

Developing High-Quality School Emergency Operations Plans: An Overview



FEMA



Summary of Webinar

- Welcome
- Introduction of Trainer
- Webinar Presentation
- Q&A Session
- Wrap-Up & Resources



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American Federation of
School Administrators
AFSA, AFL-CIO

Introduction and Purpose

- Each school day, our nation's schools are entrusted to provide a safe and healthy learning environment for approximately 55 million elementary and secondary school students. Families and communities expect schools to keep their children and youths safe from threats (human-caused emergencies such as crime and violence) and hazards (natural disasters, disease outbreaks, and accidents).

Introduction and Purpose

- Lessons learned from school emergencies highlight the importance of preparing school officials and first responders to implement Emergency Operations Plans (EOPs).
- We recommend that planning teams responsible for developing and revising school EOPs use this document to guide their efforts. It is recommended that districts and individual schools compare existing plans and processes against the content and processes outlined in this guide.

Guide Organized in Four Sections

- The principles of school emergency management planning.
- A process for developing, implementing, and continually refining a school EOP with community partners (e.g., first responders and emergency management personnel) at the school building level.
- A discussion of the form, function, and content of school EOPs.
- “A Closer Look,” which considers key topics that support school emergency planning, including addressing an *active shooter*, school climate, psychological first aid, and information-sharing.

Presidential Policy Directive (PPD) 8

- Describes the nation's approach to preparedness. This directive represents an evolution in our collective understanding of national preparedness, based on the lessons learned from terrorist attacks, hurricanes, school incidents, and other experiences.
- PPD-8 defines preparedness around five mission areas: Prevention, Protection, Mitigation, Response, and Recovery.

PPD-8 – Five Missions

- **Prevention**, for the purposes of this guide, means the capabilities necessary to avoid, deter, or stop an imminent crime or threatened or actual mass casualty incident. Prevention is the action schools take to prevent a threatened or actual incident from occurring.
- **Protection** means the capabilities to secure schools against acts of violence and manmade or natural disasters. Protection focuses on ongoing actions that protect students, teachers, staff, visitors, networks, and property from a threat or hazard.

PPD-8 – Five Missions, cont.

- **Mitigation** means the capabilities necessary to eliminate or reduce the loss of life and property damage by lessening the impact of an event or emergency. In this document, “mitigation” also means reducing the likelihood that threats and hazards will happen.
- **Response** means the capabilities necessary to stabilize an emergency once it has already happened or is certain to happen in an unpreventable way; establish a safe and secure environment; save lives and property; and facilitate the transition to recovery.
- **Recovery** means the capabilities necessary to assist schools affected by an event or emergency in restoring the learning environment.

Planning Principles

- **Planning must be supported by leadership.** At the district and school levels, senior-level officials can help the planning process by demonstrating strong support for the planning team.
- **Planning uses assessment to customize plans to the building level.** Effective planning is built around comprehensive, ongoing assessment of the school community. Information gathered through assessment is used to customize plans to the building level, taking into consideration the school's unique circumstances and resources.

Planning Principles, cont.

- **Planning considers all threats and hazards.** The planning process must take into account a wide range of possible threats and hazards that may impact the school. Comprehensive school emergency management planning considers all threats and hazards throughout the planning process, addressing safety needs before, during, and after an incident.
- **Planning provides for the access and functional needs of the whole school community.** The “whole school community” includes children, individuals with disabilities and others with access and functional needs, those from religiously, racially, and ethnically diverse backgrounds, and people with limited English proficiency.

Planning Principles, cont.

