

Active Shooter Issues for Schools – Recommendations from the Field

Submitted to the Milwaukee Board of School Directors

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Background

During the course of the project to evaluate Milwaukee’s School Resource Officer program, the MPS Board of School Directors raised a question about the “active shooter” issue and requested that Prevention Partnerships add this topic to its scope of work. Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) is concerned about the active shooter issue, and rightfully so. According to a number of recent analyses by news organizations (Education Week, CNN, Washington Post), within the past decade, there has been an increase in these events, sometimes occurring on a weekly basis.

The problem is top of mind, and those responsible for the safety and security of schools are naturally raising important questions. At the same time, it is helpful to note that school shootings occur with much less frequency than they do in the broader community. Commentators on the subject of gun violence note that, for many children, schools may be one of the safest places children will spend their day. To put things in context, note that the Center for Disease Control and Prevention’s *School Associated Violent Death Study* reveals that between 1% and 2% of all homicides among school-age children happen on school grounds.

Reports about school shooting are alarming and have dominated much of the conversation on school safety. That said, it is still important to remember that school safety is larger than protection from active shooter situations, and that active shooter situations are an issue that needs to be confronted, not just in the classroom, but in broader communities as well. The same CDC report cited above also notes that physical violence (aside from active shooter events) like bullying or fights can have an equally large impact on the well-being of students and occur with greater frequency. The 2013 Congressional Research Service report, *Mass Murder with Firearms: Incidents and Victims, 1999-2013* highlights the need to keep community safety in mind as the incidence of public mass shootings, not just in schools, but in workplaces, restaurants, houses of worship, or other public settings has increased over the past decade.

A focus on preparing for active shooter situations in schools should not distract from a larger climate of school security or from other school support services. Rather, active shooter preparedness should be viewed as an additional layer to school security, something to be added onto existing prevention and preparation efforts.

It is also important to note that active shooter situations are but one of a number of crises or emergency situations for which the schools and communities should be prepared. It is helpful to look at preparing for the active shooter scenario in the context of preparing and responding to all hazards and threats—both human-caused emergencies like crime, violence, or suicides, and hazards such as natural disasters, disease outbreaks, and accidents. Different responses are warranted for different situations. Each incident presents its own circumstances.

The particular scope of this report—prepared at the request of the MPS Board—includes an outline of key issues and guidance from the field on how to help *prevent* an active shooter, how to *prepare* for a possible active shooter situation, and what to do *after* such a situation. Some next steps are presented for consideration by MPS and the Milwaukee Police Department (MPD). In addition, extensive training

and other resources are included. The information in this report is meant to outline significant issues and approaches for consideration by the educational, law enforcement, first responders, and other community stakeholders as they address this issue in coordinated fashion.

MPS and MPD should realize that the Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) for School Security Program between the Milwaukee Board of School Directors and the City of Milwaukee relates to active shooters when it:

- Recognizes that the “the City and MPS believe that all MPS pupils deserve to receive a good education in a safe and secure school environment.”
- States that MPD officer duties include “Working with the school administrators and school safety to identify conditions that could be harmful to the welfare of pupils and the safety of the school environment and addressing those conditions.”
- Asserts that MPS duties include “Providing officers with copies of pertinent school policies, practices, and procedures and the schools security plan and emergency operations manual/procedures.”

The comprehensive approach taken to deal with an active shooter and other crisis situations is one that demands continuous conversation among Milwaukee’s leaders so that there is consistency of approach, open and clear communications, and continuous improvement aimed at keeping students and staff safe and secure.

Introduction

While active shooter events in schools remain very rare when considering the number of schools in the U.S., these events loom large in our national consciousness. Therefore, schools need to work to help prevent these situations and prepare for the possibility that they could occur. For many school districts, the process of determining how to address the active shooter issue can be difficult.

The following sections of this report detail the guidance given from important agencies/organizations that deal with the active shooter issue. The guidance is offered to help schools to prevent, be prepared for, and recover from an active shooter situation.

The information in this document does not provide legal advice, which should be sought by local legal counsel.

Rather, this report is a compilation and distillation of what are considered to be “best practices” according to Federal and other respected sources. Resources are also included from organizations that provide training related to active shooter situations. The sections not only outline key problem areas policymakers should focus attention towards, but also cite a wide array of federal, state, local, and private sector resources with best practice recommendations for action. Whenever a resource is referenced in the body of this report, a citation or link is available in the “Trainings” or “Resources” section at the end of this document.

Federal Resources

There are many helpful resources available that deal with the active shooter issue. The Federal government specifically has developed extensive resources, incorporating lessons learned from a variety of active shooting situations, as well as other crises. Current Federal resources with best practices for planning and basic principles of crisis response can be found at the Department of Education’s Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (REMS) webpage.

https://rem.ed.gov/Resources_Hazards-Threats_Adversarial_Threats.aspx. Many documents mentioned in this report come from this curated list of resources. One of the most helpful resources on the topic is the Guide for Developing High-Quality School Emergency Operations Plans (School Guide) https://rem.ed.gov/docs/REMS_K-12_Guide_508.pdf. REMS also puts active shooter situations in the broader context, also addressing an extensive array of “adversarial- and human-caused threats” and hazards a school may face, consistent with a holistic approach to school security.

The Federally-supported REMS Technical Assistance Center points out the importance of developing and implementing local plans, saying “each school district’s or school’s emergency preparedness materials should include information and protocols that are unique to the entity and its locality, including how community partners such as law enforcement and the fire department will respond to an emergency at the site.” (Person communication with Dr. Paul Meyers, Director of Research and Communications at the REMS TA Center, June 27, 2018).

What to Do to Help Prevent and Prepare for an Active Shooter Situation

Think Prevention

Schools can play a powerful role in helping to prevent violence, including violence that might involve an active shooter. One of the important roles schools can play is through strong prevention efforts that create a culture of caring. These efforts include working to build safe and supportive environments that foster positive climates. This includes implementing frameworks like Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)—something MPS has worked on in recent years. These efforts involving working with students in ways that are more engaging, responsive, and productive. As Dr. Ron Avi Astor, University of Southern California, pointed out at the National Prevention Science Coalition briefing in Washington, DC held on March 23, 2018 after the Parkland, FL mass shooting—when schools have positive climates, negative behaviors like bullying, verbal, physical, sexual harassments declined. Dr. Astor went on to talk about how schools with positive climates and social and emotional learning approaches have also decreased student and teacher reports of weapons use, being threatened by a weapon, and seeing or knowing about a weapon on school grounds.

Providing a positive and caring environment is a very effective tool to help prevent an active shooter situation.

School shootings command our attention and focus on the crisis. A great deal of effort has gone into crisis response planning for schools, but we need just as much effort and attention on *prevention*. To quote noted authority, Dr. Dewey Cornell—developer of the school threat assessment model: “Prevention must start early, long before there is a gunman at your door.” In short, school-based safety efforts should not just focus on “target hardening” efforts; they should pay attention to the climate and behavioral supports that can serve to reduce the likelihood of violence.

Conduct Threat Assessment

The U.S. Secret Service and the Department of Education note in *The Final Findings of the Safe School initiative* that engaging in prevention and preparation efforts are the biggest way schools can have an impact.

Early detection is key: The Secret Service and Department of Education’s *Final Report and Findings of the Safe School Initiative* found that 93 percent of school attackers planned their attack and that the vast majority of cases had some kind of prior warning.

Threat assessment and monitoring is *the* major way in which schools can not only prepare and plan for active shooter events, but also take a proactive stance to help prevent such incidents from occurring in the future. Much of the literature on active shooters is consistent in maintaining that, while there is no

one singular profile of an active shooter, most school attacks have advanced warning or red flags schools can look out for. An article in the journal *Psychology in the Schools* published by researchers at the U.S. Secret Service, the U.S. Department of Education, and the University of South Florida outlines the threat assessment approach and encourages its use to address the active shooter threat. The article also cautions school districts against using other models that were common at the time of publication (early 2000s). The article notes that schools should avoid “profiling” models of risk detection because it “is not sufficiently sensitive nor specific to identify a child who may be at risk for engaging in target school violence” (page 162).

According to Dr. Dewey Cornell, director of the Youth Violence Project at the University of Virginia, threat assessment should include both assessment *and intervention* when applied in a school setting.

Threat assessments should:

- Identify threats made by students.
- Evaluate the seriousness of the threat.
- Intervene to reduce the risk of violence.
- Follow up to review intervention results.

Appropriate intervention and follow up are key to responding to threats. School, mental health, law enforcement, and other agencies need to work together to ensure that appropriate interventions are carried out as the case dictates. In the wake of school shootings, communities are looking to provide services needed when potentially dangerous warning signs are identified. Schools and their partners are looking for "practices for reducing risk and promoting protective factors for persons experiencing difficulties; and interventions for individuals where violence is present or appears imminent," according to Dr. Dewey Cornell. His organization's (The Youth Violence Project) *Call for Action to Prevent Gun Violence in the US* (<https://curry.virginia.edu/prevent-gun-violence>) recognizes how schools need to work together to eliminate information sharing barriers and maintain strong threat assessment programs. This way, it is harder for students to slip through the cracks, and get services that can assist them.

