

# Report of the National School Shield Task Force

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# BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

What more can we do as a nation to improve the safety of our children at school? This was the question raised by the National Rifle Association (NRA) after the Sandy Hook tragedy in which twenty young lives were taken along with the lives of six devoted school staff.<sup>1</sup>

The posing of this question led to the assembly of a team of recognized experts in homeland security, law-enforcement training and school safety to conduct a survey of selected schools and their current security standards. This review has been conducted without any preconceived conclusions or mandate from the NRA except to determine what is needed to save young lives. The NRA has fully honored its commitment to respect the independence of this task force and to fund its work.

There are many experts in school safety. Some are self-proclaimed experts and others are nationally recognized leaders and innovators. The group of experts assembled for the National School Shield (NSS) Task Force is a selection of the most experienced and respected security experts; however, it is recognized that there are many others who have written, worked and contributed in the arena of school safety. While our report studied and reviewed the work of many in the field, our purpose was to bring together experts with different security backgrounds to provide a fresh perspective to the challenge of school violence. It is our hope that as the NSS continues into the future, the contribution and support for this initiative by school safety experts will expand.

Members of the task force include:

Ralph Basham, *Former Director of U.S. Secret Service, Former Commissioner of U.S. Customs and Border Protection, Former Director of Federal Law Enforcement Training Center*

Col. (ret.) John Quattrone, *U.S. Air Force Security Forces Officer, three-time Commander, Former Joint Staff Operations Antiterrorism/Homeland Defense Directorate, the Pentagon*

Tony Lambraia, *CEO of Phoenix RBT Solutions*

Bruce Bowen, *Former Deputy Director of U.S. Secret Service, Former Assistant Director of Federal Law Enforcement Training Center*

Thomas Dinanno, *Former Deputy Assistant Secretary for Critical Infrastructure Protection, U.S. Department of Homeland Security*

Robert Lambraia, *Director of Training of Phoenix RBT Solutions*

Joe Overstreet, *Former U.S. Secret Service Special Agent, Law Enforcement Training Manager of Phoenix RBT Solutions*

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<sup>1</sup> Jason Barron, *Nation Reels After Gunman Massacres 20 Children at School in Connecticut*, THE NEW YORK TIMES, Dec. 14, 2012, at A1, available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/15/nyregion/sandy-hook-principal-and-school-psychologist-went-the-extra-mile.html?ref=nyregion>. See also Conn. Victims: *Lively youngsters, devoted adults*, ABC Local News (Dec. 17, 2012), [http://abclocal.go.com/wpvi/story?section=news/national\\_world&id=8918308](http://abclocal.go.com/wpvi/story?section=news/national_world&id=8918308).

Mike Restovich, *Former Chief Homeland Security Attache of U.S. Embassy in London, Former Assistant Administrator of U.S. Transportation Security Administration (TSA), Former Supervisor, U.S. Secret Service*  
Randy Knapp, *Instructor, RBT Solutions*  
Joseph Turitto, *Retired Police Sergeant*  
Wence Arevalo, *Police SWAT/Entry Team Leader Sergeant*  
Kirt Rothe, *Instructor, Phoenix RBT Solutions*

In addition to the experience of the task force members, the following is a partial list of officials, schools and organizations that have made important contributions to this report by providing access to schools or by sharing their expertise and perspective.

Los Angeles Unified School District  
National Association of School Resource Officers  
Dr. Park Dietz, *President, Threat Assessment Group, Newport Beach, CA*  
Dr. Rosa Blackwell, *former Superintendent of Cincinnati Public Schools*  
Augustine Pescatore, *President of National Association of School Security Officers, Commander, Office for School Safety, Philadelphia School District*  
National Association of Pupil Transportation, Albany, NY  
Michael Dorn, *Executive Director, Safe Havens International, Inc.*

## DEMOGRAPHICS OF ASSESSED SCHOOLS

For security and confidentiality reasons, the exact names of the participating schools have been kept confidential. A general description of the assessed schools is being released to show the variety of schools surveyed by the assessment teams.

1. Midwestern area public school, rural, pre-K through 12, 1,000 students, no SRO on campus, planning on arming school staff
2. Mid-Atlantic area public school, suburban, K through 5, 652 students, no SRO on campus. Part-time visits by district SRO
3. Southeastern area public school, suburban, 6 through 8, 1,125 students, no SRO on campus; however, one full-time unarmed security representative is present. Part-time visits by district SRO
4. Southeastern area public school, suburban, 9 through 12, 2,837 students, full-time SRO (armed), full-time security staff member, plus staff of three, all armed
5. Southwestern area parochial private school, urban, pre-K through 8, 218 students, no SRO on campus
6. Southwestern area public school, urban, pre-K through 8, 939 students, no SRO on campus

In addition to the above schools, which underwent a comprehensive security assessment, the National School Shield Task Force interviewed scores of school



representatives, teachers, parents and law-enforcement officials. The experts who comprise the NSS Task Force have conducted hundreds of facility assessments, including specific evaluations of school security programs. The combined experience along with the specific assessments conducted in performance of the NSS mandate have led to the conclusions and recommendations set forth in this report.

## ASSESSMENT PROCESS

The evaluations of the security and emergency preparedness of each school consisted of a pre-assessment questionnaire presented to the principal, along with an examination of the floor plans and school design. The actual assessment, which was conducted over the course of two to four days, included:

- In-briefing with principal or superintendent
- Reviewing school's design, security/safety policies, emergency plans and procedures
- Observing day-to-day operations
- Conducting interviews with school principal, staff, security, teachers, crisis response team members, building engineers and others as necessary
- Determining potential threat(s) to location (risk analysis)
- Photographing and documenting observations

Finally, the principal was briefed at the conclusion of the assessment and provided the findings on vulnerabilities and recommendations of best practices to better secure the school.

The findings and recommendations contained in this report reflect, in part, the insights gained from these assessments. Appendix B is a summary of the common vulnerabilities and best practices observed during the course of the school assessments.

# SCHOOL VIOLENCE - A NATIONAL CALL FOR ACTION

On March 5, 2001, Charles Williams, a freshman at Santana High School in Santee, CA, used a .22-caliber revolver to shoot fifteen people at his school, killing two students and wounding thirteen others.<sup>2</sup> Two of the wounded included a student teacher and an unarmed campus security supervisor.<sup>3</sup> They were both shot when they attempted to stop Williams as he was reloading. The two off-duty police officers visiting the school at this time were on opposite ends of the building, but rushed to the scene of the crime and immediately called for backup. When the sheriff's deputies entered the bathroom, Williams was reloading his gun for the fourth time. As soon as he saw the officers, the young freshman that had just shot fifteen people quietly put down his gun and calmly surrendered.<sup>4</sup>

Jeff Weise killed five fellow students, a teacher and a security officer at Red Lake High School in Minnesota on March 21, 2005.<sup>5</sup> Early that morning, Weise killed his grandfather and his grandfather's girlfriend using a .22-caliber gun. Upon entering school that day, Weise was confronted by 28-year-old Derrick Brun, an unarmed guard. Weise murdered Brun before continuing into the school. He killed a total of nine people and wounded seven before taking his own life.

As the above examples demonstrate, the presence of a security guard or off-duty policeman when there is an active shooter is mostly ineffective unless the security officer is armed. Without a weapon to defend them, even the most heroic individuals are unprepared to defend against violent attackers armed with guns.

Contrast those cases with the 1997 shooting at Pearl High School. In that instance, Luke Woodham killed two students and wounded seven others at his high school before the school's assistant principal, Joel Myrick, disarmed him using a .45-caliber semi-automatic pistol that he retrieved from his truck.<sup>6</sup>

Now let's go back to the shooting at Santana High School in 2001. After that attack the officials in the Grossmont Union High School District, which includes both Santana High School as well as near by Granite Hills High School, decided to post armed officers at every school.<sup>7</sup> Less than three weeks after the Santana High School incident, Jason Hoffman, a student at Granite Hills High School, opened fire outside the administrative offices. Hoffman was able to fire about eight rounds before being taken

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<sup>2</sup> Jessica Reaves, *Charles 'Andy' Williams*, TIME (Mar. 9, 2001), <http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,101847,00.html>.

<sup>3</sup> EXCLUSIVE: *Santana School Shooter*, ABC News (Oct. 10, 2001), <http://abcnews.go.com/Primetime/story?id=132072&page=1>.

<sup>4</sup> Reaves, *supra* note 2.

<sup>5</sup> NBC News, *Teen who killed 9 claimed Nazi leanings* (Mar. 23, 2005), <http://www.nbcnews.com/id/7259823/#.UUjdRVsk5qs>.

<sup>6</sup> *How an Armed Assistant Principal Stopped a School Shooter*, CHICAGO NEWS BENCH (Dec. 17, 2012),

<http://rogersparkbench.blogspot.com/2012/12/how-armed-asst-principal-stopped-school.html#.UUjiLsk5qs>.

<sup>7</sup> John Weldon, *Targeting Schools*, THE NEW AMERICAN (Mar. 1, 2013),

<http://www.thenewamerican.com/culture/education/item/14656-targeting-schools>.

down and disarmed by Agent Rich Agundez, the school resource officer (SRO) on duty.<sup>8</sup> Fortunately, because of the presence and quick thinking of an armed security guard, Hoffman was prevented from taking the lives of any innocent students.<sup>9</sup>

School violence of this nature has been occurring in the U.S. for almost 300 years. Although there have been changes in the patterns and in the weapons used, mass casualty school assaults continue to have a deeply profound impact on the nation. The first recorded school shooting occurred on July 26, 1764, when four men entered a one-room schoolhouse, killing the schoolmaster and ten children.<sup>10</sup> The most deadly attack on a school occurred in May 1927 in Bath, Michigan, when a trustee from a local school board detonated 600 pounds of dynamite that he had placed inside Bath Consolidated School, before committing suicide by detonating a final explosion in his truck.<sup>11</sup> In the end, Andrew Kehoe had killed 45 people, including 38 elementary school children and his wife, and injured at least 58 more. One of the most notable school murders was the Virginia Tech massacre, when Seung-Hui Cho shot and killed 32 people and wounded 17 in two separate attacks that occurred about two hours apart.<sup>12</sup> This is the deadliest shooting incident by a single gunman in U.S. history.

During the 1999 shooting at Columbine High School, there was a full-time SRO on campus. Although the officer engaged in brief gunfire with the two murderers, which likely saved several lives, the officer remained outside the building caring for a wounded student as the killers proceeded inside.<sup>13</sup> With recent increased attention on the impact of SROs on school safety, and developments in training methods and procedures, armed guards are now able to more effectively protect students. If the situation at Columbine were to repeat itself, a trained SRO would have the skills to directly engage the active shooter and would be aware that neutralizing the threat is the first priority.

This list of atrocities goes on and includes the recent tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, CT.

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<sup>8</sup> Steven Bartholow, *Santana Shooting in the Press: The New American and NOVA*, SANTEE PATCH (March 5, 2013), [http://santee.patch.com/articles/santana-shooting-video#youtube\\_video-13436413](http://santee.patch.com/articles/santana-shooting-video#youtube_video-13436413). See also *Another School Shooting*, ABC NEWS (March 22, 2001), <http://abcnews.go.com/US/story?id=93750&page=1>.

<sup>9</sup> Mike Nelson, *5 Shot at Granite Hills High School, Ca.*, 26 SAFER SCHOOLS NEWS (March 22, 2011), [http://www.keystosaferschools.com/Granite\\_Hills\\_California\\_Shooting032201.htm](http://www.keystosaferschools.com/Granite_Hills_California_Shooting032201.htm).

<sup>10</sup> Carole Devine, *School shootings are becoming an American dilemma*, HELIUM (Oct. 29, 2009), <http://www.helium.com/items/1632829-school-shootings-in-america>.

<sup>11</sup> Nadia Reiman & Michael Garofalo, *Survivors Recall 1927 Michigan School Massacre*, NPR (April 17, 2009, 4:00PM), <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=103186662>; See also Graham Osteen, *The Bath, Michigan, school tragedy of 1927*, THE ITEM (Dec. 16, 2012 6:00AM), [http://www.theitem.com/opinion/graham\\_osteen/the-bath-michigan-school-tragedy-of/article\\_70b2ede8-4744-11e2-bb88-001a4bcf887a.html](http://www.theitem.com/opinion/graham_osteen/the-bath-michigan-school-tragedy-of/article_70b2ede8-4744-11e2-bb88-001a4bcf887a.html).

<sup>12</sup> Shaila Dewan & Johan M. Broder, *Two-Hour Delay Is Linked to Bad Lead*, THE NEW YORK TIMES (April 18, 2007), available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/18/us/18virginia.html?pagewanted=1&ref=chouseunghui>.

<sup>13</sup> Daniel Foster, *Columbine Had an Armed Guard*, NATIONAL REVIEW ONLINE (Dec. 21, 2012, 2:09PM), <http://www.nationalreview.com/corner/336338/columbine-had-armed-guard-daniel-foster>; See also David B. Kopel, *What If We Had Taken Columbine Seriously?*, 5 THE WEEKLY STANDARD 31 (April 24-May 1, 2000), available at <http://www.davekopel.org/2A/Mags/WhatIfWeHadTakenColumbineSeriously.htm>.

# ARMED OFFICERS (SROs), FUNDING HISTORY AND CHALLENGES

School resource officers are sworn law-enforcement officers who use a community-oriented policing philosophy to improve school safety and foster better relationships between law enforcement and youth.<sup>14</sup> They have a unique position in which they are “called upon to perform many duties not traditional to the law-enforcement function, such as instructing students, serving as mentors and assisting administrators in maintaining decorum and enforcing school board policy and rules.”<sup>15</sup> SRO programs emphasize the importance of collaboration between school officials and local law enforcement by promoting a community-based approach to school violence. The National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO) has divided the responsibilities of SROs into three areas, referred to as the “triad” concept of school-based policing: (1) educator, (2) informal counselor and (3) law-enforcement officer.<sup>16</sup> In addition to their training as law-enforcement officers, each SRO receives specialized training in teaching and counseling.<sup>17</sup>

The benefits of SROs go beyond increasing campus safety. Several communities have reported that placing SROs at schools has reduced the burden on patrol officers and road deputies who no longer need to respond to individual problems at local schools.<sup>18</sup> They have also helped improve the image of police officers among youth and fostered better relationships between juveniles and police.<sup>19</sup> This is all in addition to enhancing school safety by protecting students, teachers and administrators.

The past two decades have witnessed a drop in incidences of school violence, including homicide rates<sup>20</sup> and violent crime.<sup>21</sup> This positive trend mirrors the expansion of SRO programs around the country: As more SRO officers have been assigned to schools, school death rates have decreased.<sup>22</sup> These numbers support the notion that the presence of armed officers positively impacts the school environment. Despite this

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<sup>14</sup> NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS, TO PROTECT & EDUCATE: THE SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER AND THE PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS 1 (Oct. 2012), (hereinafter NASRO SRO REPORT), available at: [http://www.nasro.org/sites/default/files/pdf\\_files/NASRO\\_Protect\\_and\\_Educate.pdf](http://www.nasro.org/sites/default/files/pdf_files/NASRO_Protect_and_Educate.pdf).

<sup>15</sup> *C.M.M. v. State*, 983 So. 2d 704 (Fla. Dist. Ct. App. 5th Dist. 2008).

<sup>16</sup> NASRO SRO REPORT, *supra* note 14, at 3.

<sup>17</sup> NASRO responds to NRA recommendations, NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF RESOURCE OFFICERS (Dec. 21, 2012), <http://www.nasro.org/content/nasro-responds-nra>.

<sup>18</sup> PETER FINN, MEG TOWNSEND, MICHAEL SHIVELY, & TOM RICH, A GUIDE TO DEVELOPING, MAINTAINING, AND SUCCEEDING WITH YOUR SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER PROGRAM 210 (June 2005), (hereinafter SRO PROGRAM GUIDE), available at [http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/files/ric/CDROMs/SchoolSafety/Law\\_Enforcement/AGuidetoDevelopingMaintainingSucceeding.pdf](http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/files/ric/CDROMs/SchoolSafety/Law_Enforcement/AGuidetoDevelopingMaintainingSucceeding.pdf).

<sup>19</sup> *Id.* at 212.

<sup>20</sup> Michael Dorn, *Sandy Hook Elementary School Shooting in Newtown, CT – Initial Thoughts*, SAFE HAVENS INTERNATIONAL (Dec. 15, 2012), <http://www.safehavensinternational.org/sandy-hook-elementary-shooting-newtown-ct/>.

<sup>21</sup> Jon Anderson, *Violent crime in schools actually dropped 74 percent from 1992 to 2010, Hoover police Chief Nick Derzis says* (updated), ALABAMA LIVE (Jan. 31, 2013, 1:49 PM), [http://blog.al.com/spotnews/2013/01/crime\\_in\\_schools\\_actually\\_drop.html](http://blog.al.com/spotnews/2013/01/crime_in_schools_actually_drop.html).

<sup>22</sup> NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS, TO PROTECT & EDUCATE: THE SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER AND THE PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS 9 (Oct. 2012), available at: [http://www.nasro.org/sites/default/files/pdf\\_files/NASRO\\_Protect\\_and\\_Educate.pdf](http://www.nasro.org/sites/default/files/pdf_files/NASRO_Protect_and_Educate.pdf).

upward trend, active shooter situations and other school attacks remain a grave concern for the nation.<sup>23</sup>

## FUNDING SOURCES

Over the years, there have been a variety of responses to school violence. In 1994, President Clinton announced the creation of the Department of Justice's Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS). The \$60 million grant program was intended to provide communities with the resources necessary to tackle crime and violence in schools.<sup>24</sup> Following a wave of school shootings in the late 1990s, which included the Columbine massacre, COPS introduced a new program, called COPS in Schools (CIS), which awarded funding grants for schools to hire specially trained community officers.<sup>25</sup> Launched in 1999, CIS has provided for more than 6,500 SROs around the country.<sup>26</sup> Before funding for the program was cut in FY2006, it appeared to have a positive impact on the school environment. For example, students, faculty, and staff reported feeling safer with the presence of SROs on school grounds.<sup>27</sup> Even in situations where the community was initially reluctant to have police officers on campus, many school administrators and parents were pleased with their SRO programs.<sup>28</sup>

The purpose of CIS grants is to help schools initiate the SRO program, and thus they are only available for the initial three years, at which point schools become responsible for finding their own funding.<sup>29</sup> In some instances, when the CIS grants expired, the police department absorbed the entire cost of the program.<sup>30</sup> Although federal funds used to be the major source of program support in King County, WA, it no longer receives any federal funding.<sup>31</sup> Rather, the city and school district work together to pay the sheriff's office for each full-time SRO.<sup>32</sup>

Many schools have maintained their SRO programs by finding alternative funding sources, including state appropriations and local aid.<sup>33</sup> The majority of programs across the nation are funded by two or more sources.<sup>34</sup> The cost of these programs varies greatly depending on a myriad of factors, including location. For example, the

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<sup>23</sup> See Dorn, *supra* note 20.

<sup>24</sup> Eliana Johnson, *Cops in School*, NATIONAL REVIEW ONLINE (Dec. 31, 2012, 4:00PM), <http://www.nationalreview.com/articles/336637/cops-schools-eliana-johnson>.

<sup>25</sup> *COPS in Schools (CIS)*, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE <http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/default.asp?Item=54> (last visited March 25, 2013).

<sup>26</sup> See *id.*

<sup>27</sup> PETER FINN & JACK McDEVITT, NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER PROGRAMS FINAL PROJECT REPORT 19 (Feb. 28, 2005).

<sup>28</sup> Barbara Raymond, *Assigning Police Officers to Schools*, in PROBLEM-ORIENTED GUIDES FOR POLICE, RESPONSE GUIDES SERIES NO. 10 (Center for Problem-Oriented Policing, Inc., 2010).

<sup>29</sup> See SRO PROGRAM GUIDE, *supra* note 18, at 192.

<sup>30</sup> See *id.* at 210.

<sup>31</sup> See *id.* at 194. Similarly, the SRO program in the Virginia Beach Police Department was originally funded one hundred percent from grants, which it no longer receives. As a result of the popularity of the program, the police chief and school superintendent were able to convince the city council to fund the entire program once the grants ceased. *Id.*

<sup>32</sup> See *id.* (noting that they are only required to pay about one-third of the total cost of each SRO).

<sup>33</sup> See *id.* at 191-202.

<sup>34</sup> See *id.* at 191.

Terrebone Parish in Louisiana receives \$280,000 to support nine SROs, while the program budget in Fontana, CA, is \$969,000 for only eight SROs.<sup>35</sup> In the event that federal grants are not available, many communities have looked for creative ways to support their SRO programs, including through private corporations or charities.<sup>36</sup> Some police departments have even held fundraisers in an attempt to raise money.<sup>37</sup>

Most often, the cost is shared between the law-enforcement agency and the school district.<sup>38</sup> At the Murrieta Valley High School in San Diego, the police department and the school district jointly fund the SRO program, with the former picking up a majority of the costs.<sup>39</sup> In Virginia, the School Resource Officer Program is generally subsidized by two sources: the Byrne Justice Assistance Grant Program (JAG), the leading source of federal justice funding to state and local jurisdictions,<sup>40</sup> and the SRO Incentive Grants Fund, which comes from the state.<sup>41</sup> In addition, school communities may also seek funding from private sources.<sup>42</sup>

Some communities face grave challenges in trying to maintain their program. Schools in Indiana are requesting an expansion of the current SRO program, but lawmakers have not yet identified funding for the additional personnel.<sup>43</sup> One piece of legislation proposes creating a fund to give matching grants of up to \$50,000 to districts to help pay for the officers.<sup>44</sup> Knox County Schools in Tennessee have just requested an additional \$1.9 million from the County Commission to fund 58 new SROs.<sup>45</sup>

## OTHER FEDERALLY FUNDED SCHOOL SAFETY PROGRAMS UNDER COPS

For several years after CIS funding ceased, COPS continued to fund other school safety initiatives. In 2005, \$14.7 million was granted to 187 local law-enforcement agencies through the Secure Our Schools program (SOS),<sup>46</sup> which helps law-enforcement agencies collaborate with schools in purchasing crime-prevention equipment and conducting staff and student training. COPS awarded \$14.8 million in both 2006 and 2007 to fund 174 and 152, respectively, local law-enforcement agency efforts towards

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<sup>35</sup> *Id.* at 192.

<sup>36</sup> *Id.* at 201-4 (citing examples of funds coming from organizations like United Way and the American Legion, and from private companies, such as Microsoft, Toyota Motor Sports, and the Auto Club).

<sup>37</sup> *Id.* at 201, 205 (citing examples of hosting golf tournaments and a Kiwanis fundraiser).

<sup>38</sup> *See id.* at 192.

<sup>39</sup> Tom Sheridan, *School resource officers are no 'Kindergarten Cops'*, U.T. SAN DIEGO (Feb. 11, 2013), <http://www.utsandiego.com/news/2013/feb/11/school-resource-officers-murrieta/>.

<sup>40</sup> Edward Byrne Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) Program Fact Sheet, BUREAU OF JUSTICE ASSISTANCE, [https://www.bja.gov/Publications/JAG\\_Fact\\_Sheet.pdf](https://www.bja.gov/Publications/JAG_Fact_Sheet.pdf) (last visited Mar. 29, 2013).

<sup>41</sup> Virginia School Resource Officer (SRO) Program, VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE SERVICES, <http://www.dcj.virginia.gov/vcss/sro.cfm> (last visited Mar. 29, 2013).

<sup>42</sup> SRO PROGRAM GUIDE, *supra* note 18, at 204 (including major donors such as Microsoft, Toyota Motor Sports, and the Auto Club).

<sup>43</sup> Chris Proffitt, *Lawmakers consider bill that would help fund school resource officers, other safety measures*, THE INDY CHANNEL (Mar. 8, 2013), <http://www.theindychannel.com/news/local-news/lawmakers-consider-bill-that-would-help-fund-school-resource-officers-other-safety-measures>.

<sup>44</sup> *Id.*

<sup>45</sup> Lydia X. McCoy, *Knox Schools to seek additional funding for 58 school resource officers*, KNOX NEWS (Mar. 6, 2013 at 10:37PM), <http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2013/mar/06/knox-schools-to-see-additional-funding-for-58/>.

<sup>46</sup> COPS HISTORY (1994 - THE PRESENT), COPS: COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING SERVICES, <http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/default.asp?item=44> (last visited Mar. 29, 2013).



enhancing school safety.<sup>47</sup> Another program made possible by COPS funding is Safe Schools/Healthy Students (SS/HS). Under the SS/HS program, the Departments of Justice, Education, and Health and Human Services work together to promote a comprehensive healthy childhood development by emphasizing the relationship between prevention activities and community-based services, such as mental health and law enforcement. The SS/HS program received a grant of \$10 million from COPS to hire approximately 100 SROs.

It should be noted that because of federal budget constraints and shifting priorities, key school safety programs have declined in funding or have been terminated completely. The SOS program and the School Safety Initiative (SSI), which have been primarily funded by congressional earmarks for the last decade, have not received funding in the past few years. The SOS program, which provided more than \$110 million between 2002 and 2011, ended in 2012.<sup>48</sup> The School Safety Initiative, which gave state and local agencies more than \$53 million in grants between 1998 and 2010 for delinquency prevention, community planning and development, and school safety resources, ended in 2011.

Other sources of federal funding outside the COPS program include the U.S. Department of Education Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program,<sup>49</sup> the Edward Byrne Memorial State and Local Law Enforcement Assistance Program,<sup>50</sup> and the Juvenile Accountability Incentive Block Grants.<sup>51</sup>

## CONCLUSION

As a result of funding challenges, many schools have been unable to afford employing a single SRO, and even schools that have SROs are lacking the institutional knowledge of how to incorporate these officers into a more comprehensive safety plan. Without proper guidance, including adequate training and best practices guidelines, schools remain vulnerable to incidents of school violence. In a 2004 survey, school resource officers reported significant gaps in their schools' security, that the school crisis plans were inadequate, and that the plans were not tested on a regular basis.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> *Id.*

<sup>48</sup> John Solomon & Kimberly Dvorak, *Before Connecticut tragedy, administration eliminated emergency preparedness program, let school violence prevention programs lapse*. WASHINGTON GUARDIAN (Jan. 2, 2013). In FY 2011, SOS grant funding provided more than \$13 million to law enforcement agencies to assist schools with school safety and security concerns. *COPS Fact Sheet: Secure Our Schools*, COPS: COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING SERVICES, <http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/pdf/2011AwardDocs/CSPP-SOS-CHP/2011-SOS-Post-FactSheet.pdf> (last visited Mar. 29, 2013).

<sup>49</sup> SRO PROGRAM GUIDE, *supra* note 18, at 200.

<sup>50</sup> *Id.* (coming from the Bureau of Justice Assistance at the U.S. Department of Justice).

<sup>51</sup> *Id.* (coming from the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention).

<sup>52</sup> KENNETH TRUMP, 2004 NATIONAL SCHOOL-BASED LAW ENFORCEMENT SURVEY: SCHOOL SAFETY LEFT BEHIND? SCHOOL SAFETY THREATS GROW AS PREPAREDNESS STALLS & FUNDING DECREASES 5 (2005), National School Safety and Security Services, *available at* [http://www.schoolsecurity.org/resources/nasro\\_survey\\_2002.html](http://www.schoolsecurity.org/resources/nasro_survey_2002.html).

# FINDINGS OF THE NATIONAL SCHOOL SHIELD TASK FORCE

**Finding No. 1:** There has been insufficient attention paid to school security needs in our nation, and the greatest security gap falls within the medium- to smaller-size schools, which do not have the level of resources of the larger school districts.

*Comment:* A study of Virginia schools found that the elimination of SRO positions over a two-year period occurred mainly in the smaller schools, and was most likely due to reductions in federal and state grants for SRO programs.<sup>53</sup>

In addition, another gap identified by the assessment teams sent out by the National School Shield Task Force is that older schools, constructed more than ten years ago, have greater security challenges than newer facilities. More recently designed schools have more architectural attention devoted to security features in contrast to the building design and layout of older facilities.

Prior to the Sandy Hook incident, most schools took the view that “it probably won’t happen here.” Sandy Hook school leadership has since realized the vulnerability of an unprotected school and the need to take action.

**Finding No. 2:** Many schools do not have a formal, written security plan, and even for those that do, they are often either inadequate or not properly exercised. Schools across the nation vary greatly based on size, geography, student composition, building design, threats and a variety of other factors, all of which dictate the need for individualized and tailor-made security plans adapted to the uniqueness of the particular school.

*Comment:* The plan should be an all-hazards approach that is uniquely designed for the individual campus. The plan should set forth layers of security including use of technology, perimeter security, staff training, properly conducted security drills, and coordination with local law enforcement, fire service and emergency responders.

**Finding No. 3:** A properly trained armed school officer, such as a school resource officer, has proven to be an important layer of security for prevention and response in the case of an active threat on a school campus.

*Comment:* A study of SROs in Virginia found that they have become “an important feature of local law enforcement and public schools.”<sup>54</sup> The success of any law-enforcement presence and its deterrent value is always difficult to measure, but the

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<sup>53</sup> JOHN G. SCHUITEMAN, THE STATUS OF VIRGINIA SROs: 2007, at 2 (Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services, Apr. 6, 2007).

<sup>54</sup> *Id.* at 8.

assessments to date lead to the conclusion that a properly trained SRO is an important part of the security efforts of any school.

**Finding No. 4:** Local school authorities are in the best position to make a final decision on school safety procedures, specifically whether an armed security guard is necessary and supported by the education and citizen community.

**Finding No. 5:** Many public and non-public schools are financially unable to include armed security personnel as part of the school security plan and have resorted to school staff carrying firearms in order to provide an additional level of protection for the students and staff in the event of a violent incident on school property.

*Comment:* The school staff generally receives authorization from law enforcement as a reserve deputy or authorized security officer, even though the training required is inconsistent and often inadequate. Currently, there is no nationally recognized training program for the safe and effective carry, storage, maintenance and administration of firearms by school employees.

For example, in February, after the Sandy Hook tragedy, the Van, TX, school board, which serves more than 2,000 students, voted to allow guns on campus. This action authorized certain school employees to carry firearms on school property, at school events and at board meetings.<sup>55</sup>

**Finding No. 6:** While the local school leadership should make all final decisions regarding the elements of the school security plan, the individual states, with few exceptions, have not made school security an element of adequacy in school standards.

*Comment:* Every school is unique, and there is not a single security plan that covers all schools. A school security plan must be locally tailored to be effective, reliable and safe. What is essential is that every school conducts its own security assessment and develops a plan that covers the vulnerabilities determined in the assessment. States should set the requirements for security and risk assessment and the development of an adequate all-hazards security plan for the school.

**Finding No. 7:** School officials are not generally trained in security assessments or the development of comprehensive safety and security plans. Ideally, a school retains professional assistance in developing their school security plans; however, there is a compelling need for professional-quality online self-assessment tools. This need was emphasized in a recent statement before the House Committee on Education and the Workforce: “While there is certainly some information on websites and in other literature, and products do exist and are on the market to secure our nation’s schools,

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<sup>55</sup> Molly Hennessy-Fiske, *Texas school staffer shot during gun class*, LA Times (Feb. 28, 2013), <http://articles.latimes.com/2013/feb/28/nation/la-na-nn-texas-school-worker-shot-20130228>.

we have not been able to find in our research a website or other single source of information that comprehensively integrates all of the security needs together.”<sup>56</sup>

*Comment:* A professional security consultant generally costs \$10,000 per school campus. An online self-assessment tool will make the work of the security consultant more cost effective, and it will assist the school officials in knowing what security enhancements are needed.

**Finding No. 8:** Federal funding for the personnel costs of SROs has served as a pathway for increased security in our schools, but federal funding has proved unreliable as a long-term solution to the school safety and security needs of our nation.

*Comment:* Many states, including Connecticut<sup>57</sup> and Wyoming<sup>58</sup>, have been forced to shut down or reduce their SRO programs after federal budget cuts, yet remain actively searching for alternative funding options so they can bring SROs back to schools.

**Finding No. 9:** There are numerous federal agencies and programs that provide valuable school safety resources; however, there is a lack of coordination between the federal agencies resulting in gaps, duplication and inefficiencies.

*Comment:* There are at least three different Cabinet-level departments that have some involvement in school safety policy, funding or initiatives. The Department of Justice, the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Education all have programs focusing on school safety. Within each department there are multiple sub-agencies that are working (sometimes independently of each other) on school safety programs.

**Finding No. 10:** History teaches us that in most violent attacks at a school, there are multiple early warning signs, called pre-incident indicators, of a student or outside person who exhibits threatening behavior and poses a risk to the school.<sup>59</sup> In order to properly use these indicators to minimize the risk of violence, schools must develop a culture of awareness and willingness to share this information with the proper

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<sup>56</sup> *Protecting Students and Teachers: A Discussion on School Safety: Hearings Before the House Comm. on Education and the Workforce*, 113<sup>th</sup> Cong. (Feb. 27, 2013) (testimony of Brett Bontrager, Senior Vice President and Group Executive, Stanley Black & Decker), available at: [http://edworkforce.house.gov/uploadedfiles/bontrager\\_testimony.pdf](http://edworkforce.house.gov/uploadedfiles/bontrager_testimony.pdf).

<sup>57</sup> Dave Altimari, *State Troopers May Be Put Back In Schools*, THE HARTFORD COURANT (Jan. 22, 2013), [http://articles.courant.com/2013-01-22/news/hc-newtown-school-resource-officers-20130119\\_1\\_school-resource-officers-thomas-davoren-state-troopers](http://articles.courant.com/2013-01-22/news/hc-newtown-school-resource-officers-20130119_1_school-resource-officers-thomas-davoren-state-troopers).

<sup>58</sup> Elysia Conner, *Wyoming officials look for ways to improve school safety*, BILLINGS GAZETTE (Mar. 17, 2013, at 11:45PM), [http://billingsgazette.com/news/state-and-regional/wyoming-officials-look-for-ways-to-improve-school-safety/article\\_63037732-ec2c-5048-8c0d-b4d6b0e4bcb4.html](http://billingsgazette.com/news/state-and-regional/wyoming-officials-look-for-ways-to-improve-school-safety/article_63037732-ec2c-5048-8c0d-b4d6b0e4bcb4.html).

<sup>59</sup> The FBI and Secret Service found that in many instances of school violence, the perpetrator indicated their intentions to peers prior to the attack. Dewey G. Cornell, *The Virginia Model for Student Threat Assessment* 3, CONFRONTING VIOLENCE IN OUR SCHOOLS: PLANNING, RESPONSE, AND RECOVERY – A PERI SYMPOSIUM, available at: <http://www.apa.org/about/gr/issues/violence/virginia-model.pdf>. Mitchell Johnson, of Westside Middle School, Arkansas, told his friends he would be "running from the cops," foreshadowing his intentions, but students who heard him didn't know how to interpret his comments. Katherine Newman, *In school shootings, patterns and warning signs*, CNN.COM (Dec. 17, 2012, at 11:35AM), <http://www.cnn.com/2012/12/17/opinion/newman-school-shooters>. After Michael Carneal of Heath High School, Kentucky, shot three students, his peers later recalled his "jokes" about taking over the school, and had actually seen him bring guns to school - but nobody knew how to respond or what to do with these warnings. Karen Samples Gutierrez, *Michael Carneal: Torment of a Teen Killer*, CINCINNATI.COM (Sep. 14, 2002), [http://www.enquirer.com/editions/2002/09/14/loc\\_gutierrez\\_michael.html](http://www.enquirer.com/editions/2002/09/14/loc_gutierrez_michael.html).

individuals. A positive school culture has also been linked to reducing incidences of bullying, which is frequently associated with an attackers' decision to engage in a violent act. The *Best Practices Guidelines*, in Appendix A (pp. 9-22), contains additional information on school climate and the relationship to school violence.

The most widespread and effective tool that has been used to identify pre-incident indicators and other indicators of school dynamics is the use of Threat Assessment Groups or Behavioral Intervention Teams (BIT). These teams are trained to identify individuals who may pose a risk to society, and assist in the development of an individualized plan of mental health and educational services. The *Best Practices Guidelines*, in Appendix A (pp. 16-20), has more information on pre-incident indicators for adults and students.

*Comment:* The impact of threat assessment teams is demonstrated in a 2011 survey of Virginia school safety. The schools that used the threat assessment guidelines developed by the University of Virginia reported lower rates of weapons-related disciplinary infractions and lower rates of school suspensions.<sup>60</sup> The students in these schools experienced less bullying, were more likely to seek help for bullying and threats of violence, and had more positive perceptions of school climate.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Dewey Cornell, Peter J. Lovegrove, Donna Michaelis, & Sherri Johnson, *The 2011 Virginia School Safety Audit Survey Results*, Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services (June 2011).

<sup>61</sup> *See id.* at 9.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations have been provided to the NRA as it considers its future commitment to the mission of school security and safety. Some of the recommendations also apply to federal and state policy makers, and it is our intent that the recommendations will add to the national discussion and be part of the solutions to the common goal of protecting our children.

**No. 1: Training** A model-training program has been developed by the NSS Task Force for the professional training of armed personnel in the school environment. Appendix D is the public version of the training outline for law-enforcement school resource officers, and Appendix E is the public version of the training outline for armed school personnel. This training will only be open to those who are designated by school officials and qualified by appropriate background investigation, testing and relevant experience.

The National School Shield initiative should adopt this model-training program for armed officers or personnel in the schools as a best practice. The NRA has the nationally recognized expertise to develop and implement the stringent training courses required by this model program. It is recommended that the professional training programs that are approved by the states for armed school personnel use private sector approved and certified trainers as well as traditional state law enforcement trainers. Appendix C is the public version of the Train the Trainer Program.

**No. 2: Adoption of Model Law for Armed School Personnel** Many states prohibit anyone other than a sworn law-enforcement officer or licensed security guard to carry a firearm in a public or non-public school. In order for a selected school staff member to be designated, trained and armed on school property, the states will have to change current legal restrictions.

Attached, as Appendix H, is a model state law that is presented for that purpose.

**No. 3: School Resource Officer** Each school that employs an SRO should have a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), or an “interagency agreement,” between the appropriate law-enforcement agency and the school district. This contract should define the duties and responsibilities of the SRO, as well as the applicable laws, rules and regulations.

The objective of the SRO is not to increase juvenile arrests within a school, but to provide security and to support the normal disciplinary policies of a school consistent with the MOU.



**No. 4: Online Self-Assessment Tool** An internet-based self-assessment tool has been created to allow any school (whether public, private or parochial) to have secure access to comprehensively evaluate and assess the security gaps and vulnerabilities of each school.

Appendix G is the general description of this online self-assessment security tool.

The National School Shield initiative should pilot this self-assessment tool in three school districts of different sizes in order to perfect the questions and scoring. After the pilot projects are completed, this assessment tool should be deployed in a secure fashion on the NSS website for free access by all schools who obtain authorization codes.

This self-assessment tool is based on research-backed concepts and is guided by the unique characteristics of the individual school. The scenario-based questions prompt schools to identify the operational and functional weaknesses in their security and assist them in finding solutions to fill the gaps. The outcome-based performance standards ensure that the assessment is applicable to the unique characteristics of any given school.

**No. 5: State Education Adequacy Requirement** State standards related to school security vary from non-existent to stringent. Although state responses to school security will naturally vary, there should be a common element that requires all public schools to participate in an assessment and develop a security plan based on the unique requirements of that particular institution.

**No. 6: Federal Coordination and Funding** Either through legislation or executive action, a lead agency should be designated to coordinate the federal programs and funding of local school safety efforts. The Department of Homeland Security should be designated as the lead, supported by the Department of Education and Department of Justice.

In terms of funding, the historic model of COPS program grants and modest grants through other programs is neither consistent nor adequate to provide armed officers in our nation's schools and to fund other security-related improvements desperately needed in our schools. While the focus of this report is to create a means of private-sector support for school safety, we note that there are numerous grant programs that are not available to schools.

It is recommended that the Department of Homeland Security grants should be open for school security programs such as training, risk assessment and security response planning. This would not involve any additional federal funds, but would open up schools as a potential recipient of the Homeland Security grants.

**No. 7: Umbrella National Organization to Advocate and Support School Safety** Because of the limitations of federal, state and local funding for school safety, there is an

important role that can be filled by a private non-profit advocacy and education organization. The National School Shield is in a position with adequate funding and support from the NRA to fulfill this important national mission.

The NSS mission would: (a) provide national advocacy for school safety; (b) supply ongoing online self-assessment and other tools for public, private and parochial schools; (c) make available best practices in school safety to help guide schools in the development of school safety and security policies; (d) fund innovative pilot projects and training costs for armed school personnel; and (e) provide state-of-the-art training programs in the area of school safety and security.

It is recommended that an advisory board be created to provide counsel on the development of the NSS initiative and to assist in the securing of adequate funding for the programs.

While every school should have free access to the online resources of the NSS, it is recommended that before a school can be certified as a member of NSS, it must meet a set of strict criteria. Membership requirements would include:

- (a) Completion of online security assessment of school, supplemented as needed by on-site technical assistance
- (b) Development of comprehensive all-hazards school security plan based upon the assessment
- (c) Coordination and training with local law enforcement and first responders
- (d) Presence in the school of a trained armed law-enforcement officer, security officer or trained armed school staff
- (e) Periodic reviews of school security program utilizing available technical assistance to ensure consistency with best practices

We further recommend that NSS fund and assign technical consultations for member schools. This could be in the form of a help desk or on-site visits.

Finally, we recommend that the NSS explore insurance coverage for member schools as a potential program benefit.

#### **No. 8: Specific Pilot Program on Threat Assessments and Mental Health.**

As part of its comprehensive security plan, each school should develop a threat assessment team, which will work in coordination with mental health professionals. The purpose is to create a positive school environment that encourages sharing information on early warning signs and reducing incidences of bullying or other anti-social behavior. The team should coordinate with any current crisis response protocols, and should be responsible for assessing the emotional climate of the school by reviewing all relevant policies, rules and regulations that affect the educational environment. The *Best Practices Guidelines*, Appendix A (pp. 15-22), contains additional information on the duties of the threat assessment team.

The team will be responsible for evaluating all threats, including the surrounding circumstances, and conducting an investigation to determine whether the threat is serious. After all appropriate assessments have been made, the team should create a written safety plan by integrating all relevant findings, and should determine whether to refer the student to a school psychologist for a mental health assessment and, if necessary, to the school resource officer for a law-enforcement investigation.

Appendix A details how the teams should conduct their assessments, which individuals should be included on the team and other relevant information.

Accordingly, it is recommended that the NSS initiate a partnership with other interested national partners to develop and fund three pilot projects in order to establish best practices and a model for school threat assessment, prevention and mental health support.

In developing these pilot projects, reference should be made to the College and University Behavioral Intervention Team (CUBIT),<sup>62</sup> which is a model developed by the National Center for Higher Education Risk Management in response to the surge of school violence and shootings in 2007, and to the National Behavioral Intervention Team Association (NaBITA). The NRA should also look at the *Virginia Model for Student Threat Assessment*, which was drafted based on the findings of a series of field tests on threat assessment guidelines. An active program that should be considered is the Safe and Respectful School Program of the Threat Assessment Group (TAG), which has been available as a resource since 2011 in the state of Tennessee.

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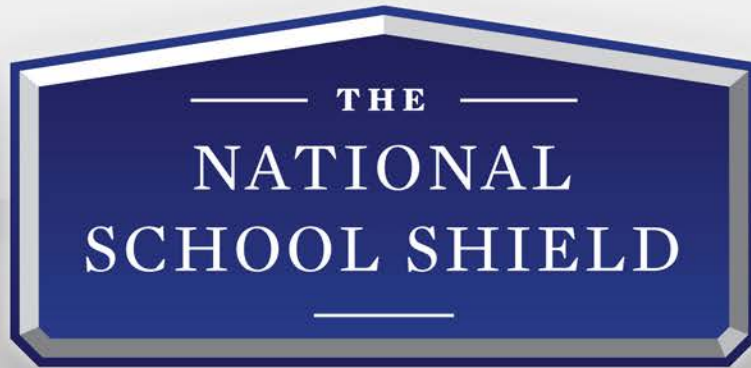
<sup>62</sup> Brett A. Sokolow & Stephanie F. Hughes, *Risk Mitigation Through the NCHERM Behavioral Intervention and Threat Assessment Model 1*, NATIONAL CENTER FOR HIGHER EDUCATION RISK MANAGEMENT, available at: <http://ncherm.org/pdfs/2008-whitepaper.pdf>. This model was developed in direct response to the Virginia Governor's Report of the Virginia Tech Review Panel and other national panel and review recommendations. The CUBIT is unique in that it includes a formalized protocol of engagement techniques and strategies, a clear process for threat collection and assessment, and a procedure for communication. In addition, it was specifically designed to integrate with all other campus risk management practices.

## **CONCLUSION**

The work of the National School Shield has only just begun. The NSS Task Force has done its work by providing best practices in school security, new tools for security assessments, recommendations for funding and a private sector program model. It is our hope that the NRA looks favorably on these recommendations, commits its enormous political will and energy behind this effort, and devotes sufficient resources to properly fund the program, pilots and continued support for school safety.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I would like to acknowledge the extraordinary expertise of Command Consulting Group, Phoenix RBT Solutions, and Tom DiNanno, who have been integral to the production of this report. Thank you to France Bognon for her research assistance. Finally, I would like to reinforce my appreciation of the NRA for the complete independence and total latitude we were given in developing this report.



# APPENDIX A BEST PRACTICES GUIDELINES





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**WARNING AND DISCLAIMER:**

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## PRELIMINARY DISCUSSIONS

### **Purpose**

This document is intended to help readers think about preventing and responding to events that should be unthinkable, but unfortunately are all too real. It is our hope that those reading this document will never experience firsthand or be directly affected by an act of violence at the school where they work or where their children attend. Indeed, we hope that such an event will never occur at any school, anywhere. Hope, however, is not a strategy; preparation and risk mitigation are.

One can stipulate that schools are, in general, very safe places, that acts of violence at schools are rare, that events such as those at Columbine and Newtown are thankfully uncommon and unlikely. Much like a terrorist attack on an aircraft, an act of extreme violence at a school may be a rare or unlikely occurrence, but it is of high consequence. Each school-based shooting has had a tragic and lasting effect on the school where it occurred, the surrounding community, and the nation as a whole. It is therefore worth thinking more about how we can better protect our schools even if the probability of a violent episode at any particular school is low. The loss of a single child or teacher through an act of violence at school is tragic; more tragic still are the loss of lives that might have been prevented if further precautions or planning had been undertaken to address a known threat or vulnerability. This document is focused on school shooting events and is intended to provide, to those charged with school security responsibilities, a usable synopsis of common security vulnerabilities, best practices for prevention, mitigation, preparedness, and response, as well as links to further resources. While it is impossible to produce a truly exhaustive examination of this ever-evolving subject, we believe that this document thoroughly addresses many of the most essential areas of concern and can be of great value to its readers.