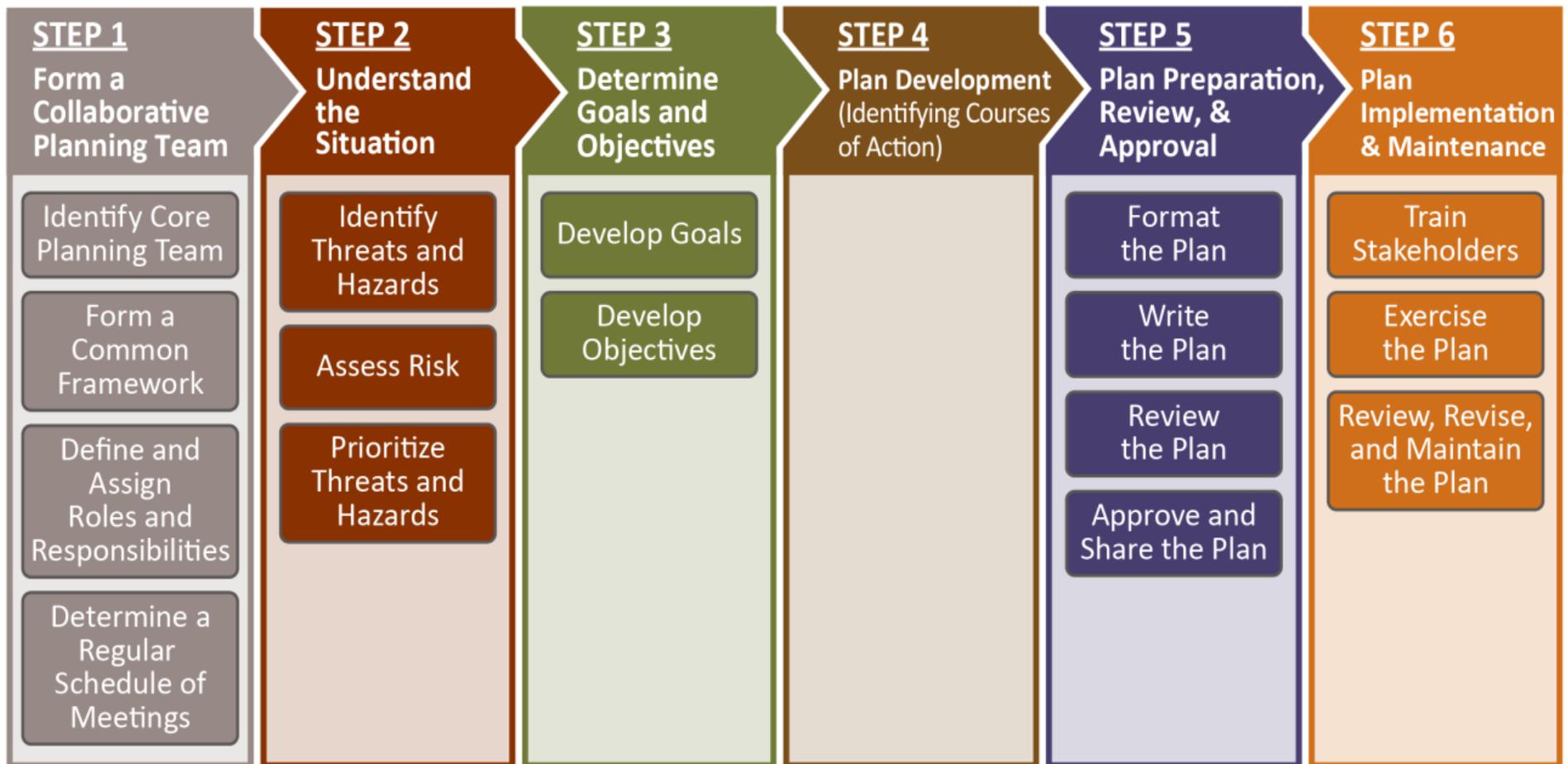
- **Planning considers all settings and all times.** School EOPs must account for incidents that may occur during and outside the school day as well as on and off campus (e.g., sporting events, field trips).
- **Creating and revising a model EOP is done by following a collaborative process.** This guide provides a process, plan format, and content guidance that are flexible enough for use by all school emergency planning teams. If a planning team also uses templates, it must first evaluate their usefulness to ensure the tools do not undermine the collaborative initiative and collectively shared plan. There are some jurisdictions that provide templates to schools, and these will reflect state and local mandates, as applicable.

The Planning Process

- There are many ways to develop a school EOP. The planning process discussed in this section is flexible and can be adapted to accommodate a school's unique characteristics and situation.
- Effective school emergency management planning and development of a school EOP are not done in isolation. It is critical that schools work with their district staff and community partners— local emergency management staff, first responders, and public and mental health officials— during the planning process. This collaboration makes more resources available and helps to ensure the seamless integration of all responders.

Steps in the Planning Process

At each step, schools should consider the impact of their decisions on ongoing activities such as training and exercises as well as on equipment and resources.



- **Identify Core Planning Team:** The planning team should be small enough to permit close collaboration with first responders and other community partners, yet large enough to be representative of the school, its families, and its community. It should also be large enough as to not place an undue burden on any single person.
- **Form a Common Framework:** A shared approach facilitates mutual understanding, coordination, and execution of the emergency management strategies as well as works from a common command structure. All team members need to take time to learn each other's vocabulary, command structure, and culture in order to facilitate effective planning.
- **Define and Assign Roles and Responsibilities:** Each person involved in the development and refinement of the plan should know her or his roles and responsibilities in the planning process.

