

# Addressing Adult Sexual Misconduct in the School Setting: An Overview

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# Addressing Adult Sexual Misconduct (ASM) in the School Setting: An Overview



U.S. Department of Education  
Office of Safe and Healthy Students

[info@remstacenter.org](mailto:info@remstacenter.org) | <http://rems.ed.gov/> | [@remstacenter](https://twitter.com/remstacenter)

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# Agenda

Introduction to the Topic of Adult Sexual Misconduct in Schools

Approaches to Preventing ASM in Schools

Integrating ASM into a High-Quality Emergency Operations Plan

Q&A Session

Community of Practice (CoP) Chat

# Welcome

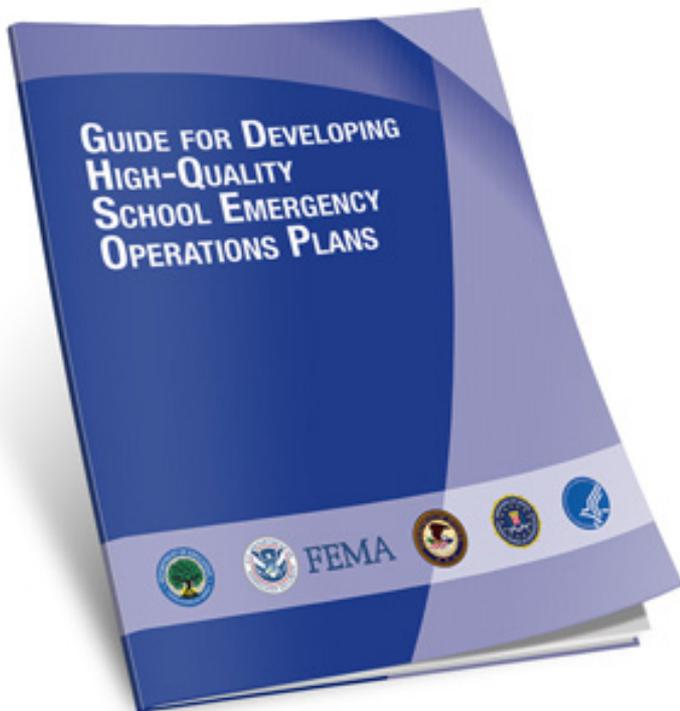


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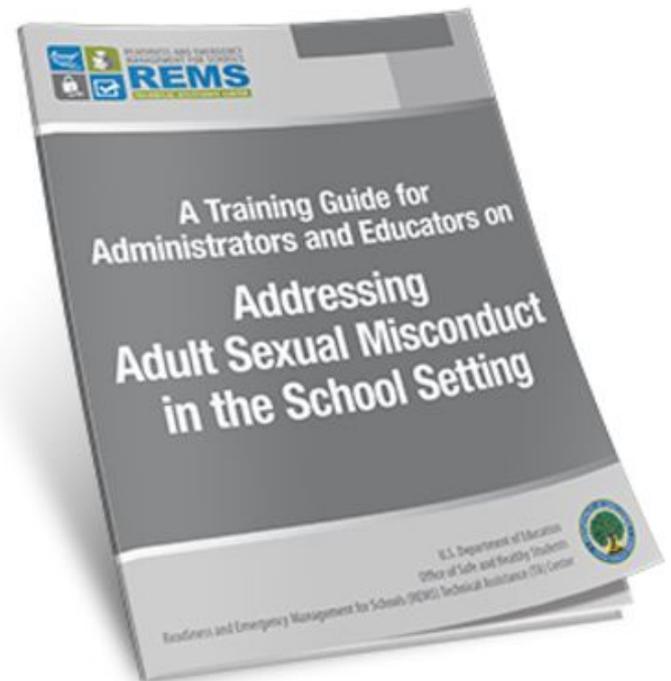


Readiness and Emergency Management for  
Schools (REMS) Technical Assistance (TA)  
Center

# Relevant References



[http://rems.ed.gov/docs/REMS\\_K-12\\_Guide\\_508.pdf](http://rems.ed.gov/docs/REMS_K-12_Guide_508.pdf)



<http://rems.ed.gov/ASMTrainingGuide.aspx>

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# ASM Defined

*Any sexual activity (physical or not) directed to a child with the objective of developing a romantic or sexual relationship*

ASM is a broad set of behaviors ranging from inappropriate to illegal

# Inappropriate Verbal Conduct

Sexual comments and questions, jokes, taunting, teasing;

In person, by phone or by use of electronic media

Numerous electronic platforms can provide avenues for ASM, and can also be hidden, including disappearing media and those requiring log-ins

# Inappropriate Physical Conduct

Kissing, hair stroking, tickling,  
frontal hugging

Important for educators to  
understand what is/isn't  
appropriate to establish boundaries  
and ensure positive and safe  
interactions with students

# Illegal Conduct

Physical sexual contact between an adult and a child under the age of 18

✓ Sexual contact	✓ Touching
✓ Genital contact	✓ Kissing
✓ Groping	✓ Sexual hugging
✓ Fondling	✓ Exhibitionism *

\* State law determines illegality

Legal definitions of child sexual abuse vary by state. Sample state policies – <http://rems.edgov/stateresources.aspx>

# Impact of ASM

Child sexual abuse, including ASM in schools, is detrimental to children



Victimization (both single event or chronic) can result in short- or long-term effects:

- Maladaptive behaviors
- Mental disorders
- Developmental delays
- Social difficulties
- Shorter life expectancy



The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) views child maltreatment as a serious public health concern.

# Characteristics and Tactics of ASM Perpetrators

ASM can be perpetrated by adults in all job categories within schools.