### **About Our Team**

#### **W. Ralph Basham**

Mr. Basham has an unparalleled breadth of experience in law enforcement and homeland security. Over the course of his 38-year career in federal law enforcement, he has served as Director of the U.S. Secret Service, Commissioner of U.S. Customs and Border Protection, Director of the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center, and Chief of Staff of the Transportation Security Administration. Mr. Basham has served in these leadership positions as a Senior Executive Presidential appointee in the Clinton, George W. Bush, and Obama Administrations.

#### **Bruce Bowen**

Mr. Bruce Bowen is a proven leader in the fields of physical and asset security and protection. During his career with the U.S. Secret Service, Mr. Bowen served as the Deputy Director and as Assistant Special Agent in Charge of the Presidential Protective Division. During his career, Mr. Bowen also led a U.S. Secret Service–U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development initiative in re-designing security for high-rise tenements in Baltimore’s inner city. Mr. Bowen has also led the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center where he was charged with developing and implementing operations to train over 13,000 students annually across 83 organizations. Mr. Bowen is a recipient of the Presidential Meritorious Executive Award, as well as the Presidential Distinguished Rank Award.

### **John Quattrone**

Colonel (retired) John Quattrone served in the United States Air Force as a Security Forces officer. Colonel Quattrone has extensive experience in facility physical security systems, critical infrastructure protection, threat assessment, risk analysis, and mitigation, all within military and civilian educational environments. Colonel Quattrone served as Team Chief, Joint Staff Integrated Vulnerability Assessments at the Defense Threat Reduction Agency, where he conducted over 80 assessments at installations worldwide. Colonel Quattrone is a former three-time commander and was in command during the tragic events of 9/11 where he ensured force protection for a community of 11,000 personnel and four on-base schools. Colonel Quattrone is a recipient of the Defense Superior Service Medal for significantly contributing to the effectiveness of the Department of Defense's antiterrorism posture.

### **Michael Restovich**

Mr. Michael Restovich served in the Senior Executive Service at the Transportation Security Administration, to include a highly regarded role as the U.S. Department of Homeland Security attaché at the U.S. Embassy in London. Here, Mr. Restovich was the senior homeland security official representing the Secretary of Department of Homeland Security, the Transportation Security Administration Administrator, and the U.S. Chief of Mission for the Embassy of London. Mr. Restovich has held key leadership positions in the private sector, serving as a Director of Asset Protection for Exodus Communications and as Head of the Network Integrity Group for MCI WorldCom. Mr. Restovich holds vast experience in securing and defending a variety of invaluable national assets and personnel.

### **Anthony Lambraia**

Mr. Lambraia has 30 years of experience in law enforcement and is considered a leader and innovator in the field of law enforcement training and operations. During his career he has served as Commander of the Active Shooter Response Team at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Tactics Chief at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center, and Chief of the Counter Terrorism Operations Training Facility. He has also served as a Correctional Officer, Patrol Deputy, Detective, and SWAT Team leader and trainer. As a Chief at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center, he was a leader in training development and authored many programs currently in use by over 80 federal agencies nationwide. Mr. Lambraia is now the Owner and CEO of Phoenix RBT Solutions/UTM, which provides products and training to clients around the world. He has been featured on LETN TV and policeone.com several times as a subject matter expert on defensive tactics, firearms, and use of force. Mr. Lambraia has also served as a use of force expert witness in court cases involving law enforcement. Mr. Lambraia has an extensive background in martial arts and has trained professional fighters in mixed martial arts.

## **Approach**

Similar to our nation's approach to terrorism after 9/11, this document focuses on prevention through deterrence, reducing common vulnerabilities, detecting warning signs, and limiting the consequences of an event if it does occur. It admittedly does so with recognition that no amount of reasonable security precautions can absolutely prevent a determined assailant from committing an act of violence at or near a school. Schools are not fortresses nor should they be. But we can and should be better prepared to prevent, respond to, and limit the consequences of the next act of violence at a school.

Much literature already exists on the topic of school security, violence in schools, and active shooter events. An array of government agencies, school districts, non-profits, and other members of the school and security communities have created a repository of literature and knowledge related to this important field, spurred by the fundamental belief that the places in which our children learn and grow

should be and could be safer. Sadly, as recent events – most notably those in Newtown, Connecticut, in December of 2012 – have shown, the challenge to prevent these senseless violent acts remains an urgent priority.

This document synthesizes and attempts to make accessible those resources formulated by trusted and proven sources from government (including from the Department of Homeland Security, Department of Education, and United States Secret Service), non-profits, and educational institutions to identify the types of security vulnerabilities that schools face, and then provide best practices for preventing and mitigating, as well as preparing for and responding to an act of violence, such as that involving an active shooter, in K-12 Schools. Therefore, it is not our desire to contradict many of the authoritative opinions on this important subject, and many schools already examining elements of security planning, risk mitigation, and response discussed in this document likely will find much of the content familiar. Nonetheless, it is our opinion that this document, in line with the goals of the National School Shield Initiative, offers new value to the school security field through its comprehensive, multi-source approach, in part by bringing together often-disparate sources into a single product. Additionally, we believe that on-site school assessments conducted by our expert team of career security professionals in recent weeks makes this document particularly valuable because it is informed by observations of what is going on in schools nationwide *right now*. This document is not intended to be a final customized product or a “one-size-fits-all” approach that will work for every school. It *is* a tool that we hope will spur a thought process on the part of school and community leaders and assist them in beginning to identify their particular vulnerabilities and moving towards developing solutions to close those gaps.

This document does discuss the recent emergence of a national conversation on the potential role of trained, armed individuals in schools as a part of that solution. Like any security measure that a school has the option to employ, whether or not this is a proper choice for a school depends on that particular school’s unique security needs and vulnerabilities, available resources, and any applicable local or state laws. For some schools, an armed law enforcement officer in the form of a School Resource Officer may be part of the answer. In others, highly-trained private security or carefully chosen and trained school staff may be ideal, while in others, an armed individual may not be an acceptable approach but better access controls, surveillance, or response plans would be. The goal of this document is not to prescribe what one solution or mix of solutions is best in a particular case; instead, it is to provide a basis upon which school officials, community leaders, parents, and local law enforcement can work together to begin the discussion about the types of resources available to reduce their vulnerabilities to an act of extreme violence at their school.

## **Document Organization**

The information and guidelines presented below are organized based on synthesis of two prominent approaches to crisis management and security design approaches developed respectively by the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security which we have synthesized with other resources in the field. The crisis management approach is based on the United States Department of Education’s suggested sequence of managing a crisis. The first layer of that approach is based on the concept of **Prevention and Mitigation**, which addresses what schools and school districts can do to reduce or eliminate risk to life and property. The second layer is based on the concept of **Preparedness**, which focuses on the process of planning for a worst-case scenario. The third layer is based on the concept of **Response**, which is devoted to the steps that parties should take during a crisis.

The fourth, and final layer is based on the concept of **Recovery**, which deals with how to restore the learning and teaching environment after a crisis.<sup>1</sup> Although an in-depth discussion of recovery from an event like that involving an active shooter is beyond the scope of this document, this topic is briefly discussed as an additional consideration in Layer Three to emphasize its importance in the overall emergency management process.

## Unique Characteristics of Your School

The use of this document and the security methodologies contained herein should begin by asking the question: “What are my school’s unique physical, environmental, and cultural characteristics?” There may be certain elements of your school’s physical, cultural, and other environmental characteristics which will create individual school security vulnerabilities. On the other hand, these characteristics may be used to strengthen security. For example, a school’s landscaping may not only act as a buffer or perimeter to potential intruders but also may provide hiding or cover for students engaging in illicit activity. Being cognizant of these unique characteristics of your school will allow you to best apply the information and best practices contained herein.

It is also critical to remember that not all threats can be predicted. The absence of a known threat does not always mean that no risk exists. There is no simple solution to the problem of school security and the safety of our children. However, some future attacks may be preventable or mitigated if those responsible for security in schools know what preliminary questions to ask, what pre-incident indicators to look for in order to be able to intervene before an attack occurs, how to prepare to prevent or mitigate an attack, and how to respond when an attack does occur. This document will give you the tools and resources to identify the right questions to ask and begin the process of protecting your school against a violent individual or act.

## Who to Involve

Identifying, coordinating with, and training the individuals that contribute to and are impacted by a school’s security is an essential and immediate step that school administrators must take in efforts to minimize the risk of violence to their students and staff. The U.S. Department of Education (“DOE”) recommends several “action steps” in preparing for the event of a crisis related to this concept of cooperation.<sup>2</sup> Key steps include:

- **Identify and involve stakeholders.** This is essential so as to gather feedback from stakeholders on the parts of crisis planning that pertain to them. This is likely to include, but is not limited to:
  - Families, with whom a school must communicate during/after an active threat situation;
  - Local emergency responders, with whom a school will need to work in a potential active threat situation;
  - City and county emergency management planners;
  - Health and social services provider agencies; and
  - School and other community resources.

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<sup>1</sup>For more on the approach, see DOE, 2003, Section 1, p. 6-7

<sup>2</sup> Based on discussion beginning on Section 3, p. 3 of DOE, 2003

- **Define roles and responsibilities.** That is, define what should happen, when, and *at whose direction*. DOE suggests involving as many staff as possible, so as to avoid unnecessarily overburdening any given individual. DOE defines the following as essential roles, for each of which both primary and backup individuals should be chosen:
  - School commander [e.g., Principal, Vice-principal];
  - Liaison to emergency responders [e.g., school security officer];
  - Caregivers to students [e.g., teachers, counselors];
  - Security officers [e.g., School Resource Officer (SRO), private security personnel];
  - Medical staff [e.g., school nurse];
  - Spokesperson [e.g., communications administrator].

While the vulnerabilities and security requirements of individual schools will vary, what will remain constant is the necessity to involve key personnel and stakeholders on an ongoing basis in order to effectively identify vulnerabilities and implement security plans and procedures.



## LAYER ONE – PREVENTION AND MITIGATION

### Definitions as used in this section:<sup>3</sup>

- Prevention is the action schools take to decrease the likelihood that an event or crisis will occur.
- Mitigation is the action schools take to eliminate or reduce the loss of life and property damage related to an event or crisis, particularly those events or crises that cannot be prevented.

### Overview

Most often, the first stage in any violent attack on a school occurs not within the confines of the school itself. Rather, the first stage of an attack can happen far from school grounds, and involves an individual or a group of individuals' decision to mount an attack on a school or on people at a school. Extensive studies of active shooter threat incidents at schools have consistently shown that these attacks on schools are very rarely impulsive acts. Rather, the overwhelming majority are premeditated and frequently involve detailed planning, sometimes weeks in advance.<sup>4</sup>

Once an individual decides to mount an attack, they must also physically succeed in overcoming early potential obstacles to that attack. For example, an individual who attempts to mount an attack in the cafeteria of their school must (1) acquire the weapons for that attack, (2) transport those weapons from their original point to the school grounds, (3) bypass any exterior security and move them across the peripheral school grounds, and (4) finally, carry those weapons into the school building and ultimately the cafeteria itself.

As shown above, the first stage of any attack involves both mental (i.e., planning) and physical (i.e., implementing) steps that must be taken prior to the point at which harm is inflicted on people at a school. Because stopping an attacker before they carry their weapons into the school or mitigating their effect if they do is the surest way to keep those at a school safe, the measures that comprise this initial layer of school security serve as an important factor in minimizing risk to a school and its occupants. Part of this strategy relies on establishing and enhancing a culture of awareness and designing procedures for identifying and dealing with potential threats so as to identify those who may be planning an attack before they take action. This includes developing a knowledge of commonly identified 'pre-incident indicators' that historical inquiry of such events suggests may be helpful in identifying and interdicting potential assailants before they engage in violence. Another part is physical, involving the construction, installation, and maintenance of appropriate physical security barriers beginning with the outermost perimeter of school grounds, extending to the exterior of the school building, and continuing through the interior of the school itself. Finally, a third part is comprised of establishing appropriate daily procedures that complement various components of a school's physical infrastructure or, where that physical infrastructure is lacking, compensate for that potential gap in security.

While none of these parts either independently or jointly are guaranteed to prevent a tragedy from occurring, proper action in addressing each of these areas of concern has the potential to significantly increase both the quantity and effectiveness of obstacles that an attacker must bypass before they can realize their violent aims, or can at least significantly limit the impact of those aims.

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<sup>3</sup> Adapted from: DOE, 2010, p. 7

<sup>4</sup> See Vossekuil, et al, p. 22 - 24

The subsections outlined in this discussion are intended to encourage and guide school administrators to consider methods that will enhance this prevention- and mitigation-oriented layer of security at their facility. In doing so, they can increase the means by which they deter and prevent violent assailants from taking action; detect and delay those actions if they are taken; and ultimately mitigate and defend against an assailant in a school setting. We will approach this by first, offering an **Overview and Common Vulnerabilities** section that touches on the importance of various aspects of school security and discusses, when applicable, common vulnerabilities that have been identified both in numerous prior studies of school security and also in our own experts' security assessments of schools across geographic regions. Then, it will introduce a set of **Best Practices** designed to be broadly applicable to a diverse set of schools and ultimately tailored by school administrators to fit their individual facility. Finally, it will provide a series of other considerations crafted to assist school administrators in furthering their thinking about specific aspects of their school's security framework.

## **Prevention and Mitigation: School Climate, Environmental Awareness, and Threat Identification**

Some of the most horrific active shooter events in United States history, such as those at Columbine High School in 1999, Virginia Tech University in 2007, and Sandy Hook Elementary in 2012, might carry with them descriptions such as “unfathomable,” “beyond belief,” and “impossible to understand.” The pain and shock that such events caused for the communities that they affected – and the country at large – can rightly be described as such. However, school officials and others who care about the safety of our schools should not conclude that it is impossible to develop knowledge regarding the processes that lead an individual or individuals to embark on such a tragic path. According to a joint report produced by the United States Secret Service and the U.S. Department of Education, “targeted violence is the end result of an understandable, and oftentimes discernable, process of thinking and behavior.”<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, the FBI report, “The School Shooter: A Threat Assessment Perspective,” states:

In general, people do not switch instantly from nonviolence to violence. Nonviolent people do not “snap” or decide on the spur of the moment to meet a problem by using violence. Instead, the path toward violence is an evolutionary one, with signposts along the way. A threat is one observable behavior; others may be brooding about frustration or disappointment, fantasies of destruction or revenge, in conversations, writings, drawings, and other actions.<sup>6</sup>

Indeed, initial reports of the very recent case of a University of Central Florida student who pulled a fire alarm and then confronted his roommate with a firearm – potentially as the beginning of a larger attack on students in his dorm - was found, after taking his own life, to have left writings indicating he had been planning an attack and to have been stockpiling weapons and homemade bombs in preparation of the attack.<sup>7</sup>

Therefore, the history of active threat situations at schools – and in particular active shooter situations – strongly indicates that such attacks are not spontaneous and without warning, but rather often are preceded by certain behavioral indicators on the part of the attacker that, if identified in time, can have important consequences in preventing the sort of tragedies that have gripped national consciousness in

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<sup>5</sup> Fein, et al, p. 30

<sup>6</sup> O'Toole, p. 7

<sup>7</sup> Postal

recent times. Being cognizant of these indicators should not be seen as a mindset maintained by only a few designated individuals; rather, efforts should be made to instill in the school as a whole – including students and teachers – a culture of awareness and a willingness to reach out to the appropriate authorities when certain risk factors in an individual or individuals are observed. With the right knowledge and training, school administrators, staff, teachers, and even students, can create an invisible but very real layer of security through awareness of these “signposts” and, subsequently, their reporting to the appropriate individuals.

As such, this section is primarily dedicated to addressing the means that schools can take to prevent or detect emerging threats through four steps:

- 1) Establishing a school climate or culture that minimizes the risk of attack by addressing certain conditions (such as bullying) that have frequently been associated with attackers’ decisions to embark on a path of violence;
- 2) Cultivating a school climate or culture that facilitates positive relationships between adults and students and encourages the sharing or reporting of these pre-incident indicators by any and all who observe them;
- 3) Disseminating knowledge of common “signposts” or pre-incident indicators that enable the members of a school community to identify behaviors on the part of individuals that may be considering or planning an act of violence;
- 4) Identifying and gathering key personnel and developing procedures to consistently and effectively respond to these reports and observations.

We should note that this is in line with the recent recommendations of the Sandy Hook Advisory Commission’s Interim Report of Findings, which suggests “establishing a best practices guide for effective bullying and threat identification, prevention, and response to be made available to all schools.”<sup>8</sup>

In addition to the above components, this section will include discussion of the necessity of schools being cognizant of the larger environment in which they operate. Schools do not operate in a vacuum; the events that occur in their surrounding areas are of consequence in influencing the events that occur at the schools themselves, and may even directly spill over onto school property. Considerations of what is going on in the surrounding environment should factor in to decisions about the magnitude of resources that a school dedicates to security as well as how those resources are used.

Finally, a school must take steps to prevent and mitigate those events that are entirely unpredictable and even unfathomable. Using a phrase from the security field, this area of consideration can be summed up as follows: “Just because there is the absence of a threat does not mean there is no risk.” Many of the steps taken to address this broad component of security are addressed by physical security components and preparedness measures to be elaborated in sections later in the document.

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<sup>8</sup> Sandy Hook Advisory Commission, p. 14

## School Climate: Minimizing Risk

In an ideal world, schools would be healthy, productive environments for all of their occupants. Unfortunately, schools suffer from problems of varying severity related to school climate and culture that history indicates may be significant in spurring an individual to engage in violence against others. One of the most frequently identified problems in schools in this regard is bullying. Undoubtedly, most children who experience bullying never engage in, let alone contemplate, violence against their peers or teachers at their school. Nonetheless, an extensive examination of incidents of ‘targeted school violence’<sup>9</sup> from 1974 – 2000 by the United States Secret Service and the U.S. Department of Education showed that in 71 percent of cases of such attacks, “the attackers felt persecuted, bullied, threatened, attacked, or injured by others prior to the incident.”<sup>10</sup> The report continues:

In several cases, individual attackers had experienced bullying and harassment that was long-standing and severe. In some of these cases the experience of being bullied seemed to have a significant impact on the attacker and appeared to have been a factor in his decision to mount an attack at the school.<sup>11</sup>

A report by the FBI, “The School Shooter: A Threat Assessment Perspective”, which aims to provide guidance for assessing the magnitude of threat for potential shooters at a school, dedicates a discussion to the potential importance in this process of “school dynamics” – which it defines as “patterns of behavior, thinking, beliefs, customs, traditions, roles and values that exist in a school’s culture”.<sup>12</sup> The report stresses that “assessors need to be aware of how a school’s dynamics are seen by students.”<sup>13</sup> The FBI report includes the following factors as components of potential “warning signs” as related to school dynamics:<sup>14</sup>

- Student’s detachment from school, including other students, teachers, and school activities;
- Tolerance for disrespectful behavior, in that a school does little to prevent or punish disrespectful behavior between individual students or groups of students;
- Inequitable discipline, in that the use of discipline is or is perceived to be inequitably applied;
- Inflexible culture, in that official and unofficial patterns of behavior, values, and relationships among students, teachers, staff, and administrators are static, unyielding, and insensitive to changes in society or student/staff needs;
- Pecking order among students, in that certain groups of students are officially or unofficially given more prestige and respect than others.

Another organization, the Kentucky Center for School Safety (KYCSS) has conducted independent examinations of the culture and climate in 255 schools since 2003. KYCSS lists bullying and harassment as one of the top six common issues found affecting schools’ climate and culture, and writes the following on the subject:

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<sup>9</sup> Defined in the report as “any incident where (i) a current student or recent former student attacked someone at his or her school with lethal means (e.g., a gun or knife); and, (ii) where the student attacker purposefully chose his or her school as the location of the attack.” (See: Vossekuil, et al, p. 7)

<sup>10</sup> Vossekuil, et al, p. 21

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 21

<sup>12</sup> O’Toole, p. 13

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 13

<sup>14</sup> Adapted from O’Toole, p. 22

Most schools, we have discovered, have well-defined school and district policies to address these behaviors but, nevertheless, they persist and, in some schools, seem to be growing. Exacerbating the problem in many schools now is the advancement of electronic forms of communication which are sometimes being used to bully and/or harass in an insidious and sometimes much more hurtful way than other forms.<sup>15</sup>

While this document does not argue that bullying is the primary instigator behind attacks at schools, or that even eliminating it completely would always prevent an attack from occurring, the literature provided by the above respected authorities strongly suggests that schools that actively build and maintain a proper climate for students, empower and train staff, and actively deter bullying behaviors between students can significantly impact their risk when it comes to school shootings.

### School Climate: Sharing and Reporting

Schools can and should be continually proactive about addressing the issue of bullying and other school climate issues that may lead to the feeling of being “persecuted, bullied, threatened, attacked, or injured” that may contribute to an individual’s engaging in violence. Nevertheless, entirely eliminating the possibility that students will have those feelings or other negative experiences in a school setting is unrealistic, and the extreme measures that would be necessary to even attempt to do so could prove counterproductive. Therefore, a second important aspect of school climate is the extent to which it encourages communication and sharing of problems and concerns when they do arise as well as reporting of perceived threats.

The final report of the U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Department of Education’s Safe School Initiative, already discussed, listed ten “key” findings about school attacks that may have “implications for the development of strategies to address the problem of targeted school violence.”<sup>16</sup> Of these findings, several are of direct consequence in whether or not a school fosters a climate as described above:<sup>17</sup>

- Prior to most incidents, other people knew about the attacker’s idea and/or plan to attack;
  - In 81 percent of incidents, at least one person had information that the attacker was thinking about or planning the school attack;
  - In 59 percent of incidents, *more than one* person had information about the attack before it occurred;
- Most attackers engaged in some behavior prior to the incident that caused others concern or indicated a need for help;
- In many cases, other students were involved in some capacity.

The immediate question for many after reading the above findings is: “If others knew about an attack before it occurred, why wasn’t the attack prevented?” The basis for that answer is perhaps partially found in another statistic from the Secret Service and Department of Education report: in 93 percent of these cases, the person who knew was a peer, such as a friend, schoolmate, or sibling, while in only two cases did an adult have information about an idea or plan to attack.<sup>18</sup> In other words, while it was highly

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<sup>15</sup> Gateskill

<sup>16</sup> Vossekuil, et al, p. 31

<sup>17</sup> Based on Vossekuil, et al, p. 25-26

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 25

likely that for a given attack at least one other person knew about the idea or plan to attack, it was highly unlikely that that person was in a position of authority to garner the necessary resources to do something about it, because very rarely was that person an adult.

A continuing attempt to answer that question takes the form of another Secret Service and Department of Education jointly produced report, entitled, “Prior Knowledge of Potential School-Based Violence: Information students learn may prevent a targeted attack.” In this report, researchers attempted to discern why “bystanders” – that is, those with prior knowledge of an attack – acted the way they did in the run-up to an attack.<sup>19</sup> One key finding of the report was as follows:

School climate affected whether bystanders came forward with information related to threats. Some bystanders reported that the school climate influenced their decisions to share information with the school staff regarding the threats. Bystanders who came forward with information commented that they were influenced by positive relations with one or more adults, teachers, or staff, and/or a feeling within the school that the information would be taken seriously and addressed appropriately. Similarly, students who displayed a reluctance to come forward indicated that they anticipated a negative response from the school had they shared information.<sup>20</sup>

The Kentucky Center for School Safety also lists as its number one commonly found school climate/culture-related issue, “Lack of Teacher/Staff Connectivity With Students.”<sup>21</sup> The KYCSS report further states:

Too often, we visit schools where a significant number of students indicate having a feeling of disconnection from all of the adults in the building. As a consequence of this feeling, they tell us, there is no staff member to whom they would turn if the need arose. These students, when probed, will indicate that they feel this way, in essence, because their perception is that there is an inconsistency of actions and/or a lack of caring and trust on the part of many of the staff members in their respective schools.<sup>22</sup>

These findings strongly suggest that ensuring that a school’s climate and culture encourage positive and trusting relationships between students and staff can have a significant impact in evaluating possible threats, and if need be, preventing them from being carried out.

### **School Climate: Recommendations**

The U.S. Secret Service and Department of Education publication, “Threat Assessment in Schools: A Guide to Managing Threatening Situations and to Creating Safe School Climates,” states:

Cultures and climates of safety, respect, and emotional support can help diminish the possibility of targeted violence in schools. Environments in which students, teachers and administrators

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<sup>19</sup> Pollack, et al, p. 4

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 7

<sup>21</sup> Gateskill

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

pay attention to students' social and emotional needs as well as their academic needs will have fewer situations that require formal threat assessments.<sup>23</sup>

The Secret Service, U.S. Department of Education, Kentucky Center for School Safety, and other organizations have compiled a wealth of information on the overarching principles that school officials should maintain in establishing a healthy school climate as well as many of the concrete steps they can take in that pursuit. School officials would be wise to consult these documents in full. For the purposes of this document, we have included a selection of goals and recommendations that we hope can serve as a starting point in this continual process:<sup>24</sup>

- Cultures and climates of safety should be ones in which teachers and administrators pay attention to students' social and emotional needs as well as their academic needs;
- A culture of safety should create "shame free zones" in which daily teasing and bullying is not accepted as a normal part of the adolescent culture;
- School administrators and teachers should strongly and consistently enforce all rules and policies that the school and/or district have governing bullying/harassment;
- Educators have long known that it is important for students to develop healthy relationships with their peers at school; educators should recognize that it may be just as important for students to feel a definite sense of connection to (at least some members of) the school's staff;
- In creating a climate of safety, schools should aim to ensure that students have a positive connection to at least one adult in authority. Each student should feel that there is an adult to whom he or she can turn for support and advice if things get tough, and with whom that student can share his or her concerns openly without fear of shame or reprisal;
- Schools should emphasize personal contact and connection between school officials and students and should take steps to identify and work with students who have few perceptible connections to the school;
- Schools should consider the idea that "silence is far from golden." Schools should make efforts to break the "Code of Silence" pervasive in many schools, which has the effect of forcing students to handle their pain and problems on their own, without the benefit of adult support, and also suggests to the student that they should not bring any concerns that he or she may have about a peer's behavior to the attention of responsible adults;
- Law enforcement officers and educators should convey clearly to students that merely reporting information about potential threats will not subject the student to negative consequences and/or liability.

For more information on this subject, please refer to:

- Kentucky Center for School Safety: Common Issues Found in Safe School Assessments
- Secret Service / Department of Education: Threat Assessment in Schools: A Guide to Managing Threatening Situations and to Creating Safe School Climates
- Secret Service/Department of Education: Prior Knowledge of Potential School-Based Violence: Information Students Learn May Prevent a Targeted Attack

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<sup>23</sup> Fein, et al, p. 6

<sup>24</sup> Goals and recommendations selected/adapted from or based upon: Fein, et al, p. 11-13; Gateskill, p. 2-3; Pollack, et al, p. 8

### Threat Assessment Groups/Behavioral Intervention Teams

As already discussed in detail in this document, many prior active shooter incidents in schools involved individuals who exhibited behaviors that raised the attention of others prior to the act being committed. However, these “red-flags”<sup>25</sup> may not provide the warning and possible prevention of an active shooter event if (1) an environment which is conducive to reporting these indicators does not exist, (2) they are not reported to a team of professionals capable of understanding their implications, and (3) they are not considered in the broader context of the general patterns and trends of the individual’s overall behavior or misconduct.

Schools should have a dedicated Threat Assessment Group or Behavioral Intervention Team (BIT) that meets at a minimum once every two weeks and preferably weekly. These teams should employ a multi-disciplinary approach to not only assess existing threats but also focus on preventing the threat or crisis from occurring. According to the National Behavioral Intervention Team Association, the role of these teams is described as follows:

While effective threat assessment techniques are a part of BIT function, these teams focus on a caring and preventive approach that incorporates the school, the district, community resources and the family to support the student. Teams intervene with specialized knowledge to identify the earliest signs of potential crisis rather than waiting for clear signs of an impending threat and reacting. Teams develop success plans for students that may include disability support, treatment requirements, and academic assistance. BIT can be coordinated within or across districts and can include appropriate community agencies where available and required.

The team tracks “red flags” over time, detecting patterns, trends, and disturbances in individual or group behavior. The team receives reports of disruptive, problematic or concerning behavior or misconduct (from co-workers, community members, friends, colleagues, etc.), conducts an investigation, performs a threat assessment, and determines the best mechanisms for support, intervention, warning/notification and response. The team then deploys its resources and resources of the community and coordinates follow-up.<sup>26</sup>

The key players on such a team might include a mix of the following:<sup>27</sup>

- Designated chair(s);
- Case managers;
- District superintendents and/or asst. superintendents;
- School guidance counselors;
- School psychologists/counseling directors;
- District counseling coordinators;
- School health professionals (e.g., school nurse, PA, etc.);

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<sup>25</sup> NABITA

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.



- School/district disability service director/coordinator;
- School principal;
- Assistant principal responsible for student conduct and/or discipline;
- [School Resource Officer];
- [School security officer];
- District legal counsel;
- School/district faculty representative;
- District media relations/public relations coordinator;
- School/district PTA representative;
- Academic affairs professionals and faculty;
- Human resources or teachers' union representative;
- District Employee Assistance Program (EAP) coordinator;<sup>28</sup>
- Other offices designated as members of the BIT.

For more information on this subject, please refer to:

- National Association of School Psychologists: [Threat Assessment: Predicting and Preventing School Violence](#)
- National Center for Higher Education Risk Management: [2009 Whitepaper – 2<sup>nd</sup> Generation Behavioral Intervention Best Practices](#)

### Awareness: Pre-Incident Indicators

Along with establishing and working to foster a culture and climate of safety, openness, and respect, a school and its inhabitants should be cognizant of certain behavioral signs – commonly termed “pre-incident indicators” – that an individual might exhibit prior to launching an attack. Instinct may spur some people to approach the task of identifying individuals that may be at risk for planning and launching an attack by identifying certain common characteristics or developing a sort of “profile” of potential attackers; this approach is wrong. Rather, authoritative sources strongly suggest that “rather than trying to determine the ‘type’ of student who may engage in targeted school violence, an inquiry should focus instead on a student’s *behaviors and communications* to determine if that student appears to be planning or preparing for an attack.”<sup>29</sup>

The United States Secret Service, Department of Education, and Federal Bureau of Investigation all have conducted extensive investigations that support this view. The very first key finding of the Secret Service and Department of Education Safe School Initiative (SSI), states: “there is no accurate or useful ‘profile’ of students who engaged in targeted school violence.” Indeed, the SSI report found that attackers ranged across categories in age, racial/ethnic background, family situation, academic performance, social standing/relationships, and disciplinary history.<sup>30</sup> Likewise, the FBI describes efforts to develop a coherent profile as “shortsighted, even dangerous” and expresses concern that such discussion, often

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<sup>28</sup> Per NABITA: “many corporations use EAP (Employee Assistance Programs) for employees who are experiencing psychological or coping problems.” This would be applicable if the team’s responsibilities are extended to employee concerns.

<sup>29</sup> Vossekul, et al, p. 34

<sup>30</sup> See Vossekul, et al, p. 19-20, 34

perpetuated by the media, “can end up unfairly labeling many nonviolent students as potentially dangerous or even lethal.”<sup>31</sup>

The appropriate course of action is to raise awareness of types of behaviors and communications that a student of any type might display before engaging in a violent or potentially deadly act. Once again, it is important to reemphasize findings across agencies that individuals do not simply “snap” – i.e., these acts are typically not sudden, impulsive, or random acts of violence. Rather, previous attacks “appeared to be the end result of a comprehensible process of thinking and behavior – behavior that typically begins with an idea, progresses to the development of a plan, moves on to securing the means to carry out the plan, and culminates in an attack.”<sup>32</sup> As such, being aware of how those behaviors and thoughts may be exhibited can expand the opportunity for schools to prevent those ideas and plans from being carried out.

### **Pre-Incident Indicators: Students**

Behaviors and communications that qualify as pre-incident indicators vary. Potential attackers may explicitly lay out their thoughts or plan to others or via different mediums of expression; others may give more subtle indications that they are thinking of or planning to harm themselves and others. As the FBI puts it, “a threat is one observable behavior; others may be brooding about frustration or disappointment, fantasies of destruction or revenge, in conversations, writings, drawings and other actions.”<sup>33</sup>

Before discussing more specific pre-incident indicators, it is also important to mention that a student that exhibits a pre-incident indicator or even multiple pre-incident indicators does not automatically pose a threat to a school and its inhabitants. Rather, recognition and reporting of these indicators to an appropriate party such as the School Threat Assessment Group can serve as the impetus for the initiation of what the Secret Service, Department of Education, FBI and other authorities describe as a “threat assessment” process, which will be discussed in more detail below. Only then should the appropriate stakeholders take action to determine the authenticity and severity of a potential threat. Still, being knowledgeable about patterns evident in the behavior of past offenders can help stakeholders – including students – build a sound awareness upon which they can increase the likelihood of noticing, and subsequently reporting, signs of trouble.

The following selected findings from the Secret Service / DOE Safe School Initiative may shed light on what might and what might not be a common pre-incident indicator:<sup>34</sup>

- Most attackers engaged in some behavior, prior to the incident, that caused others concern or indicated a need for help;
- Most attackers had difficulty coping with significant losses or personal failures. Many had considered or attempted suicide;
- Most attackers had access to and had used weapons prior to the attack.

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<sup>31</sup> O’Toole, p. 2

<sup>32</sup> Fein, et al, p. 18

<sup>33</sup> O’Toole, p. 7

<sup>34</sup> Vossekuil, et al, p. 34 – 36

The Secret Service / DOE Threat Assessment in Schools Guide also includes the following behaviors as raising concern about potential violence:<sup>35</sup>

- Ideas or plans about injuring him/herself or attacking a school or persons at a school;
- Communications or writings that suggest that the student has an unusual or worrisome interest in school attacks;
- Comments that express or imply the student is considering mounting an attack at school;
- Recent weapon-seeking behavior, especially if weapon-seeking is linked to ideas about attack or expressions about interest in attack;
- Communications or writings suggesting the student condones or is considering violence to redress a grievance or solve a problem; and
- Rehearsals of attacks or ambushes.

Additionally, the FBI says that “one of the most important clues that may precede an adolescent’s violent act” is something it terms “leakage.” According to this definition, a version of leakage occurs when:

a student intentionally or unintentionally reveals clues to feelings, thoughts, fantasies, attitudes, or intentions that may signal an impending violent act. These clues can take the form of subtle threats, boasts, innuendos, predictions, or ultimatums. They may be spoken or conveyed in stories, diary entries, essays, poems, letters, songs, drawings, doodles, tattoos, or videos.<sup>36</sup>

The above highlights two important points. One is that the focus is clearly on certain types of behavior and communications, rather than on the qualities of a particular student. Two is that concerning behaviors occur on a wide range of levels, from subtle indicators to explicit threats. That does not mean that a certain type should be seriously addressed while another ignored; it is entirely possible that in one situation a subtle behavior masks a very real threat, whereas in the other what seems like an explicit threat is not intended to ever be carried out. Nevertheless, as the FBI states, “all threats are NOT created equal... However, all threats should be assessed in a timely manner and decisions regarding how they are handled must be done quickly.”<sup>37</sup> This further supports the need for the establishment and adherence to a well-developed threat assessment process.

One additional consideration not fully addressed in the reports cited above is the way in which technological advances and the rise of social media have expanded the arena in which students express themselves and communicate with one another. For many adolescents, these new platforms do not merely supplement traditional mediums of communication, but are often the primary means through which they communicate. Therefore, it is important that adults with a stake in school security adapt to this changing landscape. Students increasingly, and often anonymously, can turn to the Internet to research past attacks or methods of obtaining or constructing weapons, or to communicate with others with shared interests. Furthermore, the frequency with which student’s threats have been made via platforms such as Facebook or Twitter show that this is neither a fad nor a future development for

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<sup>35</sup> Fein, et al, p. 50

<sup>36</sup> O’Toole, p. 16

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 5

which school officials have time to prepare; it is happening now and requires immediate and continuing attention. The ability to anonymously make threats via the Internet and social media also poses a new challenge in identifying the source of threats once known in addition to assessing their viability. When a serious but anonymous threat presents itself, school officials and local law enforcement may need to employ technical assistance along with traditional investigative techniques to determine the source of the threat.

In conclusion, this section should by no means be taken as an exhaustive or complete list of what may qualify as a pre-incident indicator. It merely recaps what some of the most authoritative voices on preventing violent attacks as well as experts on our educational system as a whole have identified as historical trends of past offenders. As such, it is intended to introduce a line of thinking and provide some common examples to stakeholders in school security measures. Stakeholders should not dismiss the value of old-fashioned intuition, which may not directly conform to any of the above situations. As the Secret Service and Department of Education have pointed out, while in some cases members of a school were aware of an individual's detailed idea or plan of attack, others merely "knew something 'big' or 'bad' was going to happen."<sup>38</sup>

### **Pre-Incident Indicators: Adults**

In the discussion so far, there has been an implicit and sometimes explicit focus on students in particular as the most important group in this discussion – at least as far as posing a potential threat to fellow students or teachers. However, history has unfortunately shown that adults are also capable of posing threats to the occupants of a school. To the victims of an attack and those surrounding them, it hardly matters whether a fellow student or an adult committed the act; the more important thing is that a potential offender – regardless of age – is identified and stopped before they commit the act. While the conditions and motives that lead an adult to commit a violent act at a school typically may differ from those of a student, it is also believed that an adult, such as an employee, that commits a violent act does not "snap" but rather displays behavioral indicators over time that lead up to the event.<sup>39</sup> The Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) report, "Active Shooter: How to Respond," provides guidance on recognizing potential workplace violence in adults. Like the section on student pre-incident indicators above, DHS cautions, "this list of behaviors is not comprehensive, nor is it intended as a mechanism for diagnosing violent tendencies." Rather, this document recommends that, as for students, schools have a process in place to assess potential threats and, when necessary, to do so in coordination with local law enforcement and other external stakeholders. The following are selected "potentially violent" behaviors by employees:<sup>40</sup>

- Increased use of alcohol and/or illegal drugs;
- Unexplained increase in absenteeism; vague physical complaints;
- Noticeable decrease in attention to appearance and hygiene;
- Depression/withdrawal;
- Noticeably unstable, emotional responses;
- Suicidal: comments about "putting things in order";
- Talk of previous incidents of violence;

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<sup>38</sup> Vossekul, et al, p. 25

<sup>39</sup> DHS, 2008, p. 10

<sup>40</sup> Selected from DHS, 2008, p. 10

- Empathy with individuals committing violence;
- Increase in unsolicited comments about firearms, other dangerous weapons and violent crimes.

These points underscore that, while it is essential to pay attention to the behavior of students at a school, stakeholders should not sacrifice paying attention to the adults – including administrators, teachers, other staff, and parents – in being cognizant of pre-incident indicators.

It is also recommended that schools perform a pre-employment background check and periodic re-checks on all employees. This recommendation was recently echoed by the Sandy Hook Advisory Commission, which recommended “requiring background screening for all staff in schools.”<sup>41</sup> The following list includes the types of information school officials should consult as part of a pre-employment background check within the laws governing access and use for making informed hiring decisions. It is also recommended that schools conduct a periodic background check on all employees every three years.

- Former employment data;
- DMV records;
- Residential address history verification;
- Credit check;
- Criminal records check;
- Education verification;
- Civil history;
- National wants and warrants;
- Social security verification;
- Drug testing;
- Finger print screening.

If a more in-depth pre-employment background screening is desired, it is recommended that the school contact a local private investigator.

### **Responding to Potential Threats: The “Threat Assessment” Process**

As described above, there is compelling evidence that a school’s climate and culture can lead to important gains in (1) preventing students from contemplating violence in the first place, but also in (2) ensuring that students, if they observe possible or evolving threats, feel comfortable, and indeed, obligated, to report them to an adult and that, in turn, this information is provided to the School’s Threat Assessment Group or Behavioral Intervention Team. The above section on pre-incident indicators further supports the contention that making students and staff cognizant of telltale behaviors often associated with the lead up to an attack can help in this process.

We should note that school officials may also want to consider establishing other channels and mechanisms to report threats and concerns in order to strengthen this process. While cultivating healthy student and staff relationships cannot be overemphasized in this regard, it is possible that students in certain circumstances still may feel uncomfortable raising concerns directly with an adult. Therefore, schools may benefit from instituting tools, such as anonymous tip lines, so that students feel

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<sup>41</sup> Sandy Hook Advisory Commission, p. 14

they have an option they are comfortable with using if they feel the need to report a concern. It is worth examining what options may exist that would be familiar to today's adolescents, including online anonymous comment mechanisms or anonymous text message systems.

However, all of these steps are for naught if the school does not respond to reports or observations of potential threats in an appropriate, timely, fair, and effective manner. Not only will failure to do so potentially put the school at immediate risk if a real threat goes unaddressed, but also can quickly undermine the foundations of a positive school climate if students or staff do not feel that their concerns are acted upon or taken seriously. Indeed, the Secret Service and Department of Education Bystander Report points to "a feeling within the school that the information [reported] would be taken seriously and addressed appropriately" as one factor that led individuals to share concerns with an adult.<sup>42</sup> Conversely, "students who displayed a reluctance to come forward indicated that they anticipated a negative response from the school had they shared information."<sup>43</sup>

The United States Secret Service, Department of Education, and Federal Bureau of Investigation all recommend that schools develop and adhere to a well thought out "threat assessment" process to maximize the chance that tips about or indicators of potential violence are dealt with in an appropriate and timely manner. The FBI describes the goal of threat assessment as follows:

Threat assessment seeks to make an informed judgment on two questions: how credible and serious is the threat itself? And to what extent does the threat[ening person] appear to have the resources, intent, and motivation to carry out the threat?<sup>44</sup>

The Secret Service and Department of Education furthermore outline the components of a threat assessment as follows:

In a situation that becomes the focus of a threat assessment inquiry or investigation, appropriate authorities gather information, evaluate facts, and make a determination as to whether a given student [or adult] *poses* a threat of violence to a target. If an inquiry indicates that there is a risk of violence in a specific situation, authorities conducting the threat assessment collaborate with others to develop and implement a plan to manage or reduce the threat posed by the student in that situation.<sup>45</sup>

It would be redundant in this document to elaborate on every key component or important step that a well-crafted threat assessment should include; the Secret Service and Department of Education Guide, "Threat Assessment in Schools," ("the Guide") is of particular superiority in this regard and could be repeated verbatim here. It is highly recommended that critical stakeholders closely consult this document in establishing, altering, or maintaining their school's threat assessment process. However, the Guide suggests that the following six key overarching principles should guide the threat assessment process:<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Pollack, et al, p. 7

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 7

<sup>44</sup> O'Toole, p. 5

<sup>45</sup> Fein, p. 29

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 29

- Targeted violence is the end result of an understandable, and oftentimes discernable, process of thinking and behavior;
- Targeted violence stems from an interaction among the individual, the situation, the setting, and the target;
- An investigative, skeptical, inquisitive mindset is critical to successful threat assessment;
- Effective threat assessment is based upon facts, rather than on characteristics or “traits;”
- An “integrated systems approach” should guide threat assessment inquiries and investigations;
- The central question in a threat assessment inquiry or investigation is whether a student *poses* a threat, not whether the student has *made* a threat.

The Guide also includes discussions about establishing the authority to conduct inquiries and investigations, issues regarding information-sharing in that process, legal considerations, and the skills and training valuable to threat assessment teams and processes. Further chapters discuss in detail the important steps of a threat assessment process as well as guidance on managing a threatening situation if it has been established.

For more information on this subject, please refer to:

- FBI: A School Shooter: A Threat Assessment Perspective
- US Secret Service: Threat Assessment in Schools: A Guide to Managing Threatening Situation and Creating Safe School Climates

### Unique Threats in Context of the Surrounding Community

Schools do not operate in a vacuum; they are affected not only by the trends influencing events within their confines, but also by the events that occur in the surrounding area and community. As such, the prevention and mitigation aspect of security should look beyond those individuals, mainly students, teachers, and staff, that make up the bulk of its population on a given day. Just as schools should be cognizant of what is happening among its adolescents and adults on a daily basis and should be prepared to assess potential threats as they arise, they should also understand unique factors in the surrounding community that could create risk for a school’s occupants. For example, a school located in an area known for a prevalence of gang activity, or located close to a high-profile site such as a government building that might be at increased risk of targeting, could fall victim to violence that is not immediately directed at it but nevertheless spills onto its grounds.

### Unpredictable Threats

The discussion thus far has attempted to shine light on the steps a school can take to create an invisible layer of security based on a healthy climate and culture that (1) reduces the factors that may lead one to violence and (2) increases the likelihood that individuals contemplating violence can be identified and stopped prior to taking action. Unfortunately, there are instances of violence that are beyond the realm of predictability; the horrendous actions of the gunman at Sandy Hook Elementary prove this point. Threats by adults entirely external to the school community may be the most difficult to detect but have also been the outlier in the record of previous incidents or threats of extreme violence at schools. In the wake of Newtown, the possibility of such a threat cannot be discounted but, if detected in advance, it is likely to come to light through different sources such as law enforcement encounters or psychiatric care than through the direct observation of pre-incident indicators at the school itself, by the school community, or via the threat assessment process described above.

Furthermore, the above discussion on climate, culture, and threat assessment procedures focuses on ideas and methods that are inherently subjective in parts and ultimately imperfect; schools should be cognizant that even the healthiest of climates and most honed threat assessment processes may fail to identify every single potential threat. As such, the remainder of this document deals with the steps that schools can take to identify weaknesses and gaps, mitigate and prevent such violence through physical security measures, undertake the necessary process and training steps to be prepared for such acts, and ultimately respond to an active event if it, unfortunately, becomes real.

## Prevention and Mitigation: Physical Security Measures

Physical measures should by no means be the sole contributor to a school's security system nor can any reasonable physical security measure in a school environment absolutely prevent an individual intent on violence from doing harm. However, the construction and design, add-ons, and other physical tools can significantly enhance a school's security posture by both deterring potential offenders from taking action in the first place and, if they do take action, detect their presence and movement, delay their progress, limit their access, more quickly trigger a law enforcement response, and defend against their violent behavior. Proper physical tools should complement and enhance non-physical security policies and procedures and should not be viewed separately from these. Indeed, relying on overbearing physical measures in a stand-alone manner may have deleterious effects on school atmosphere, ironically creating conditions prone to greater violence.<sup>47</sup> Choosing what physical tools to employ must also be based on each school's unique assessment of their particular threats/hazards, gaps and vulnerabilities given their environmental circumstances, human resources, protocols, and procedures. One standard school of thought for minimizing a facility's physical susceptibility to attack and other undesired behavior is known as Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED). CPTED is based on three strategies, each of which can be useful for school administrators in considering their goals in developing exterior physical security measures:<sup>48</sup>

- **Territoriality** – expressing ownership and defining clear borders through the use and maintenance of buildings, fences, pavement, signs, and landscaping;
- **Natural surveillance** – the physical ability to see what's going on in and around your school, which can be either enhanced or obstructed depending on placement of physical features like walls, shrubs, vehicles, signs, locations of certain activities, and gatherings of people;
- **Access control** - the ability to decide who gets in and out of your school, often through the judicious placement of entrances, exits, fencing, landscaping, and lighting.