Additionally, schools need to walk the line between being adequately responsive to genuine instances of threats of violence without over-reacting. As Dr. Cornell's testimony before congress makes clear, any instances of zero-tolerance school policies can result in unnecessary exclusionary discipline or suspension.

The *Final Report and Findings of the Safe School Initiative* further clarifies that schools need to be “developing the capacity to pick up on and evaluate available knowledge” on threats of violence. Schools should then be “employing the results of these threat assessments in developing strategies to prevent potential school attacks from occurring.”

Multi-disciplinary threat assessment team. Similarly, an FBI informational document *Violence Prevention in Schools* notes that schools should “create a multi-disciplinary threat assessment team consisting of individuals already involved in the school on a regular basis who can assess and determine appropriate action when a threat arises.” The document also articulates how these threat assessment systems need to be coupled with effective reporting mechanisms.

Systematic approach. Another FBI report in partnership with the U.S. Department of Justice and Texas State University, *A Study of Active Shooter Incidents, 2000 – 2013*, specified that “Maintaining a systematic approach to evaluating and responding to different types of threats is important.” Schools should be able to differentiate between low, medium, and high probability events. Schools should also take into consideration the potential harm of certain events. Combining the probability of an event and the potential harm from an event should give schools guidance on how to devote resource to responding. These understandings should be tailored to a school specific environment. Different schools face different threats.

School systems looking to implement effective threat assessment teams should look to a model like the *Virginia Student Threat Assessment Guidelines*, which gives specific recommendations on how to categorize threats, who to put on a threat assessment team, procedures for reporting and identifying threats, and effective methods to intervene and resolve threats.

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction also maintains a number of useful resources on threat assessment and planning at <https://dpi.wi.gov/sspw/safe-schools/assessment> This website includes tools to help schools at all levels “identify gaps and strengths in their violence prevention program.”

In addition to establishing a culture of prevention by attending to a positive and caring environment, and also instituting a sound threat assessment program, schools should make sure they have ways to monitor threats that arise, and to establish reporting mechanism.

Monitor Threats

Having an “ear to the ground” is a crucial part of a school’s ability to detect threats. Fostering relationships with students to keep an eye out for what the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s *The School Shooter: A Threat Assessment Perspective* document calls “**leakage.**” This is where a student, intentionally or not, reveals hints or clues that signal an impending violent act. The same FBI report notes that “leakage is considered to be one of the most important clues that may precede an adolescent’s violent act. It is important that people who learn of such clues, whether they be school safeties, teachers, students, or whomever, report them to a person of authority who will take action, such as an SRO and/or school administrator.

Many school threats and safety concerns happen online. It is important to encourage parents, teachers, and students to keep an eye out for behavior that is threatening or harmful. Conveying clearly the difference between tattling and telling can be useful in this instance, as noted by the U.S. Secret Service and the U.S. Department of Education in the document *Threat Assessment in Schools*. Students are key to success in this area.

One short article in the National School Board Association’s (NSBA) American School Board Journal titled *Trending in School Safety* gave an example of how some schools have considered monitoring the public social media posts by students. The article acknowledges the goal of keeping an ear to the ground, but

also highlights how parents see the danger in such a system. One official in Florida's Orange County Public Schools is quoted as saying, "not everyone is in favor of school districts monitoring social media... so this is an important conversation to have clearly with parents so they understand why it's important to utilize a tool like this." Whether or not to employ such a tactic is up to individual school boards; the decision should be made in consultation with community members.

Establish Reporting Mechanisms

Drawing from the key findings of *Final Report and Findings of the Safe School Initiative*, effective reporting mechanisms are key. Some of the key findings from the initiative included the fact that incidents of targeted violence at schools were rarely sudden impulsive acts, that in many cases, other students were involved in some capacity, and that most attackers engaged in some behavior prior to the incident that caused others concern or indicated a need for help.

In light of the findings of the Secret Service and Department of Education report on *Prior Knowledge of Potential School-Based Violence*, schools should consider tapping into the knowledge students already have by:

- "Ensuring a climate in which students feel comfortable sharing information they have regarding a potentially threatening situation with a responsible adult" (page 8).
- Developing policies that address the many aspects of reporting a threat including things like:
 - Providing several options of reporting.
 - Articulating the kind of information that can be shared and that the school will take reports seriously.
 - Clarify who is responsible for acting on information received.
 - Review information sharing policies and where the law permits, involve law enforcement and mental health officials in the review process.
- "[Training] teachers, administrators, and other faculty should on how to properly respond to students who provide them with information about a threatening or disturbing situation, as well as how to deal with actual threats" (page 10).

Plan and Prepare

Being prepared to address an active shooter situation requires extensive planning in advance. The State of Wisconsin requires that these plans be reviewed regularly. In fact, "Act 143 makes changes related to school safety plans that every public and private school must have in effect. As under prior law, every school must have a school safety plan created with active participation of appropriate parties, which may include local law enforcement officers, fire fighters, school administrators, teachers, pupil services professionals, and mental health professionals, and must review the plan every three years. The Act provides that the parties participating in plan creation may also include the Department of Justice, and requires a school board or governing body to approve a school safety plan at least once every three years."

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) recommends that school safety policies should be developed by a collaborative and multidisciplinary team, formally recorded, and regularly re-evaluated.

In FEMA's *Guide for Developing High-Quality School Emergency Operations Plans*, the agency goes into great detail about how a school can create and implement school safety policies and responses. Specifically, this guide sets an effective framework through which a school should be able to:

- Form a **collaborative team**.
 - Select from a wide range of school personnel, parent and student representatives, local law enforcement officers, emergency medical services personnel, fire officials, public and mental health practitioners.
- **Understand the situation** a school is facing.
 - Enumerate and assess the risk from potential threats and hazards to enable prioritization.
- **Determine goals and objectives**.
 - “Goals are broad, general statements that indicate the desired outcome in response to the threat or hazard identified by planners in the previous step” (Page 12).
 - “Objectives are specific, measurable actions that are necessary to achieve the goals. Often, planners will need to identify multiple objectives in support of a single goal” (Page 13).
- Develop/review/implement a **plan of action**.
 - The first step is to identify courses of actions, considering realistic scenarios, timelines, and decision points. Courses of actions should answer questions like:
 - What is the action?
 - Who is responsible for the action?
 - When does the action take place?
 - How long does the action take and how much time is actually available?
 - What has to happen before?
 - What happens after?
 - What resources are needed to perform the action?
 - How will this action affect specific populations, such as individuals with disabilities and others with access and functional needs who may require medication, wayfinding, evacuation assistance, or personal assistance services, or who may experience severe anxiety during traumatic events? (page 15).
 - These plans should then be formatted and written down.
 - Finally plans should be reviewed to ensure they meet standards for emergency operations plans (outline on page 19).
 - Plans should also incorporate a regular timeline for review at the outset.

The *Guide for Developing High-Quality School Emergency Operations Plans* builds on other important work related to effectively handling school crises. Of particular note is the landmark document, *Practical Information on Crisis Planning: A Guide for Schools and Communities*. This 2004 guide “intended to give

schools, districts, and communities the critical concepts and components of good crisis planning, stimulate thinking about the crisis preparedness process and provide examples of promising practices.” (Page 1-3).

This important guide laid out the sequence of crisis management, after extensive interviews with experts, and a review of the literature on handling crises. This review resulted in four phases of crisis management:

- **“Mitigation/prevention** addresses what schools and districts can do to reduce or eliminate risk to life and property.
- **Preparedness** focuses on the process of planning for the worst-case scenario.
- **Response** is devoted to the steps to take during a crisis.
- **Recovery** deals with how to restore the learning and teaching environment after a crisis” (Pages 1-7).

Conduct Training

It is also important that trainings have lasting impacts on behavior. The National School Board Association also emphasizes the need for a, “well-conceived schedule of professional development on school safety practices, with that training reinforced by regular drills and brief refresher courses.” Teachers, staff and students should all have a clear understanding of their role in an emergency situation. The school shooting at Sandy Hook elementary school in Connecticut resulted in many deaths but the superintendent at the time of the shooting recently told MPS Director of Safety and Security, Ed Negron, that staff believed it would have been worse, if it were not for the monthly drills the school practiced.

Additionally, FEMA’s Emergency Management Institute offers trainings to learn the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and the Incident Command System (ICM), both of which can help enable actors to work together effectively during crisis incidents. As the MPS Director of Safety and Security points out, one place schools can use incident command is at dismissal, with the many busses arriving and leaving in a short period of time. He notes, “Using incident command would help a school and its staff to learn to work together during a trying moment and prepare for a real crisis.”

It is important to understand what NIMS is, and how it relates to schools. The following is information comes from personal correspondence with the REMS TA center:

What is NIMS?