- **Determine a Regular Schedule of Meetings:** School emergency management planning is an ongoing effort that is reinforced through regularly scheduled planning meetings. Establishing a flexible but regular schedule of meeting times will facilitate greater collaboration, coordination, and communication among team members and will help solidify crucial relationships.
- After completing Step 1, the school has formed a planning team with representatives from all necessary stakeholders. The planning team has taken initial steps to form a common framework, define and assign roles and responsibilities in the planning process, and set a schedule of planning meetings.

STEP 2

Understand the Situation

Step 2

- **Identify Threats and Hazards:** The planning team first needs to understand the threats and hazards faced by the school and the surrounding community.
- **Assess the Risk Posed by the Identified Threats and Hazards:** Once an initial set of threats and hazards has been identified through the process described in the previous section, the planning team should select suitable assessment tools to evaluate the risk posed by the identified threats and hazards.

STEP 2

Understand the Situation

Step 2

- Assessments will be used not only to develop the initial plan but also to inform updates and revisions to the plan on an ongoing basis. The following table provides more information about some of the most essential assessments the planning team should undertake.

STEP 2

Understand
the
Situation

Step 2

Type of Assessment	Description	Purpose and Results
Site Assessment	<p>A site assessment examines the safety, accessibility, and emergency preparedness of the school's buildings and grounds. This assessment includes, but is not limited to, a review of building access and egress control measures, visibility around the exterior of the building, structural integrity of the building, compliance with applicable architectural standards for individuals with disabilities and others with functional and access needs, and emergency vehicle access.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">*Increased understanding of the potential impact of threats and hazards on the school buildings and grounds.*Increased understanding of risk and vulnerabilities of the school buildings and grounds when developing the plan.*Knowledge of which facilities are physically accessible to students, staff, parents, volunteer workers, and emergency response personnel with disabilities and can be used in compliance with the law.

STEP 2

Understand
the
Situation

Step 2

Type of Assessment	Description	Purpose and Results
Culture and Climate Assessment	<p>In schools with positive climates, students are more likely to feel connected to adults and their peers. This fosters a nurturing environment where students are more likely to succeed, feel safe, and report threats. A school culture and climate assessment evaluates student and staff connectedness to the school and problem behaviors. For example, this assessment may reveal a high number of bullying incidents, indicating a need to implement an anti-bullying program. If a student survey is used to assess culture and climate, student privacy must be protected. A range of school personnel can assist in the assessment of culture and school climate, including school counselors and mental health staff.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">*Knowledge of students' and staff's perceptions of their safety.*Knowledge of problem behaviors that need to be addressed to improve school climate.

STEP 2

Understand the Situation

Step 2

Type of Assessment	Description	Purpose and Results
School Threat Assessment	A school threat assessment analyzes communication and behaviors to determine whether or not a student, staff member, or other person may pose a threat. These assessments must be based on fact, must comply with applicable privacy, civil rights, and other applicable laws, and are often conducted by multidisciplinary threat assessment teams. While a planning team may include the creation of a threat assessment team in its plan, the assessment team is a separate entity from the planning team and meets on its own regular schedule.	Students, staff members, or other persons that may pose a threat are identified before a threat develops into an incident and are referred for services, if appropriate.

STEP 2

Understand the Situation

Step 2

Type of Assessment	Description	Purpose and Results
Capacity Assessment	<p>The planning team needs to know what resources will be at their disposal. A capacity assessment examines the capabilities of students and staff as well as the services and material resources of community partners. This assessment is used to identify people in the building with applicable skills (e.g., first aid certification, search and rescue training, counseling and mental health expertise, ability to assist individuals with disabilities and others with access and functional needs). Equipment and supplies should also be inventoried. The inventory should include an evaluation of equipment and supplies uniquely for individuals with disabilities, such as evacuation chairs, the availability of sign language interpreters and technology used for effective communication, accessible transportation, and consumable medical supplies and durable medical equipment that may be necessary during a shelter-in-place or evacuation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">*An increased understanding of the resources available.*Information about staff capabilities will help planners assign roles and responsibilities in the plan.

STEP 2

Understand the Situation

Step 2

After conducting these assessments, the planning team should consolidate all of the information it has obtained into a format that is usable for comparing the risks posed by the identified threats and hazards. One effective method for organizing information is to create a table with a range of information about each possible threat and hazard, including any new threats or hazards identified through the assessment process. The table should include:

- Probability or frequency of occurrence (i.e., how often a threat or hazard may occur);
- Magnitude (i.e., the extent of expected damage);
- Time available to warn staff, students, and visitors;
- Duration (i.e., for how long the hazard or threat will be occurring); and
- Follow-on and cascading effects of threat or hazard.

