTEMBER 2012

- Training for principals and assistant principals on Medical Emergency Law and procedures by the School Safety Coordinator. They are tasked with educating their staff and posting a Medical Emergency Response Protocol sheet on the walls of every room. The School Safety Coordinator acquires the names, room numbers, and phone extensions of each person certified in CPR in each building. He then made a list, for each school, with a brief description of the new law and procedures to be posted in every room of each school.

OCTOBER 2012 - PRESENT

- Joint monthly meetings begin with Police, Fire, Education Department, Health Department, Department of Public Works, outside agencies, and Mayor’s Office regarding school safety. The School Safety Coordinator is the representative to this group from the School Department.
- School Safety Coordinator begins to work on an Operations Plan for the School District for responding to emergencies.

NOVEMBER 2012

- Tabletop exercise initiated with many city departments regarding a school shooting.
- School Safety Coordinator and three members of the student services department attend a three day certification on crisis counseling. All four are now certified in Individual Crisis Intervention and Peer Support, as well as Group Crisis Intervention. The goal is to have a district team that will respond and help provide critical incident stress debriefing and provide short term counseling to students, parents, and staff that are involved in a tragic event. School Emergency Operations Plan completed by the School Safety Coordinator.
- School Emergency Operations Plan completed by the School Safety Coordinator.
- Malden Public School’s Safety Review Checklist completed by the School Safety Coordinator.

2013

JANUARY 2013

- The School Safety Coordinator chaired a committee consisting of city personnel, school department staff, and vendors. Meeting held relative to unauthorized access to schools and video surveillance. This committee continued to meet during the year.
- School Safety Coordinator Update with Superintendent on materials for school committee presentation.
- Poster for classrooms on lockdown, shelter-in-place, and evacuations completed, printed, and distributed to all rooms in every building by the School Safety Coordinator.

(Assessment of each school every June by the Assistant Principal and the Head Custodian of each school). Any repairs, and/or changes are addressed during the summer for the beginning of school in the fall.

- A “point person” is established for each school to work directly with the School Safety Coordinator to rollout and handle any school safety issues, plans, trainings, etc. at his/her school.

DECEMBER 2012

- The Malden Public School’s School Safety Flip Chart for Immediate Response completed by the School Safety Coordinator.
- New school or district school safety evaluation checklist completed by the School Safety Coordinator.
- PowerPoint training for staff on school safety procedures completed by the School Safety Coordinator.
- PowerPoint training for students on student responsibilities during an emergency completed by the School Safety Coordinator.
- Forms for drills, examples of letter for staff and parents, and other related materials completed by the School Safety Coordinator.
- Meeting with Superintendent on updates provided by the School Safety Coordinator.

FEBRUARY 2013

- Presentation on school safety plans, policies, etc., to Mayor and district safety team by the School Safety Coordinator.

MARCH 2013

- Presentation to school committee for approval of policy, plan, A.L.I.C.E., and roll out by the School Safety Coordinator.

APRIL 2013

- Presentation to community on safety plan by the School Safety Coordinator.
- All administrators, school psychologists, adjustment counselors, and guidance counselors certified in NIMS ICS 100, 200, and 700.

APRIL - JUNE 2013

- School Safety Coordinator met with each school’s emergency response team to assess what is in place and what is needed to be put in place, and to educate them on their role on the team.
- Flip charts, drill forms, letters to parents, etc. for each school completed and placed into a binder and on a USB drive for each principal. This was completed by the School Safety Coordinator.
- Begin purchase of radios for administration, nurse, outside classrooms (Physical Education), maintenance, guidance, main office, recess, and adjustment counselors. The School Safety Coordinator managed the purchase and programming for the radios for each school.

JUNE 2013

- School Committee sub-committee training and then a full vote of school committee at the regular monthly meeting on adoption of all items relative to school safety up to this point, for the district. Training provided by the School Safety Coordinator.

2014

DECEMBER - JUNE 2014

- Training of staff on school safety by the School Safety Coordinator. Extra training provided to the “point person” in each building to conduct the training for students by the School Safety Coordinator.
- Begin to implement shelter-in-place, lockdown, and evacuation drills in each school.
- Training of maintenance, administrative assistants, cafeteria staff, before and after school program staff (which also conducts a summer program) by the School Safety Coordinator.
- The School Safety Coordinator wrote a school safety social story for PreK-second grade teachers to use in class.
- Vote of the City Council to approve safety cameras, door jams, wall pockets for flip charts, panic buttons, keyless entry, etc.

JULY 2013

- Printing of response manuals and flip charts, and distribution to every room in each school.

AUGUST 2013

- Training provided to Administration Team on school safety response by the School Safety Coordinator.

SEPTEMBER 2013

- All school nurses, the athletic director, and new employees in administration, guidance, or social workers, certified in NIMS ICS 100, 200, and 700 by the end of the year.
- Proposal to City Council for video cameras, panic buttons, alarmed security systems, door jams, wall pockets, and other safety equipment by the city’s Emergency Management Team.
- Radios acquired for all sub-separate classrooms PreK-12, and training on how to use them properly. Protocols were developed and disseminated. Both were handled by the School Safety Coordinator.

JUNE 2014

- Drills conducted in all PreK-12 schools with students.

AUGUST 2014

- 911 stickers placed on all classroom phones in PreK-12 buildings. Placed on all classroom phones in the district by the School Safety Coordinator.

SEPTEMBER 2014

- Training of building administration in each school on the use of cameras and keyless entry systems by the School Safety Coordinator and camera vendor.
- All staff assigned a keyless entry card w/lanyard, databases established for each school, including district staff access to all schools completed by the School Safety Coordinator.

- The School Safety Coordinator updated the Medical Emergency Postings for each school with staff that are trained in CPR.
- The School Safety Coordinator trained all new staff for the district on the school safety protocols and drills that everyone in the district has received during the new staff induction meetings.

OCTOBER 2014

- Begin to use keyless entry system in each school. All outside doors now locked all day.
- Begin to use camera system, including on all administration’s desk tops, ipads, cellphones, lap tops, police headquarters, and police vehicles.

2015

JUNE 2015

- The School Safety Coordinator updated the district’s Medical Emergency Policy and sent to the DESE.

SEPTEMBER 2015

- The School Safety Coordinator trained all new staff for the district on the school safety protocols and drills that everyone in the district has received during the new staff induction meetings.
- The School Safety Coordinator acquires new staff names, positions, and school locations, and issue new access cards and eliminate staff that have left the district.
- The School Safety Coordinator converted the school district’s flip chart to be used at city hall, senior center, library, and teen center.

MARCH - MAY, 2014 - 2015

- Continuation of drills in each of the schools at least three times during the school year. In addition to at least one fire drill.

JULY 2014

- Development of the Community Outing Protocol PreK-12. These are protocols for our special education self-contained classrooms on what to do before, during, and after a venture into the community at large. These classrooms present many different challenges and safety issues that may not be covered by traditional policies, procedures, operations manuals, and/or flip charts on school safety. Developed with behavior specialists for the district and the School Safety Coordinator.

- The School Safety Coordinator updated the Medical Emergency Postings for each school with staff that are trained in CPR

JUNE 2015 - SEPTEMBER 2016

- Implementation of CrisisGo by the School Safety Coordinator.
- Develop staff database for each building including; district-wide personnel and access information, training for School Safety Coordinator, training of administration, rollout to staff in each school building on the basics of CrisisGo app.

SEPTEMBER 2016

- The School Safety Coordinator acquires new staff names, positions, and school locations and issue new access cards and eliminate staff that have left the district.
- Continuation of all-hazard emergency drills in each of the schools at least three times during the school year, in addition to at least one fire drill each quarter, for a total of four fire drills.
- Ran tabletop exercises for School Level Crisis Response Team in each building, then tabletops with respective staff at a faculty meeting.
- Implement the social story “*What to do in an Emergency at School!*” A story for preparing children in schools for emergencies and drills, in all PreK-2nd grade, and substantial separate classrooms K-12.

- The School Safety Coordinator updated the Medical Emergency Postings for each school with staff that are trained in CPR

SEPTEMBER - DECEMBER 2016

- The School Safety Coordinator reviewed the Malden Public Schools School Safety policy, Operation Manual, Flip Chart, Poster, and other resources. Present to the school committee when ready for any changes.
- The School Safety Coordinator began to assess our keyless entries and camera placements.

NOVEMBER 2016

- “Go-Kits” delivered to each school

- Training students with the CrisisGo App and getting parents to download as well.
- Further training of staff on how to set up communication groups for teams/ parents/ etc.
- The School Safety Coordinator finalized the districts Flip Chart for review and approval of Superintendent and then publish and distribute to each room in each school.
- The School Safety Coordinator distributed the new version of the flip chart to representatives of city hall, senior center, library, and teen center flip charts for input and changes.
- The School Safety Coordinator completed the School Crisis Recovery Team Manual and established the School District Crisis Recovery Team and began meeting twice a year, while

incorporating table top exercises. The group is comprised of school psychologists, social workers and guidance counselors that provide support services during and after an event.

- The School Safety Coordinator began to train staff at city hall, senior center, library, and teen center on safety procedures and disseminate the flip chart designed for them



City/Town Emergency Management Team

Nothing in the timeline above would have been possible without the leadership and cooperation between the police, fire, and the school system. As you can see, when setting out to manage a project of this scope, placing a coordinator in charge to oversee the effort, is one of the key principles to ensure success.

It is highly recommended that emergency planning begin at the city/town level. For example, in Malden, the Mayor’s Emergency Management Team meets every month to develop protocols, receive updates, and train for all types of emergencies that could face them as a city, as well as a school system. The team is comprised of representation from the Mayor’s Office, Police and Fire Departments, Buildings and Grounds, Department of Public Works, Health Department, and the School Department. Team members meet monthly and are provided a small stipend.

Malden has covered many topics in the four years since the team’s first meeting. The topics have included the implementation of cameras and keyless entry for the schools; CrisisGo (a smartphone application for quicker emergency response) for the schools, library, city hall, teen center, and senior center; snow emergency procedures; drills for disasters, and many other topics. The city has recently just finished converting the school’s flip chart for emergency response to fit the needs of the library, city hall, teen center, and senior center. The city will train staff in each of these locations as it has done in the schools and then drill for emergencies.

A sample [School Safety Audit Review Checklist](#) should be completed at the beginning of each school year by an administrator and head of maintenance. Inspections will help reduce any issues that a school may have during an actual emergency. Involving local police and fire departments during these inspections is also encouraged.

RESPOND

An appropriate response to crisis begins with the development of a response plan. Following this plan helps to ensure an adequate and timely response. This section summarizes some of the major recommendations, gathered from experienced practitioners and other experts, about points to remember when called on to implement your crisis plan. Members of the crisis team should be aware that there will always be an element of surprise and accompanying confusion when a school is confronted with a crisis. When implementing the crisis plan, the crisis team must be activated to quickly recognize the type, location, and the magnitude of the crisis. Because the team has practiced the plan, leaders will be ready to make these decisions.

A CRISIS IS THE TIME TO FOLLOW THE CRISIS PLAN, NOT TO MAKE A PLAN FROM SCRATCH.

It is essential that the School Level Crisis Response Team responds to an event promptly. This includes notifying appropriate emergency responders. It is better to call emergency responders to the scene as soon as possible, even if the incident has been resolved by the time they arrive. This approach is preferred rather than to delay calling and risk further injury and damage. The team must also quickly determine if an evacuation, shelter-in-place, lockdown, or enhanced lockdown is necessary for the safety of the students and staff. This timely decision is crucial, and should be one of the first decisions made. It is important to remember in an enhanced lockdown, individuals (both staff and students) are permitted to make decisions regarding their own safety.

The School Level Crisis Response Team should also be trained and practiced in creating and directing triage stations to provide emergency aid for those in need; this should be facilitated by the school nurse. The crisis plan should assign emergency medical services personnel and qualified school staff, to determine who needs emergency first aid.

