

TO: Superintendents, Principals and School Safety Stakeholders,  
FROM: Vermont School Safety Center  
Robert L. Evans, Vermont's School Safety Liaison Officer  
RE: Future School Safety Considerations

As schools continue to manage their responses to the “pandemic” and begin to plan for students coming back to the classroom, now is the time for school leadership teams to review and revise their existing emergency response plans, policies and procedures. Please review the planning considerations below and utilize the identified resources for future school crisis planning initiatives.

1. Review and revise your school and school district's Emergency Operations Plan (EOP). We recommend schools utilize the state's EOP template developed during Vermont's 18 month School Safety Planning, Training and Exercise Initiative found here: <https://schoolsafety.vermont.gov/planning>
2. Continue to educate and inform school faculty and staff (including school bus drivers, food service personnel and para-educators), on how to respond to the variety of hazards and threats they may be exposed to. All school safety training should be “all hazard” focused and trauma informed. We recommend schools utilize the (1) hour “virtual” Immediate Action Response Training available on the Vermont School Safety Center's website found here: <https://schoolsafety.vermont.gov/news/available-vermont-school-safety-initiative-online-training>. Schools also may want to consider the training resources available through the I Love U Guys Foundation found here: <https://iloveuquys.org/>
3. Collaborate with local first response organizations to ensure they are familiar with the details of your school/school district's EOP. Review evacuation routes and evacuation sites, share emergency contact information and define individual/organizational roles and responsibilities during a critical incident at your school.
4. Test and evaluate your schools emergency notification systems to ensure everyone on your campus, no matter their location, can quickly be informed of an emergency.
5. Consider providing de-escalation and prevention of violence training to faculty and administrative staff. We acknowledge the increased level of stress and anxiety being felt by our students, parents and our education communities. To assist school staff with managing potentially violent behaviors, we recommend staff review the (1) hour “virtual” De-Escalation and Prevention Violence training provided by Deputy Commissioner Mourning Fox, Vermont Department of Health, found on the Vermont School Safety Center's website here: <https://schoolsafety.vermont.gov/training/online>
6. Review and revise behavioral threat assessment policies and practices. For over 5 years, Vermont has been emphasizing the importance of developing a behavioral threat assessment framework and establishing policies and procedures to evaluate and respond to concerning behaviors that may have a negative impact on our schools. We recommend schools utilize the behavioral threat assessment resources and best practices found on the Vermont School Safety Center's website, here: <https://schoolsafety.vermont.gov/planning/vermont-school-crisis-guide>. School leadership



teams may want to consider viewing this (11) minute “Pathway to Violence” video produced by the U.S. Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency to learn more about some of the key indicators for potential future violent acts found here: <https://www.cisa.gov/pathway-violence-video>

7. Implement individual and organizational resiliency programs for students, faculty and staff that promote personal wellbeing and mental health. Everyone experiences everyday challenges differently and we must implement strategies that meet the individual needs of our communities. For additional support and mental health resources, please refer to Vermont’s Department of Health website, here: <https://www.healthvermont.gov/topic/mental-health>
8. In response to the pandemic, many schools are continuing to plan for the use of outdoor classroom spaces. When planning for the unique safety and security challenges of these outdoor classroom settings, school leadership teams should:
  - Test and evaluate all exterior emergency notification systems.
  - Ensure faculty, staff and students are informed of evacuation routes and evacuation locations to utilize during an emergency at the school.
  - Share outdoor classroom space locations with your local emergency first response organizations to ensure they can effectively respond to these locations during an emergency.
9. Consider adopting the Vermont School Board Association’s Model Policies on “Access Control” and “Visitor Management” found here: <https://www.vtvsba.org/copy-of-model-policy-manual>

Please feel free to reach out for me if you have any questions, concerns or need any additional school crisis planning support.

Respectfully,

Robert L. Evans

Vermont School Safety Liaison Officer

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