New York State
School Violence/Active Shooter Resource Guide

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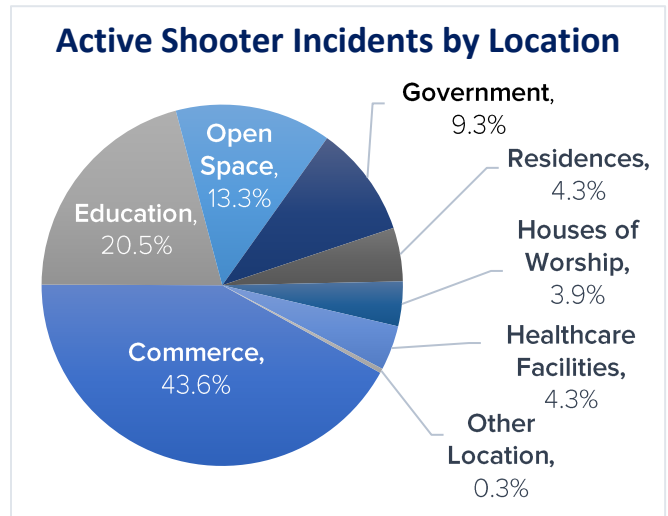NEW YORK STATE | Homeland Security and Emergency Services

NYSEMA
New York State Emergency Management Association

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Introduction Active shooter incidents and other acts of targeted violence against schools are an unfortunate reality of the world we live in. Despite the increased threat of active shooter incidents from a national perspective, it is important to note that active shooter incidents still represent a low likelihood/high consequence event for most schools. **Although the likelihood may be low, active shooter prevention and preparedness efforts will better position schools to address other acts of targeted violence as well.** There are a variety of actions that schools and their public safety partners can take to prevent these acts from occurring. Prevention should remain the priority, but schools and their partners should also prepare for the possibility of acts of targeted violence and consider how they should respond to and recover from these incidents.

The Purpose of this guide is to offer schools and their public safety partners options to consider related to all phases of readiness for active shooter incidents, to include: prevention, preparedness, response and recovery. **The guide is intended to serve as a framework to help inform planning and operational decisions, and** *not a step by step list of instructions or requirements for every school.* **The information in this guide is derived from best practices, federal and state guidance, and other relevant resources.** The guide includes several options to consider, but it is ultimately up to the school and their planning partners to determine which options are most viable based on the threat environment, available resources, previous experience, and other factors. This guide is also designed to help ensure collaboration between schools and their public safety partners, to include emergency management, law enforcement, and other stakeholders involved in planning for active shooter incidents.

Active Shooter Incidents by Location

- Open Space, 13.3%
- Education, 20.5%
- Commerce, 43.6%
- Government, 9.3%
- Residences, 4.3%
- Houses of Worship, 3.9%
- Healthcare Facilities, 4.3%
- Other Location, 0.3%

Source: FBI.gov

Threat Overview According to Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) data, active shooter incidents have increased nationwide and there were 277 active shooter events between 2000 and 2018. During this timeframe, there were 57 shootings at schools, accounting for approximately 20.5% of the active shooter incidents in the U.S. School-related incidents also involved some of the highest casualty rates of all events.

A June 2018 FBI report identified that approximately 25% of active shooters had a documented case of mental illness. However, this does not account for undiagnosed mental conditions or other stress factors. The Safe School Initiative, a study conducted by the Secret Service in partnership with the U.S. Department of Education, examined the thinking, planning and pre-attack behaviors of attackers. As noted in the *School Safety Initiative*, most of the school shooters engaged in some type of behavior, prior to the incident,

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE FBI'S PRE-ATTACK BEHAVIORS OF ACTIVE SHOOTERS STUDY:

❖ **Most** active shooters cannot be readily identified prior to an attack based on demographics alone.

❖ On average, **77%** of active shooters spend a week or longer planning their attack; **46%** spend a week or longer preparing for the attack.

❖ **Most** active shooters obtain their firearms legally.

❖ In past active shooter incidents, approximately **25%** of active shooters had been diagnosed with a mental illness. Of those diagnosed, a small percentage had been diagnosed with a psychotic disorder.

❖ Active shooters typically experience multiple stressors (**on average, 3.6**) in the year before the attack.

❖ **On average**, an active shooter will display 4-5 concerning observable behaviors. The **most frequent** concerning behaviors include mental health challenges, problematic interpersonal interactions, and the accidental or deliberate disclosure of violent intent.

❖ For active shooters under age 18, school peers and teachers were **more likely** to observe concerning behaviors than family members. For active shooters 18 years old and over, spouses/domestic partners were the **most likely** to observe concerning behaviors.

❖ When concerning behavior is observed, the most common response was to communicate directly with the individual (**83%**) or do nothing (**54%**). In **41%** of the cases, the concerning behavior was reported to law enforcement.

❖ In cases where the active shooter's grievance could be identified, the **most common** grievances were related to an adverse interpersonal or employment action against the shooter.

that caused others concern or indicated a need for help. Often, classmates, teachers and school staff are the most likely to notice these concerning behaviors. This finding highlights the importance of identifying behavioral actions and the need for preventative measures. Although prevention is the number one priority, schools and their partners must also plan for preparedness, response, and recovery.

Guide Structure
The New York State School Violence/ Active Shooter Resource Guide is organized into four sections: **Prevention, Preparedness, Response, and Recovery**. There are also Appendices with links to additional information and resources. This Guide was developed collaboratively by the New York State Emergency Management Association (NYSEMA), New York State Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services (DHSES), New York State Police, and the New York State Education Department (NYSED).

Note
This guide will be reviewed and updated (as necessary) based on feedback, lessons learned, and other factors. Feedback, comments or questions can be directed to: terry.hastings@dhses.ny.gov

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Prevention

School Climate

Create a Safe and Supportive Environment

☐ Develop a positive school climate built on a culture of safety, respect, fairness, trust and social and emotional support that fosters a culture of connectedness.

☐ Ensure there are open lines of communication between parents, teachers and students.

