

**Colorado School Safety Resource Center**  
**Best Practices Continuity of Operations**  
**(COOP) Template for Schools**

Based on COOP Templates from U.S. Department of  
Education and FEMA



**CO L O R A D O**

**School Safety Resource Center**

Department of Public Safety

# COOP Template Essential Elements

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# Essential Elements

## 1. TABLE OF CONTENTS

- a. Each COOP should contain a Table of Contents to ease the burden of end users in locating key information, especially during an incident.

## 2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- a. The executive summary should briefly outline the organization and content of the COOP Plan and describe what the plan is to be used for it is, whom it affects, and the circumstances under which it should be executed/implemented. Further, it should discuss the key elements of COOP planning and explain the organization's implementation strategies.

## 3. INTRODUCTION

- a. The introduction to the COOP Plan should explain the importance of COOP planning to the organization. It may also discuss the background for planning, referencing recent events that have led to the increased emphasis on the importance of a COOP capability for the organization.

## 4. PURPOSE

- a. The purpose section should explain why the organization is developing a COOP Plan. It should briefly discuss applicable district, local, county, state and federal guidance and explain the overall purpose of COOP planning, which is to ensure the continuity of mission essential functions. Because of today's changing threat environment, this section should state that the COOP Plan is designed to address the all hazard threat.



## 5. APPLICABILITY AND SCOPE

- a. This section describes the applicability of the plan to the organization as a whole, district offices as well as individual schools, co-located and geographically disperse, and to specific personnel groups of the organization. It should also include the scope of the plan. Ideally, plans should address the full spectrum of potential threats, crises and emergencies (natural as well as man-made).

## 6. DELEGATIONS OF AUTHORITY / ORDERS OF SUCCESSION

- a. Delegations of Authority  
This section should identify, by position, the authorities for making policy determinations and decisions to act on behalf of the school or district administrative head, district leadership, school board members and other key individuals. Delegations should specify at least two alternate authorities and any limitations based on this delegation. **Legal counsel should review these delegations along with state law limitations to such actions.**
- b. Orders of Succession  
This section should identify orders of succession to key positions within the school/district during an emergency when the incumbents are unable or unavailable to execute their duties. Orders should be of sufficient depth to ensure the organization's ability to manage and direct its essential functions and operations.

## 7. DECISION / ALERT PROCESS

- a. Decision Process  
This section should explain the logical steps associated with implementing a COOP Plan, the circumstances under which a plan may be activated (both with and without warning), and should identify who has the authority to activate the COOP Plan. This process can be described here or depicted in a graphical representation.
- b. Alert, Notification, and Implementation Process  
This section should explain the events following a decision to activate the COOP Plan. This includes employee alert and notification procedures and the COOP Plan implementation process.

## 8. ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS

- a. The essential functions section should include a list of the organization's prioritized essential functions. Essential functions are those organizational functions and activities that must be continued under any and all circumstances.

Organizations should:

-Identify all functions; determine which must be continued under all circumstances, and those that are considered nonessential, allowing for recognition of those services which will cease in emergency situations.

-Prioritize these essential functions

-Establish staffing and resource requirements

-Integrate supporting activities

-Develop a plan to perform additional functions as the situation permits

- b. Examples of essential functions:

-Transportation—of students or evacuees

-Communications—internal and external audiences

-Instructional services—distance learning

-Facility use—accessible main buildings or alternative locations

## 9. ALTERNATE FACILITIES

- a. This section should explain the significance of identifying an alternate facility, the requirements for determining an alternate facility, and the advantages and disadvantages of each location. Performance of a risk assessment is vital in determining which alternate location will best satisfy an organization's requirements.

-Determine if relocation within the district is feasible or if arrangements must be made with other school districts, agencies or partners

-Provide for reliable logistical support, services and infrastructure systems



-Consider repositioning assets and resources at alternate facility (e.g., computers, servers, etc.), if feasible

-Determine which essential functions and services can be conducted from a remote location (e.g., home) and those that need to be performed at a pre-designated alternate facility

b. Alternate facilities should provide:

-Sufficient space and equipment

-Capability to perform essential functions within 12 hours, up to 30 days

-Reliable logistical support, services, transportation, and infrastructure systems

-Consideration for health, safety, and emotional well-being of personnel

-Interoperable communications

-Computer equipment and software

## 10. MISSION CRITICAL SYSTEMS

a. This section should address the organization's mission critical systems necessary to perform essential functions and activities. Organizations must define these systems and address the method of transferring/replicating them at an alternate site, i.e. any items that a school cannot do without, that may need to be evacuated with staff/students or that needs to be purchased for the alternate facility.

b. Examples of mission critical systems:

-Computers/ Server

-Medications

-Medical devices

-Generators

## 11. INTEROPERABLE COMMUNICATIONS

- a. This section should identify available and redundant critical communication systems that are located at the alternate facility. These systems should provide the ability to communicate within the organization and outside the organization.
- b. These communication systems should provide the ability to:
  - Communicate externally with teachers, staff, students, parents, staff, other agencies and organizations
  - Communicate internally with leadership, staff and students
  - Ensure connectivity between internal and external parties in the event that primary means of communication fail
  - Ability to operate at the alternate facility within 12 hours, and for up to 30 days
- c. Consider viable methods of communication in the event cellular towers and land lines are inoperable. Also consider access to county/ state radio frequencies, satellite phones and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) radios.

