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TO: Superintendents, Principals and School Safety Stakeholders

**FROM: Daniel French, Secretary, Vermont Agency of Education
Michael Desrochers, Director, Division of Fire Safety**

SUBJECT: New Guidance regarding Egress Evacuation and Options Based Response Drills

SCOPE:

With State and Federal restrictions being loosened and vaccinations rates continuing to increase, we are providing the following school safety drill guidance with a focus on returning to traditional drill procedures. Prior to the Pandemic, 6 Egress (Evacuation) Fire Drills and 5 (Lockdown) drills were required throughout the school year. Under guidance provided at the start of the 2021-2022 academic year, only 1 Egress (Evacuation) Fire Drill was required within the first 30 days of opening and the other 5 Egress Fire Drills were permitted to be instructional. Violent Intruder Drills were required to be conducted within 30 days of the start of the fall and spring semesters and could be discussion/instructional based.

Beginning in April 2022, 1 Egress Fire drill is to be held in April, and 1 Options-Based drill is to be held in May.

Fire/Evacuation Drills:

- Emergency evacuation plans are designed to evacuate the school in the most efficient and safe manner without panic. Without practicing drills, occupants including faculty will not know how to implement their emergency action plans.
- School fires and other emergency conditions may arise warranting the complete evacuation of the school in a timely manner thus, schools must be prepared to initiate emergency evacuations.



Guidelines:

1. In the month of April 2022, all students, faculty and staff must participate in an Egress (Evacuation) Fire Drill consisting of full evacuation of the school.

Options Based Drills for Potentially Violent Situations

Guidelines:

1. During the month of May, we encourage schools to build upon their previously required discussion based drills, and conduct an “options based response drills” that requires faculty, staff and students to demonstrate their ability to respond to these types of situations.

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network Guidance document, “Creating School Active Shooter/Intruder Drills” states, “*Safety drills need to incorporate a lockdown response but also an “option-based” approach. An option-based approach means that there are different actions educators and students can take if confronted by an active shooter/intruder (e.g., run away, keep out, and hide). The district needs to evaluate which approach is best and to adapt that approach to the developmental level of their students, including for students with disabilities, language barriers, and mobility needs.*” We encourage all school administrators to review the document mentioned above for best practice information on the development, delivery, evaluation and mental health support when developing your future school safety drill initiatives:

<https://www.nctsn.org/resources/creating-school-active-shooter-intruder-drills>

For those schools utilizing a traditional “**Lockdown**” approach to a Violent Intruder, we recommend the following instructional guidance:

The term LOCKDOWN means “LOCKS, LIGHTS, OUT OF SIGHT” Students, faculty and staff (full and part-time) should be trained to:

- Move out of the line of sight of the doorway and windows
- Maintain silence
- Turn off cell phones

Teachers/staff (full and part-time) should be trained to:

- Lock classroom door(s)
- Turn lights off
- Move out of the line of sight of the doorway and windows
- Maintain silence
- Do not open the door



- Take roll, account for students (if safe to do so)

For those schools who utilize the Run, Hide, Fight – A.L.I.C.E or other methodologies for response to a Violent Intruder:

What is **Run, Hide, Fight**?

Run, Hide, Fight is the US Department of Homeland Security’s recommended actions to be taken when responding to a Violent Intruder.

- Does **NOT** replace current safety protocols for evacuation, sheltering in place or other emergency response procedures.
- **DOES** give additional tools that may be used to respond to a Violent Intruder.

The **Run, Hide, Fight** concept is to:

Run – if you can safely escape the area of the threat, you must make a decision based on the best information available

Hide – find a safe location to hide and avoid detection and potentially reinforce “harden” your location

Fight – when faced with no other option, you may need to confront an active threat with the resolve that you will survive the encounter

Run

- Can be faculty, staff or student initiated
- Have an escape route and plan that includes identified assembly areas located a safe distance away from the incident (Accountability)
- Leave personal belongings behind
- Must be prepared to change evacuation/run routes based on situational awareness
- Be prepared to transition to a lockdown /hide or fight option based on situational awareness
- Keep your hands visible

Hide and Reinforce - Take steps to barricade, reinforce or fortify your location

- Hide in an area out of the view of the potential threat
- Lock doors and use items such as desks, chairs, bookshelves to barricade the door
- Silence cell phones

Fight



- Last option for survival
- Must assess individual capabilities
- Enhance survivability by utilizing available resources (fire extinguisher, books, heavy objects) to defend or protect yourself
- Consider developing a plan with others in your location to determine the best options for your survival (Swarming, distraction)

For questions on any of the new drill guidance please contact Vermont's School Safety Liaison Officer Rob Evans at revans@margolishealy.com or (802) 839-0448 or visit the Vermont School Safety Center's website at: <http://schoolsafety.vermont.gov/>