- One 2001 survey of students experiencing ASM reported unwanted sexual contact most commonly originated from:
  - Teachers (18%)
  - Coaches (15%)
  - Substitute Teachers (13%)
  - Bus Drivers (12%)

Perpetrators in schools focus on vulnerable children, and isolate, manipulate, and lie to them to gain sexual contact and make them feel complicit.

To keep their conduct secret, perpetrators coerce and “groom”.

# Phases of Exploitation

## Trolling and Testing

- Identifying Potential Communities/Victims

## Exploiting and Lulling

- Maintaining the Relationships and Secrets

## Grooming

- Desensitization

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# Importance of Developing Policies & Procedures

Developing clear, written policies and procedures ensures that all school personnel and volunteers:

Receive consistent messages

Understand behavior that constitutes ASM

Are aware of their duty to prevent, report, and respond to ASM

# Who has responsibility for protecting students?

Protecting students from ASM is a responsibility shared by *all* of the following:

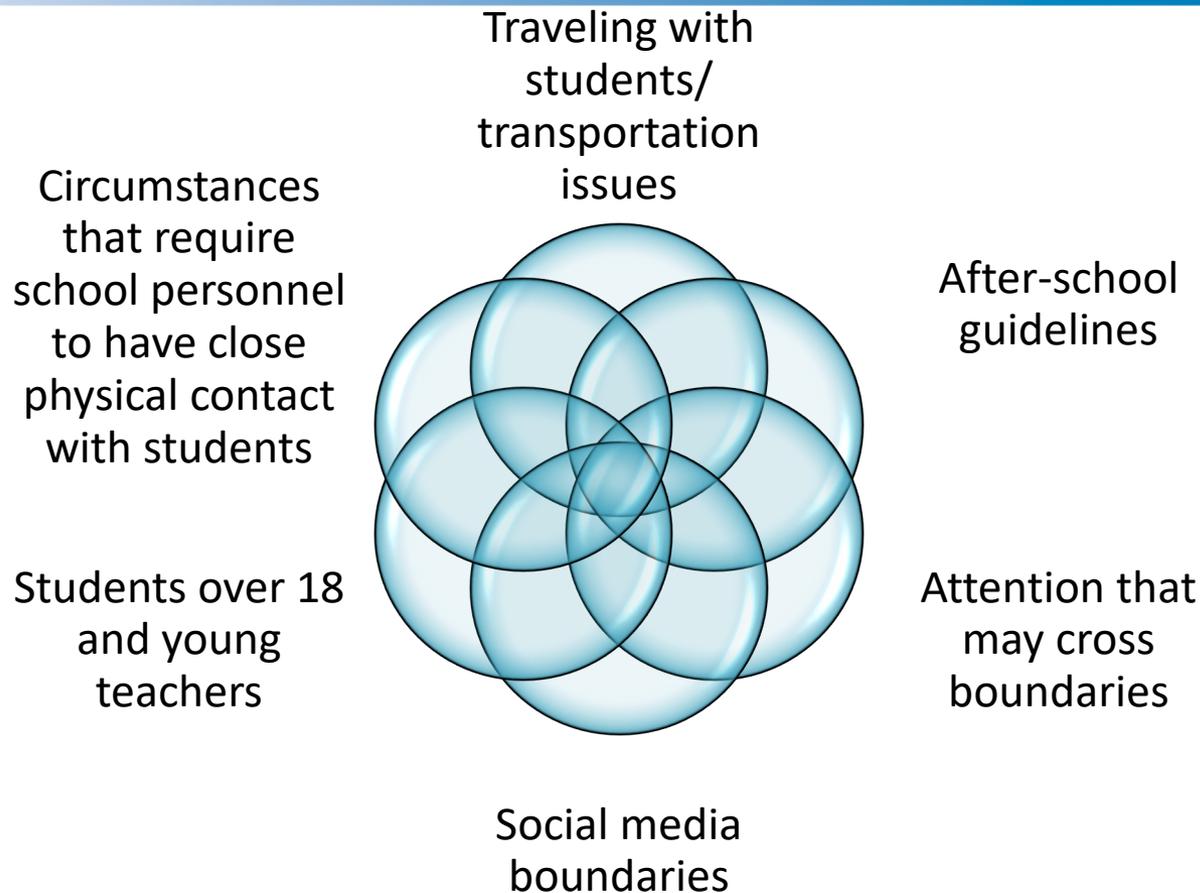
- School Board of Trustees
- Superintendent
- All school personnel and volunteers
- Parents
- State agencies
- Law enforcement; and
- Students

# What are the main areas in which to develop precise definitions, policies and procedures?

The CDC recommends development of precise definitions, policies and procedures in the following areas:

- Verbal, written, and physical misconduct—in person and in cyber settings, as well as before, during, and after school—including acceptable and unacceptable behaviors
- Education about ASM prevention strategies for students, parents/guardians and all school personnel and volunteers
- Guidance for identifying and reporting behaviors that might indicate ASM
- Legal consequences for a violation
- Both illegal and inappropriate conduct that will not be tolerated, and can lead to termination of employment
- Disclosure of formal reprimands or dismissals for violating policies on sexual misconduct to other schools seeking references

# “Gray Areas” Involving ASM



# Policies and Procedures for Mandated Reporting

Most states require school personnel to be mandatory reporters

Mandatory reporters typically are required to report cases of suspected ASM to state or local child protection services and/or a designated school employee

A “permissive reporter” voluntarily reports

The role of the reporter is **not** to investigate or evaluate the alleged abuse, but to report the behavior which raised concern to those charged with conducting an investigation.