☐ Encourage teachers and staff to build positive, trusting relationships with students by actively listening to students and taking an active interest in what they say.

☐ Break down "codes of silence" and help empower students to share concerns with adults confidentially, without feeling ashamed.

☐ Help students feel more connected to their classmates and the school by encouraging them to join extra-curriculars, clubs, school sports and to volunteer.

☐ Partner with community groups, volunteer organizations, civic groups, travel sports, local camps, etc. to expand your school community and web of influence.

☐ Provide education and training to all staff, including individuals who interact with students most frequently (e.g., teachers, aides, school nurse, cafeteria monitors) on observing changes in behavior, including social isolation, withdrawal or aggressive behavior.

☐ Embed Social Emotional Learning (SEL) in your school environment. SEL helps students learn the core competencies of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.

☐ Coordinate with local behavioral health and health agencies to provide resources and assistance to individuals in need.

☐ Consider implementing a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS). The MTSS approach considers environmental factors as they might apply to an individual student's difficulty and provides services/intervention as soon as the student demonstrates a need.

☐ Schools should utilize a variety of methods to better connect students with resources and support.

☐ Ensure your school is implementing the Dignity for All Students Act (DASA) requirements, including receiving complaints and investigating complaints.

Establish School Rules and Policies

☐ Establish policies defining prohibited behaviors that are unacceptable and warrant immediate intervention. Examples include: threatening or engaging in violence, bringing a weapon to school, bullying or harassing others, and other concerning or criminal behaviors.

☐ Develop and adopt a school Code of Conduct in collaboration with students, teachers, administrators, parents, community organizations, school safety and other school personnel.

☐ Keep in mind that concerning behaviors occur along a continuum. The threshold for intervention should be relatively low.

Prevention

Establish a Central Reporting System
- ☐ Establish one or more mechanisms so an individual can anonymously report information, concerning actions and behaviors or incidents of bullying, verbal or electronic harassment, cyberbullying, psychological violence, emotional abuse or any type of domestic violence.
    - ☐ Note: DASA requires schools to provide reporting mechanisms for discrimination, harassment, and bullying.
- ☐ Ensure that reports are acted upon immediately, kept confidential and handled appropriately.
- ☐ Provide training and guidance to students, teachers and parents on recognizing behaviors of concern, their roles and responsibilities in reporting the behavior, and how to report the information.
- ☐ Messaging should demonstrate to students that there is a big difference between "snitching," "ratting," or "tattling," and seeking help.

Address Digital Safety and Bullying
- ☐ Educate teachers, staff and parents about student communication networks. These networks are often the source of cyberbullying, online threats and cries for help from at-risk students.
- ☐ Educate and provide training to students, parents and teachers about online safety (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram and YouTube) and the internet (e.g., blogs).
- ☐ Adopt policies that address physical, verbal, social bullying and cyberbullying.
- ☐ Empower and train school professionals (e.g., teachers and support staff) to take an active role in responding to bullying incidents. Educate your staff on DASA and the Safe Schools Against Violence in Education (SAVE) Act.
- ☐ Create an anonymous reporting system that students and parents can use to report concerning behaviors including bullying and suicidal behaviors.
- ☐ Develop peer-to-peer programs to build a culture that is supportive and not tolerant of bullying.

Behavioral Assessment

Develop Risk Management Options
- ☐ Develop school policies for referrals to law enforcement or mental health professionals in the event of threats of self-harm or harm to others.
- ☐ Develop risk management strategies that reduce the student's likelihood for engaging in violence. Remove/redirect the student's motive and reduce the effect of stressors.
- ☐ Create protocols that outline how and when law enforcement should be notified if a student is thinking about or planning to engage in violence. Make efforts to address the safety of any potential targets. Note: Removing a student from school does not eliminate the risk to the school community.
- ☐ Provide resources to assist the student (e.g., peer support programs, therapeutic counseling, life skills classes, tutoring, mental health care, etc.).

Prevention

Establish Behavioral Assessment Procedures

☐ Maintain documentation to keep track of reports/tips, when, where, how the information was obtained, who was interviewed, the behaviors/circumstances of concern and the intervention strategies taken.

☐ The Behavioral Intervention Team, sometimes called the Behavioral Assessment Team or Threat Assessment Team, should evaluate student's concerning behaviors and communications in the context of his/her age and their social and emotional development. Collect information from diverse sources to ensure the student is being accurately assessed.

☐ Use a community-system approach to acquire information on the student's actions and circumstances.

☐ Develop relationships that can facilitate information-gathering efforts. These efforts may encourage parents or guardians to share concerns, and the student to be more forthcoming about frustrations, needs, goals or plans.

☐ Examine online content (e.g., blogs), social media pages (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube), conduct interviews, review class assignments and consider searching the student's locker or desk. The Behavioral Intervention Team should also consider reviewing academic, disciplinary, law enforcement and other formal records that may be related to the student.

☐ Create forms and templates as part of the Behavioral Assessment Plan to ensure standardization across cases.

☐ Consider developing a reintegration plan for individuals that were previously removed from the school for behavioral or mental health issues.

Establish a Behavioral Intervention (Crisis Intervention or Behavioral Assessment) Team

☐ Establish a multi-disciplinary Behavioral Intervention Team (BIT) of individuals within your school (e.g., teachers, school administrators, guidance counselors, mental health professionals, maintenance and custodial staff, coaches, bus drivers, food service staff, etc.). If your school has school resource officers (SROs), they should be included.

    ☐ A SROs primary role is to build and develop relationships, to liaise between students, teachers and parents and to serve in a preventive role.

☐ The BIT should direct, manage, and document the behavioral assessment process, receive reports about concerning students and situations, gather additional information, assess the risk posed to the school community, develop intervention/ management strategies to mitigate any risk of harm.

☐ Designate a leader for the BIT (usually occupied by a senior administrator within the school).

☐ Ensure that school leadership participates in annual behavioral assessment training.