The School Level Crisis Response Team should be aware of all available equipment that may be used for a variety of responses. A member of the team should be assigned to monitor the equipment and replace as necessary. An up-to-date list of community-based resources and contact information should be available for use during and after any potential crisis.

In some cases a school may have to relocate students and staff to a secondary site. Reunification is the systematic process of reuniting students with parents and guardians. All schools should have more than one pre-established reunification site as part of their overall SEOP. In order to provide accurate dismissal information, having access to student profile information, in both electronic and paper form, is critical.

It is imperative that the parents/guardians do not see students and staff until the actual reunification takes place. Dependent upon the type of crisis, members of the School Level Crisis Response Team may be dispatched to several locations during an incident. A reunification plan should be developed in each building in conjunction with police, fire, DPW, and other officials.

The following areas may be used in an incident and should have accompanying mental health support: medical triage staging area (for those with injuries), parent staging area, student and staff relocation sites (relocation area for evacuation and student/ staff staging area inside of the reunification site), parent check-in at the reunification site, reuniting area (where the actual reunification takes place), and a designated staging area established to give difficult news to parents/ family. Also consider deploying mental health personnel to support other schools in the district depending on the situation/need.

Additionally, in order to facilitate important information management and simultaneously ensure the aforementioned restricted areas are kept private, it is critical to establish a media staging area at both the school and the reunification site. A Public Information Officer should be assigned to this area.

A sample [reunification plan](#), as well as [examples of letters](#) to use with staff and parents/guardians, [Reunification Card for student release](#) and a form to use at the registration area can be found in the Respond section, on the companion website.

RESPONSE ACTION STEPS

- ✓ **Trust leadership.** Trust will help calm the situation and minimize the chaos that may occur during a crisis.
- ✓ **Communicate accurate and appropriate information.** All information released to the media and public should be funneled through a single public information officer or appointed spokesperson. This will maximize the likelihood of presenting consistent and accurate information to the public.
- ✓ **Activate the reunification system.** Always keep in mind that the earliest possible safe release of students is a desired goal. Often, student release will be accomplished before complete resolution of a crisis.
- ✓ **Allow for flexibility in implementing the crisis plan.** With proper training and practice, emergency responders and staff will be able to respond appropriately and, if necessary, adapt the school crisis plans to the situation.
- ✓ **Documentation.** Assign one person to write down every action taken during the response to provide a record of appropriate implementation of the crisis plan. In addition, in keeping with Incident Command Systems, proper documentation can assist with recovery of damages and litigation.
- ✓ **Follow-up/Evaluation.** District/School Level Crisis Response Team should debrief to evaluate the response and make necessary adjustments for future crises.

Evacuation, Shelter-in-Place and Lockdown/
Enhanced Lockdown Preparation

Evacuations require all students and staff to leave the building. The evacuation plan should include backup locations to serve as emergency shelters. Evacuation plans should also include contingencies for weather conditions such as rain, snow, and extreme temperatures. There should be some established plan with outside agencies in case of an extended evacuation, to provide medical treatment, food, and water. Please note: There may be circumstances in which only a portion of the building (ie: students and staff) are evacuated. There should be some consideration given to this possibility in the planning process

Shelter-in-Place provides safe areas for students, guests, and faculty within the building during an emergency, such as a medical emergency, police activity near the school building, a weather event, power outage, a hazardous materials incident, or by order of a public safety official. Safe areas may change depending on the nature of the emergency. In certain situations, as determined by administration and/or public safety, students and staff may be permitted to move around inside the school. There should be no exit from, or entry into the building unless otherwise directed by the proper officials. If a shelter-in-place emergency is declared by announcement, schools may, depending on the nature of the emergency:

- Direct all students, guests, and faculty into rooms or offices.
- Take attendance of students.
- Close all exterior doors and windows.
- Draw shades, if the situation warrants.
- Place signage on exterior doors indicating a shelter-in-place directive.
- Move all persons away from windows and doors.
- In the event of an environmental condition outside of the building that would prevent occupants from evacuating; if advised – cover mouth and nose with handkerchief, cloth, paper towels or tissues. Turn off any classroom ventilation, if possible.
- DO NOT allow anyone to exit the classroom (dependant upon the nature of the emergency).
- DO NOT open the classroom door unless directed by announcement (dependent upon the nature of the emergency).
- Contact local police and/or fire if you are in need of immediate assistance or have important information to share.
- Await further instruction from school administration.
- Should you be directed to relocate to another area, accompany students to the safe areas and bring classroom attendance records. Upon arriving at new area, retake attendance and notify administration of any missing students or emergencies.
- If someone has found themselves in the hallway or bathroom he/she should find their way to the main office for instructions.
- Districts should consider notifying bus companies, contractors, parents, and other potential visitors that entry and exit will not be permitted until the situation is resolved.
- Custodial staff should shut down the HVAC system if the incident warrants.



Lockdowns are initiated when a crisis occurs outside of the school and an evacuation would be dangerous. A lockdown may also be initiated when there is a crisis inside and movement would jeopardize student safety. Traditional lockdown requires that all exterior doors are locked to prohibit entry and staff would remain in their classrooms. Lights are turned off, windows may need to be covered, classroom door is locked, and room occupants hide out of view from the doorway.

Enhanced lockdown strategies, such as [A.L.I.C.E.](#), use lockdown as part of the process but enhance it by including the option to barricade the classroom doors with furniture, rope, zip ties or other implements preventing access by an intruder. The plan also includes preparing room occupants, both mentally and physically, to counter the attack as a last resort (ie: an active killer erupts into classroom without warning and before a lockdown/barricade can be initiated, or locked/barricaded door is defeated and intruder enters the classroom). Occupants of the school should be aware of secondary evacuation routes such as windows, if safe to do so, and secondary doors.

An enhanced lockdown plan also gives the option to building occupants to evacuate to pre-determined rally points, or in the absence of those, as far away from the danger as possible. Fleeing away from

the intruder using information gleaned from PA announcements, sights, sounds, or any other stimuli is encouraged when safe to do so. An enhanced lockdown plan further builds on traditional lockdown by calling for constant flow of information, in plain language, by anyone on scene to public safety, as well as other building occupants so they may make the best decisions about their own safety.

Remember, law enforcement will most likely not be on scene for several minutes, so building occupants will need to be authorized and trained to make the best decisions possible until more help arrives. If someone has found themselves outside of the classroom, he/she should follow the district's existing plan to ensure safety, to include exiting the building or barricading, if safe to do so. It is imperative that they listen to the announcements during the emergency to be able to make informed decisions.

Please note: Communities should have local protocols regarding bells and alarms, and the changing of classes, as part of their preparedness plans. During a lockdown, current practices dictate that bells and alarms should be ignored unless directed by public safety officials. Please consult your local public safety partners when addressing this contingency in your plans.



PREPAREDNESS ACTION STEPS

- ✓ **Identify and involve stakeholders.** Ask stakeholders to provide feedback on sections of the plan that pertain to them. For instance, provide a forum for families to comment on procedures for communicating with them during a crisis.
- ✓ **Consider existing efforts.** Investigate existing plans, and identify areas of integration and conflict.
- ✓ **Determine what crises the plan will address.** Define what will constitute a crisis for your school, based on vulnerabilities, needs, and assets.
- ✓ **Define roles and responsibilities.** Emergency responders use the Incident Command System (ICS) to manage incidents, which provides a structured way for delegating responsibilities among all responders during a crisis response. It is strongly encouraged that all school systems train their staff in Incident Management Systems (ICS) and the National Incident Management System (NIMS), to increase their understanding of these systems and to ensure the most unified and effective cooperation among all responding agencies. Please see the [ICS Training Links](#) in the Prevent section of the companion website for more assistance with this training.
- ✓ **Develop methods for communicating with the staff, students, families, and the media.** Develop a communication plan to notify students, staff, and other stakeholders that an incident is occurring and to instruct them on what to do. This plan may include mass communication systems, radio use, email, text, and any other acceptable forms of communication. In the companion web site, examples of [radio protocols](#), [sign-out sheets](#), sample communications, and [guidelines](#) are available for your use. Sample [letters](#) that may be sent to parents and guardians are also available for your use and can be found in the Respond Tab of our website.
- ✓ **Obtain necessary equipment and supplies.** Prepare response “Go-Kits” for [the main office](#), [nurses](#), and [teachers](#), so they have easy access to the supplies.
- ✓ **Prepare for immediate response.** When a crisis occurs, it must be quickly determined whether students and staff need to be evacuated from the building or locked down in the building.
- ✓ **Create maps and facilities information.** Maps should include information about classrooms, hallways, and stairwells, the location of utility shut-offs, and potential staging sites.
- ✓ **Develop accountability and student release procedures.** Emergency responders treat a situation very differently when people are missing – when a crisis is recognized, account for all students, staff, and visitors, and establish a protocol for reporting missing students, staff, and visitors.
- ✓ **Practice.** Preparedness includes emergency drills and crisis exercises for staff, students, and emergency responders. This should include the use of announced and then unannounced drills to reduce anxieties of all members of the school community. As the school community becomes more comfortable and competent with the drills, the school should begin to conduct drills in the following ways: before and after school, during lunch, during passing times, and blocking halls and stairways. The idea is to challenge everyone, so that complacency doesn't have a negative effect in your practices.
- ✓ **Train new employees, including contracted employees and substitutes.** Training of new employees is vital to the success of any emergency procedures. At the beginning of each school year all new employees should have the school safety trainings as part of any new staff induction program. Train new employees and substitutes upon hiring.
- ✓ **Address liability issues.** Situations where there is a foreseeable danger can hold liability if the school does not make every reasonable effort to intervene or remediate the situation.
- ✓ **School “Go-Kit”.** A suggestion of what should be included in a [School “Go-Kit”](#) can be found on the companion website. The following should be updated as needed throughout the year: Teacher schedules, class lists, “do not release information”, sexual offender information for the area around the school and/or relocation site, photo book (when available), and staff/student medical information.

THE STATE FIRE MARSHAL STATES THAT FIRE ALARMS SHOULD ONLY BE USED FOR FIRE OR FIRE RELATED INCIDENTS, NOT FOR ANY OTHER EVACUATION.

Reunification. Most school districts do not fully plan for reunification. This is a vital part of an emergency situation, which if not executed correctly, can exacerbate the crisis. A reunification can happen on or off campus, and plans should be able to be adapted to either scenario. Districts should consider protocols for releasing students over the age of 18.

IT IS ALSO IMPERATIVE THAT YOU HAVE ACCESS TO ALL “DO NOT RELEASE” INFORMATION TO AVOID RELEASING THE CHILD TO THE NON-CUSTODIAL ADULT

- Under most emergency situations, parents and guardians will not be allowed to enter the school facility until public safety agencies declare it safe to do so. The parent/child reunification plan used by the school district during an emergency/crisis is a systematic process to assist schools in effectively and efficiently reuniting students with parents and guardians.
- The reunification process can be a challenging and time consuming process. There is a chance, due to safety concerns, that the parent reunification site will not be at your school.
- It would be helpful for parents/guardians to have a copy of reunification procedures, including not going to the school unless directed to do so, and bringing photo identification.
- Due to the nature of the emergency, staff and students may be unable to access their vehicles, so they may need alternate arrangements.
- Staff may have to go through the same process to be released to family or sign out procedure.

In both the Prepare and Respond Section of the *Toolkit* companion website are examples of Reunification materials: a [Reunification Letter](#) that goes out at the beginning of each school year, [Reunification Brochure](#) announcing the locations and procedures of reunification, [Reunification Card for Student Release](#), [Direction Sign](#) (arrows to direct people to certain locations), [Grade Level Registration Sign](#) and [Alphabetical Registration Sign](#).

RECOVER

Recovery refers to the restoration of the learning and teaching environment, as well as a return to social-emotional wellness after a crisis. The goal of recovery is to return to learning and restore the infrastructure of the school, as quickly as possible. Focus must be on students, staff, and the physical plant. Officials must realize that, depending on the crisis, recovery can take a significant amount of time. Experts agree that when a school community undergoes a crisis, it is important to return students to learning as quickly as possible.