NIMS uses a core set of concepts, principles, procedures, processes, standards, and terminology that may all be integrated with school emergency preparedness practices. The collective use of NIMS across all local incident response agencies, including law enforcement, K-12 schools, school districts and institutions of higher education (IHEs), and disciplines creates a common operating picture, promotes mutual goals and responsibilities, and, ultimately, improves the efficiency and effectiveness of response services. Furthermore, in the event of a large-scale incident crossing multiple jurisdictions and disciplines, NIMS unites all response teams across all of the participating jurisdictions and facilitates

effective and appropriate assistance from outlying communities when needed based on the size and complexity of the incident.

NIMS Requirements

As schools and school districts are integral components of every community and its government, both ED and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) recommend all schools (public and nonpublic) and school districts support the implementation of NIMS.

To meet the unique needs of schools and school districts, and to meet the needs of previous grant programs, ED, DHS, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) collaborated several years ago to create NIMS Implementation Activities for Schools and Institutions of Higher Education, https://rems.ed.gov/docs/NIMS_ComprehensiveGuidanceActivities_2009-2010.pdf, which is a customized set of NIMS implementation activities for schools to support close collaboration with their community partners. ED identified those NIMS implementation activities that match the unique role of schools in a community and its needs and its functions as response agents along the chain of command. For example, rather than require schools and school districts to create and manage their own credentialing system, the customized NIMS guidance for schools and school districts requires them to work with state and local partners to ensure “proper authorization and access to credentialed personnel.” A Checklist: NIMS Implementation Activities for Schools and IHEs, https://rems.ed.gov/docs/NIMS_ImplementationActivitiesChecklist_2009-2010.pdf, was also developed to provide a brief checklist for schools and IHEs to use when tracking their progress towards NIMS implementation.

NIMS Training. Within NIMS Implementation Activities for Schools and Institutions of Higher Education, https://rems.ed.gov/docs/NIMS_ComprehensiveGuidanceActivities_2009-2010.pdf, the training requirements are captured in Activities 8 through 13. In order to fulfill NIMS training requirements, schools and school districts were required to (and are still encouraged to) determine which personnel needed to receive incident command system (ICS) and NIMS training based on their role(s) in the overall school and school district emergency management program.

NIMS Trainers. A Frequently Asked Questions document, https://rems.ed.gov/docs/NIMS_FAQ_2009-2010.pdf, was also developed, which provides answers to some of the most commonly posed questions to ED and the REMS TA Center as schools and IHEs support the implementation of NIMS. Included within this document is information on how to identify qualified instructors to conduct trainings, such as ICS-300 and 400.

The value of drills

“The ‘best practice’ has to be Practice, Practice, Practice...once you’ve adopted a plan you need to train for it.” – William Modzeleski, former Associate Deputy Under Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education, and director of the Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools.

Type of drills

Research from John Blair in his book *Active Shooter Events and Response* shows that training and drills are a key part of preparedness for an active shooter situation. First responders need thorough training that enables them to act quickly in the event of an active shooter. For law enforcement officers

(especially SROs), who are often the frontline responders in the event of a crisis, this may mean SWAT-type tactical trainings and simulations. For school staff and faculty, this may mean engaging in scenario workshops and drills during meetings.

The Texas School Safety Center has produced the *Training, Drilling, and Exercising Toolkit*, <https://txssc.txstate.edu/tools/tde-toolkit/drill-recs>, which explains the different kinds of exercises: discussion- and operations-based.

The National Association of School Psychologists provides guidance on this topic when they note in their *Manual on Best Practice Considerations for Schools in Active Shooter and Other Armed Assailant Drills* that:

- “Schools should consider the most cost-effective method of preparing students and staff for an active shooter situation while balancing the physical and psychological risks associated with such drills.”
- “It is imperative that schools have a clearly defined evaluation process that identifies areas of strength and areas in need of improvement as the school community continues to refine ongoing comprehensive crisis preparedness and response plans.”

The manual also notes how teachers can play a role to help alleviate student concerns by explaining the situation properly beforehand.

NASP’s curriculum for school safety and crisis preparedness, PREPaRE, details the specific ways schools can:

- Prevent and prepare for psychological trauma with safety teams and plans.
- Reaffirm physical health and perceptions of security and safety.
- Evaluate psychological trauma.
- Provide interventions and Respond to Student Psychological needs.
- And examine the effectiveness of crisis prevention and intervention through needs assessments, crises analysis, and outcome evaluation.

Involving students. NASP specifically advises that more realistic drills, using things like fake gunshots, or some degree of role play for a shooter and victim can have a traumatic impact upon students. MPD and MPS should reconsider whether to use students in such training events with the police where they play the roles of victims. While such a practice can provide a more realistic feel, there may be concern about oversharing law enforcement tactics related to handling such an event, which could give a student information that could be used in a possible future attack.

Also of concern is the potential for trauma experienced by a student who has volunteered for the exercise; this can arise from a realistic event where police use heightened stressors, namely, realistic sights and sounds. For students, especially young students, training needs to take into account the psychological impact traumatic drills and discussions of violence can have. Schools need to first and foremost be a place students feel safe and comfortable to learn. Drills, trainings, and discussions that are overly traumatic can distract from an effective learning environment with little added safety benefit. Striking the right balance between preparing students to be safe in the event of an emergency without distracting from learning is crucial. Schools also need to balance the types of safety measures they

practice. Schools also need to conduct drills that are tailored to specific environments and age levels and the threats they are likely to face.

For these reasons it may be best not to involve students in emergency drills with police. For clarification, students should be involved in drills where they are practicing the appropriate response, such as Code Red lockdown in schools. Having some idea about what might happen in a crisis like an active shooter situation may actually alleviate shock and overload during an actual incident. In addition, students demonstrating the appropriate response during a drill can become leaders to their peers prior to law enforcement arriving. This type of drill can help a student approach a crisis more rationally and carry out a more informed response during periods of stress.

Number of Drills

While the prevailing consensus is that practicing more will make schools better prepared, some note the need to moderate the frequency of drills to avoid “practicing into complacency.” This problem can be addressed by modifying drills.

Establish Communication Networks

School safety is not a project that should be undertaken in a vacuum. Schools are a part of a broader community with which they need to partner for effective school safety measures. This means schools should reach out and coordinate with law enforcement and other first responders, mental health professionals, social service workers, and others in the region. Schools should have access to a nexus of resources they can refer students to when there is a need. The FBI *Violence Prevention in Schools* document notes that frequent communication and engagement with other community agencies can help address students’ multifaceted needs.

These networks have to be well coordinated so that communications are routed quickly to the right responders. Communications networks also have to be able to respond appropriately to the requests made to the public that “If you see something, say something!” It is important that students, as well as school staff, and parents, feel comfortable in relaying information that might reveal a potentially dangerous situation.

Communicating with children. Communication networks also extend to communicating with children. In an article in the American School Board Journal, Michelle Healy for the National School Board Association argues that there is a need to take violence surrounding urban school districts with similar urgency and focus other school shootings receive. The article notes, “Along with enacting policy that improves school climate and security, boards can also help “create a level of empowerment in students to be in control of their own narrative,” Cooper says. That can range from issuing public statements of support to aligning dollars that create opportunities where students can tell their stories.”

Communicating with parents. Systems of communication also need to be in place to give and receive information from parents. In the U.S. Department of Education’s *Lessons Learned from School Crises and Emergencies* technical assistance document, authors describe how information can be distributed to families. Schools need to take simple steps, like letters home to families describing school-based

services that will be provided for families in need. The document also describes how schools can have effective meetings where parents can receive information and crisis team members can help defuse strong emotions in the wake of a crisis incident.

Know Information Sharing Laws

That same FBI document on violence prevention in schools says law partners in school safety should also, “be aware of information sharing laws and develop information sharing protocol with other community agencies.” The Colorado Committee on School Safety and Youth in Crisis noted in their *Report on the Arapahoe High School Shooting* that some major failures of information sharing were:

1. A failure to use the student information system (e.g., Infinite Campus) to document behavioral and safety concerns (e.g., threat, risk, academic, discipline response).
2. A failure to train students and staff in an anonymous reporting system. Colorado uses their Safe2Tell anonymous reporting system <https://safe2tell.org/>
3. A failure to implement an interagency information sharing agreement to exchange vital information about students of concern with law enforcement and other community agencies.

[Other reporting systems could include the following. Note that the Federal government does not endorse private service providers or their programs.

- a. Sandy Hook Promise organization’s “Say Something: Anonymous Reporting System” <https://www.saysomething.net/>
- b. Safe Schools by Vector Solutions’ Tip Reporting system <https://www.safeschools.com/suite/tip-reporting/>
- c. P3 Campus Anonymous Reporting Solution <https://www.p3campus.com/index.htm>]

Develop Safe Campuses

Physical security. The physical security and layout of a school can have a great impact on the ability to mitigate damage in crisis situations. It is important to include common sense policies like ID check-ins at a central location, strong locks for school doors, and an awareness among students and staff not to let visitors in side or back entrances. MPS has intercoms at all schools and most have cameras at the intercoms. The DHS and FEMA *Primer to Design Safe School Projects in Case of Terrorist Attacks and School* includes information on ways to mitigate or prevent physical attacks on schools. This not only includes building construction, but items like well thought-out and well-publicized evacuation routes.