# Title IX Requirements for Reporting ASM

*Title IX of the U.S. Education Amendments of 1972*

Prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in any educational organization that receives federal funds

School districts must designate oversight and POC for sexually-related complaints and to coordinate investigations

For more information: U.S. Department of Education's  
Office for Civil Rights  
<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/index.html>

# False Allegations

Include in school policies written prohibitions against:

- False student complaints
- False complaints made by school personnel against colleagues

Include the consequences for those who make false accusations

# Policies and Procedures for Hiring Practices

## Background Checks & Fingerprints

- Every state in the nation has enacted laws requiring K-12 educators to have criminal background checks.
- Schools depend on both state and federal sources of criminal data, such as state law enforcement databases.
- Relying on background checks alone could lead schools to develop a false sense of security about ASM prevention.

# Uncovering Red Flags in Hiring Process

## In the employment application:

- A break in the licensure record
- Mid-year or early departure from a school
- Frequent changes in jobs/positions
- Name change(s)
- Frequent relocations

During face-to-face interviews, scenarios can be used in the interview process requiring applicants to problem-solve potential issues at the school, which can help reveal possible concerns with the applicant.

Reference checks provide additional information about applicants and help verify previous work and volunteer history.

Online public searches may also uncover relevant information on an applicant.

# Professional Development for Prevention and Accountability

## ASM awareness starts with staff training

- District policies and procedures
- State laws
- Recognizing warning signs in children
- Detecting patterns of ASM in adults
- Respond appropriately when an ASM incident is detected

Training should be ongoing and multifaceted and include school personnel, volunteers, parents and guardians, and students.

Professional development puts ALL staff on notice that there is zero tolerance of ASM.

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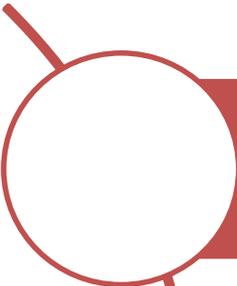
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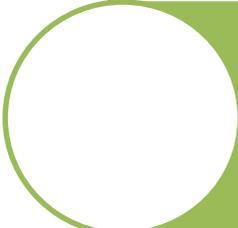
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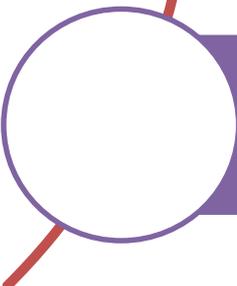
# Why integrate ASM into school EOPs?



All schools have or should have an emergency operations plan (EOP).



The goal of an EOP is to keep the whole school community safe before, during, and after a threat or hazard occurs.



EOPs address more than natural disasters; they also address adversarial- and human-caused threats.

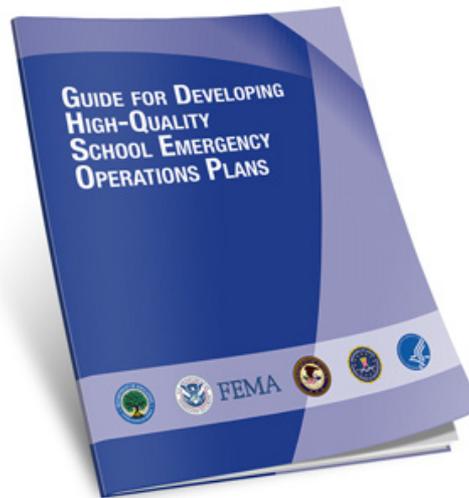
# Preparedness

As part of a comprehensive school EOP, it is important for schools and school districts to understand how to prevent, protect against, mitigate, respond to, and recover from critical incidents, including those involving adult sexual misconduct.

