

GUIDE FOR DEVELOPING HIGH-QUALITY SCHOOL EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLANS



FEMA



Introduction and Purpose

- **Our nation's schools (serving 55 million students) are entrusted:**
 - to provide safe and healthy learning environments
 - to keep children and youth safe from threats and hazards
- **In collaboration with their local government and community partners, schools can:**
 - plan for these potential emergencies;
 - create school Emergency Operations Plans (school EOP).
- **The guide will assist planning teams responsible for developing and revising school EOP in their efforts.**

Guide's Four Sections

- 1. Principles** of school emergency management planning.
- 2. 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.
- 3. Discussion** of the form, function, and content of school EOPs.
- 4. “A Closer Look,”** which considers key topics that support school emergency planning:
 - addressing an active shooter
 - school climate
 - psychological first aid, and
 - information-sharing.

Presidential Policy Directive (PPD) 8

PPD-8 describes the nation's approach to preparedness and **defines** preparedness around **five** mission areas:

- **Prevention** means the capabilities necessary to avoid, deter, or stop an imminent crime or threatened or actual mass casualty incident.
- **Protection** means the capabilities to secure schools against acts of violence and manmade or natural disasters.
- **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.
- **Response** means the capabilities necessary to stabilize an emergency once it has already happened or is certain to happen in an unpreventable way.
- **Recovery** means the capabilities necessary to assist schools affected by an event or emergency in restoring the learning environment.

Planning Principles

Planning

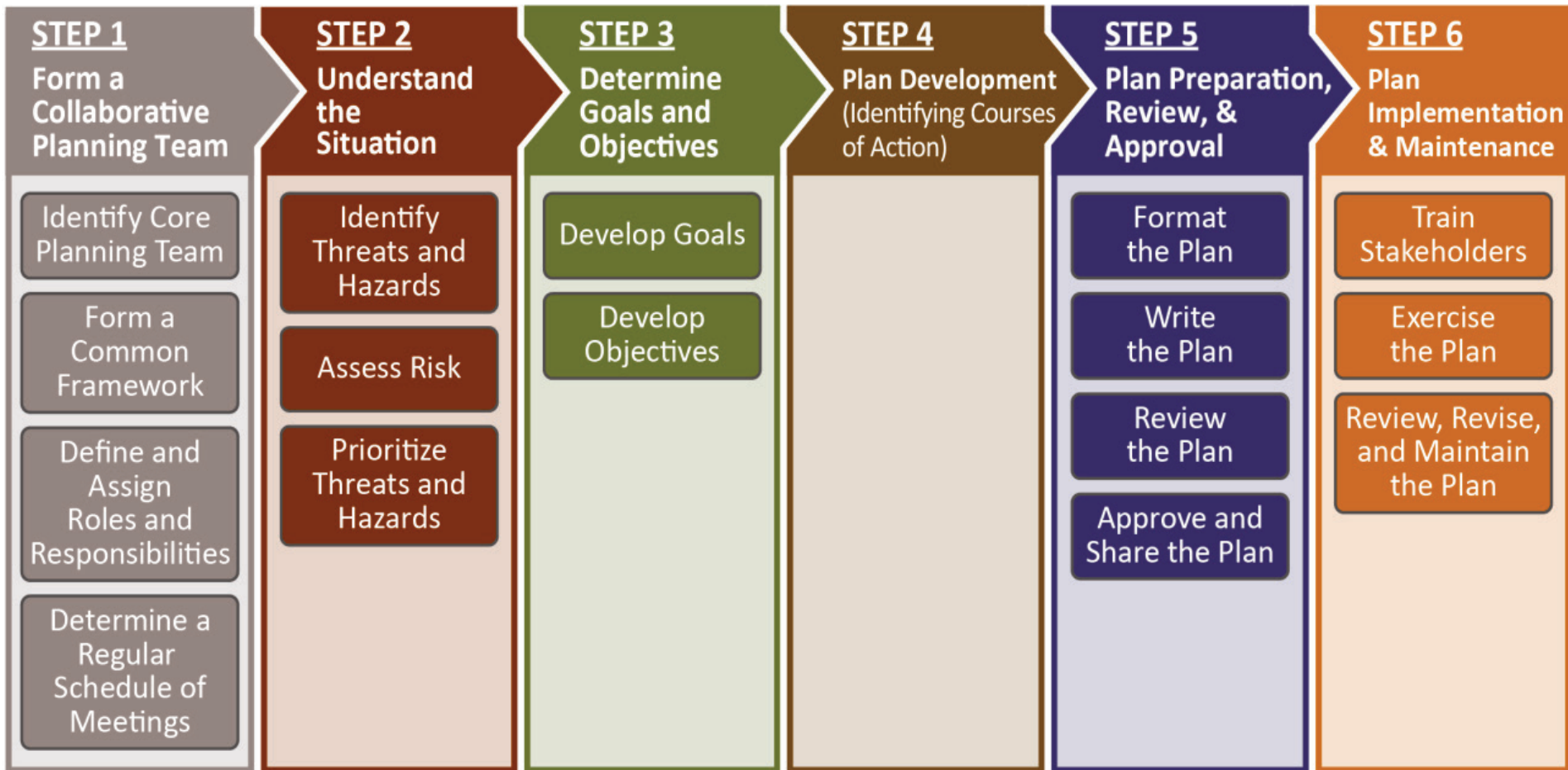
- must be supported by leadership.
- uses assessment to customize plans to the building level.
- considers all threats and hazards.
- provides for the access and functional needs of the whole school community.
- considers all settings and all times.
- follows a collaborative process for creating and revising a model emergency operations plan.