Community of practice for safe campuses. One of the resources available to Milwaukee and any other community in the U.S. is the REMs “community of practice.” This is an online, virtual place for schools and other community partners to share experiences and learn from each other.

<https://rem.ed.gov/COP/default.aspx>

As described on its webpage, “The REMS TA Center CoP is a collaborative of practitioners with the collective aim to enhance the ability of schools, school districts, IHEs, state education agencies (SEAs), and their community partners to develop high-quality emergency operations plans (EOPs) and implement comprehensive emergency management planning efforts through the sharing of ideas, experiences, lessons learned, and by engaging with one another on these important topics.”

Know Your Standard Response Protocol

The “I Love U Guys” foundation developed the standard response protocol, which outlines specific types of responses for specific crisis situations, highlights the need for drills and trainings of their system for it to be effective. See <http://iloveguys.org/srp.html>.

The Standard Response Protocol (a tiered system of responses to crisis used in several State education systems) recognizes the need for different courses of action depending on the specific scenario. Their response levels demonstrate the different ways schools could take action when a threat occurs:

- **Lockout** is followed by the Directive: "Get Inside. Lock Outside Doors" and is the protocol used to safeguard students and staff within the building.
- **Lockdown** is followed by "Locks, Lights, Out of Sight" and is the protocol used to secure individual rooms and keep students quiet and in place.
- **Evacuate** is always followed by a location. The term is used to move students and staff from one location to a different location in or out of the building.
- **Shelter** is always followed by a type and a method and is the protocol for group and self-protection.

Note: See MPS response codes at the end of this document. MPS combines the terms lockdown/lockout.

Understand Chain of Command

Law enforcement agencies need to be able to communicate with officers quickly and effectively in the event of a crisis situation like an active shooter. The Department of Homeland Security, in partnership with The International Fire Chiefs Association, put out a *Hostile Event Guide* which spoke to this necessity: “Multi-discipline coordination between all response entities, including emergency communications, is the foundational component for developing an active shooter and hostile event response capability.” Law enforcement agencies need to have consistent and clear response protocols in the event of a crisis event.

According to a statement from the Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools Technical Assistance Center, both the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security recommend *all schools* (public and nonpublic) and school districts support the implementation of the National Incident Management System (NIMS).” REMS TA also includes a valuable checklist of implementation activities schools should undertake to ensure proper utilization of the system (www.rems.ed.gov/docs/NIMS_ImplementationActivitiesChecklist_2009-2010.pdf).

Communicate—Be on the Same Page

Be clear about how to use communications between schools and law enforcement. Specific lines of communications are especially important in times of emergency. The 2016 New York City Police Department *Recommendations and Analysis for Risk Mitigation* tells schools to have clear points of contact with police and vice versa. To fulfill this need, SROs are encouraged to act as coordinators.

School districts can also utilize the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation’s Law Enforcement Enterprise portal to enhance systems that enable better communication between law enforcement and schools on the protocols and roles in emergency situations (<https://www.fbi.gov/services/cjis/leep>).

William Modzeleski, former Associate Deputy Under Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education, and director of the Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools noted that internal communication can be just as important: “If you’re in a school (large or small), you need to ensure that information about a shooter is transmitted throughout the school in a quick and efficient manner. In a lot of situations there are a host of problems with getting information out to the classrooms and without this happening you end up with a confused staff.”

Know What the Individual Response Will Be

Some groups, like the National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO) *Manual on Best Practice Considerations* advocate a kind of “Run, Hide, Fight” model for implementation in schools. The Office of the Emergency Management Division of the city of Milwaukee encourages the use of the “Run, Hide, Fight” model (<http://county.milwaukee.gov/OEM/EmergencyManagement/Active-Shooter-Preparedness.htm>). Other response models may simply encourage shelter-in-place training for students.

The *Active Shooter: How to Respond* information sheet from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security specifically suggests that, “You can run away from the shooter, seek a secure place where you can hide and/or deny the shooter access, or incapacitate the shooter to survive and protect others from harm” (page 63).

The *Active Shooter* guide notes that in a crisis incident, individuals should make sure to:

- Be aware of your environment and any possible dangers.
- Take note of the two nearest exits in any facility you visit.
- If you are in an office, stay there and secure the door.
- If you are in a hallway, get into a room and secure the door.
- As a last resort, attempt to take the active shooter down. When the shooter is at close range and you cannot flee, your chance of survival is much greater if you try to incapacitate him/her.

The guide says: “If neither running nor hiding is a safe option, **as a last resort** when confronted by the shooter, **adults in immediate danger** should consider trying to disrupt or incapacitate the shooter by using aggressive force and items in their environment, such as fire extinguishers, and chairs” (Page 65).

The *Guide for Developing High-Quality School Emergency Operations Plans (School Guide)* stresses that the option to fight should only be used by adults (i.e., employees, parents/guardians, or adult visitors)

and only if it is not possible for people to effectively run away or hide. Further, the requirement to confront an active shooter should never be in a job description; how an employee responds in an active shooter situation should be up to him or her.

Another method of preparing people for responding to a situation like an active shooter is the Avoid, Deny, Defend method. <http://www.avoiddenydefend.org/> This method was developed by the Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training (ALERRT)[™] Program at Texas State University as a way to help people to “protect themselves and reduce the dangers faced during one of these events. Avoid, Deny, Defend[™] has been developed as an easy to remember method for individuals to follow. As we’ve seen that hiding and hoping isn’t a very effective strategy.” Dr. Joe McKenna, of the Texas School Safety Center, notes that adopting various methods of response is a local decision, and that the response method taught should be done age appropriately.

Be Clear on the Roles and Responsibilities of the SROs

According to the REMs Technical Assistance Center, “The roles and responsibilities of SROs, school administrators and others are best identified in the planning process, which is described by the *Guide for Developing High-Quality School Emergency Operations Plans (School Guide)*.

In the event of an active shooter situation, SROs will often be the first to respond, and require appropriate training to be able to act effectively in time sensitive situations. The National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO) offers a three-day active shooter training for SROs that focuses on equipping officers to respond in a one and/or two officer response situation. This kind of tactical training for an active shooter event is also available through the Texas State University ALERRT program which provides courses on skills SROs may need. This includes integrating law enforcement, fire, plus EMS response, crisis decision making and priorities, and other tactical techniques.

The FBI’s article *School Resource Officers and Violence Prevention Best Practices* highlights the specific ways SROs should be engaged in the day-to-day issue of school safety. SROs should:

- Develop relationships (formally with preparedness teams and informally with students and staff).
- Interact and communicate with students (to gain information about potential threats, encourage reporting of threats, and make students feel safer).
- Conduct training in classroom settings with students on issues a school is facing.
- Serve as a point of contact and threat assessment team advisor.

SROs should take a proactive role on the **threat assessment team** so that everyone can be on the same page, not over-reacting to minor cases and working together in serious cases. In the most serious cases, SROs have a lot to offer. If they are not on the team, they might work at cross purposes with the team’s efforts.

Access to the school by SROs and other first responders. Related to the issue of a safe campus is the issue of access of first responders, including SROs, to the school. MPS and MPD should have the conversation about making sure that SROs have quick access when necessary. As one SRO supervisor

suggested, make sure that SROs are able to gain access by issuing SROs a master key or electronic pass cards they can use to enter schools, rather than have to wait to be “buzzed” in, if no one is available to grant access to the school building.

Visitor management and security systems. Managing who enters the school and making sure that schools have the “hardware” is something school districts can review with law enforcement. Some examples of private companies providing school security services include:

- Raptor Technologies <https://raptortech.com/protect-your-school/raptor-visitor-management-system/>
- Identisys <https://www.identisys.com/markets-served/k-12-education/school-visitor-management>
- School Gate Guardian <http://www.schoolgateguardian.com/>
- Lobby Guard <http://lobbyguard.com/k-12-education-school-safety>

Active Shooter Guidance for SROs

A number of sources provide more specific guidance for the roles SROs can play in an active shooter situation. These roles and sources are listed below

Some literature highlighted the fact that SROs can be **frontline responders** in the event of a crisis. John P. Blair’s *Active Shooter Events and Response*: Officers need consistent tactical trainings for active shooter situations. This means making SROs familiar with SWAT standards of response to first stop the killing by isolating or neutralizing and offender, then stop the dying by assisting those in need on the scene.

Additionally, the FBI’s *School Resource Officers and Violence Prevention Best Practices* highlights the specific ways SROS should be engaged in the day-to-day issue of school safety. SROs should:

- **Develop relationships** (formally with preparedness teams and informally with students and staff).
- **Interact and communicate** with students (to gain information about potential threats, encourage reporting of threats, and make students feel safer).
- **Conduct training** in classroom settings with students on issues a school is facing.
- **Serve as a point of contact** and threat assessment team advisor.