One of the major goals of recovery is to provide a caring and supportive school environment. School staff should be trained to manage the emotional impact of the crisis, as well as to initially assess the emotional needs of students, staff, and responders.

During this phase, a school district can develop general plans for recovery after a crisis. However, it is important to recognize that it is not possible to foresee, in advance of a crisis, all that will be required for a successful recovery. That is why, when managing a crisis, someone should be designated as early as possible to begin developing a more specific recovery plan based on the nature of the incident.

PLANNING FOR RECOVERY SHOULD BEGIN IN THE PREPAREDNESS PHASE OF THE CRISIS PLAN, WHEN THE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF STAFF AND OTHERS WHO WILL ASSIST IN RECOVERY MAY BE ASSIGNED.

The companion website houses many [helpful documents](#) that can be utilized to assist a school system in the Recovery phase following a critical incident. These documents can be used as handouts to assist school personnel and effected families in understanding and responding to an incident, including death, tragedy, stress, coping skills, grief, and trauma.

RECOVER ACTION STEPS

- ✓ **Schools and districts are reminded to keep students, families, and the media informed.** Let families and other community members know what support services the school and district are providing or what other community resources are available.
- ✓ **Deploy District Crisis Recovery Team.** Activate an already established District Crisis Recovery Team. This team should be on hand to assist the school's mental health professionals with any recovery efforts.
- ✓ **Focus on the building, as well as people, during recovery.** Conduct safety audits and determine the parts of the building that can be used, and plan for repair to those that are damaged, and/or relocation during repair. Districts may wish to consider the use of an outside cleaning contractor in some instances, to alleviate undue stress on custodial staff.
- ✓ **Provide assessment of emotional needs of staff, students, families, and responders.** Determine individuals who need intervention by a school counselor, social worker, school psychologist, or other mental health professional. Arrange for appropriate interventions by school or community-based service providers.

- ✓ **Provide support during class time.** As appropriate, allow students to talk about what they felt and experienced during the traumatic event. This is best achieved when a plan is developed in partnership with experienced mental health professionals.
- ✓ **Conduct daily debriefings for staff, responders, and others assisting in recovery.** Mental health workers who have provided services after crises stress the importance of ensuring that those who are providing “mental health first aid” are supported with daily critical incident stress debriefings.
- ✓ **Take as much time as needed for recovery.** Depending on the traumatic event and the individual, recovery may take months, or even years.
- ✓ **Remember anniversaries of crises.** The anniversary of crises may stimulate memories and feelings about the incident. Develop a plan for supporting students and staff during this time.
- ✓ **Evaluate.** Evaluating recovery efforts will help prepare for the next crisis.



THREAT ASSESSMENT AND RESPONSE PROTOCOL



PREPARE PROMPT READY ABLE **RECOVER**
ESTABLISH CALM SECURE **PROTECTION** ACCESSIBLE
TEAM PROTOCOL SOLUTION PLAN **PREVENT**
RESPOND CODE **REINFORCE** TRAIN PRACTICE

In any situation that has the potential to cause harm, or breach the safety of any student, school personnel, and/or the school environment, decisions must be made quickly, definitively, and with the concern of all parties involved. Just as it can be impossible to predict the occurrence of a violent incident or acute hazardous condition, it is impossible to predetermine the course of action to take for each given situation without knowing all the variables.

THE THREAT ASSESSMENT PROCESS

The United States Department of Education, in collaboration with the United States Secret Service, advises schools to differentiate their threat assessment process between a threat assessment inquiry and a threat assessment investigation. The key distinction between the two is that the former is initiated, conducted, and controlled by the school threat assessment team, while the latter is initiated, conducted, and controlled by law enforcement agencies. (For more information see [Threat Assessment in Schools: A Guide to Managing Threatening Situations and to Creating Safe School Climates](#), which can also be found on our companion website).

THREAT ASSESSMENT INQUIRY/ THREAT LEVEL DETERMINATION

At the outset of learning of any perceived threat to the safety of a school, its staff, or students, the school's threat assessment team must make an initial inquiry into the level and validity of the threat being posed, and gather appropriate information as needed. Refer to the companion website for a [Threat Assessment Investigative Resource](#) provided by NEMLEC STARS.

In order to assess the threat level, the school threat assessment team can follow a defined process in determining the following:

- **Type of Threat:** The suspect's emotional state; the intended target; the weapon of choice and manner to be used; reasons or motivation for threat; date and time of alleged incident; method (verbal, written, Internet, graffiti); location threat was received; and accurate quote of threat.
 - » **Direct Threat** – specific act against a specific target (potential subjects of violence should be notified of the threat: “duty to warn”).
 - » **Indirect Threat** – the plan, intended victim, and/or motivation are unclear.
 - » **Veiled Threat** – strongly implies, but does not explicitly threaten violence.
 - » **Conditional Threat** – type of threat often seen in extortion cases (“If you don’t ____, I will ____”).
- **TOADS Assessment:** Does the suspect have any or all of the following to carry out the threat?
 - » **Time** – time to plan, prepare, and overcome inhibitions.
 - » **Opportunity** – access to target.
 - » **Ability** – mental/physical capacity to follow through, skills, access to weapons, experience, creativity, etc.
 - » **Desire** – motivation and willingness to inflict injury and/or death.
 - » **Stimulus** – external triggering event.



Based upon the analysis uncovered by the threat assessment team's threat content inquiry, the team may determine the threat level to be one of three categories:

- **Low Level Threat:** medium risk, unlikely to be carried out.
 - » **Minimum Response** – Consultation
- **Medium Level Threat:** could be carried out.
 - » **Minimum Response** – Readiness
- **High Level Threat:** imminent and serious danger.
 - » **Minimum Response** – Intervention

INCIDENT REPORT

Once a threat assessment has been made and a threat level assigned, an incident report should be completed. The purpose of the incident report is to generate a record of standardized information that archives school-based events, provides learning opportunities, and allows the school or district-based team of trends that may be developing.

RESPONSE CLASSIFICATIONS

The fire chief, police chief, and superintendent of schools, or their respective designees, agree to address incidents and threats through response classifications involving varying degrees of consultation, readiness, and intervention.

- **Consultation (Non-Emergency):** Designated school personnel contact responsible police and/or fire personnel with concern or knowledge of a situation that may or may not escalate or result in potential violence. This can include, but is not limited to, information sharing, hearsay, and requests for follow-up information and/or expertise. Each party can share information, provide input, and make recommendations in an effort to reach a consensus on how best to respond to the situation.

- **Readiness (Increasing Concern):**

Designated school personnel contact responsible local police and/or fire personnel with concern or knowledge of a one-time or ongoing situation that has potential to cause harm to any individual or property, or provoke a greater degree of violence. Readiness can include a situation where in most cases the mere presence of law enforcement and/or fire service personnel can deescalate or settle a given situation. Each party shares information, provides input, and makes recommendations. The ultimate decision-making authority regarding the breach of school rules should be determined by local school officials. Police officials should determine the consequences of any breach of law that threatens the safety of persons and property.

- **Intervention (Emergency):**

Designated school personnel contact responsible local police and/or fire personnel with an emergency situation, report of violence, or serious/imminent threat to the safety of students, faculty, administrative personnel, or school property. School personnel should provide pertinent information as to personnel and facilities. The ultimate decision-making authority concerning public safety related determinations will be made by the police or fire chief, or his/her designee in consultation with the school superintendent or his/her designee.

BOMB THREATS

Bomb threats have been an increasingly common threat to schools and other public arenas. These incidents can be frightening for not only students and faculty, but parents as well. Often, and rightfully so, parents want to know, “Is it safe to send my child to school?” That question is best answered by having your district safety planning and response teams engaged with local public safety officials, and conduct an accurate threat assessment.

In the late 1990's and early 2000's, many districts experienced an increase in written bomb threats on walls of bathrooms and other locations within their school system. The responses ranged from wiping the threat off the wall and ignoring it, to evacuating an entire building and sending children home out of an abundance of caution. Unfortunately these

investigations stopped at the school level, and very rarely made it to law enforcement hands. At the time, many school districts lacked the knowledge and resources to tackle these crimes and the incidents often persisted unless suspects were identified and adjudicated.

It is important for districts to attempt to prevent the "harassment" or "disruptive" bomb threats as much as possible. These are the type of threats that typically are perpetrated by one student. The design of the threat is to disrupt the school system, and after a thorough investigation, it is often determined that the suspect lacked the real intent to carry out the crime, did not have access to the weapons claimed in the threat, and is usually symptomatic of a larger revenge based element or behavioral and/or mental health issue. It is up to the local district, utilizing a multi-disciplinary collaborative approach, to determine how best to deal with this suspect. Many remedies are at the district's disposal, such as working with the local police, DA's office juvenile justice experts, and mental health professionals.

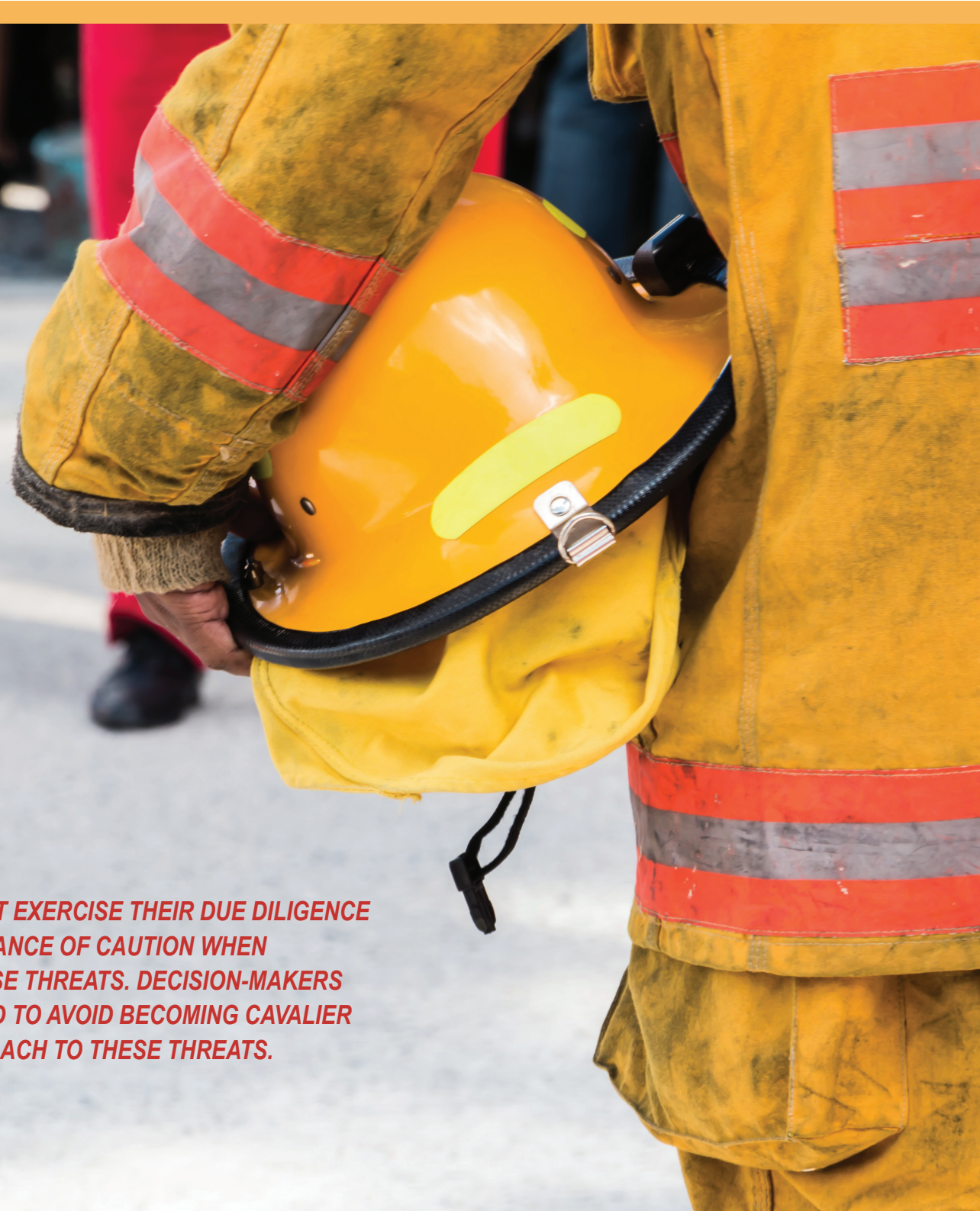
Making a decision about a threat's realism, veracity, or lack thereof, without proper threat assessment and consultation with their team, not only puts the building's population at risk, but may open up the district to liability for failing to protect the staff and students. Districts should not discount the threat as a hoax or a suspect's ill-placed, attention-seeking behavior until all avenues of the investigation, utilizing accepted threat assessment practices, have been exhausted.