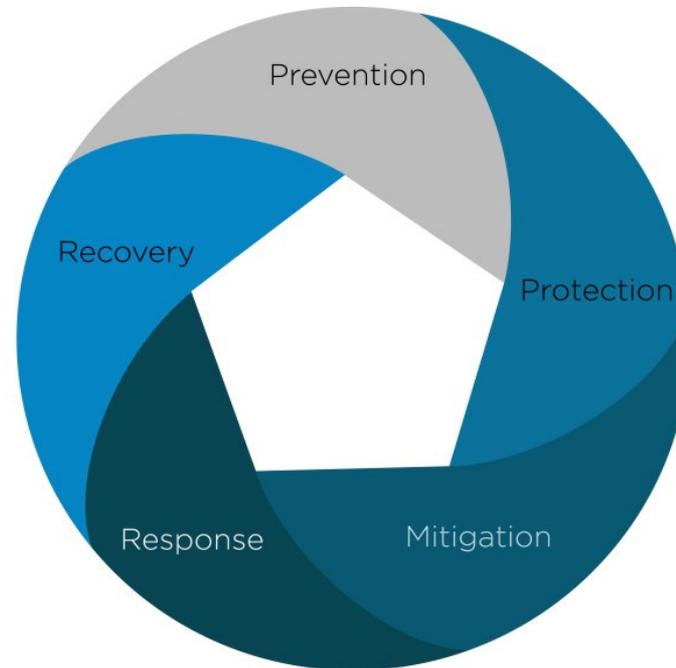
# Federal Agency Partners



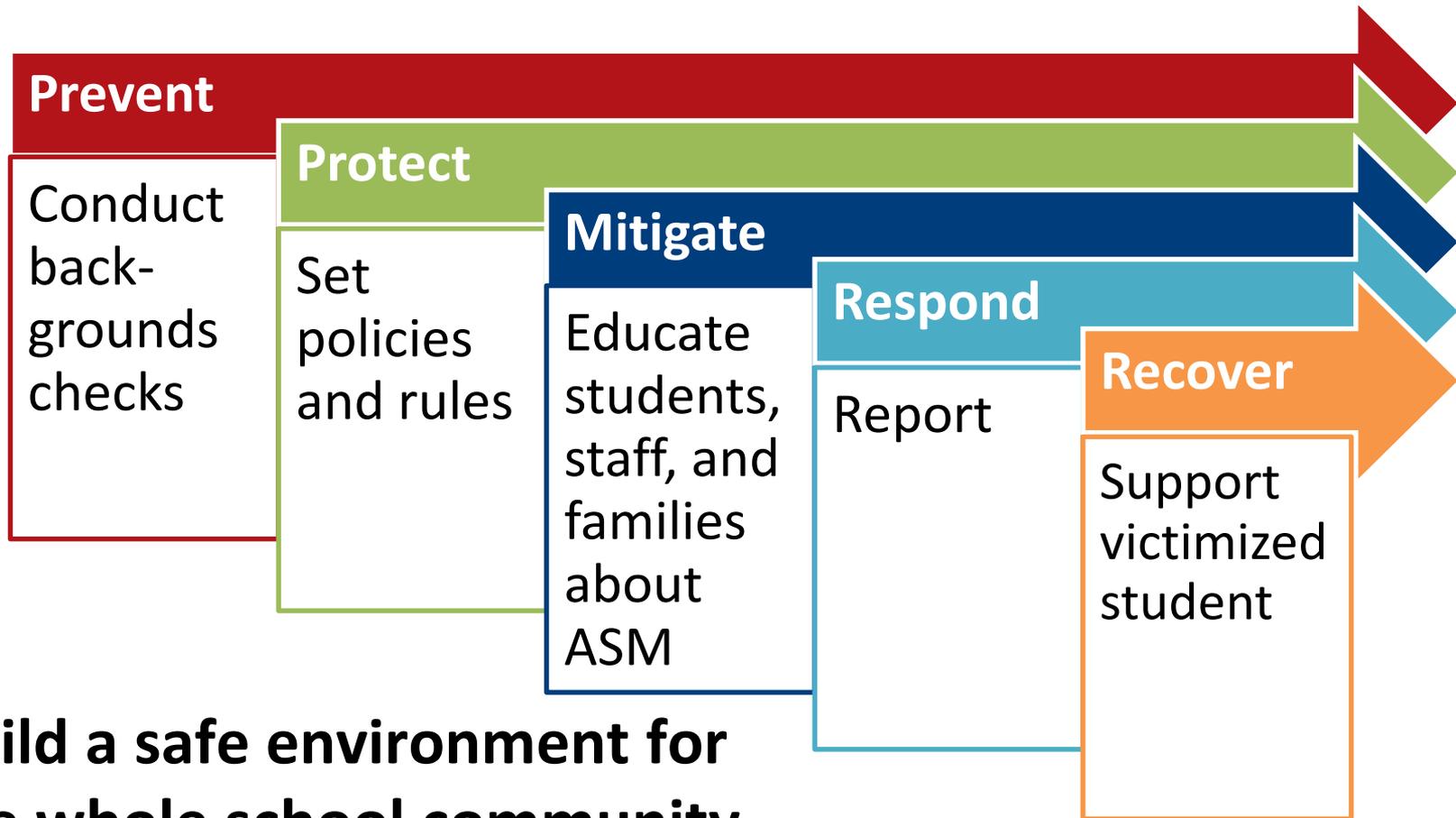
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# Five Preparedness Missions