STEP 2

Understand
the
Situation

Step 2

Prioritize Threats and Hazards

- Next, the planning team should use the information it has organized to compare and prioritize risks posed by threats and hazards. This will allow the team to decide which threats or hazards it will directly address in the plan.

STEP 2**Understand
the
Situation****Step 2**

Hazard	Probability	Magnitude	Warning	Duration	Risk Priority
Fire	4. Highly likely 3. Likely 2. Possible 1. Unlikely	4. Catastrophic 3. Critical 2. Limited 1. Negligible	4. Minimal 3. 6–12 hrs. 2. 12–24 hrs. 1. 24+ hrs.	4. 12+ hrs. 3. 6–12 hrs. 2. 3–6 hrs. 1. < 3 Hours	High Medium Low
Hazmat spill outside the school	4. Highly likely 3. Likely 2. Possible 1. Unlikely	4. Catastrophic 3. Critical 2. Limited 1. Negligible	4. Minimal 3. 6–12 hrs. 2. 12–24 hrs. 1. 24+ hrs.	4. 12+ hrs. 3. 6–12 hrs. 2. 3–6 hrs. 1. < 3 hrs.	High Medium Low

After completing Step 2, the planning team has a prioritized (high, medium, or low risk) list of threats and hazards based on the results of the risk assessment.

- In Step 3, the planning team decides which of the threats and hazards identified in Step 2 will be addressed in the school EOP. This is a critical decision point in the planning process that is left up to the planning team. It is recommended that the team address more than just the “high” risk priority threats and hazards.
- Once the planning team has decided which threats and hazards will be addressed in the school EOP, it develops *goals* and *objectives* for each.

- The planning team should develop at least *three goals* for addressing each threat or hazard (though the planning team may want to identify more). Those three goals should indicate desired outcome for (1) before, (2) during, and (3) after the threat or hazard.

For a fire, for instance, three possible goals include

- Hazard Goal Example 1 (before): Prevent a fire from occurring on school grounds.
- Hazard Goal Example 2 (during): Protect all persons from injury and property from damage by the fire.
- Hazard Goal Example 3 (after): Provide necessary medical attention to those in need.

- *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.
- After the team has finished compiling the objectives for the prioritized threats and hazards, it will find that certain critical “functions” or activities apply to more than one threat or hazard. Examples of these cross-cutting functions include evacuating, providing medical care, and accounting for all students, staff, and guests.

STEP 3

Determine
Goals and
Objectives

Step 3

- After identifying these functions, the planning team should develop three goals for each function. These commonly occurring functions will be contained in a “Functional Annex” within the school EOP.
- After completing Step 3, the planning team has at least three goals (i.e., before, during, and after) for each threat or hazard and function, as well as objectives for each goal.

STEP 4

Plan Development
(Identifying Courses
of Action)

Step 4

- In Step 4, the planning team develops courses of action for accomplishing each of the objectives identified in Step 3. Courses of action address the what, who, when, where, why, and how for each threat, hazard, and function. The planning team should examine each course of action to determine whether it is feasible and whether the stakeholders necessary to implement it find it acceptable.

STEP 4

Plan Development
(Identifying Courses
of Action)

Step 4

Identify Courses of Action

- Courses of action include criteria for determining how and when each response will be implemented under a variety of circumstances. Subsequently, the planning team develops response protocols and procedures to support these efforts.

STEP 4

Plan Development
(Identifying Courses
of Action)

Step 4

Possible courses of action are typically developed using the following steps:

- **Depict the scenario.**
- **Determine the amount of time available to respond.**
- **Identify decision points.**
- **Develop courses of action**

STEP 4

Plan Development
(Identifying Courses
of Action)

Step 4

Select Courses of Action: After developing courses of action, planners compare the costs and benefits of each proposed course of action against the goals and objectives. Based on this comparison, planners select the preferred course or courses of action to move forward in the planning process. Plans often include multiple courses of action for a given scenario to reflect the different ways it could unfold.

STEP 4

Plan Development
(Identifying Courses
of Action)

Step 4

- After selecting courses of action, the planning team identifies resources necessary to accomplish each course of action without regard to resource availability. Once the planning team identifies all of the requirements, it begins matching available resources to requirements.
- After completing Step 4, the planning team will have identified goals, objectives, and courses of action for before, during, and after threats and hazards, as well as functions.