☐ Establish protocols and procedures to follow for each assessment, including who will interview the student of concern; who will talk to classmates, teachers, or parents; and who will be responsible for documenting the BIT's efforts. Establish protocols to ensure a smooth assessment process so team members are aware of their own roles and responsibilities, as well as those of their colleagues.

Prevention

☐ Team members should meet whenever a concerning student or situation has been brought to their attention, but they should also meet on a regular basis to engage in discussions, role-playing scenarios, and other teambuilding and learning activities.

Determine the Threshold for Law Enforcement Intervention

☐ Create protocols that outline how reports of student behavior involving weapons, threats of violence, physical violence, or concerns about an individual's safety should be immediately reported to law enforcement.

☐ If there are SROs or law enforcement personnel at your school, ensure that they are aware of these processes and are actively engaged in this process.

Facility Protection

Conduct a Facility Risk Assessment

☐ Convene a diverse group of individuals (e.g., local first responders, community stakeholders, etc.) to participate in the Facility Risk Assessment

☐ Conduct the Facility Risk Assessment to identify vulnerabilities and develop a strategy to address security gaps. Effective security plans use a multi-layer approach across all four areas of a school: the exterior, entry points, the interior and the classroom.

 ☐ The assessment should evaluate the following: building access and visitor procedures, bus and parking procedures, the building exterior (e.g., playgrounds, recreation areas, athletic fields, sheds, building rooftop), the building interior (e.g., classrooms, cafeteria, gymnasium, bathrooms, hallways and stairwells), specialized classrooms (e.g., science, art, theater, technology and shop), the school's monitoring system, internal and external communications procedures, and school training, drills, exercises and local response teams.

 ☐ Create a diagram of your school that includes all classrooms, automated external defibrillators (AEDs), fire alarms, fire extinguishers, water and gas shutoffs, location of hazardous chemicals, cameras as well as points of ingress/egress.

 ☐ Develop a report that documents the group's findings, provides recommendations for improvements and establishes target dates for completion. Determine appropriate protective measures based on the characteristics of the school and available resources and personnel.

 ☐ Ensure that the School Emergency Response Plan includes key elements of the Facility Risk Assessment.

Address the Building's Exterior

☐ When possible, ensure the perimeter of your school is fully secured and monitored. Strategically placed cameras serve as both a deterrent and as an effective means of monitoring of the school.

☐ Ensure trees and shrubs are trimmed outside the building, limiting the places where people or weapons could be hidden.

Prevention

- ☐ Eliminate parking immediately adjacent to any parts of the school. Mix faculty and student parking lots. Design parking lots to discourage through traffic.
- ☐ Observe and closely monitor parking lots, playgrounds, and playing fields.
- ☐ Limit roof access by keeping dumpsters away from building walls. Cover drainpipes so they cannot be climbed.
    - ☐ Note: Every second and minute matters - the average active shooter incident lasts 480 seconds. Facilitating movement by law enforcement in and around your schools will make a difference.

Examine Building Access and Entry Points

- ☐ Consider establishing monitored single or limited points of entry that include appropriate physical security measures, screening processes and access control measures.
- ☐ The school's main office should have a direct view of the front entrance.
- ☐ Consider installing self-locking doors. Every door should be equipped to lock from the inside without a key. Note: all locks should be compliant with fire codes.
- ☐ Establish a check-in protocol for visitors to the school. Implement a visible identification card and pass system.
- ☐ When possible, instruct visitors to conduct work at the school before/after school hours (e.g., deliveries, contractors, construction crews, etc.).
- ☐ Establish a system to account for all visitors on school grounds during a threat or security-related incident.

Address the Building Interior

- ☐ Consider installing an alarm system and/or closed-circuit television monitoring system.
- ☐ Maintain a list of student's locker combinations or issue school-owned locks to students. Secure unused lockers with zip ties or school-owned locks.
- ☐ Consider labeling all doors and rescue windows as it will aid building occupants and emergency responders in the case of an emergency.
- ☐ Encourage faculty and staff to routinely inspect hallways, restrooms and stairwells.
- ☐ Ensure that all hallways are well lit. Minimize blind spots; use convex mirrors to allow hall monitors and students to see around corners.
- ☐ Lock sensitive areas of the school, including unoccupied classrooms. Ensure that authorized staff have keys/access to these areas.
- ☐ Do not allow graffiti to linger on walls. If discovered, read it, record it, and remove it.
- ☐ Ensure that ceiling tiles in public areas are secure such as restrooms, locker rooms and hallways.
- ☐ Use trash cans that can be easily checked for suspicious objects, such as wire-style trash cans with transparent trash bags.

Prevention

- If your school utilizes a portable building, consider making security upgrades to it.
- Ensure that a public-address system is in place and is audible in all areas including cafeterias, bathrooms, gymnasiums, hallways and outdoor activity areas. Additionally, consider installing strobe lights in these public spaces that are a different color than white which is used for fire alarms.

Protecting the Classroom

- Consider installing self-locking doors. Every door should be equipped to lock from the inside without a key. Note: all locks should be compliant with fire codes.
- Consider setting up "hard corners" in all classrooms that are clear of furniture to allow adequate space for occupants. These corners are areas where individuals would gather during an active shooter incident that's out of sight from doors and windows.
- Consider installing duress/panic buttons in the classrooms, main office, etc. as well as proper controls and procedures to prevent the misuse of these tools.
- Prohibit posters on classroom windows.
- Provide a checklist of instructions (e.g., Run, Hide, Fight or Avoid, Deny, Defend) and evacuation plans on the back of doors that reflects the age and developmental level of your students.
- Emergency contact numbers should be placed under each phone in the school (e.g., 911, law enforcement, principal, main office, nurse's office, counseling center, custodian, attendance).
- Create "Go Bags" with supplies you may need in an emergency - they should be kept in strategic locations across the school such as classrooms and the nurse's office and should include items such as: stuffed animals, stress balls, snacks, water, communication devices, class rosters, pen/paper, medication/sanitary supplies, blueprints, emergency phone numbers, etc.