The 2013 Congressional Research Service Report *School Resource Officers: Law Enforcement Officers in Schools* suggests that SROs “might **serve as a deterrent** to a potential school shooter or provide a quicker law enforcement response in cases where a school shooting occurs...” (Page 21.) Although the report went on to say that the research did not address whether SRO programs deter school shootings.

The FBI’s *Violence Prevention in Schools: Enhancement Through Law Enforcement Partnerships* encourages **inclusion of an SRO or local LE partner on a threat assessment team**. The document also notes that SROS should:

- **“Build trusting relationships**
- **Be visible and establish a presence in the school.**
 - Help deter crime and de-escalate situations.
- **Minimize tolerance for bullying.**
 - Advocate ways to prevent bullying and educate students on what to do when they are aware of bullying.
- **Encourage nonviolent ways of resolving conflict.**
 - Teach students that violence is not an appropriate response to conflict.
 - Educate students on nonviolent conflict resolution strategies (peer mediation, active listening).
 - Promote respectful communication between students.
- **Provide campus safety-related training.**
 - Consider training in lockdown/run, hide fight method for active shooter.
 - Teach students about:
 - Leakage (that perpetrator’s desire to carry out an attack often “leaks” prior to an attack).
 - Bullying and internet safety.
 - The difference between tattling and telling.
- **Communicate to students that schools are safe places,** encourage students to ask questions and become involved in school safety planning. Remind students to be cautious, prepared and alert, but that they don’t need to endlessly worry” (pages 5-9).

NASRO’s guide *To Protect and Educate: The School Resource Officer and the Prevention of Violence* finds that SROs can act as **coordinators or liaison** between schools, law enforcement, and the community. The guide also specifies a number of roles SROs can play in creating a safe and secure community within the traditional triad approach (page 22):

- Meeting with principals each morning to exchange information gathered from parents, community members, and social media to detect potential spill-over of threats, drug activity, and other behavior onto campus.
- Meeting with campus and community social workers to understand when and how at home issues may be motivating a student's disruptive behavior in order to work with school staff to ensure effective and supportive responses.
- Coordinating additional law enforcement resources to assist with large public events on school campuses such as athletic events, dances and community functions.
- Working with school administrators to keep the school’s emergency management plan updated. (Any changes must be clearly communicated to all concerned parties.)
- Scheduling emergency drills in conjunction with other local agencies.
- Developing intervention, skills-development, and healthy-lifestyle programs for elementary and middle-school students so they are prepared to succeed in high school.
- Conducting home visits to contact parents of at-risk students and assisting those families.

In a Forum on Public Policy article, *Developing Safe Schools Partnerships with Law Enforcement*, it is observed that “triad roles of an SRO can be expanded and clarified for school safety situations.”

- SROs may build relationships to help students address a special need by referring them to appropriate resources.
- SROs may gather intelligence to intercede and stop criminal or problematic behavior.
- The presence of an SRO in a school already places the officer on the scene, should an emergency or other need for a trained first responder arise” (Page 11).

Resources that include the roles of SROs

Active Shooter Events and Response. Blair, John P. (2013). Boca Raton: Taylor & Francis. Retrieved from <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/umdcpr/reader.action?docID=1209809&query=#>

School Resource Officers and Violence Prevention: Best Practices (April 11, 2017). Schweit, K. and Mancik A. *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin*

School resource officers: Law enforcement officers in schools. James, N., & McCallion, G. (2013). Congressional Research Service, June, 26. Retrieved from <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R43126.pdf>

Violence Prevention in Schools: Enhancement Through Law Enforcement Partnerships (March 2017), U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation <https://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/violence-prevention-in-schools-march-2017.pdf/view>.

To Protect and Educate: The School Resource Officer and the Prevention of Violence in School (2012). NASRO. <https://nasro.org/cms/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/NASRO-To-Protect-and-Educate-nosecurity.pdf>

John Rosiak, “Developing Safe Schools Partnerships with Law Enforcement,” Forum on Public Policy, no. 1 (2009), accessed November 17, 2016, <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ864815.pdf.y>

What to Do After an Active Shooter Situation

Report

After an event, schools need to make sure all reporting requirements are met. Schools need to have procedures in place to communicate details of the event to local law enforcement, parents, and the community. An article co-authored by the author of this report in the *Journal of School Safety* titled *Learning Lessons from Averted Acts of Violence in Schools* (Winter 2017) analyzes a Police Foundation database on averted violence incident reports. The article notes that schools must have a plan for timely communication of incidents to those involved, including parents.

Follow Up to an Active Shooter Event—Stay Vigilant

Schools should take future threats seriously and keep threat assessment teams ready to evaluate potential “copycat” events that sometimes occur. The National Tactical Officers Association put out their *Active Shooter: How to Respond* guide which notes that, in managing the consequences of an active shooter situation, organizations should engage in several post-event assessments and activities, including:

- An accounting of all individuals at a designated assembly point to determine who, if anyone, is missing and potentially injured.
- Determining a method for notifying parents/families of individuals affected by the active shooter, including notification of any casualties.
- Assessing the psychological state of individuals at the scene and referring them to health care specialists accordingly.
- Identifying and filling any critical personnel or operational gaps left in the organization as a result of the active shooter.

Support Students, Staff, and Community

Debriefing can be an important part of the recovery from an active shooter event. Some research notes that therapy aimed at children needs to be specially tailored. Single-session individual psychological intervention may not be the most effective. Sometimes small group-based programs can have a larger impact, especially for incidents that impact a large number of people.

It is important to provide support for students, as well as adults, involved in an active shooter situation. Schools need to work in partnership with a variety of mental health resources to help the school community deal with the effects of trauma. This support includes paying attention to the mental well-being of all involved, which is part of a sound support system in the community that will help deal with all kinds of mental health issues, including suicide.

In their document on effective drills for crisis events, NASP encourages schools to continue to make available mental health services after a traumatic community event like a school shooting. The article

“*What can be Done About School Shootings?*” in the journal *Educational Researcher* details several ways in which schools should be engaged following a crisis event. These can be items like:

- Reaffirming physical health and perceptions of safety.
- Evaluating factors that increase the risk of psychological trauma.
- Providing crisis interventions that respond to the psychological needs of students and staff.

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network also puts out the *Parent Guidelines for Helping Youth After the Recent Shooting* fact sheet, which notes “Children's and teen’s reactions to the shooting are strongly influenced by how parents, relatives, teachers, and other caregivers respond to the event. They often turn to these adults for information, comfort, and help.” This sheet encourages parents and school staff to make themselves aware of the ways they can support students immediately following an incident. They also have tip sheets on the psychological impact of mass violence, talking to journalists after mass violence, and talking to children about school shootings.

Youth.gov, an interagency resource hub, highlights ways the Federal government thinks about responses to shootings in their *Federal Resource on Helping Youth Cope After a School Shooting* webpage <https://youth.gov/feature-article/federal-resources-helping-youth-cope-after-school-shooting>. This page links to important information on ways the Federal government supports the adoption of **trauma-informed care**.

Items that may seem basic in a post-crisis situation often need reiteration. The U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance’s *Guide for Preventing and Responding to School Violence* specifically mentions that school administration should engage in activities like:

- Maintaining informational and support call-in lines for families of victims.
- Ensuring multilingual counseling is available for those who need it.
- Providing families with guidance on handling potential media attention.
- Checking that teachers self-address their own reactions before interacting with students.

Guidance for School Boards

As the leaders of the school district in Milwaukee, the board of school directors provides leadership and guidance on significant issues. Addressing active shooters and other emergency management issues fits in this purview. The National School Boards Association points out that, “In compliance with state and federal laws, school boards establish policies and regulations by which their local schools are governed.” <https://www.nsba.org/about-us/frequently-asked-questions> School boards are responsible for larger tasks, including employing the superintendent; developing and adopting policies, curriculum, and the budget; and overseeing facilities issues. The Center for Public Education states that one of the effective characteristics of an effective school board is that they “lead as a united team with the superintendent, each from their respective roles, with strong collaboration and mutual trust.” <http://www.centerforpubliceducation.org/research/eight-characteristics-effective-school-boards-full-report>

Below is guidance for school boards/administrators from key documents addressing the active shooter issue.

The Bureau of Justice Assistance notes in the *Guide for Preventing and Responding to School Violence* that School Boards and school administrators must be responsible for creating a safe school by

- **Creating a crisis planning team.**
- Establishing crisis management teams at district and site levels **using nationally recognized Incident Command System.**
- Include off site school activities such as stadium events, field trips, and so on, in crisis planning
- Identify personnel who will have master keys, codes, and access to secured areas at the site.
- Identify and train on-site building maintenance staff (primary and backup) and off site personnel who will take responsibility for dealing with fire alarms, sprinkler systems, gas, and so on.
- Establish and practice lockdown and evacuation procedures, including where students should go during different types of crises.
- After a crisis, the report notes that school administrators should have strong **support systems** in place. (All from Section 4: Crisis Planning and Preparation, Pages 20-23).