STEP 5

Plan Preparation,
Review, &
Approval

Step 5

- In Step 5, the planning team develops a draft of the school EOP using the courses of action developed in Step 4. In addition, the team reviews the plan, obtains official approval, and shares the plan with community partners such as first responders, local emergency management officials, staff, and stakeholders.

Format the Plan

- An effective school EOP is presented in a way that makes it easy for users to find the information they need and that is compatible with local and state plans. This may include using plain language and providing pictures and/or visual cues for key action steps. This guide presents a traditional format that can be tailored to meet individual school needs. This format has three major sections: the Basic Plan, Functional Annexes, and Threat- and Hazard-Specific Annexes.

- **Write the Plan:** As the planning team works through the draft, the members add necessary tables, charts, and other supporting graphics. The planning team circulates a draft to obtain the comments of stakeholders that have responsibilities for implementing the plan.
- **Review the Plan:** Planners should check the written plan for compliance with applicable laws and for its usefulness in practice. Commonly used criteria can help determine the effectiveness and efficiency of the plan.

Approve and Share the Plan

- After finalizing the plan, the planning team should present it to the appropriate leadership and obtain official approval of the plan. The team should then share the plan with its community partners who have a responsibility in the plan.
- Schools should be careful to protect the plan from those who are not authorized to have it and should consider how they will secure documents shared electronically.
- After completing Step 5, the planning team will have a final school EOP.

Train Stakeholders on the Plan and Their Roles

Everyone involved in the plan needs to know her or his roles and responsibilities before, during, and after an emergency.

- **Key training components include:**

Hold a meeting, Visit evacuation sites, Give involved parties appropriate and relevant literature on the plan, policies, and procedures, Post key information throughout the building, Familiarize students and staff with the plan and community partners, Train staff on the skills necessary to fulfill their roles.

Exercise the Plan

- The more a plan is practiced and stakeholders are trained on the plan, the more effectively they will be able to act before, during, and after an emergency to lessen the impact on life and property. Exercises provide opportunities to practice with community as well as to identify gaps and weaknesses in the plan. They require increasing amounts of planning, time, and resources. Ideally, schools will create an exercise program, building from a tabletop exercise up to a more advanced exercise, like a functional exercise.

Review, Revise, and Maintain the Plan

- This step closes the loop in the planning process. It focuses on adding the information gained from exercising the plan to the research collected in Step 2 and starting the planning cycle over again. Remember, planning is a continuous process even after the plan is published. Plans should evolve as the school and planning team learn lessons, obtain new information and insights, and update priorities.
- Reviews should be a recurring activity.
- The planning team should ensure that all community partners have the most current version of the school EOP.

Plan Content

- Step 5 of the planning process in this guide introduced a format with three sections for schools to follow in developing a school EOP. This section provides greater detail about what each of the three sections should include and some key considerations in developing the content.

The Basic Plan

- **The Basic Plan** section of the school EOP provides an overview of the school's approach to operations before, during, and after an emergency. This section addresses the overarching activities the school undertakes regardless of the function, threat, or hazard. The content in this section provides a solid foundation for the school's operations.

The Basic Plan, cont.

- **Introductory material** can enhance accountability with community partners, including first responders, local emergency managers, and public and mental health officials, and make a school EOP easier to use.

Typical introductory material includes: Cover Page, Promulgation Documentor Signature Page, Approval and Implementation Page, Record of Changes, Record of Distribution, Table of Contents

The Basic Plan, cont.

- **Purpose.** The purpose sets the foundation for the rest of the school EOP. The basic plan's purpose is a general statement of what the school EOP is meant to do. The statement should be supported by a brief synopsis of the basic plan and annexes.
- **Situation Overview.** The situation section explains why a school EOP is necessary. The situation section covers a general discussion of:
 - The threats and hazards that pose a risk to the school and would result in a need to use this plan;
 - and Dependencies on parties outside the school for critical resources.

The Basic Plan, cont.

- **Concept of Operations** section explains in broad terms the school administrator's intent with regard to an operation.
- **Organization and Assignment of Responsibilities** section provides an overview of the broad roles and responsibilities of school staff, families, guardians, and community partners (e.g., first responders, local emergency managers, public and mental health personnel), and of organizational functions *during* all emergencies.

The Basic Plan, cont.

- **Direction, Control, and Coordination** section describes the framework for all direction, control, and coordination activities.
- **Information Collection, Analysis, and Dissemination** section addresses the role of information in the successful implementation of the activities that occur before, during, and after an emergency.

The Basic Plan, cont.