Building Level Emergency Response Plan

Develop an Active Shooter Plan

- Convene school leadership, teachers, security/facility personnel, school psychiatrist, social workers, law enforcement, SROs, emergency medical services (EMS), emergency management and fire personnel to develop the Active Shooter Plan.
- The workgroup should ensure that plans, policies and procedures are developed, maintained, reviewed, updated, tested and activated at least annually. The plan should also include preparedness assessments, communications plans, logistics plans, and training and exercise plans.
- Factors for consideration include: whether to relocate or secure in place, internal staff response and assistance, threat recognition and threat reaction procedures and training, notification of occupants, mobility characteristics of occupants and bleeding control kits (i.e., Stop the Bleed).
- Consider before school, after school and extra-curricular activities in your plans.
- Plans should be flexible to changing circumstances and environments.

Prevention

Develop a Communications Plan

☐ Develop a Communications Plan to identify formal and informal lines of communication with local and state law enforcement, fire and emergency management officials to facilitate information and intelligence sharing.

☐ Develop or pre-write basic messages in advance for use during an incident.

☐ Ensure information sharing protocols are included in your plans that bridge your radio communication to public safety personnel.

☐ Develop a public affairs strategy for an emergency at your school. Create a checklist of necessary and appropriate information to provide during or immediately after an incident.

☐ Develop a media plan inclusive of public messaging and the use of social media as part of the broader crisis preparedness, response and recovery plans.

Coordinate with Partners

☐ Develop relationships with your SROs, school security officers, local law enforcement and emergency management officials. Create protocols/procedures for coordination with partners from law enforcement and community for events needing outside assistance.

☐ Build relationships with local travel/intramural sports leagues, places of worship, volunteer organizations, summer camps, etc. so that you have established networks to support students, staff and community if an incident occurs.

☐ Establish relationships with businesses in proximity of the school that are visited by the student body (e.g., restaurants, convenience stores, gas stations, shopping centers, etc.).

Training

Provide Training for all Stakeholders

☐ School safety is everyone's responsibility. Teachers, administrators, maintenance, custodial staff, bus drivers and food service staff should participate in training related to behavioral assessment and violence prevention.

☐ Students should also be trained on the behavioral assessment process (i.e., what and where to report concerns). Provide assurances to students that reports can be made anonymously and that their information will be kept confidential.

☐ Parents should be trained on the behavioral assessment process and their role. It should be clear on whom to call, when, and what information they should be ready to provide.

☐ Develop relationships with your SROs, school security officers, local law enforcement and emergency management officials. They can be a resource to help develop and deliver trainings.

☐ Invite law enforcement and local first responders to provide specialized training to all school staff on professional development days.

☐ Educate your staff on the Dignity for All Students Act (DASA) and the Safe Schools Against Violence in Education (SAVE) Act.

☐ Consider enrolling key personnel in your school in Incident Command System (ICS) training.

Preparedness

School Climate

Raise Awareness Through Public Education

☐ Consider holding an assembly program to raise awareness about your school's policies and procedures and inform students of their personal responsibilities during an emergency.

☐ The student handbook should educate both students and parents on the school safety and security policies, the discipline code and the code of conduct. It should also cover topics such as: student rights and responsibilities, expectations of students, prohibited and concerning behaviors and conduct, the issuance of ID cards and procedures for reporting harassment/bullying, etc.

 ☐ Develop a method for communicating the code of conduct to students, parents and staff.

☐ Consider having a town hall or open house to inform students and parents of the actions your school has taken to keep students safe.

☐ Teachers and staff should learn the behavior indicators that should prompt further exploration and attention from teachers, staff and potentially law enforcement. They should also learn about the phases of an active shooter (e.g., conceptualization, planning, preparation, approach, implementation).

☐ Ensure that proactive measures such as character education, anti-bullying, and internet safety curriculums are in place.

Behavioral Assessment

Develop and Maintain Risk Assessment Plans

☐ Conduct a risk assessment. This process should include: risk/hazard identification, vulnerability assessment, consequence identification, as well as estimating human, psychological, functional, property and economic impacts.

☐ Consider conducting behavior threat assessments to identify threatening behaviors early on. These assessments rely upon collaboration and partnerships to identify and respond to at-risk behaviors.

☐ After completing the risk assessment, hazards should be ranked based on likelihood and consequence.

☐ The Risk Assessment Plan should be developed in consultation with the BIT.

Coordinate with Key Partners

☐ Develop and foster relationships within the school, school district, neighboring school districts and with BOCES partners.

☐ Consider enacting a volunteer program, similar to volunteer crossing guards, in which parents are mobilized and tasked by the school to provide school safety assistance (e.g., field trips, after school events, etc.).

☐ Implement mutual aid agreements with neighboring school districts and community partners that may be utilized during a crisis (e.g., mental health/counseling, finances, staffing, donation management and building restoration).

Preparedness

- ☐ Develop a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with your local law enforcement to have a SRO at your school. Schools are required to provide a copy of their Emergency Response Plans to local law enforcement.
- ☐ Develop partnerships with local law enforcement and emergency management. Consider providing them access to your camera systems and communication systems, access to school blueprints and keys to every building. Invite them to participate in planning sessions, risk assessments, trainings, drills, exercises, and to have an active presence in your school.
- ☐ Establish relationships with district bus drivers. Consider providing bus drivers with direct communication to the main office or district office and equipping buses with GPS, cameras, etc.
- ☐ Develop relationships with local mental health organizations.

