

Voorheesville Central School District
DISTRICT – WIDE SCHOOL SAFETY PLAN
Project SAVE (Safe Schools Against Violence in Education)
Commissioner’s Regulation 155.17

Chief Emergency Officer: Brian Hunt, Superintendent

Introduction

Emergencies and violent incidents in school districts are critical issues that must be addressed in an expeditious and effective manner. Districts are required to develop a district-wide school safety plan designed to prevent or minimize the effects of serious violent incidents and emergencies and to facilitate the coordination of the district with local and county resources in the event of such incidents or emergencies. The District-Wide School Safety Plan is responsive to the needs of all schools within the district and is consistent with the more detailed emergency response plans required at the school building level.

Districts stand at risk from a wide variety of acts of violence, natural, and manmade disasters. To address these threats, the State of New York has enacted the Safe Schools Against Violence in Education (SAVE) law. Project SAVE is a comprehensive planning effort that addresses prevention, response, and recovery with respect to a variety of emergencies in each school district and its schools.

The **Voorheesville Central School District**, supports the SAVE Legislation and intends to facilitate the planning process. The Superintendent of Schools encourages and advocates on-going district-wide cooperation and support of Project SAVE.

The Chief Emergency Officer is responsible for coordinating communication between staff and law enforcement and first responders for ensuring staff understanding of the district-level safety plan. The Chief Emergency Officer shall also be responsible for ensuring completion and yearly update of the confidential Building-Level Emergency Response Plans.

Section I: General Considerations and Planning Guidelines

A. Purpose

The District-Wide School Safety Plan was developed pursuant to Commissioner’s Regulation 155.17. At the direction of the Board of Education, the School Superintendent appointed a District-wide Health & Safety Committee and charged it with the development and maintenance of the District-wide School Safety Plan.

B. Identification of School Teams

The district has created a District-wide School Safety Team consisting of, but not limited to, students, teachers, administrators, nurses, and representatives from local law enforcement.

C. Concept of Operations

- The District-Wide School Safety Plan is directly linked to the individual Building-Level Emergency Response Plans for each school building. Protocols reflected in the District-wide School Safety Plan guides the development and implementation of individual Building-Level Emergency Response Plans.
- In the event of an emergency or violent incident, the initial response to all emergencies at an individual school is by the Building-Level Emergency Response Team.
- Upon the activation of the Building-Level Emergency Response Team, the Superintendent of Schools or his/her designee is notified and, where appropriate, local emergency officials are also notified.
- Efforts may be supplemented by County and State resources through existing protocols.

D. Plan review and public comment

- This plan is reviewed and maintained by the District-wide Health & Safety Committee and reviewed on an annual basis on or before September 1 of each year.
- Pursuant to Commissioner's Regulation 155.17 (e)(3), this plan was available for public comment 30 days prior to its adoption. The district-wide and building-level plans were originally adopted in 2001-2002, by the School Board after one public hearing that provided for the participation of school personnel, parents, students and any other interested parties. The plan was formally adopted by the Board of Education.
- While linked to the District-Wide School Safety Plan, the Building-level Emergency Response Plans is confidential and shall not be subject to disclosure under Article 6 of the Public Officers Law or any other provision of law, in accordance with Education Law Section 2801-a. The District-Wide Health & Safety Committee and the Board of Education review the Building-level Emergency Response Plans yearly before September 1 of each year.
- The District-wide School Safety Plan is:
 - Posted on the district's website as requested by the New York State Education Department.

NOTE: Building-Level Emergency Response Plans are supplied to both local and State Police within 30 days of adoption.

The district has many Board of Education (BOE) policies that support school safety, including but not limited to:

- 0110 – Sexual Harassment
- 0115 – Student Harassment, Hazing or Bullying Prevention and Intervention
- 4526.1 – Internet Safety
- 5300 – Code of Conduct
- 5440 – Drug and Alcohol Abuse
- 5450 – Student Safety

- 5710 – Violent and Disruptive Incident Reporting
- 8100 – Safety Program
- 8110 – School Building Safety
- 8130 – School Safety Plans and Teams
- 8133 – Bomb Threats
- 8134 – Emergency Closings
- 8140 – Procedures For Determining Whether A Student Has Become The Victim Of A Violent Criminal Offense On School Grounds

Section II: General Emergency Mitigation, Prevention and Response Planning

The District emergency preparedness includes mitigation and prevention to decrease the likelihood of an emergency and to reduce losses or damage should one occur. Mitigation involves the identification risks and vulnerabilities, an assessment of resources and facilities, identification of stakeholders including knowledgeable and collaborative emergency responders and mental health resources, and the communication process. Preparedness includes ensuring policies and protocols are in place as well as the readiness and knowledge to respond. This involves clarifying team member roles, having the incident command system (ICS) in place, continuous training on ICS and the plan procedures, and conducting exercises and drills.