- **Training and Exercises** section describes the critical training and exercise activities the school will use in support of the plan. This includes the core training objectives and frequency to ensure that staff, students, faculty, parents, and community representatives understand roles, responsibilities, and expectations.
- **Administration, Finance, and Logistics** section covers general support requirements and the availability of services and support for all types of emergencies, as well as general policies for managing resources. It should identify and reference policies and procedures that exist outside the plan.

The Basic Plan, cont.

- **Plan Development and Maintenance** section discusses the overall approach to planning and the assignment of plan development and maintenance responsibilities.
- **Authorities and References** section provides the legal basis for emergency operations and activities, and includes:
 - Lists of laws, statutes, ordinances, executive orders, regulations, and formal agreements relevant to emergencies; and
 - Provisions for the succession of decision-making authority and operational control to ensure that critical emergency functions can be performed in the absence of the school administrator.

Functional Annexes Content

- Functional annexes focus on critical operational functions and the courses of action developed to carry them out. This section of the guide describes functional annexes that schools should address in developing a comprehensive, high-quality school EOP. Also included in this section are issues the planning team should consider as it develops goals, objectives, and courses of action for these functions. While these are some of the most important issues, they are not meant to constitute an exhaustive list.

Functional Annexes Content, cont.

- **Evacuation Annex** focuses on the courses of action that schools will execute to evacuate school buildings and grounds.
- **Lockdown Annex** focuses on the courses of action schools will execute to secure school buildings and grounds during incidents that pose an immediate threat of violence in or around the school. The primary objective of a lockdown is to quickly ensure all school staff, students, and visitors are secured in the rooms away from immediate danger.

Functional Annexes Content, cont.

- **Shelter-in-Place Annex** focuses on courses of action when students and staff are required to remain indoors, perhaps for an extended period of time, because it is safer inside the building or a room than outside. Depending on the threat or hazard, students and staff may be required to move to rooms that can be sealed (such as in the event of a chemical or biological hazard) or without windows, or to a weather shelter (such as in the event of a tornado).

Functional Annexes Content, cont.

- **Accounting for All Persons Annex** focuses on developing courses of action for accounting for the whereabouts and well-being of students, staff, and visitors, and identifying those who may be missing.
- **Communications and Warning Annex** includes communication and coordination during emergencies and disasters (both internal communication and communication with external stakeholders), as well as the communication of emergency protocols before an emergency and communication after an emergency.

Functional Annexes Content, cont.

- **Family Reunification Annex** details how students will be reunited with their families or guardians.
- **Continuity of Operations (COOP) Annex** describes how a school and district will help ensure that essential functions continue during an emergency and its immediate aftermath. Essential functions include business services (payroll and purchasing), communication (internal and external), computer and systems support, facilities maintenance, safety and security, and continuity of teaching and learning.

Functional Annexes Content, cont.

- **Recovery Annex** describes how schools will recover from an emergency. The four most fundamental kinds of recovery are academic recovery, physical recovery, fiscal recovery, and psychological and emotional recovery.
- **Public Health, Medical, and Mental Health Annex** describes the courses of action that the school will implement to address emergency medical, public health, and mental health counseling issues. Schools should coordinate these efforts with the appropriate emergency medical services, public health, mental health, law enforcement, fire department, and emergency management representatives. Mental health needs after an emergency will be addressed in the Recovery annex.

Functional Annexes Content, cont.

- **Security Annex** focuses on the courses of action that schools will implement on a routine, ongoing basis to secure the school from criminal threats originating from both inside and outside the school. This includes efforts done in conjunction with law enforcement personnel.

The planning team should consider the following when developing its goals, objectives, and courses of action:

- How agreements with law enforcement agencies address the daily role of law enforcement officers in and around school.
- How to make sure the building is physically secure (including implementation of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design [CPTED]).

Threat- and Hazard-Specific Annexes

- The Threat- and Hazard-Specific annexes describe the courses of action unique to particular threats and hazards. Courses of action already outlined in a Functional annex need not be repeated in a Hazard-Specific annex. Schools will develop these based on the prioritized list of hazards determined in the assessment process. As planning teams develop courses of action for threats and hazards, they should consider the federal, state, and local regulations or mandates that often apply to specific hazards.
- If there is a Functional annex that applies to one of the threat or hazard annexes, the latter will include it by reference. For example, if a “during” course of action for a fire hazard involves evacuation, and there is an evacuation annex, the Fire annex would indicate “see Evacuation annex” in the “during” course of action section rather than repeat the evacuation courses of action in the Fire annex.