According to the Department of Homeland Security, asking questions about territoriality, natural surveillance, and access control can lead to solutions that:<sup>49</sup>

- Increase the [perpetrator's] effort to commit crime or terrorism [or, in this case, an active shooter event];
- Increase the risks [for the perpetrator] associated with such actions;
- Reduce the rewards [for the perpetrator] associated with such actions;

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<sup>47</sup> FEMA, 2012, section 2, p. 34

<sup>48</sup> Adapted and combined from, FEMA, 2012, Section 2, p. 18 and Schneider, *CPTED 101*

<sup>49</sup> FEMA, 2012, Section 2, p. 19



- Remove the excuses as to why people do not comply with the rules or behave inappropriately.

One benefit of approaching security through a CPTED lens is that CPTED principles can be applied in a variety of scenarios, including at existing facilities. They also can involve highly cost-effective solutions to security, which is relevant given the limited resources many schools have in their efforts to create a safer environment at their facilities.<sup>50</sup>

The Department of Homeland Security recommends designing secure facilities on the basis of establishing concentric “layers of defense” around the valued asset – in this case, a school and its occupants.<sup>51</sup> These layers begin with an outer perimeter and move inward towards the interior of the school building itself. According to DHS, the “layers are mutually independent and designed to reduce the effectiveness of an attack by attrition, i.e., each layer is designed to delay and disable the attack as much as possible.” This concept is termed **protection-in-depth**, and is illustrated by Figure 1 below:

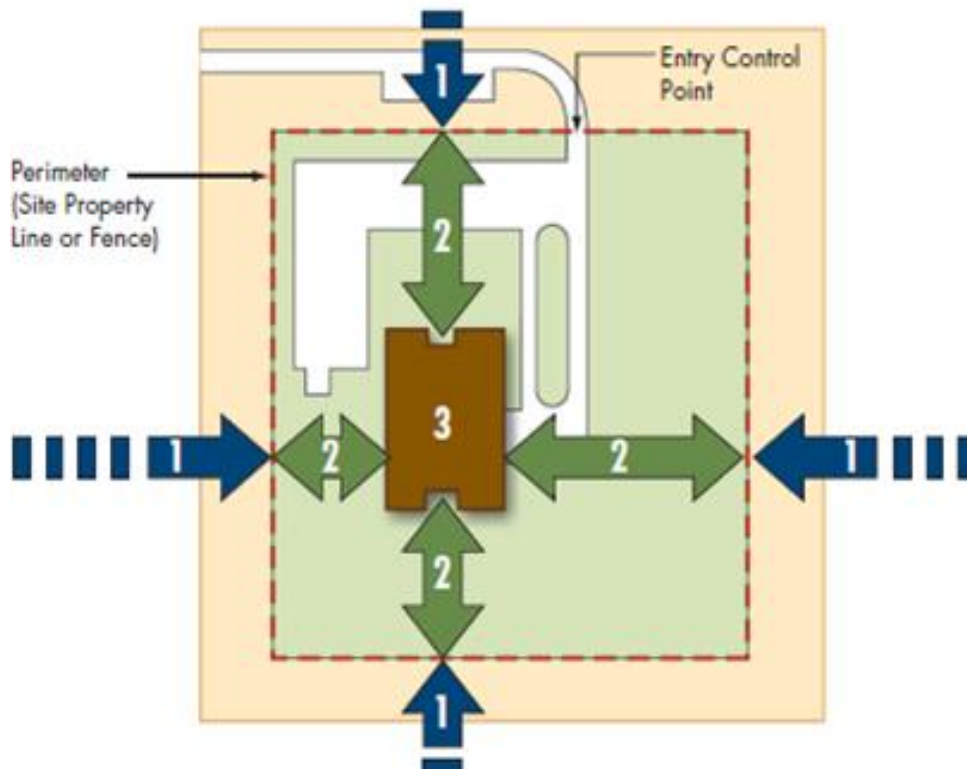


Figure 1: Protection-in-depth Concept. Adapted from FEMA 428/Buildings and Infrastructure Protections Series-07

<sup>50</sup> FEMA, 2012, Section 2, p. 19

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 22

## Outermost Exterior and Perimeter Security

### Fencing and Gates: Overview and Common Vulnerabilities

Fencing and gates should be considered the outermost physical component of security for schools – both the first physical and the first psychological barrier that a violent individual must overcome. Fences and gates serve multiple purposes, from establishing clear territoriality as outlined in CPTED strategies to making it physically difficult to enter a school’s premises without entering through designated, controlled entrances, hence enhancing access control. Fences can also play an important role in establishing a secure perimeter in the event of an active threat situation, which is crucial both in (1) denying suspects easy escape routes and (2) in keeping concerned parents and other members of the community at a distance so as to avoid their interfering with efforts to neutralize the threat and assist those in need. Since activities like recess and gym classes frequently occur outside of the main school building, perimeter fencing or other perimeter demarcation like hedges are also the only physical impediment that might be employed to protect the outdoors areas of the school.

Both in school assessments conducted specifically for the purposes of this document and in previous studies of individual school security systems, schools were found to be without perimeter fencing or other delineations indicating the boundaries of school property, or had fences that were dilapidated or ineffective. (see Figure 2)



*Figure 2: Inadequate perimeter fence.*

Not only do these conditions increase the possibility of unauthorized access to school property, but also indicate from a psychological standpoint that a given school is vulnerable, which diminishes deterrence and undermines the goal of establishing territoriality. In addition, our experts also found multiple sites with only a single entry/exit route to the school from public roads, which creates a single point vulnerability if that entry/exit is impassable or otherwise obstructed. (see Figure 3)



*Figure 3: Red circle demarcates single point entry/exit into school property.*

### **Fencing and Gates: Best Practices**

Fencing is not the end-all-be-all of school security or even perimeter security. However, certain factors – such as fence location, height, type, and maintenance, can maximize returns on security if used properly. Choice and placement of fencing should balance priorities of denying access while also allowing for maximum surveillance of surrounding areas from inside of school grounds. For example, a ten foot-high concrete wall may do an excellent job of denying access other than through designated entry points, but may increase a school’s vulnerability in other ways by providing concealment of suspicious activity that can’t be viewed from inside such a wall. As such, best practices for fencing include:<sup>52</sup>

- Install fencing that denies climbing holds as well as opportunities to bypass underneath;
- Carefully choose materials for fences and landscaping that provide opportunities for natural surveillance and access control;
- Use fencing material that clearly demonstrates territorial ownership;

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<sup>52</sup> Best practices based in part on Texas State University, Chapter 5, p.5



- Fencing should be free of any vegetation. Bushes, trees, containers, tanks, or any object that might provide a hiding place should be removed from the proximity of the fence. Eliminating places to hide can discourage a person from crawling under, climbing over, or cutting through the fence. (see Figure 4)



*Figure 4: Example of a school fence. Source: Internet.*

Because it is necessary to provide efficient points of access for students, staff, visitors, and service providers via personal vehicles, buses, or by foot, gates or other exterior access points must accompany exterior security features like fences.

According to the Department of Homeland Security:

The objective of the access point is to prevent unauthorized access, while at the same time controlling the rate of entry for vehicles and pedestrians. An access point is a designated area for authorized school building users, such as employees, visitors, and service providers. Access points along the defended perimeter are commonly shared between the first and second layers of defense, providing observation of approach, controlled entry, and queuing areas...Although the access itself is from a public roadway, these site features are within the site property line and from part of the first defense layer.<sup>53</sup>

The nature of such access points depends on a particular school's deemed level of risk; in high-risk schools, an entry control point or a manned guard building with corresponding levels of screening and a sturdy gate may be ideal; in others, active monitoring at exterior entry points may be deemed unnecessary, impractical, or counterproductive. A third option is to allow free entry and exit during

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<sup>53</sup> FEMA, 2012, Chapter 2, p. 29

designated arrival and departure times, while enacting more stringent perimeter screening and access control during daytime school hours and after school hours. The following best practices for perimeter access control measures, such as gates, should be considered:<sup>54</sup>

- Active perimeter entrances should be designated so that security personnel can maintain full control without creating unnecessary delays. This can be accomplished by the provision of a sufficient number of entry points to accommodate the peak flow of pedestrians and vehicular traffic, as well as adequate lighting for rapid and efficient inspection;
- At the same time, the number of access points into a site should be minimized because they are a potential source of weakness in the controlled perimeter, and are costly to construct and operate. However, at least two access control points should be provided in case one is shut down or obstructed for various reasons;
- Whenever possible, commercial, service, and delivery vehicles should have a designated entry point to the site, preferably away from high-risk buildings.

#### Fencing and Gates: Other Considerations<sup>55</sup>

- Do site entries provide for the ready passage of fire trucks and other emergency vehicles?
- Are gates available for closing access points when necessary?
- Do perimeter fences, walls, or “hostile vegetation” provide sufficient access control, surveillance, and territoriality?
- Is the perimeter of the site secured to a level that prevents [or delays] unauthorized vehicles or pedestrians from entering, and does this occur as far from the school building as possible?
- Are perimeter barriers capable of stopping vehicles?

For further discussion of perimeter security measures such as fencing and gates, refer to FEMA, 2012, Section 2.3.4. and 2.3.5.

#### Additional Consideration: Exterior Lighting<sup>56</sup>

Most schools in the United States, perhaps with the exception of those in Alaska or other northern states, rarely have significant numbers of students and faculty inside the school during hours of darkness on a routine basis, as the school day coincides with daylight hours in most schools. Therefore, exterior lighting may be a secondary security concern and more closely related to deterring vandalism and property theft during non-school hours. Exterior lighting is nonetheless a consideration for more comprehensive site design – including that based on CPTED – and may be of interest to school officials or others interesting in improving this aspect of school management.

For more information on best practices regarding lighting of exterior areas of school facilities, school officials may consult the following documents:

- Texas State University, Security Design Manual for Schools, Chapter 23
- FEMA 428: Primer to Design Safe School Projects in Case of Terrorist Attacks and School

<sup>54</sup> Based on FEMA, 2012, Chapter 2, p. 29-30

<sup>55</sup> Selections from FEMA, 2012, Building Vulnerability Assessment Checklist (Section F, p.4-5)

<sup>56</sup> For more information, see Texas State University, Ch. 23; FEMA, 2003, Ch. 2, p. 25

- Campus Safety Magazine: [4 Lighting Maintenance Tips](#)
- Florida Department of Education, Florida Safe School Design Guidelines, Section 2 – Site Design

### Landscaping: Overview and Common Vulnerabilities

Landscaping – including landforms, water features, and vegetation – has the potential to both serve as an enhancement of overall school security and as a detriment to it. As an enhancement, landscaping can define and designate spaces, deter or prevent unwanted surveillance and unauthorized access, and even provide a level of blast shielding in the event that an offender attempts to utilize explosive devices in an assault on school property.<sup>57</sup> At the same time, school officials should be cognizant that, if misused, misplaced, or neglected, landscaping can conversely be detrimental to school security, providing hiding places for people, weapons, and explosive devices, blocking lighting, inadvertently providing routes of unauthorized access, blocking lines of sight necessary for natural surveillance, or damaging other security devices.<sup>58</sup> For example, in one school assessment conducted by our experts, vegetation next to a perimeter fence was excessively overgrown, which not only undermined territoriality by indicating neglect of school property and blocked lines of sight away from the facility, but also physically damaged and rendered ineffective the fence at that location.

### Landscaping: Best Practices

Changes to landscaping of various degrees can enhance security on school grounds. These relate to the placement, type, and maintenance of certain aspects of landscaping. In utilizing landscaping to minimize risk and maximize security, the following best practices should be considered:<sup>59</sup>

- Tall features of landscaping, such as trees, should be kept at sufficient distance from buildings so as to prevent roof and upper-level window access to school property;
- Avoid dense vegetation close to buildings, as it may screen various forms of illicit activity;
- Trim trees to permit cross-campus visibility;
- Use landscaping elements to control access and define public, semipublic, semiprivate, and private areas;
- Use landscape elements to protect sensitive operations, gathering areas, and other activities from surveillance without creating concealment for covert activity;
- Use thorn-bearing and sharp-leaved plant species to create natural physical barriers to deter aggressors, keeping in mind they may also impede emergency egress.

### Landscaping: Other Considerations<sup>60</sup>

- Is shrubbery limited to a maximum height of 3 feet and tree branches to a minimum height of 6-8 feet so as to ensure visibility at eye-level on the ground?
- Are trees at least 10 feet from buildings, preventing window and roof access?
- Does placement of bushes, trees, and shrubbery minimize opportunity to use as hiding space?
- Does landscaping inhibit lines of sight within, into, or beyond the campus?

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<sup>57</sup> Texas State University, Chapter 10, p. 1

<sup>58</sup> See Texas State University, Chapter 10, p. 1; FEMA, 2012, Chapter 2, p. 10

<sup>59</sup> Based on recommendations in Texas State University, Chapter 10, p.2

<sup>60</sup> Based on FEMA 2012, Section F, p. 7; Texas State University, Chapter 10, p. 2-3

For an extended list of suggestions on the topic of landscaping, please refer to the Texas School Safety Center's *Security Design Consideration for Instructional Facilities: Reference Guide*, chapter 10.

### **Parking and Vehicular Zones: Overview and Common Vulnerabilities**

**\*Note:** It is important to acknowledge that this section on vehicles and the following section on buses in the school zone are focused on best practices for security purposes, some of these may overlap with best practices for student safety and visibility in vehicle and bus zones near the school but some practices may even be at odds with student or pedestrian safety in such zones depending on school configuration and considerations such as crossing guards. These practices should not be employed in a vacuum without first considering the effect on student and pedestrian safety from vehicular accidents due to reduced visibility or impeded flow of traffic and with adjustments made accordingly.

Parking lots and vehicular access zones provide ready and reliable school access for students, staff, parents, and other visitors. At the same time, vehicles can provide potential attackers with a means of concealing and transporting weapons, can be used as a tool in overpowering physical security infrastructure, and can even serve as weapons in and of themselves. As such, school officials should be cognizant of their simultaneous goals of providing convenience for school visitors and occupants while maximizing security in areas accessible to vehicles.

#### **Parking and Vehicular Zones: Best Practices**

Proper design, placement, and use of parking and vehicular zones contributes to various aspects of school security, including access control, natural surveillance, and student monitoring. It is important that schools have physical designs in place that facilitate observation and management of vehicular flow while protecting the school building and those inside from the hazards associated with vehicles and their operators. Goals should include maximizing visibility of vehicles and their occupants from inside the school building while keeping vehicles at a great enough distance to prevent their use in an attack on the school building or those inside. Best practices for parking and vehicular zones include:<sup>61</sup>

- Restrict external access to parking areas to a limited number of controlled entrances;
- Provide clear signage and posted rules as to who is allowed to use parking facilities and when they are allowed to do so;
- Designate separate parking lots for student use, especially for high schools, in order to monitor students who may leave or arrive at campus during school hours. Secure these parking lots and, if possible, supervise during peak-use times;
- Avoid long, straight parking layouts that allow cars to generate speed or, if unavoidable, use speed-lowering measures such as speed bumps;
- Place parking areas in a location that facilitates visual surveillance via windows from inside administrative offices and classrooms in the building.

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<sup>61</sup> Based on Texas State University, Chapter 7. For additional guidance, see FEMA 2012, Chapter 2, p. 40-41

### Parking and Vehicular Zones: Other Considerations<sup>62</sup>

- Are vehicle circulation routes to service and delivery areas, visitors' entry, bus drop-off, student parking, and staff parking separated as needed and do they function safely in the context of the site?
- Are designated entries, routes, and parking lots for after-hours use clearly identified and controlled within the context of the site?
- Are parking areas within view of the main office, other staffed areas, or surveillance cameras?
- Do signs or posted rules clearly identify who is allowed to use parking facilities and when they may do so?
- Is visitor parking located near the main entrance to the school, with clear signs directing visitors to the main office?
- In high schools, are parking spaces numbered and marked for the designated users: students, faculty, staff, and visitors?
- Are unassigned parking spaces minimized, especially in student parking zones?
- Is access to parking areas limited by curbs, fencing, gates, and a minimum number of entry points?

#### **Additional Consideration: Bus Loading and Unloading Zones**

In addition to regular parking and vehicular zones, bus loading and unloading zones are of particular importance in ensuring the safety of students and staff against threats such as an active shooter. Multiple schools examined by our experts in preparation of this report had some of their most prominent vulnerabilities associated with these areas. Vulnerabilities regarding bus loading and unloading are related to both aspects of the physical site in which they operate and the procedures that they follow within that site. Because these factors cannot be reasonably separated from the other, we have decided to include the discussion of physical aspects of bus zones along with procedural ones in the "Daily Policies and Procedures" section found later in Layer One. It is highly encouraged that readers of this document pay attention to the discussion provided there, which includes important information on physical site security.

#### **Exterior Monitoring and Surveillance: Overview and Common Vulnerabilities**

Surveillance equipment installed on the outdoor grounds of a school or on the exterior of the building itself can serve several purposes. For one, "cameras help distinguish between outsiders who do not belong on campus and students and employees who do."<sup>63</sup> This ability can be helpful, especially to administrative or security staff who may gain from extra time in identifying a threatening individual approaching the school and taking appropriate preventive measures. Exterior surveillance equipment can also be beneficial in monitoring blind spots that cannot easily be viewed from inside the building unassisted or high activity exterior areas such as bus loading/unloading zones, vehicular drop-off points, parking lots (see Figure 5), playgrounds, sports fields, and others – especially when these areas may be difficult to view from a school's administrative or security office or when a human monitor cannot be placed there. Cameras also allow for observation of a suspicious person from a safe distance without direct contact. Cameras also provide deterrent value by indicating that a school takes security seriously and that a would-be-assailant is under observation without knowing who is watching and when. In

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<sup>62</sup> Selected from "Building Vulnerability Assessment Checklist" from FEMA, 2012, Section F, p. 9 - 11

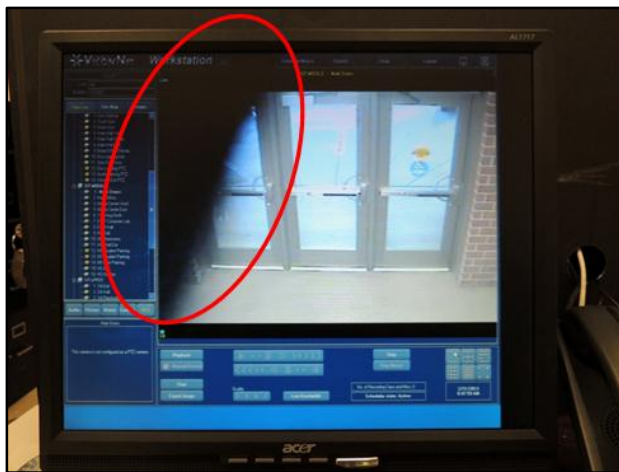
<sup>63</sup> Arizona, p. 4



several school assessments, our experts found that external surveillance equipment was often hampered by blind spots (see Figure 6), which undermined its effectiveness, or that external surveillance equipment did not properly function (see Figure 7) or exist at all.



*Figure 5: Sample surveillance camera view of parking lot area.*



*Figure 6: Camera view is obscured.*



*Figure 7: Non-functioning camera.*

## Exterior Monitoring and Surveillance: Best Practices

According to the Texas School Safety Center:

Closed circuit television (CCTV) is a primary choice for remote surveillance systems. These units have become very economical and easily mounted where they are less intrusive. CCTV deters outsiders who do not belong on campus and deters students from committing malicious acts. In the event a crime occurs, footage or photographs from the CCTV can be used to identify and prosecute the individuals involved.<sup>64</sup>

In line with those desired benefits, the following best practices should be considered by school officials in installing, upgrading, or maintaining surveillance equipment:<sup>65</sup>

- Provide parking lots with CCTV cameras connected to the security system and adequate lighting capable of displaying and videotaping lot activity;
- Substitute CCTV cameras where topography, existing conditions, or aesthetic objectives make observation of pedestrians and vehicles from within the school difficult or undesirable to achieve;
- Tie camera monitoring into existing emergency action plans and procedures;
- Cameras should be placed on avenues of approach to the building to detect potential intruder(s)/assailant(s);
- Exterior school main reception area entryway should have a video intercom and camera coverage to identify personnel requesting access to the school.

## Exterior Monitoring and Surveillance: Other Considerations

In installing or maintaining exterior surveillance equipment, school officials should consider other factors that affect the proper functioning and use of a system both in general terms, and more specifically, the challenges of installing technology in an outdoor environment. School officials may also want to consider the following:<sup>66</sup>

- Have housing designed to protect against tampering, vandalism, and extreme temperature or moisture;
- Use lenses which capture useful images under existing lighting conditions [including during the day and at night];
- Have an uninterruptable power supply and connected to the building's emergency power;
- Install exterior video and power cabling to the cameras in a conduit, which provides protection from environmental degradation as well as tampering;
- Cables running up poles or buildings to the cameras are vulnerable to vandalism and tampering and must be in a conduit for protection.

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<sup>64</sup> Texas State University, Chapter 45, p. 2

<sup>65</sup> Best practices adapted or selected from FEMA, 2012, Chapter 2, p. 41; Texas State University, Chapter 45, p. 2-4

<sup>66</sup> Adapted or selected from Texas State University, Chapter 45, p. 3-4

For more information on different camera technologies, installation choices, and checklists, please refer to the following:

- Texas State University, *Security Design Consideration for Instructional Facilities*, [Ch. 45](#)
- *Primer to Design Safe School Projects in Case of Terrorist Attacks*, Appendix F, Section 6 Checklist: Security Systems
- National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities: [School Security Technologies](#)
- National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities: [Improving School Access Control](#)
- SchoolFacilities.com: [CCTV in the School Environment](#)

## Exterior Security – Building Exterior

### Main Entrance: Overview and Common Vulnerabilities

According to the Department of Homeland Security:

To control access and limit intrusion, visitors should be guided to a single control point and required to pass directly through to administration reception areas when entering or leaving the school. The combination of a main entry with a carefully located and constantly staffed administrative area can enhance the supervision of school entries, stairs, and hallways without the need for an additional assigned monitor.<sup>67</sup>

The above passage shows why a school's main entrance is one of the most important aspects of overall school security. Because it is a commonly advised best practice to funnel visitors to a single, main entrance – and, indeed, to prevent their entry altogether through any other location – it is imperative that schools carefully consider the physical security tools that will allow convenient access by visitors while preventing that of potential assailants at this location.

Unfortunately, the deadly events at Sandy Hook Elementary in Newtown, Connecticut in December 2012 confirm that importance. According to existing reports as of writing, Sandy Hook Elementary actually followed multiple best practices in regards to physical security. For example, it is believed that all other doors and entrances were closed and locked to the outside at the time of the shooting, which may have played a role in forcing the gunman to attempt to gain access via the main entrance.<sup>68</sup> The school was furthermore equipped with an intercom/camera system that assisted in screening visitors prior to entry.<sup>69</sup> Nevertheless, the gunman was apparently able to exploit one vulnerability by shooting through a front door, which was reportedly made from glass.<sup>70</sup> From there, it is apparent that the gunman had to overcome few if any obstacles – aside from heroic teachers and administrators who attempted to confront him – in his path of destruction.

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<sup>67</sup> FEMA, 2012, Chapter 3, p. 42

<sup>68</sup> Gray

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Blodget

In assessments of multiple schools throughout the United States in preparation of this document, main entrance vulnerabilities were some of the most common that our experts encountered. Common vulnerabilities in main entrances included:

- Limited or no opportunity for pre-screening of visitors before entry;
- Unsecured or minimally protected main reception areas;
- Single sets of doors that prevent or make difficult entrapment of a potential assailant; (see Figure 8)
- Non-ballistic protective doors, often made of non-ballistic protective glass;
- Surveillance cameras that were malfunctioning; blind spots in area under surveillance; unmonitored and not readily viewable surveillance feeds; (see Figure 9)
- Administrative areas without panic buttons or without easily activated (i.e., within hands reach) panic buttons.



Figure 8: Single set of doors.

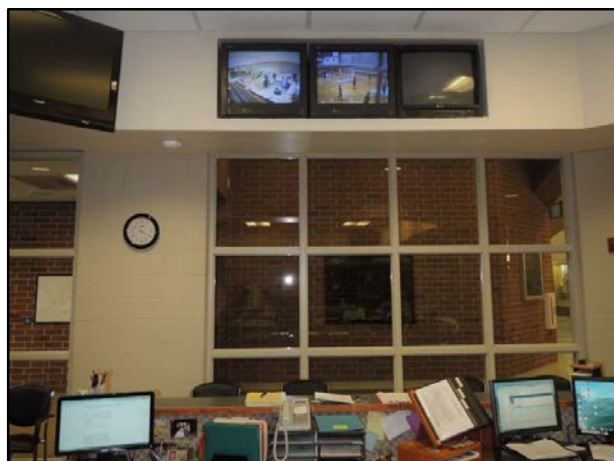


Figure 9: Unmonitored and not readily viewable surveillance feeds.

### Main Entrance: Best Practices

Readers will notice that many of the following best practices for a school's main entrance area will be reiterated sporadically in other sections below, such as those covering exterior doors, access control, and surveillance equipment. Although this may seem redundant, we believe this is useful for two reasons: (1) to organize various suggestions across categories into a single, readable section, and (2) to emphasize the importance of some of the implements related to main entrances that will be described here.

The Florida Department of Education offers guidelines applicable to main entrances that school officials should consider in establishing best practices for this crucial area of security. The included diagrams may be of use when envisioning such practices:<sup>71</sup>

- Position a primary control point in the lobby between the main entry and all other areas of school;

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<sup>71</sup> Best practices and diagrams selected or adapted from FLDOE, Section 3, p. 33-35

- Direct visitors through this single control point at main entry;
- Locate a staffed administration area or desk adjacent to main entry and connected to the lobby;
- Design lobby areas that can be easily secured;
- Utilize extensive interior glazing and windows in lobby area to encourage natural surveillance;
- Provide an escape route from staffed administration reception area for emergency egress out of lobby area.

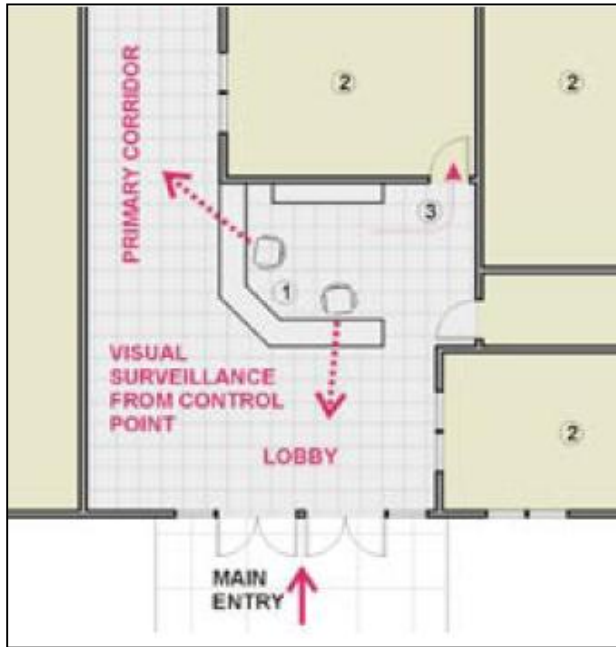


Figure 10: Main entrance with direct access vulnerabilities (no entrapment area; limited natural surveillance of outdoors; potential to bypass front desk area).

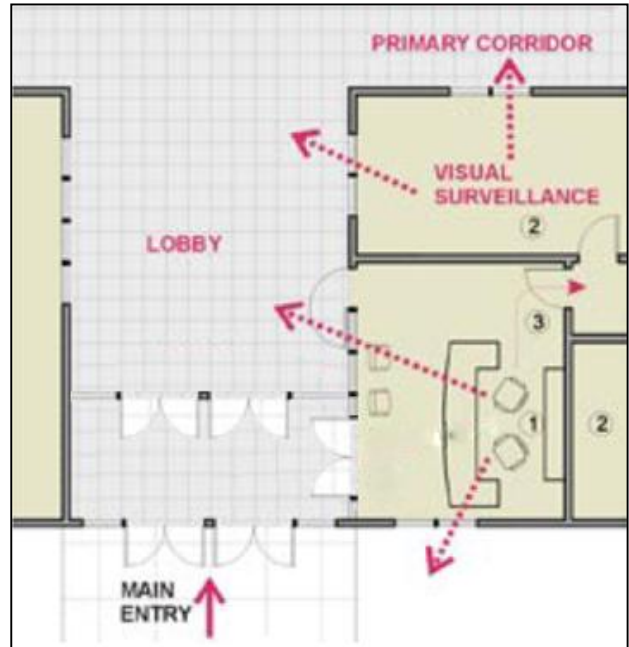


Figure 11: Main entrance utilizing best practices.

Source: [Florida Safe Schools Design Guidelines, Section 4, page 33](#)

- Locate administration areas adjacent to the main entry and lobby;
- Provide the reception/visitor information area with adequate protection by utilizing a counter and, when necessary, a protective shield;
- Incorporate extensive interior glazing in administration areas to provide unobstructed views and natural surveillance;
- Design and locate the administration area to reinforce its role as the guardian of school facility;
- Provide seating at reception/visitor information areas;
- Consider installing an electronic lock system that can allow main office staff to automatically lock all school doors, including exterior doors and interior classroom doors, from a central control station.

#### Main Entrance: Other Considerations

Additionally, based on recent assessments of schools across the United States, our experts suggest the following for main entrance areas:

- Consider installing a panic button at receptionist's desk;
- Consider installing a video intercom system on building exterior to enhance access control;



- Consider installing an automatic locking mechanism to ensure main entry door is locked during school hours;
- Consider installing ballistic protective glass;<sup>72</sup>
- Consider moving surveillance monitors to security officer's desk and receptionist's desk/computer, so as to be viewed at eye level. Re-direct responsibility of proactive viewing of most critical cameras (especially that of main entry) to stationary administrative staff members, who can take ownership of specific cameras and report anomalies to appropriate security staff.
- Consider installing ballistic protective steel plating on vertical facing of desk front and side wall; (see Figure 12)
- Consider installing two sets of doors to create an entrapment area; (see Figure 13)
- Consider using a visitor management system to verify that guests are authorized to visit the campus; (see Figure 14)
- Consider escorting visitors (or delivery personnel) into the building;
- Ensure door-locking mechanisms meet applicable life safety and fire codes.



Figure 12: Red arrows indicate ballistic steel plating.

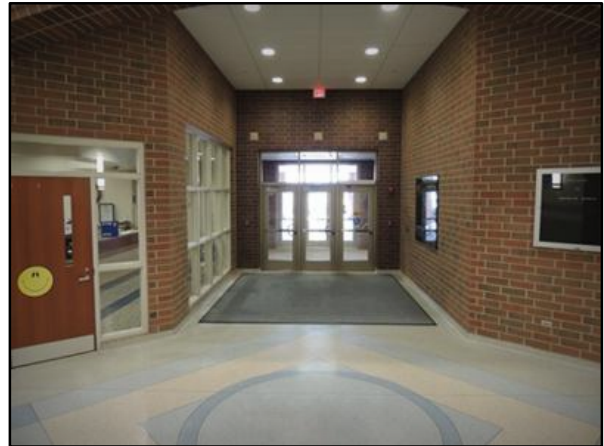


Figure 13: Two sets of doors.



Figure 14: Visitor management system.

<sup>72</sup> For more information, see: <http://usbuletproofing.com/USBPStandards.htm>

## Exterior Doors: Overview and Common Vulnerabilities

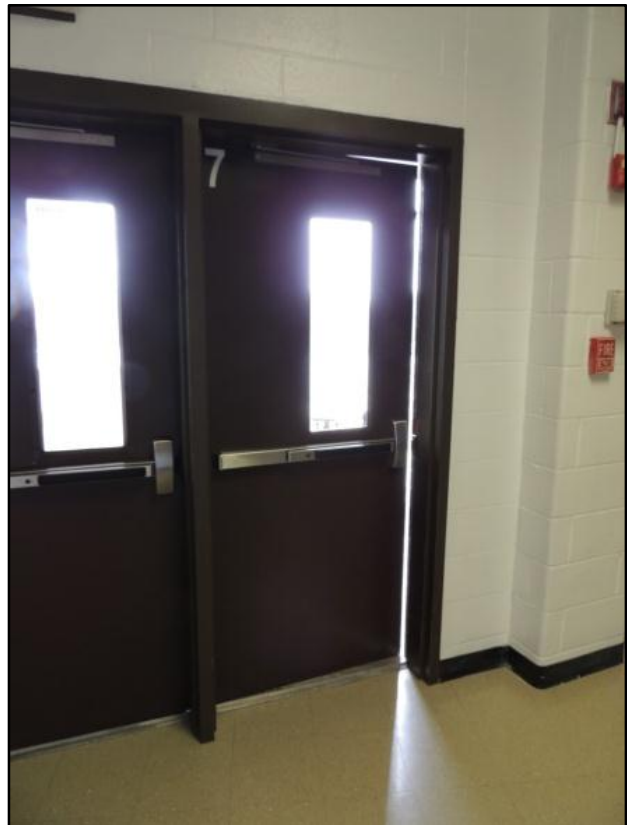
Our experts found that proper installation and use of doors was a challenge – and hence, a common source of vulnerability – for many schools. This is because doors must serve competing priorities – such as denying entry to a school by unauthorized individuals (i.e., denying passage) while at the same time maximizing the ability of students, teachers, and staff to move through doors either into or out of a school, which is important for day-to-day function and may be particularly essential in a time of emergency (e.g., facilitating evacuation during a fire).

In assessment of schools, our experts found multiple vulnerabilities with regards to exterior doors, including:

- Door hinges unprotected and on the exterior of the building; (see Figure 15)
- Doors that did not automatically close and lock on their own with an adjustable spring or air return or instances of such hardware malfunctioning;
- Doors that otherwise needed adjustment or did not close properly; (see Figure 16)
- Unsecured and unmonitored service doors. (see Figure 17)



*Figure 155: Unprotected hinges.*



*Figure 16: Doors that do not close properly.*



*Figure 17: Partially opened service door.*

### Exterior Doors: Best Practices

On the exterior of a school building, school administrators should consider the number, placement, installment, and hardware quality of doors in efforts to maximize gains in security. As described above, doing so properly can lead to significant results in keeping intruders on the outside while allowing students and staff to exit safely in the case of emergency. Indeed, the importance of following best practices on the topic of exterior doors is highlighted by the attention received in the recently released Sandy Hook Advisory Commission Interim Report of Findings, which recommended that the State of Connecticut require all exterior doors in K-12 school to “be equipped with hardware capable of implementing a full perimeter lockdown.”<sup>73</sup>

School officials should consider the following best practices on this topic:<sup>74</sup>

- The number of exterior doors should be minimized, especially those able to be opened from the outside;
- Exterior doors should be constructed of steel aluminum alloy or solid core hardwood and designed and certified to resist thrown or wind-blown objects;
- Doors should have an adjustable spring or air return to ensure they are always closed and should be inspected on a regular basis to ensure they are functioning properly;
- Doors vulnerable to unauthorized use by students are made more secure by installing door alarms, delayed opening devices, sensors, or cameras that monitor doors from administration;

<sup>73</sup> Sandy Hook Commission, p. 10

<sup>74</sup> Adapted or selected from Texas State University, Chapter, 20, p. 4-5; FEMA, 2012, Chapter 4, p. 27-28



- All exit doors should be equipped with emergency exit hardware and not locked or secured by any other means, and should under no circumstances be otherwise locked or chained shut;
- Exterior doors should have little or no exposed hardware and hinges should have non-removable pins; (see Figure 18)
- Place doors away from windows so that, if the windows are broken, the doors cannot be unlocked.



*Figure 18: Exterior door with protective hinge covering.*

#### Exterior Doors: Considerations<sup>75</sup>

- Does exterior door security hardware allow egress from the school building at all times?
- Are exterior doors sized and arranged to reduce congestion and avoid crowding?
- Where exterior doors are protected from the weather, do they serve as concealed areas for unwanted activity?
- Is the number of exterior building entries and exits/doors kept to a minimum, and are all controlled or supervised?
- Can exterior doors be electronically locked to block visitors' entry into the building?
- When the main entry doors are unlocked, can securable internal doors oblige visitors to confer with the receptionist to gain entry beyond the reception area?
- Are exterior foyer doors offset from interior ones?
- Do exterior doors along the line of security screening meet requirements of UL 752, Standard for Safety: Bullet-Resisting Equipment?
- Are all exit doors and gates equipped with emergency exit hardware and not locked or secured by any other means?
- Are all exterior doors designed to prevent unauthorized access into the building?
- Do exterior doors have narrow windows, sidelights, fish-eye viewers, or cameras to permit seeing who is on the exterior side?

<sup>75</sup> Adapted or selected from FEMA, 2012, Section F, p. 16, 18, 21-23, 36-38

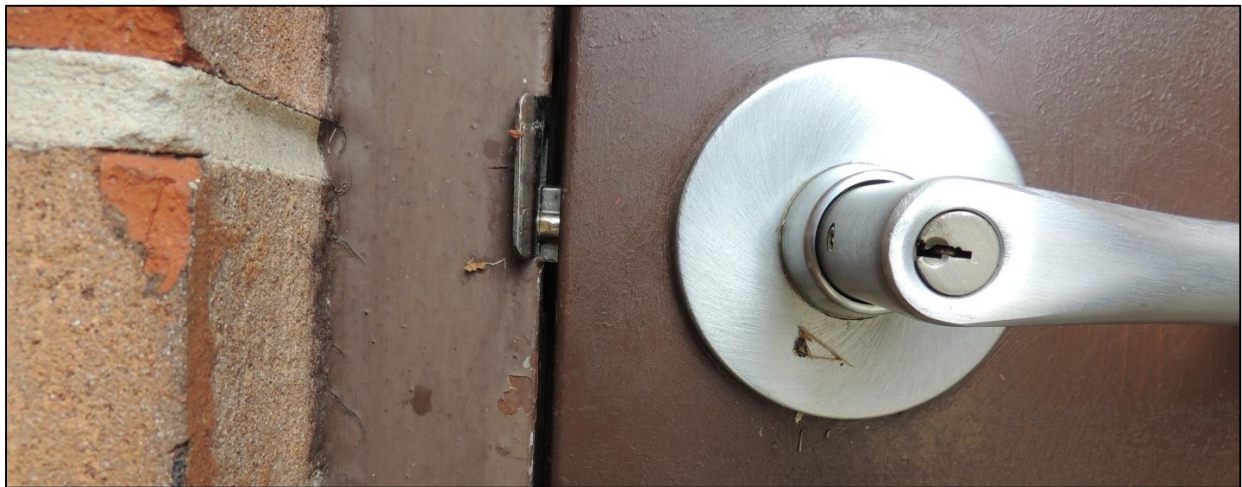
- Are exterior doors airtight?

For further information on this topic, school officials may reference:

- NCEF: [Building Access Control Checklist](#)
- FEMA: *Primer to Design Safe School Projects in Case of Terrorist Attacks* - Chapter 4, p. 27-28

### Exterior Locks: Overview and Common Vulnerabilities

Locks are a common tool in overall physical security measures at schools. Locks, simultaneously with doors, must both promote access control and efficient entry/egress when needed. Locking systems should not be analyzed independently of the doors in which they are placed (refer to the above section on doors for further discussion), nor should the effectiveness of doors be analyzed independent of the locking systems that support them. Both factors go “hand-in-hand” – a well-placed door made of appropriate materials is far less effective if not paired with an appropriate locking system; likewise, a good locking system is not effective if the door it supports can be defeated due to other weaknesses in door placement, materials, or hardware. It is important to keep in mind that lock systems are readily undermined if not paired with adequate management of keys/unlocking implements – a subject that will be addressed in the procedural section of this document. In our experts’ assessment of schools, some schools were found to have exterior doors with the locking mechanism exposed to the outside of the building, creating an unnecessary vulnerability (see Figure 19).



*Figure 19: Exterior doors with locking mechanism on the outside of building.*

### Exterior Locks: Best Practices<sup>76</sup>

- Ensure door-locking systems allow for emergency exiting without impediment.
- Use highly pick-resistant locking systems.
- Protect all exterior door-lock cylinders by securing them to prevent cylinder removal.

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<sup>76</sup> Adapted or selected from Texas State University, Chapter 21, p. 5-6

### Exterior Locks: Considerations<sup>77</sup>

- Are locks with single cylinders and interior thumb turns on doors with glass panels more than 36 inches away from the nearest glass panel?
- Do deadbolt locks seat at least one inch into the doorframe or lock-bolt receiver?
- Do all door-locking systems meet applicable life safety and fire codes to allow emergency evacuation?
- Are door jambs sufficiently strong to meet the strength of locks?
- Have all externally mounted locks and hasps been replaced with internally locking devices?<sup>78</sup>

### Exterior Windows: Overview and Common Vulnerabilities

The incorporation of exterior windows can serve both as a security enhancement – through the increase in natural surveillance and potential for emergency egress that they provide – and stand as a vulnerability – in that they may provide access opportunities for intruders and may create hazards if broken glass serves as a projectile. Consideration of exterior windows is especially resonant given the recent events at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Connecticut, when it is believed that the assailant gained access to the school by shooting through a glass door that was otherwise locked. Our experts also commonly found schools to have windows – particularly in key areas such as the main entrance – that were susceptible to an assailant and did not utilize ballistic-resistant materials.

### Exterior Windows: Best Practices

Several goals should be kept in mind when considering the topic of exterior windows in school design. Windows should be as resistant as possible to an assailant like an active shooter, and allow students and staff to monitor events outside the building as well as communicate with outside responders in an emergency situation. At the same time students and staff might need to use them as secondary escape routes in the case of an emergency like a fire, or even active shooter (as the Virginia Tech shooting, in which several students escaped the gunman by exiting through windows, proves).<sup>79</sup> Given these considerations, best practices for exterior windows include:<sup>80</sup>

- Windows that face traffic should have protective coatings applied to enhance their resistance;
- Windows should be protected against forced entry with efforts to minimize any sacrifices to visibility;
- Locate windows strategically to provide natural light and natural surveillance;
- Place windows at main entrance to enhance visual surveillance to parking lots and pedestrian routes. In high risk schools, minimize the number and size of windows in a façade (know that this will lessen the amount of natural surveillance allowed);
- Avoid glass walls or windows at emergency exits to facilitate escape;
- Avoid wire glass due to the injuries it can cause by becoming flying debris;
- Place guards (i.e. grills, screens, or meshwork) across window openings by affixing them firmly to the structure to protect against covert entry;

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<sup>77</sup> Adapted or selected from Texas State University, Chapter 21, p. 4-5

<sup>78</sup> Adapted from FEMA, 2012, Chapter 4, p. 28

<sup>79</sup> FEMA, 2012, Chapter 3, p. 23

<sup>80</sup> Best practices based on selections or adaptations from FEMA, 2012, Chapter 3, p. 40; Chapter 4, p. 23-26;

- Design windows, framing, and anchoring systems to minimize the effects of explosive blasts, gunfire, and forced entry;
- Place windows away from doors so that, if the windows are broken, the door cannot be unlocked.

#### Exterior Windows: Considerations<sup>81</sup>

- Do classroom windows enhance visual surveillance of the school grounds?
- Does door and window security hardware allow egress from classrooms at all times?
- Are windows designated for escape readily operable and not blocked by grills or screens?
- Do windows facilitate surveillance from the reception area, providing, on the outside, an unimpeded view of the main entry and drop-off and visitor parking areas?

### Physical Access Control: Overview and Common Vulnerabilities

Access control is an essential part of school security and one that involves both physical and procedural aspects for a given school. Access control can be a security component at each of the layers outlined above and even create sub-layers within each layer. Physical and procedural access control measures can be part of the outermost layer of security to the innermost. For example, it is common to think of access control as primarily a tool at the main entrance of a school – indeed, a place where access control is undoubtedly very important. But access control can play an important role even for individuals who have gained initial access to the building by denying access to key areas deeper within the building. Unfortunately, some of the physical tools that assist in access control can be prohibitively expensive in certain situations and may also create undue burdens on environments like schools which not only rely on a level of openness to promote a healthy learning environment for students but also are inherently public institutions in nature that must provide access for parents and the community at-large. Nevertheless, schools should attempt to weigh these considerations against the reality that some level of access control may allow a school to continue to serve its primary functions while going a long way to prevent threatening individuals access to their property.

It is important to remember that, like most physical security tools, those providing access control are rapidly diminished in value when not accompanied by proper procedures that govern their use. As NCEF puts it:

If windows and doors are left unsecured and unsupervised, the choice of access control device is of no consequence. But once a school has committed to controlling access, decisions have to be made about which technologies to use.<sup>82</sup>

#### Physical Access Control: Best Practices

The same philosophy that underlies the overall layered approach to security underlies that of access control: access control measures create one or more obstacles that a potential offender must cumulatively overcome in realizing their violent aims (see BIPS 3-40 for “cumulative” discussion). As DHS states:

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<sup>81</sup> Selected from FEMA, 2012, Section F – “Building Vulnerability Assessment Checklist”, p. 14, 16, 22

<sup>82</sup> Schneider, *School Security Technologies*, p. 1



Ideally, access control systems should keep shooters out of a building completely, but in case a shooter manages to penetrate a building, the systems should include the ability to close and secure doors remotely, and thereby limit access to vulnerable targets. Limited access forces a shooter to spend more time searching for targets, giving the building occupants more time to evacuate to a safe area or seek cover in safe rooms. The delay also allows response forces more time to arrive on the scene to neutralize the threat or reduce casualties. Such systems also have the potential to trap the shooter in a specific area, increasing the chances of a positive outcome with no injuries. Immediate video assignment may give the staff the ability to notify law enforcement of an emergency and identify the exact location of the threat.<sup>83</sup>

As such, school officials should consider the following in establishing appropriate access control at their facilities:<sup>84</sup>

- Establishing a single, controlled, clearly marked entry point that requires passage by/through administrative reception areas for visitors at a school;
- Signs should be placed throughout the school campus, particularly around parking areas, directing visitors to the main reception area, (see Figure 20)
- Positioning the main entry area so as to allow for unobstructed surveillance of lobby doors, stairwells, and perpendicular hallways.
- Placing the administrative area on an exterior wall to allow for additional surveillance of outside areas, especially visitor parking, drop-off areas, and exterior routes leading to the main entrance;
- Placing administration areas adjacent to main entry areas, allowing for visual surveillance between administrators and students or visitors, and providing them with a lockable door, working telephone and, ideally, two remote exits;
- When feasible and appropriate, installing security camera(s) in the lobby/main reception area; (see Figure 21)
- Controlling further access to areas containing classrooms and other areas frequently used by students, teachers, and staff by:
  - Using materials for such walls or doors that are difficult to penetrate quickly;
  - Installing a central control station that can remotely close and secure all internal doors.