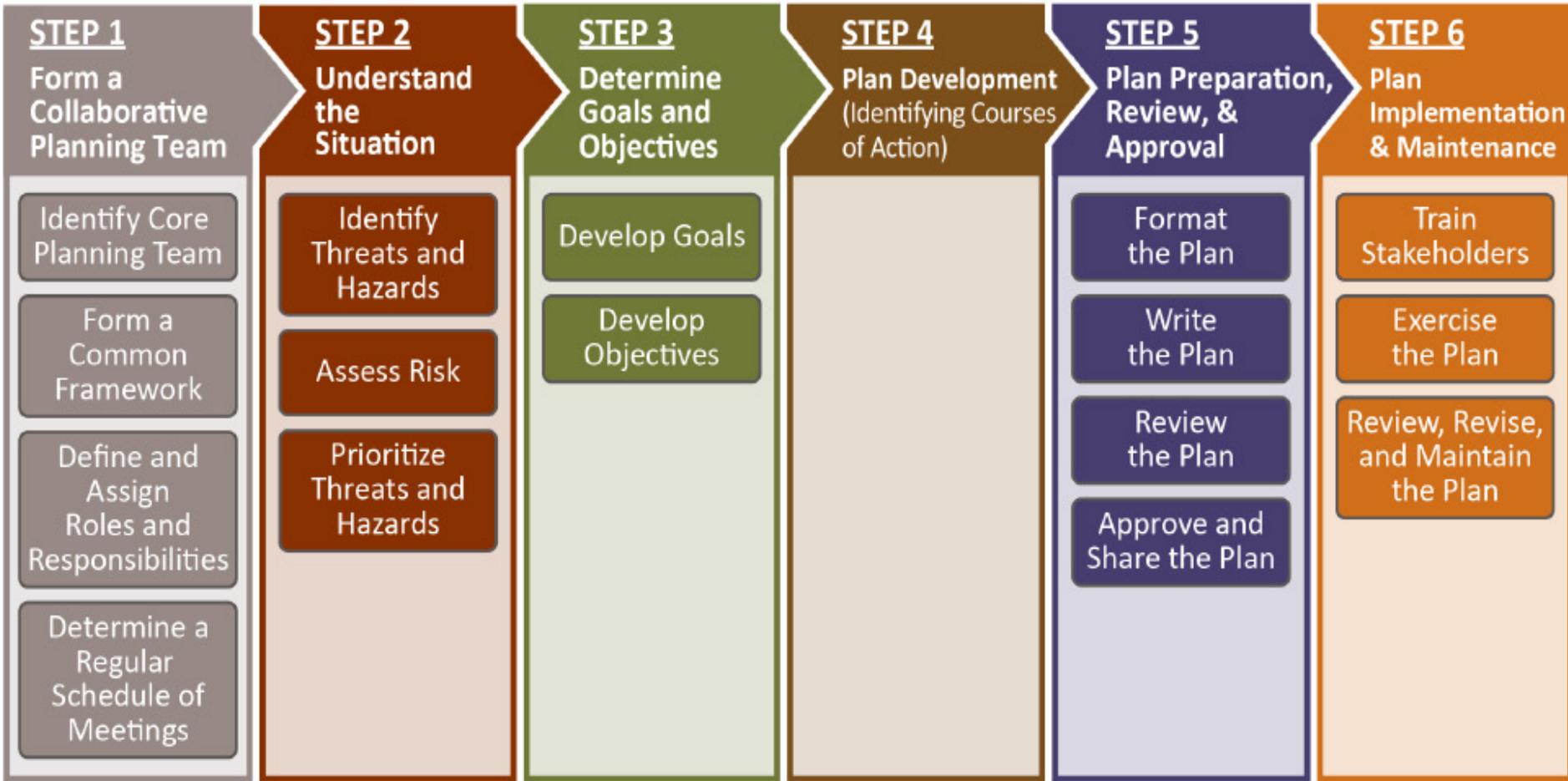


# ASM Initiatives in Schools

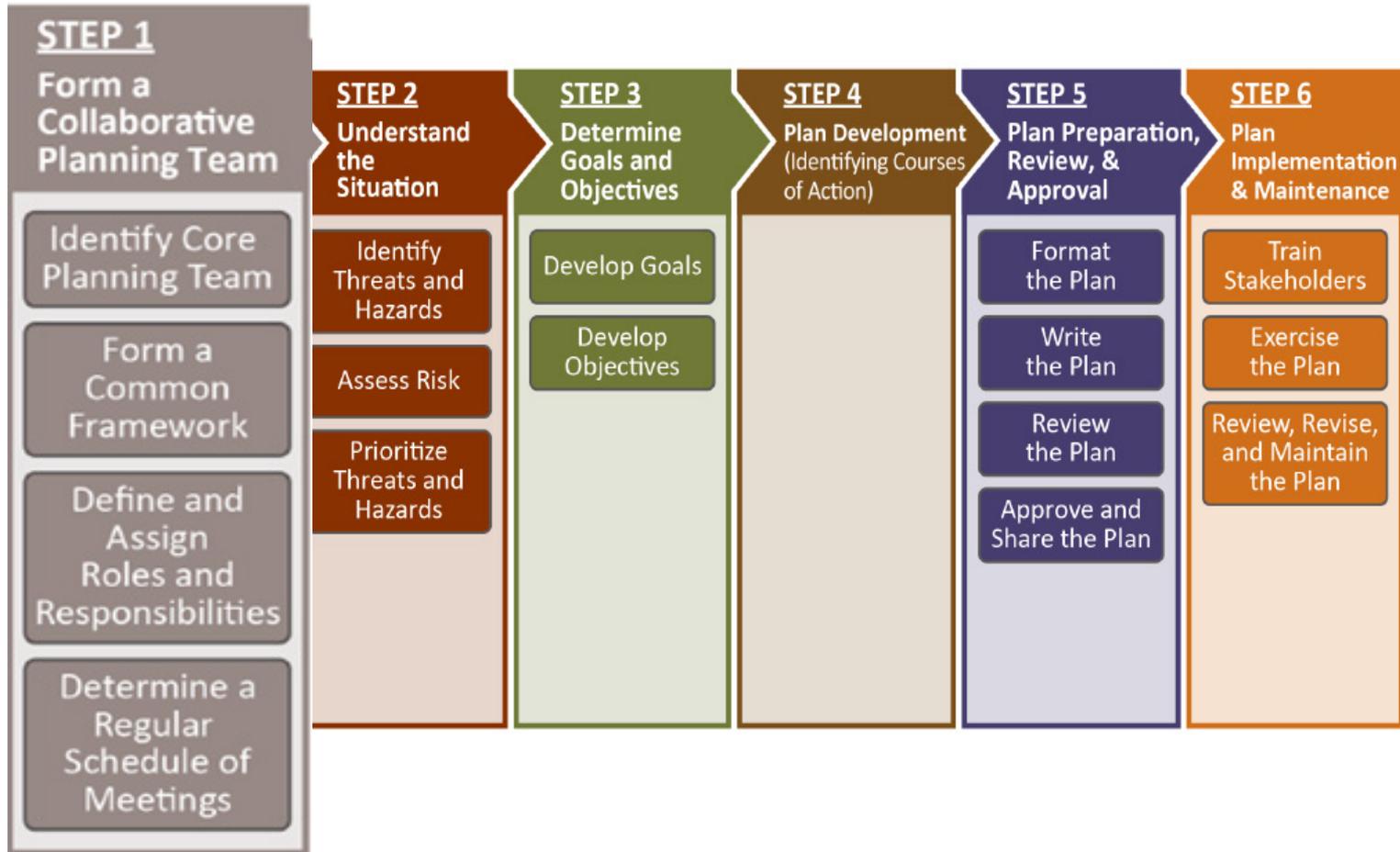