Threat- and Hazard-Specific Annexes

Threat and Hazard Type	Examples
Natural Hazards	Earthquakes, Tornadoes, Lightning, Severe wind, Hurricanes, Floods, Wildfires, Extreme Temperatures, Landslides or mudslides, Tsunamis, Volcanic eruptions, Winter precipitation
Technological Hazards	Explosions or accidental release of toxins from industrial plants, Accidental release of hazardous materials from within the school, such as gas leaks or laboratory spills, Hazardous material releases from major highways or railroads, Radiological releases from nuclear power stations, Dam failure, Power failure, Water failure
Biological Hazards	Infectious diseases, such as pandemic influenza, extensively drug-resistant tuberculosis, <i>Staphylococcus aureus</i> , and meningitis, Contaminated food outbreaks, including Salmonella, botulism, and <i>E. coli</i> , Toxic materials present in school laboratories
Adversarial, Incidental, and Human-caused Threats	Fire, Active shooters, Criminal threats or actions, Gang violence, Bomb threats, Domestic violence and abuse, Cyber attacks, Suicide

A Closer Look

- This section of the guide provides users with information on four key topics to enhance the implementation of their Emergency Operations Plans (EOPs). These topics are described in the following chapters:

“Information Sharing”, “Psychological First Aid for Schools”, “School Climate and Emergencies”, “Active Shooter Situations”

A Closer Look, Information Sharing

- **The Information Sharing** section of “A Closer Look” provides an overview of the *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)* and the implications that this and other federal statutes have for information-sharing in the emergency planning process. This section also provides a brief overview of the more limited circumstances when the *Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)* may apply to impact information-sharing in the school setting.

A Closer Look, Psychological First Aid for Schools

- **Psychological First Aid for Schools (PFA-S)** is an evidence-informed intervention model to assist students, staff, and families in the immediate aftermath of an emergency and can be used by any trained staff member or community partner. Trauma-related distress can have a long-term impact. PFA-S uses brief interventions to produce positive results that last. PFA-S is designed to reduce the initial distress caused by emergencies, allow for the expression of difficult feelings, and assist students in developing coping strategies and constructive actions to deal with fear and anxiety.

A Closer Look, School Climate and Emergencies

- “School climate” describes a range of conditions that may influence student learning and well-being, including:
 - Safety;
 - Relationships and engagement; and
 - The environment.

A Closer Look, School Climate and Emergencies, cont'd.

Positive school climates that promote student learning and well-being often feature safe environments, free of:

- Violence
- Bullying
- Harassment
- Substance use

A Closer Look, School Climate and Emergencies, cont'd.

Positive school climates that promote student learning and well-being often feature safe environments, inclusive of :

- Appropriate facilities and surroundings;
- Supportive academic settings;
- Clear and fair disciplinary policies;
- Respectful, trusting, caring relationships throughout the school community; and
- Available social, emotional, and behavioral supports.

A Closer Look, School Climate and Emergencies, cont'd.

Research finds that positive school climates can help districts, schools, and teachers meet key goals, including:

- Boosting student achievement, closing achievement gaps
- Increasing high school graduation rates
- Decreasing teacher turnover/increasing teacher satisfaction
- Turning around low-performing schools

A Closer Look, School Climate and Emergencies, cont'd.

- Positive school climates also enhance safety in the school and community by:
 - Increasing communication between students, families, and staff
 - Reducing violence, bullying, and suicide
- A positive school climate can affect the capacity of students and staff to prevent, respond to, and recover from emergencies.

A Closer Look, School Climate and Emergencies, cont'd.

- **Prevention**
 - Reduces incidences of behaviors that contribute to crisis
 - Increases likelihood that students will quickly report potential threats
- **Response**
 - Teaches social and emotional competencies
 - Trains staff on development and how to respond to a variety of student behaviors
- **Recovery**
 - Represents commitment to providing emotional and mental health services

A Closer Look, School Climate and Emergencies, cont'd.

Steps to Promoting a Positive School Climate

- Conduct a comprehensive needs assessment
 - Can provide data support needed to improve climate
- Use multi-tiered interventions and supports
 - School-wide, groups at elevated risk, individuals
- Promote social and emotional competencies
 - Can help individuals prepare for and respond to emergencies

A Closer Look, Active Shooter Situations

- Police officers, firefighters, and emergency medical services technicians (first responders) who come to a school because of a 911 call involving gunfire face a daunting task. Though the objective remains the same— protect students and staff— the threat of an *active shooter* incident is different than responding to a natural disaster or many other emergencies.
- *Active shooter situations* are defined as those where an individual is “actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill people in a confined and populated area.” Unfortunately, schools face active shooter situations as well.

A Closer Look, Active Shooter Situations, cont'd.