Provide Training for all Stakeholders

- ☐ Students, faculty and staff members should undergo annual emergency preparedness, response and notification training.
  - ☐ State Law requires schools to practice twelve (12) emergency drills per school year; eight (8) must be evacuation (e.g., fire drills) and four (4) must be lockdown drills.
- ☐ Training and exercise programs should aim to improve awareness and to enhance the knowledge, skills and abilities of your school community to prevent, respond and take protective measure in a variety of situations. Topics should include: developing a personal preparedness plan (e.g., survival strategies), preparedness information (e.g., 'Run, Hide, Fight', 'Stop the Bleed'), identification of warning signs and how to report them, and what to expect when interacting with first responders.
- ☐ Participate, invite and develop discussion-based, tabletop, drills or full-scale trainings in conjunction with local first-responders.
  - ☐ Drills are designed to test a single skill set or capability and do not have to be all encompassing. Full scale exercises in comparison, are designed to test all components of a plan from start to finish.
- ☐ Note that lockdown drills can be scheduled or unscheduled. Scheduled drills mean that students and staff are aware that a drill is to be conducted on a certain date and time. Unscheduled drills are conducted without students and staff being aware that the drill will be conducted on a specified date and time.
  - ☐ Lockdown drills can be scheduled or unscheduled, however no drill should ever be conducted unannounced. Unannounced drills are likely to cause panic, stress, possible injury and likely to result in potential liability upon the school. All drills must begin with an announcement that a drill is being conducted and concluded with final announcement that the drills has been concluded.
- ☐ Consider requiring school administrators to take ICS training. FEMA Independent Study courses are useful in exercise design and planning.
- ☐ Consider providing new students and employees (i.e., substitute teachers) active shooter training on their first day.

Preparedness

- ☐ Ensure that student and staff are trained and fully aware of the fire extinguisher and AED locations within your school.
- ☐ Consider providing Occupant Self-Help and First Aid (e.g., hemorrhage control, bandage and apply direct wound pressure, tourniquets, etc.) to students and staff.
- ☐ Ensure that your school nurse knows whether EMS responders are basic life support (BLS) or advanced life support (ALS).

Plans, Policies and Procedures

Update the Building Level Emergency Response Plan

- ☐ Review/update the building-level emergency response plans (ERP), as per Education Law §2801-a and Commissioner's Regulation §155.17.
- ☐ ERPs must include information about the school, key staff, floor plans, and detailed response procedures. If an emergency does occur in a school, it is essential that law enforcement have access to the information included in these plans. As such, it is a requirement that each year, every public school and BOCES update and submit their building-level ERP to both the State Police and local law enforcement within 30 days of adoption, but no later than October 15.
- ☐ Additionally, ERPs should outline policies and protocols for incidents that warrant shelter in place, hold in place, evacuation, lock out and lock down (SHELL). Policies and procedures should consider the age group and physical limitations of occupants.
- ☐ School building ERPs must be submitted by the chief executive officer of each school.
- ☐ Ensure that all staff annually receives training about the ERP and on mental health. The Building Plan should not be publicly disclosed but should be shared with key personnel within the school.
- ☐ As outlined in the Safe Schools Against Violence in Education (SAVE) Act, ensure the following safety teams are fully staffed and include diverse representation: district-wide school safety team, building-level emergency response team, emergency response team and the post-incident response team.
- ☐ Review the NYSED Memo (03/05/2019) addressing School Security and Door Hardening to ensure your school is meeting standards and requirements.
- ☐ Use training and exercises to enhance awareness and understanding of all plans, to include your building level emergency plan.

Preparedness

Test and Practice Using the Communications Plan

☐ Develop an electronic mass notification system for students, faculty and parents. The system should be able to provide information via text message, automated phone calls, email, etc.

　☐ SROs and school leadership officials should have the ability to send emergency messages and should test and exercise their notification system on at least an annual basis.

　☐ Develop notification protocols for individuals who are not regularly on mass notification (e.g., substitute teachers, visitors, etc.). Special consideration should also be paid to individuals that have access and functional needs or are non-native English speakers.

☐ Develop formal and informal lines of communication with local and state law enforcement, fire and emergency management officials to facilitate information and intelligence sharing.

☐ Ensure information sharing protocols are included in your plans that bridge your radio communication to public safety personnel.

☐ Develop a Public Affairs Strategy for an emergency at your school. Create a checklist of necessary and appropriate information to provide during or immediately after an incident.

☐ Develop a Media Plan inclusive of public messaging and the use of social media as part of the broader crisis preparedness, response and recovery plans.

☐ Ensure that the school website is void of any sensitive, safety, or security related information such as building schematics, blueprints, diagrams, drill information, bus routes, etc.

Miscellaneous

Explore Training and Grant/Funding Opportunities for Preparedness

☐ Consider sending appropriate safety team members to attend the Multi-Hazard Emergency Planning for Schools Course (G-364) offered by the NYS Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services, Office of Emergency Management. The training calendar can found at: http://www.dhses.ny.gov/training/calendar/

☐ Funding and grant opportunities may be available to support planning, training, exercises and equipment purchases.

☐ Explore local, state and federal funding sources (e.g., DHS, DOJ, ED). Consider partnering with neighboring school districts and/or BOCES regions.

☐ Current information on available grants at the State can be found at: https://www.ny.gov/agencies and at the Federal level here: https://www.grants.gov/

Response

Incident Recognition

Implementing Building Safety Plans

☐ Empower staff to make critical decisions on implementing the building safety plans. Consider enabling phones in the building with the ability to make announcements or issue warnings, with the proper access controls in place to prevent misuse.

☐ Consider how messages, alarms, sirens and/or lights will be utilized to inform building occupants of the actions they should take.

☐ Teachers and staff will need to lead and guide students to safety.

☐ There are five recognized emergency responses in New York State: (1) shelter-in-place, (2) hold-in-place, (3) evacuation, (4) lockout and (5) lockdown.

    ☐ **Shelter-in-place:** Students and staff should remain indoors because it is safer inside the building or a room than outside (e.g., severe weather).

    ☐ **Hold-in-place**: Movement of students and staff is temporarily limited when an internal incident arises, such as a student fight, a medical emergency or a maintenance issue. This is initiated to keep students and staff away from the affected area.

    ☐ **Evacuation:** Students and staff must move outside the building because it is safer outside than inside (as in the case of a fire, explosion or hazardous material spill).

    ☐ **Lockout:** The school building is secured due to an imminent concern outside of the school building. Outdoor activities are suspended and all personnel move indoors. Regular activities may continue inside the school.

    ☐ **Lockdown:** Students and staff take cover, remain silent and out of view. This occurs when an incident poses an immediate threat of violence in or around the school.