Figure 20: Signs directing visitors to main reception area.



Figure 21: Camera in main reception area.

<sup>83</sup> FEMA, 2012, Chapter 3, p. 42

<sup>84</sup> Based on FEMA, 2012, Chapter 3, p. 42

### Access Control: Other Considerations

There is an array of physical devices that can be co-opted in an effort to enforce effective access control. To repeat a point from above, physical tools meant to enhance access control are only as effective as the individuals and procedures that define their use. Furthermore, the most advanced technology manned by highly trained individuals at the front entrance of a school is rendered irrelevant if an intruder can easily enter through an unlocked back door. That being said, school officials looking to leverage physical tools and technology in an earnest and well-informed effort to improve access control can benefit from more detailed discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of the myriad options that exist, from door, lock, and key varieties to surveillance technologies – some of which will be described in more detail in the interior security sections below.

For more information, the following sources may prove useful:

- National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities: [School Security Technologies](#) (Tod Schneider, July 2010)
- Texas School Safety Center: *Security Design Criteria Manual for Schools*, Chapter 40 – Access Control

### Building Interior Security

Ideally, schools will be able to prevent an armed attacker from gaining access to the school interior, through methods described in sections above. In practice, it is very possible that an armed assailant will succeed in at least gaining partial entry to the school interior. Hence, interior physical security measures of various degrees can be a valuable part of a school's overall physical security infrastructure. Some physical measures – such as doors, locks, and windows – can prevent or at least delay an active shooter from freely moving throughout a school at large or from entering classrooms where students and teachers may be located. Others, such as security cameras or other monitoring systems, can assist in locating and identifying a threat and hence minimizing the time it takes for responders to neutralize that threat. In any case, interior physical measures play the same role as other physical measures; they complicate an attacker's freedom of movement and action and have the potential to add precious seconds and minutes to the time it takes for an attacker to realize their goals.

### Interior Doors and Locks: Overview and Common Vulnerabilities

According to the National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities (NCEF), interior doors serve the following purposes:<sup>85</sup>

- Controlling the movement of people among school spaces;
- Controlling noise and air flow;
- Acting as flame and smoke barriers during a fire;
- In a lockdown and during classroom instruction, serve as security barriers.

According to NCEF, the most important function of a door from a security standpoint is to control entry; this must be balanced, however, with a door's ruling factor from the standpoint of fire safety, which is

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<sup>85</sup> NCEF, *Door Locking Options in Schools*, p. 1

exit function as a “means of egress.” NCEF describes as “iron-clad” the rule that “egress doors can prevent entry but they can *never* prevent exit.” This once again highlights the need for a comprehensive approach to ensuring safety and security at schools and the essentiality of preventing and preparing for an active shooter event only within that larger context (in this case, the danger of fire at schools). For more information on building and fire code provisions regulating egress doors see the NCEF’s publication: “Door Locking Options in Schools”.

Two of the most well-known and horrific active shooter events at educational institutions in the United States – those at Columbine High School in 1999 and those at Virginia Tech University in 2007 – highlight the potential importance of proper interior door and lock implementation in schools.<sup>86</sup> In the case of the Columbine High School shooting, an event that led to 15 deaths and 24 injuries and which lasted 46 minutes, it is of note that throughout the entire duration of the attack, neither of the two shooters ever entered a locked classroom. In the Virginia Tech case that led to the deaths of 32 and the injury of 17 others, it is of note that none of the four classrooms in which the shooter entered and shot students and instructors had interior locks, despite attempts in at least two of the classrooms to barricade the door or prevent the shooter from entering. It is further notable that all individuals in the Virginia Tech case that managed to hide in a locked room survived.

It is of further note that the Interim Report of Findings produced by the Sandy Hook Advisory Commission, in the wake of the horrific events that occurred in Newtown, Connecticut, recommended that the State of Connecticut require “all classrooms in K-12 schools [to] be equipped with locking doors that can be locked from the inside by the classroom teacher or substitute.”<sup>87</sup>

#### Interior Doors and Locks: Best Practices

Specifically in relation to the risk posed by an active shooter in the interior of a school, doors and locks serve several functions both in controlling entry and providing egress:<sup>88</sup>

- Preventing entry of dangerous people and goods into the school and into the occupied spaces within it;
- Facilitating rapid lockdowns;
- Allowing rapid entry of police and rescue personnel;
- Preventing perpetrators from barricading themselves in a classroom or other space, particularly if holding hostages.

Discussion of interior doors and locks at schools includes doors to classrooms and other rooms as well as doors or gates employed in between various sections or wings of a school such as corridor doors. School officials should consider the functions above in ensuring that interior doors positively impact overall school security, including their ability to deny access to an intruder and protect those behind them, delay or channel the movement of an assailant through the interior, assist responders in moving freely to confront a threat or provide assistance to those in need, allow for safe and efficient egress, and conform to fire codes and other local, state, and federal regulations. These considerations involve the

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<sup>86</sup> See FEMA, 2012, Ch. 3, p. 23 – 26

<sup>87</sup> Sandy Hook Advisory Commission, p. 10

<sup>88</sup> NCEF, *Door Locking Options in Schools*, p. 3

placement, material, and hardware of interior doors in schools. The following best practices should be kept in mind by school officials examining interior locks and doors:<sup>89</sup>

- Doors should be constructed of steel, aluminum alloy, or solid-core hardwood. Glass doors as a security matter are less than ideal. If necessary, glass doors should be fully framed and equipped with burglar-resistant tempered glass;
- Ideally, a central control station should have the ability to close and secure all internal doors when an alarm is sounded. Effective access control will enable the central control station to restrict the movement of an assailant and direct the safe escape of students;
- Double doors should be secured with heavy-duty, multiple-point, long flush bolts;
- There should be no recessed doorways;
- Interior corridor doors should be equipped to prevent criminals or vandals from locking or chaining hall doors in order to slow down security officers' pursuit;
- Use door hardware which allows staff to quickly lock rooms from the inside without stepping into the hallway;
- Ensure classroom locks can be unlocked from the inside by applying pressure to the handle or knob;
- Ensure all door-locking systems meet applicable life safety and fire codes to allow emergency evacuation.

#### Interior Doors and Locks: Other Considerations

School officials face an array of door hardware and lock choices in considering the goals above. As with other security technologies, making these choices is dependent on a particular school's needs and resources. For example, schools in warm weather climates or with portable classrooms that open directly to the outdoors may require different doors and locking systems than those located within the confines of an enclosed building.<sup>90</sup> Furthermore, new lockset technologies may offer room for improvement in the security benefits provided by certain types of doors and locks. For example, many classroom doors for decades utilized locking systems that denied entry to those on the outside but allowed for easy exit on the part of those on the inside, technology that helped meet some of the goals outlined above. However, this common system required teachers to open their door and step into the hallway to lock the door before closing it again in the case of a lockdown, potentially putting the teacher at risk or offering a violent attacker opportunity to gain entry to a classroom. Newer "classroom security function" locksets allow for the door to be locked without leaving the room, and may prove useful in narrowing that security gap.<sup>91</sup> For more details regarding specific options and guidelines for different door types and locksets see Texas State University, Ch. 20 or NCEF, *School Security Technologies and Door Locking Options in Schools*.

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<sup>89</sup> Based on selections or adaptations from: NCEF, *Door Locking Options in Schools*; NCEF, *Improving Access Control*; Texas State University, Chapters 20 – 21; FEMA, 2012, Chapter 3, p. 43

<sup>90</sup> NCEF, *Door Locking Options in Schools*, p. 2

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2



## Interior Windows: Overview and Common Vulnerabilities



*Figure 22: Example of non-ballistic resistant glass near and in door, creating vulnerability to assailants.*

There are two primary security considerations in regards to interior windows, in particular those that provide lines of sight into/out of classrooms and other populated areas such as windows built into or adjoining classroom doors.<sup>92</sup> The first is allowing for natural surveillance of hallways and immediate areas surrounding classrooms and other areas, which may be important in allowing those inside of a classroom to recognize or appraise a danger outside of the classroom and take appropriate response measures. It is also important for those inside of the classroom to be able to see who is at the door before allowing an individual entry to the classroom. The second consideration, and one with particular relevance to an active shooter situation, is minimizing a window's vulnerability during response procedures such as a lockdown. Such windows must prevent or greatly hamper an assailant's ability to bypass a locked-down door by either gaining direct access through broken glass or using a breach in the window to unlock the door from the inside. (see Figure 22)

Previous incidents serve to emphasize the importance of this factor. For example, in 2010 a 16-year-old attacker killed six people hiding in a locked classroom in Hastings Middle School in Minnesota by shooting and subsequently stepping through a tempered glass window that ran vertically alongside the classroom door.<sup>93</sup>

### Interior Windows: Best Practices

There are several best practices with regards to interior windows that can minimize the ability of an assailant or unauthorized individual to gain access to interior areas such as classrooms. These relate to the size, placement, and material used for windows, and include the following:

- Minimize the size of windows or install multiple smaller windows interspersed by barriers so as to prevent providing adequate space for entry by assailant;
- Place windows at sufficient distance from interior locking mechanism to prevent or make difficult opening a door or lock from inside;
- As a cost-effective measure, consider concealing or obscuring window views during events such as a lockdown to prevent assailant from ascertaining status or presence of persons inside of classroom;
- Consider steel-plating (hardening) window frames to lessen window vulnerability;
- If feasible and if resources permit, consider installing ballistic-resistant windows for interior spaces such as classrooms.

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<sup>92</sup> See FLDOE, p. 40

<sup>93</sup> Huppert

## Interior Surveillance Equipment: Overview and Common Vulnerabilities

Accordingly to an article in *School Planning and Management*:

Cameras provide two levels of safety and security for school building users. The first is the benefit of video analytics in crisis situations that, fortunately, are few and far between for school districts. The second is the benefit of discouraging inappropriate and illegal behavior, such as bullying and trespassing.<sup>94</sup>

There are multiple benefits to installing a surveillance system in a school. For one, “video systems can provide responders with the capability to rapidly assess a situation and safely conduct surveillance of suspicious persons, as well as provide an immediate assessment of a triggered alarm.”<sup>95</sup> Surveillance systems can also arguably enhance overall school culture – not only by indicating to occupants of a school that their behavior is being monitored, but also by reducing the very bullying and destructive behavior that reports have cited as often being contributive to the mindset that might lead one to undertake such horrific actions.

In our experts’ assessments of schools, it was often found that surveillance systems suffered from a number of problems that could prove to be deleterious to a school’s overall state of security. The following vulnerabilities were found:

- Malfunctioning or broken cameras; (see Figure 6)
- Blurry, obscured, or intermittent camera feeds; (see Figure 7)
- Cameras easily subject to vandalism and tampering;
- Poor or non-existent active monitoring and storage of feeds.

Active monitoring (employing monitors to watch cameras in real-time) is more expensive than passive monitoring (camera feeds that are recorded but not watched in real-time), due to additional staffing and equipment costs. However, active monitoring can provide school officials and law enforcement with opportunities to respond to crimes that they would not otherwise have immediately recognized. Having trained staff monitor a live feed can provide first responders with information about potential dangers, people of interest, and other circumstances at the scene. Such information can enhance school safety and security.

### Interior Surveillance Equipment: Best Practices

Despite potential downsides, surveillance systems – if installed and monitored correctly – have the potential to lead to significant positive gains in security, depending on a school’s needs. According to the Texas School Safety Center (TXSSC), “Closed circuit television (CCTV) is a primary choice for remote surveillance systems. These units have become very economical and easily mounted where they are less intrusive.”<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Kollie

<sup>95</sup> FEMA, 2012, Ch. 3, p. 48

<sup>96</sup> Texas State University, Ch. 45, p. 2

The following best practices should be considered by school officials in deciding if and how to install surveillance systems in their school:<sup>97</sup>

- When feasible and appropriate, consider providing security camera(s) in the lobby area for electronic surveillance and access control;
- Cameras should be installed throughout the facility to enable staff to identify and assess any threats;
- Each room and hallway should have a camera that can be operated from a central location to ensure safety and provide a rapid means to determine the exact nature of any suspected threat to better direct response actions.
- Pictures printed from surveillance equipment should provide clear enough images to identify suspects in a court of law.<sup>98</sup>

#### Interior Surveillance Equipment: Other Considerations

There exists an array of technologies that support physical surveillance systems in schools, and school officials should choose based on their consideration of the above topics and given their unique needs and resources. Based on this, school officials may find it useful to consider these additional questions:<sup>99</sup>

- Do CCTV camera systems cover appropriate areas of the school and record to digital or tape devices?
- Do CCTV cameras use lenses that capture useful images under existing lighting conditions? Is infrared used if needed for dark areas or at night?
- Are cameras triggered by motion or intrusion?
- Are camera housings designed to protect against tampering, vandalism, and exposure to extreme temperature or moisture?
- Do cameras have an uninterruptible power supply, and are they connected to the building's emergency power supply?
- Does system utilize DVR recording capability?

Advances in technology also have created new options for facilities such as schools in installing surveillance systems. For example, many facilities are moving towards installing Integrated Security Management Systems (ISMS), which are designed to tie together multiple security technologies – such as cameras, alarms, communication, and access control devices (many of which are discussed further below) – in one, compatible system.<sup>100</sup> Many of these new systems are Internet Protocol (IP) based, which may allow for more intelligent, flexible, easy-to-use, reasonably priced systems and be relatively easily handled by a school's existing IT department.<sup>101</sup> The Sandy Hook Advisory Commission, in response to the Newtown, Connecticut tragedy of December 2012, recently recommended that schools consider “the usage of IP enabled cameras” in schools to “support response capacity.”<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Selected or adapted from FEMA, 2012, Ch. 3, p. 42

<sup>98</sup> Texas State University, Ch. 45, p. 2

<sup>99</sup> Selected or adapted from FEMA, 2012, Section F, p. 47 (“Building Vulnerability Assessment Checklist”)

<sup>100</sup> See NCEF, *Improving School Access Control*, and Schneider, *School Security Technologies*

<sup>101</sup> See D-Link, p. 2

<sup>102</sup> Sandy Hook Advisory Commission, p. 13

For more information on choosing and installing a surveillance system, as well as balancing student privacy with school safety, see the following:

- National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities – [School Security Technologies](#)
- National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities – [Selecting Security Technology Providers](#)
- Department of Homeland Security – *Primer to Design Safe School Projects in Case of Terrorist Attacks and School Shootings*, Section F
- Department of Education: [Balancing Student Privacy and School Safety: a Guide to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act for Elementary and Secondary Schools](#)

### **Communications and Alarm: Overview and Common Vulnerabilities**

Choosing and installing adequate communications systems is a fundamental part of a school's security infrastructure. In an active shooter situation, schools must be able to both communicate rapidly and clearly with outside responders as well as alert their occupants to the threat and advise action. Additionally, it is important that occupants of a school have the ability to readily establish communication with and relay information to a school's main administrative or security offices from various locations throughout the school, including classrooms. As the NCEF puts it, "a teacher shouldn't have to choose between staying with students and calling for help."<sup>103</sup>

NCEF points out that weaknesses in communication systems often include:<sup>104</sup>

- Unreachable areas, such as playgrounds, bathrooms, boiler rooms or basements, due to lack of radio reception, wiring, speakers, or phones;
- Dysfunctional equipment that works inconsistently, due to bad weather, leaky roofs, or deferred maintenance;
- Reliance on towers or systems that predictably overload in genuine emergencies;

### **Communications and Alarm Systems: Best Practices**

The Department of Homeland Security describes the following as important components of a school's communications system:<sup>105</sup>

- Telecommunications systems – according to DHS, these are essential to the operation of many modern security devices in addition to providing the ability to alert external responders of an emergency. Schools should have an independent system, such as radios or cellular phones, to alert responders;
- Redundancy – A second telephone service should be maintained to allow communications in case of an incident. A base radio communications system with antenna should be installed in the stairwell, and portable sets should be distributed to each floor as a preferred alternative;
- Radio telemetry system – this system should provide antennas throughout the school facility if required for emergency communications through a wireless transmission of data;
- Alarm and information systems – these should not be collected and mounted in a single conduit, or even collocated;

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<sup>103</sup> Schneider, *School Security Technologies*, p. 9

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9

<sup>105</sup> See FEMA, 2012, Ch. 3, p. 48 - 49

- Empty conduits (usually only a consideration during new construction) and power outlets – these should be provided for possible future installation of security control equipment;
- Mass notification systems – these are critical for advising faculty, students, and visitors of impending danger, and ideally can provide notifications to the entire school or send message to specific locations;
- Classroom communication systems – these can provide a rapid means for staff or students to alert the administration that a serious incident is taking place, and can consist of a push-to-talk button installed on a wall, an identifiable telephone system, or other means;
- Schools might also consider tying alarm systems into police dispatch centers to facilitate quick/rapid response to alarm conditions.<sup>106</sup>

### Communications and Alarm Systems: Other Considerations

Like other security technologies, there exist a wide array of options for school administrators looking to install new or improve upon their current communications and alarm systems. Installation of Integrated Security Management Systems (ISMS), as described in the ‘Surveillance Equipment: Other Considerations’ section above, encompasses this area of security. The National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities provides a detailed discussion on many issues related to choice, purchase, and maintenance of communications and alarm systems in their publication on security technologies from 2010, which school officials may find useful. The following questions, from the DHS Primer’s “Building Vulnerability Assessment Checklist,” may also be useful in considering such issues:<sup>107</sup>

- Are all classrooms, including portable classrooms, on the public address system?
- Do intercoms, phones, or radios allow for two-way verbal communication between all classrooms and the school’s administrative or security offices?
- Does a mass notification system reach all building occupants (public address, pager, cell phone, computer override, etc.)?
- Does the mass notification system provide warning and alert information, along with actions to take before and after an incident?
- Do shelter spaces have the necessary provisions to ensure cell phone or radio communication by EMS personnel?
- In high-risk areas, is communications system wiring distributed in secure chases and risers, or otherwise secure areas, to prevent tampering?
- Does the school have the necessary transmitters, receivers, and repeaters to ensure radio communication by EMS personnel everywhere in the building?

It is also worth mentioning that, in many recent cases, the use of personal cellphones has been an important factor in emergency situations like those with an active shooter. In the midst of an emergency, a personal cellphone may be the only means of communication with outside responders or a school’s security office. The Sandy Hook Advisory Commission suggested “requiring school facilities to evaluate cell phone coverage throughout the facilities and grounds and make reasonable efforts to address deficiencies” that might render cellphones useless in such a situation.<sup>108</sup> While this may only

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<sup>106</sup> See Texas State University, Ch. 45, p. 1-2

<sup>107</sup> Selected or adapted from FEMA, 2012, Section F, p. 15, 30, 34, 42 (“Building Vulnerability Assessment Checklist”)

<sup>108</sup> Sandy Hook Advisory Commission, p. 12

apply to staff cellphones – given school policies regarding student cellphone use during school hours – it nevertheless may be worthy of further consideration.

For further details and questions similar to those above, please refer to section 4 of appendix F in the DHS primer. For other information, the following may be useful:

- School Management and Planning: [Critical Communications](#)

### **Additional Consideration: New School Construction**

While our main goal in this document is to provide existing schools with broadly applicable solutions to make their facilities more secure and their students and staff safer, it also can be of use to those planning and constructing new school facilities. It is almost always easier, more effective, and more efficient to incorporate security-enhancing best practices into a new facility than to attempt to retrofit an existing facility. For example, a new facility can incorporate electronic alarm and door locking systems that allow an administrator to remotely lock down all classrooms and doors in response to an approaching threat with the push of a button; installing such a system in an older school may be impractical or prohibitively expensive.

Our team of experts confirmed this view during their assessments of schools across the United States. Our experts noted that in many older schools or smaller schools with especially limited resources, a facility's architectural design, site layout, and other physical features created inherent vulnerabilities that required significant resources and effort to remediate. On the other hand, our experts examined a brand new middle school that, due to the security-enhancing features "built-in" to the facility, was significantly ahead of other schools in providing a base level of protection to students and staff.

The considerations that should go into construction of a new facility are numerous and will not be discussed in depth beyond what is covered elsewhere in this document. These considerations span from the macro (e.g., where in a city or town to place a school to reduce risk) to the micro (e.g., the type of electrical system inside of a school that can enhance security features). We strongly recommend that those involved in the planning and construction process involve security experts, law enforcement, and other school security stakeholders before 'breaking ground' on a new facility.

For more information on these types of considerations in the construction of new schools, readers may refer to the following:

- FEMA: *Primer to design Safe School Projects in Case of Terrorist Attacks and School Shootings* - Chapter 2
- FEMA Online Course E155 – "Building Design for Homeland Security" - <http://www.fema.gov/mitigation/fema-e155-building-design-homeland-security-course>

## **Prevention and Mitigation: Daily Policies and Procedures**

Another important aspect of prevention and mitigation are the policies and procedures that both complement existing physical security measures and compensate for areas in which they are lacking or for various reasons, inappropriate or impractical to install. Two areas that include these policies and procedures are directly related to access control – namely, those encompassing visitor sign-in and badging and key control. Others, such as bus loading/unloading procedures and general supervision and monitoring procedures, compensate for security vulnerabilities for which purely physical means are minimally applicable or insufficient, without adding a human element of security. Finally, other miscellaneous recommendations based on our experts' assessments of schools are offered. These procedural aspects of prevention and mitigation are also of note because they generally are an inexpensive way of positively affecting overall levels of security as they primarily involve altering human action rather than the installation of more expensive physical systems.

## **Visitor Management: Overview and Common Vulnerabilities**

Many schools have established visitor sign-in and badge policies and procedures already in place at their facilities. However, too often exceptions to these rules are the rules themselves with many visitors bypassing or ignoring visitor sign-in and badge procedures and school staff and administrators inconsistently enforcing them, if at all. While in most cases the failure to enforce these rules does not lead to harm, there are still several unnecessary vulnerabilities to which a school exposes itself by not enforcing such rules.

First and foremost is the most obvious – a threatening individual could easily gain access to the school and cause harm either without being stopped or without being noticed in the first place. Additionally, a non-threatening individual such as a parent that is not clearly identified as a visitor could be mistaken as a threat by law enforcement or other armed responders in a chaotic situation. In our assessments of school facilities, it was also noted on multiple occasions that staff members did not display staff badges or enforcing of such policies was minimal, which can further create confusion – especially in an emergency situation – as to what adults are authorized to be on school property and who may be an intruder.

## **Visitor Management: Best Practices**

There are several recommendations with regards to visitor management procedures that school officials should consider in establishing these practices at their school, including:

- Establish one main entrance and put up signage identifying it as the main entrance. Maintain visible signage on campus and on all school doors directing visitors to the main entrance door;<sup>109</sup>
- Some schools also post notices advising that individuals who do not follow visitation procedures may be charged with trespassing;<sup>110</sup>
- Create a visitor sign-in, sign-out, and escort procedure;<sup>111</sup>
- Visitors should be greeted at the main entrance of the school and asked for identification, such as a driver's license. This should ideally occur in a locked vestibule before the visitor is permitted further access to the school;<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> NSSSS

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.



- Consider establishing some form of “credential exchange,” in which visitors exchange a driver’s license or photo ID to be safely stored until the visitor completes his/her business, in exchange for a badge or other credentials to be clearly displayed by the visitor.<sup>113</sup> (Note that this parallels the recommendation in Interim Report by the Sandy Hook Advisory Commission that a Trusted Access Program (TAP) “be enforced at all schools [to] ... allow, through the visual display of credentials, the identification of staff, contractors, parents, and others authorized to be on school grounds.”<sup>114</sup>);
- Consider personally escorting all visitors throughout their business on school grounds.

### Visitor Management: Other Considerations

Several other aspects of school security both support and are supported by the establishment of effective and consistently enforced visitor management. For instance, if unmonitored exterior doors are unlocked from the outside and provide easy access to the school building, even the best visitor management procedures at the main entrance are of minimal value. Additionally, if the occupants of a school, such as students and teachers, do not recognize when a visitor fails to display their credentials, then much of the point of visitor management has been lost. As such, school officials should consider these additional thoughts on visitor management:<sup>115</sup>

- Reduce the number of doors which may be opened from the outside (while keeping in mind the necessity of being able to open doors from the inside in the event of a fire or other emergency);
- Consider the use of a camera, intercom, and buzzer at the school main entrance, especially at elementary schools. Be sure to have the controls for these [devices] at the desk of each secretary, rather than only at that of one person, if you have main office secretaries controlling the doors. Train the secretaries on proper procedures for allowing access;
- Secure custodial entrances and delivery doors during and after school hours. Have custodial personnel keep a log of deliveries to include the name of the vendor company, name of the delivery person, license plate of the vehicle, date and time of arrival and departure, and associated information;
- Train all school staff, including support personnel, to greet and challenge strangers. Staff should be trained to at least report strangers to the office if they do not feel safe in approaching someone they believe to be an intruder;
- Train students not to open doors to strangers, other students, or even adults they may know;
- Educate parents about access control strategies and the importance of them following the rules;
- Consider using a badge on a colored, break-away lanyard to be displayed around the neck of a visitor, rather than a sticker (which can fall off, be inconsistently applied, or damage clothing);
- Look into software that can scan photo ID and check visitor information on matches in sex offender registries, restraining orders, known threats in the community, expelled students, etc. before issuing credentials.

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<sup>112</sup> Timm

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Sandy Hook Advisory Commission, p. 14

<sup>115</sup> Based on selections or adaptations from NSSSS; Timm



For more information on the subject of visitor management, which school officials may find valuable for further consultation, including:

- School Planning and Management: [Effectively Managing Visitors](#)
- School Planning and Management: [R U up 2 Speed?](#)
- National School Safety and Security Services: [School Access and Visitor Control](#)

### **Key Control: Overview and Common Vulnerabilities**

For various reasons, conventional keys are still frequently used by many schools in terms of access control. Adherence to habit, limited financial cost, or technological familiarity may all contribute to this. However, in many cases schools will “readily admit that dozens of keys or more are floating around, lost, stolen or unaccounted for.”<sup>116</sup> If this is the case, other physical and procedural security measures – like good doors and locks – are minimally effective in keeping unwanted visitors out if individuals can simply unlock a locked door with an obtained key. The National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities lists the following as indicators that conventional keys and locks are no longer adequate:<sup>117</sup>

- Burglaries in which thieves accessed locked rooms and there were no signs of forced entry;
- Lost keys or a history of distributing keys that were not stamped “Do not duplicate.” Stamping should discourage duplication, although it is no guarantee that it will not occur;
- Lockdown plans that are heavily dependent on the extensive use of keys. If only some staff members carry the keys, or if the act of locking the doors would put teachers in the line of fire, or if teachers are likely to be physiologically stressed during the crisis, then an alternative plan is worth considering.

Vulnerabilities due to keys can be primarily addressed in two ways. One way is by addressing policies and procedures related to distribution and tracking of keys. The other is by transitioning to other forms of access control aside from traditional keys that utilize technology to improve ease of use, issuance/de-issuance of access, tracking, and other issues.

### **Key Control: Best Practices**

Schools must make an informed judgment as to whether current policies and procedures regarding keys and access control are effective. Indeed, according to NCEF, “in many cases, a conventional lock-and-key system is still the best option. If it works, don’t fix it.”<sup>118</sup> If a school does decide to rely on more traditional lock-and-key systems, school officials may want to consider the following recommendations:<sup>119</sup>

- Have a formal plan that establishes systematic control of locks and keys, the components of which include:
  - Knowing the identity of authorized key holders, which keys they have access to, and why they are needed;

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<sup>116</sup> Schneider, *School Security Technologies*, p. 2

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> See: Pires

- Taking a physical inventory of every access point and every piece of door hardware in every building;
- Identifying the keys that fit each of the locks, who has the keys, what keys they have and what doors they access;
- Labeling every door with an ID number, and labeling and recording the corresponding key;
- Properly balance security and public access needs, by understanding how the facility works on a day-to-day basis so that routines and operations are disrupted as little as possible when a key control and management plan is implemented;
- Plan for future needs by accounting for future growth;
- Store and track your keys appropriately. Consider, for example, utilizing online monitoring, updating and reporting capabilities that can allow campus security to view who has keys out, who previously had keys out and when, and that can send e-mail alerts to security when keys are not returned as scheduled.

#### Key Control: Other Considerations

For reasons briefly discussed above and for others, many schools are moving towards incorporating newer, electronic keying systems that minimize many of the complications and vulnerabilities associated with traditional key systems. There are various resources that school officials may want to consult in examining the technological options that exist and their various benefits as well as disadvantages:

- Designed Security, Inc.: [Physical Access Control Cheat](#)
- National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities: [School Security Technologies](#)
- Campus Security Magazine: [Photo Gallery of Access Control Options](#)

#### Bus Procedures and Physical Loading/Unloading Zone: Overview and Common Vulnerabilities

Buses pose a unique challenge to school security for several reasons. For one, what occurs on the inside of a bus is often subject to minimal amounts of supervision; in many cases, the bus driver is the only adult on board along with dozens of children, and must primarily pay attention to the road in addition to any supervisory duties. This can make it difficult to actively monitor who is on the bus, what they are doing, and what items (such as weapons) they are carrying until they step off of the bus and onto school grounds. This risk is compounded by the reality that in most cases, there is little that can be done to screen items brought onto a bus by a student when they load the bus as opposed to the more extensive screening that is possible, for example, at the front door of a building. Therefore, threats can come from those on the buses themselves.

Additionally, buses can be the target of threats at a school. Because of the large number of individuals on a bus and the minimal opportunity for rapid exit from the vehicle, undertaking rapid egress for many individuals from the bus in the case of an emergency can prove very difficult. Furthermore, buses' size and the reality that they are often parked very close together or "stacked" one behind another may complicate or prevent egress in an emergency situation (see Figure 23). It may be furthermore difficult to communicate to those on a bus (including the driver) that an emergency is taking place. Finally, buses can indirectly prevent detection of a threat or by blocking sight lines and reducing natural surveillance, thereby creating an opportunity for a threatening individual to approach the school without being detected. They also can complicate response procedures if they block arrival of law enforcement or other emergency response vehicles.



*Figure 23: Buses stacked closely, preventing or slowing emergency egress. Sight lines to surrounding areas heavily obscured.*

Vulnerabilities of the sort described above were one of the most common findings in security assessments of schools conducted in preparation of this report. Minimizing the risk posed to and by buses involves both physical and procedural measures. This section is meant to integrate both the physical and procedural means that schools can take to reduce these vulnerabilities.

#### **Bus Procedures: Best Practices**

In designing daily bus procedures, school officials must understandably balance sometimes competing priorities. For example, while on one hand buses can be vulnerable to threats like an active shooter and may also increase a school's vulnerability to such threats, they also can be dangerous to pedestrians such as students walking in the area around them. As such, many standard bus arrival/departure and unloading/loading procedures advise that buses arrive and park in a single-file configuration with right wheel to the curb not dissimilar to that portrayed in Figure 23. The rationale behind such a procedure is that, as pictured, students do not have to walk either in front of or behind buses as they unload or load. Furthermore, if stacked single file as such, buses do not need to drive in reverse at any point to exit, therefore reducing risk to students or others that may be behind buses. Nevertheless, doing so can increase the risk to an active shooter as described above.

Bus procedure related security can also be enhanced through the actions of bus drivers and other adults who can recognize threats and issue alerts/take appropriate action.

In minimizing risk to an active shooter event through bus procedures, school officials should consider the following:

- Staggering buses to allow for emergency egress;
- Positioning buses in a single row or lane, with adequate space in between buses, to prevent one bus from blocking in another in the case that emergency egress proves necessary;
- Positioning security personnel in strategic areas, such as the lead and trail of bus lanes, to monitor avenues of approach from external areas as well as immediate student activity during unloading and loading times;
- Increasing general supervision of students and bus loading/unloading zone by teachers and staff;
- Utilizing surveillance cameras where/when human monitoring is impractical or impossible to monitor bus loading/unloading zones;
- Providing emergency training to bus drivers, integrated bus arrival/departure into emergency plans and exercises, and conducting emergency egress drills for bus drivers;
- Installing surveillance equipment inside of buses enhance deterrence and detection of bus-based threats. (see Figures 24 and 25)



Figure 24: Surveillance camera in the back of the bus.



Figure 25: Surveillance cameras at the front of the bus.

School officials should consider these and other priorities in crafting procedures for bus loading and unloading. Officials may need to employ a level of creativity, and as always, should tailor procedures to a school's specific needs and vulnerabilities while consulting with relevant experts and stakeholders.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) also provides a "School Bus Driver In-Service Safety Series" that includes lesson modules for bus drivers on a number of topics both directly and indirectly related to preparing for potential emergencies like active shooter, including:<sup>120</sup>

- Driver attitude;
- Emergency evacuation [i.e., removing students from a bus in which a danger exists];
- Emergency egress [i.e., removing a busload of students from a dangerous situation];
- Loading and unloading;
- Student management;
- Students with special needs;
- Vehicle training.

#### Bus Procedures: Other Considerations

School buses, and the children who ride them, are not only at risk during the loading and unloading phase of the school day in designated bus zones [although the congestion and crowd build up that they can cause during these times is a reason that they receive particular attention]. Unavoidably, school buses are bound to carry large numbers of students – often with minimal adult supervision, control, or protection – beyond the highly controlled property of a school into the broader world in which the variables, scenarios, and risks for which there is a need to account are endless. In addition to traversing various roads, buses frequently stop in areas of differing safety to pick up and drop off students, increasing exposure to risks while stationary. Unfortunately, this was demonstrated in terrifying and high profile fashion as recently as February of 2013, when a deranged Alabama man boarded a school bus, shot and killed the driver, kidnapped a young student, and held him hostage for multiple days in an underground bunker.

<sup>120</sup> NHTSA, "School Bus Driver In-Service Safety Series"

The Florida Association for Pupil Transportation, a group that “provides vision, leadership, and services to the student transportation community to improve safety, efficiency and service to Florida’s public school children,” has created a presentation entitled “Active Shooter Response Training on the School Bus: Survival Mindset and Courses of Action.” The presentation includes guidance for bus drivers on dealing with emergency situations in which there is the threat of an active shooter or such a threat appears imminent, including:<sup>121</sup>

- Be observant of the environment you travel by each day, and fall back on [training];
- If you see something that is not right at the bus stop as you pull up, (e.g., individual with a gun) don’t stop, continue to drive by the stop and call dispatch with observations;
- If something occurs on the bus, leave radio microphone in open position to allow for dispatchers to listen to events;
- As a last resort (for instance, if the weapon has been used/shots have been fired), attempt to take out the threat.

While it is important to recognize the threats that can face students who travel to and from school by bus, it is also important to recognize that the risk posed by such threats are small when taken in a larger context. As such, it would be highly questionable to discourage parents from continuing to send their children to school via school bus due to the risks outlined above. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), school buses are the safest mode of transportation for getting children back and forth to school, including being driven by parents or adults.<sup>122</sup> This is mentioned merely to reiterate the point that school security should be always viewed in the larger context of student safety; protecting against active shooter is only one of many educational and safety priorities that schools focus on for children, and only a comprehensive approach based on unique needs and capabilities should be undertaken.

#### **Bus Loading and Unloading Zones (Physical Site): Best Practices**

A number of goals should define placement and use of bus loading and unloading zones in order to maximize security. Like parking zones, bus loading/unloading zones should be designated based on their conduciveness to monitoring, room for maneuverability, and effect on natural surveillance of broader school grounds. Bus zones should facilitate and be tailored to procedural best practices as described above. The following physical site best practices regarding bus loading/unloading zones should be followed:<sup>123</sup>

- Locate bus loading area so that it is visible to administration or adjacent areas of surveillance;
- Avoid crosswalks at entry to and exit from bus zones;
- Segregate the bus loading and unloading area from the main entry and other vehicular traffic;
- Provide separate driveways and parking lots for buses and cars;
- Design zones so that buses do not have to park in double rows or back up to turn or park.

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<sup>121</sup> See: FAPT

<sup>122</sup> NHTSA, “My choice...their ride”

<sup>123</sup> Based on or selected from Texas State University, Chapter 7

## Bus Loading and Unloading Zones (Physical Site): Other Considerations<sup>124</sup>

- Do buses drop off and pick up students in a designated, marked loading/unloading zone near a designated and supervised school entrance, in full view of designated school staff or security?
- Do bus zones require that buses have to back up to turn or park, or do they have to be parked in double rows?
- Are bus loading/unloading zones and adjoined areas adequate to avoid overcrowding while students wait for, load, and unload buses?
- Are parent drop-off and pick-up zones clearly designated and separated from bus traffic?

### **General Supervision and Monitoring: Overview and Common Vulnerabilities**

According to Safe Havens International, “there are very few things that can have such a dramatic impact on school safety as you will see with good student supervision.”<sup>125</sup> The Kentucky Center for School Safety’s publication, “Common Issues Found in Safe School Assessments”, states:

Most school staffs do an admirable job of supervising students while the students are in the classrooms, but they often are not as diligent with supervision when their students are in the various, but necessary, non-classroom modes during the school day. During assessments, we find frequently that there is not enough “active” supervision during routine transitioning periods, such as morning arrivals, after-school dismissals, breaks, class changes, recesses, etc. Ironically, most schools’ administrators have developed detailed supervision plans for the vast majority of, if not all, non-classroom scenarios; however, many times those plans are either not enforced by the administration (which invariably leads to most staff members gradually abandoning their routine supervisory duties), or the staff members supervising are not vigilant in their roles as supervisors. Vigilant supervision is “active” supervision, which entails visibly moving among and interacting with the students being supervised.<sup>126</sup>

In assessments that were done in preparation of this report, similar findings were common. Supervision is a crucial piece of school security that affects multiple areas already discussed in this document. Adequate and active supervision deters inappropriate and potentially dangerous behavior; it has the potential to reduce bullying and create a more positive school culture and climate; it increases the chances that, if a threat or potential threat does appear to arise, an adult will recognize, report, and respond to it in a timely manner.

### **General Supervision and Monitoring: Best Practices**

KYCSSL recommends that school administrators:

Emphasize often the importance of adequately and effectively supervising students in transition by “requiring” and “assigning” staff to specific areas to supervise, rather than only encouraging them to perform this duty. This responsibility, we believe, is much too critical to the school’s

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<sup>124</sup> Based on or selected from FEMA, 2012, Section F, p. 10 (Building Vulnerability Assessment Checklist)

<sup>125</sup> Safe Havens, “Why is student supervisions so important?”

<sup>126</sup> Gateskill



overall level of safety to be left to the arbitrary judgment and mood of individual faculty members.<sup>127</sup>

Safe Havens additionally posits:

One technique that is particularly easy to apply and at the same time, quite effective is to emphasize proper positioning of staff in relation to children they are supervising. For example, if an adult is walking a group of students from one location to the other and they take a position at the front of a line of students, they are not in a good position to observe the children. While this position may at times be appropriate with very young children, it is often not the best position for observing students.

Similarly, if teachers in a school who are assigned to monitor hallways at key times, they can often take a position at an intersection of multiple hallways to enable them to observe multiple areas of the building at one time.<sup>128</sup>

### General Supervision and Monitoring: Other Considerations

As discussed in other sections of this document, students' actions and interactions are no longer limited to readily observable areas like hallways, playgrounds, and classrooms. Technology and social media have revolutionized the way that even very young students interact. While there are many benefits to the use of such technologies, unfortunately they have also provided avenues to risky and overall negative behaviors, such as cyberbullying and, in the extreme case, making threats of violence. Therefore, schools should recognize that even the best physical supervision is only part of an effective supervision strategy. There must be an awareness of what occurs via Internet or other technologies, such as text message. Schools are encouraged to work closely with parents on this issue to ensure that safe and positive communication through these mediums occurs both on and off of school property.

There are many resources that school officials may consult in designed policies and procedures related to supervising technology use by students, including:

- New York State Center for School Safety: [Cyberbullying Fact Sheet](#)
- New York State Center for School Safety: [Off School Grounds Cyberbullying Fact Sheet](#)
- New York State Center for School Safety: [Social Networking Fact Sheet](#)
- Kentucky Center for School Safety: [Cyber-Bullying – “The Silent Tormentor”](#)
- Stopbullying.gov: [Cyberbullying Page](#)

### Other Daily Policies and Procedures: Overview and Common Vulnerabilities

Crises at schools – especially violent events like those involving an active shooter – happen quickly and have the opportunity to catch many in a school setting by surprise. There are multiple small steps that schools can take to minimize the impact of surprise and better mitigate risk.

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<sup>127</sup> Gateskill

<sup>128</sup> Safe Havens, “School Safety Expert advice on Simple Techniques to Improve Supervision of Children – Positioning”



### Other Daily Policies and Procedures: Recommendations

- Consider locking all classroom doors during daily instruction;
- Consider affixing a 'Crisis Response Checklist' or similar abridged resource of essential crisis response steps to every classroom exit doorway; (see Figure 26)
- Consider placing a rubber triangular chock block or door wedge near each entry door to serve as an additional reliable door security device.



Figure 26: Crisis Response Checklist affixed to door.

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## LAYER TWO – PREPAREDNESS



Figure 27: Preparedness Cycle. Source: FEMA - “The Preparedness Cycle”, from *Comprehensive Preparedness Guide (CPG) 101, Section 1, Page 5*

### Overview

Prevention and mitigation greatly minimize a school’s vulnerability to violent attack, but they can never eliminate it completely. Therefore, the discussion in Layer Two focuses on the concept of preparedness. It deals with preparing administrators, teachers, staff, students, emergency responders, and other stakeholders to be ready to deal with the unfortunate but all too real possibility that preventive measures will fail to prevent an attack from materializing. The reality that some threats border on the unpredictable only intensifies this need. Preparedness need not cost much money; it does, however, take time and devotion. But if a violent situation does arise, no other investment has a greater influence over the outcome than whether the people at the school have been properly prepared and trained to assume the essential roles and responsibilities and make the essential decisions in a crisis. According to the Department of Education, the basic idea behind preparedness is that:

Good planning will facilitate a rapid, coordinated, effective response when a crisis occurs. Being well prepared involves an investment of time and resources – but the potential to reduce injury and save lives is well worth the effort.<sup>129</sup>

Preparedness, however, goes beyond planning. Schools absolutely should develop and continually reevaluate plans, but must also ensure that beyond those plans, individuals responding to a crisis have proper tools and training to carry them out. Schools should ensure that different groups – including adults, students of varying ages, and students with special needs, are prepared in a way fitting to their particular roles in an emergency situation and their varying capabilities and needs.

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<sup>129</sup> DOE, 2003, Ch. 3, p. 1

## Establishing an Emergency Response Team

Before detailed planning and other preparation takes place, an initial step for schools is to establish what is frequently termed a “crisis response team”<sup>130</sup> or an “emergency response team.”<sup>131</sup> According to the Department of Education’s Crisis Planning Guide:

One of the key functions of this team is to identify the types of crises that may occur in the district and schools and define what events would activate the plan. The team may consider many factors such as the school’s ability to handle a situation with internal resources and its experience in responding to past events.<sup>132</sup>

These teams are often formed on both a district-wide and school-specific level. Ideally, district teams develop district-wide emergency management plans and subsequently support individual school teams in developing school-specific plans that work in concert with the district plans but account for factors and needs unique to that particular school.<sup>133</sup> It is recommended that the district crisis response team be assembled with a variety of professionals with expertise in emergency management, community partners, and school-based staff, for example:<sup>134</sup>

- Police, including the School Resource Officer(s), fire, and emergency services personnel;
- Public and mental health professionals;
- Facilities and cafeteria managers;
- Nurses;
- Disability specialists;
- Counselors;
- Teachers;
- Administrators;
- A representative of the bus drivers.

The district crisis response team is responsible for:<sup>135</sup>

- Initiating, building, and maintaining relationships with community partners;
- Conducting safety and security needs assessments;
- Establishing and updating the emergency management plan;
- Assisting in the establishment of individual school-based crisis response teams, to include community partners and school-based personnel such as facilities managers, cafeteria managers, nurses, disability specialists, counselors, teachers, and administrators; and
- Developing training activities and conducting emergency exercises to support and improve the plan.

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<sup>130</sup> DOE, 2007, Issue 8, p.4

<sup>131</sup> KYCSS, p. 61

<sup>132</sup> DOE, 2003, Ch. 1, p. 5

<sup>133</sup> DOE, 2007, Issue 2, p. 1

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> DOE, 2007, Issue 1, p.1

The individual school crisis response team “should reflect the diversity of the school community and should capitalize on the unique training and expertise offered by staff in various positions in the school.”<sup>136</sup> Selected members of this team may include:<sup>137</sup>

- Principal;
- Counselor;
- Nurse;
- Head custodian or campus foreman;
- Office secretary;
- Chemistry teacher [due to control of access to dangerous chemicals];
- School security Officer;
- Law enforcement personnel [including School Resource Officer as applicable];
- School psychologist;
- Social worker;
- Special education teacher;
- Transportation coordinator;
- Staff located in strategic positions in the building (i.e., near exits or fire extinguishers);
- Person tasked with receiving incoming school telephone calls.

The purpose of establishing the team includes:<sup>138</sup>

- Develop the school’s Emergency Management Response Plan based upon documented school-specific risks, assets, and needs. This plan should use an all-hazards approach and be aligned with the District Plan;
- Conduct or coordinate orientation training for staff and recommend additional training [to include ongoing training, drills, and exercises as recommended in this document. This may be best accomplished during staff in-service days or during pre-school year orientation periods.]
- Conduct or coordinate awareness programs for students;
- Evaluate the school’s preparedness for implementing specific emergency response protocols based upon the given situation;
- Report progress to the school’s site based council, parents and superintendent;
- Assist with the completion of debriefs following exercises and/or an event.

It is important to note that crisis/emergency response teams as described above are entirely distinct from the roles school administrators and staff assume under the Incident Command System (ICS), discussed in greater detail below, that delineates operational authority in the case of an actual emergency and supports the response infrastructure in an active emergency situation. Emergency response teams are an essential part of the *preparedness* process but it is possible that certain members of this team will not have an active role in the live *response* to an emergency like an active shooter, which should follow the chain of command established under the ICS. In many schools some of the same key personnel will be part of the crisis response team and have a role under the ICS in an actual event.

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<sup>136</sup> KYCSS, p. 34

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.