## 12. VITAL RECORDS

- a. This section should identify what vital records are to each organization and how they will be handled. Vital records are electronic and hard copy documents, references and records needed to support essential functions during a COOP situation and to reconstitute normal operations after the emergency ceases.
- b. Two types of vital records:
  1. Emergency operating records, i.e. Emergency operations plans and directives, Orders of succession, Delegations of authority, References for those who perform which essential functions
  2. Legal and financial records, i.e. Personnel Records, Social Security Records, Payroll Records, Retirement Records, Insurance Records, Contract Records, Student Records, and Medical Records

### 13. HUMAN CAPITAL MANAGEMENT

- a. Human capital management is the sum of talent, energy, knowledge, and enthusiasm that people invest in their work. This section might include diagrams or charts that enhance all personnel’s understanding of their position and duties during a COOP situation. Including a plan for keeping employees informed as to their status, can be part of this section.
  - Place the most qualified people in the positions necessary to perform essential functions
  - Consider reassignment of personnel from nonessential functions.
  - Management is responsible for accounting for all staff, during a COOP situation.
- b. Most employees will:
  - Fulfill their pre-designated emergency support function, or
  - Go home, or
  - Remain available, or
  - Wait for further direction.

### 14. DEVOLUTION

- a. The devolution section should address how an organization will transfer statutory authority and responsibility for essential functions in the aftermath of a worst-case scenario, one in which the leadership is unable or unavailable for an extended amount of time.
- b. Steps used in this process:
  - Identify likely triggers and authorities for devolution implementation.
  - Describe how and when devolution will occur.
  - Identify the resources that will be required to continue essential functions under a devolution scenario.

## 15. RECONSTITUTION

- a. This section should cover the process by which teachers, staff and, ultimately, students resume normal operations, from the original (or replacement) primary operating facility.
- b. For example:
  - Notification procedures for all staff and students returning to school must also be addressed.
  - Conducting, After Action Review's (AAR's), to determine the effectiveness of COOP plans and procedures.

## 16. COOP PLANNING RESPONSIBILITIES

- a. This section should include additional delineation of COOP responsibilities of each key staff position in the planning team, i.e. who creates the plan, who maintains the plan and when they must accomplish these tasks.
- b. Address how the organization plans to ensure that the COOP Plan contains the most current information. Federal guidance states that organizations should review the entire COOP Plan at least annually. Key evacuation routes, roster and telephone information, as well as maps and room/building designations of alternate locations should be updated as changes occur.

## 17. TEST, TRAINING & EXERCISES

- a. Tests, training and exercises of the COOP plan ensure that the plan is capable of supporting operations of essential functions, all equipment and systems work as required, all employees are able to deploy to the alternate facility within the required time frame, supply chain and infrastructure capabilities are addressed, and that any deficiencies are identified. This section should also include a schedule of planned test, trainings and exercises and After Action Reports.



## 18. ANNEXES

### A. AUTHORITIES AND REFERENCES

This annex should cite a list of authorities and references that mandate the development of this COOP Plan, and provide guidance towards acquiring the requisite information contained in this COOP Plan.

### B. OPERATIONAL CHECKLISTS

This annex should contain operational checklists for use during a COOP event. Checklists may be designed to list the responsibilities of a specific position or the steps required to complete a specific task.

For example:

- Emergency Calling Directory
- Key Personnel Roster
- Essential Functions Checklist
- Alternate Site Acquisition Checklist
- Emergency Operating Records and IT Checklist
- Emergency Equipment Checklist

### C. ALTERNATE LOCATIONS

This annex should include general information about the alternate location/facility, to include the address, points of contact, and available resources at the alternate location.

### D. MAPS AND EVACUATION ROUTES

This annex should provide maps, driving directions, and available modes of transportation from the primary facility to the alternate location. Evacuation routes



from the primary facility should also be included.

## E. DEFINITIONS AND ACRONYMS

This annex should contain a list of key words, phrases, and acronyms used throughout the COOP Plan and within the COOP community. Each key word, phrase and acronym should be clearly defined.