While prevention is the biggest way to have an impact on the danger posed by school shooters, a protected school environment also has value and can save lives in a crisis situation. The Department of Education’s REMS technical assistance center links to the trade publication *Building Design+ Construction*, whose three-part series on building design and school safety *Can Design Prevent another Sandy Hook?* frequently references the role school boards and school administrators can have in the design of school buildings and campus security. The report emphasizes how:

1. “Early planning and collaboration with all stakeholders in the school district is the key to success. (Skip this step and you may as well pack your iPad and go back to the office.)
2. Thoughtful design of schools through the employment of “the three Ds” of security—deter, detect, delay—could save lives when seconds count.
3. Technology can help, but technology alone cannot make schools 100% safe. Training and preparedness, plus good design, are also required.

4. School boards' chief priority is educating children, but they must also take into consideration that school buildings are community resources and must be open to the public at certain times. School officials and AEC professionals are strongly united in the belief that schools must not be turned into walled fortresses in the name of security" (Paragraph 8).

Schools need to consider what technologies and policies around school layout and design can be implemented to great effect. **School boards can conduct interior and exterior threat assessments** to make campuses safer. The article also emphasizes that schools need to have good safety design not just to deter active shooter threats but to be prepared for other, more likely school safety scenarios (like a suspicious backpack in a stairwell, a bullied student who now keeps a weapon in their locker, an angry parent in a custody battle).

- School safety design can include items as simple as doors with secure locks and clear numbering of classrooms for easy navigation by security personnel in the event of a crisis.

The U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Secret Service argue in *Threat Assessment in School: A Guide to managing threatening situations and creating safe school climates* that: School boards need to be ready to support and approve threat assessment programs run by schools and should emphasize an integrated systems model where stakeholders from the school, community, law enforcement and emergency management come together to define threats to a community.

The Virginia Department of Education's *Threat Assessment in Virginia Public Schools Model Policies, Procedures, and Guidelines* aims to help local school boards establish and operate threat assessment teams in their schools. The document lays out the important principles of a threat assessment team as a process designed to

1. "Identify individual(s)/situation(s) whose behavior causes concern for violence
2. Gather additional relevant information in a lawful and ethical manner
3. Assess the individual(s)/situation(s) in context based on the totality of the information available
4. Manage the individual situation to prevent violence and mitigate impact of harm" (page 15).

And operates under six principles of

1. "The central question in a threat assessment inquiry is whether an individual poses a threat (i.e., is building the capability to cause harm), not just whether the person has made a threat (directly expressed intent to harm).
2. Targeted violence is the end result of an understandable, and often discernible, process of thinking and behavior, often referred to as the Pathway to Violence
3. Targeted violence stems from an interaction among the Subject(s), Target(s), Environment and Precipitating Incidents
4. An investigative, skeptical, inquisitive mindset is critical to successful threat assessment
5. Effective assessment is based upon facts and observations of behavior, rather than on characteristics, traits or profiles. Perpetrator "profiles" do not provide a reliable basis for making judgments of the threat posed by a particular individual.
6. An "integrated systems approach", coordinating between local agencies and service systems within the school and the community (e.g., mental health services, law enforcement) should guide threat assessment and management processes" (Pages 16-17)

The National School Board Association’s American School Board Journal published an article detailing school safety threats school boards should keep up with. The Article *Trending in School Safety* noted that boards need to:

- Make smart technology choices.
- Ensure schools keep up with essential trainings.
- Have an ear to the ground for potential “Leakage.”
- Understand the role of SROs to build relationships and collect information.
- Watch the front door. Maintain clear points for admission to schools and ensure those inside a school are only people who are supposed to be there.

Resources that present guidance about what school boards can do

Tips for School Administrators for Reinforcing School Safety (Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists, 2015), accessed November 18, 2016,
www.houstonisd.org/cms/lib2/TX01001591/Centricity/Domain/8052/School%20Safety%20Tips%20for%20Administrators.pdf

Guide for Preventing and Responding to School Violence, Bureau of Justice Assistance and International Association of Chiefs of Police (K-12) https://www.bja.gov/Publications/IACP_School_Violence.pdf

Threat assessment in schools: A guide to managing threatening situations and to creating safe school climates. Fein, R. A. (2002). DIANE Publishing, U.S. Department of Education, U.S. Secret Service. Retrieved from <https://www2.ed.gov/adms/lead/safety/threatassessmentguide.pdf>

Threat Assessment in Virginia Public Schools: Model Policies, Procedures and Guidelines. Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services. (2016). Retrieved from <https://www.dcjs.virginia.gov/sites/dcjs.virginia.gov/files/publications/law-enforcement/threat-assessment-model-policies-procedures-and-guidelinespdf.pdf>

Trending in School Safety. Stover, Del. (2017). NSBA American School Board Journal. Retrieved from <https://www.nsba.org/newsroom/american-school-board-journal/asbj-august-2017/trending-school-security>

Next Steps for Consideration

Preparing for active shooter situations, and other crises, requires many partners to do many things. Some best practices, as noted in the author's correspondence with the REMs Technical Assistance Center, include:

- Working with community partners.
- Emergency operations plan development.
- Training and exercises.

Some of the action steps are the responsibility of particular agencies. For example, MPD may lead the tactical training of SROs to better prepare them for active shooter situations. Many activities are the joint responsibility of different partners, such as MPD, working in concert with other first responders and MPS staff.

Preparation for active shooter situations and other crisis events demands ongoing work. Crisis planners talk about how you cannot prepare for all possible scenarios, but literature on mass shooting suggests that focusing on prevention of mass shooting events in the first place can have a great impact.

Overall, coordination is key. MPS administrators and staff need to know what police (and other first responders) will do in an active shooter or other crisis situation. MPD (and other first responders) need to know what MPS administrators, staff, and students will do in such a situation. In short, all parties must know how the other parties will handle a crisis situation such as an active shooter. Each party must respect the roles of the other agency/organization. These roles and responsibilities should be clear on paper, and made clearer in drills carried out over the course of the year.

In summary: Be clear about, in advance, what the policies and protocols of each partner are in an active shooter or other crisis situation. Know their respective roles. Practice them. Learn from drills conducted. Revise and improve to be better prepared.

The following are actions to be considered by MPS, working in concert with MPD:

Establish threat assessment procedures. Schools need to remain alert and engaged in a variety of school safety issues. For active shooter situations, this means establishing threat assessment capabilities to intervene before a potential active shooter incident.

Conduct training. MPD training with MPS administrators is critical and needs to happen so that school administrators know what to expect. Administrators must understand that police responding to an active shooter situation are honed in on stopping the threat and may bypass someone injured. Administrators will ideally be trained in National Incident Management System (NIMS) and Incident Command System (ICS) and understand the principle of "unified command" and understand their roles in that process.

More specifically, MPS administrators and MPD must work together to make sure that the police know what the schools' response will be in an emergency, for example, how Code Red is carried out by the school. Administrators must work with teachers to make sure that students in their classrooms know

and practice the emergency drills so that students are quiet and follow directions provided by the teachers, then police if/when necessary.

Training with MPS safety assistants should be continued because of their essential role during a crisis, but also prior to a crisis, and afterwards. These MPS staff members are on-site every day in the school and know the school building and students well. One suggestion made during the SRO evaluation was that future training could also be with the supervisors of the MPS school safety assistants (“safeties”) to make sure the understanding of roles of all those involved is reinforced.

MPS “Safeties” can play key roles in several areas to assist during an active shooter situation:

1. Let the police into the building immediately during an active shooter situation (since police do not have master keys or electronic access);
2. Provide police with radios that work in the schools (since MPD radios do not work in school buildings);
3. Assist police with the video capabilities in the building to provide the incident commander with a valuable visual tool of what is happening real-time.

Use the emergency planning process. FEMA guides present a 6-step emergency planning process that includes the steps below. MPS can work with MPD to review this planning process to determine how it fits into local current planning effort, and to see if the process might help improve current practice.

The Guide for Developing High-Quality School Emergency Operations Plans (School Guide)

https://rems.ed.gov/docs/REMS_K-12_Guide_508.pdf presents how, once formed, the collaborative planning team should construct a SMART action plan that is specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-framed to carry out these steps to be better prepared to prevent and prepare for an active shooter or other emergency situation. The six steps are:

- 1) Form a collaborative planning team.
- 2) Understand the situation.
- 3) Determine goals and objectives.
- 4) Develop the plan.
- 5) Prepare, review, and approve the plan.
- 6) Implement and maintain the plan.