## Planning

Establishing or updating plans to deal with an emergency like an active shooter event is the foundation of the preparedness process. Plans must be both shaped by and familiar to relevant stakeholders, including those both within and outside of the school. The Department of Education writes that while “crisis planning may seem overwhelming” and “takes time and effort”, it is “manageable.”<sup>139</sup> We would stress to the reader that the task should not be ultimately considered overwhelming since being prepared in a time of crisis is the best investment towards making a school safer. DOE provides the following principles that may be useful to remember in the planning and broader preparedness processes:<sup>140</sup>

- Effective crisis planning begins with leadership at the top – including state political leaders, but extending to local political leaders, district officials, and individual school leaders;
- 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;
- School and districts should open the channels of communication well before a crisis. Emergency responders should be familiar with your school, and relationships with city emergency managers, public works officials, health and mental health professionals, and even local media are all important;
- Crisis plans should be developed in partnership with other community groups, including law enforcement, fire safety officials, emergency medical services, as well as health and mental health professionals;
- A common vocabulary is necessary – it is critical that school staff and emergency responders know each other’s terminology. [Importantly, “plain language” during radio transmissions, rather than coded language, is much preferred. During the “fog of battle”, coded language is usually forgotten];
- Schools should tailor district crisis plans to meet individual school needs;
- Plan for the diverse needs of children and staff;
- Include all types of schools where appropriate;
- Provide teachers and staff with ready access to the plan so they can understand its components and act on them;
- Training and practice are essential for the successful implementation of crisis plans in an emergency as almost all such events call for human judgment to assess the situation and take the appropriate action or choose the right option.

The Department of Education outlines the following as important action steps that schools should take in the preparedness process:<sup>141</sup>

- Identify and involve stakeholders, including but not limited to: families, emergency responders, and city and county planners;
- Consider existing efforts, such as existing plans of district and local government and other agencies’ plans. Consider how the school’s crisis plan integrates with other agencies’ plans and

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<sup>139</sup> DOE, 2003, Ch. 1, p. 9

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., p. 9 – 12

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., Ch. 3, p.3

identify any conflicts. Consider what information from others' crisis plans can be used in the school's crisis plan;

- Determine what type of crises the plan will address, based on a school's vulnerabilities, needs, and assets;
- Define roles and responsibilities – that is, create an organizational system that defines what should happen, when, and at whose direction;
- Develop methods for communicating with the staff, students, families, and the media.
- Identify and obtain necessary equipment and supplies;
- Prepare for immediate response in determining what action steps need to be taken for a variety of differing scenarios;
- Create maps and facilities information, especially those that will be valuable to emergency responders in a crisis;
- Develop accountability and student release procedures;
- Practice every plan multiple times;
- Identify gaps in the plans through these exercises;
- Amend plans to address identified gaps;
- Address liability issues.

The following discussion elaborates on the importance of each of these action steps in the preparedness process, identifies commonly identified weaknesses in that process where applicable, and provides recommendations regarding each action step that school officials should consider in preparing their school for a crisis situation involving an active shooter.

### **Identifying and Involving Stakeholders**

Webster's Dictionary defines "stakeholder" simply as "one who is involved in or affected by a course of action." This broad definition parallels the broad spectrum of individuals and organizations that should be included in a school's preparation for a crisis event such as that involving an active shooter. It is important to recognize that a school's occupants are not the only ones involved or affected by such an event; emergency responders, law enforcement, family members, and the community at large are all involved and affected. As such, schools "should not attempt to create their plans in isolation. This will only lead to misunderstanding, lack of trust and less than a desirable response should one be needed."<sup>142</sup>

The Department of Education stresses the need to "ask stakeholders to provide feedback on sections of the plan that pertain to them."<sup>143</sup> Key stakeholders are likely to include, but are not necessarily limited to:<sup>144</sup>

- Families of students;
- Administrators, teachers, and staff;
- Law enforcement (local, regional, and/or state);
- Public health professionals;
- Mental health professionals;

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<sup>142</sup> KYCSS, p. 9

<sup>143</sup> DOE, 2003, Ch. 3, p. 3

<sup>144</sup> DOE, 2003, Ch. 3, p. 3; KYCSS, p. 9

- Local government officials (e.g., representative from the Mayor’s office);
- Fire Safety officials;
- Emergency Medical Services.

Conversations with these various stakeholders can take different forms. For instance, families might be consulted and asked to comment on procedures for communicating with them during a crisis.<sup>145</sup> In the case of emergency responders, it is important to learn how these organizations function and how schools and these organizations will work with each other during a crisis, and it can be valuable to learn the vocabulary, command structure, and culture of these outside organizations.<sup>146</sup> Even students can be actively consulted in the preparedness process and encouraged to take a stake in their own security; FEMA offers an “Involving Students in Prevention Checklist” which can be found on their website under “Prevention and Preparedness Resources” here:

<http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/emischool/EL361Toolkit/PreventionResources.htm>

### **Considering Existing Efforts**

It is essential that, as part of the preparatory/planning phase, planning teams consider what planning activities and preparedness efforts have already been conducted by individual schools and school districts, as well as those on the local, regional, state, and federal/national level. This is important for two reasons. First, doing so will make planning not only easier but also more effective by building upon the wealth of experience and guidance that already exists on the subject. In other words, as the Department of Education advises, “do not reinvent the wheel.”<sup>147</sup>

Second, consideration of existing efforts is perhaps even more essential in ensuring that whatever plans are developed are aligned with local, state, and federal emergency response protocols, in particular the U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s National Incident Management System (NIMS). The NIMS is the national, unified response plan used by first responders to prepare, coordinate, and execute responses to all types of emergencies. Complying with NIMS allows federal, state, local, and private agencies to jointly manage incidents and ensures a smooth and effective response to all emergencies.<sup>148</sup> School officials should consult the following online resources in this effort:

- NIMS – <http://www.fema.gov/emergency/nims/index.shtm>
- Department of Homeland Security State Homeland Security Contacts - <http://www.dhs.gov/state-homeland-security-contacts>
- Federal Emergency Management Agency – <http://www.fema.gov>
- FEMA Regional and State Emergency Management Agencies - <http://www.fema.gov/regional-operations>

### **Identifying Risks and Hazards to Address in the Plan**

To strengthen the planning process, the Department of Education recommends that teams “identify and prioritize risks and hazards to the school community and take into consideration the possible effects of

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<sup>145</sup> DOE, 2003, Ch. 3, p.3

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., Ch. 1, p. 10

<sup>148</sup> DOE, 2007, Issue 1, p. 2

natural, biological, or manmade disasters on the school and local community.”<sup>149</sup> This highlights the importance of conceptualizing some of the real and specific hazards, such as the one posed by an active shooter, in the preparedness process. At the same time, there is a consensus across multiple agencies, including the Department of Education and the Federal Emergency Management Agency, that schools and other facilities should take what is termed an “all-hazards” approach to emergency management planning. The FEMA Comprehensive Preparedness Guide (CPG) 101 describes the rationale behind such an approach as:

While the causes of emergencies can vary greatly, many of the effects do not. Planners can address common operational functions in their basic plans instead of having unique plans for every type of hazard or threat. For example, floods, wildfires, HAZMAT releases, and radiological dispersal devices may lead a jurisdiction to issue an evacuation order and open shelters. Even though each hazard’s characteristics (e.g., speed of onset, size of the affected area) are different, the general tasks for conducting an evacuation and shelter operations are the same. Planning for all threats and hazards ensures that, when addressing emergency functions, planners identify common tasks and those responsible for accomplishing the tasks.<sup>150</sup>

Therefore, it is important that, while considering specifically the threat that an active shooter potentially poses to a school and its population, an all-hazards approach is still maintained. Not only will this ensure that schools are prepared for a variety of potential emergencies that are not only possible but in many cases even more likely to occur than an active shooter scenario, but also will arguably increase preparedness for an active shooter scenario itself as well. That is because even within one specific category of event, such as active shooter, there are a range of potential developments – some predictable and others less so – that may necessitate differing forms of response. Emergency management plans should not be so narrow so as to preclude the essential quality of adaptability that may be necessary both within individual emergency situations and across categories as well.

When identifying hazards, school officials should be aware of liability issues. According to the Department of Education:

Consideration of liability issues is necessary before crisis planning can be complete and may protect you and your staff from a lawsuit. 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. A careful assessment of the hazards faced by the school is critical.<sup>151</sup>

It is not within the scope of this document to discuss in detail the legal ramifications of emergency management planning. Many states require schools to undertake certain emergency preparedness activities and planning. Schools and school districts should always comply with any local, state, or federal laws when embarking on the planning process. It is highly recommended that schools consult with appropriate legal counsel in addressing such needs.

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<sup>149</sup> DOE, 2007, Issue 1, p. 2

<sup>150</sup> CPG, Ch. 1, p. 2

<sup>151</sup> DOE, 2003, Ch. 3, p. 11

## Defining Roles and Responsibilities – Incorporating the Incident Command System (ICS)

Schools must be prepared to respond to an active shooter in conjunction with local, state, and federal law enforcement and other emergency response agencies. As partners with these agencies, the school's responders must use the same terminologies and approach in a coordinated fashion. Schools must have a system in place that is capable of determining (1) what should happen, (2) when, and (3) at whose direction.

The Incident Command System, or ICS, is a standardized, on-scene, all-hazard incident management approach. ICS allows school personnel and community responders to adopt an integrated organizational structure that matches the complexities and demands of various incidents without being hindered by jurisdictional boundaries. The ICS structure is flexible. It can grow or shrink to meet different needs. This flexibility makes it a very cost-effective and efficient management approach for both small and large situations.<sup>152</sup>

The ICS is the response infrastructure designated under the NIMS to facilitate effective and efficient incident management. The ICS utilizes five functional areas (Command, Operations, Planning, Logistics, and Finance-Administration) for managing all incidents, integrating facilities and resource management, establishing equipment standards, and creating a common incident management organization as illustrated below:

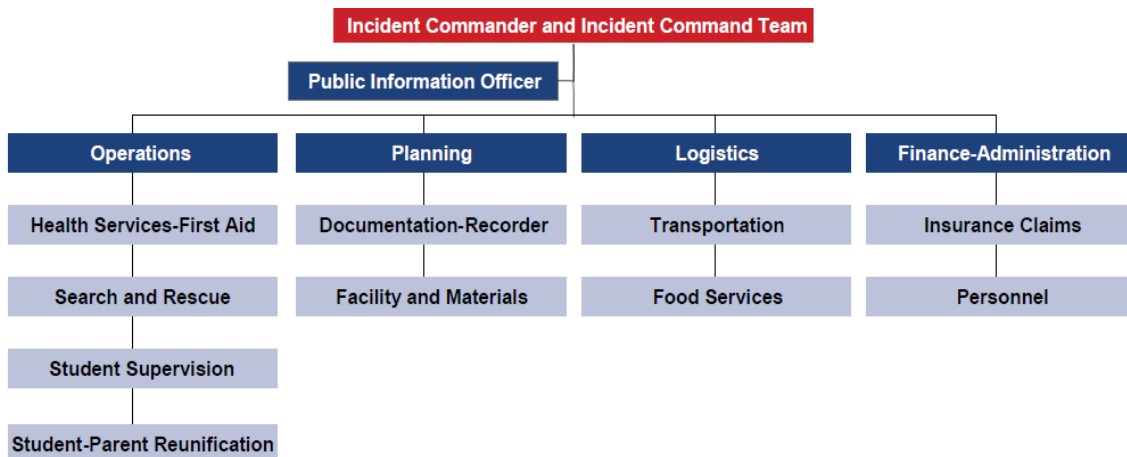


Figure 28: Sample School or School District Incident Command System (Source: DOE, 2007, Issue 1, p. 3)

Establishing ICS at your school involves.<sup>153</sup>

- Identifying key team roles and functions;
- Assessing staff skills;
- Pre-designating staff for each ICS area;
- Coordinating with community partners to identify roles and responsibilities;
- Assigning key individual roles and functions; and
- Creating lines of succession (backup) for all key positions.

<sup>152</sup> FEMA, Intro to ICS for Schools

<sup>153</sup> DOE, 2007, Issue 1, p. 3

School officials should be familiar with and trained in Incident Command Systems, both generally and specific to schools. In particular school officials should be familiar with:

- How ICS principles can be applied in a school-based incident;
- ICS organizational principles and elements;
- ICS positions and responsibilities;
- ICS facilities and functions;
- ICS planning; and
- How to be prepared to interface with community response personnel under the ICS.

Staff can become trained in ICS, free of charge, through online courses made available by the Department of Homeland Security. Requiring staff to become trained in NIMS and ICS was also a recent recommendation in the interim report of findings of the Sandy Hook Advisory Commission.<sup>154</sup>

Recommended courses include:

- IS-100.b (ICS 100): Introduction to Incident Command System;
- ICS 200.b (ICS 200): ICS for Single Resources and Initial Action Incidents;
- IS 700: National Incident Management System (NIMS), An Introduction;
- IS-800.b: National Response Framework, An Introduction;
- IS-100.SCA: Introduction to the Incident Command System for Schools;
- IS: 907: Active Shooter: What You Can Do;
- IS-362.A: Multi-Hazard Emergency Planning for Schools;
- IS-100.HE: Introduction to Incident Command System for Higher Education.

The following are special considerations in applying ICS to your school.<sup>155</sup>

- There is no correlation between the ICS chain of command and the school administrative structure;
- The structure is unique in order to avoid confusion over whom you should take direction from;
- Everyone's titles are different from their daily school titles;
- A single Incident Command Post should be established for all incidents, even for a small incident;
- School incidents may require additional facilities beyond those that are standard ICS facilities.

To help evaluate whether your school is ready to implement ICS, the following should be considered:<sup>156</sup>

- Are your school's emergency operations plans, policies, and procedures consistent with ICS principles?
- Do you have the needed communications and other equipment, vests, badges, or other supplies to implement ICS?

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<sup>154</sup> Sandy Hook Advisory Commission, p. 14

<sup>155</sup> FEMA, Intro to ICS for Schools

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

- Can responders from different agencies (e.g. fire, police, public works) communicate with school personnel during an emergency?
- Have you identified qualified personnel to assume ICS command and general staff positions?
- Do you have sufficient back up personnel for all key ICS positions?
- Have you identified potential locations for ICS facilities (e.g., Incident Command Post, Staging Area, Base, Camp, Helispots, etc.)?
- Do you practice applying ICS during drills and planned events?
- Within the past year, have you conducted an exercise practicing Unified Command with different agencies?
- Are after-action reviews conducted to identify lessons learned following exercises, drills, planned events, or incidents?

### **Developing a Communications Plan**

According to the Department of Education, open lines of communication among crisis response team members, community partners, staff, students, district personnel, parents, and the media before, during, and after an incident is a critical component of emergency management.<sup>157</sup> Therefore, an effective emergency management plan should incorporate a detailed communications plan for the district and each school. The communications plan must:

- Create, in advance, policies and plans for communicating emergency information with the public;
- Develop procedures for maintaining communication among administrators, staff, and students, as well as between community partners, parents, and the media;
- Establish alternative communication devices and methods not connected to the main power source in case of power outages, downed phone lines, or an overwhelming number of cellular calls; and
- Identify a public information officer (PIO) who will serve as or prepare the primary spokesperson to the media and the public during a crisis.

In addition, FEMA’s Comprehensive Preparedness Guide advises that planners ensure the following qualities in communications systems, plans, and procedures:<sup>158</sup>

- Interoperability;
- Accessibility;
- Redundancy.

The failure of a school’s communication system or a lack of adequate planning in this area can undermine even very well prepared schools in the event of an emergency like an active shooter. It is easy to conjure up many scenarios involving communications failures. For example, schools may be unable to communicate with students and staff via a PA system in the event of a power outage; a school’s Incident Commander may find that a two-way radio is incompatible with arriving law enforcement officers; multiple responding agencies may use different terminology which could lead to miscommunications and confusion. Quite simply, if communications equipment fails, if protocols for

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<sup>157</sup> DOE, 2007, Issue 1, p. 4

<sup>158</sup> CPG, Ch. 2, p. 2



how and when to communicate are inadequate, or if there is a lack of shared terminology among school officials and outside responders, then an otherwise expertly crafted emergency response plan may quickly disintegrate in real time.

According to an issue brief supported by the United States Department of Justice, entitled “Communications in the Incident Command System,” two principles of NIMS ICS are of particular note in regards to communication: (1) common terminology and (2) integrated communications.<sup>159</sup> With regards to the importance of a common terminology, the brief states:

The importance of common terminology is clear in interagency communications: responders cannot coordinate and cooperate if they are unable to understand one another when they try to communicate. The need for common terminology, i.e., “plain language” precedes incident response, however. Pre-incident planning and coordination require a common language to articulate needs, describe processes, establish policies, craft joint SOPs [standard operating procedures], and ultimately command resources during interagency operations. Interagency communications SOPs require a common dialect for describing the “who, when, why, where, what, and how” of operations.<sup>160</sup>

Furthermore, in relation to integrated communications, the brief states:

Under ICS, communications and incident action plans have to be integrated to capture management goals and operational objectives. Integration of supporting services and technologies is critical to effective incident response. Since responder safety and effectiveness are closely related to how well communications supports them, the capabilities and capacity of systems to support operations is taken into account continuously during incident action planning.<sup>161</sup>

One recommendation is that emergency response team members and/or school officials take advantage of a free, online course provided by FEMA under the listing “IS-704: NIMS Communications and Information Management”, which can be found at:

<http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/courseOverview.aspx?code=is-704>.

There are other resources that school emergency response teams may find valuable in considering the components of a communications plan as part of their emergency response plan:

- National Incident Management System (NIMS): *Communications and Information Management Standards* - [http://www.fema.gov/library/file?type=publishedFile&file=nims\\_guide\\_0004\\_comm\\_and\\_info\\_management\\_standards\\_1\\_10\\_08.pdf&fileid=f4cc5390-d0e2-11dc-b3ee-001185636a87](http://www.fema.gov/library/file?type=publishedFile&file=nims_guide_0004_comm_and_info_management_standards_1_10_08.pdf&fileid=f4cc5390-d0e2-11dc-b3ee-001185636a87)
- U.S. Department of Education, Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (REMS) Technical Assistance Center: “Communication and Collaboration During Natural Disasters: The Lessons Learned from Past Experience” -

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<sup>159</sup> Hawkins, p. 4

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

[http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/emischool/EL361Toolkit/assets/LL\\_CommunicationCollaboration.pdf](http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/emischool/EL361Toolkit/assets/LL_CommunicationCollaboration.pdf)

- United States Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS): Issue Brief – *Communications in the Incident Command System* - <http://www.search.org/files/pdf/IB2-CommICS.pdf>
- Texas School Safety Center: “Sample Communications Plan” - <http://www.txssc.txstate.edu/media/HLS/downloads/EOP/2010-Sample-Annex-B-Communications.doc>
- Kentucky Center for School Safety, *Emergency Management Resource Guide*, p.39 – 47 - <http://www.kycss.org/emp/Home/EmerRevCol.pdf>
- School Planning and Management: “Communication Systems” - [http://www.peterli.com/spm/resources/articles/archive.php?article\\_id=1351](http://www.peterli.com/spm/resources/articles/archive.php?article_id=1351)
- FEMA Course – “Social Media in Emergency Management” - <http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/courseOverview.aspx?code=IS-42>

Whatever the training, whether formal or informal, there is no substitute for ensuring that school officials and first responder representatives work together in developing the communications plan. Those involved must be familiar with their role in the plan and of the common terminology to be used. All must train and exercise on these plans together to see how well the communication plan functions when in use. This is a key best practice that any school and community serious about planning for and responding to an act of violence must undertake.

### **Obtaining Equipment and Supplies**

Just as an effective emergency management plan accounts for what is done, when it is done, and at whose direction, so too should the plan account for the supplies that are needed to carry out the plan. The existing literature on this topic includes suggested items that vary in their applicability to preparing for an active shooter situation. For example, some sources discuss obtaining food and water as part of emergency management preparation. While food and water may be essential in a certain type of emergency situation for which a school’s all-hazards approach should account, it is unlikely to be of high importance in an active shooter emergency – which tends to begin and end quickly – and therefore will not be discussed at length here.

Nonetheless, there are several considerations in terms of equipment and supplies that are applicable in preparing for an active shooter situation. Equipment and supplies along these lines may include:

- Master keys for emergency responders to ensure complete access to the school;<sup>162</sup>
- Phones and radios needed for communication (see above);<sup>163</sup>
- Lists of contact information for families;<sup>164</sup>
- “Go-kits” that are stocked with emergency supplies that can be easily accessed and transported in the event of an emergency. Typical go-kits are:

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<sup>162</sup> DOE, 2003, Ch. 3, p. 7

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

- Stored in backpacks or duffle bags and placed in readily accessible and secure locations;
- Equipped with supplies that address the needs of the specific school, its population, climate, facilities, and resources; and
- Include a first-aid kit, emergency procedures, and student attendance rosters.<sup>165</sup>

The Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department (LASD) also has written tips on building and maintaining a “Crisis Response Box,” which may be useful if the need arises to “quickly locate and provide relevant information to the right people so they may begin responding.”<sup>166</sup> According to LASD, the Crisis Response Box has one simple goal:

School administrators will immediately have the information essential for effective management of a major critical incident. A crisis is not the time to collect information – it is the time to act upon information. Precious minutes need not be lost gathering life-saving intelligence. Knowing what information to collect ahead of time, how to organize it and how to use it during a crisis are all addressed through assembling the contents of the box.<sup>167</sup>

The contents of this Crisis Response Box are recommended to include:<sup>168</sup>

- Aerial photos of campus;
- Map of school and surrounding area;
- Campus layout;
- Blueprint of school buildings;
- Teacher/employee roster;
- Keys;
- Fire alarm turn-off procedures;
- Sprinkler system turn-off procedures;
- Utility shut-off valves;
- Gas line and utility line layout;
- Cable television satellite feed shut-off;
- Student photos;
- ICS key responders’ phone numbers;
- Designated command post and staging areas;
- Student attendance roster;
- Emergency resource list;
- List of evacuation sites;
- Student disposition forms and emergency data cards;
- Inventory of staff resources;
- List of students with special needs;
- First aid supplies location;
- Emergency first aid supplies;
- Location of various video monitors.

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<sup>165</sup> DOE, 2007, Issue 1, p. 5

<sup>166</sup> Williams, p. 19

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid., p. 20 - 27

The importance of each of these components may be useful to emergency management teams and/or school officials, and can be found here:

<http://www.state.nj.us/education/schools/security/task/planning/ActiveShooterSafetyConsiderations.pdf>

Other experts, including our own, recommend installing a secure box, attached to the exterior of a school, that law enforcement or other emergency responders can readily access when arriving at the school in the case of an active shooter (or other) emergency. This box may include essential items such as master keys, which may be of particular importance to arriving law enforcement that may be faced with a school in lockdown and may not have breach equipment readily accessible. It may also include useful maps, school layouts, and blueprints. Schools should consult with local stakeholders, law enforcement, and other emergency responders in considering such a tool.

FEMA also offers a “Recommended Emergency Supplies for the Whole School Checklist,” which emergency response teams and/or school officials may find useful in examining this issue further, which can be found here:

<http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/emischool/EL361Toolkit/assets/SchoolEmergencySupplies.doc>

### **Preparing for Response**

In the case of an emergency such as an active shooter situation, it is essential that students, teachers, and staff take the appropriate actions so as to maximize their safety. The purpose of response plans is not to anticipate every possible scenario and nuance and create robots following a series of pre-determined steps. Rather, it is to familiarize those charged with student safety with the overall plan, their role within that plan, and guiding principles to work within and ultimately give them the confidence to initiate actions and make decisions under duress with or without direction. The Kentucky Center for School Safety’s (KYCSS) Emergency Management Resource Guide points out six Universal Emergency Procedures – defined as “sets of standard, clear directives that may be implemented across a variety of emergency situations.”<sup>169</sup> According to KYCSS, “when an emergency begins, the principal, as Incident Commander [or the otherwise specified/acting Incident Commander], will decide which Universal Emergency Procedures to implement, based on the situation.”<sup>170</sup> Of the six universal procedures, three are primarily of note in dealing with an active shooter situation: (1) lockdown, (2) reverse evacuation, and (3) evacuation.

- *Lockdowns* are designed for “situations where there is information that a person has a firearm or other weapon on school property and there is any indication that they may be about to use the weapon.” Because emergency lockdown protocols are typically more extreme and disruptive due to the high degree of danger for these types of threats, this can lead school officials to be reluctant to implement them. Many schools utilize both preventive and emergency lockdown options so school employees will have appropriate options for both dire life-threatening emergencies as well as for more common situations which require a higher degree of alertness

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<sup>169</sup> KYCSS, p. 81

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

and building security (e.g. police notification of a bank robbery in the vicinity of the school with suspect fleeing the scene might trigger a precautionary lockdown even though there is no threat directed at the school or known to be on school grounds or even in the area).<sup>171</sup>

- *Reverse evacuation* protocols “are used when there is a need to move students rapidly and in an organized fashion back *into* a facility because it is dangerous for them to remain outside,” due to various natural and manmade threats including aggressive and/or armed persons outside of the school.<sup>172</sup>
- *Evacuation* protocols require all students and staff to leave the building, due to conditions making it safer outside the school than it is inside the school.<sup>173</sup>

It is crucial to remember when preparing response plans and training under those plans not to pre-designate that only one type of response will be activated upon a certain type of event occurring. An active shooter incident is a good example – decision making in an actual response may require the different protocols for lockdown, evacuation, or reverse evacuation be implemented throughout the lifecycle of the event. For example, students and staff outside of the school may be ordered to reverse evacuate and then lockdown. Or students inside the school might be ordered to lockdown but students located on an athletic field some distance from the school might evacuate and go to a pre-determined emergency assembly area. When preparing and practicing plans, school officials need to prepare for and practice this flexibility.

### Lockdown

The Kentucky Center for School Safety provides the following as components of a lockdown procedure:<sup>174</sup>

- Students are to be cleared from the halls immediately and to report to nearest available classroom;
- Assist those needing special assistance;
- Close and lock all windows and doors and do not leave for any reason;
- Cover all room and door windows so as to reduce ability to see within room from outside;
- Stay away from all doors and windows and move students to interior walls, drop low to ground and otherwise stay out of line of sight of any doors or windows if possible;
- Shut off lights;
- BE QUIET!
- Wait for further instruction by those designated under the plan or law enforcement responders.

An article in Campus Safety Magazine, entitled “Your Key to Effective Lockdowns”, also includes best practices with regards to lockdowns, several of which are provided here:<sup>175</sup>

- **Remember that no lockdown protocol is perfect.** There is a tendency for many people to “what if” lockdown protocols to the point of gridlock. Lockdown protocols can become too

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<sup>171</sup> Safe Havens, “Emergency Lockdown”

<sup>172</sup> Safe Havens, “Reverse Evacuation

<sup>173</sup> DOE, 2003, Ch. 3, p. 7; DOE, 2007, Issue 1, p. 4

<sup>174</sup> KYCSS, p. 81

<sup>175</sup> Dorn

cumbersome and confusing for effective application under stress to be viable if they attempt to address the wide range of scenarios dreamed up by some committee members.

- **Account for the effects of stress on staff.** Lockdown protocols, training and drills should be created with the understanding that staff and students may have to implement them under extreme pressure. Seemingly simple things, like inserting a key into a lock or reading a poorly formatted emergency chart, can prove difficult under extreme stress.
- **Incorporate self-directed decision-making.** If staff members are trained to be solely reliant upon a command from a central authority, a tragedy could occur if a dangerous individual started an assault in a location where staff members become aware of the threat before the central authority is notified.

Schools may also want to consider securing doors with rubber chock blocks or door wedges (see Daily Policies and Procedures section in Layer One for more on this topic), which provide an inexpensive and simple addition to door security during lockdown.

### Reverse Evacuation

“The reverse evacuation protocol is not only critical, it is perhaps even more important than the lockdown protocol. This is because any school that does not have a reverse evacuation protocol and the ability to execute it effectively, may be unable to implement a lockdown, shelter in place for hazardous materials or severe weather sheltering protocol when and if students and staff are outside of the school.”<sup>176</sup> The Kentucky Center for School Safety lists the following as components of a reverse evacuation:<sup>177</sup>

- Move students and staff inside as quickly as possible;
- Assist those needing special assistance;
- Report to classroom;
- Check for injuries;
- Take attendance; report according to Student Accounting and Release procedures;
- Wait for further instructions.

### Evacuation

The Kentucky Center for School Safety lists the following as components of an evacuation plan:<sup>178</sup>

- Take the closest and safest way out as posted (use secondary route if primary route is blocked or hazardous);
- Take roll book for student accounting;
- Assist those needing special assistance;
- Do not stop for student/staff belongings;
- Go to designated assembly area;
- Check for injuries;
- Take attendance;
- Wait for further instructions.

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<sup>176</sup> Safe Havens, “Reverse Evacuation – A Life or Death Protocol”

<sup>177</sup> KYCSS, p. 81

<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

The Department of Education’s Crisis Planning Guide includes several salient points about evacuation planning, including:<sup>179</sup>

- The evacuation plan should include backup buildings to serve as emergency shelters, such as nearby community centers, religious institutions, businesses, or other schools;
- Agreements for using backup spaces should be negotiated or reconfirmed prior the beginning of each school year;
- Evacuation plans should include contingencies for weather conditions such as rain, snow, and extreme cold and heat;
- Students with disabilities may have more restricted mobility than other students; plans should include transportation options for these students.

It is recommended that members of the emergency response team and/or relevant school officials consult additional resources that may assist in the creation of lockdown, reverse evacuation, and evacuation procedures, several of which are listed below.

- OSHA: Evacuation Plans and Procedures eTool - <http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/evacuation/evac.html>
- State of Pennsylvania: Sample Checklist for Lockdown – [http://www.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/document/432961/06380\\_sample\\_checklist\\_for\\_lockdown\\_pdf](http://www.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/document/432961/06380_sample_checklist_for_lockdown_pdf)
- Michigan State Police: Lockdown Templates - [http://www.michigan.gov/documents/msp/5-lockdown\\_template-all\\_182843\\_7.doc](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/msp/5-lockdown_template-all_182843_7.doc)
- Government of Ontario: Guidelines for Developing and Maintaining Lockdown Procedures for Elementary and Secondary Schools in Ontario - <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/memos/june2009/LockdownGuidelinesEn.pdf>

If possible, school emergency response plans should identify both on-site and off-site assembly areas where students and staff can be moved safely away from danger when necessary. If the on-site school location is unsafe, then it may be necessary to move teachers and students to an off-site assembly area.

When choosing assembly areas off-site from schools, our experts recommend that school officials consider the following:

- Does the size of the location allow enough room for all students?
- Can the location be used as a secondary bus loading area?
- Is the location within walking distance of the school?
- Is the route to the assembly area free from obstacles, hazards (fences, high traffic roads, etc.)?
- Can the area be contained from media and other groups seeking to interact with teachers and staff?
- Does the location provide shelter from the elements (does it provide indoor and outdoor shelter)?

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<sup>179</sup> DOE, 2003, Ch. 3, p. 8



- Has the owner of the location provided their consent to the area being used as an assembly point during an emergency?
- Can this location be used as part of established accountability, release, and parent-student reunification procedures?
- In the event that students and staff end up at multiple on-site or off-site locations during an emergency, are plans and equipment in place to ensure communication between staff at these locations?

The above components of each emergency protocol are listed here only as an example and is not guaranteed to be appropriate either as part of a school’s procedure or as a comprehensive procedure that will work for all schools. As with all parts of the preparedness process, it is strongly recommended that the emergency response team consult with stakeholders, such as local law enforcement, emergency responders, and school district officials, to tailor emergency procedures to specific schools’ needs and to ensure integration with district, regional, state, and federal plans and regulations.

### **Maps and Facilities Information**

According to the Department of Education:

[Prior to and during] a crisis, emergency responders need to know the location of everything in a school. Create site maps that include information about classrooms, hallways, and stairwells, the location of utility shut-offs, and potential staging sites. Emergency responders need copies of this information in advance. [Prior to and] during a crisis designate locations— staging sites—for emergency responders to organize, for medical personnel to treat the injured, for the public information officer to brief the media, and for families to be reunited with their children. Student reunification sites should be as far away from the media staging area as possible. Law enforcement will help determine the plans needed to facilitate access of emergency responders and to restrict access of well-wishers and the curious.<sup>180</sup>

The Kentucky Center for School Safety also recommends developing a “toolbox” that includes essential facilities information for use during an emergency. Some components may include:<sup>181</sup>

- Map of building(s) with location of exits, phones, first aid kits, and assembly areas;
- Blueprints of school building(s), including utilities;
- Videotape/DVD of inside and outside of the building and grounds;
- Map of local streets with evacuation route.

Once again, it is important to consult with stakeholders, especially local law enforcement and emergency responders, to determine what these groups will need in the case of an emergency such as an active shooter.

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<sup>180</sup> DOE, 2003, Ch. 3, p. 10

<sup>181</sup> KYCSS, p. 78

## Accountability, Student Release, and Student-Parent Reunification Procedures

According to the Department of Education:

As soon as a crisis is recognized, account for all students, staff, and visitors. Emergency responders treat a situation very differently when people are missing. For example, when a bomb threat occurs, the stakes are substantially higher if firefighters do not know whether students are in the school when they are trying to locate and disarm a bomb ... [Additionally], in many crises, families have flocked to schools wanting to collect their children immediately. A method should be in place for tracking student release and ensuring that students are only release to authorized individuals.<sup>182</sup>

Therefore, developing adequate and appropriate accountability and release procedures are essential in both (1) ensuring that the response is tailored to the nature of an emergency and the extent to which students, teachers, and staff may still be in danger and, (2) minimizing panic and the potential for parents to interfere with emergency operations when attempting to locate their child.

To account for students in the case of emergency, it is essential that rosters of faculty, staff, and students be on hand. It is important that those accounting for students and staff have updated roll books or attendance sheets in their possession during an emergency so as to avoid unnecessary confusion in the case of a student or staff member that is absent. As described above in the “Obtaining Equipment and Supplies” section, these lists might be incorporated into or stored in an emergency “go-kit” to ensure they are at hand in a crisis situation.

After accounting for students and staff, it is essential that schools have student release / parent-student reunification procedures in place in advance. Note that Parent-Student reunification is a component of ICS under the operations area.

FEMA provides guidance on parent-student reunification procedures. First, schools must establish a safe area for parents to pick up their children, which must be away from both the crisis and the students assembly area.<sup>183</sup> In a typical release, these steps will be followed:<sup>184</sup>

- Parents will report to the assigned area and give the name of their child/children;
- Picture I.D. will normally be required by the person in charge to ensure the person requesting the child/children matches the name on the emergency release card;
- A runner will go to the student assembly area and get the child/children requested by the parent or adult. The runner will escort the student back to the pick-up area;
- Parents will be asked to sign a form indicating they picked up the child/children. The date and time will also be indicated on the pick-up form;
- If the child is in the first aid area the parent will be escorted to that area for reunification with their child/children;
- Counselors, when available, will be located close to the first aid area in the event they are needed.

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<sup>182</sup> DOE, 2003, Ch. 3, p. 10

<sup>183</sup> Washington Military Department, p. 1

<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

It is recommended that emergency management teams and/or other officials review the remainder of the document, which also includes guidance on maintaining the procedures, traffic control, and other tips, which can be found here:

<http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/emischool/EL361Toolkit/assets/Parent-StudentReunificationProcedures.pdf>

FEMA also offers “General Suggestions for Parent-Student Reunification Plans for Schools,” which can be found here:

<http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/emischool/EL361Toolkit/assets/Parent-StudentReunificationPlans.pdf>

### **Practice and Exercises**

The purpose of practices and exercises is not to create robots who follow a series of pre-determined steps but rather to practice the roles identified in the plans within different scenarios that:

- Emulate actual situations or conditions;
- Identify any gaps or weaknesses in the plans; and
- Give students and administrators the confidence to initiate actions and make decisions under duress with or without direction.

According to FEMA, an exercise is:

An instrument to train for, assess, practice, and improve performance in prevention, protection, response, and recovery capabilities in a risk-free environment. Exercises can be used for: testing and validating policies, plans, procedures, training, equipment, and interagency agreements; clarifying and training personnel in roles and responsibilities; improving interagency coordination and communications; identifying gaps in resources; improving individual performance; and identifying opportunities for development.<sup>185</sup>

As the purpose and definition above illustrates, the value of practice through exercises is twofold: it prepares students, teachers, staff, responders, and others to confidently translate words into action in the case of an emergency; it also helps planners understand both the strengths and the gaps in existing plans so as to enable a continual improvement process with existing plans. Crucially, exercises provide the opportunity for those at the school to practice with external law enforcement and other emergency responders and to practice ICS implementation.

As the Department of Homeland Security puts it, “well-designed and well-executed exercises are the most effective means of.”<sup>186</sup>

- Assessing and validating policies, plans, procedures, training, equipment, assumptions, and interagency agreements;

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<sup>185</sup> HSEEP I, Appendix B, p. 9

<sup>186</sup> Ibid., p. 1

- Clarifying roles and responsibilities;
- Improving interagency coordination and communications;
- Identifying gaps in resources;
- Measuring performance; and
- Identifying opportunities for improvement.

Schools may utilize a wide range of drills and exercises to prepare for a crisis situation like that involving an active shooter. Drills and exercises can range from the informal and limited, involving a small group of select stakeholders discussing a particular aspect of emergency preparedness, to highly realistic and expansive in nature, involving many or all of the role players that would be involved in a real emergency reacting fully to a simulated emergency in real time.

FEMA recommends taking a “building block approach” to conducting exercises, in which “exercises should be planned in a cycle that increases in complexity. Each successive exercise should build on the scale and experience of the previous one.”<sup>187</sup> (see Figure 29) According to the New York Center for School Safety, “this type of exercise progressively becomes more difficult and allows for deficiencies in plans to be addressed while allowing personnel time to build their confidence, skill level and familiarity with emergency operations plans.”<sup>188</sup>



Figure 29: Source: FEMA Emergency Management Institute, IS-120.a - An Introduction to Exercises

<sup>187</sup> FEMA, Intro to Exercises

<sup>188</sup> NYCSS

Exercises can be either “discussion-based,” centering on participant discussion, or “operations-based,” focusing on action-oriented activities such as deployment of resources and personnel. According to FEMA, discussion-based exercises:

- Provide a forum for discussing or developing plans, agreements, training, and procedures;
- Are generally less complicated than operations-based types;
- Typically focus on strategic, policy-oriented issues;
- Include seminars, workshops, tabletops, and games;
- Do not involve deployment of resources.

On the other hand, operations-based exercises:

- Involve deployment of resources and personnel;
- Are more complex than discussion-based types;
- Require execution of plans, policies, agreements, and procedures;
- Clarify roles and responsibilities;
- Improve individual and team performances;
- Include drills and both functional and full-scale exercises.

FEMA describes seven accepted types of exercises that make up the building block progression. The four discussion-based exercises are:

- **Seminar** – an informal discussion-based exercise led by a presenter or facilitator, used to teach or orientate participants;
- **Workshop** – a formal discussion-based exercise led by a facilitator or presenter, used to build or achieve a product;
- **Tabletop Exercise (TTX)** – an exercise involving senior staff, elected or appointed officials, or other key personnel in an informal group discussion centered on a hypothetical scenario;
- **Game** – a simulation of operations using rules, data, and procedures designed to depict an actual or assumed real-life situation.

The three operations-based exercises are:

- **Drill** – a supervised activity that tests a specific operation or function of a single agency;
- **Functional Exercise** – a single or multi-agency activity designed to evaluate capabilities and multiple functions. In the past these have been occasionally referred to as Command Post Exercises (CPXs);
- **Full Scale Exercises** – a high-stress multi-agency, multi-jurisdictional activity involving actual deployment of resources in a coordinated response, as if a real incident had occurred.

Exercises should be conducted with enough frequency to maintain preparedness among an ever-changing student and staff population and to continually facilitate improvement of procedures. Schools should also comply with any federal, state, and local laws or regulations that govern the type and frequency of conducting emergency exercises.

## Evaluation

Planning and conducting exercises is only part of the preparedness process in this arena. A remaining part involves evaluating exercises and implementing improvement planning based on that evaluation. According to the Department of Homeland Security:

Exercise evaluation maintains a fundamental link to improvement planning because it assesses an entity's performance in an exercise and identifies strengths and areas for improvement. Following exercise conduct, improvement planning leverages the outputs of the evaluation process by developing Improvement Plans (IPs), which assign responsibility for correcting deficiencies or shortcomings observed during a given exercise. Through this process, evaluation identifies improvement opportunities, and improvement planning provides a disciplined process for implementing corrective actions.<sup>189</sup>

DHS outlines the following eight steps that make up evaluation and improvement planning, which are discussed in further detail in Chapters 2 and 3 of the Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP)'s Exercise Evaluation and Improvement Planning guide.<sup>190</sup>

1. Plan and organize the evaluation;
2. Observe the exercise and collect data;
3. Analyze data;
4. Develop the draft After Action Report/Improvement Plan (AAR/IP);
5. Conduct an After Action Conference;
6. Identify corrective actions to be implemented;
7. Finalize AAR/IP;
8. Track implementation

There is a wealth of information that emergency management teams and/or school officials may want to consult in planning, evaluating, and enacting improvements in emergency procedure exercises:

- FEMA offers several online independent-study courses related to exercise design, planning, evaluation, and improvement planning, which may be accessed via [FEMA's Emergency Management Institute Homepage](#), including:
  - IS 120.A: An Introduction to Exercises
  - IS 130: Exercise Evaluation and Improvement Planning
  - IS 139: Exercise Design
- FEMA's section on "[Conducting Exercises & Drills](#)" via the [Multihazard Emergency Planning for Schools Toolkit](#) is also an excellent resource on the topic and includes:
  - Checklists on emergency drill planning and evaluation;
  - Predetermined tabletop scenarios addressing various emergency situation;
  - Guides for developing After Action Reports following exercises.
- The [Department of Homeland Security Exercises and Evaluation Program \(HSEEP\)](#) is a capabilities and performance-based exercise program that provides a standardized

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<sup>189</sup> HSEEP III, p. 1

<sup>190</sup> Ibid., p. 6, 18

methodology and terminology for exercise design, development, conduct, evaluation, and improvement planning. The HSEEP is a repository of resources on exercise design, planning, and evaluation, including:

- Guidance documents on exercise program management, planning, conduct, evaluation, and improvement planning;
- Exercise tools and technology;
- Exercise technical assistance.

## **Additional Preparedness and Training**

Implementing ICS, conducting extensive planning, and engaging in various forms of exercise can go a long way in preparing a school for the unthinkable. However, a school and its inhabitants can never be “too prepared” for an event that has the potential to become a tragedy. It is therefore valuable to look at certain key groups – such as staff, students, and special needs staff and students – that can benefit from tailored training and preparedness based on their unique age, experience, and functional needs.

### **Ensuring Staff Preparedness**

As the adults in a school and those immediately responsible for the well being of students, it is essential that staff are adequately prepared to take appropriate action in the event of a crisis situation, such as that involving an active shooter. Staff cannot afford to wait for law enforcement, armed security, or other responders to take responsibility for their safety and that of their students; immediate action is required. The Department of Education says that:

Experts have noted that when a crisis occurs, individuals involved tend to go on autopilot. Therefore, when a crisis occurs staff immediately need to know how to react. They need to know, for example, the signals for crisis, the protocol for lockdown and evacuation, how to dismiss students, and what to do if staff or students need help. They should know these things ahead of time. There will not be a time during the crisis to think about what to do next.<sup>191</sup>

There are several forms of training, exercises, and drills that serve to enhance staff preparedness in this regard. School officials should consider the following in reaching that goal:<sup>192</sup>

- Providing regular, comprehensive trainings for teachers and staff, to include crisis response training, reviews of crisis plans and procedures, and periodic reminders of signals and codes;
- Visiting evacuation sites with staff and stakeholders, including showing not only where evacuation sites are but also where specific areas, such as student reunification, media, and triage areas will be;
- Giving all staff literature corresponding to the crisis plan. This should include a copy of the crisis plan, but may also include helpful pamphlets reminding them of key principles. Each classroom should also be provided with these materials along with other relevant supplies and equipment.
- Requiring a specific number of crisis drills every year, and work with state and district laws for possible options;

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<sup>191</sup> DOE, 2003, Ch. 6, p. 35

<sup>192</sup> Ibid., p. 35 - 36



- Conducting tabletop exercises and scenario-based drills regularly, which can range from actual drills and training to informal, group brainstorming activities held with other stakeholders.

Active shooter events typically begin and end rapidly, are unexpected, and can cause mass confusion; therefore, schools may consider adding additional components to increase readiness for active shooter events. The Department of Homeland Security guide for responding to an active shooter situation lists several components of training exercises to train individuals on responding to an active shooter situation. DHS’s “Active Shooter: How to Respond” guide recommends consulting local law enforcement in including the following components into a training program specifically for active shooters:<sup>193</sup>

- Recognizing the sound of gunshots;
- Reacting quickly when gunshots are heard and/or when a shooting is witnessed:
  - Evacuating the area;
  - Hiding out;
  - Acting against the shooter as a last resort;
- Calling 911 (or communicating with main or security office, in the case of a school);
- Reacting when law enforcement arrives;
- Adopting the survival mindset during times of crisis.

It also may be valuable to consider expanding the level of staff preparedness at a school, by position-specific training and exercises for different types of employees. For example, a secretary may be provided expanded training on how to keep a threatening caller on the phone as long as possible and alerting other staff and law enforcement based on the call. A school district in Virginia designed a readiness quiz for substitute teachers to gauge their preparedness for an emergency. Groups of staff subject to specialized training may include:

- Front-office personnel;
- Custodial personnel;
- Food service personnel;
- Administrative personnel;
- Teachers;
- Substitute teachers;
- School nurses or other health personnel;
- Bus drivers and transportation personnel.

### **Ensuring Student Preparedness**

Just as staff need to immediately know how to react in the event of an active shooter, students must also be prepared to act appropriately in such an event. Student preparedness can complement staff preparedness and minimize the chance of miscommunication or unnecessary confusion in an emergency situation. Furthermore, in the unfortunate event that a staff member who is responsible for a group of children is hurt or separated from such students, students should be empowered to take action to ensure their own safety. It is essential that students take part in exercises and drills to practice various types of emergency procedures. It is furthermore valuable to train students – in an age appropriate

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<sup>193</sup> DHS, 2008, p. 6

manner – about the importance of emergency procedures as well as the conditions under which they should be initiated.

The Texas School Safety Center offers several school drill lesson plans, including on lockdown drills, to train students on these matters.<sup>194</sup> Schools may find these helpful in adapting them for their own students based on their unique needs and capabilities. For example, lesson plans include:<sup>195</sup>

- Discussion of the reasons that a particular emergency procedure may need to be enacted;
- Discussion of the importance and objectives of a particular procedure;
- Discussion of the characteristics and steps of an effective emergency procedure;
- Discussion of how students would feel in and react to a certain scenario that may require emergency procedures;
- Guided practice of emergency procedure;
- Encouraging students to provide assessment, feedback, or suggestions for improvement.