*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

- Is **flexible** and can be **adapted** to accommodate a school's unique characteristics and situation.
- During the planning process 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.

Steps in the Planning Process



- **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.
- **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.
- **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.

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 have been identified, the planning team should select suitable assessment tools to evaluate the risk posed by the identified threats and hazards.

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.

Type:

Site Assessment

Description:

A site assessment examines the safety, accessibility, and emergency preparedness of the school's buildings and grounds.

Purpose:

- 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.

Type:

Culture and Climate Assessment

Description:

A school culture and climate assessment evaluates student and staff connectedness to the school and problem behaviors.

Purpose:

- **Knowledge** of students' and staff's perceptions of their safety.
- **Knowledge** of problem behaviors that need to be addressed to improve school climate.

Type:

School Threat Assessment

Description:

A school threat assessment analyzes communication and behaviors to determine whether or not a student, staff, or other person may pose a threat.

Purpose:

- Students, staff, or other persons that may pose a threat are identified before a threat develops into an incident and are referred for services, if appropriate.

Type:

Capacity Assessment

Description:

A capacity assessment examines the capabilities of students and staff as well as the services and material resources of community partners

Purpose:

- An increased **understanding** of the resources available.
- Information about staff capabilities will help planners assign roles and responsibilities in the plan.

- 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;
 - Magnitude;
 - Time available to warn staff, students, and visitors;
 - Duration ;and
 - Follow-on and cascading effects of threat or hazard.

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.

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. 12–4 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.

The planning team

- Decides ***which of the threats and hazards identified in Step 2 will be addressed*** in the school EOP
- Develops ***goals and objectives*** for each
- Develops ***at least three goals*** indicating 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.

- 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.
- 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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

Write the Plan

- As the planning team works through the draft, the members add necessary tables, charts, and other supporting graphics.

Review the Plan

- Planners should check the written plan for compliance with applicable laws and for its usefulness in practice.

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.

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.

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, starting the planning cycle over again.
- The planning team should ensure that all community partners have the most current version of the school EOP.

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.*

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.

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.

Situation Overview

- explains why a school EOP is necessary.

The Basic Plan, cont.

The Concept of Operations

- Explains in broad terms the school administrator's intent with regard to an operation.

Organization and Assignment of Responsibilities

- Provides an overview of the broad roles and responsibilities of school staff, families, guardians, and community partners, and of organizational functions *during* all emergencies.

Direction, Control, and Coordination

- Describes the framework for all direction, control, and coordination activities.

Information Collection, Analysis, and Dissemination

- 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

- Describes the critical training and exercise activities the school will use in support of the plan.

Administration, Finance, and Logistics

- Covers general support requirements and the availability of services and support for all types of emergencies, as well as general policies for managing resources.

Plan Development and Maintenance

- Discusses the overall approach to planning and the assignment of plan development and maintenance responsibilities.

Authorities and References

- Provides the legal basis for emergency operations and activities.

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.

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.

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.

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 as well as the communication of emergency protocols before an emergency and communication after an emergency.

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.

Functional Annexes Content, cont.

Recovery Annex

- Describes how schools will recover from an emergency.

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.

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.

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.

Threat- and Hazard-Specific Annexes

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

A Closer Look: Information Sharing and Psychological First Aid for Schools

Information Sharing

- 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.

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.

A Closer Look, School Climate and Emergencies and Active Shooter Situations

“School climate”

- Describes a range of campus conditions, including safety, relationships and engagement, and the environment, that may influence student learning and well-being.

“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

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.

Sharing Information With First Responders

- The planning process
 - is not complete until the school EOP is shared with first responders.
 - 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

Exercises

- 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.

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

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 of a multidisciplinary school threat assessment team (TAT).

A Closer Look, Active Shooter Situations

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.
- Train staff to overcome denial and to respond immediately, including fulfilling their responsibilities for individuals in their charge

A Closer Look, Active Shooter Situations

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.

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.

A Closer Look, Active Shooter Situations

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.

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

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