Preparing for an Active Shooter Situation

- **Planning**

As with any threat or hazard that is included in a school's EOP, the planning team will establish goals, objectives, and courses of action for an annex.

These plans will be impacted by the assessments conducted at the outset of the planning process and updated as ongoing assessments occur.

A Closer Look, Active Shooter Situations, cont'd.

Sharing Information With First Responders

- The planning process is not complete until the school EOP is shared with first responders. The planning process must include preparing and making available to first responders an up-to-date and well-documented site assessment as well as any other information that would assist them.

A Closer Look, Active Shooter Situations, cont'd.

Exercises

- Most schools practice evacuation drills for fires and protective measures for tornadoes, but far fewer schools practice for active shooter situations. To be prepared for an active shooter incident, schools should train their staff, students, and families, as appropriate, in what to expect and how to react.

A Closer Look, Active Shooter Situations, cont'd.

Preventing an Active Shooter Situation

Warning Signs

- No profile exists for an active shooter; however, research indicates there may be signs or indicators. Schools should learn the signs of a potentially volatile situation that may develop into an active shooter situation and proactively seek ways to prevent an incident with internal resources, or additional external assistance.

A Closer Look, Active Shooter Situations, cont'd.

In 2002, the Safe School Initiative (SSI) was completed by the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Secret Service, examining 41 K–12 student attackers involving 37 incidents in the United States from 1973 through May 2000. These research results, though focused on targeted school violence and not on active shooter situations, remain highly useful as a guide for law enforcement officials, educators, and mental health practitioners.

A Closer Look, Active Shooter Situations, cont'd.

Threat Assessment Teams

- As described in the previous section, research shows that perpetrators of targeted acts of violence engage in both covert and overt behaviors preceding their attacks. They consider, plan, prepare, share, and, in some cases, move on to action. One of the most useful tools a school can develop to identify, evaluate, and address these troubling signs is a multidisciplinary school threat assessment team (TAT).

A Closer Look, Active Shooter Situations, cont'd.

Responding to an Active Shooter Situation

- School EOPs should include courses of action that will describe how students and staff can most effectively respond to an active shooter situation to minimize the loss of life, and teach and train on these practices, as deemed appropriate by the school.

A Closer Look, Active Shooter Situations, cont'd.

Respond Immediately

- It is not uncommon for people confronted with a threat to first deny the possible danger rather than respond. Train staff to overcome denial and to respond immediately, including fulfilling their responsibilities for individuals in their charge. For example, train staff to recognize the sounds of danger, act, and forcefully communicate the danger and necessary action (e.g., “Gun! Get out!”) to those in their charge. In addition, those closest to the public address or other communications system, or otherwise able to alert others, should communicate the danger and necessary action.

A Closer Look, Active Shooter Situations, cont'd.

Upon recognizing the danger, as soon as it is safe to do so, staff or others must alert responders by contacting 911 with as clear and accurate information as possible.

Run

- If it is safe to do so for yourself and those in your care, the first course of action that should be taken is to run out of the building and far away until you are in a safe location.

Hide

- If running is not a safe option, hide in as safe a place as possible. Students and staff should be trained to hide in a location where the walls might be thicker and have fewer windows.

A Closer Look, Active Shooter Situations, cont'd.

Fight

- 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. In a study of 41 active shooter events that ended before law enforcement officers arrived, the potential victims stopped the attacker themselves in 16 instances. In 13 of those cases they physically subdued the attacker.

A Closer Look, Active Shooter Situations, cont'd.

Fight

- While talking to staff about confronting a shooter may be daunting and upsetting for some, they should know that they may be able to successfully take action to save lives. To be clear, confronting an active shooter should never be a requirement in any school employee's job description; how each staff member chooses to respond if directly confronted by an active shooter is up to him or her. Further, the possibility of an active shooter situation is not justification for the presence of firearms on campus in the hands of any personnel other than law enforcement officers.

A Closer Look, Active Shooter Situations, cont'd.

Interacting With First Responders

- Staff should be trained to understand and expect that a law enforcement officer's first priority must be to locate and stop the person(s) believed to be the shooter(s); all other actions are secondary.

After an Active Shooter Incident

- Once the scene is secured, first responders will work with school officials and victims on a variety of matters. This will include transporting the injured, interviewing witnesses, and initiating the investigation.

The REMS TA Center

Questions?

The REMS TA Center

For additional information, resources, training, and technical assistance, please contact the Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (REMS) Technical Assistance (TA) Center:

Phone: (855) 781-7367 (REMS)

Email: info@remstacenter.org

Website: <http://rems.ed.gov>