**Build a safe environment for the whole school community**

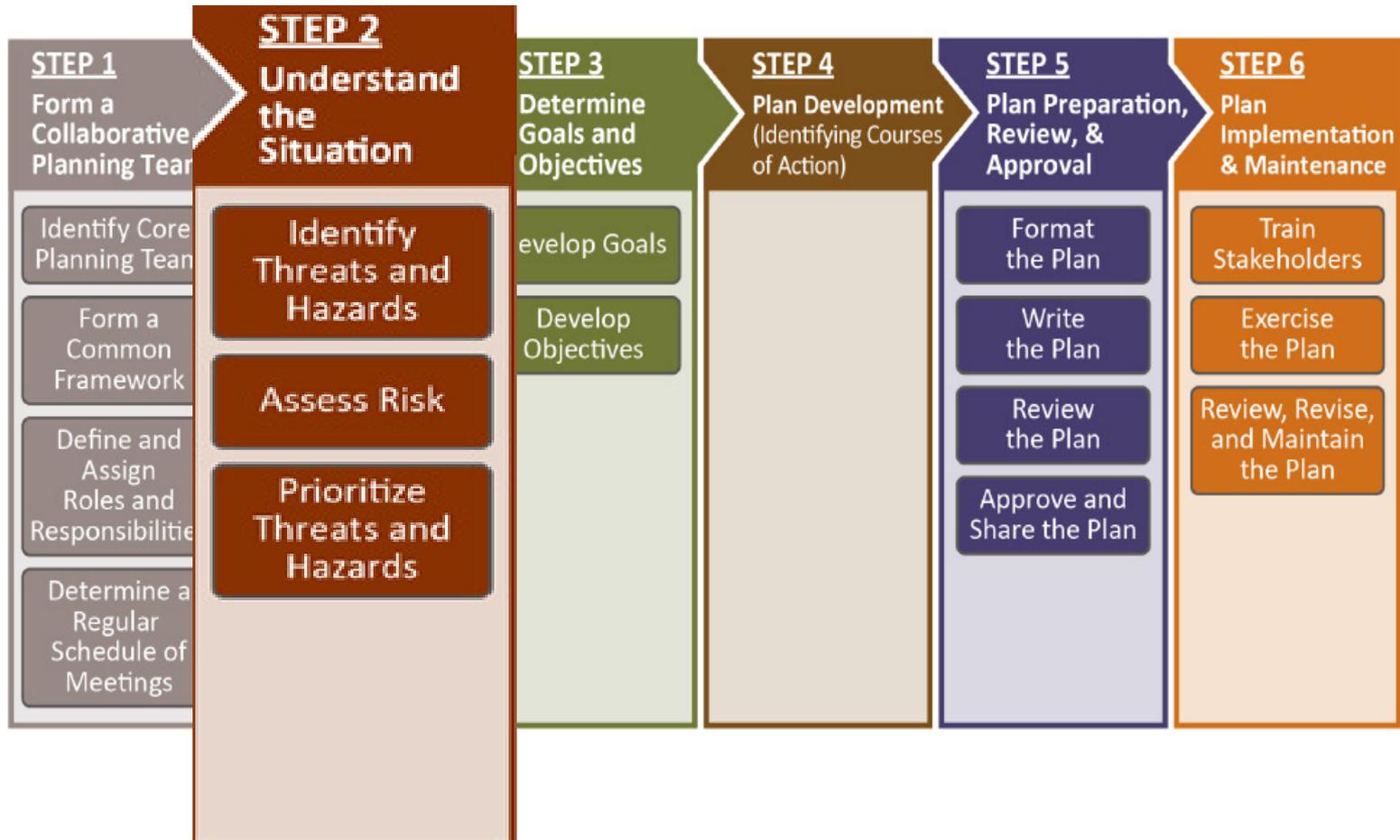
# Connection to the Six Step Planning Process