During the fall of 2014, Massachusetts and the entire New England region experienced a marked increase in bomb threats and threats of violence via "spoofed" phone calls and emails, social media, and "swatting" incidents, as well as the traditional methods seen for many years previously. The new challenge was the anonymity that social media and emerging technologies gave perpetrators, which emboldened them to make, in some cases, extremely detailed and horrific threats of violence toward their victims. Understandably, this was very alarming to many districts, as well as law enforcement agencies that do not often deal with these types of crimes.

Realizing that the volume of threats was not only problematic for school communities, but also for regional response teams such as **NEMLEC STARS** and the Massachusetts State Police Bomb Squad, leaders from both units convened to strategize on sharing information and best practices. The Commander of the Bomb Squad then convened a meeting of over 70 statewide officials including personnel from schools, fire, and police. The Team shared a proposed statewide strategy to formulate a response protocol. Members of the Massachusetts State Police, Fire Marshal's Office, **NEMLEC STARS**, and the Commonwealth Fusion Center traveled the state to educate schools, fire and police departments in this new response protocol. This collaborative effort was designed to aid local communities in dealing with this very troubling and resource-depleting crime trend, lessen fear, improve understanding, and enhance response strategies.

Although no bomb has ever been found in a Massachusetts school after a communicated threat, every district should take each threat seriously. Every bomb threat is unique and should be handled in accordance with the needs of the facility. Every school should have a Bomb Threat Response Plan as part of an All-Hazard Plan. The guidelines located on the companion website should be used by local officials as a review, and where needed, to revise the bomb threat response section of your All-Hazard Plan. They are taken directly from the publication entitled "[Massachusetts Bomb Threat Response Guidelines.](#)" which was approved by The Fire Chiefs Association of Massachusetts, Massachusetts Police Chiefs Association, Massachusetts Major City Chiefs, Mass. Association of School Superintendents and **NEMLEC STARS** and can be found on the companion website. An example of a [Bomb Threat Checklist](#) can also be found on our companion website.

DISTRICTS MUST EXERCISE THEIR DUE DILIGENCE AND AN ABUNDANCE OF CAUTION WHEN HANDLING THESE THREATS. DECISION-MAKERS ARE CAUTIONED TO AVOID BECOMING CAVALIER IN THEIR APPROACH TO THESE THREATS.





For schools to be as prepared as they can be, there must be extensive collaboration between school district personnel, emergency first responders, public and mental health professionals, and others. Partnerships are the hallmark of any healthy school safety program. These partnerships are built at the executive level, but also filter down to the individual relationships among those actively involved in the day-to-day safety of a community and its schools.

The organizational structure that supports such a program should include the following:

- District Level Emergency Management Team
- School Level Crisis Response Team
- Crisis Counseling Recovery Team (if applicable)

DISTRICT LEVEL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT TEAM

The most successful school preparedness initiatives begin with commitment from the executive level. The District Level Emergency Management Team should include the school superintendent, school principals, police and fire representatives, facilities management, business manager, mental health and/or special education coordinators, transportation representative, food service representative, technology representative, media/communications person, professional educators, school safety coordinator (if applicable), and nursing supervisor or designee.

Consistent with the Unified Command structure of the Incident Command System (ICS), the respective executives commit resources from their organizations to support the school safety program (e.g., representatives to serve on the School Level Crisis Response Teams), but continue to maintain direction and control of those resources.

The general responsibilities of the District Level Emergency Management Team include:

- Plan and drill an all-hazards approach for issues that could affect the community as a whole;
- Serve as champions for the school safety program;
- Collaborate to set policies and procedures to support school safety program;
- Commit resources from their respective agencies to serve on the District Level Emergency Management Team, support development and review of crisis plans, provide training, and other efforts required by the school safety program

SCHOOL LEVEL CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM

The School Level Crisis Response Team includes designated personnel from an individual school who are given specific responsibilities during a crisis. This school level team includes school administrators, teachers, and staff who are trained in, and capable of providing the services needed during the immediate, short-term response to a school crisis. Crisis incidents may include, but are not limited to: shelter-in-place, evacuation, lockdown and enhanced lockdown, medical emergencies, and accidents.

COMPONENTS:

- Principal and/or Assistant Principal
- Head Custodian
- School Resource Officer
- Local Fire Representative and EMS
- Food Service
- School Nurse
- Guidance Staff, School Psychologist, School Adjustment Counselor, and School Social Worker
- Administrative Assistant
- Other Teachers and Staff

Each School Level Crisis Response Team has a management structure to designate the roles of each member, including the person in command. Members of the School Level Crisis Response Team may also be asked to contribute in the following ways:

- Assist in the conceptualization and implementation of prevention programs.
- Prepare for, assess, and respond to threats or acts of school violence.
- Commit to attend trainings as determined by the Executive Team.
- Turn over command of an incident to the scene commander or senior officer when required.
- Participate in after-action debriefings.
- Respond to incidents impacting a school within their district when called upon by the District Level Emergency Management Team.

CRISIS RECOVERY TEAM (CRT)

Comprised of district mental health professionals. Team members offer support to students, faculty, staff, and families before, during, and following a traumatic event. The Crisis Recovery Team includes school psychologists, social workers, adjustment counselors, guidance counselors, and other appropriately-trained officials from the district. Not all communities are large enough to staff this team but larger communities would benefit from having this important response team.

SUPPLEMENTAL RESOURCES

While training and experience will continuously enhance the expertise of a District Level Emergency Management Team, it is not possible for individuals to develop the level of expertise required to address all types of incidents. As such, it often makes sense for the District Level Emergency Management Team to develop “reach back” support. These supplemental resources would be able to provide subject matter expertise in areas that may be required to handle particular incidents. Based on the anticipated needs of a school district, the District Level Emergency Management Team should explore different

alternatives for having these subject matter experts available, and should have in place procedures for how these resources will be activated during a crisis or when otherwise needed.

COMPONENTS:

- **Explosives Detection Canine**
to respond to incidents involving a bomb threat. In many instances, local police departments are already familiar with canine units that are available to support their jurisdiction, and have a procedure to activate that resource. In such cases, local school districts should have protocols in place to address bomb threats and the subsequent use of bomb detection K-9 units. Always follow the lead of the responding detection K-9 teams, as they are experts in their field.
- **Computer Forensics/Crimes Specialist**
to support investigations involving online threats or other illegal activities where a computer is used, or to provide risk assessments, public awareness, and cyber-crime training to members of the school community. Your local District Attorney’s Office and The Commonwealth Fusion center are two excellent resources.
- **Metal Detectors/X-Ray Machines**
hand held and/or walk-through metal detectors and X-ray machines for controlled entrance or exit. There are companies that provide this technical assistance and equipment for a fee. Communities that are served by **NEMLEC** receive this equipment and personnel to operate it through the already established cooperative partnership with the **STARS** team.

TRAINING FOR DISTRICT LEVEL AND SCHOOL LEVEL TEAMS

Members of District and School teams should receive specialized training and attain a greater level of experience and expertise in dealing with a school crisis. Members of the team should participate, as a group, in regular training sessions. The following are examples of the type of training personnel should participate in: All Hazards School Safety

- Incident Command System (ICS) for Schools*
- Mental Health Training
- CPR/AED Training
- FBI/United States Secret Service Threat Analysis
- Critical Incident Management
- Developing and Implementing Operational Plans
- Developing After-Action Reports
- Determining the Level of Threat through Content Analysis
- Computer Crimes and Internet Safety
- Crisis Response Trainings

*Incident Command Training (ICS) for schools was a Presidential mandate in 2005.

When called upon, members of a District Level Emergency Management Team respond to incidents impacting a school within their district. These incidents may involve threats or acts of violence, hate crimes, vandalism, fatalities, suicides, or other crises.

AFTER A MAJOR INCIDENT, EVERYONE IS ALWAYS IN A HURRY TO LEAVE AND IF YOU SCHEDULE AN AFTER ACTION MEETING AT A LATER DATE, IT MAY BE HARD TO GET MULTIPLE DISCIPLINES BACK TOGETHER. IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING A CRITICAL INCIDENT IS A GOOD TIME TO DISCUSS WHAT WENT WRONG AND WHAT WENT RIGHT AND AT LEAST GET KEY POINTS THAT CAN BE FOLLOWED UP ON AT A LATER DATE.

CASE STUDY - Winchester Public Schools, Winchester, MA | Best Practices and Lessons Learned

District Level Emergency Management Team

Summary: Emergencies are unexpected, unpredictable, and take many forms. No one can be fully prepared for everything that may happen, but some simple measures are helpful in any emergency. One such measure is to establish and train School Level Crisis Response Teams.

Description: The Winchester School District has established a district-based Incident Management Team (IMT)* made up of a representative from each school and the Central Office, as well as a representative from the Winchester Police and Fire Departments. The team is co-chaired by police, fire and school representatives and acts as a steering committee, developing plans, procedures and providing additional support to the schools during the course of an incident. The team is also responsible for post incident evaluation and debriefings.

Winchester’s IMT coordinates the four functions of emergency management for the district-Mitigation/Prevention, Preparedness, Response, and Recovery. Also, the district has adopted the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and the IMT is responsible for ensuring compliance with NIMS and implementing the Incident Command System (ICS) during any incident.

In addition to the District IMT, each school in Winchester has a School Based Emergency Management Team comprised of administrators, teachers and staff, as well as Allied Health Care. Each member of the team is issued a copy of the Winchester Public Schools Incident Management Procedures reference book which also includes “Be Safe” floor plans for all schools. This tool provides a bulleted list of actions to take in many school based emergencies. The administrative office of each school also has an Incident Management “Go-Kit”. These kits contain valuable resources, including action guides, an incident management reference book, master attendance list, medical list, emergency call numbers, and other information or materials deemed necessary to manage an incident especially if unable to return to the building.

Finally, each school staff member in the district has a bright yellow folder assigned to them containing, class roster(s), medical list, a BowMac REDI Action Guide, and a red and green laminated 8x10 card to be used in taking a quick and consistent attendance at any time during an evacuation.

*Winchester’s IMT team is known, throughout the document, as the District Level Emergency Management Team.

MAJOR CRITICAL INCIDENT CHECKLIST



PREPARE PROMPT READY ABLE **RECOVER**
ESTABLISH CALM SECURE **PROTECTION** ACCESSIBLE
TEAM PROTOCOL SOLUTION PLAN **PREVENT**
RESPOND CODE **REINFORCE** TRAIN PRACTICE

Although they are rare in occurrence, a [major critical incident](#) in a school system can have significant and long lasting ramifications not only to the physical structure, but more importantly, to the emotional and psychological well-being of everyone involved in the community.

Below are some suggestions for you to consider as you enter the response, planning, and recovery phases of any critical incident. This list is meant to be a mental checklist, so that important steps are not forgotten in the middle of the response. It is not uncommon for local decision-makers to be pulled in so many directions that some considerations go overlooked. Some recommendations are particular to specific crises, and will be noted in obvious fashion.