Response occurs when the plan is activated and involves the action to contain and resolve a crisis. The ICS plan in place is activated as needed to promote effective decision-making. Consistent communication is maintained with staff, students, family and media, actions are documented and after-action briefings are conducted. Emergency response planning has proceeded with the assistance of the Capital Region BOCES Risk Management Service and coordinated at the District level. Development of the plan has included involvement of the local police, fire and rescue squad personnel. The District emergency response plan and the building plans linked to this plan use the incident command system. Staff have been identified at each building to assume roles in the incident command structure in the event of an emergency. Assignments, roles and procedures are adjusted on the basis of the exercises. The plan is further adjusted annually using exercises to test potential for emergency response. District and building plans include:

- A. Identification of sites of potential emergency, including:
 - Detailed plans for each school building;
 - The location of potential command and evacuation sites; primary and secondary for each site;
 - The kinds of action to be taken in the event of emergency, and
 - The potential internal or external hazards or emergency situations.

- B. Plans for taking the following actions in response to an emergency where appropriate, including but not limited to:
 - School cancellation
 - Early dismissal

- Evacuation (before, during and after school hours, including security during evacuation and evacuation routes)
- Lockdown/Lockout
- Sheltering sites (internal and external)

Emergency Procedures include the following:

Air Pollution	Hazardous Materials Incident – Off Site
Anthrax/Biological Threat	Hazardous Materials Incident – On Site
Aviation Crash	Heating System Failure
Bomb/Explosive Threat	Hostage Situation
Building Structural Failure	Intruder
Civil Disturbance	Loss of Building Use
Crimes Against Persons (includes Assault, Abuse, Hostage-Taking, Kidnapping and Robbery)	Loss of Transportation Fleet
Earthquake	Medical Emergencies
Electrical Systems Failure	Multiple Casualty Incident
Energy Supply Loss	Natural Gas or Propane Leak
Epidemic	Radiological Incident
Explosion	Roof Failure or Leak
Fire and Alarm Activation	School Bus Accident
Flooding	Severe Weather Emergency
	Toxic Exposure
	Water Emergency

- C. The identification of district resources which may be available for use during an emergency, including the identification of personnel and other resources.
- D. Description of procedures to coordinate the use of school district resources and manpower during emergencies, including:
- Identification of the officials authorized to make decisions, and
 - Identification of the staff members assigned to provide assistance during emergencies
- E. Policies and procedures for annual multi-hazard school training for staff and students, including the strategies for implementing training related to multi-hazards.

Voorheesville Central School District Staff receive mandated annual school safety and violence prevention training.

The Voorheesville Central School District currently practices the following exercises and drills:

- Lock-Down Drills – required four times a year
- Emergency Go-Home Drills – at least once a year
- Fire/Evacuation Drills – required eight times a year

- F. Procedures for the review and conduct of drills and other exercises to test components of the emergency response plan, including the use of tabletop exercises and drills, in coordination with local and county emergency responders and preparedness officials.

The Voorheesville Central School District practices the following exercises and drills:

Tabletop Exercises relating to multi-hazards and other multi-hazard drills using the National Interagency Incident Management System Incident Command System which is an integral part of the Safety Plan.

The District has worked in conjunction with members of the State Police and local police to perform lockdown drills and active shooter drills.

The District-Level School Safety Team meets following the drills to review and analyze the drill process and how all participants performed.

Section III: Responding to Threats and Acts of Violence

Both building and District emergency response plans use the incident command system to identify and respond to anticipated or unanticipated threats or acts of violence. Plan appendices include the following:

- A. Policies and procedures for responding to implied or direct threats of violence by students, teachers, other school personnel and visitors to the school.
- B. Policies and procedures for responding to acts of violence by students, teachers, other school personnel and visitors to the school, including consideration of zero-tolerance policies for school violence.
- C. Policies and procedures for contacting parents, guardians, or persons in a parental relation to a student in the event of an implied or direct threat of violence by a student against themselves, including threat of suicide. These policies and procedures are maintained by the school counselors.
- D. Policies and procedures for contacting appropriate law enforcement officials in the event of a violent incident. The appropriate procedure will always use the 911 emergency call system.
- E. Identification of appropriate responses to emergencies, including protocols for responding to:
- Bomb threats
 - Hostage takings
 - Intrusions
 - Kidnappings
- F. Policies and procedures to contact parents, guardians or persons in parental relation to the students in the event of a violent incident or an early dismissal.