# Step 1: Form a Collaborative Planning Team



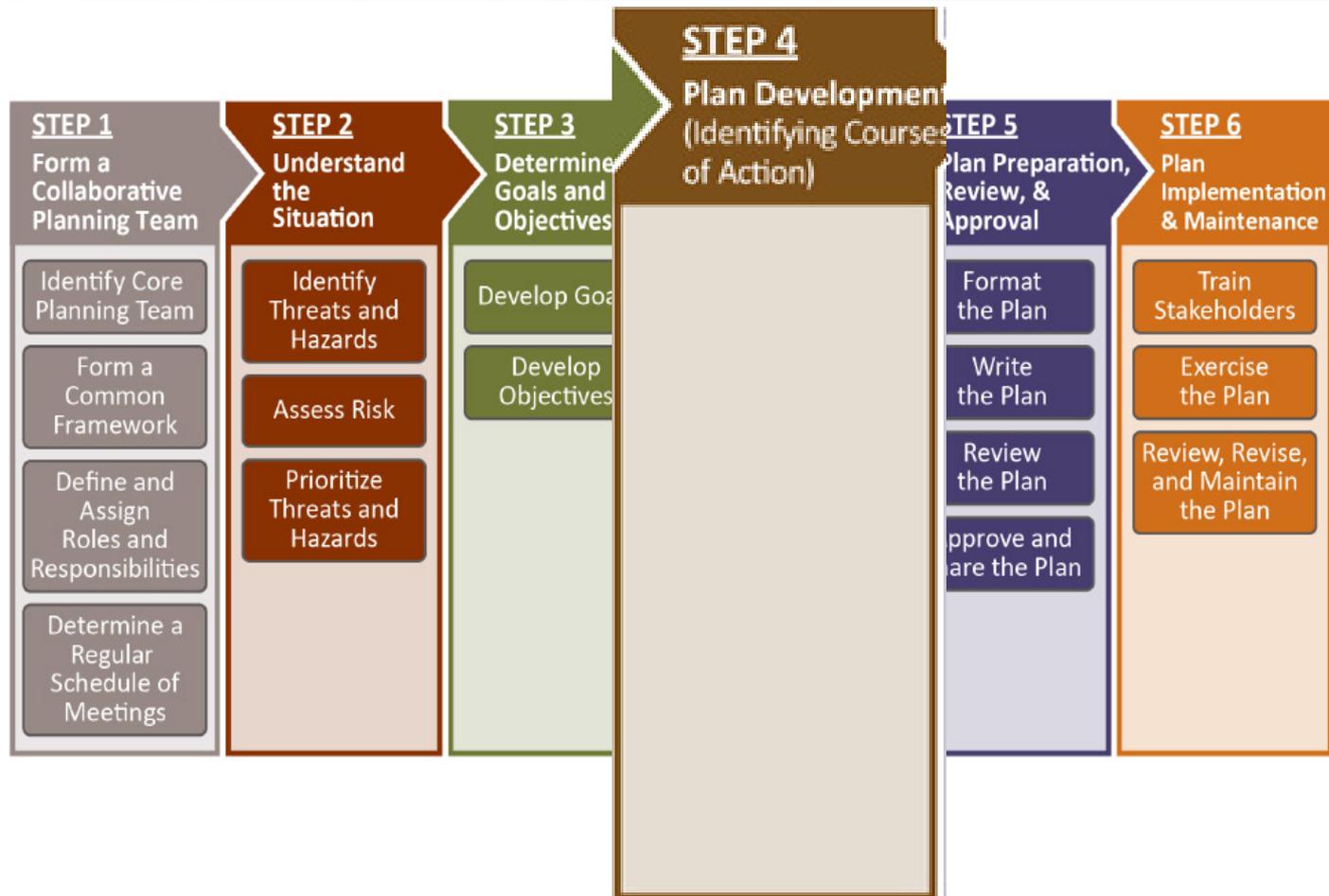
# Step 2: Understand the Situation



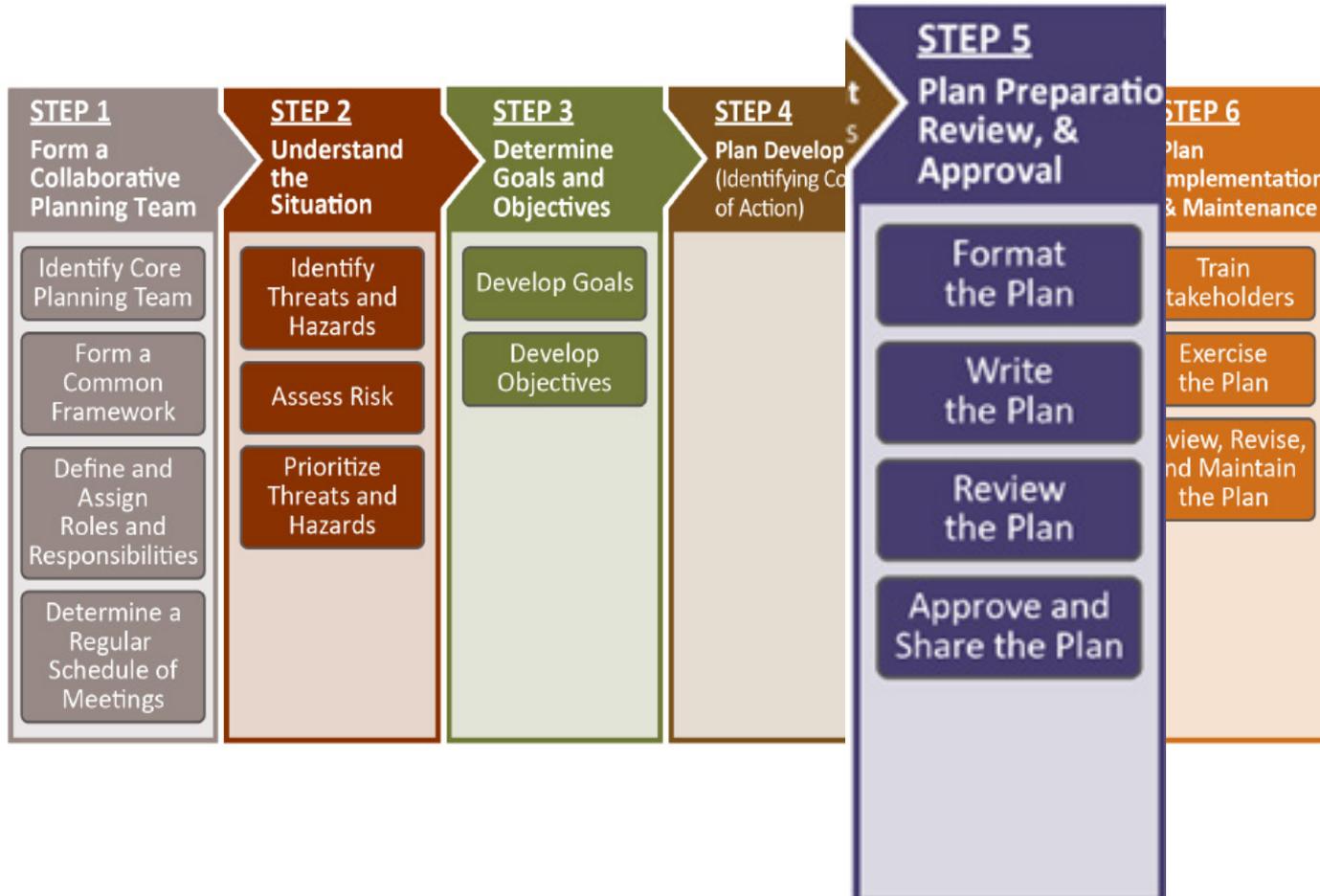
# Step 3: Determine Goals and Objectives