People will be looking to YOU for answers. Although not the general rule in these situations, you will be best served if you keep an open mind and anticipate some chaos, rumors, potentially inappropriate behavior from inside and outside your district. The purpose of this word of caution is not meant to cause alarm, but just raise awareness. People at the focal point of a tragedy can tend to be hyper-focused as they deal with the ebb and flow of an incredible amount of information, and contingencies can occur without warning.

KEEP AN OPEN MIND AND SURROUND YOURSELF WITH YOUR STRONG, SUPPORTIVE PEOPLE; THEY WILL SERVE YOU WELL.

This chapter is designed to be a list of friendly reminders, and serve as a resource when you’re being pulled in a myriad of different directions. This resource has been compiled by your colleagues

from **NEMLEC STARS**, including public and private educators, administrators, school-based mental health professionals, police officers, and fire officials. It is meant as a guideline only, and conferring with the experts in your district is still the recommended approach as you deal with this incident.

Please remember to take care of yourself too, so that you may best serve your district in this incredible time of need. There are many public and private resources and colleagues in other school districts, as well as many other professionals statewide at your disposal, eager to help. You don’t have to navigate these waters alone!

The **NEMLEC STARS** team hopes this resource will serve you well, and we are here to support all **NEMLEC** school districts in any way we can.

IMMEDIATE CONCERNS FOR EARLY ON IN CRISIS

- Security of scene, students, staff, and first responders.
- Determine if evacuation/reunification will be utilized. Is transportation necessary?
 - » Local or regional buses available if needed?
 - » Separate and private area for parent/ student reunification.
 - » Are achievable goals different for before and/or after school hours, transition periods, etc?
- Communicate with staff, students, and families as often possible during and after the event.
- Communicate with pre-established relocation sites and transportation companies (private and public) for possible need of services.
- Activate local school-based and district-wide crisis teams, and crisis recovery teams.

- For Incident Command and leadership personnel representing all disciplines: Assign someone to scribe for you! You are making decisions. Someone else should be documenting for you, in a clear and concise manner for later review, and harvesting info for reports, potential recovery of financial losses, and protection during litigation, to name a few examples.
- Contact appropriate public safety officials, district/regional crisis teams, superintendent of schools, city/town management, DPW, other schools/organizations etc., that can support your needs.
- Early on in the incident, you should exchange cell phone/email contact info with major decision-makers and planners on scene, to account for communication after hours and in the days to come.
- Sign-in sheets for major planning meetings. Who was there? This helps later on in reporting.
- Physically, where are immediately affected families relative to this incident? Is a School/Law Enforcement liaison necessary? For how long?
- Do I need to cancel classes for this school, all schools in district?
 - » Depends on scope and significance of crisis
- Do I need to cancel any impacted after school activities (plays, clubs, sports) in district or traveling outside of district?
- Safety check of community. Who else is affected? What about when school is not in session (holiday/seasonal breaks)? Consider the ripple effect on your community.
- Identify chain of command. Is it a unified command in some areas and not in others? Can it be flexible in some parts? I.e, District Attorney, superintendent of schools, police chief, fire chief, etc. Who are the major players? Who has what role and authority? Keep an open line of communication to work collectively toward a common purpose: the fullest recovery of the school community possible.
- Identify “go-to” staff in your building or in district that you can lean on for a variety of necessary tasks: liaison between police, victims’ families,

perpetrator’s (if student) family, scribe/record keeping, and helping to establish a memorial, etc.

- You will not be able to stay ahead of social media, but getting out some information from a public information officer as soon as possible may reduce rumors and false stories. If you have the ability, maintain your monitoring and info sharing. **CAUTION: Be mindful of sharing confidential and/or sensitive information.**

ONGOING ISSUES AND PLANNING

- Addressing faculty and students in separate assemblies/classrooms.
 - » Address faculty first for crisis briefing, formulate/advise of plans, then address students.
 - » Handouts can be provided for faculty and students on dealing with grief and other emergencies.
 - » Consider having an additional faculty meeting at the end of the day for briefing and review of self-care guidelines.
- Hold off-site meetings if appropriate – consider if law enforcement security is needed.
- Remember the athletic director, coaches, custodial, support staff, substitutes and others that may not be in building on a daily basis. The message/plan should account for all of your staff, whether full-time or not.
- Is/was the student on an IEP? Does that affect anything in your response and planning?
- Consider religious, cultural, ethnicity factors – do you need translation services? Will it be necessary to translate written or electronic materials?
- Parent information nights – great way to share information on response and planning, and how you will be helping their children.
 - » Consult with law enforcement and DA’s office if crisis involves a crime about what can be lawfully shared so as to not impede the overall investigation and future trial if applicable.
 - » Handouts should be provided to parents on grief and/or other appropriate material relative to the critical incident.

- Provide coverage or extra coverage for victim’s classes – who?
 - » How to handle the classroom? Is any victim a student or a teacher?
 - » Who will take over teaching? How do you select them temp vs. permanent? Support them; this is a difficult new role for them.
- Provide extra substitutes for the hallways and common areas for the first few days of school to help cover classes for staff that may need a break and to help identify students that are having difficulty and getting them to help.
- Receiving and managing community support.
 - » Outpouring of support, donations, food, flowers, cards.
 - » You may have to identify publicly what you need/don’t need and/or want as your school can be overwhelmed.
- Relative to the school community and responding personnel, remember food, hydration, sanitary facilities, and tissues, for your staff and other people present helping out.
- Make available various stress-reduction activities (coloring, stress balls, etc.)
- Union/Labor management concerns.
- Legal concerns – advise/consult legal counsel.
 - » The local municipality’s legal counsel, as well as school department counsel should be contacted immediately to inform them of the incident and to ask for advice for immediate concerns and for the duration of the incident.
- Do you need to remove victims/perpetrators from: *(Check with law enforcement entity if a crime involved – any of this may have significant evidentiary value!)*
 - » Emergency notification systems (Connect-Ed, Alert Now etc.).
 - » Mailing lists.
 - » Class lists electronic and/or paper, grade book, substitute plans, go-kits, recess roster.
 - » School website.
 - » Voice mail inbox for staff member.

» Social media sites, email portals, faculty/student management portals.

- Clean out the classroom and/or office of the deceased staff member.
- Consider what to do with displayed work of the deceased student and/or perpetrator.
- Clean out hallway locker, locker room and/or team room, and/or classroom, and after school activity locker storage area.
- Adjust configuration of the seating in classroom of student that is deceased and/or perpetrator.
- When necessary, meet with other district administration to provide updated information, and support and guidance for the other schools that will be dealing with the incident as well.
 - » Inform private and charter school within the district for the same reasons and inform neighboring districts when appropriate.
 - » Did the victim/suspect have siblings at their schools?
 - » Reminder: Do not send notification to the family of the direct victim (ex: the child killed in an accident).

MEMORIALS

- Temporary (set a deadline and communicate).
- Permanent: appropriateness, location, what does it look like, how will having a permanent memorial affect students, staff, the community? Is it a good idea?
- Easels, with white boards, markers, post it notes, condolences book.
 - » Monitor content to ensure that it is appropriate.
- How has your district done them in the past?
 - » Under what circumstances? Consider issue of setting expectations/precedent beforehand.
- Location appropriate – safety/emotional considerations, expectations from others/groups.
- Consider “living memorials”
 - » Donations to causes that victim was involved in, charity drives, road races, etc. Consider having community members/parents take charge of living memorials instead of the school.

- Consider need for counselors on hand when first established, especially if on site of school grounds.
- Community vigils which may impact your school community, may occur.

MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS

- Provide staging off of school grounds.
 - » Reasonable and lawful site lines for photo opportunities for them, or they will find a way – very resource draining and upsetting for staff and students.
- Where do the communication/press briefings occur?
 - » Neutral area vs. school grounds. Why? Will be driven by type of crisis.
 - » Are you looking to show school is safe?
 - » Do you hold off-site to be more sensitive to victims?
- Who is the local Public Information Officer?
- Unified press releases where appropriate.
- Inform school committee, and city council, selectmen, etc. to keep public comments to themselves for the duration of the incident. One spokesperson will release statements to the press and community.
- Anticipate that you may be called at work, home, or cell phone.
- Be aware of media interviewing students and faculty as they leave school grounds or at their homes, as well as neighbors; remind staff that you will have ONE designee to speak.
- Be aware of the many methods used by media to gain access to staff and students (blast emails to faculty – harvested from your school website, kids via Facebook and other forms of social media, such as Twitter) asking them to get photos of scene for them, make statements etc.
- What is the information process to communicate to staff, students, community?
- Do you need to obtain/hire a press liaison with experience in school crisis communication management?

- Staff, students, and parents will want to hear from school leadership!
- Morning announcements – how does that look?
 - » One announcement from Principal.
 - Over PA (**not recommended**).
 - In an assembly?
 - » Announcement read by each teacher at a designated time, from scripted and authorized statement with time to process and ask questions.

ANTICIPATING QUESTIONS

- How do I tell staff, students, parents, community _____ occurred?
- Is there a script I can use, resources at my disposal?
- Parents coming to school/calling.
- Staff, student, parents – am I safe, is the building safe, is my child safe?
- Personal possessions – **respectful of family's wishes.**
 - » Are they of evidentiary significance? Always partner with law enforcement to be sure.
- What do I do with the seat/desk in classroom?
- What do I do with the contents of the hallway locker/physical education locker and/or team/extracurricular activity locker and/or team room?
- What do I do with any school work on display in the classroom, around the school, and/or on the school website?
- What do I do with personal storage in other classrooms like art, music, vocational classrooms?
- What do I do about social media accounts of victims, perpetrators?
- How do I ensure removal of ConnectEd, email address, voice left on school phone message, attendance sheets, office mail box, Student Information System?

TRAUMA SCENES

- This process **must** be authorized through local Police Chief/District Attorney's Office.
 - » Maintain integrity of investigation. If investigation is hampered by the release of inappropriate information, the community may not achieve full closure, district could face legal action. Talk with District Attorney's Office and local Police Chief first prior to cleaning or altering in any way.
- Closing off scene of trauma/death. For how long?
 - » Can it be re-opened?
 - » Should you re-open it?
- Outside professional cleaning and sanitation services.
 - » It is highly recommended that you not allow cell phones to enter the area (so no photos can be taken and leaked to media/social media).
- Thorough second and third checks to make sure no evidence of scene is visible or left behind, *after* the cleaning.

WAKES/FUNERALS

- Family's wishes?
- Who will be attending?
- How to arrange for transportation?
 - » Coordinated travel?
 - » Staff and students going on their own?
- If using buses, will parents be joining their kids on the bus?
- Police escort possible for longer distances?
- Walk through at funeral home or church?
- Answer questions as they arise, regarding what a wake or funeral service looks like, might be their first one and may be experiencing anxiety; encourage students to talk to their parents/guardians.
 - » Utilize mental health staff to work with students directly impacted (sports teams, band, etc.).
- Arranging coverage for staff to attend (substitutes/administrative coverage), as well as extra coverage in hallways if appropriate.

- Not every child or staff member will want to go or feel comfortable going and may express the desire to stay behind – they should be supported in this decision and not made to feel badly about it.
- Consider if sports teams/extracurricular groups will be impacted.

COUNSELING

- What crisis services do I have at my disposal?
- How do I set it up? Who should coordinate?
- Implement the District's counseling team or pre-established, contracted, outside service providers, if you have one.
- Provide multiple private counseling areas on-scene or off-site if appropriate.
 - » It is advisable to have a separate area for staff.
- Identify vulnerable students and staff as quickly as possible through school officials, student reporting, on-scene crisis counselors.
- Provide "escorts" to triage/support areas to prevent flight of emotionally overcome staff and students.
- Psychological triage and identify those in need of future resources.
 - » Is it an emergency? Get help immediately, if not, provide referrals and/or guidance for next steps.
- Long term resources: Who is available? Who do I trust to refer to?
- Use caution when accepting help from volunteer crisis groups you know nothing about. Fully vet them to ensure licensure and that services offered/background are appropriate to your needs. Crises draw out all kinds of people who may be looking to have access to the crisis/crime scene and/or offering services for a fee (just generating business). A service that charges is not necessarily bad; just know who you are dealing with.
- Teaching phase: Have a qualified clinician provide a separate session to help educate staff to look out for warning signs for colleagues and students.
 - » Consider providing separate sessions for parents, also.