Above, in the “Staff Preparedness” section, we discussed guidance provided by the Department of Homeland Security in a document entitled, “Active Shooter: How to Respond.” Components of this guidance include training on recognizing the sound of gunshots, as well as considerations of not only when to evacuate or hide from a shooter but as a last resort, acting with force against the shooter. Whether or not those components are appropriate for students may be a matter of discretion for school officials, parents, and other stakeholders in the community, and likely would include age considerations.

Finally, as discussed briefly above, schools have the option of including students in various phases of the preparedness process. The Department of Education’s Crisis Planning guide notes that students can be involved in tabletop exercises along with staff and other stakeholders.<sup>196</sup> Not only can this better prepare students themselves for an emergency like an active shooter, but doing so can help adult stakeholders identify additional areas that need to be addressed in the preparedness phase in relation to student needs. The school can also provide opportunities for student leadership related to safety and security issues and even encourage and support student clubs focused on programs and safety. The Texas Center for School Safety also offers a summer “[Youth Preparedness Camp](#)” that focuses on teen Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training, youth emergency preparedness, leadership, and action planning, which serves as one example of the types of opportunities that schools may identify to involve students in the preparedness process.

FEMA also has a website designed for children to encourage preparedness for emergencies and disasters, which can be found at: <http://www.ready.gov/kids>.

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<sup>194</sup> See TXSSC

<sup>195</sup> Selected or adapted from TXSSC

<sup>196</sup> DOE, 2003, Ch. 6, p. 36

## **Ensuring Special Needs Preparedness<sup>197</sup>**

According to the Department of Education:

Be sure to give special consideration to the unique needs of staff and students with disabilities when developing the crisis plan. Evacuation and relocation procedures will need to address mental, physical, motor, developmental, and sensory limitations. For example, individuals who use wheelchairs or other auxiliary aids will not be able to traverse the front steps of a building without substantial assistance.

DOE suggests that the following issues should be addressed with regards to special needs:

- In some cases, individuals with disabilities may have limited mobility. In an evacuation there may not be enough time to move mobility-impaired students and staff to traditional shelters. It is important to identify alternative, accessible, safe shelter locations and to communicate these locations to emergency responders;
- Individuals with hearing disabilities may not be able to communicate verbally, to read lips, or to hear fire alarms or other emergency signals. Consider providing basic sign language training to designated school staff;
- Visual impairments might impede reading signs or traversing unfamiliar or altered terrain—consider whether debris might obstruct the evacuation of such staff and students and necessitate alternative shelter locations;
- Debris may obstruct the evacuation of individuals with mobility impairments. Be sure to assign sufficient staff to assist these individuals during a crisis or consider identifying alternative shelter locations;
- Are staff trained to assist students with developmental disabilities? These students may become upset if routine patterns of activity are disrupted;
- Do any students or staff have special needs for medicines, power supplies, or medical devices that are not likely to be available in emergency shelters? Consider what alternative arrangements can be made to provide these necessities.

## **Armed and Unarmed Security Personnel**

Since the tragic events of December 2012 at Sandy Hook Elementary in Newtown, Connecticut, a national discussion has emerged on the concept of introducing armed personnel or arming current personnel at schools to combat an active shooter threat.

Our goal in the ensuing discussion is neither to advocate for nor against all or any of the possibilities in a specific case; rather, it is to provide a cogent analysis of some of the potential benefits as well as the accompanying risks to introducing armed personnel of various forms into schools. The ultimate decision regarding whether to introduce any form of armed security at a school must always be made by local stakeholders on the ground; nevertheless, it is the belief of the National School Shield Task Force that many schools across the country stand to benefit from the presence of armed security and, in the quest to make our schools safer, should leave no option off the table. The National School Shield Task Force understands and shares the concerns of those who want to ensure that armed security, if introduced at a school, is done so in a safe and responsible manner. That is why the National School Shield Initiative

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<sup>197</sup> See DOE, 2003, Ch. 6, p. 30 – 31

has developed, in conjunction with some of the country's foremost experts on security and weapons handling, a model training program both for School Resource Officers (SROs) and also for other armed school personnel.

Any of the below described possibilities may or may not be appropriate for a given school. That decision can only be made by the relevant school officials, local law enforcement, legal counsel, and other stakeholders based on a particular school's resources, risks, needs, and legal requirements.

If a school decides to employ the services of one or multiple forms of security personnel, it is recommended that schools perform a pre-employment background check on all of these individuals, whether armed and unarmed. The following list includes the types of information the school should consult as part of a pre-employment background check within the laws governing access and use for making informed hiring decisions:

- Former employment data;
- DMV records;
- Residential address history verification;
- Credit check;
- Criminal records check;
- Education verification;
- Civil history;
- National wants and warrants;
- Social security verification;
- Drug testing;
- Finger print screening.

It is also recommended that schools conduct a periodic background check on all security personnel upon hiring and at least once every three years. If a more in-depth pre-employment background screening is desired, it is recommended that the school contact a local private investigator.

There are four primary possibilities in terms of arming personnel in schools, each of which will be discussed in more detail below.

### **School Resource Officer (SRO)**

A School Resource Officer (SRO) is a uniformed, armed and sworn law enforcement officer, usually drawn from local police or sheriff's departments, assigned to school duties. According to the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS), SROs "provide school security, serve as instructors of law-related education classes and act as crime prevention specialists, crime investigators, mentors, and role models."<sup>198</sup> Many schools throughout the country already have SROs on their grounds. For example, according to a statewide survey conducted by DCJS in the state of Virginia in 2006, 95% of high schools surveyed (284/300) and 74% of middle schools (227/308) were served by an SRO at least part time and in most cases full time.<sup>199</sup> The Sandy Hook Advisory Commission's Interim Report also recommended

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<sup>198</sup> Schuiteman, p. 1

<sup>199</sup> Ibid., p. 4

that schools, as part of threat and risk assessment, undertake “definitive analysis” as whether to have a School Resource Officer on their campus.<sup>200</sup>

There are multiple benefits to having an SRO serve a particular school. For one, as a sworn law enforcement officer, schools can expect that SROs will have a strong base level of training for and professionalism in their duties, especially those related to carrying a weapon. Additionally, as a member of a local law enforcement agency, it may be easier to integrate an SRO’s duties during an emergency with those of arriving law enforcement and emergency responders – a key issue that has been discussed at length in Layer Two and Three of this document. The SRO must be involved in all scenarios involving police response to their assigned school. Furthermore, they should be intimately involved in the development and training of all school-based response scenarios. Ideally, these training opportunities should occur on weekends, in-service training days, or pre-school orientation periods.

Furthermore, SROs offer a number of additional services – such as those of a mentor – that may be beneficial to a school that are not directly related to protecting against an active shooter scenario. Parents, students, teachers, staff, and other stakeholders are often comfortable with and frequently in favor of having this form of armed personnel on school grounds.

Although the fact that they are sworn law enforcement officers reasonably inspires confidence in their abilities, there are still additional aspects of training that an SRO should undergo. As Mr. Mo Canady, the Executive Director of the National Association of School Resource Officers, explains:

School-based policing requires specialized training not covered in most law enforcement academies. Because school resource officers are much more than armed guards, they need training in teaching, counseling and the special skills required to act as a law enforcement officer in a school setting. In addition, we recommend that all school resource officers receive special training to assure that their responses to an active shooter will be safe and effective.<sup>201</sup>

An SRO’s various duties can serve as both a benefit and a potential downside to their role as a security presence in schools. In many cases, including our own assessments, it was found that SROs bring many positives to a school environment through their relationships with students and staff and the various services, including those security-related, that they provide. But because an SRO’s duties often extend to areas beyond the school campus, they may not always be readily available to confront an immediate threat like an active shooter. As law enforcement officers, many SROs spend a significant portion of their time investigating crimes or attending court sessions, in addition to fulfilling duties at other schools when necessary and other law enforcement duties.<sup>202</sup> Emphasis must be given to the importance of an SRO serving in the school(s) to which they are assigned, and not performing ancillary duties, which remove them frequently from the school environment.

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<sup>200</sup> Sandy Hook Advisory Commission, p. 11

<sup>201</sup> NASRO

<sup>202</sup> Schuiteman, p. 1-2

### **Private Contracted Security**

The second possibility is introducing privately contracted security personnel, typically in the form of uniformed security personnel employed by a private security company. Private security forces, particularly if armed, are subject to various laws and regulations. If the guards are to be armed, relevant firearm regulations will require careful evaluation. The orders given to security guards should reflect the policies of the school and should be concise and consistent. They should be as specific as possible regarding duties, responsibilities, and limits of authority.

An armed security guard is trained in the use of firearms, and is licensed to carry firearms during their shifts. They have the authority to utilize deadly force if necessary. Because of this, the school will want to carefully consider the message of having an armed guard on the premises. The school should also be aware that if someone is injured or killed, they can be held liable. Due to the licensing and training requirements, armed guards cost more than unarmed security guards.

That said, an armed officer is often a strong deterrent to most perpetrators, and armed security guards frequently have military and/or law enforcement backgrounds, giving them a high degree of additional specialized training and experience. Schools will ultimately determine whether contract guards should be armed or unarmed based on their local threat and risks associated with arming the security force. If a school elects to have on-site security guards for their campus, the process of choosing a company should be based on more than price alone. Schools should require that the personnel used at their facility be fully and properly trained, frequently retrained, licensed, and subject to pre-employment and in-service background checks in line with those detailed in the introductory section of this discussion. Highly specific, clear, and rigorously enforced policies and procedures regarding armed individuals and their weapons must be in place at all times.

Schools also must be sure to adhere to any federal, state, or local laws and regulations that may apply to introducing privately contracted security personnel – particularly if they are armed – into a school setting.

One potential benefit of private armed security as opposed to or in addition to having an SRO(s) is that an SRO's duties often extend beyond providing on-site security of the type that would readily be available to confront an active shooter at any moment. As law enforcement officers, many SROs spend a significant portion of their time investigating crimes or attending court sessions, in addition to fulfilling duties at other schools when necessary.<sup>203</sup> Because armed contracted security personnel do not fulfill those additional duties, the chance is maximized that an armed individual will be on-site at all times to deter and respond to an active shooter threat.

### **Armed Citizen Volunteers**

The third possibility is introducing armed citizen volunteers, such as retired or off duty police officers or military veterans, to provide an additional layer of deterrence and security.

The potential benefits to armed citizen volunteers are similar to those described above for SROs and contracted security (i.e., as an armed protective presence whose primary duty is providing protection to

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<sup>203</sup> Schuiteman, p. 1-2

the school). An armed citizen volunteer has the potential to provide a visible deterrent to a potential active shooter and, in the worst-case scenario, take action against an active threat.

In addition to these benefits, an armed volunteer – as a volunteer – is potentially a less expensive option to schools and school districts with limited resources.

However, because such an individual is neither an SRO nor a professional security contractor, an additional burden may be placed on a school or school district in ensuring that such an individual is highly trained to operate with a weapon in a school environment. It is absolutely imperative that schools consult with subject matter experts, local law enforcement, and other stakeholders in ensuring that any individual carrying a weapon on school property undergo a physical exam and preferably psychological testing, as well as extensive initial and in-service training throughout their service. They should also be subject to pre-service and periodic in-service background checks in line with those detailed in the introductory section of this discussion.

Schools must also seriously consider how such individuals will be integrated into emergency preparedness and response as described in Layer Two and Three of this document. Any armed volunteer should clearly understand their role, where it begins, and where it ends in an emergency situation, and should have ample practice in a variety of scenarios through drills and exercises. There is also the very serious risk that, in the case of an emergency like an active shooter situation, arriving law enforcement officers or SWAT teams could perceive an armed volunteer as a threat. Therefore, it is essential that the armed volunteer be clearly identified; that he or she has trained with local law enforcement for the response scenario, and that the protocols for response are agreed upon.

In addition to these considerations, schools must ensure that they are in compliance with any federal, state, and local laws and regulations that may apply to having an armed individual on school grounds. They should seriously consider the legal and physical risk of having a weapon on school grounds and that even the most highly-trained individuals are capable of negligent behavior with their weapons – though proper initial and in-service training significantly reduces that risk. A multitude of other choices – including but not limited to weapon choice, weapon security, weapon retention, ammunition choice, weapon ownership, and weapon storage – must be addressed by the school and qualified security and weapons experts. Highly specific, clear, and rigorously enforced policies and procedures regarding armed individuals and their weapons must be in place at all times.

### **Arming Principals, Teachers, or other School Staff**

The fourth option involves arming personnel already at the school for whom security is not their primary duty – for example, teachers, principals, or custodial staff.

The potential benefits to arming staff members are similar to those described above. An armed staff member has the potential to provide a visible deterrent to a potential active shooter and, in the worst-case scenario, take action against an active threat. In addition to these benefits, an armed staff member already on payroll is a potentially less expensive option to schools and school districts with limited resources.

However, such an individual is neither an SRO nor a professional security contractor, and unlike even an armed citizen volunteer, provides security as a secondary responsibility (e.g., if they are a principal or teacher). Therefore, an additional burden may be placed on a school or school district in ensuring that



such an individual is highly trained to operate with a weapon in a school environment. It is absolutely imperative that schools consult with subject matter experts, local law enforcement, and other stakeholders in ensuring that any individual carrying a weapon on school property have extensive initial and in-service training throughout their service.

Schools must also seriously consider how such individuals will be integrated into emergency preparedness and response as described in Layer Two and Three of this document. Any armed staff member should clearly understand their role, where it begins, and where it ends in an emergency situation, and should have ample practice in a variety of scenarios through drills and exercises. There is also the very serious risk that, in the case of an emergency like an active shooter situation, arriving law enforcement officers or SWAT teams could perceive an armed staff member as the threat. Therefore, it is essential that the armed volunteer be clearly identified; that he or she has trained with local law enforcement for the response scenario, and that the protocols for response are agreed upon.

In addition to these considerations, schools must ensure that they are in compliance with any federal, state, and local laws and regulations that may apply to having an armed individual on school grounds. They should seriously consider the legal and physical risk of having a weapon on school grounds and that even the most highly-trained individuals are capable of negligent behavior with their weapons – though proper initial and in-service training significantly reduces that risk. A multitude of other issues – including but not limited to weapon choice, weapon security, weapon retention, ammunition choice, weapon ownership, and weapon storage – must be addressed by the school and qualified security and weapons experts. Highly specific, clear, and rigorously enforced policies and procedures regarding armed staff and their weapons must be in place at all times. Schools should require that the personnel used at their facility be fully and properly trained, licensed, and subject background checks in line with those outlined in the introductory section above.

### **Unarmed Security Personnel**

Some schools and other institutions also benefit from the services of unarmed security personnel. While unarmed security personnel will not play the same role as an armed individual in combatting an active shooter with a firearm of their own, they can play a role in deterring, detecting, and responding to a potential assailant. For example, in Virginia schools in 2006, an estimated 1,100 unarmed School Security Officers (SSOs) assumed such a role.<sup>204</sup>

The first area of benefit potentially provided by unarmed security personnel is in providing deterrence. Unarmed security guards can often provide a strong deterrent without becoming a possible cause or source of violence. They are also less expensive, and may incur less insurance and liability issues. Properly screened and trained unarmed guards can be sufficient in making students, staff, and parents feel at ease and deter many possible threats.

Unarmed security personnel can also provide an extra set of “eyes and ears” to assist in immediately detecting a threat and initiating emergency response procedures. While an unarmed guard will not necessarily respond in a direct manner to an active shooter like an armed individual might, detecting such a threat and sounding the alarm even seconds earlier has the potential to save many lives.

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<sup>204</sup> Schuiteman, p. 1

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## LAYER THREE – RESPONSE

### Overview

This section provides guidance and best practices to schools for responding to an active shooter incident. Active shooter incidents tend to be fluid and can be chaotic and confusing to those experiencing them. The appropriate response to such an incident changes as event-specific information regarding the shooter, victims, hostages, bomb threats, and other information is received. Although an immediate response from law enforcement or on-site security is typically required to stop the active shooter, there are steps that teachers, staff, and students can take to protect themselves and each other before law enforcement arrives on campus. Those at a school must react quickly and decisively to activate emergency response plans and follow the steps in which they are outlined. These plans (the development of which are discussed above in Layer Two) outline a process for managing the incident and maintaining a safe environment for staff and students until the threat is neutralized, and/or all students and staff can be moved to a safe location.

### Emergency Response Plan Activation

#### Notification

Unless the active shooter initially confronts a trained, armed individual, such as a School Resource Officer (SRO) or other security personnel, a teacher, student, or school administrator may be the first to encounter or notice the active shooter. This person must immediately begin the notification process to ensure rapid response by both occupants of the school and emergency responders, including law enforcement. Notification has three parts for an active shooter threat:

- Notifying law enforcement;
- Internal notification to activate the school’s emergency action plan; and
- If violence is imminent, verbal notification of students in immediate area to take cover.

Whoever first becomes aware of the threat should call 911 and notify the appropriate individuals as established in the school’s emergency action plan as soon as possible. Since neutralizing the active shooter threat will nearly always require help from law enforcement or security personnel, it is critical to notify them of the situation as soon as it is possible and safe to do so. Key information to provide to law enforcement, security staff, or the 911 operator includes:<sup>205</sup>

- Location of the active shooter(s);
- Number of shooters, if more than one;
- Physical description of shooter(s);
- Number and type of weapons held by the shooter(s);
- Number of potential victims at the location.

Staff and teachers will be asked to provide as many details as possible without endangering their lives or others to gather the information.

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<sup>205</sup> DHS, 2008, p. 5

Along with dialing 9-1-1, the school's emergency response plan instructs staff or teachers to notify leadership and others on school grounds of the threat. If the teacher or staff member is notifying the school via a public address system or intercom, it is ideal that this communication is delivered in a clear, specific, and non-threatening manner that does not escalate the situation. Some schools use signals or code words to instruct teachers and staff to take action to avoid unnecessarily alarming students or creating panic. Schools should ensure that all staff, teachers, visitors (including substitute teachers) are familiar with the signals or codes before an incident occurs. However, if these codes or signals are not known, if training of all relevant parties and visitors is impractical, or codes are observed as frequently being forgotten under pressure in exercises, it is perfectly permissible – even encouraged – to use clear, simple language. In fact, many experts argue that clear, simple commands are always preferable to codes in emergency situations.<sup>206</sup>

The established notification protocols in the school emergency response plan, which should have been previously tested, and upon which relevant staff should have been trained, must be used to communicate the danger. The occupants of a school should not blindly assume that the notification will come from a central administrative or security office in a timely manner, if it comes at all. Relevant administrative or security staff may be unable to act due to being incapacitated by the shooter, or the shooter's first encounter may be with someone unfamiliar with the notification protocol (e.g., student, substitute teacher, visitor, etc.). This requires that anyone notified of the threat take action to notify the occupants of the school when it is possible and safe to do so.

Notification protocols cannot be strict, chain-of-command structures that prevent notification in the absence of key personnel (e.g., principal, vice principal, etc.). Authority and responsibility to 'sound the alarm' must be fluid, flexible, and immediate. For example, an FBI law enforcement bulletin, "Those Terrible First Few Minutes – Revisiting Active Shooter Protocols for Schools" advocates lockdown as the default protocol when gunshots are heard but there is no communication from the central administrative office due to incapacity or other unknown reasons.<sup>207</sup> If not notified of how to respond by central administration, staff must use their best judgment and the protocols in their Emergency Response Plan to determine on a case-by-case basis the action that is situation-appropriate based on the incident.

The need for immediate notification and action is of utmost importance. A school where lockdown (as discussed in the following section) is ordered clearly and quickly benefits from the protective features of lockdown immediately. If the lockdown response does not happen quickly, the active shooter can gain an advantage, which imperils the school's occupants. Every second counts.

## **Lockdown**

A key component in defending against an active shooter is having an effective and practiced lockdown plan. Lockdown is a protective action taken when faced with threats of violence in which it would be unsafe to evacuate or otherwise avoid a threat from outside or inside the school.

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<sup>206</sup> Safe Havens, "Codes Can Kill"

<sup>207</sup> Buerger

The FBI explains that most active shooter protocols contain the same advice for schools following notification of an active shooter threat:

Implement lockdown procedures, minimize the target profile, and wait for the police to neutralize the situation. Teachers and students should hide quietly, lock or barricade doors, and turn off lights and electrical equipment [including silencing cellphones] that would attract the shooter's attention. If possible they should provide detailed information via 911 contact to guide authorities, and then, remain quiet until a recognized voice [such as a school administrator or law enforcement official] advises that it is safe to move.<sup>208</sup>

The same article provides the rationale for lockdown as follows:

Once a school is in lockdown, "hide and hope" defensive actions minimize the chances of being a target and maximizes police latitude in clearing the building. Concealment and cover reduce potential casualties. The chaos of moving, screaming bodies provides a target-rich environment for a shooter [and an extremely difficult environment in which law enforcement or armed security responders can engage and neutralize an active threat without risking harm to others.]

Lockdown procedures [are designed to impede and limit access for] the [assailant(s) and force them] to search for softer targets [or alternate routes] within a large physical plant. That interval coincides with police response time, delays the perpetrator's engagement with any targets, and keeps the person in open space. When discovered, the shooter is isolated against the background, a single target for law enforcement officers. If [the perpetrator] seeks concealment from the police, they abandon the search for victims, increasing the overall safety of the school community.<sup>209</sup>

When implementing the instruction to lockdown in a classroom or other secure area, the following are some of the best practices to follow:<sup>210</sup>

- Clear students from the halls immediately and report to nearest available classroom or if in a classroom remain there;
- Lock all doors with any available objects;
- Turn off lights;
- Turn off computer monitors;
- Close blinds;
- Block windows;
- Move away from windows;
- Get on the ground and out of sight;
- Take cover under desks, chairs, tables, filing cabinets, etc.;
- Keep calm and quiet;
- Silence cell phones;
- Do not open the door for anyone. Responding law enforcement will have keyed access to all rooms in the school;

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<sup>208</sup> Buerger

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

<sup>210</sup> Based in part on: KYCSS, p. 81

- Use intercom systems to notify school administration of the location of the active shooter if it is safe to do so.

The goal of this document is not to provide a firm list of criteria defining when implementing a lockdown plan is appropriate as opposed to other options such as evacuating. Lockdown is undoubtedly a common and often appropriate response, but it is not the only correct response for every individual or group of individuals in every situation involving an armed assailant. For example, during a developing active shooter event, it may be better to rapidly evacuate a small group of students to a safer location outside the building if locking down or moving to a classroom would require moving towards the sound of gunfire. Like any situation that requires response, responsible adults must use their best judgment – based on their training and practice – to ensure their own and their students’ safety.

Each school must implement the lockdown plans established and practiced under its Emergency Response Plan as appropriate for their school based on the specific nature of the active shooter threat and their physical proximity to the perceived threat, among other considerations. Different conditions may influence the decision of whether to lock down or take other action. Some examples of these potential conditions are included below for discussion and scenario-based planning purposes. The FBI identifies circumstances where the standard protocol of lockdown carries additional challenges and may require real time judgment calls:<sup>211</sup>

- When students are outside of classrooms such as at lunchtime or recess – typically in corridors and other common areas. If faced with an active shooter threat in these cases, administrators and teachers can direct students to go to their next class or nearest class room;
- When students are located in large areas within the school such as auditoriums, cafeterias, libraries or gymnasiums. Often the physical layouts of these areas do not provide the same level of cover that a locked classroom might, leading to the possibility that another emergency protocol should be followed. On the other hand, depending on the physical structure of the school, these same areas may provide the ideal lockdown environment due to a lack of windows, highly securable doors, or other factors. This only furthers the importance of being aware of the nature of your physical environment and establishing an Emergency Response Plan that considers these types of contingencies. If time allows, and it is required, it may be possible to move to smaller areas such as classrooms where it is possible to implement the lockdown procedures;
- Age of students. Reaction among students to an active shooter threat will vary greatly among high school and much younger students (e.g., Kindergarten through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade). Despite a teacher’s best efforts it may be very difficult to quiet a large group of emotionally distraught younger students or explain the logical reasons behind why they should remain quiet to remain hidden;
- In high schools, silencing cell phones is desirable but may be difficult if not impossible to implement. Cell phones provide a way to communicate information to the outside world, but one ring can alert an intruder to the presence of people inside a room where they might otherwise go undetected. This is especially so in the inevitable instance that concerned parents frantically try to contact their children in the middle of such an emergency;

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<sup>211</sup> Buerger



- Outdoors. Students outside or loading or unloading off buses might be better served by evacuating the scene and regrouping in a secondary location than trying to lock down within a classroom or other area within the school.

A final consideration involves the pulling of a fire alarm by the assailant or an accomplice during an active shooter event. This is believed to have been the plan in the aforementioned recent event at the University of Central Florida,<sup>212</sup> and occurred as well during a shooting in Jonesboro, Arkansas. This has been done by the perpetrator or an accomplice in previous active shooter incidents to generate targets as they filter into hallways or evacuate the building. If this happens, schools should consider, in the absence of external evidence of fire, that the school ordered lockdown overrides the fire alarm unless there is smoke or evidence of a fire (e.g., door handles are hot to touch.) If the violent threat is not recognized until people have gathered outside, then the school needs to be prepared to go from evacuation to reverse evacuation and lockdown as discussed below.

### **Evacuation and Reverse Evacuation**

In the majority of past active shooter incidents, schools have locked down instead of evacuating their facilities. Lockdown can result in fewer targets for the shooter, can reduce confusion for arriving law enforcement and emergency medical officers, can help contain the situation, and can minimize the chance of an accidental shooting by responding officers.<sup>213</sup> Lockdown also eliminates the chance that staff, teachers, and students are injured by hazards outside the school while evacuating (such as fences, streams, rivers on the exterior of the school, or extreme temperatures).

There are exceptions to implementing a lockdown that schools may outline in their emergency response plans. For example, schools may outline when to evacuate based on the layout of their campus or facility and the specific location of the active shooter at a given time.

The document, “Active Shooter Considerations” cautions that during a shooting spree, the best-laid plans for evacuation are also under siege:

All classrooms at Columbine, for example, had evacuation plans but with two students shooting throughout the entire school, evacuating the building was itself a dangerous venture. In the Jonesboro, Arkansas incident, two boys opened fire after students evacuated the building during a false fire alarm. Other factors may affect an Incident Command Officer to alter the usual evacuation route...thus, it is important to have at least two predetermined evacuation sites identified.<sup>214</sup>

For times when there is an accessible, safe path for evacuation, schools should consider the following guidelines:<sup>215</sup>

- Follow school evacuation plans;

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<sup>212</sup> See: Postal

<sup>213</sup> Williams, p. 17

<sup>214</sup> Ibid., p. 26

<sup>215</sup> See DHS, 2008, p.3; KYCSS, p. 81

- Take the closest and safest way out as posted (use secondary route if primary route is blocked or hazardous);
- Take roll book for student accounting if possible;
- Leave belongings behind;
- Assist those needing special assistance;
- Check for injuries;
- Do not attempt to move wounded people;
- Prevent individuals from entering an area where the active shooter may be [located];
- Keep your hands visible;
- Follow the instructions of any law enforcement officers;
- Go to designated assembly area if it is away from danger;
- Take attendance;
- Call 911 at first safe opportunity to do so.

As outlined in Layer Two, 'Preparedness', it is also important to consider the option of reverse evacuation. Reverse evacuation is used to rapidly and safely move students and staff inside a facility when it would be dangerous to remain outside.<sup>216</sup> Reverse evacuation is implemented when it is safer to return to or stay inside a facility or classroom than it is to go outside.

"Reverse Evacuation – A Life or Death Protocol," produced by Safe Havens International, states:

The reverse evacuation protocol is not only critical, it is perhaps even more important than the lockdown protocol. This is because any school that does not have a reverse evacuation protocol and the ability to execute it effectively may be unable to implement a lockdown, shelter in place for hazardous materials, or severe weather sheltering protocol when and if students and staff are outside of the school.<sup>217</sup>

Schools may adapt the following guidelines for reverse evacuation:<sup>218</sup>

- Follow school evacuation plans (for reverse evacuation);
- Move students and staff inside as quickly as possible;
- Report to classroom;
- Lock the door;
- Stay out of the active shooter's view;
- Provide protection if shots are fired in your direction (i.e. behind a desk in an office with a closed door);
- Blockade the door with heavy furniture;
- Do not trap yourself or restrict your options for movement;
- Silence your cell phone;
- Turn off any source of noise (i.e. radios, televisions);
- Assist those needing special assistance;

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<sup>216</sup> Safe Havens, "Reverse Evacuation"

<sup>217</sup> Safe Havens, "Reverse Evacuation – A Life or Death Protocol"

<sup>218</sup> See: DHS, 2008, p. 4; KYCSS, p. 81

- Check for injuries;
- Take attendance;
- Remain quiet;
- Wait for further instructions.

When the threat has passed, wait for law enforcement to clear the area and then evacuate following law enforcement instructions, following evacuation accountability, student release, and parent-student reunification procedures.

### **Responding When Trapped**

School's emergency action plans may advise that only as a last resort, and *only* when staff or teachers have been trapped by the active shooter and their lives are in imminent danger, should they attempt to disrupt and/or incapacitate the shooter. Actions to try to incapacitate the active shooter as a last resort can include:

- Acting as aggressively as possible against him/her;
- Throwing items and improvising weapons;
- Yelling;
- Committing to your actions;
- Attacking in a group by:<sup>219</sup>
  - Tackling the perpetrator in the lower leg area, knocking him/her to the ground;
  - Grabbing the shooter's extremities and taking him/her to the ground, using body weight to secure him/her;
  - Using any available object to neutralize the perpetrator;
  - Attacking any area that causes immediate pain, such as the shins, genitals, throat, eye socket area, upper head area (eye sockets and above), and others that cause the most immediate release of blood;
  - Using keys, hairbrush handles, a broken vase or glass to gouge the eye area. Remember, the assailant can't shoot what they can't see;
  - If you're in a science lab and have the ability to neutralize the perpetrator with chemicals, and can do so safely, do so;
  - Removing weapon(s) from reach of perpetrator at first possible moment. DO NOT handle weapon near the trigger housing. This will prevent accidental discharge of weapon;
  - Fighting as if your life depends on it! Don't ever give up!
  - Fighting dirty! There is no unfair fighting when survival is the goal.

If staff, teachers, or students have incapacitated the active shooter (again, as a last resort and only when the shooter is down and no longer a threat) and law enforcement personnel have not arrived:<sup>220</sup>

- Call 911 and advise law enforcement personnel the active shooter is down;
- Provide your location and stay on the line;
- Secure the suspect (body weight, belts, etc.);

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<sup>219</sup> Based in part on recommendations in: Ohio University

<sup>220</sup> Ohio University

- Move any weapons away from the suspect. Do not run from the room. Help is on the way.

### **Role of Law Enforcement and Emergency Responders**

Law enforcement's main priority when arriving at your school, following a report of an active shooter, is to protect life and stop the active shooter as soon as possible. Law enforcement officers will proceed directly to the area in which the last shots were heard. When arriving on the scene officers may arrive individually, in teams of two, or in teams of four or more and:<sup>221</sup>

- Officers may wear regular patrol uniforms or external bulletproof vests, Kevlar helmets, gas masks, and other tactical equipment. Badges or police insignia will usually be displayed and recognizable but especially for SWAT teams may not be as apparent;
- Officers may be armed with rifles, shotguns, and handguns;
- Officers may use pepper spray or tear gas to control the situation;
- Officers may shout commands, and may push individuals to the ground for their safety.

Schools should follow their response plan protocols for identifying law enforcement personnel that arrive to confront the active shooter threat. This is to mitigate the unfortunate but real risk that the shooter has dressed or otherwise posed as a law enforcement officer or other responder as a means of subterfuge. Identifying legitimate first responders may be more easily done if directly and visibly approached by law enforcement that arrives on the scene. However, if out of direct sight of law enforcement, for example under lockdown, it is appropriate to follow established and predetermined protocols to verify their identity. Like in all other areas of response, it is possible that judgment calls will have to be made; it is always better to be "safe than sorry."

When law enforcement arrive school staff, teachers, and students should:<sup>222</sup>

- Remain calm and follow officer's instructions;
- Put down any items in your hands;
- Immediately raise hands and spread fingers;
- Keep hands visible at all times;
- Avoid making quick movements toward officers such as holding on to them for safety;
- Avoid pointing, screaming, and/or yelling;
- Do not stop to ask officers for help or direction when evacuating, just proceed in the direction from which the officers are entering the premises.

*It is important to remember that the first law enforcement personnel to arrive on the scene will not stop to assist injured persons.* Additional teams of law enforcement and emergency medical personnel will arrive following the initial officers. These rescue teams will treat and remove any injured persons as appropriate.

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<sup>221</sup> Based in part on: DHS, 2008, p. 5

<sup>222</sup> Ibid., p. 5

## **Additional Response Best Practices**

The following are elements of the response that schools should consider implementing throughout the life cycle of the active shooter event. Remember that the first priority is to ensure the safety of the occupants of the school. These elements should not be implemented to the detriment of this first priority but rather by appropriately incorporating them as part of the school's Emergency Response Plan as they help in achieving this goal.

### **Incorporate National Incident Management (NIMS) and Incident Command System (ICS) into the response**

Schools should integrate the Incident Command System (ICS) into their emergency response plans. As discussed in Layer Two, ICS is a standardized, on-scene, all-hazard incident management approach within NIMS. It is a system that allows school personnel and first responders to work together under an integrated organizational structure. The ICS structure is flexible. ICS can be adapted for the situation. It can grow or shrink to meet the different needs of the incident.

In an active shooter response, when schools activate their emergency response plans, they should immediately start to work under ICS. For example, the plan may designate an Incident Commander. If it is the Principal, he/she is responsible for managing the components of the school's overall response to the incident (e.g., notification or lockdown) until law enforcement arrives. Once first responders arrive on the scene, they may assume the Incident Commander role. The ICS structure will continue to evolve as additional responders (e.g. Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) teams, emergency medical services, state police, and others) arrive. Not adopting ICS can cause delays in establishing a command, issues with communications, and delays in critical decision-making and the availability of critical resources.

### **Establish an Incident Command Post**

When the incident allows and school personnel are able to do so safely, they should establish an Incident Command Post (ICP). The ICP houses the on-scene incident command and management organization including the Incident Commander, managers of other ICS functions, and school staff designated to manage the incident. The ICP is usually located out of danger, at or near the school and is the headquarters for directing on-scene control of the tactical operations.

Contained within the ICP is the Incident Communications Center, which should operate from the ICP throughout the duration of the response. Additionally, the ICP should include other individuals familiar with the technological and physical layout of the school. In "Lessons Learned from School Crisis and Emergencies," the US Department of Education discusses lessons learned from an active shooter incident that turned into a hostage situation at a school. DOE advocates both incorporating ICS and the establishing an Incident Command Post as immediate steps that should be taken in response to an incident. The report provides other recommendations for schools and first responders regarding the setup of the ICP including:<sup>223</sup>

- The School Administrator assigned to the ICP [should] have additional support to take calls regarding such issues as evacuation progress, care of hostages when released, and communication with other education officials not at the ICP;

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<sup>223</sup> DOE, 2007, Issue 6, p. 9 – 10

- Diagram the ICS structure and indicate specific names of each management function on a white board or large paper so that everyone knows the chain of command;
- Ask all ICS key personnel to wear different colored vests labeled with their agency or position or use other means to readily identify them and their roles;
- Assign a scribe to document all actions taken by the incident commander;
- Monitor all forms of communication in the school. For example in a hostage or lockdown situation, there may be some concern that talking on the phone may reveal the location of people hiding; thus email or text messaging is an alternative. Assigning someone to monitor the cell phones and emails of administrators during the lockdown may help identify the location of staff or students not found during an initial sweep of the building;
- Include someone with expertise in technology and communications systems at the ICP.

In the specific incident considered by the Department of Education above, the school attorney and insurance carrier for the school were included in the ICP to both consider the legal ramifications of any response and to allow for a rapid damage assessment by the insurer of the school buildings and campus once the incident had been resolved. This latter inclusion resulted in a swift cleanup of the school so that it was ready for an open house to communicate with the local community only five days following the incident.

### **Coordinate, Communicate, and Share Information Among All First Responders and Agencies**

Activating your Emergency Response Plan effectively and efficiently requires coordination, communication, and the sharing of information among all agencies and first responders involved in responding to the incident.

A common communications plan is essential for ensuring that responders can communicate with one another during an incident. The response to the Columbine school shooting incident was hampered by response agencies operating on radios set to different frequencies. Prior to an incident, schools must work with local responders to ensure that communication equipment, procedures, and systems can operate together during a response (in security terms, they should be “interoperable”). Working out such issues is yet another benefit of including local law enforcement and emergency responders in exercises, as emphasized throughout this document. A complementary mission of the ICP is the receiving of and re-transmission of radio communications from dissimilar radio frequencies. This flow of accurate communications is practiced during training sessions and exercises.

If your school has followed the best practices identified in Layer Two, then representatives of law enforcement, the fire department, emergency medical services (EMS), school officials, SWAT teams, as well as the public information officer, and others previously identified as part of the response team, will be able to communicate with each other during the response to the incident. This will not only allow for multi-agency operability communication but also ensures that the equipment being used works in all parts of the school building, its campus and surrounding areas in which responders must operate.

## **Activate a Media Communications Plan at the Onset of the Incident**

The core of a media communications plan is the designation of a Public Information Officer (PIO) who serves as the liaison between the Incident Commander and the media. Having followed the best practice of designating a PIO prior to the active shooter event, this person will:<sup>224</sup>

- Prepare and disseminate information about the incident, its size, cause, and ongoing situation and what is being done to ensure the safety of the students and general public;
- Issue press releases that should include resources for counseling, and other resources such as food and shelter, depending on the emergency;
- Oversee the media staging area where all media is located. The media staging area should be away from the site of the incident and parent reunification area and large enough to accommodate media trucks and TV reporters;
- Address the public's need for information about the incident; the PIO should schedule regular briefings (e.g., every two hours or other regular intervals);
- Ensure the rapid release of accurate information and instructions to all media and help to reassure families that their children are safe and assist with facilitating an orderly reunification process;
- Inform parents of what documentation is required to be reunified with their children.

## **Parent Center/Parent Reunification Area**

According to the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, police chiefs involved in several of the recent school shootings recommend that schools and law enforcement plan for three distinct staging areas in addition to the Incident Command Post, to include:<sup>225</sup>

- A staging area for law enforcement and emergency personnel;
- A media staging area away from the school that can accommodate a larger number of media and vehicles (discussed above); and
- a parent center located away from the Incident Command Post, where parents can retrieve their children.

Keeping a separate staging area for parent reunification serves several purposes:<sup>226</sup>

- Prevents the media from converging upon parents;
- Prevents parents from converging on and thereby interfering with law enforcement and emergency personnel;
- Allows for the control of traffic, parking, and parent needs.

FEMA provides guidance on parent-student reunification procedures.<sup>227</sup> First, schools should establish a safe area for parents to pick up their children, which must be away from both the danger and the student's assembly area. School Emergency Response Plans should designate who within the school will

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<sup>224</sup> See DOE, 2007, Issue 6, p. 11

<sup>225</sup> Williams, p. 24

<sup>226</sup> Based in part on Williams, p. 24

<sup>227</sup> See: Washington Military Department

be responsible for the role(s) needed to properly administer the reunification process. In a typical release these steps should be followed:

- Parents report to the assigned area and give the name of their child/children;
- Picture I.D. should be required by the person in charge to ensure the person requesting the child/children matches the name on the emergency release card;
- A runner goes to the student assembly area and gets the child/children requested by the parent or adult. The runner escorts the student back to the pick-up area;
- Parents should be asked to sign a form indicating they picked up the child/children. The date and time will also be indicated on the pick-up form;
- If the child is in the first aid area the parent should be escorted to that area for reunification with their child/children;
- Counselors, when available, should be located close to the first aid area in the event they are needed.

It is recommended that emergency management teams and/or other officials review the remainder of the document, which also includes guidance on maintaining the procedures, traffic control, and other tips, which can be found here:

<http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/emischool/EL361Toolkit/assets/Parent-StudentReunificationProcedures.pdf>

#### **Additional Resources**

- Attorney General of North Carolina, Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention: “A Critical Incident: What to Do in the First 20 Minutes.” (Video) (<http://srtbrc.org/downloads/>)
- U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance: *Guide for Preventing and Responding to School Violence, Second Edition*. ([https://www.bja.gov/Publications/IACP\\_School\\_Violence.pdf](https://www.bja.gov/Publications/IACP_School_Violence.pdf))
- Ready Houston: “Run. Hide. Fight. – Surviving an Active Shooter Event” (Video) (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5VcSwejU2D0>)
- Active Shooter How To Respond – U.S. Department of Homeland Security: *Active Shooter: How to Respond* ([http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/active\\_shooter\\_booklet.pdf](http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/active_shooter_booklet.pdf))
- Federal Bureau of Investigation: Law Enforcement Bulletin, “Those Terrible First Few Minutes – Revisiting Active Shooter Protocols for Schools” (<http://www.fbi.gov/stats-services/publications/law-enforcement-bulletin/September-2010/shooting-feature>)
- Deputy John Williams, Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department: “Active Shooter Safety Considerations for Educators” (<http://www.state.nj.us/education/schools/security/task/planning/ActiveShooterSafetyConsiderations.pdf>)



## Recovery

The scope and focus of this document is on the first three layers - preventing and mitigating, preparing for, and responding to an active shooter incident. We do, however, recognize the importance of the recovery phase which includes a number of priorities including addressing the mental health needs of staff and students, victim funerals and memorials, restoring the physical plant, and returning to learning as soon as possible and conducting a lessons learned analysis from the incident itself. While not within the scope of this document there are a number of good resources available on the recovery phase including:

- Department of Education: *Practical Information on Crisis Planning: A Guide for Schools and Communities* – Chapter 5
- Department of Education: “Tips for Helping Students Recovering from Traumatic Events” - <http://www2.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/recovering/index.html>
- FEMA: Response and Recovery Resources - <http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/emischool/EL361Toolkit/ResponseRecoveryResources.htm>
- Department of Education, Emergency Response and Crisis Management Technical Assistance Center: *Responding to and Recovering from an Active Shooter Incident that Turns into a Hostage Situation*. Lessons Learned from School Crisis and Emergencies, Vol. 2, Issue 6, 2007. ([http://rems.ed.gov/docs/LL\\_Vol2Issue6.pdf](http://rems.ed.gov/docs/LL_Vol2Issue6.pdf))

## Layer Three References

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DOE, 2007, Issue 6, *Responding to and Recovering from an Active Shooter Incident that Turns into a Hostage Situation*, U.S. Department of Education, Emergency Response and Crisis Management Technical Assistance Center, "Lessons Learned from School Crises and Emergencies", Vol. 2, Issue 6, 2007. [http://rems.ed.gov/docs/LL\\_Vol2Issue6.pdf](http://rems.ed.gov/docs/LL_Vol2Issue6.pdf)

KYCSS, *Emergency Management Resource Guide*, Kentucky Center for School Safety, 2008. <http://www.kycss.org/emp/Home/EmerRevCol.pdf>

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Postal, L., & Ordway, D. "Former UCF student who killed himself had planned wider attack". Orlando Sentinel. March 19, 2013. [http://articles.orlandosentinel.com/2013-03-19/news/os-ucf-death-suspicious-evacuation-20130318\\_1\\_dorm-room-beary-assault-rifle](http://articles.orlandosentinel.com/2013-03-19/news/os-ucf-death-suspicious-evacuation-20130318_1_dorm-room-beary-assault-rifle)

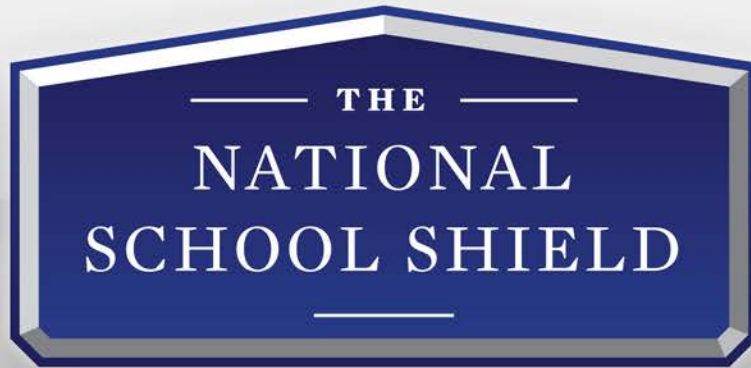
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Safe Havens, "Reverse Evacuation – A Life or Death Protocol". Safe Havens International, January 2012. <http://www.safehavensinternational.org/quick-what-do-we-do-a-sample-tabletop-exercise-scenario/>

Safe Havens, "Reverse Evacuation", Safe Havens International. Accessed March 2013. <http://www.safehavensinternational.org/glossary/reverse-evacuation/>

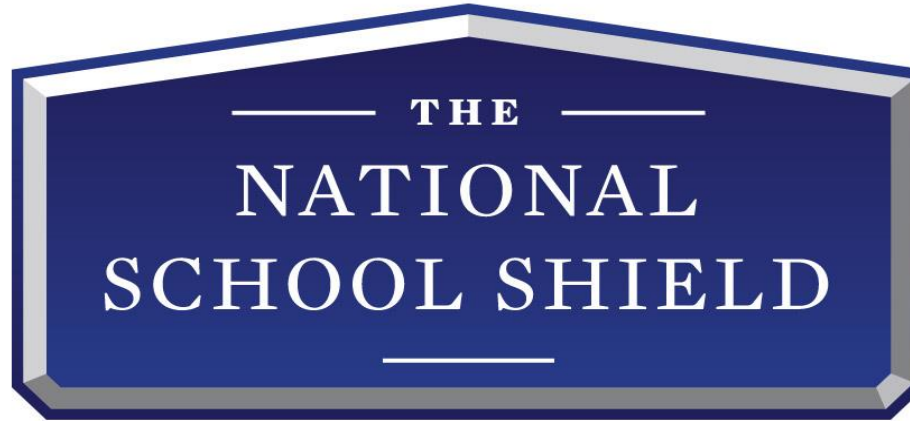
Washington Military Department, "Parent-Student Reunification Procedures", Federal Emergency Management Agency via Washington Military Department, Emergency Management Division. October 2009. <http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/emischool/EL361Toolkit/assets/Parent-StudentReunificationProcedures.pdf>

Williams, J., *Active Shooter Safety Considerations for Educators*, Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. Accessed March, 2013. <http://www.state.nj.us/education/schools/security/task/planning/ActiveShooterSafetyConsiderations.pdf>



**APPENDIX B**  
**SUMMARY OF SCHOOL ASSESSMENTS**





# COMMON VULNERABILITIES & BEST PRACTICES FOR K-12 SCHOOLS

SECURITY ASSESSMENTS REVIEW

As of: 26 March 2013

*This information is subject to disclaimers, waivers and warnings. Please refer to Slide 58 of this document for more details.*

# Agenda

- Demographics of Assessed Schools
- Process and Methodology
- Findings
- Best Practices



# Consulting Team

- **Mr. Ralph Basham**, Former Director of US Secret Service (USSS), Former Commissioner of US Customs and Border Protection (CBP), Former Chief of Staff of US Transportation Security Administration (TSA), Former Director of Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC)
- **Mr. Thad Bingel**, Former Chief of Staff of US Customs and Border Protection (CBP)
- **Mr. Bruce Bowen**, Former Deputy Director of US Secret Service, Former Assistant Director of Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC)
- **Mr. Mike Restovich**, Former Chief Homeland Security Attaché of US Embassy in London, Former Assistant Administrator of US Transportation Security Administration (TSA)
- **Colonel (ret.) John Quattrone**, US Air Force (USAF) Security Forces Officer, Former three time Commander, Former Joint Staff Operations Antiterrorism/Homeland Defense Directorate, The Pentagon
- **Mr. Tony Lambraia**, CEO of Phoenix RBT Solutions
- **Mr. Robert Lambraia**, Director of Training of Phoenix RBT Solutions
- **Mr. Joe Overstreet**, Former US Secret Service Special Agent, Law Enforcement Training Manger of Phoenix RBT Solutions
- **Mr. Randy Knapp**, Instructor RBT Solutions
- **Mr. Joseph Turitto**, Retired Police Sergeant
- **Mr. Wence Arevalo**, Police SWAT/Entry Team Leader Sergeant



# Demographics of Assessed Schools

1. Mid-Western area public school, Rural, PK-12, 1,000 students (PK-6: 550 students. 7-12: 450 students), no SRO on campus, planning on arming school staff.
2. Mid-Atlantic area public school, Suburban, K-5, 652 students, no SRO on campus (part-time visits by district SRO).
3. Mid-Atlantic area public school, Suburban, 6-8, 1,125 students, no SRO on campus, however, one full time unarmed security rep is present. In addition, part-time visits by district SRO.
4. Mid-Atlantic area public school, Suburban, 9-12, 2,837 students, full-time SRO (armed), full time security staff member plus staff of 3, all unarmed.
5. South-Western area parochial private school, Urban, PK-8, 218 students, no SRO on campus.
6. South-Western area public school, Urban, PK-8, 939 students, no SRO on campus.