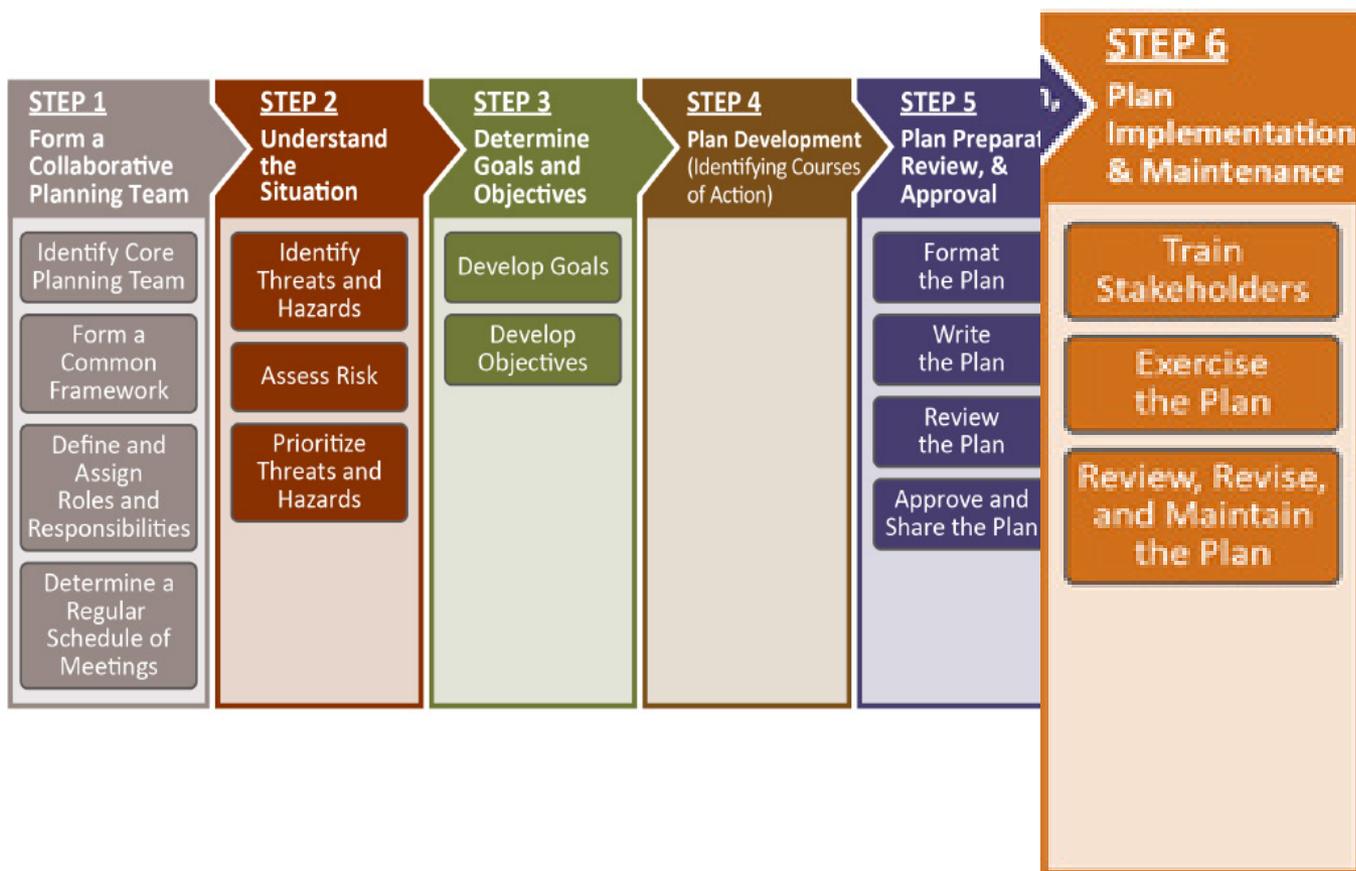
# Step 4: Plan Development



# Step 5: Plan Preparation, Review & Approval



# Step 6: Plan Implementation & Maintenance



# Summary

ASM includes inappropriate verbal conduct, inappropriate physical conduct, and illegal conduct that takes place in the school setting

To prevent ASM, schools and districts should develop policies and procedures for staff and volunteer interactions with students, mandated reporting, and hiring practices.

Schools should incorporate ASM into their school EOP to prevent, protect against, mitigate, respond to, and recover from an ASM incidence.

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# Get Connected

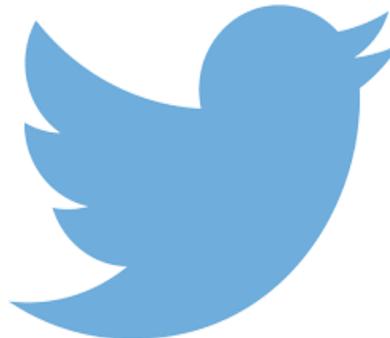


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The screenshot shows the top navigation bar of the REMS website. On the left is the REMS logo, which includes icons for a person, a checkmark, and a document, with the text "READINESS AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT FOR SCHOOLS" and "REMS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTER". The navigation menu includes "HOME", "K-12 SCHOOLS & DISTRICTS", "HIGHER EDUCATION", "TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE", and "ABOUT US".

The main content area features the heading "Community of Practice (CoP)" in a large, italicized font. Below it is a descriptive paragraph: "A virtual space for schools, school districts, institutions of higher education (IHEs), and their community partners to collaborate, share, and learn from the experiences of others in the field." To the right of the text is a graphic of a map of the United States composed of interconnected nodes.

Below the main content is a secondary navigation bar with buttons for "CoP HOME", "ABOUT THE CoP", "FORUMS" (highlighted in yellow), "RULES", and "MY PROFILE" with an external link icon. A third navigation bar contains "Recent Topics", "Recent Posts", "Search", "Users", "Administrator", "Moderator (6)", and "FAQ" with a search icon.

The bottom section of the screenshot shows the "FORUMS" heading on the left and user status on the right: "Unread Topics 1", "Messages 0", and a user profile for "administrator my profile" with the REMS logo.

[stop watching this topic](#)   [move thread to forum:](#)   [merge with another topic](#)