These steps identified in the School Guide are spelled out further by the REMs Technical Assistance Center, as it describes the process:

The School Guide provides planning principles and a six-step planning process to create, review, or revise emergency operations plans (EOPs). For example, as the six-step planning process applies to preparing for an active shooter situation, a planning team will first be formed (Step 1: **Form a Collaborative Planning Team**). This planning team will likely comprise of school personnel (e.g., SRO, administrators, educators, school psychologists, nurses, facilities managers, transportation managers, food personnel, and a representative of families), community partners (e.g., law enforcement, fire department, emergency medical services, and emergency management), and a school district representative.

Next, the team may identify through assessments that active shooter events are a type of threat that needs to be addressed in the EOP (Step 2: **Understand the Situation**).

Goals can be created that identify desired outcomes for before, during, and after an active shooter event and objectives can be established that are specific and measurable actions to achieve those goals (Step 3: **Determine Goals and Objectives**).

Courses of action are then developed to accomplish those objectives, and describe the who, what, why, when, and how (Step 4: Plan Development [**Identifying Courses of Action**]). For example, the planning team will likely want to describe what the roles and responsibilities are of the administrator before, during, and after an active shooter incident.

After a draft of the EOP is written and approved (Step 5: **Plan Preparation, Review, and Approval**), schools and school districts can implement the activities described in the EOP, including conducting exercises and training (Step 6: **Plan Implementation and Maintenance**).

Milwaukee Public School Resources Related to Active Shooters

Milwaukee Public Schools has several tools related to active shooter situations, including:

Crisis Plan

This tri-fold flip chart for administrators summarizes what to do in various emergencies/crises. The document is completed/updated at the beginning of each school year by each school. The plan includes resources lists indicating the members of the crisis management team, school phone chain, and other resources (such as MPD, other first responders, MPS resources and neighborhood leaders); worksheets that include people responsible for dealing with issues related to particular staging areas (including forms on command post, media staging area, bus staging area, alternative site evacuation area, alternate site partnership agreement, health treatment center, counseling room, parent reunification area, and other), and school floor plans.

Response Codes

One-page document that outlines MPS standardized emergency response codes, which are designed to be simple and easy to understand. Includes: Code Green—low risk for normal operations; Code Yellow—elevated risk where staff and students are in standby/alert mode as normal operations continue; and Code Red—severe risk, where staff and students go into action mode due to information that there is an imminent threat.

Depending on the situation the principal issues an emergency response to: Duck and cover; evacuate the building (fire drill procedures); lockdown/lockout designed to prevent perpetrator(s) from entering occupied areas—school administrator may be directed by law enforcement to issue Code Red; shelter-in-place to isolate students and staff from outside environmental contaminants; or isolate/contain activity such as a fight or disturbance. This response may escalate to evacuation or lockdown.

Gun Violence Plan

One-page document on procedures to follow if one or more individuals with a gun are attempting to cause harm to students or staff.

Also available to MPS are the services of the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI). DPI can provide guidance and support in the area of school preparedness. The DPI point of contact is Ms. Brenda Jennings, Brenda.Jennings@dpi.wi.gov.

Additional questions can be directed to the Office of Safe and Healthy Students (OSHS) through its Readiness and Emergency Management (REMS) Technical Assistance Center at 1-855-781-REMS [7367] or info@remstacenter.org.

Milwaukee Police Department Resources on Active Shooters

With the goal of training those who work in schools, the MPD Tactical Enforcement Unit has provided refresher training to the SROs on how to respond to an active shooter situation, which includes how to carry out various formations, depending on the number of officers on the scene. In the Spring of 2018 MPD trained all of the SROs, then provided a follow-up training with the MPS school safety assistants, known as “safeties.” (School administrators were invited to this training, but none attended due to other professional development.) MPD training does not involve table top drills; rather, the focus is on live, hands-on demonstrations that are designed with realistic stressors like noise and sound to simulate real life situations. MPD believes that this live drill approach ingrains itself into the responders thinking and actions more effectively. MPD conducts training with MPS safety assistants because of their essential during a crisis, but also prior to a crisis, and afterwards. MPD recognizes the value of these MPS staff members who are on-site every day in the school and know the school building and students well.

MPD has documentation related to active shooter training that is kept on file at the police training academy. MPD has a number of policies and standard operating procedures (SOPs) regarding a variety of hazards and how incident command would apply to those situations, including those involving schools.

Resources Related to Active Shooter Situations

Active Attack Integrated Response Course, Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training (ALERRT) at Texas State University (K-12 and higher education)
https://alerrt.org/course_types/view/115

Active Shooter. Ready.gov webpage describing what to do if you find yourself in an active shooter situation. <https://www.ready.gov/active-shooter>

Active Shooter Awareness Virtual Roundtable, U.S. Department of Homeland Security (K-12 and Higher ed) <https://share.dhs.gov/asaware2011>

Active Shooter Educational Sheet, U.S. Department of Homeland Security (K-12 and Higher ed)
<https://rems.ed.gov/docs/Active%20Shooter%20Educational%20Sheet.pdf>

Active Shooter Events From 2000 to 2012, Federal Bureau of Investigation (K-12 and Higher ed)
<https://leb.fbi.gov/articles/featured-articles/active-shooter-events-from-2000-to-2012/view>

Active Shooter Events and Response. Blair, John P. (2013). Boca Raton: Taylor & Francis. Retrieved from
<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/umdcpr/reader.action?docID=1209809&query=#>

Active Shooter Event Quick Reference Guide, Federal Bureau of Investigation (K-12 and Higher ed)
<https://rems.ed.gov/docs/Active%20Shooter%20Event%20Quick%20Reference%20Guide.pdf>

Active Shooter/ Hostile Event Guide. Inter-Agency board, USDHS, International Fire Chiefs Association (2016) Retrieved from <https://www.nccpsafety.org/resources/library/active-shooter-hostile-event-ashe-guide>

Active Shooter: How to Respond. US Department of Homeland Security (2008). National Tactical Officers Association, Fairfax County Police Department, National Retail Federation, and Retail Industry Leaders Association (K-12 and Higher ed) Retrieved from
https://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/active_shooter_booklet.pdf

Active Shooter Incidents in the United States From 2000-2017, Federal Bureau of Investigation (K-12 and Higher ed) <https://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/active-shooter-incidents-2000-2017.pdf/view>

Active Shooter Preparedness, U.S. Department of Homeland Security (K-12 and Higher ed)
<https://www.dhs.gov/active-shooter-preparedness>

Active Shooter: Recommendations and Analysis for Risk Mitigation. Miller, J., O'Neill, P., Waters, R. (2016) City of New York Police Department and Counterterrorism Bureau. Retrieved from
<https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/nypd/downloads/pdf/.../active-shooter-analysis2016.pdf>

Active Shooter Situations: Describing Unique Challenges Involved in Preparing for, Responding to, and Recovering From a School-Based or Postsecondary Institution Shooting Webinar, Federal Bureau of

Investigation, U.S. Department of Justice, and REMS TA Center (K-12 and Higher ed)
<https://rems.ed.gov/ActiveShooterSituations.aspx>

Active Shooter Situations, U.S. Department of Education, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency, U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (K-12)
<https://rems.ed.gov/K12ActiveShooterSituations.aspx>

A Study of Active Shooter Incidents, 2000 - 2013. Texas State University and Federal Bureau of Investigation Blair, J. Pete, and Schweit, Katherine W. (2014). U.S. Department of Justice, Washington D.C. 2014. Retrieved from <https://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/active-shooter-study-2000-2013-1.pdf>

Averted School Violence Near Miss Reporting System, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (K-12 and Higher ed) <https://www.asvnearmiss.org/>

Avoid, Deny, Defend. <http://www.avoiddenydefend.org/>

Best Practice Considerations for Schools in Active Shooter and Other Armed Assailant Drills, National Association of School Psychologists and National Association of School Resource Officers (K-12)
https://www.nasponline.org/Documents/Research%20and%20Policy/Advocacy%20Resources/BP_Armed_Assailant_Drills.pdf

Campus Attacks: Targeted Violence Affecting Institutions of Higher Education, U.S. Secret Service, U.S. Department of Education, and Federal Bureau of Investigation (Higher ed)
https://rems.ed.gov/docs/CampusAttacks_201004.pdf

Can Design Prevent Another Sandy Hook?, Building Design + Construction (K-12)
<https://www.bdcnetwork.com/special-report-can-design-prevent-another-sandy-hook>

Crisis Management and Emergency Response in Virginia Schools. Virginia Department of Education (2007). Resource guide. Retrieved from http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/safety_crisis_management/school_safety/emergency_crisis_management/crisis_mgmt_emer-response_guide.pdf

Dealing with Weapons on Campus (Lessons Learned Volume 1, Issue 1), REMS TA Center (K-12)
https://rems.ed.gov/docs/DealingWithWeaponsOnCampus11_7.pdf

Enhanced Dynamic Geo-Social Environment (EDGE), U.S. Department of Homeland Security (K-12)
Final Report and Findings of the Safe School Initiative: Implications for Prevention of School Attacks in the United States, U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Department of Education (K-12)
<https://www.dhs.gov/science-and-technology/EDGE>

