

School Safety: What are the Board's Roles and Obligations?

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Overview

- ❑ School safety requires a comprehensive approach, consistent with existing law and customized for both the district's, and the school's, unique circumstances and needs.
- ❑ Consider:
 - Site/School Safety Plans
 - Mandated drills
 - ALL forms of potential emergencies: campus crisis, natural disaster, infectious disease, terrorist threat, shootings, cyber-attacks
 - Value (or not) of enhanced technology-based security measures
 - Student and staff emotional and mental health needs
 - PR and communications protocol



Overview of School Safety & Applicable Laws

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The Big Picture

- ❑ Students are generally safe at school.
 - Students are more likely to be shot or be the victim of a crime away from school.
- ❑ That said, school shootings had declined since the 1990's, but a recent US Department of Education study found that as of 2020-21, shootings are at their highest number in two decades.
 - That school year, out of about 50 million public school students, 93 school shootings resulted in casualties (43 deaths).
 - The study found that this increase seems related to the overall increase in gun violence and was not specific to schools.



Shootings Are High Profile, But...

- ❑ Typically, more students die in school transportation accidents than any other cause.
- ❑ Youth suicides have increased.
- ❑ Annually, an average of 24 people are killed as pedestrians on school property.
- ❑ COVID and recent forest fires have been a harsh reminder about the on-going need to ensure planning for natural disasters and infectious diseases.
- ❑ A comprehensive approach to school safety and emergency management is the recommended one.



Mandatory State Emergency Drills

- ❑ 22-13-14 NMSA mandates certain emergency drills in every public and private school.
- ❑ During the first four weeks of the school year, every school must conduct:
 - one shelter in place drill that includes preparation to respond to an active shooter,
 - one evacuation drill, and,
 - two fire drills.
- ❑ During the rest of the school year, every school must conduct:
 - at least four more emergency drills, at least two of which must be fire drills.



State Law

- ❑ NMAC 6.12.6 requires local school boards, school districts and charter schools to develop and implement a wellness policy that includes “school safety plans at each school building focused on supporting healthy and safe learning environments”.
- ❑ Every three years, the school safety plans, or SSPs, must be submitted to PED for approval.
- ❑ An SSP must include these “minimum components:”
 - introduction;
 - school policies and procedures;
 - prevention; and
 - a school EOP.



What is an EOP?

- ❑ It is a term used by the US Department of Education and is a mandatory part of the SSP.
- ❑ PED rules define an EOP as “the document which outlines and explains *functions, resources and coordination procedures for responding to and supporting crisis, emergency, terrorist-response, and disaster operations, and is that portion of a safe school plan that details risk assessments and establishes the plans or procedures to manage a crisis, emergency, terrorist or disaster event before, during and after it has occurred* and includes, but is not limited to, emergency routes and staff assignments as they relate to immediate actions, delayed actions, mitigation actions, facility evacuations and facility reentry.”
- ❑ PED tends to refer to EOPs and SSPs interchangeably.



SSPs and the School Safety Committee

- ❑ A School Safety Committee, for every campus, will prepare the school's SSP.
- ❑ PED expects the following to be on the School Safety Committee:
 - administrators
 - educators
 - service providers
 - facilities and transportation managers
 - students
 - parents and family services representatives



SSPs and the School Safety Committee

- ❑ Per 22-5-4.12, at least one of the committee members must be a “special education expert” because the use of restraint or seclusion techniques must be included in a school safety plan.
- ❑ PED suggests also having on the School Safety Committee representatives from the School Health Advisory Council (SHAC) and/or the Local Emergency Planning Council (LEPC).



PED Resources

- ❑ PED has developed guidance and resources to help schools with safety planning.
 - Those are compiled here:
<https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/bureaus/safe-healthy-schools/safe-schools/>
- ❑ A key PED resource is the guide *Planning for Safe Schools in New Mexico*.
- ❑ That document includes planning templates, checklists, worksheets, and sample incident-related communication documents.