Implementing the Communication Plan

☐ Develop a plan for sending out emergency notifications and alerts during an incident. Consider who, what and how the alert will be made. Use any means necessary (e.g., text, email, apps, social media, public address systems, etc.) to disseminate information and/or to initiate a lockdown.

    ☐ Notifications should be made in a variety of formats so that they are accessible to those with access and functional needs or are non-native English speakers.

☐ Develop a process for receiving and managing requests for information during an incident from various stakeholders (e.g., teachers, students, parents, law enforcement, the media).

☐ Develop a plan for communicating with parents during and immediately following an incident. Consider specific actions you want them, or do not want them to take and when/where to find additional information.

☐ Frontload the school/school district website with the information that the public will want to know (e.g., who, what, when, where, why, available resources, contact information).

☐ Use social media to keep your community up-to-date. Monitor social media and respond to issues and concerns as they arise.

Response

☐ Maintain one unlisted telephone line (typically in the main office) for outgoing calls in an emergency.
☐ Ensure emergency numbers are available at all phone locations (e.g., principal, main office, nurse, counseling center, custodian, attendance).

Inside 480 Seconds

Operationalizing the Run, Hide, Fight Concept
☐ Run, Hide, Fight are the three choices an individual can make when an active shooter incident occurs. These options do not need to be executed in order. In a school setting, 'Hide' may also be called lockdown. Consider the age and stage development of the students.

   ☐ **Run:** Have an escape route and plan in mind. Run, walk, crawl, roll- do whatever necessary to get into a safe area. Leave your belongings behind and keep your hands visible. Create distance between you and the shooter. Get out of hallways.

   ☐ **Hide:** Consider initiating a lockdown. Immediately gather students from hallways into classrooms. Hide in an area out of the shooter's view. Deny entry to your hiding place and lock the doors. Silence your cell phone and disable vibrate functions. Ignore the public address system and fire alarms (unless fire is evident). Stay hidden until released by law enforcement.

   ☐ **Fight:** This response should be used as a last resort and only when your life is in imminent danger. Attempt to incapacitate the shooter. Use items at your disposal and throw them at the shooter (e.g., chairs, fire extinguisher, scissors). Act with physical aggression and work to disarm or distract the shooter.

Interacting with Law Enforcement
☐ Teachers, staff and students must be aware that the first priority for responding law enforcement is to respond to the threat.
☐ The first officers to arrive on the scene will not stop to assist with injured personnel. Rescue teams consisting of additional officers and medical personnel will follow and will enter the facility as soon as possible.
☐ It is important to remain calm and follow law enforcement's instructions. You should put down any items in your possession, raise your hands and spread your fingers. Remember to avoid quick movements towards officers, as well as pointing, screaming or yelling.
☐ Be aware that law enforcement may respond in plain-clothes or be non-uniformed.
☐ Store an additional set of master keys in a designated secure location for immediate first responder access to all rooms in your school.
☐ Law enforcement will likely request access to video footage; consider who has access to the film and how it can be remotely accessed/shared with law enforcement.
☐ Plan with law enforcement; understand how school officials will fit into the response and into ICS.

Recovery

Short-Term Recovery: Addressing Immediate Needs

Recovery Planning

☐ Recovery can begin during an incident. The actions that you take while an incident is occurring will be the foundation for short-term and long-term recovery. The goal is to re-establish safety and mitigate the physical, psychological, and emotional impacts from an incident. Critical tasks include: ensuring that those affected are safe, accounted for, reunited with their families/friends, can retrieve their personal possessions, get proper medical and mental health care if required, and are able to receive timely information from an authoritative source about the incident and its resolution.

☐ Address short-term recovery issues through response policies and procedures that are regularly exercised. Note: the magnitude of the incident will determine how the short-term recovery process is achieved.

☐ Additional overarching guidelines and procedures that should be considered include: strategic objectives, communications, resource and security/law enforcement needs, mutual aid requests, notification protocols, media/social media coordination, and establishing a safe and secure environment to support the recovery process.

Assembly Areas

☐ Develop plans, policies and procedures to evacuate students and staff from the scene of the incident to an assembly area.

☐ Evacuation and assembly areas may already be designated for fire drills and other emergencies however depending on the incident, assembly areas may have to be created on an ad hoc basis.

☐ Consider the medication needs of students; students that evacuate will not be allowed to bring anything with them.

☐ Create a plan and process for accounting for all individuals at one or more designated assembly points to determine who, if anyone, is missing.

☐ The assembly area may serve as a venue for key leadership to address next steps, such as relocation and reunification.

  ☐ Key leadership should introduce themselves to law enforcement, who will likely be positioned nearby to protect the assembly area.

☐ Ensure that individuals injured during the incident or evacuation are provided immediate care.

Information Coordination and the Communications Plan

☐ Develop a crisis communication plan and identify a spokesperson. The plan should include coordination with law enforcement and scripted responses to likely questions. The individual identified as spokesperson should participate in crisis communications training.

☐ Use the school website and social media accounts to provide updates. Also work with local media to disseminate the same updated information.

Recovery

☐ Consider establishing a toll-free telephone number and the use of social media to provide continued updates on the incident and the recovery process. Ensure coordination with law enforcement for updated and accurate information. Provide points of contact for students and staff.

☐ Provide information to employees not present at the site regarding whether or not to report for work.

☐ Regardless of existing communication channels, ensure that evacuees' families are informed as soon as possible about their whereabouts and health status.

Reunification

☐ Create a plan for a parental reunification location.

☐ To successfully reunify students with parents/guardians, there should be two teams: the impacted site team who will safely transport students to the reunification site and the reunification team, that will reunify students with family members.

☐ Leverage available technology and equipment (e.g., school buses, radios, laptops, etc.).

☐ Coordinate with law enforcement to account for any occupants who were not evacuated.

☐ Student reunification and release procedures should be communicated to parents at the beginning of each school year when reviewing school safety procedures. The procedures should be included in the student handbook.

☐ Identify private rooms for immediate aftermath counseling.

☐ Establish pre-determined means of parental or guardian notification.