- Don't forget: Siblings/family members (victim or perpetrator) in school affected, other schools (could be student or staff) in district.
- Neighboring districts? What is the impact? Media coverage/harassment, bullying, etc. – contact and alert them. Bring them into the planning if deemed necessary and appropriate, i.e., if there is a significant bridge of your crisis into one or more of their schools (siblings, staff related to victim/perpetrator).
- Can you provide extra staff, substitutes, and public safety personnel, when students return to school?
- Establish a plan for staff and student return. Is it segmented? Over hours? Days? Longer?
- Include first responders in your ongoing counseling plan, when appropriate.
- Handouts for staff, students, emergency responders, and families for signs and symptoms of trauma and grief.
- Don't forget to include the night shift staff, as they may have a reaction/relationship with the emergency and/or student or staff member involved.

FUTURE CONCERNS

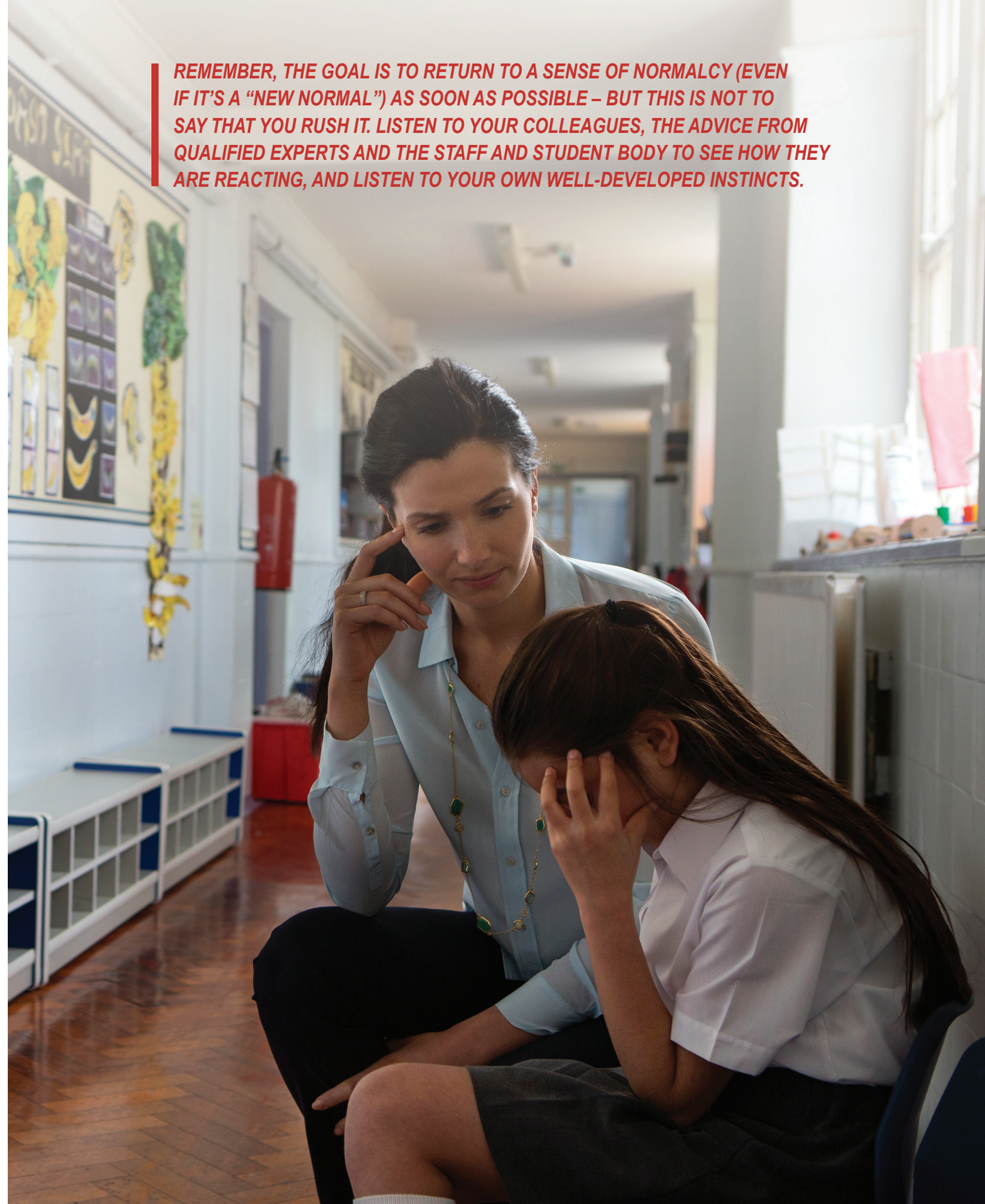
- Check in with administration and staff at periodic intervals.
 - » How are they? How are the students?
- Pay close attention to circle of friends, faculty, and family around victim(s) and perpetrator(s).
- Have you identified any long term effects and/or mental health needs?
- Prepare for plans for uniform recognition by teams or clubs.
- Prepare for recognition (or not), at graduation and/or in yearbook, depending on the age of the child.
- Anniversary dates/important dates: court hearings, motions, similar news occurring in the future that may lead media to re-examine your case, other anniversary dates for victims, staff, students, perpetrators that may share a closeness to cause an impact.

- School should consider putting a notice in student file (siblings, too, if appropriate) if impacted by crisis/trauma, or death, to follow them as they move through system. This will warn of anniversary dates, and make faculty aware if similar situations arise. In the future you may see unexplained drop in performance, attendance, and/or discipline issues at certain times of year. New teachers may not understand why.
- Long term counseling or mental health support from professional local or state resources (grief and loss experts, trauma experts, Critical Incident Stress Debriefings).
- Students and staff will react to trauma and grief differently and at different times. Other events could trigger a relapse or first time reaction to this new incident and a past incident. The staff or student may not have any visible signs and symptoms but could a week, month, or year later.
- Consider seeking grant funding to support long range goals.
 - » A word of caution: grantors will often publicize the release of funds to local news outlets and this can have ill-effects on relations with victims' families, or even staff and students. Talk with grantor in advance and ask if award can be given without public fanfare normally associated with grant awards.

Keep a detailed list of actions taken during incident – remember your scribe.

Remember to stop occasionally, breathe, eat, and hydrate, and confer with a trustworthy confidant. You will be carrying the majority of a great deal of responsibility, and you must take care of yourself, too.

REMEMBER, THE GOAL IS TO RETURN TO A SENSE OF NORMALCY (EVEN IF IT'S A "NEW NORMAL") AS SOON AS POSSIBLE – BUT THIS IS NOT TO SAY THAT YOU RUSH IT. LISTEN TO YOUR COLLEAGUES, THE ADVICE FROM QUALIFIED EXPERTS AND THE STAFF AND STUDENT BODY TO SEE HOW THEY ARE REACTING, AND LISTEN TO YOUR OWN WELL-DEVELOPED INSTINCTS.





In a crisis, emergency responders need to know the location of not only the classes and other important rooms, but also the locations of critical infrastructure vulnerabilities, utilities, and other significant data. There are two foundational components: floor plans and door numbering. Floor plans and door numbering for each school facility should be developed and provided to local public safety and school officials in both hard-copy and electronic formats. In **NERAC** Communities, **NERAC** and the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security (EOPSS) have provided critical funds for mapping new schools and providing updates on existing plans for schools having gone under significant construction, so that floor plan mapping can be up-to-date and shared with the appropriate public safety partners.

FLOOR PLAN

An integral part of the emergency response protocol is to have up-to-date schematic building and floor plans (i.e., *STARS* Floor Plans) available to emergency responders, including police, fire, and school officials, who constitute the core elements of prevention and response to school-based violence or threats of violence in schools (see Figure 3). This may also be used for an all-hazards incident, such as a weather or bio-hazard event. The availability of floor plans will enhance the efficiency and capabilities of local officials for assessing and responding to threats of violence in school facilities. Floor plans provide first responders with advanced information about a school's physical layout, surroundings, and access points before arriving at the location and entering a school building, thus enabling responders to expedite their intervention.

The following highlights what is contained in an effective floor plan:

- A detailed drawing of the footprint of a subject building and the outline of the building's architectural contents.
- Creation of a schematic building and floor plan for all floors of all designated school buildings on the school grounds. This must include the basement, crawl space, attic, and the roof.
- The schematic building and floor plan include entrances, egresses, doors, windows, stairs, hallways, elevators, and all rooms.
- Buildings have letters corresponding to each side and are clearly labeled. "A" designates the side of the building with the front entrance "B", "C" and "D" follows clockwise in alphabetical order.
- Where applicable, school buildings with independent zones should clearly mark these zones in the building.
- A key provides the symbols that represent each of the following items: window, single door, double door, elevator, chair lift, stairs, ramp, gas shut-off, water shut-off, power shut-off, sprinkler shut-off, fire extinguisher, and generator.
- The schematic floor plan of the roof includes all ventilating shafts, egresses and potential egresses.
- Floor plan must be architecturally accurate and proportionately to scale.
- Floor plan must include a table with the following information: district, school name, address, school hours, in-session contact, off-hours contact, and any additional notes.
- All doors in the building must be marked indicating which way they open.
- If a school has cameras and keyless entry these locations should also be located on the floor plans with appropriate symbols that designate their locations and the direction the camera is facing.

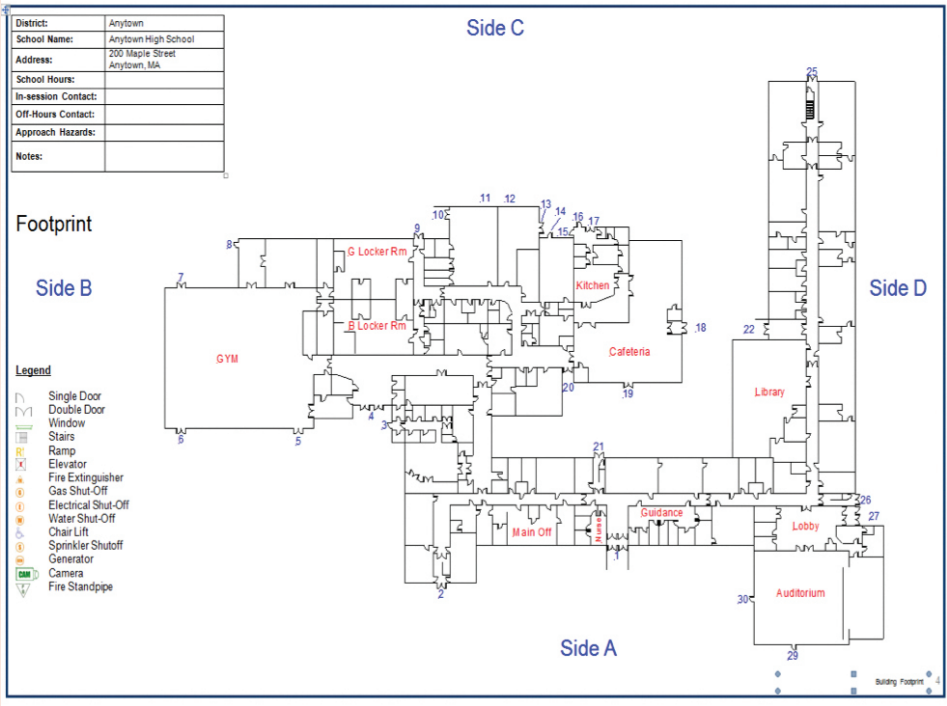


Figure 3 – Sample STARS Floor Plan



Figure 4 – Sample Door Numbering with Reflective Material

- The location of AED devices should also be shown.
- Floor plans must be in a paper format and in an easily accessed electronic format with the ability to be updated by the school and public safety officials, including dispatch centers at police and fire headquarters, laptops of emergency vehicles and/or command centers, staff and emergency responders phones, iPads, and other devices as determined by the district, when needed.
- Floor plans (and numbering) must be updated following any renovations or additions.