Section IV: Communication with Others

Community based emergency response services (police, fire and rescue squad) participate in the development, tabletop review and review of each building plan and the district plan. Copies of each written plan are made available to emergency service agencies and officials of each town and county government.

- A. A 911 protocol is used in every instance to request emergency assistance.
- B. Written copies of the plans will be forwarded to county and town officials explaining the role that emergency response agencies have played in the development of the plan and seeking advice, suggestions or other feedback. This includes the discussion about the county officials responsible for implementation of Article 2-B of the Executive Law.
- C. If a disaster occurs that impacts the district, all internal communications will run through the district office whose staff will activate building and district level emergency response teams as necessary. The district office will inform all educational agencies within the school district of such a disaster.
- D. Maintenance of relevant information included in the confidential Building-level Emergency Response Plans and for each educational agency* located in the school district, include information on:
 - School population
 - Number of staff
 - Transportation needs
 - Business and home telephone numbers of key officials of each such educational agency

*Educational agencies means public and nonpublic elementary and secondary schools, public and private nursery schools, approved private schools for the education of students with disabilities as defined in section 200.1(d) of this Title, and public and private schools for the education of preschool children with disabilities.

Section V: Prevention and Intervention Strategies

The District strives to provide and enhance emergency and violence prevention and intervention strategies. Such strategies include improving communications among students and between students and staff, reporting of potentially violent incidents and establishing reporting mechanisms for school violence.

- A. The school climate is viewed as an important part of school safety. The Dignity for All Students Act supports an environment free of harassment and discrimination. The District provides training around bullying prevention through curriculum integration, which is overseen by the building level DASA coordinators. The District's Code of Conduct supports intervention and defines Disciplinary Consequences/Remediation. If appropriate, disciplinary action will be taken by the administration in accordance with the district's Code of Conduct, as applicable. If the behavior rises to the level of criminal activity, law enforcement will be contacted.

- B. Policies and procedures related to school building security, including, where appropriate, the use of security devices or procedures.

All entrances are secured daily. The District utilizes an electronic buzzer system at only one entrance to each building wherein persons must be identified and cleared prior to allowing them access to the building.

Security cameras have been installed in strategic areas throughout the district.

Staff has been issued swipe cards in order to access the buildings.

- C. Policies and procedures for the dissemination of informative materials regarding the early detection of potentially violent behaviors, including, but not limited to:

The identification of family, community and environmental factors to teachers, administrators, parents and other persons in parental relation to students of the school district or board, students and other persons deemed appropriate to receive such information.

All faculty and staff will receive Mental Health Awareness and Violence Prevention Training and a copy of the District's Code of Conduct is made available. The Superintendent of Schools will determine if additional persons should be given such information based on facts or circumstances arising.

- D. Appropriate prevention and intervention strategies and strategies for improving communication among students and between students and staff and reporting of potentially violent incidents, such as the establishment of:
- Anti-Bullying Programs
 - Youth-run programs
 - Conflict resolution
 - Others based on district need

The Elementary Schools practice the following prevention and intervention strategies:

- The Spirit Committee at the elementary school coordinates assemblies based on yearly themes aimed at character education.
- The school counselor teaches lessons in classrooms for students in kindergarten through fifth grade.
- The school counselor facilitates groups for students, such as Banana Splits and friendship groups.
- The school's site based team coordinates a yearly theme to improve school culture.

- The school counselor works with outside agencies to support our families to improve mental health awareness
- The school counselor and school psychologist offered a variety of after school clubs throughout the school year to support students' social-emotional well being

The Middle School practices the following prevention and intervention strategies:

- Team character themes with activities throughout the year promoting and recognizing positive behavior.
- Mediation throughout the year.
- DASA complaint/concern forms available for submission and investigation.
- Student office report forms for when a child is sent to an office to explain their interpretation of why – may result in counseling of behavior approach, teacher-student meeting or an investigation of another issue that was a result of the behavior.
- The school counselor works with outside agencies to support our families to improve mental health awareness
- Counselor led class room lessons on positive peer interactions and social media safety
- Counselor led groups on friendship/leadership/positive character
- Yearly school community building activity

The High School practices the following prevention and intervention strategies:

- Natural Helpers (**Sources of Strength** student leaders) are trained in and offer school-wide support in the areas of substance abuse, healthy relationships, stress reduction, response to and processing of social norms, and suicide prevention.
- The superintendent, high school principal, ~~GSA~~ **SAGA** advisor, and deans of students meet with the Pride Center of the Capital Region
- The school psychologist, social worker, guidance counselors, deans of students, principal, and teaching staff employ a "Keeping Students Safe: Crisis Plan" in the case of visible cuts, burns, and other self-harm behavior.
- The Voorheesville Community Alliance for Healthy Choices takes a proactive stance regarding the reduction of destructive decisions by providing resources, organizing speakers, and offering a range of summer and year-round educational programs.
- Every Clayton A. Bouton student participates in Beacon of Hope/Remind 301 to internalize lessons about the responsibility intrinsic in life behind the wheel of a car.
- Through Reality Check, the Great American Smokeout, and Albany County Stop DWI, our chapter of SADD sets up visuals through the school and on our front lawn to display the addictive power of nicotine, the life-threatening and/or life-ending consequences of drugs and alcohol: floor-to-ceiling posters of victims and their families, flags symbolizing each teen who starts to smoke, etc.
- The high school principal and district social worker are trained in ACE (Adverse Childhood Experiences) and turnkey train staff members regarding trauma-informed instruction.

- The school counseling team works with outside agencies to support our families to improve mental health awareness

E. Description of duties, hiring and screening process, and required training of hall monitors and other school safety personnel are maintained in the District Office.

The Voorheesville Central School District does not employ hall monitors. When and if the district hires hall monitors or other school safety personnel, they will go through the normal district hiring practices including, but not limited to, interviews, reference checks, meeting job posted requirements and fingerprinting if not on file.

Section VI: Recovery

Recovery addresses the help needed for all involved to heal and to restore the school community to “normal” operations. The District supports the school buildings by deploying district resources that support the Emergency Response Teams and the Post-Incident Response Teams in the affected school(s).

Recovery plans include mental health/emotional recovery, academic, physical and business recovery, and can continue long after the actual emergency. The District has social worker and counselor resources and support systems. The District has the ability to coordinate with school, local, County and State disaster mental health services. The District’s role with mental health services includes looking at the school culture and climate, providing student access to services and following threat assessment procedures.

A. District Support for Buildings

Each Building-level Emergency Response Plan provides resources for supporting the Emergency Response Teams and Post-Incident Response Teams. The district’s Incident Command System (ICS) identifies back-ups to relieve team members. This provides team members the opportunity to rotate personnel, to fill in if assigned personnel are unavailable and to debrief in a supportive environment.

The district realizes that some emergencies may overwhelm an individual school’s ability to manage an extreme crisis. If/when a Building-level Emergency Response Team or Post-Incident Response Team is faced with an emergency such as threats of violence or actual violent incidents, the District-Wide Emergency Response Team will assist as follows:

- Acting as a sounding board for the building principal/supervisor regarding the implied or direct threats and/or violent acts.
- Assisting in determining the level of threat and appropriate response.

- If safe to do so, sending a district-wide team member to support the Building-level Emergency Response Team(s).
- Monitoring the situation and adjusting the district's response as appropriate.
- Assisting with parent/guardian, faculty/staff, and media communication.
- Assisting with coordinating building and grounds security in conjunction with local and State Police.
- Assisting with offering a backup Post-Incident Response Team (i.e., another school team and/or an outside group) if needed.
- Offering debriefing sessions as needed working in conjunction with local, County and/or State emergency responders.

B. Disaster Mental Health Services

If/when a Building-level Emergency Response Team or Post-Incident Response Team is faced with an emergency that may overwhelm an individual school's ability to manage an extreme crisis, the District-Wide Emergency Response Team will assist as follows:

- If safe to do so, sending a district-wide team member to each affected school/building as a liaison between the school/building and the District Office.
- Activating the district-wide Post-Incident response Team. The district and schools have school counselors, school psychologists, school nurses, and social workers that are knowledgeable of local resources for students. In addition, a Community Mental Health Resource List can be found on both the middle school and high school websites.
- Offering district support and looking for continued feedback from those directly impacted during the incident, with projected plans to assist if needed during heightened stressful times such as a re-occurrence of a similar event and anniversaries of the original event.
- Assisting with parent/guardian, student, and faculty/staff debriefing and/or post-incident crisis intervention. The debriefing is also used in part to evaluate the district's plan for possible revisions. If needed, assisting in contacting additional outside mental health resources such as the National Organization for Victim Assistance (1-800-try-nova; www.try-nova.org).
- Assisting the schools with written statements going out to faculty/staff, parents/guardians, press releases and media requests through the district's Public Information Officer and Communications Office.

The district supports the recovery phase and reevaluates current multi-hazard and violence prevention practices and school safety activities.