☐ Remember to identify the custodial parent during reunification for families with custody orders.

☐ If your school decides to open a Family Assistance Center, consider the needs and impacts of victim assistance to include mental health counseling, health care, childcare, etc.

☐ Facilitate the retrieval of personal belongings. Note: some personal possessions may not be recovered until the crime scene investigations are complete.

Vigils and Funerals

☐ Provide support to impacted families and if asked, provide information on vigils, wakes, funerals and memorial services.
   ☐ Identify a team of individuals that can represent the school at all funerals and memorials.

Miscellaneous

☐ Prepare for visits from politicians (local/state/federal) and celebrities.

☐ Prepare to be in the middle of a national debate on (e.g., gun control, mental health, school safety).

Recovery

Long-Term Recovery: Restoration

Recovery Planning

☐ Recovery can begin during an incident. Once the assembly areas are cleared by law enforcement for cleaning and the affected individuals are returned to their families and friends, critical tasks can begin, which include: helping employees return to normality in their daily interactions and professional life, and to take whatever steps are necessary to return the school community to normal operations.

   ☐ Consider that the progress of long-term recovery depends on the facility and institution, as well as the unique circumstances of each incident. Recovery time will be directly impacted by the number of victims, number of people affected and the extent of the property damage.

Staff Specific Resources

☐ Assist employees with an Employee Assistance Program (EAP), which is designed to help employees resolve personal and work-related problems. After an incident, this may include assisting with emotional difficulties, financial and legal concerns and other post-incident issues.

☐ Consider facilitating applications for worker's compensation, or other types of financial assistance. Individuals may be eligible to apply for compensation for their medical expenses.

☐ Encourage all individuals involved to seek information about victim assistance programs from the local community and the Office of Victim Services (OVS), which can aid in their recovery. Further information and funding programs may be available from OVS, law enforcement or local government offices.

☐ Assemble crisis intervention teams and debrief teachers and school staff on a daily basis.

☐ Consider developing or requiring additional training/continued education opportunities.

Grief and Mental Health Counseling

☐ Provide mental health resources (e.g., grief counselors, therapy dogs, therapists, etc.) to students, teachers, and staff immediately after an incident to evaluate, treat, and meet the social and emotional needs of affected individuals.

☐ Develop relationships with local mental health organizations. Counselors should consult with other school staff and family members, to discuss the social, emotional, and behavioral needs of students.

☐ Counselors can consult with family members and stipulate resources regarding the characteristics of mental illness, available treatments, as well as arranging referrals to community agencies.

☐ Individuals that have experienced a traumatic event have a higher likelihood of experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), Acute Stress Disorder, depression and anxiety.

☐ Continue to provide education and training to individuals who interact with students most frequently (e.g., teachers, aides, lunch monitors) on mental health issues. Encourage staff to look out for one another.

Recovery

Information Coordination
- ☐ Continue to update your district/school website with useful and relevant information for students, parents, teachers and the public. Provide information and resources to students, teachers and staff that wish to participate in news interviews, marches, and/or rallies. Consider including:
  - ☐ Tips for parents on media coverage
  - ☐ Tips for students when talking to journalists
  - ☐ Tips on public speaking for students
  - ☐ Guidelines for parents to help children after the shooting
  - ☐ Tips for helping students with traumatic grief
- ☐ Consider developing a crisis support website and/or hotline for students, teachers, and parents.
- ☐ Document pertinent lessons learned.

Donations Management
- ☐ Frequently, a GoFundMe page will be set up and funds will be distributed to the victims of the incident. Consider listing approved funds on the school district website so donations are not made to fraudulent sites. Note: emphasis should be made to ensure any GoFundMe page or fundraising does not interfere or conflict with any victim assistance or compensation programs.
- ☐ Identify possible storage locations to store physical donations following an incident.
- ☐ Identify volunteers willing to address physical donations management on the school's behalf.
- ☐ Consider establishing a crisis team that has donations management, to include spontaneous volunteers, as a dedicated responsibility.
- ☐ Establish a plan for what to do with the tokens of remembrance, such as donating to a local charity (e.g. flowers, etc.) or transferring them to the families of the victims.

Continuity of Operations (COOP) and Reopening the School
- ☐ Continuity plans should identify and document the following: procedures for activating the plan, roles and responsibilities of the individuals implementing the continuity strategies, individuals/organizations that need to be notified, processes that must be maintained, critical and time-sensitive processes (e.g., payroll, NYSED requirements), alternative work sites (e.g., teachers, students, buses), workaround procedures, vital records, contact lists, required personnel, vendors and contractors supporting continuity and resources needed for continued operations.
- ☐ Unless there is severe physical damage from the attack or other special circumstances, most facilities will reopen soon after the post-incident investigation is complete. In some cases, an alternative temporary facility may be used.

Recovery

- ☐ In past incidents (e.g., Parkland, Sandy Hook), schools have typically remained closed for two weeks. Some schools have staggered start dates with teachers returning approximately one week after the event and students returning two weeks after. Schools in the district that are not directly impacted by the incident have sometimes been closed and other times have remained open.
- ☐ Consider where students will go to school if a building cannot be used for an extended period.
- ☐ It is reasonable for school districts to expect a 70-80% turnover rate for district and school staff and faculty in the first three to five years following an active-shooter event.
- ☐ Prepare and enact continuity plans to keep operations going, if necessary. The plan may include provisions for hiring temporary staff, teleworking, and working from alternate locations.
- ☐ Evaluate, consider, and discuss actions by first responders and others to reduce the likelihood of triggers for traumatic flashbacks when returning to school for the first time after the incident.
- ☐ Create an open forum for students, teachers, parents, and the community to come together and discuss challenges, concerns, and to support each other.

Anniversaries and Memorials

- ☐ The anniversary and any established memorial(s) may become focal points for memorials, reunions, and renewed media attention.
- ☐ Anniversaries are an opportunity for individuals to reconnect. The school should consider facilitating such opportunities. For some, anniversaries and memorial services of remembrance may bring about an adverse reaction as they relive the events. Be aware of this and offer assistance if needed.
- ☐ Consider developing a permanent memorial or fund in honor of the victims. However, contemplate future building expansions when choosing site for memorials so that they do not need to be moved in the future.
- ☐ Remember anniversaries and honor the victims. Coordinate closely with family and friends of those impacted.