Five Preparedness Areas

- ❑ In the *Planning for Safe Schools* guide, PED has adopted the five “preparedness mission areas” from the National Response Framework:
 - Prevention
 - Protection
 - Mitigation
 - Response, and
 - Recovery



Requirements for the Five Preparedness Areas

- ❑ The Prevention components of the SSP must include:
 - Health Services Information
 - Infectious and Communicable Disease Planning
 - Behavioral and Mental Health Resources, including restorative justice programs
 - Bullying policies, programs, and protocol
 - Suicide Awareness and Prevention strategies



Requirements for the Five Preparedness Areas

- ❑ The Protection components of the SSP must include:
 - Access Control plan and measures
 - Facility Safety assessments, plans and checklists
 - Internet Safety measures
 - Identification of School Security Staff (guards, SROs, Security officers)
- ❑ Also recommended:
 - Bicycle Safety



Requirements for the Five Preparedness Areas

- ❑ The Mitigation components of the SSP must include:
 - Identification of school-specific threats and hazards (including relevant first responders)
 - Mandatory and optional assessments for building safe and supportive schools: school climate, behavioral threat, and school disaster/emergency capacity/resources
 - Site-specific plan for drills, exercises, and evacuations



Requirements for the Five Preparedness Areas

- The Response components of the SSP must include:
 - Incident Command System (organizational structure and responsibilities for incident management)
 - Protocols for Protective Actions (lockdown, shelter-in-place, evacuation, active shooter)
 - School Closing/Early Dismissal protocol
 - Act of Violence best practices
 - Active Shooter actions
 - Animal on Campus protocol
 - Bomb Threat practices
 - Actions in a Civil Disturbance
 - Cyber Security Breach prevention, action, reporting and recovery



Requirements for the Five Preparedness Areas

- The Response components of the SSP must ALSO include:
 - Fire
 - Explosion
 - Hazardous Materials
 - Fallen Aircraft
 - Loss of Power/Water
 - Medical Emergency
 - Natural Hazards (e.g. wildfire)
 - Suicide Threat/Attempt
 - Missing Child/Amber Alert
 - Transportation Emergency (e.g. bus accident, pedestrian hit on campus)
 - Notification, Messaging and Media



Requirements for the Five Preparedness Areas

- The Recovery components of the SSP must include:
 - Relocation plan and sites (including go-kits and floor plans)
 - Reunification plans, including team names, emergency responder information, involved school or mental health professionals
 - Notification to parents re Relocation and Reunification processes
 - Continuity of Operations Planning to (among other things):
 1. Ensure essential functions can be performed
 2. Reduce loss of life and minimize property damage/loss
 3. Plan order of succession with accompanying authorities
 4. Reduce or mitigate disruptions to operations
 5. Ensure school has facilities where essential functions can be performed
 - Short and long-term Emotional and Psychological Recovery resources and plans



IPRA and SSPs

- ❑ School Safety Plans (SSPs) and EOPs are confidential under IPRA as they are “Tactical response plans or procedures prepared for or by the state or a political subdivision of the state, the publication of which could reveal specific vulnerabilities, risk assessments or tactical emergency security procedures that could be used to facilitate the planning or execution of a terrorist attack”.



FERPA and School Emergencies

- ❑ FERPA protects the confidentiality of students' education records and personally identifiable student information.
- ❑ Schools must comply with FERPA and so cannot release student information without written parent consent, except under very limited circumstances.
- ❑ FERPA-protected student information MAY be released to health and law enforcement but only where it is needed in a health and safety emergency.
 - Per the US Department of Education, the "emergency" must be an "actual, impending, or imminent emergency, such as a natural disaster, a terrorist attack, a campus shooting, or the outbreak of an epidemic disease".
 - So specific confidential student information generally may NOT be disclosed to the media, parents, or school community in an emergency.



Questions?

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