DOOR NUMBERING

As an additional safety feature, all exterior doors at school facilities should be clearly numbered, on both the inside and outside of the doorway, with a reflective material for easy identification in the event of a quick entry/exit during a critical situation (see Figure 4). For compatibility with floor plans, and to encourage a standardized approach, door number “1” starts with a school’s main entrance, and increases numerically by one for each exterior doorway moving clockwise around the school building.

CASE STUDY - Wilmington Public Schools, Wilmington, MA | Best Practices and Lessons Learned

Importance of developing, sharing, and using school floor plans.

Summary: It is well established that the best school district emergency plans are developed cooperatively with local school officials and representatives from police, fire and other local entities in a cooperative spirit, thus allowing the plan to be the most comprehensive it can be. One of the hallmarks of a thorough safety plan is an up-to-date and accurate floor plan.

Description: School systems are well served by partnering with a professional entity to develop accurate floor plans for its entire school district. Accurate floor plans, and the availability of these plans, help local officials in drilling, planning, evaluation, and responding in an emergency.

Drilling: Local officials have used floor plans to coordinate room assignments during lockdown, shelter in place, evacuation, and A.L.I.C.E. training and drills. The plans are invaluable to track room assignments for participants, trainers, and the district safety team. This improves the outcome of the training and improves overall safety of any drill.

Planning: Officials can use the plans to coordinate narcotics detection police K-9 searches, and in making assignments and reporting back to command when sections of the building are searched or a secondary search is needed.

Evaluation: Local officials, such as school resource officers, partnering with school administrators and fire prevention officers for example, can routinely inspect the plans and buildings for any changes or deficiencies and report needed corrections to the District Level Crisis Response Team. Remember, these plans are often shared with regional and state first responders in a crisis, so they must be accurate.

It is recommended that districts also create a training program for all first responders using the floor plans and photos taken within each school. PowerPoint presentations can be used as an overview to show the building layout, door numbering, tactical considerations, and hazards. This type of training can be done as a roll call

training initiative. Follow-up walkthroughs are also important. Taking each shift and physically walking them through each building, thereby increasing familiarity with the building, is imperative. Hopefully, taking the time to do this will save precious time in the event of an actual crisis.

Responding: Occasionally, a school faces the challenge of a threat from within its school. When local police and fire officials need to respond and coordinate a search of the building, accurate floor plans help those unfamiliar with the building in their efforts to render the school as safe as possible. Often, outside resources such as mutual aid from area police and fire departments, personnel and K-9 units from state, regional and local teams are dispatched to assist the school community. Having floor plans in digital format on a computer, tablet, on a screen at an emergency operations center, or in paper form – physically in the hands of command staff and responders – aids in the swift and coordinated response and recovery for the local school district.

Work with your local resources to formulate a set of accurate and detailed floor plans that show the overall layout of the building and grounds, detailed floor plans for each floor, important contact information, data on utilities, aerial views, and any other information designed to help responders and district officials prevent, respond to, or recover from a school based crisis.

FLOOR PLANS CAN BE USED FOR A VARIETY OF REASONS, SUCH AS PLANNING SMALL SCALE SCHOOL ACTIVITIES, ASSISTING IN EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS, AND RESPONDING TO AN UNTHINKABLE TRAGEDY.





Even the best emergency response and crisis management plans can be rendered useless without appropriate training and practice, which are essential for the successful implementation of any crisis plan. Consistent with best practices, districts should train school administrators, teachers and staff, and local first responders. These individuals then need the opportunity to practice what they’ve learned through exercises designed to test plans, procedures, systems, and personnel.

The content of a school district’s emergency operations plan is driven by a comprehensive assessment of the risks and hazards faced by the district and its schools. This assessment must also inform a district’s training and exercise program. Each year, the District Level Emergency Management Team should develop a training and exercise schedule that is comprehensive and meets the specific needs of the district and community.

Often, training and drills identify issues that must be addressed in the emergency operations plan, such as problems with procedures for communication and response. Teachers also need training in how to manage students during and after a crisis, especially those experiencing panic reactions. Careful consideration of these issues will improve your emergency operations plan and better prepare your community to respond to an actual crisis.

It is recommended that all superintendents, assistant superintendents, business managers, principals, assistant principals, guidance counselors, school psychologists, nurses, head maintenance person for each school, and athletic directors be certified in [NIMS ICS](#) levels [100](#) and [700](#). Staff in a management position should also take, at a minimum, level [200](#). All staff also have the option of level [800](#).

It is recommended that each school district has a designated “point person” to assure compliance.

TRAINING

Training is vital to ensuring personnel are prepared to carry out their responsibilities during a crisis. The type and level of training that should be provided to school and emergency response personnel will depend on the roles each must play in overall school preparedness and response. A school district and community’s training program must be tailored for specific needs. For successful exercises and events, school administration and staff should have appropriate ICS training. The Training and Exercise Matrix (figure 5) provides some guidelines and recommendations for suggested training exercises and recommended participants.

Although more specialized training should be reserved for public safety personnel and members of the District Level Emergency Management Team, basic training, including an orientation to a school’s crisis plan, should be provided for all students, faculty and staff (including but not limited to, substitute teachers, custodial staff, food services and transportation) as well as the community’s first responders.



FIGURE 5 - TRAINING AND EXERCISE MATRIX

Training Curriculum	District Level Emergency Management Team	First Responders	School Administrators and School Level Crisis Response Team	Teachers and Staff	Students
National Incident Management System (NIMS)	•	•	•		
Incident Command System (ICS)	•	•	•		
Threat Assessments	•	•	•	•	•
Exercise Planning	•	•	•		
Exercise Assessment	•	•	•	•	•
School’s Crisis/ Evacuation Plan Orientation	•	•	•	•	•
Position/ Responsibilities in Crisis Response	•	•	•	•	•

TRAINING EXERCISES

Fortunately, critical incidents are not a common occurrence for most schools. As such, many school officials have not faced the challenges that come with managing a crisis. However, it is often said that the best type of training is experience. To minimize anxiety and increase the likelihood of a positive outcome in an actual crisis, training exercises are a key component to the overall operations plan.

Traditionally, training exercises are created for staff. Moving forward, students must be included in such exercises. Training exercises for staff, students, and emergency responders are an important element of a district’s overall preparedness. Most students and staff know what to do in case of a fire because routine

fire drills are required by law. However, knowledge of what to do during a different type of crisis is much less common. Thus, school districts and communities should require other types of drills as well (e.g., shelter-in-place, lockdown/enhanced lockdown, evacuation, and reunification). Such exercises allow school and emergency response personnel to evaluate what works and what needs to be improved.

The type and scope of exercises vary, and should be selected and designed based on the unique needs of each district and individual schools. In accordance with US Department of Homeland Security guidelines, a district’s exercise program should follow a “building-block” approach, wherein the complexity of exercises

progresses over time. The typical progression for a school district and community may involve tabletop exercises, drills (announced/unannounced), and full-scale exercises.

Regardless of the type of training exercise, each typically follows a standardized process that includes design, conduct, and evaluation.

- **Design** involves one or more planning meetings with an exercise planning team, during which exercise objectives are defined, the scenario is developed, and exercise documentation is drafted.
- **Conduct** includes setup, briefings, facilitation and/or exercise control, and wrap-up activities.
- **Evaluation** consists of a debriefing with participants and exercise evaluators and controllers, development of an After Action Report (AAR), and creation of an Improvement Plan (IP).

Districts should document trainings and drills, which could potentially reduce liability risk. A sample form is provided to you on our companion website titled, [School Safety Review and Compliance Checklist](#). This form includes training dates for staff and students, school safety assessment completion, as well as types and dates of drills and should be given to your School Safety Coordinator. Other forms available are: [drill assignment](#) identification of evaluators and location, [checklists for each evaluator](#), [administration all clear checklist](#), [surveys](#) for staff and students after drill completion, and letters to parent/guardians announcing [relocation sites](#) and [drills](#) that will take place during the year. All examples of these documents are found in the companion website under the specific drill you would like to run.

TABLETOP EXERCISES

[Tabletop](#) exercises (TTXs) are informational training exercises intended to facilitate the testing, evaluation, and practice of a school’s crisis response plan, and promote group problem-solving. TTXs often involve school staff and emergency responders discussing the steps they would take to respond to a crisis. During the exercise, participants are presented with a

hypothetical scenario to which they must collectively develop a response plan. Participants are encouraged to discuss issues in depth, identify alternative courses of action, and make decisions using a collaborative, problem-solving approach.

Many schools have found tabletop exercises very useful in practicing and testing the procedures specified in their crisis plan, and identifying gaps in the plan. Participants are allowed to apply and share their knowledge and skills to a set of problems that arise from the scenario. The discussion is moderated by an exercise controller/facilitator, who presents the scenario, facilitates the discussion, and summarizes the agreed upon resolution. District-wide tabletop exercises have proven to be helpful. They can include bus company employees, hospitals, other schools in town (including private schools and administration), police, fire, and local government (city or town hall).

DRILLS

A drill is a coordinated, supervised activity used by schools to practice or test a specific function or procedure. Unlike a tabletop or full-scale exercise, drills are not typically driven by a hypothetical scenario. Rather, they are designed to evaluate performance of a specific operation. The most common types of drills in a school are fire drills and lockdown drills. However, drills can, and should, go beyond these. Other examples of drills may include shelter-in-place, enhanced lockdowns, evacuation, reunification, and/or notification procedures.

Letters should go home at the beginning of each school year, announcing that drills will take place several times during the year. A separate letter should go home to announce relocation/reunification procedures and pre-determined sites. Refer to the companion website for examples of these [letters](#) and a [brochure](#) that also could be used to announce relocation sites.

It is recommended that the drills referenced below take place a minimum of three times during the year, *in addition* to the minimum four required fire drills conducted with local fire departments. It is advisable to conduct these drills early in the school year, at varying times of day, with reinforcement drills throughout the year. Refer to the companion website for examples of documents to be used in effective drills including: [checklists for each floor](#) (allowing the principal to know everyone is ready to end the drill), [district forms](#) (to be compiled within the district to prove drills have been done at each school), and [evaluations from staff](#). All documents can be found in the companion website under the Prepare Tab.

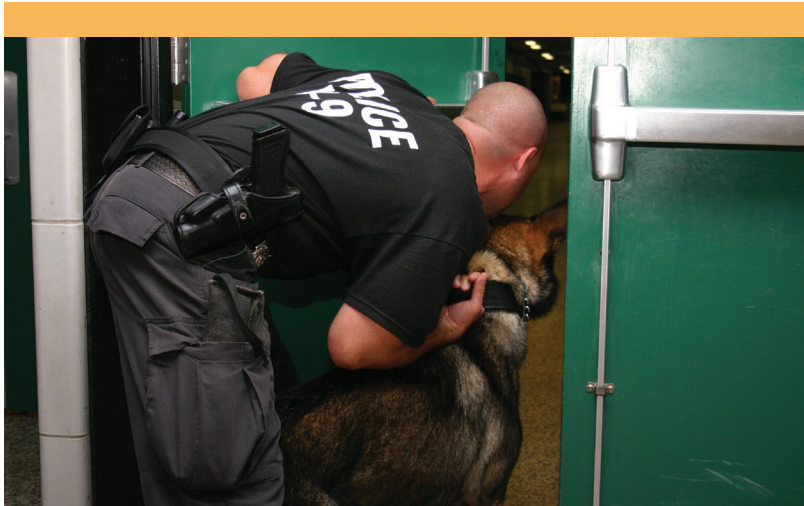
TYPES OF EXERCISES AND DRILLS

- District Tabletops.
- Building-Based Tabletops.
- Announced Building-Based Drills.
- Unannounced Building-Based Drills.
It is mandatory that a minimum of four (4) fire drills be conducted in each school, each year. Within the first three days of school, every student must be advised of fire drill procedures or shall take part in a drill. Please see a copy of the Massachusetts State Fire Marshall [School Fire Prevention](#) letter from August of 2016 for further guidance.
- Changing Types of Drills: Shelter-In-Place, Lockdown, Enhanced Lockdown, Environmental, Evacuation, and Chemical.
- Changing Times of Drills: Before/After School, Transition Periods, Lunch, Blocking Hallways/ Stairwells, and during different times of the year.
- After-Hours Local Police SWAT Drills: Local police should have time in school buildings before an event, and/or full-scale drills, to give them a chance to see the buildings and the unique challenges that each presents.
- Relocation/Reunification Drills.
- Full-Scale District Drills.
- Bus Drills (2/year).