Miscellaneous

Explore Grant/Funding Opportunities for Recovery

- ☐ Grant funding has previously been made available to School Districts for areas to include mental health training programs, threat assessment and technology reporting programs, physical security improvements, trauma training for students, repairs of minor damage, technical assistance for developing a recovery plan, and overtime and other staffing costs following an incident.
- ☐ Current information on available grants at the Federal level is available at https://www.grants.gov/
- ☐ Several New York State agencies provide grant funding opportunities; current information on available grants at the State level can be accessed by visiting agency websites at https://www.ny.gov/agencies

Appendix A: Additional Resources

The New York State Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services (DHSES) does not endorse any person, product, service or enterprise. References to specific agencies, companies, products, or services therefore should not be considered an endorsement by NYS DHSES. Rather, the references are illustrations to supplement discussion of the issues. Weblink references cited in this publication were valid as of the date of this publication.

Enhancing School Safety Using a Threat Assessment Model: An Operational Guide for Preventing Targeted School Violence, *U.S. Department of Homeland Security, United States Secret Service (2018).*

Threat Assessment in Schools: A Guide to Managing Threatening Situations and to Creating Safe School Climates, *United States Secret Services, United States Department of Education (2004).*

Planning and Response to an Active Shooter: An Interagency Security Committee Policy and Best Practices Guide, *U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Interagency Security Committee (2015).*

Active Shooter Recovery Guide, *U.S. Department of Homeland Security (2017).*

Active Shooter Resources, *Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigations.*

K-12 School Security, A Guide for Preventing and Protecting Against Gun Violence, *U.S. Department of Homeland Security (2018).*

A Study of Pre-Attack Behaviors of Active Shooters in the United States Between 2000 and 2013, *Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigations (2018).*

Active Shooter/Hostile Event (ASHE) Guide, *the InterAgency Board (2016).*

Active Shooter Information, *U.S. Department of Homeland Security.*

Guide for Developing High-Quality School Emergency Operations Plans, *U.S Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, Justice, the Federal Bureau of Investigations and Federal Emergency Management Agency (2013).*

Final Report of the Federal Commission on School Safety, *U.S Departments of Education, Justice, Homeland Security, and Health and Human Services (2018).*

School Safety Reference Guide, *New York State School Boards Association (2018).*

Smart Schools Bond Act, *New York State Education Department*

The Final Report and Findings of the Safe School Initiative: Implications for the Prevention of School Attacks in the United States, *United States Secret Services and the U.S Departments of Education (2004).*

Quick Guide to Emergency Response Planning Requirements in Education Law §§ 807 and 2801-a and Commissioner's Regulation 155.17, *New York State Education Department (2018).*

Implementation of NYSAFE Act, *New York State Education Department (2013).*

480 Seconds- Surviving an Active Shooter Incident, *NYS Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services*

Appendix A: Additional Resources

Best Practice Considerations for Schools in Active Shooter and Other Armed Assailant Drills, *National Association of School Psychologists.*

Prevention and Response to School Violence, *International Association of Chiefs of Police*

Social Emotional Learning: Essential for Learning, Essential for Life, *New York State Education Department (2018).*

New York State Social Emotional Learning Benchmarks, *New York State Education Department.*

School Mental Health Resource and Training Center, *Mental Health Association in New York State, Inc.*

Social Emotional Learning: A Guide to Systemic Whole School Implementation, *New York State Education Department (2019).*

Social Emotional Learning Activities and Teaching Practices, *New York State Education Department.*

Mental Health Education Literacy in Schools: Linking to a Continuum of Well-Being, *New York State Education Department (2018).*

Appendix A: Additional Resources

The following documents are included as attachments to the Guide. New York State Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services (DHSES) does not endorse any person, product, service or enterprise. References to specific agencies, companies, products, or services therefore should not be considered an endorsement by NYS DHSES. Rather, the references are illustrations to supplement discussion of the issues. Document references cited in this publication were valid as of the date of this publication.

How to Respond When an Active Shooter is in Your Vicinity, *U.S Department of Homeland Security*
Active Shooter: How to Respond, *U.S Department of Homeland Security*

How to Prepare for and Respond During and After an Active Shooter Incident, *U.S Department of Homeland Security*

Emergency Response Card, *New York State Education Department*

DASA Requirements for Schools, *New York State Education Department, New York State Center for School Safety*

DASA Implementation and Incident Reporting Self- Assessment, *New York State Education Department, New York State Center for School Safety*

Appendix B: Summary of Development Levels of Safety Awareness

Summary of Development Levels of Safety Awareness

Level	Description
Early *(Pre-K and Kindergarten)*	• General understanding of danger. • Heavily reliant on adults for direction. • Capable of practicing basic safety concepts like "get out" and "keep out."
Developing *(Early Elementary)*	• Demonstrates characteristics of early awareness. • Capable of providing basic assistance in an emergency (e.g., turning out lights).
Practiced *(Upper Elementary)*	• Demonstrates characteristics of developing awareness. • Capable of assisting adults in an emergency (e.g., closing doors).
Proficient *(Intermediate/Middle School)*	• Capable of performing practiced actions independently. • May of may not demonstrate the ability to interrupt an attacker.
Independent *(High School and Adult)*	• Demonstrates automatic response in a variety of safety situations. Demonstrates ability to independently adapt and apply safety skills and knowledge in a variety of situations, May or may not demonstrate the ability to interrupt an attacker.
Advanced *(Professionally Trained Adults or Staff Members)*	• Capable of leading others and making decision in emergencies. • May or may not demonstrate the ability to interrupt an attacker.
Professionals *(Responders, Military, Security Professionals)*	• Highly capable of decision-making in an emergency • Trained and equipped to provide tactical response in an emergency.

Source: National Association of School Psychologists