Guide for Developing High-Quality School Emergency Operations Plans (also referred to as the School Guide). U.S. Department of Education, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Federal Emergency Management Agency (2013). Retrieved from <https://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/33599>

Guide for Preventing and Responding to School Violence, Bureau of Justice Assistance and International Association of Chiefs of Police (K-12) https://www.bja.gov/Publications/IACP_School_Violence.pdf

Gun Violence and School Safety briefing. Dewey Cornell, National Prevention Science Coalition Capitol Hill Testimony. (2018) March 23. Starting at 50:53 <https://www.c-span.org/video/?442989-1/capitol-hill-forum-focuses-gun-violence-school-safety>

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How to Prepare for an Active Shooter Incident. https://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/1472672897352-d28bb197db5389e4ddedcef335d3d867/FEMA_ActiveShooter_OnePagerv1d15_508_FINAL.pdf

How to Prepare for and Respond During and After an Active Shooter Incident, Federal Emergency Management Agency (K-12 and Higher ed) https://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/1472672897352-d28bb197db5389e4ddedcef335d3d867/FEMA_ActiveShooter_OnePagerv1d15_508_FINAL.pdf

IACP National Law Enforcement Policy Center Active Shooter Concepts and Issues Paper (2018) <http://www.theiacp.org/model-policy/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2018/04/ActiveShooterPaper2018.pdf>

IS-907: Active Shooter: What You Can Do, Emergency Management Institute (K-12 and Higher ed) <https://training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-907>

Learning Lessons from Averted Acts of Violence in Schools. Solano, S., Straub, F., and Rosiak, J. (2017). Journal of School Safety, Winter 2017. Retrieved from https://issuu.com/johnrosiak/docs/joss_win_2017_averting_school_viole

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Making Schools Safer. U.S. Department of Homeland Security and U.S. Secret Service Retrieved from https://www.secretservice.gov/data/protection/ntac/Making_Schools_Safer_Quick_Reference_Guide_2018_Update.pdf

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Mass Shootings at Virginia Tech: Report of the Review Panel, Virginia Tech Review Panel (Higher ed) <https://rems.ed.gov/docs/MassShootingsatVirginiaTech.pdf>

National Child Traumatic Stress Network resources Retrieved from https://www.nctsn.org/resources/all-nctsn-resources?search=&resource_type=All&trauma_type=126&language=All&audience=All&page=1

Includes:

Psychological Impact of Mass Violence <https://www.nctsn.org/resources/psychological-impact-mass-violence>

Talking to Children about the Shooting <https://www.nctsn.org/resources/talking-children-about-shooting>

Helping Youth After Community Trauma: Tips for Educators <https://www.nctsn.org/resources/helping-youth-after-community-trauma-tips-educators>

National Seminar and Tabletop Exercise Series for IHEs (NTTX), U.S. Department of Homeland Security (Higher ed) <https://www.dhs.gov/nttx>

NTTX 2016: Campus Violence Summary Report, Federal Emergency Management Agency and Office of Academic Engagement (Higher ed) <https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/2016%20NTTX%20Summary%20Report.pdf>

Parent Guidelines for Helping Youth After the Recent Shooting, National Child Traumatic Stress Network (K-12) <https://www.nctsn.org/resources/parent-guidelines-helping-youth-after-recent-shooting>

Planning and Response to an Active Shooter: An Interagency Security Committee Policy and Best Practices Guide, Interagency Security Committee (K-12 and Higher ed) <https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/isc-planning-response-active-shooter-guide-non-fouo-nov-2015-508.pdf>

Practical Information on Crisis Planning: A Guide for Schools and Communities. U.S. Department of Education, (2004). <https://rems.ed.gov/docs/PracticalInformationonCrisisPlanning.pdf>

Primer to Design Safe School Projects in Case of Terrorist Attacks and School Shootings, U.S. Department of Homeland Security (K-12) https://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/st/bips07_428_schools.pdf

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Psychological Impact of the Recent Shooting, National Child Traumatic Stress Network (K-12) https://www.nctsn.org/resources/all-nctsn-resources?file=/sites/default/files/assets/pdfs/psychological_information_sheet_two_pager.pdf&nid=113

Report on the Arapahoe High Arapahoe High School Shooting: Lessons Learned on Information Sharing, Threat Assessment, and Systems Integrity <http://cdpsdocs.state.co.us/safeschools/Resources/AHS-reports/CSPV.AHSFullReport.pdf>

Responding to an Active Shooter Crisis Situation and RUN. HIDE. FIGHT. Surviving an Active Shooter Event Video, Federal Bureau of Investigation (K-12 and Higher ed) <https://www.fbi.gov/about/partnerships/office-of-partner-engagement/active-shooter-resources/responding-to-an-active-shooter-crisis-situation>

Responding to and Recovering From an Active Shooter Incident that Turns Into a Hostage Situation (Lessons Learned Volume 2, Issue 6), REMS TA Center (K-12) https://rems.ed.gov/docs/LL_Vol2Issue6.pdf

Restoring a Sense of Safety in the Aftermath of a Mass Shooting: Tips for Parents and Professionals, Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress (K-12) <https://rems.ed.gov/Docs/documents/RestoringAftermathMassShooting.pdf>

Retraumatization: How One College Campus Responded to Emotional Reinjury (Lessons Learned Volume 5, Issue 3), REMS TA Center (Higher ed) https://rems.ed.gov/docs/LL_Vol5Issue3.pdf

School resource officers: Law enforcement officers in schools. James, N., & McCallion, G. (2013). Congressional Research Service, June, 26. Retrieved from <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R43126.pdf>

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Targeted Violence on a School and University Campus: Emergency Management Implications for Human Resources Professionals (Lessons Learned Volume 6, Issue 2), REMS TA Center (K-12 and Higher ed)

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The school shooter a threat assessment perspective. O'Toole, M. E. (2009). DIANE Publishing. Washington DC: US DOJ and FBI Retrieved from <https://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/stats-services-publications-school-shooter-school-shooter/view>

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Tip Sheet for Youth Talking to Journalists About the Shooting, National Child Traumatic Stress Network (K-12) <https://www.nctsn.org/resources/tip-sheet-youth-talking-journalists-about-shooting>

Training, Drilling, and Exercising Toolkit. <https://txssc.txstate.edu/tools/>

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Active Shooter Training Resources

The following organizations offer trainings of active shooter response for school staff, faculty, and SROs:

ALERT center at Texas State University: Hosts trainings on active shooter situations for law enforcement officers <https://alerrt.org/Course-Catalog>

ALICE Training Institute: Offers instruction geared towards making an organization better prepared for a violent intruder incident www.alicetraining.com/training-classes

Civilian Response to Active Shooter Events Training from University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Police <http://uwm.edu/police/tag/active-shooter/>

City of Madison PD Civilian response to Active Shooter Trainings <https://www.cityofmadison.com/police/safety/commTrainings/crase.cfm>

FBI: Partners with DOJ Bureau of Justice Assistance and ALERT to offer trainings to state and local police departments. Additionally, FBI field offices held conferences around best practices and lessons learned from prior mass shooting incidents. FBI offices also host tabletop exercises for law enforcement focusing on how to respond and recover from an active shooter incident. <https://www.fbi.gov/about/partnerships/office-of-partner-engagement/active-shooter-resources>

FEMA Emergency Management Institute <https://training.fema.gov/is/crslst.aspx>

National Association of School Psychologists PREPaRE: The curriculum is designed to help schools use evidence-based methods related to school crisis prevention and response. <https://www.nasponline.org/professional-development/prepare-training-curriculum>

National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO): Offers a three-day training for SROs on active shooters <https://nasro.org/sro-active-shooter-response/>

National Incident Management. NIMS Implementation Activities for Schools and Institutions of Higher Education, https://rems.ed.gov/docs/NIMS_ComprehensiveGuidanceActivities_2009-2010.pdf FAQs about NIMS Implementation Activities for Schools and Institutions of Higher Education. https://rems.ed.gov/docs/NIMS_FAQ_2009-2010.pdf

National Safety Council: Offers training materials to community leaders who can organize the training locally to inform about how active shooter situations unfold, how to be situationally aware, and the actions that can improve your odds of survival www.nsc.org/home-safety/get-involved/community-training

National Seminar and Tabletop Exercises for Institutions of Higher Education <https://www.dhs.gov/nttx#>

National School Boards Association. Planning and Managing the School Crisis You Hope Never Comes https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o4qDyOL5F_I

National Tactical Officers Association (NTOA): Utilizes active police as trainers in a “hands-on” course to prepare other officers for an active shooter scenario. Has local agencies host NTOA to provide the training www.ntoa.org/host-training-courses

School Safety Advocacy Council: Offers online and on-site courses to improve school safety training and development www.schoolsafety911.org/training.html#1

Texas School Safety Center. Training, Drilling, and Exercising Toolkit, <https://txssc.txstate.edu/tools/tde-toolkit/drill-recs>