K-9 SEARCHES

Many school districts choose to have local and regional law enforcement conduct searches for illegal substances during the school day. These can be combined with drills that are conducted during an overall plan for drills during the year. The searches are conducted within the school and in the parking lots of high schools. For example, a school could combine an evacuation of the building and have the K-9s go through the building and check lockers that may be inside of classrooms. A school could conduct a shelter-in-place drill while the K-9s search the lockers in hallways. Refer to the resource section of the companion web site for documents about [K-9 searches](#) and forms that could be used during the searches. Documents that can help you plan and implement this exercise, include letters to staff and home announcing the drill took place, how to organize staff, and either evacuating students and staff inside or outside the building during the drill. These drills could be completed in less than 15-20 minutes if completed with proper organization.

IF THERE IS A LARGE SCALE TRAINING, CONSIDER USING YOUR MASS NOTIFICATION SYSTEM TO NOTIFY THE PUBLIC AND REQUEST THAT THEY AVOID THAT AREA.



FULL-SCALE EXERCISES

Full-Scale Exercises (FSEs) are the most complex in the series of exercises. They typically involve district and individual school personnel, as well as emergency responders. FSEs allow a district and community to test many facets of crisis response and recovery. They can help to clarify roles and responsibilities, identify gaps in resources needed to implement a school’s crisis plan, and ultimately improve individual and team performance.

FSEs involve the actual response, mobilization of resources (e.g., fire apparatus and school buses) and commitment of personnel. These exercises typically involve the participation of students, faculty and staff, as well as responders from a district’s local police, fire, EMS, and emergency management departments.

In some instances, the mutual-aid partners of local public safety agencies are also activated for the exercise.

The level of support needed to conduct an FSE is greater than is needed during tabletops or drills. The exercise team includes both controllers and evaluators. Controllers help to ensure that participants’ role-play and response activities remain within the predefined boundaries of the exercise, and include scenario elements to simulate real events. Evaluators observe and document behaviors and activities and compare them against expected outcomes (i.e., established crisis plan, policies and procedures, and standard or best practices).

CASE STUDY - Wilmington Public Schools, Wilmington, MA | Best Practices and Lessons Learned
Implementing Change in your Lockdown Procedures

Summary: Just as many people may perceive it is dangerous to walk through a shopping mall parking lot at night, despite crime analysis of the parking lot showing little, if any, reported crime; students, faculty, and parents also fear the threat of violence in our schools. Though our nation’s schools are still the safest place for your children to be during the day, that does not mean we shouldn’t do everything we can to prevent violence and prepare our school population for the possibility of a crisis. Giving the school’s occupants up-to-date practices and methods, allowing them to participate in their own preparedness, and taking their concerns seriously, goes a long way in ensuring a physically and emotionally safe school. Furthermore, it increases the likelihood of survival should the unthinkable happen.

The Wilmington Public School District, Wilmington Police, and Wilmington Fire partnered for several years in researching, evaluating, and implementing changes in its standardized lockdown procedures. The changes were necessitated by local officials’ desire to give its students and staff more options in an active killer situation. It was determined that one single protocol cannot possibly cover the myriad of responses potentially available to the occupants of a building during such a crisis.

Description: The Wilmington Public School District has a history of long term partnerships with the Wilmington Police, Wilmington Fire, and other local entities in working to prevent, plan, respond, and recover as it relates to a wide variety of potential school-based incidents. The district meets monthly in a collaborative partnership to exchange ideas and concerns, and has a chairperson assigned to coordinate assignments and set goals for the team. This long-term partnership, spanning several decades, proved invaluable in initiating change from its traditional lockdown program to the *A.L.I.C.E. program*.

A.L.I.C.E. is an acronym used to remember/describe:

Alert

Get the word out! Informing staff and students there is an armed intruder in the building instead of using codes. Use clear, concise, plain language to convey the type and location of the event.

Lockdown

This is a good starting point. We will continue to lockdown students in a secure area, but enhance it to help strengthen the physical security.

Inform

Communication keeps the shooter off-balance and allows for good decision making. Update school community on current location of the threat

Counter

Apply skills to distract, confuse, and/or gain control (swarm, which is part of the “gain control” component, was only taught to staff and middle school and high school-aged children)

Evacuate

Training on safer and more strategic evacuation procedures. Creating distance between students/staff and the threat

Evaluation: In April of 2011, Wilmington Police personnel attended an A.L.I.C.E. Instructor program. Intrigued by this dynamic change in philosophy learned in this training, district leadership began to review if this new approach could work. Encouraged by the paradigm shift, police officials met with the school superintendent to discuss the topic and get their feedback.

At the next District Level Emergency Management Team meeting, a police representative briefed the members on A.L.I.C.E. for their consideration. The team spent time evaluating and debating the merits of the program, as any healthy team should do.

Encouraged by the common sense approach to the training, the school superintendent asked police officials to present at the summer 2011 faculty leadership meeting. When the presentation was over, the superintendent invited her staff to provide their feedback. The proposed changes were received in an overwhelmingly positive manner, though many questions still existed.

Planning: As school began in 2011 the District Level Emergency Management Team continued to meet to consider the proposed shift in thinking, debate the challenges of implementation, and begin outlining the steps necessary to plan, train staff, students and parents, and inform the general public. The team began developing a comprehensive plan and timeline.

In May 2012, members of the District Level Emergency Management Team presented its research and evaluation to the School Committee. With the School Committee’s support, the team then set a goal to implement the new protocol and train students and staff beginning the following school year.

As the 2012-13 school year began, the team recognized that a strict adherence to a timeline, dedicated assignments by team members for various tasks, and some creative scheduling would be necessary to implement the program. Pre-established cooperative partnerships resulted in a successful outcome.

In January 2013, local A.L.I.C.E. instructors presented to staff members at the Wilmington Middle School and High School during 40-minute “pre-training” A.L.I.C.E. overview sessions on early dismissal days. These sessions laid the foundation for the training to come.

Several weeks later, during a 3-hour curriculum improvement day, all staff from both schools convened at the high school for more advanced training and actual drilling. Instructors demonstrated evacuation procedures, lockdown and barricade techniques, and counter/swarm techniques. Four

separate drills were conducted, from basic lockdown to the other various components of A.L.I.C.E., so that participants could make critical decisions and act based on the information provided to them in those scenarios. This type of drilling enhances confidence of staff and students, provides verification that the target audience understands and can meet expectations, and provides essential feedback to district leaders.

A parent information night was then planned, and the full program was described to all in attendance using PowerPoint, video, and audio clips. Feedback was elicited for the following month, and student training sessions were administered to all students, by grade, in both schools. These trainings were provided by local A.L.I.C.E. instructors, with the help of other instructors throughout the region, highlighting the value of mutual aid partnerships.

This entire process was repeated with the staff, parents, and students at the primary schools in Wilmington during the winter of 2014, utilizing specialized age-appropriate “social stories” that were designed for the focused audiences of Pre-K & K, grades 1-3, and grades 4-5. These social stories also had an accompanying teacher’s guide. The Wilmington School District, in partnership with each school’s School Level Crisis Response Team, decided this information was best delivered to these sensitive age groups by their own teachers, the adults they most trust while away from home. While staff learned the full A.L.I.C.E. protocol, younger students learned all components except the swarm component within the counter strategy.

Drilling: In April 2013, both the Middle School and High School participated in drills administered by the District Level Emergency Management Team. Local A.L.I.C.E. instructors, as well as guest instructors from **NEMLEC STARS** were on hand to help with the oversight of the drills and provide valuable feedback to participants. This process was repeated at the

elementary schools, with age appropriate scenarios, in the spring of 2014.

Responding: The Wilmington School District team and all its partners firmly believe that providing occupants of its school buildings with **OPTIONS** to survive an active killer event increases the likelihood of success by building occupants, decreases the time an intruder has to attack potential victims, closes the gap between the time the shooter starts the event and police/civilian intervention, **EMPOWERS** staff, students, and parents and no longer limits occupants of any given building to one sole strategy (lockdown alone), which ultimately makes them easy victims.

Police Training: During this time, Wilmington Police training staff also taught blocks of classroom instruction covering an overview of A.L.I.C.E., as well as active shooter response and engagement practices, to Wilmington Police personnel. The training staff also provided enhanced medical training to police officers, including hemorrhage control, equipping officers with tourniquets and blood stopping agents, and other specialized gear. Wilmington Police provided on-shift training to Wilmington Fire, on A.L.I.C.E., reviewed the department’s active shooter response, and provided a joint medical training on hemorrhage control. The training culminated with day-long exercises for groups of officers in a local school, where training staff instructed on hallway clearing, stairwell clearing, room entries, and other protocols. The training culminated with force on force exercises using Simunitions non-lethal but realistic equipment.

CONCLUSION



PREPARE
ESTABLISH CALM

PROMPT

READY

ABLE

RECOVER
ACCESSIBLE

PROTECTION
TEAM

SOLUTION

PLAN

PREVENT
TRAIN

RESPOND

CODE

REINFORCE
PRACTICE

Creating a comprehensive crisis response plan for a school district requires significant time and effort from many stakeholders within the school community. A thorough examination of the district’s current plan or procedures will help guide your team in the right direction to enhance or create what is needed. It is important to acknowledge that this will be a lengthy process to ensure that the plan and protocols are tailored for your particular district.

In addition to a solid School Emergency Operations Plan to rely on for resources and guidance, it is critical that the personnel responsible for carrying out the plan have had sufficient practice and training. This must be accomplished with local law enforcement, the local fire department and any other community specific agencies that may offer assistance and response during a critical incident.

It is critical to address the importance of preventing, preparing and responding for possible incidents, it is equally important to dedicate the time to planning for the recovery of such incidents. Continued support during this phase is crucial to helping your community heal and move forward after an incident.

While this planning and preparing for crisis events can be daunting, it is important and valuable in helping your district to ensure the safety and well-being of your school community. Dedicating the time and effort to planning will ensure a more effective response and recovery if ever needed.

THERE ARE NO SHORT CUTS TO PROPER PLANNING, EDUCATING AND TRAINING FOR YOUR STAFF, STUDENTS, AND OTHER COMMUNITY MEMBERS.





The following documents and websites can provide further resources to you as you prepare, respond, and recover from an incident involving your school and/or school community. We encourage you to follow the links to review these resources or go to our companion website.

[American Red Cross](#)

[Child Abuse Form](#)

[Child Abuse Law](#)

[FEMA](#)

[MA Fire Reporting Law](#)

[Metropolitan Planning Council](#)

[NASP Best Practices for Armed Assailant Drills](#)

[NYPD Active Shooter Report](#)

[REMS – Readiness & Emergency Management for Schools](#)

[Safe and Sound Schools – A Sandy Hook Initiative](#)

[U.S. Department of Homeland Security Active Shooter Preparedness](#)



A.L.I.C.E. Training Institute, *Alert Lockdown Inform Counter Evacuate*, 2011-2015.

Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Dept. of Fire Services/Massachusetts State Police Bomb Squad, *Massachusetts Bomb Threat Response Guidance*, 2014

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Massachusetts Department of Public Health, *The Comprehensive School Health Manual*, 2011.

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U.S. Department of Education, Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools, *Practical Information on Crisis Planning: A Guide for Schools and Communities*, Washington, D.C., 2003.

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