# Assessment Process & Methodology



# Assessment Process

## SECURITY EXAMINATION OF SCHOOL SECURITY AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

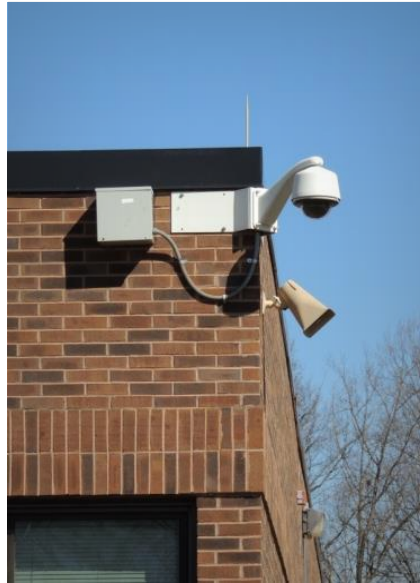
- **Pre-Assessment**
  - Questionnaire presented to Principal
  - Examine floor plans/designs
- **Assessment**
  - In-brief with Principal
  - Review emergency plans and procedures
  - Observe day-to-day operations
  - Conduct interviews with school principal, staff, security, teachers, crisis response team members, building engineers, and others as necessary
  - Determine potential threat(s) to location (risk analysis)
  - Photograph and document observations
- **Post-Assessment**
  - Out-brief with Principal addressing assessment highlights
  - Determine common vulnerabilities and best practices



# Assessment Methodology



Deterrence



Detection



Delay

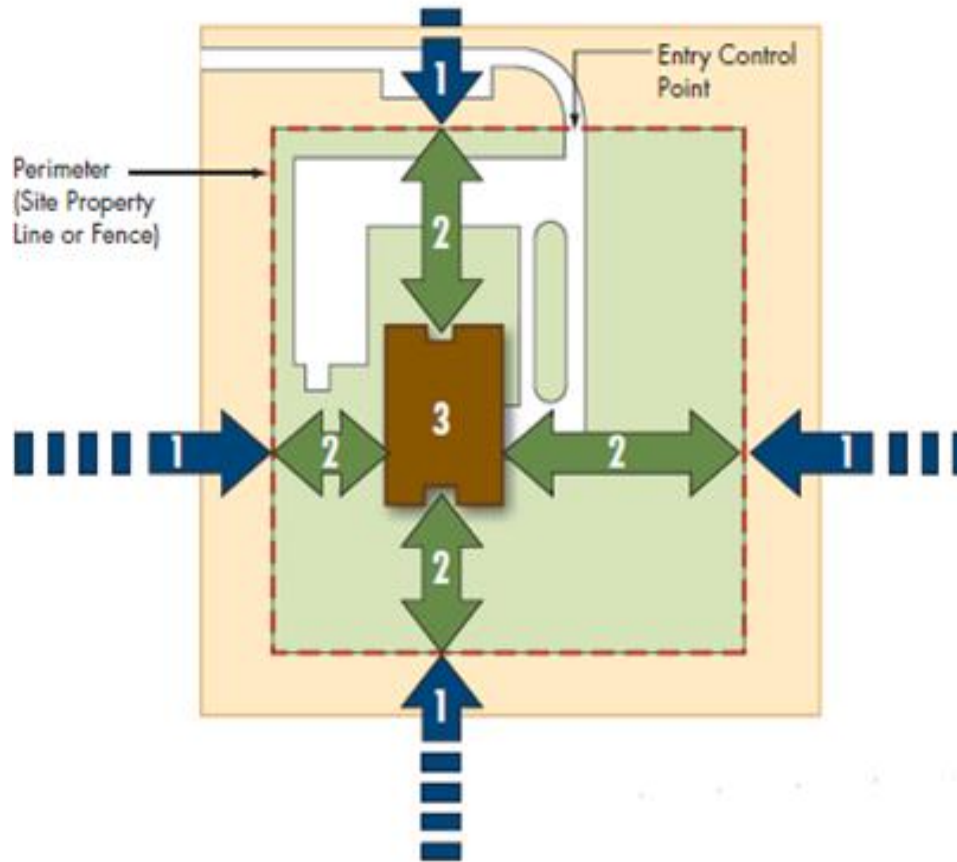


Response



# Assessment Methodology

## Layers of Protection



Adapted from FEMA 428/Buildings and Infrastructure Protection Series-07



# Assessment Methodology

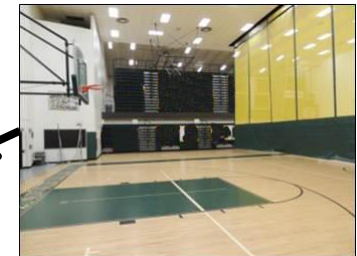
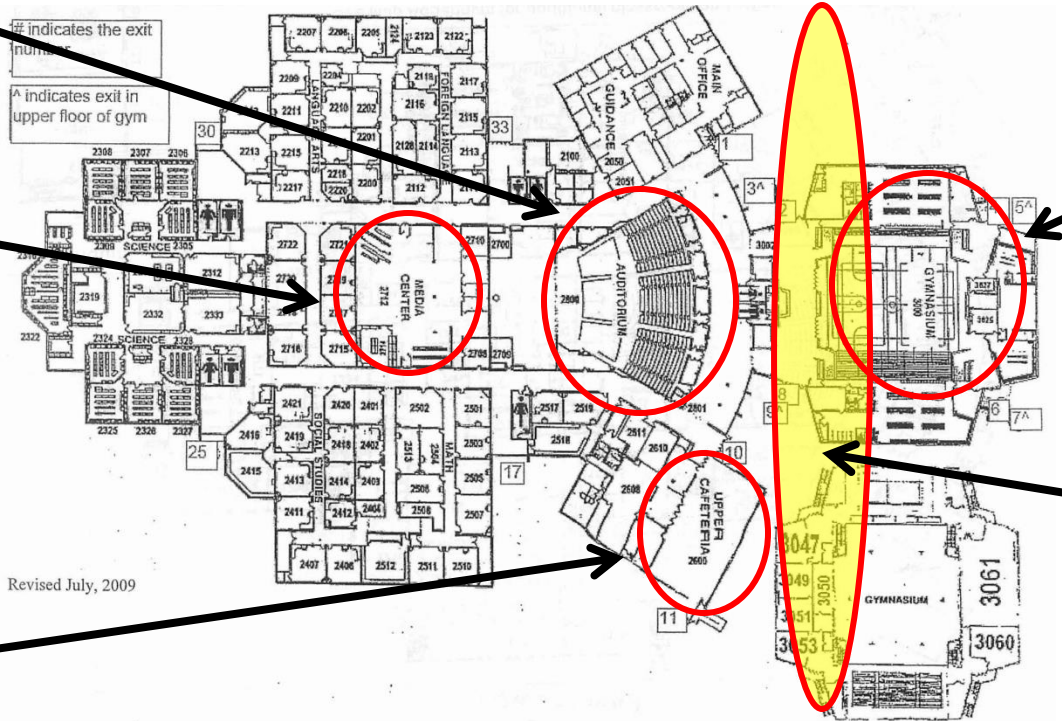
Risk Analysis: identify potential for mass casualty areas

**Potential for Mass Casualty** **Number of students**

1. Bus loading 1200-1400
2. Cafeteria 300-600
3. Gym 150-160
4. Media Center 80-100

**Special events**

1. Football Stadium Up to 5000
2. Auditorium 600-900



# Findings: Perimeter Fence



# Findings

No perimeter fence



# Findings

Inadequate or no perimeter fence





# Best Practice



Sample fence

## Recommendations:

- Consider erecting fence around playground areas.
- Consider erecting fence around entire school property.
- Choice and placement of fencing should balance priorities of denying access while also allowing for maximum surveillance of surrounding areas from inside of school grounds.
- Fencing should be free of any vegetation.
- Bushes, trees, containers, or any object that might provide a hiding place should be removed from the proximity of the fence.
- Eliminating places to hide can discourage a person from crawling under, climbing over, or cutting through the fence.





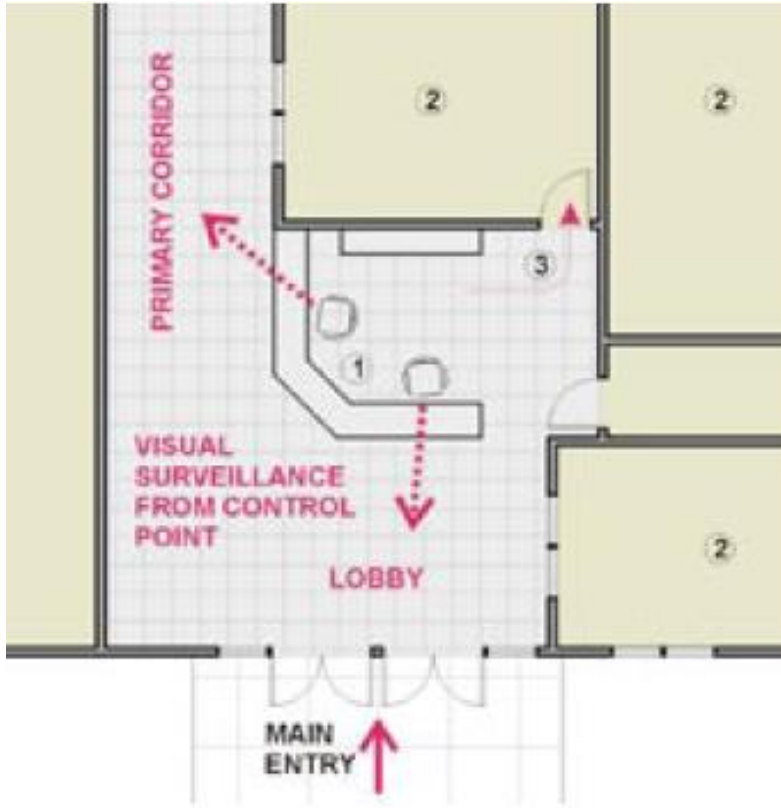
# Findings: Main Entrance

# Findings

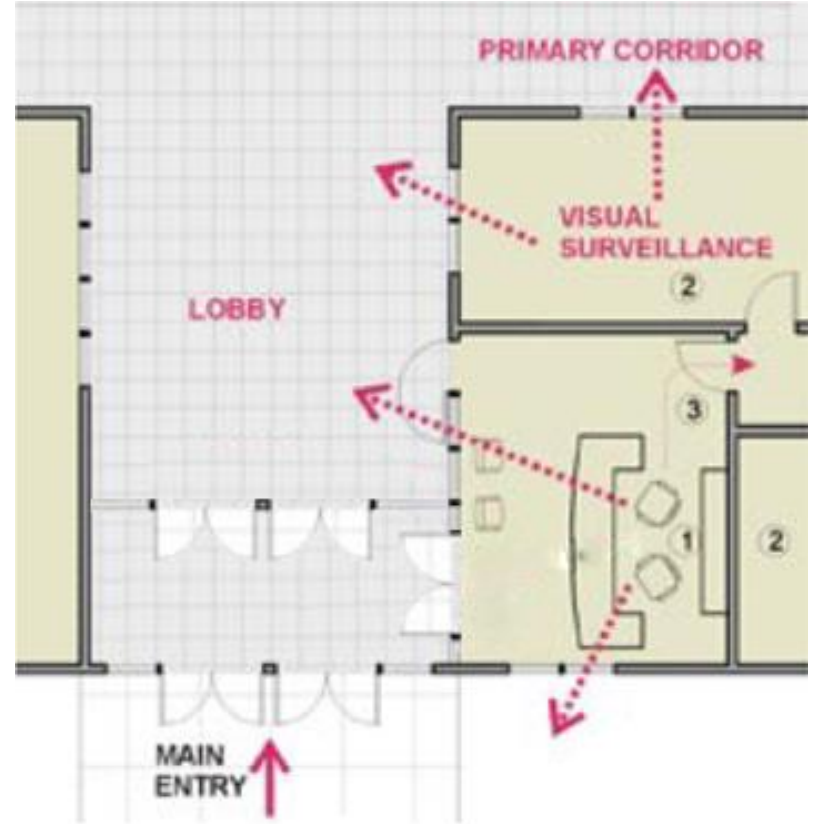
Main entrance areas need security improvements



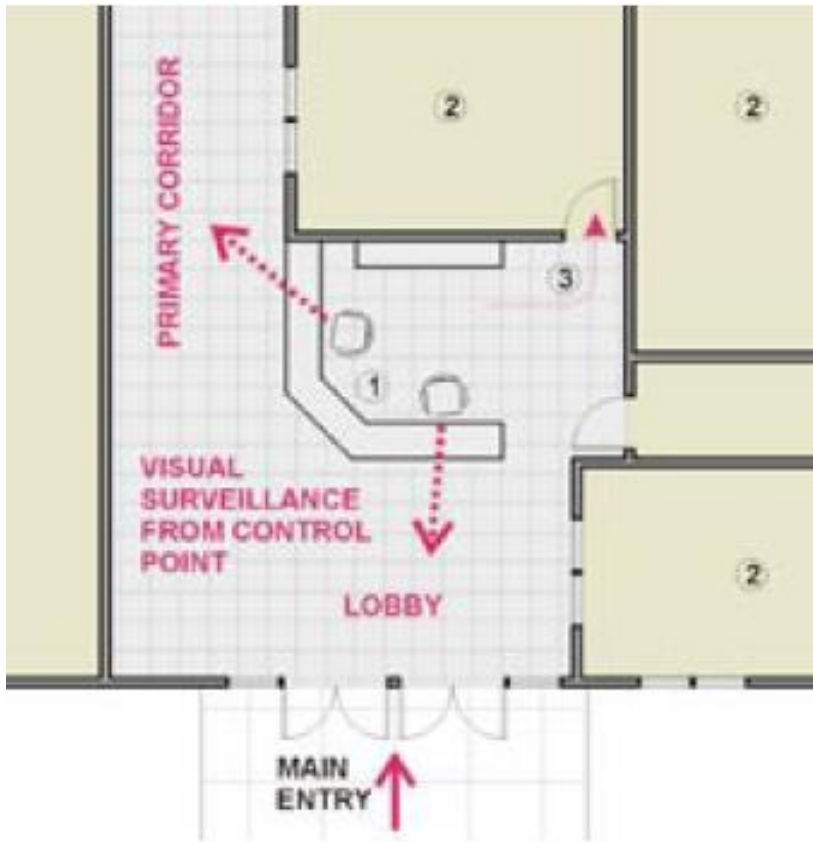
# Direct VS Layered Approach



**VS**



# Configuration #1: Direct Access

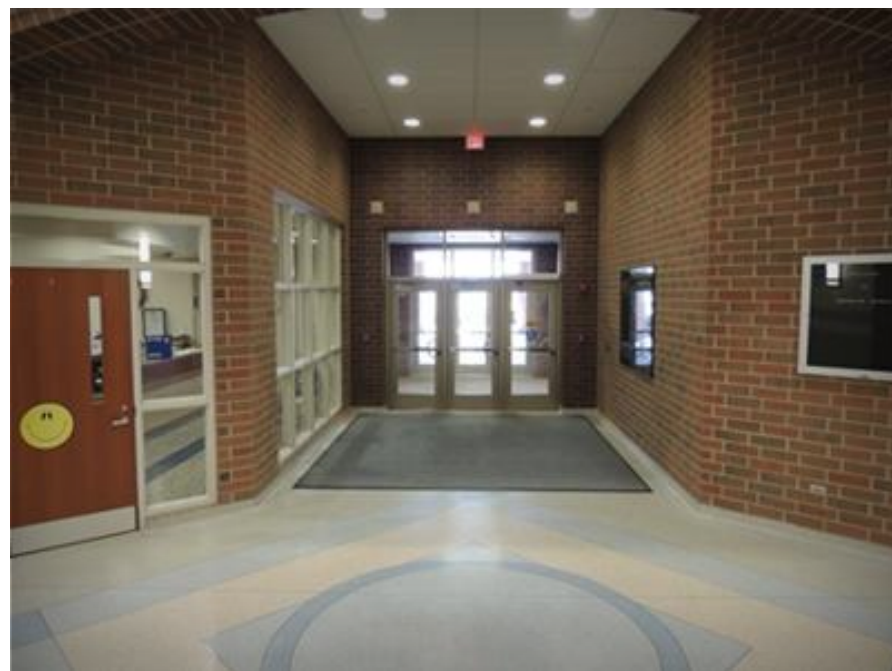
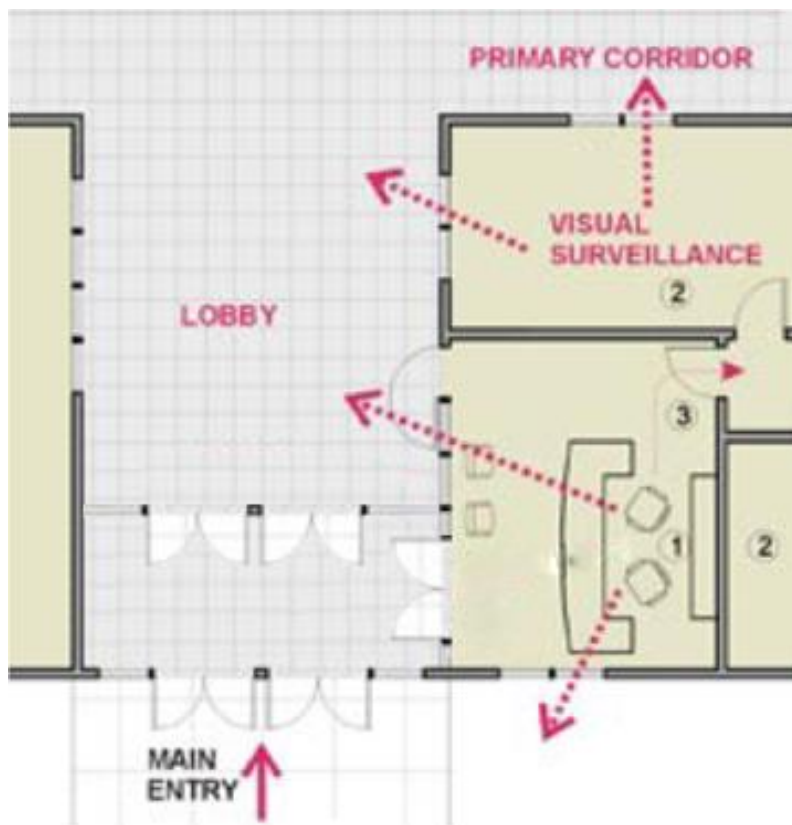


- Double or single entry doors
- Front reception desk with NO entrapment area





# Configuration #2: Layered Access



- Double or single entry doors
- Office reception room with entrapment area



# Best Practices

## Recommendations:

- Eliminate the number of unmonitored entrances into the building.
- At the beginning of the school day when several doors are open, all of the entrances should be monitored by teachers, security staff or administrators.
- Ensure all doors to the school are secured during school hours.
- Consider installing an automatic locking mechanism to ensure doors remain locked during school hours.
- Consider installing a panic button at the receptionist's desk.
- Budget permitting, consider installing ballistic glass to provide greater protection and delay a potential intruder's actions.
- For those buildings not constructed with an entrapment area, consider installing another set of doors to create an entrapment area.
- Use a visitor management system to verify that guests are authorized to visit the campus.
- Install surveillance cameras directly outside main building entrance to monitor avenues of approach.
- Install surveillance cameras in the main reception/lobby areas.
- Ensure door locking mechanisms meet applicable life safety and fire codes.



# Best Practices

## Recommendations:

- Consider installing a video intercom system on the building exterior to enhance access control.
- Consider installing ballistic protective steel plating on the vertical facing of desk front and sidewall.



Sample video intercom



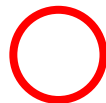
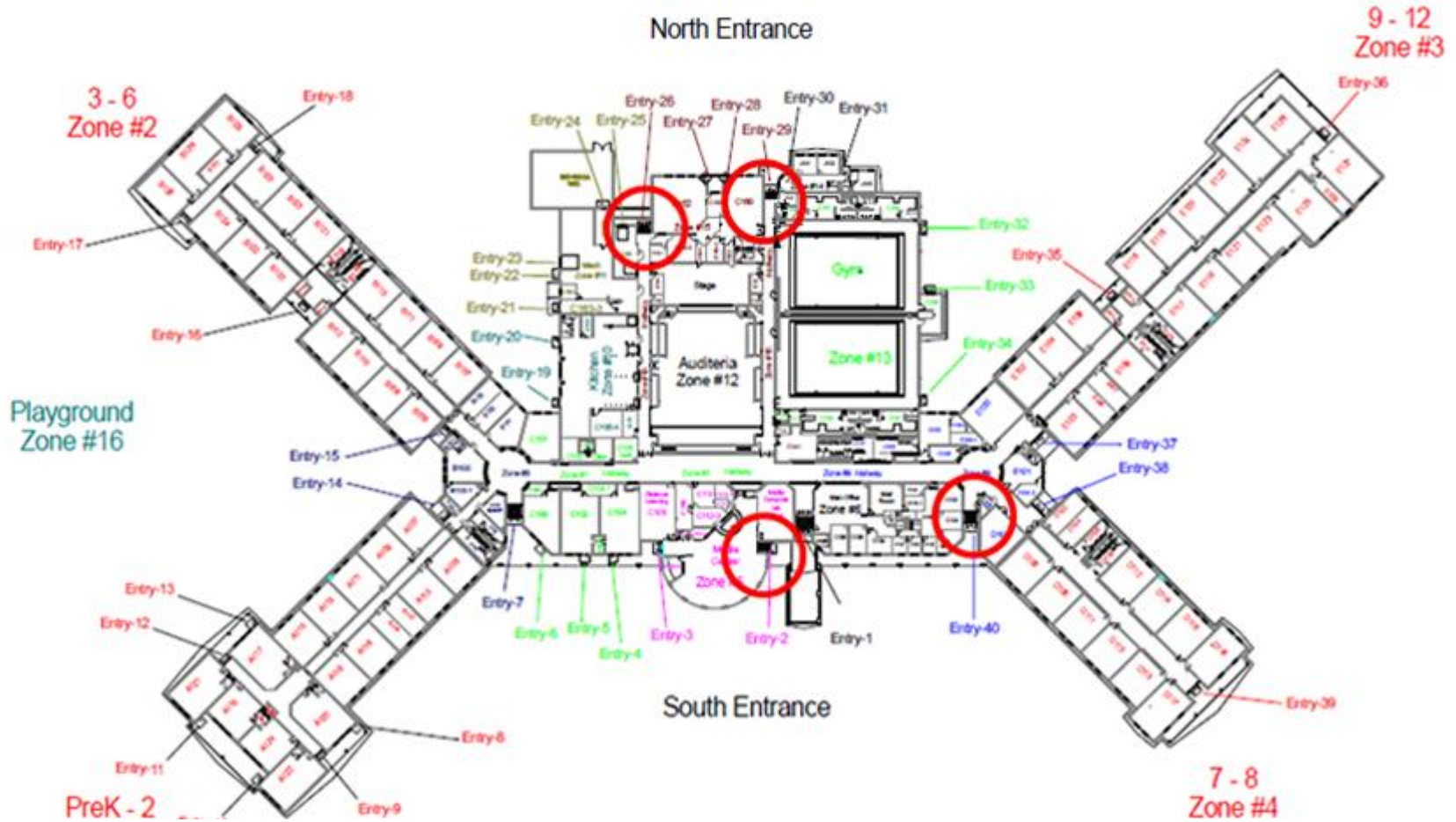
Steel plating

# Findings: Exterior Doors & Locks



# Findings

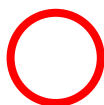
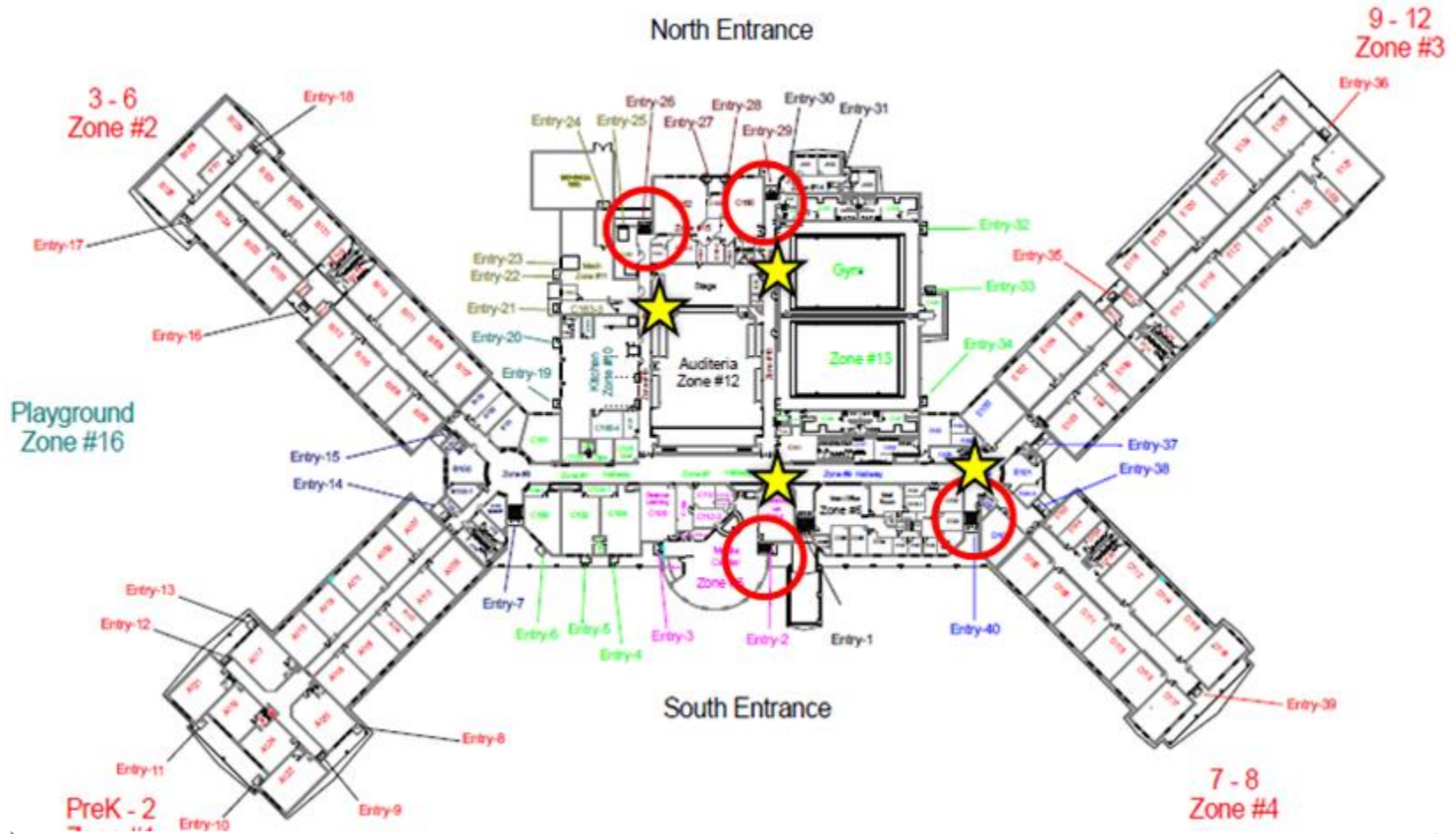
Access Control can be improved



Doors open from 0730 – 0800 am

# Best Practices

## Recommended Access Control improvement



Doors open from 0730 – 0800 am



Post staff members to control building access

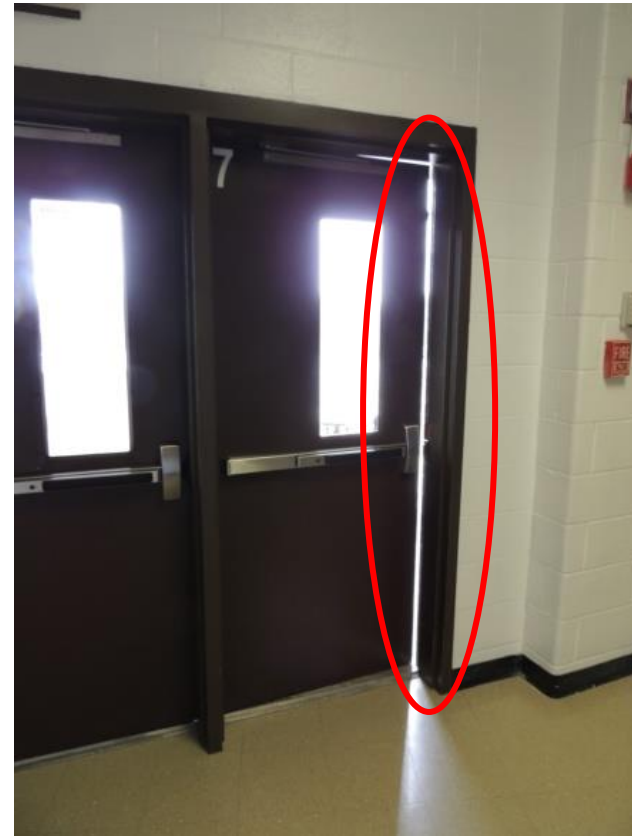


# Findings

Exterior building doors and locks can be improved



Unsecured service door



Unsecured door needing adjustment



# Findings

Exterior building doors and locks can be improved



Unsecured door



Exploitable to "carding"

# Findings

Exterior building doors and locks can be improved



Hinges exposed to tampering

# Best Practices

## Recommendations:

- Exterior doors should be constructed of steel aluminum alloy or solid core hardwood.
- Doors should have an adjustable spring/mechanism to ensure they are always closed.
- Doors should be inspected on a regular basis to ensure they are functioning properly.
- Doors should be equipped with peep holes as a surveillance mechanism to determine who is seeking entrance.
- Exterior doors should have little or no exposed hardware and hinges should have non-removable pins.
- Consider welding hinges to prevent tampering.
- Use highly pick-resistant locking systems.
- Ensure door-locking systems allow for emergency exiting without impediment.



# Best Practices

Consider installing an anti-carding plate





# Findings: Interior Doors & Windows

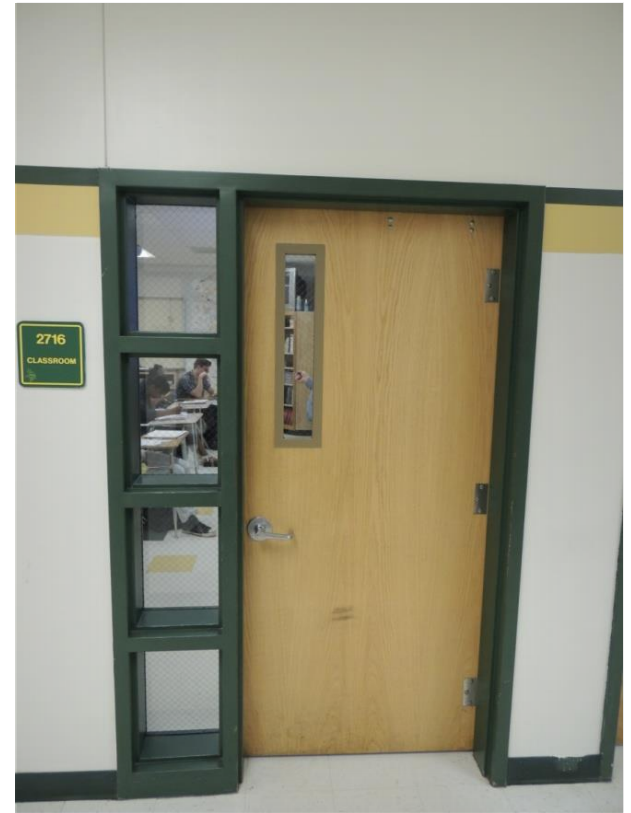
# Findings

Interior doors and windows are easily exploitable due to glass

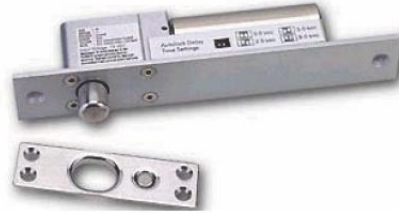


# Findings

Interior doors and windows are easily exploitable due to glass



# Best Practices



*Columbine and Virginia Tech University active shooter events highlight the importance of proper interior door and lock implementation: Throughout the entire duration of both attacks, neither of the two shooters ever entered a locked classroom (“DHS 428 Primer,” Chapter 3, pages 22 – 27).*

## **Recommendations:**

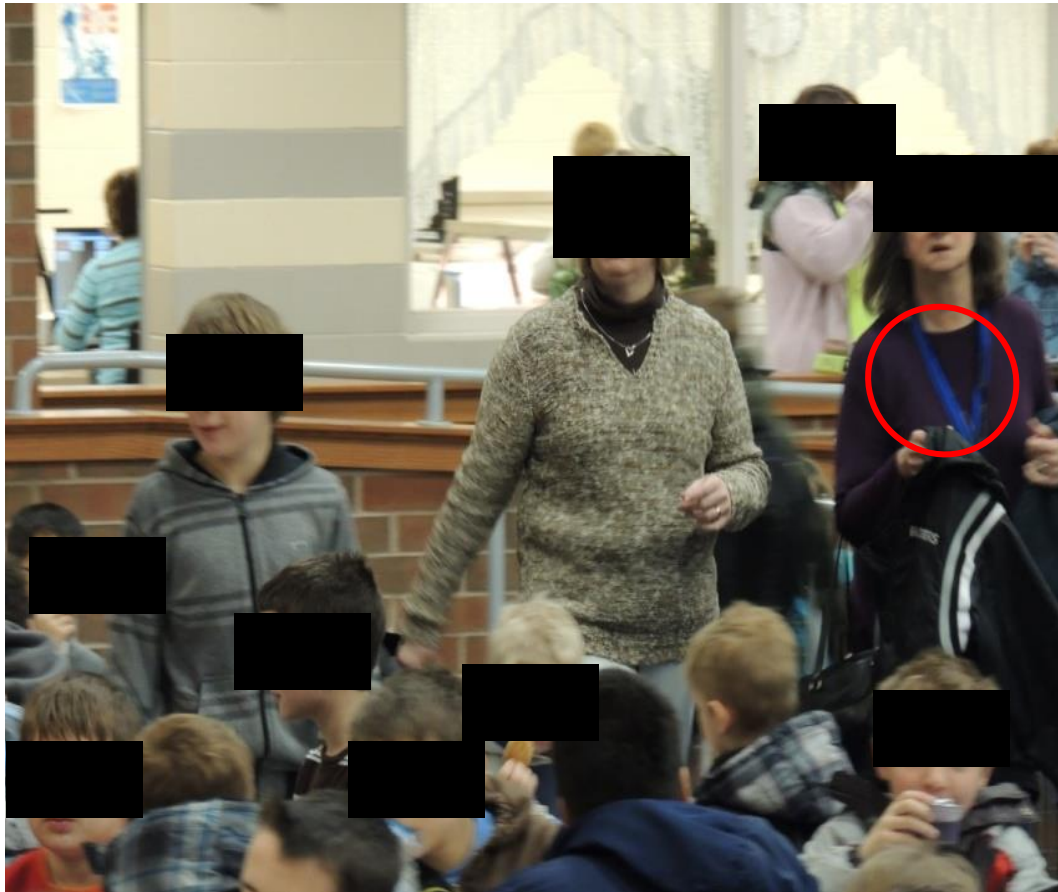
- Ensure classroom doors are locked during class time, this policy facilitates rapid lockdowns.
- Obscure and or/fortify doorway windows with ballistic or other protection as to prevent entry by assailant.
- Doors should be equipped with peep holes as a surveillance mechanism to determine who is seeking entry.
- Place door stop near each entry door to serve as an additional reliable door security device.
- Ensure all door-locking systems meet applicable life safety and fire codes to allow emergency evacuation.



# Findings: Internal Personnel Controls

# Findings

Teachers/staff members observed without badges or visibly displayed



# Best Practices

## Recommendations:

- Enforce wearing of badges.
- Enforce notification procedures for lost or stolen badges.
- Conduct spot checks.
- Train personnel to visibly display badges.
- Train personnel to challenge anyone not wearing a badge.
- Use a visitor management system to verify that guests are authorized to visit the campus.
- Examine and retain official identification from visitor.
- Consider escorting all visitors.





# Findings: Surveillance Cameras

# Findings

Video recordings are not checked on a regular basis to ensure video equipment is functioning properly

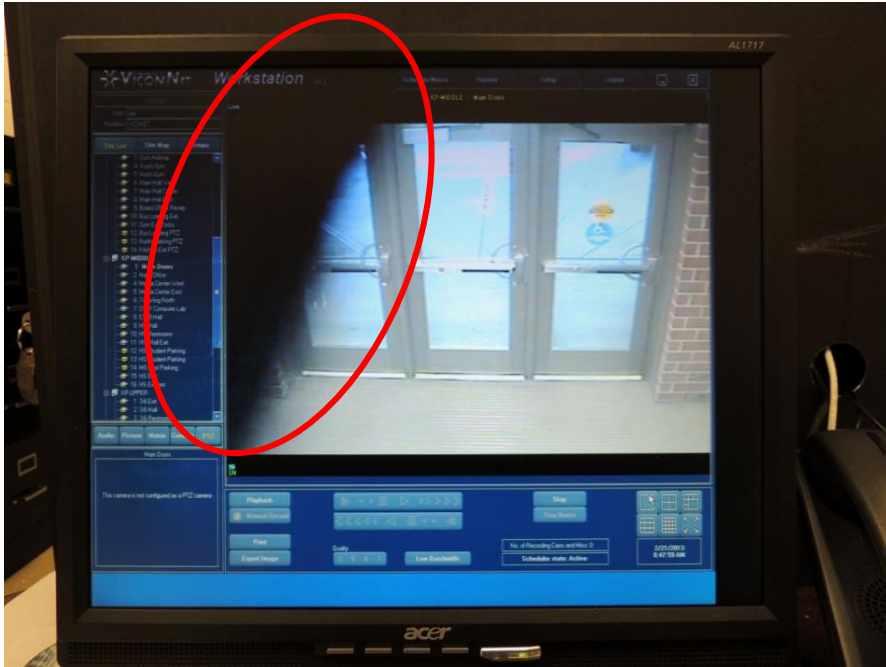


# Findings

## Non functioning cameras



# Findings



Camera view is obscured by shadow



Lighting sensitivity needs adjusting

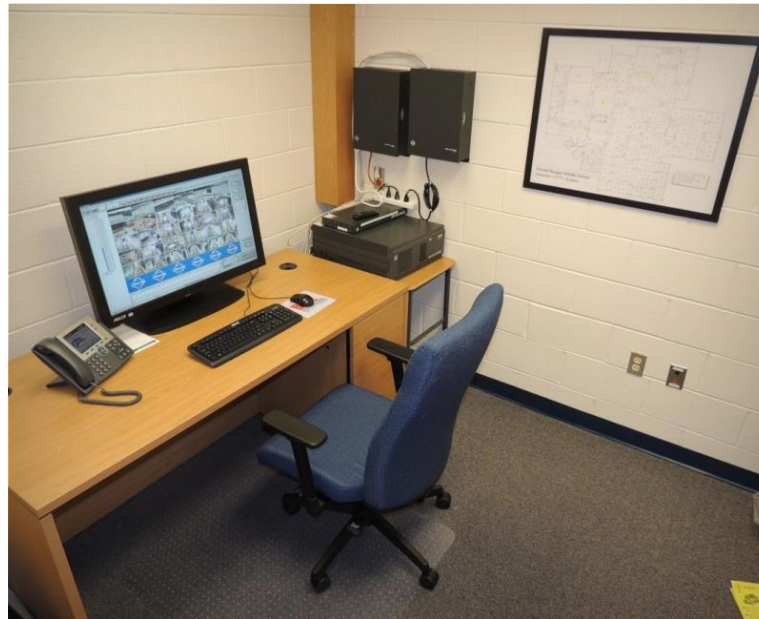


# Findings

Monitoring of surveillance cameras can be improved



Location of monitors



Unoccupied office



Part-time occupied office



# Best Practices

## Recommendations:

- Cameras should be installed throughout the facility to enable staff to identify and assess any threats.
- Conduct periodic checks of video recordings to verify video equipment is functioning properly.
- Direct proactive viewing of most critical cameras (main entry, cafeteria, gym, etc.) to security and/or administrative staff members, who can take ownership of specific cameras, reporting anomalies to appropriate staff.
- Move monitors to security and administrative staff member's desk/computer (eye level) for maximum viewing efficiency.



# Findings: Bus Operations



# Findings

Inadequate supervision of students during bus loading and unloading



Positioning of buses is not conducive to preventing a mass casualty situation



# Best Practices

## Recommendations:

- Consider increased control and supervision of students.
- Consider establishing single bus lane with appropriate space to allow for emergency egress.
- Consider conducting emergency egress drill for bus drivers, and including drivers in regularly scheduled, all inclusive, active shooter drills.
- Consider posting security (or staff) at lead and trail of bus lane to monitor avenues of approach.
- Consider staggering bus arrival and departure times.



# Findings: Preparedness

# Findings



Minimal or no joint training and exercises with local law enforcement/emergency responders.

Mandatory evacuation drill dates are announced thereby eliminating the element of surprise, which defeats the effectiveness of the drill.



# Best Practices

- Conduct joint training and exercises with local law enforcement/emergency first responders to enhance response capabilities.
- First responders should also have easy and immediate access to building plans and layouts so they can quickly shut off power, HVAC, etc., during an incident.
- Conduct unannounced drills to ensure realistic abilities are practiced and evaluated.
- Conduct tabletop exercises and scenario-based drills regularly, which can range from actual drills and training to informal, group brainstorming activities held with other stakeholders.
- Exercises should be conducted with enough frequency to maintain preparedness among an ever-changing student and staff population and to continually facilitate improvement of procedures.
- Providing regular, comprehensive trainings for teachers and staff, to include crisis response training, reviews of crisis plans and procedures, and periodic reminders of signals and codes.
- Encourage students to provide assessment, feedback, or suggestions for improvement.



# Findings

School Security Resource Officer (SRO) training and integration needs improvement:

- Minimal training with local first responders and SWAT.
- Minimal training within the school environment.
- Minimal in-service training that is focused on active threat response.
- Minimal force on force training.



# Best Practices

## Recommendations:

- SROs should be trained in Active Threat Response Tactics as outline by the NSSI training program.
- The security plan should integrate SROs, local first responders, SWAT, and school staff members.
- SROs should train with local first responders, SWAT, and school staff members.
- SRO should receive reality-based, force-on-force training; utilizing non-lethal ammunition to apply tactics and weapon skills.
- SROs should maintain continual presence without additional off-site duties.
- SRO's should undergo regular tactical training within the school environment.





# Best Practices

## School Personnel

- Conduct training for teachers, administrators, parents, armed personnel and students, to reinforce existing or new school safety and security procedures (security is everyone's responsibility!).
- Direct SRO(s) to remain on school grounds and minimize job duties outside of school environment.
- Enforce safety protocols, security measures and standards.
- “Every school person is a sensor” – enhance monitoring and controlling of student or visitor movements during and after school hours to include bus arrival and departure.
- Conduct unannounced lockdown drills as well as drills that transition from fire to lockdown and vice versa (complex scenarios).

MINDSET: Work to create a “culture of safety and security”.



# Best Practices

## Armed Security Staff

- Conduct regular training with qualified instructors in all areas of firearms safety, weapon handling, shooting skill, weapon retention, use of force and tactics to improve chances of success during any response to an active threat.
- Integrate training and response plan with local first responders, SWAT, and school staff.
- Incorporate reality-based, force-on-force training against a human role player to improve judgment/decision making.
- Ensure basic tactical ability during an active threat response.
- Ensure ability to apply skills under stress through stress inoculation.
- Conduct use of force training.



# Additional Best Practices

# Best Practices

## Managing Threat Information:

Key to successful threat management is the recognizing and addressing of Pre-Incident Indicators (Proactive) and management of Overt Threats (Reactive).

## Background:

- Most School Districts have formal procedures in place to manage overt threats. Threat assessments are ordered and the student is generally restricted from attending school until resolved satisfactory.
- Many High Schools have counselors, sociologist, psychologists, nurses, and security directors on staff to assist teachers and administrators in assessing students who have exhibited troubling or behavioral issues related to substance abuse, mental instability, bullying, or family/ peer pressures and others. The process of resolving these issues need to be more streamlined and formalized to include sharing of information among those administrators and student advisors and caregivers to better assess their risk.

Each school or district should assign a Threat Assessment Group (TAG) whose is responsible for compiling the social, medical and security factors to recognize the cumulative effect of each and assess the totality of risk factors. The TAG is responsible for recommending to the school administrator the final assessment of risk.



# Best Practices



- Classroom doors locked during instruction.
- Hallways are well lit and clear of obstructions.



# Best Practices

Crisis Management Plan (Quick Reaction Guide) affixed to every classroom exit doorway, including steps for:

- Active shooter
- Lockdown
- Bomb Threat
- Evacuation
- Hazardous Material Release
- Hostage Situation
- Medical
- Shelter In Place
- Attempted Suicide
- Tornado
- Emergency Response Numbers



# Summary

- Process and Methodology
- Findings
- Best Practices



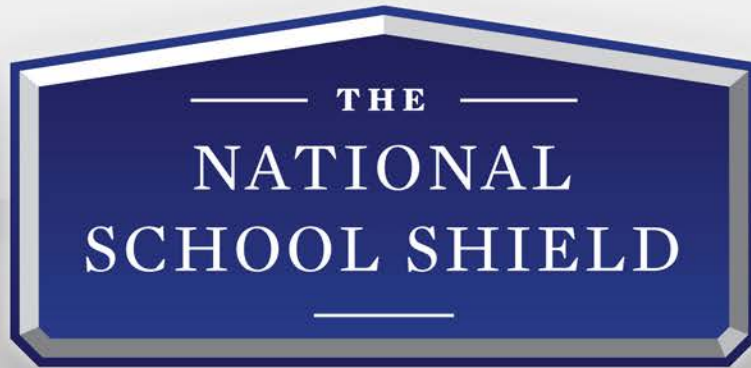




*In an uncertain world, experience matters.*

**WARNING AND DISCLAIMER:**

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**APPENDIX C**  
**TRAIN THE TRAINER PROGRAM**





## NATIONAL SCHOOL SHIELD INITIATIVE – TRAIN THE TRAINER PROGRAM

### Introduction

The focus of any train the trainer program should be to provide instructors with a practical way to develop, improve and implement new or existing topics, concepts and skills. Even if regional trainers or agencies use different approaches to training, there can be great benefit found in a program that promotes continuity, consistency and quality control across a variety of training methods. The National School Shield Initiative (NSSI) National Train the Trainer Program (NTTP) is designed to do just that. It is intended as a blueprint for law enforcement and military trainers as well as professional training organizations to develop quality instructors who will ultimately train end users (e.g. School Resource Officers (SROs) or armed school staff or personnel).

There are many motivated and qualified instructors across the country with years of law-enforcement, military and professional training experience, so one might ask, “Why do we need a national train the trainer program?” This is a valid question that must be addressed prior to any discussion of what that program should look like. The first part of the answer can be found in what the NTTP *is not*. It is not intended to be a rigid, restrictive and singular set of rules and techniques that must be universally adopted across the board by every trainer in America. That would not only be impractical, but contrary to the essence of what such a program seeks to accomplish. The goal for the NTTP is to provide a template or model for qualified regional trainers that allows the implementation of individualized agency or organization protocols and concepts that suit the needs of the specific audience while still adhering to industry-accepted best practices. This program will provide information and serve as a stand-alone instruction guide, but will also be flexible enough to have broader application among existing programs.

The second part of the answer to the question of why we need a NTTP can be best explained by understanding that “how something is taught is every bit as important as what is taught.” Information is only as effective as how well it is conveyed. A skilled officer or operator may be able to perform a skill or job very well, but that does not automatically make him or her an effective instructor. An easy-to-apply model or methodology often helps qualified instructors to bridge the gap between their knowledge/abilities and those of their students. As in any successful NTTP, our goal is to create training success, not training scars. Training scars can be as viewed as an ingrained bad habit borne from improper training or instruction, and is the antithesis of what trainers want students to take away from their training experience.

Below is a list of some of the other advantages and favorable qualities of the NTTP. It is not meant to be an all-inclusive list, but rather what we believe to be a litmus test when evaluating the pros and cons of any train the trainer program:

- **Consistency:** An effective train the trainer program should provide a means for maintaining the consistency of quality and content of instruction in all topical areas. It should encourage free thinking, but not freelancing. There will no doubt be some differences in techniques, strategies and protocols taught regionally, so it is imperative that a NTTP consist of a training model or methodology which provides a template or paradigm for continuity based on industry best

practices and NSSI core principles. An example would be in the area of tactics. A NTTP should be applicable to individual agency protocols or tactics without necessarily being “tactics dependent” as long as what is being taught is of sound content.

- **Quality Control of Instruction:** This concept of quality control and assurance is something that will be familiar to anyone who has supervised instructors within an agency. Quality control of instruction is part of the consistency element described above and simply means that a NTTP should provide a method to promote consistency and quality control among instructors and instruction throughout the initiative. This is critical to the success of any individual agency program, but even more so for one that would be implemented regionally and scrutinized nationally. For example, it is common for two instructors to teach the exact same topic in a different style, but the content and core principles delineated in the NSSI Active Threat Response Training Guide or any other particular program should be consistent across instructors. Lack of consistency and quality control of instructors leads to sending mixed messages to students and creating training scars.
- **Testing protocols:** An effective NTTP should provide a model or methodology to test the validity of existing techniques and protocols. Tactics and training can be debated endlessly, but a good model for training should allow for the actual testing of what works and what does not through realistic training. Utilizing live fire as well as non-lethal training ammunition (NLTA) for what is referred to as “Force-on-Force (FOF)” is a tremendous tool for accomplishing this. FOF allows for the engagement of interactive human role players, giving trainers an opportunity to see if what they are teaching students is likely to have real-world application and success.
- **Training model applications:** The program will also have a model for training basic, advanced and in-service students, as well as an easy way for remediation of each. It will allow for effective, realistic training while taking into consideration budget, time and facility limitations while minimizing “down-time” for students. The training model used would show trainers how to take students through a progression of skills up to and including realistic scenario development and application, stress inoculation and decision making.

## Importance and Outline

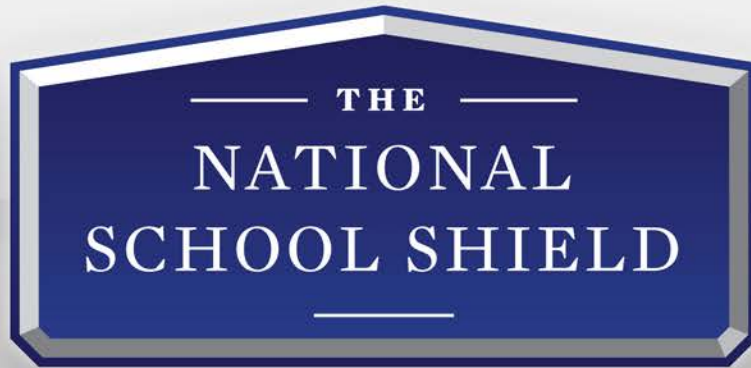
Having a NTTP is a critical element in assuring that the NSSI is a success nationwide. The information within the approved NTTP manual must be accurately facilitated to the instructors that will be teaching the material to the SROs and/or armed personnel. All information must be delivered to the trainers in a consistent and methodical manner so that a clear understanding of the material, methodologies, principles and concepts are in turn precisely presented to the trainees.

Let’s discuss the trainers selected to deliver this NSSI program. The national trainers for the NSSI program should be selected from existing law enforcement, military or professional training organizations. Qualification/disqualification and prerequisite consideration criteria for trainers would include but not be limited to criminal background investigation; current law enforcement, military or professional training organization status; psychological screen; medical screen; experience/expertise as a trainer in pertinent topical areas; professional references check; etc.

**Initial Training:** The trainee must be able to successfully complete the NSSI NTPP 50-hour best practices course. There will be a strong emphasis on the ability to accurately “teach back” what they have learned and demonstrate a clear understanding of the principles and concepts. The instructor development portion is to provide a refresher and/or enhance the basic knowledge of the instructor trainee.

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# APPENDIX D

## TRAINING GUIDE FOR SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS







## INTRODUCTION

Responsibility for the safety of our schools ultimately requires the collective efforts of law enforcement, school officials, parents and students. Safety enhancement should consist of education and training, as well as continuous quality improvement measures to maintain the safest school environment possible in our communities for children.

We should create opportunities to develop training for the incorporation and integration of all these groups into a comprehensive approach to safer schools. This guide will focus on three groups that are critical to the success of the National School Shield Initiative (NSSI). Specifically, we will provide guidelines for training the following three groups of personnel: 1) law enforcement School Resource Officers (SROs); 2) non law enforcement armed security personnel (security staff that are hired or contracted by the school); and 3) armed school personnel (any school staff member that has been designated to be armed in the school, other than an SRO and other than someone hired primarily to serve as security personnel). All training of armed school personnel must account for and anticipate the integration of other individuals and first responders into response plans of the armed school presence.

There are a number of similarities between the approaches to training the three armed groups for the prevention and mitigation of an active threat in order to minimize the risk of a mass casualty event. (NOTE: for the purposes of this guide, mitigation can be interpreted to mean either the isolation/containment or negation of an active threat).

In viewing the NSSI guide to training for SROs, non-law enforcement armed security, and other armed staff, the reader will immediately notice that there are many topics, which seem to overlap between all three groups. It should also become readily discernible that, in light of the differences between the mission and job requirements of a sworn law enforcement officer or non-law enforcement security officer, as opposed to other armed personnel whose primary responsibilities do not involve school security, there will appropriately be some dissimilarities between training best practices on each topic for these groups. Identifying specific jurisdictions, duties, individual school policy, agency use of force guidelines, and state/federal laws will drive and differentiate the training for each individual group as will the background, experience and ability of the trainee. For example, topics like patrolling the school grounds, arrest techniques, agency use of force policy, team tactics, and others may be very suitable for an SRO but outside the scope of responsibility and school policy of an armed staff member. Differences in emphasis or time spent on particular topics may also vary within each group based on experience level.

This guide will delineate the differences by putting forth a section on training for SRO, followed by section for armed school personnel which will have a subsection of non-law enforcement armed security. Ostensibly, the actual response of any single person moving to an active threat in the midst of a potential mass casualty event may appear to be the same, but training must be tailored to fit the individual responsibilities, jurisdiction, background, and mission of each person whether he or she is an SRO, armed school personnel or armed security.



# NATIONAL SCHOOL SHIELD ACTIVE THREAT RESPONSE TRAINING GUIDE FOR SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS

## *Summary*

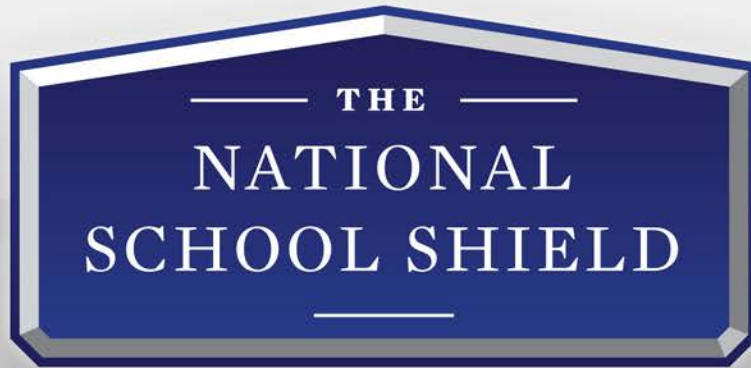
1. **History** –The training program should begin with an overview of events, lessons learned, and discussion of the paradigm shift from the traditional response.
2. **Pre-Incident Indicators (PII)** – The training program will include a brief synopsis of behavioral trends and patterns of past offenders through lessons learned. The SRO must maintain a general vigilance and should be trained to recognize specific indicators when a suspect is navigating through the critical transition from the planning stage to execution of the event. The SRO must maintain a continual situational awareness to be able to identify abnormal actions of the student body as well as outside threats. It is essential the SRO be trained with the appropriate level of cognitive tools to identify and enact procedures to interdict the incident well before the violent act is committed.
3. **Mindset** – Proper mindset is a critical tool needed to prevent or mitigate an active threat. It must be developed and reinforced prior to any critical incident. For example, moving toward the sound of gunfire is contrary to the survival instincts of most people but may be appropriate and necessary for the armed responder. The SRO must consider the stress and fear, as well as social, ethical, or faith based issues that may arise when confronted with the reality of moving towards danger, the possibility of using lethal force on another human being, or risking their own life and safety in the process. Training must be designed in a manner to provide stress inoculation, not stress overload and to evaluate reasonable judgment/discretion skills in action.
4. **Use of Force** – The training program instructs the application of use of force to include legal updates on state and federal Laws along with individual agency policy.
5. **Patrol Techniques in School** – The training program instructs officers on concepts and principles related to ‘hardening your target’ with specifics pertaining to patrol procedures inside and outside of the school grounds while maintaining continued focus on PIIs, situational awareness, and their importance in prevention!
6. **Response Plan to Active Threat** – The training program will instruct officers on the appropriate response to an active threat. During the response phase of an active threat when the decision has been made that a physical response is necessary to mitigate further loss of innocent life SROs should be trained appropriately.
7. **Response to Bomb/Suspicious Package Located During Active Threat** – History has shown us that many active threat incidents are premeditated and involve significant planning. In some instances, part of the suspects attack plan includes bombs and explosives. SROs should be provided with a basic working knowledge of these topics, which may be needed if they encounter such a device specifically DURING an active threat event. Established protocol should be observed if discovery is absent an active threat.

8. **Weapons Training (using both Non-Lethal Training Ammunition (NLTA) and Live Fire)** – An essential skill needed to successfully mitigate an active threat is weapon proficiency under stress. Many people can shoot stationary paper targets on a static range, however there are more relevant firearms skills and tactics that must be the focus of training when preparing for an active threat event. Live fire training is essential, as is reality based tactics drills and scenarios. Force-on-Force training with NLTA provides realism by allowing trainees to make the psychological and physical transition from engaging inanimate static targets to interactive human role players during training exercises in a safe environment.
9. **Tactics** – Concepts and principles in tactics are another critical component of success when responding to an active threat. The SRO must be trained to safely and effectively mitigate the threat.
10. **Defensive Tactics/Arrest Techniques** – The SRO may find himself/herself in close proximity to the active threat; this may occur during or after initial contact. Therefore, the SRO must have the hand-to-hand (i.e. close quarters) skills necessary to mitigate or control the suspect without necessarily implementing a firearm to do so. Defensive tactics and arrest techniques, including handcuffing, must be a part of the SRO's skill practiced and maintained skill set. Strong emphasis should also be placed on weapon retention, security and protection at all times both in training and in daily routines.
11. **Tactical Medicine (TAC-MED)** – Too often active threat incidents involve traumatic wounds to victims, including first-responders. The SRO must be able to manage initial care of traumatic wounds sustained by himself or a victim. This should be attempted **ONLY** when tactically appropriate-that is when the threat has been neutralized.
12. **Integrated plans** – History has proven that in today's high risk environment for an active threat, it is critical for an SRO to communicate and train with other agencies, local police departments including special response teams, fire departments, emergency medical personnel, and other school staff. The SRO must be familiar with all other emergency response plans as well as his/her role when local police and/or response teams arrive on the scene.

*Recommended Duration of Training 40-50 hours.*

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**APPENDIX E**  
**TRAINING GUIDE FOR ARMED SCHOOL PERSONNEL**





# THE NATIONAL SCHOOL SHIELD ACTIVE THREAT RESPONSE TRAINING GUIDE FOR ARMED SCHOOL PERSONNEL

## *Summary*

1. **History** – The training program for armed school personnel should begin with an overview of events, lessons learned, and discussion of the paradigm shift from the traditional response.
2. **Mindset** – Proper Mindset is a critical tool in preventing or mitigating an active threat. This mindset must be developed and reinforced prior to any critical incident. For example, moving toward the sound of gunfire is contrary to the survival instincts of most people but may be appropriate and necessary for an armed responder. The potential responder, must consider the stress and fear, as well as social, ethical, or faith based issues that they may arise when confronted with the reality of moving towards danger and the possibility of using lethal force on another human being or risking their own life or safety in the process. Training must be designed so as to provide stress inoculation, not stress overload and to evaluate reasonable judgment/discretion skills in action.
3. **Pre-Incident Indicators (PII)** – The training program should include a brief synopsis of behavioral trends and patterns of past offenders through lessons learned. The individual must maintain a general vigilance and should be trained to recognize specific indicators when a suspect is navigating the critical transition from the planning stage to execution of the event. The armed responder must maintain a continual situational awareness to be able to identify abnormal actions amongst the student body as well as outside threats. It is essential that armed school personnel be trained with an appropriate level of cognitive tools to identify and enact procedures to interdict the incident well before the violent act is committed.
4. **Legal Considerations** – The training program for armed school personnel should cover many of the legal issues related to the carry of firearms and the protection of human life. Coverage should include state and federal Laws as well as particular school policies and procedures.
5. **Response Plan to Active Threat** – The training program for armed school personnel should instruct individuals on the appropriate response to an active threat. The response plans should include but not be limited to: variables and threat assessment considerations, such as type of threat, multiple threat communication, and others. During the response phase of an active threat when the decision has been made that a physical response is necessary to mitigate further loss of innocent life, armed responders should be trained to respond appropriately.
6. **Response to Bomb/Suspicious Package Located During Active Threat** – History has shown us that many active threat incidents are premeditated and involve significant planning. In some instances, part of the suspects attack plan includes bombs, explosives, and booby traps. Armed school personnel should be provided with a basic working knowledge of these topics which may be needed if they encounter such a device specifically DURING and active threat event.



Established protocol and bomb threat emergency plans should be observed if discovery is absent an active threat.

7. **Weapons training (using Non-Lethal Training Ammunition (NLTA) and Live)** – An essential skill to successfully mitigate an active threat is weapons proficiency under stress. Many people can shoot stationary paper targets on a static range, however there are more relevant firearms skills and tactics that must be the focus of training when preparing for an active threat event. There must be an appropriate mix of fundamentals and tactical shooting with judgment and stress. Live fire training is essential as is more reality based tactics drills and scenarios. Force on Force training with NLTA provides realism by allowing trainees to make the psychological and physical transition from engaging inanimate static targets to interactive human role players during training exercises in a safe environment.
8. **Weapon Retention/Empty hand skills** – Any individual who carries a weapon, whether exposed or concealed, must always remain aware of the risk of having the security of that weapon system compromised. As such, weapon retention and protection is a critical component of any training plan for armed personnel. Basic striking skills in close quarter are also useful.
9. **Tactics** – Concepts and principles of tactics are another critical component of success when responding to an active threat. The armed responder must be trained to safely and effectively tactically handle the threat.
10. **Emergency medicine** – Too often active threat incidents involve traumatic wounds to victims, including other first-responders. The armed responder should be able to manage initial care of traumatic wounds sustained by himself or herself or a victim. This should be attempted **ONLY** when tactically appropriate – that is when the threat has been neutralized.
11. **Integrated plans** – History has proven that in today’s high risk environment with regards to an active threat, it is critical for an armed responder to communicate and when feasible, train with other agencies, local police departments, fire departments, emergency medical service personnel and other school staff. The armed responder should be familiar with all other response plans such as evacuation, lockdown type plans and bomb threats as well as his or her role when local police and/or response teams arrive on the scene. Understanding all the response plans and having the training to decide which action plan to follow is a critical decision making skill required for all staff. Too often, emergency response plans are practiced in a robotic and singular fashion with no consideration of or opportunity for real-time decision-making. Training should include the introduction of a hypothetical emergency/threat and staff must decide which plan to follow and action(s) to take. This will assist in providing the individual with the skills necessary to make hard choices under real-world stress.
12. **Special Considerations:** The secure document will include a list of special considerations.

*Recommended Duration of Training 60-80 hours.*

13. **Armed Security Personnel with a Primary Function of School Security** – For armed staff, the primary role of whom is providing security, such as uniformed private security personnel; the following additional training objectives should be covered:

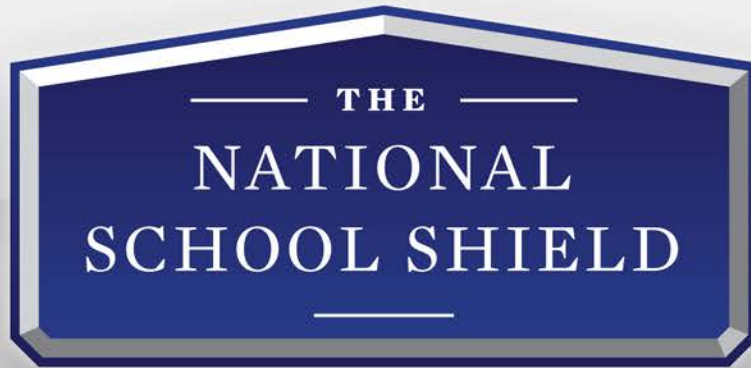
- a. **Use of force** – The training program for armed security personnel (uniformed or non-uniformed) should cover use of force to include legal updates on state and federal Laws along with individual agency, school and organization policy.
- b. **Patrol techniques in School** – The training program for armed security personnel (uniformed) should instruct individuals on concepts and principles related to ‘hardening your target’ with specifics pertaining to patrol procedures on the school grounds while maintaining continued focus on PII, situational awareness, and their importance in prevention!

*Recommended Duration of Training with Additional Objectives 60-80 hours.*

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**APPENDIX F**  
**WEB-BASED ASSESSMENT TOOL**

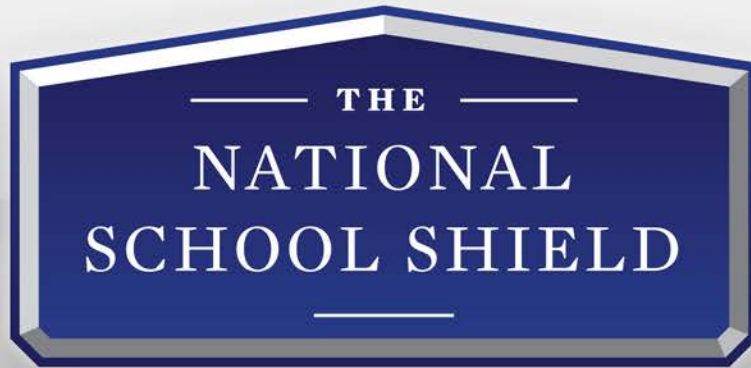


# PUBLIC SUMMARY ON WEB BASED SELF ASSESSMENT TOOL

The National School Shield Task Force has developed a web based self assessment tool for free access by all public, private and parochial schools in the nation. The assessment tool is designed to assist school officials in evaluating the security of facilities, security and safety policies, training and coordination with law enforcement.

The assessment tool will be based upon the following guiding principles:

1. Access will be granted by a secure pass code issued by the National School Shield (NSS) to verified school official with a plan to conduct a school security assessment.
2. There will be no fee or charge for use of the on line assessment tool.
3. Membership in NSS is not a requirement for access to the assessment tool.
4. The completion and scoring of the assessment tool is a team effort in which teachers, administrators and school staff will work together to complete the assessment.
5. The scenario-based questions prompt schools to identify the operational and functional weaknesses in their security.
6. The assessment tool does not provide a cookie cutter solution to a school's security needs. Rather, it aids the school in identifying security gaps and assists school officials in finding solutions to fill the gaps in school policy, technology, personnel, training and oversight.
7. The outcome-based performance guidelines (Appendix G) ensure that the assessment is applicable to the unique characteristics of any given school.
8. In many instances the on line assessment tool will lead the school to use a professional school security consultant to guide the school in closing the gaps identified in the assessment. In other instances the school may utilize the professional assistance of local law enforcement in developing the school security plans and may also be assisted by the Best Practices available on the NSS web site and included with this report as Appendix A.
9. This is an ongoing project. The assessment tool will be piloted in various schools and the scenarios and questions refined to provide the best resource to all schools. After initial roll-out the assessment tool will be kept current along with the best practices available to the schools.
10. The actual assessment tool is being provided to the NRA as a non-public document since the scenarios and specific assessment tools should not be disclosed for security reasons.



**APPENDIX G**  
**PERFORMANCE GUIDELINES FOR**  
**SCHOOL SECURITY PLANS**



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## **Preface**

These non-compulsory performance guidelines and criteria provide our nation’s schools with guidance for consideration in evaluating existing armed aggressor security measures and plans. National School Shield developed these guidelines and criteria to provide our nation’s schools with guidance that is specific to the armed aggressor(s) threat. These performance guidelines and criteria adhere to long-established security principles that a school may consider as part of a strategy to address the armed aggressor threat. The guidelines and criteria will likely apply in differing manners and to differing degrees to each school. The application of the guidelines and criteria can be determined at a local level by each school that may choose to use this guidance as a tool in the evaluation of their existing security plan to respond to an armed aggressor.

## **1.0 Introduction and Overview**

The Armed Aggressor Performance Guidelines and Criteria is the first in a series of National School Shield products developed to enhance the capacity of our nation’s schools in managing school security risks. Contributing to the protection of our children and the professionals that educate and care for them is our duty and pledge.

Historically, schools have used various methods to assess security measures and security plans. One method that has been used in recent years is checklist-based questionnaires for schools to conduct vulnerability assessments. While providing some level of benefit, most check-list based assessment approaches do not ask questions based upon credible threat scenarios nor provide guidance to evaluate the responses. These methodologies may not lead to the identification of operational and functional gaps and/or limitations that may exist in a school’s security plans and procedures.

Schools can use the performance guidelines and criteria to:

- ✓ *Facilitate identifying gaps in existing plans and procedures,*
- ✓ *Benchmark armed aggressor plans against performance guidelines and criteria,*
- ✓ *Assess how existing security policy and procedures may actually perform prior to or during an armed aggressor(s) event*
- ✓ *Support decision-makers in the security risk-based decision processes*

## **2.0 A Security Minded Culture is Important**

Seconds matter in protecting lives when a potential and or actual armed aggressor event is occurring. At that moment, written plans and safeguards must intuitively turn into executable actions by all responders and stakeholders on and off-campus. Armed aggressor precursors or an actual event must be recognized, assessed, communicated quickly and properly with a response initiated as soon as possible. Basic to achieving this outcome is for schools to establish and sustain a security minded culture.

- ✓ *A security minded culture ensures that there is a constant drive within the school to promote and execute the objectives of the security plan. This culture also ensures that staff and stakeholders actively contribute to the continual improvement and success of such efforts.*

A strong security culture can help to avoid complacency and flawed assumptions that “*an armed aggressor event would not happen at our school and things like that just don’t happen where we live.*” While such events are unpredictable and unlikely, the potential consequences are heartbreaking and catastrophic. Having a security mindset does not imply that schools educate in fear, but rather are vigilant and well-prepared to respond to such an unlikely event.

## **3.0 Benefits of Gap Analyses in Managing School Security Risk**

A very important step in managing school security risk is conducting “gap analyses” of existing security plans, physical security measures, training, and security management functional disciplines.

- ✓ *One of the missing links in the evolution of school security improvements has been the lack of useful performance guidelines and criteria applicable to school security*
- ✓ *The purpose of these guidelines and criteria are to provide our nation’s schools guidance to perform an assessment of existing and/or planned security procedures against performance guidelines and criteria; thus fulfilling a very important step in the security risk management process*

### **3.1 Description of Performance Guidelines**

Providing schools performance guidelines and criteria establishes a tangible benchmark to assist schools in assessing preparedness against armed aggressor threats. Implemented correctly, performance guidelines assist schools in improving the levels of readiness against armed aggressor(s) without prescribing the specific method(s) for achieving the desired results. Therefore, a school is

able to select and implement measures that provide the most security benefit to achieve the outcome of the performance guideline.

*Stated differently, a performance guideline specifies the outcome desired, but leaves the specific measures to achieve that outcome up to the discretion of the school or school system. A performance guideline sets a goal and provides each school the flexibility to decide how their current armed aggressor(s) measures and plans achieve the performance guideline.*

Each performance guideline section contains the following:

- An overview of the performance guideline topic and how it relates to school security
- A definition of the performance guideline
- A list of objectives and criteria that describe the desired outcomes of the associated performance guideline

#### **4.0 Performance Guideline 1 – Detection, Student Supervision, and Monitoring**

At schools, the methods of detection, student supervision, and monitoring are generally achieved through (1) “visual observation” by school staff and stakeholders, (2) CCTV system monitoring, (3) access control systems and measures, (4) oversight of school controlled computer networks, and (5) information gleaned by school staff or other responsible individuals pertaining “over-hearing threatening language and or observing threatening behavior.”

Definition for Performance Guideline 1: Detection, student supervision, and monitoring refer to a school’s capability to recognize events such as; unauthorized person(s) on campus, recognizing precursors to armed aggressor events, or an actual armed aggressor event and the capability to communicate that information, as appropriate. In the context of the armed aggressor threat, “monitor” refers to the need to have indoor and outdoor situational awareness of the person(s) and activities present on school grounds.

Detection, Student Supervision, and Monitoring Objectives:

- 1.1. School recognizes an act of aggression, suspicious activity, and or precursors related-to and or actual armed aggressor incident
- 1.2. School assesses the validity of the act observed through detection, student supervision, and/or monitoring
- 1.3. School communicates to the designated on-campus and off-campus response personnel

Criteria for Detection Objective 1.1:

- 1.1.1 School monitors student and visitor arrival locations (bus stops, parking lots, etc.) such that armed aggressor precursors (displaying a weapon) or an act of aggression (firing a weapon) could be detected.
- 1.1.2 School monitors indoor and or outdoor student and visitor assembly area(s) such that armed aggressor precursors (displaying a weapon) or an act of aggression (firing a weapon) could be detected.

1.1.3 School monitors main pedestrian access doors, as well as any other doors through which students or other person(s) routinely pass during times in which these doors are not secured.

1.1.4 School monitors hallways such that armed aggressor precursors (displaying a weapon) or an act of aggression (firing a weapon) could be detected.

1.1.5 School monitors cafeteria, commons area, auditorium, atrium, media center, or other similar locations such that armed aggressor precursors (displaying a weapon) or an act of aggression (firing a weapon) could be detected.

1.1.6 School monitors student and visitor dismissal locations (bus stops, parking lots, etc.) such that armed aggressor precursors (displaying a weapon) or an act of aggression (firing a weapon) could be detected.

1.1.7 School monitors after school and special events such that armed aggressor precursors (displaying a weapon) or an act of aggression (firing a weapon) could be detected.

1.1.8 School maintains oversight of internet usage of school computers such that armed aggressor threat precursors could be detected.

1.1.9 School screens reports to internal school officials in relation to specific security threats and or incidents that occur on campus or within the school district.

#### Criteria for Detection Objective 1.2:

1.2.1 School has the capability to assess reports of “behaviors of concern” from all supervision and monitoring processes such that the cause of the behavior receives timely communication to officials within the school and/or across the school system.

1.2.2 School has a process to assess potentially aggressive behavior or actions.

#### Criteria for Detection Objective 1.3:

1.3.1 School has a process to communicate information concerning armed aggressor precursors (displaying a weapon) or an act of aggression (firing a weapon) from all monitoring or screening measures to school personnel and local law enforcement.

## **5.0 Performance Guideline 2 – Access Control**

In dynamic incidents such as an armed aggressor event, school staff must rapidly implement measures that hinder or impede the aggressor’s access to students and staff by initiating access control and/or other physical security measures to interrupt the movement of the armed aggressor.

The rapid implementation of access control measures necessitates that an armed aggressor temporarily cease a hostile course of action such as “firing a weapon” to breach the measures providing additional time for on-campus and/or off-campus responders to interdict hostile actions. The effectiveness of this layered security approach cannot be underestimated as to the ability of barriers, locks, and other access



control measures to save lives and create time for on-site and or off-site responders to interdict the armed aggressor's actions.

Definition Performance Guideline 2: Access control refers to a school's capability to delay, hinder and/or impede an armed aggressor(s) attack method(s) and access to staff and students by the use of physical security measures and barriers, administrative/procedural measures, and other methods. Additionally, access control includes the school's ability to monitor and control access to the school campus and/or buildings and permit access to authorized person(s) only.

Access Control Objectives:

2.1 Control and/or monitor access to the school campus, buildings, classrooms, and activities.

Criteria for Access Control Objective 2.1:

2.1.1 Hinder/impede the accessibility of the armed aggressor to students and personnel by using a combination of one or more layers of physical barriers or other methods thus providing more time for responders to interdict the armed aggressor(s).

2. 1.2 School has a system and process that checks the identification of visitors and persons seeking access to the school.

## **6.0 Performance Guideline 3 – Response**

Response is the role-specific execution of a school security plan. Responding to an armed aggressor or precursor event requires that the school's security procedures, training, and preparation converge into a series of practical and executable tasks carried out by school staff and other first responders. The security measures and response methods selected to protect the students and staff at the school, upon being alerted, must function as planned and practiced.

Definition Performance Guideline 3: Response refers to the capability to communicate, respond, and manage the appropriate reaction(s) to potential and or actual armed aggressor(s) attack events.

Response Objectives:

3.1 Disseminated response plans are developed that ensure that on-site school responders and applicable offsite emergency and law enforcement response agencies are cognizant of armed aggressor event response protocols.

3.2 Communication systems at the school communicate within the school facility and with first responder agencies are operable, maintained, and periodically tested, as applicable.

3.3 Training program for applicable personnel and role-specific training on responsibilities associated with armed aggressor events are in place.

3.4 Escalate levels of protection during periods of elevated threat.

Criteria for Response Objective 3.1:

3.1.1 School Response Plan describes specific school procedures and/or processes to address an armed aggressor event.

3.1.2 School security plans, security hardware, and security system changes or upgrades are coordinated with law enforcement and other appropriate agencies to ensure that changes or upgrades do not adversely affect law enforcement or other first responder agency response capabilities and effectiveness.

Criteria for Response Objective 3.2:

3.2.1 Operable and reliable communication equipment and or methods allow for communication to on-site personnel and offsite response agencies.

Criteria for Response Objective 3.3:

3.3.1 School armed aggressor training program includes all applicable school personnel and addresses specific roles and responsibilities to implement an armed aggressor response plan.

Criteria for Response Objective 3.4:

3.4.1 Plans address school security posture changes in response to periods of elevated threat.

## **7.0 Performance Guideline 4 – School Security Management**

Schools should develop and rehearse leadership and staff roles and responsibilities as they pertain to armed aggressor events. Not every scenario and/or malevolent act can be predicted, thus requiring those responsible for the protection of students and staff to be cross-trained in the roles and responsibilities in the school security plan and how to implement the plan on a moment's notice.

Definition Performance Guideline 4: School Security Management refers to the capability to assess risk and then develop, manage, and implement policies, procedures, physical security measures, training, and processes as they relate to potential and or actual armed aggressor events.

School Security Management Objectives:

4.1 Training for school personnel in security and armed aggressor policies and procedures, including specific roles and responsibilities related to the armed aggressor threat and events (includes drills and exercises)

4.2 Manage a formalized inspection and/or testing program for physical security measures

Criteria for Security Management Objective 4.1:

4.1.1 School has identified roles and responsibilities for armed aggressor event(s) and identified the personnel responsible for performing those duties.

4.1.2 Personnel within the school are trained and cross-trained to task-specific roles and responsibilities pertaining to the potential for or actual occurrence of an armed aggressor event.

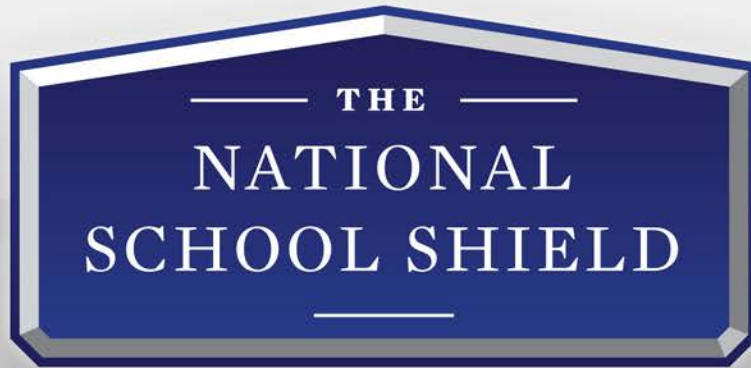
4.1.3 School has developed policy, qualifications, initial and recurrent training requirements, and equipment needs for School Resource Officer and or Armed Security Officers.

Criteria for Security Management Objective 4.2:

4.2.1 Back-up plans are developed to maintain the school's security posture in cases of temporary changes (personnel or equipment), equipment failure, modifications, and/or outages of existing security measures and processes.

4.2.2 Access control and delay measures including, but not limited to access control systems, lockdown systems, barriers, locks, and doors are in good working order and are inspected and otherwise maintained.

4.2.3 Detection and monitoring measures including, but not limited to, intrusion detection systems, access control systems, CCTV, and lighting are inspected, calibrated, tested and otherwise maintained.



**APPENDIX H**  
**MODEL STATE LAW FOR**  
**ARMED SCHOOL PERSONNEL**



1  
2 An act relating to school safety; authorizing school  
3 administrators to designate personnel who may carry  
4 concealed weapons or firearms on school property;  
5 providing an exception to a prohibition on possession  
6 or discharge of weapons or firearms on school property  
7 by such designees; authorizing designees to carry  
8 concealed weapons or firearms; providing an effective  
9 date.

10  
11 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of \_\_\_\_\_:

12  
13 Section 1. [STATE EDUCATION STATUTE] is amended by  
14 inserting [AT THE APPROPRIATE PLACE]:

15 (1) A person who is a school employee or retired law  
16 enforcement officer may be designated by the school principal  
17 or, for an administration building, by the district school  
18 superintendent, as authorized to carry a concealed weapon or  
19 firearm as defined in [STATUTE DEFINING "FIREARM" AND "WEAPON"]  
20 on school property.

21  
22 (a) A designee authorized to carry a concealed weapon  
23 or firearm on school property may only carry such weapon or  
24 firearm in a concealed manner.

25  
26 ALTERNATIVE 1:

27 (b) The designee shall submit to the authorizing  
28 principal or authorizing superintendent proof of completion  
29 of training in a program developed by the National Rifle

30 Association's Law Enforcement Division, and of any  
31 recertification required by such program.

32  
33 ALTERNATIVE 2:

34 (b) The designee shall submit to the authorizing  
35 principal or authorizing superintendent proof of completion  
36 of training or experience as described in [STATE STATUTE  
37 REQUIRING TRAINING AND RENEWAL TRAINING FOR ARMED SECURITY  
38 GUARDS OR RESERVE POLICE].

39  
40 ALTERNATIVE 3:

41 (b) The designee shall submit to the authorizing  
42 principal or authorizing superintendent proof of completion  
43 of a minimum of [XX] hours of training in a program  
44 certified to conduct such training by [STATE AGENCY  
45 RESPONSIBLE FOR SETTING LAW ENFORCEMENT OR ARMED SECURITY  
46 TRAINING STANDARDS] for an initial designation, and a  
47 minimum of [XX] hours of additional training in each  
48 additional 12-month period thereafter. Such training shall  
49 include, at a minimum, training in the following areas—

50  
51 (i) Firearm safety and maintenance;

52  
53 (ii) Defensive marksmanship;

54  
55 (iii) Personal tactics appropriate to the  
56 protection of students and school personnel against  
57 criminal attack;

58

59                   (iv) Secure carrying and retention of a concealed  
60                   weapon or firearm; and

61  
62                   (v) Appropriate interaction with law enforcement  
63                   and emergency personnel arriving on the scene of an  
64                   incident.

65  
66                   (c) Each school principal or, for an administration  
67                   building, the superintendent, may designate one or more  
68                   such designees under this paragraph. The school principal  
69                   or superintendent shall notify local law enforcement  
70                   agencies in the jurisdiction in which the school is located  
71                   that personnel have been designated under this paragraph.

72                   (d) The school, school district, board and  
73                   administrators, and designees who are authorized to possess  
74                   firearms on school property under this paragraph, shall not  
75                   be liable for damages, injury or death caused by any acts  
76                   or omissions in responding to an incident that threatens  
77                   the safety or security of the school or its students or  
78                   employees, other than acts or omissions constituting  
79                   recklessness or willful or wanton misconduct; or

80                   (e) The school, school district, board and  
81                   administrators shall not be liable for any damages, injury  
82                   or death arising out of a designee's actions involving a  
83                   firearm carried or possessed on school property unless the  
84                   school district, board or administrators knew of or  
85                   intentionally solicited or procured the designee's actions  
86                   that resulted in the harm.

87



88 Section 2. [STATE GUN-FREE SCHOOL ZONES STATUTE--  
89 EXCEPTIONS] is amended by inserting [AT THE APPROPRIATE PLACE]:

90 (a) This provision shall not apply to a person designated  
91 as authorized to carry a concealed weapon or firearm on school  
92 property under [EDUCATION STATUTE AMENDED ABOVE].

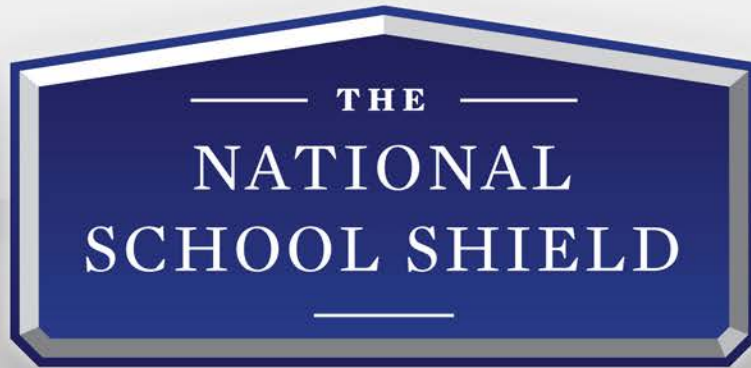
93  
94 Section 3. [STATE FIREARMS DISCHARGE STATUTE--EXCEPTIONS]  
95 is amended by inserting [AT THE APPROPRIATE PLACE]:

96 (a) This provision shall not apply to a person designated  
97 as authorized to carry a concealed weapon or firearm on school  
98 property under [EDUCATION STATUTE AMENDED ABOVE] and acting in  
99 lawful self-defense or defense of others.

100  
101 Section 4. [STATE CONCEALED CARRY PROHIBITION--EXCEPTIONS]  
102 is amended by inserting [AT THE APPROPRIATE PLACE]:

103 (a) This provision shall not apply to a person designated  
104 as authorized to carry a concealed weapon or firearm on school  
105 property under [EDUCATION STATUTE AMENDED ABOVE].

106  
107 Section 3. This act shall take effect \_\_\_\_\_.  
108 [OR USE EMERGENCY ENACTING CLAUSE IF NEEDED TO TAKE EFFECT  
109 SOONER]



# APPENDIX I PRE-INCIDENT INDICATORS





## PRE-INCIDENT INDICATORS

Active threat multiple casualty events, often referred to in law enforcement as “Active Shooter”, are rapidly evolving and dynamic criminal acts that vary distinctly from one to the next. Simply defined, an “Active Shooter/Active Threat” is an individual actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill. Since the shooting at the University of Texas in Austin (1966), an estimated 117 school shootings have occurred across the US leading up to the tragic events at Sandy Hook Elementary on December 14, 2012. The psychological and sociological impacts of such tragic events are felt universally throughout the country. These events must serve as an impetus for change and adaptation of our school safety procedures and protocols in order to minimize the likelihood of history repeating itself and our communities must remain vigilant against this seemingly unpredictable threat.

There have been numerous attempts by law enforcement, universities, focus groups and organizations, all of which have fallen short, in establishing a clear or reliable profile of such offenders. With that said, it is becoming increasingly prevalent to identify offenders retrospectively, that displayed common traits such as a long history of mental illness with an obsession with or proclivity toward violent behavior, prior to his/her final decision to progress from planning to initiation of the violent act.

Based on these studies, the law enforcement community has identified a wide range of exhibitive behaviors and characteristics commonly attributed to offenders as they transition from the planning phase to the execution phase of the violent act itself. Collectively we refer to these early warning signals as Pre-Incident Indicators (PII). The identification of PII is reliant on strong and perseverant situational awareness on the part of school staff, resource officers, volunteers and the general public alike. The challenge of how to raise public awareness of this topic can be daunting. It is critical for law enforcement to have a means to receive information and to evaluate reports as possible PII prior to the initiation of the violent act.

It is difficult for law enforcement to measure the success of early identification and interdiction of possible active threat events. This is largely due to the challenge of developing tangible evidence or accumulating behavioral indicators to support that the suspect would have actually carried out a multiple casualty event absent the intervention of law enforcement. It is simply difficult to quantify “what might have happened”, making conclusions largely subjective. Elements commonly shared in perceived interventions, include the presence of a mitigation program designed to raise public awareness and the willingness of citizens to report. Successful communities were able to implement clearly established Community Awareness Programs (CAP). The goals behind the CAP were to raise public awareness and establish simple public reporting procedures in conjunction with local law enforcement in order to take measures to use the information in the intervention process.

The communities where our schools reside should be empowered with the understanding that PII are more likely to be identified by friends, associates and family members of the offender. The key to success in establishing such programs is the emphasis placed on training the public to observe and report. More specifically; ‘process what is observed’ and ‘to whom do they report the observation’. In the tragic events of Virginia Tech (2007) the offender was seen days before the event at a local gun range shooting at targets lying on the ground. In afterthought, the individual that observed the actions of the offender felt it was ‘odd’ but did not feel compelled to report to law enforcement.

Unfortunately, there is not a steadfast and concise set of guidelines to follow regarding what behaviors are reliably indicative of imminent aberrant or violent behavior and observations must be viewed in context of each individual situation. This fact however, should not deter citizens from remaining vigilant in the effort to disseminate information to law enforcement when they observe something that gives cause for concern just because it is technically absent any actual illegal activity.

## **School Safety Community Awareness Program**

The National School Shield Active Threat Response Guide recommends, as best practice, to implement a well planned, promoted and highly visible Community Awareness Program for school safety. This program should clearly establish reporting procedures for parents, students, faculty and staff for use by School Resource Officers (SROs), law enforcement or intervention professionals. In order to ensure a successful CAP it must contain three essential elements:

1. **Purpose** – Clearly defines what the purpose of the program is and why it is essential for participation. It is well publicized with full support of the school staff and administration. An example of campaigns with well-designed purpose is Crime Stoppers or the more recent ‘See Something, Say Something’ campaign.
2. **Direction** – Clearly defines what to report and who to report the information; while not limiting the method of which to report. The program would allow for emails, text messages, phone calls or even integration through social network platforms like Facebook or Twitter.
3. **Confidential** – All persons reporting information must have confidence that the information provided will be managed and kept confidential by law enforcement and school officials. They must know that the information will be used only for its intended purpose of promoting school safety. By ensuring anonymity it is more likely that students, staff and citizens to report without fear of repercussion including civil action.

If we analyze school shootings within the past 20 years, the offenders involved possessed some similarities in both behavioral history and short-term behavioral patterns leading to the incident. These PII alone do not imply a subject is planning an attack, but consideration of numerous PII within several months could provide law enforcement with the essential data necessary to conduct an intervention, investigation or an arrest. The training of SROs and staff in the recognition of PII is essential in closing the link between Awareness Programs and providing mental health officials and law enforcement with necessary information to prevent school violence up to a mass casualty event.

## **References**

1. Department of Homeland Security, “Active Shooter, How to Respond”, October 2008.

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