

District-Wide School Safety Plan

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

The NYC Autism Charter Schools District (“District”) supports the SAVE Legislation and engages in a planning process annually. The leadership team encourages and advocates on-going district-wide cooperation and support of Project SAVE.

Section I: General Considerations and Planning Guidelines

A. Purpose:

The NYC Autism Charter Schools (NYCACS) District-wide School Safety Plan was developed pursuant to Commissioner’s Regulation 155.17. At the direction of the NYC Autism Charter Schools boards, the Executive Director of NYC Autism Charter Schools appointed a District-wide School Safety Team and charged it with the development and maintenance of the District-wide School Safety Plan.

B. Identification of School Teams

NYCACS has appointed a District-wide School Safety Team consisting of, but not limited to, representatives of the School Board, administrators, school safety personnel, and other school personnel.

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 will be used to guide the development and implementation of individual Building-level Emergency Response Plans.
- The development of the District-wide School Safety Plan was a collaborative effort of the District-wide Safety team utilizing guidance provided by the New York State Education Department, in consultation with Homeland Security and the New York State Police.

- In the event of an emergency or violent incident, the initial response to all emergencies at an individual school will be guided by the School Emergency Response Team. NYCACS consists of the following facilities in New York:
 - NYC Autism Charter School East Harlem
 - NYC Autism Charter School Bronx
- Upon the activation of the School Emergency Response Team, the Executive Director or their designee will be notified and, where appropriate, local emergency officials will also be notified by calling 911.
- County and state resources through existing established protocols may supplement emergency response actions, including post-incident responses.

D. Plan Review and Public Comment

- This plan will be reviewed and maintained by the District-wide School Safety team on an annual basis before July 1 of each year. Pursuant to Commissioner's Regulation, Section 155.17 (e)(3), this plan will be made available for public comment at least 30 days prior to its adoption. The district-wide plan may be adopted by the School Board only after at least one public hearing that provides for the participation of school personnel, parents, and any other interested parties.
- Full copies of the District-wide School Safety Plan and any amendments will be submitted to the New York State Education Department within 30 days of adoption. A copy of the plan will be available in the NYCACS East Harlem main office (433 E. 100th St New York, NY).
- While linked to the District-wide School Safety Plan, the Building-level Emergency Response Plans shall be 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.a.

Section II: Risk Reduction/Prevention and Intervention

This section of the plan is used to identify and describe the district's policies and procedures for reducing the risk of violence; implementing programs and activities for prevention of violence; and establishing clear descriptions of actions that will be taken in the event of a violent incident or other school emergency.

A. NYCACS Prevention/Intervention Strategies

Research demonstrates that positive, skills-based approaches can increase the safety of students and teachers in school, as well as improve the community climate. Given that all NYCACS students are profoundly affected by autism, they may engage in dangerous or aggressive behavior. These behaviors are almost always seen as resulting from their autism diagnosis. Adaptive, prosocial responses are, therefore, taught and reinforced in an effort to create alternatives to such behaviors. Additionally, BIP's may be created for certain students in conjunction with and with the approval of families, in an effort to reduce levels of maladaptive responding.

B. More Traditional Prevention/Intervention Strategies

NYCACs conducts age- and skill level-appropriate programs for students (if/when they are able to benefit from such instruction) and staff in each building such as:

- Non-violent conflict resolution training
- Peer mediation programs and support
- Other programs established at each school building

Additionally, school buildings are staffed by School Safety Agents.

C. Training, Drills, and Exercises

- NYCACs has established the following policies and procedures for annual multi-hazard school safety training for staff and students (adapted to fit their learning profile):
 - Annual review of the building emergency response procedures with staff.
 - Practice with such procedures through emergency drills that include (8) evacuation drills and (4) lockdown drills (both shelter-in and hard/soft lockdown).

D. Implementation of School Security

- NYCACs works closely with the NYC School Safety Division within each facility in New York City. All visitors to a school must sign in with both the School Safety desk at the Main Entrance and the school's main office upon arrival. A visitor is considered anyone who is not a regular staff member or student. Visitors must wear a Visitors Badge to identify them and are not permitted to wander throughout the facilities. If a staff member notices suspicious, threatening, and/or otherwise inappropriate behavior, the behavior is to be immediately reported to the Main Office for a response from the Head of School or Executive Director.

E. Vital Educational Agency Information

- NYCACs has two facilities in New York City:
 - NYC Autism Charter School East Harlem
 - NYC Autism Charter School Bronx

Each Building Emergency Response Plan will contain vital information such as school population, number of staff, transportation needs, and the business and home telephone numbers of key officials of each such educational agency. These plans include relocation and reunification locations.

F. Early Detection of Potentially Violent Behaviors

- The leadership team is regularly meeting with staff and parents to discuss any challenging behavior demonstrated by students. They also regularly review data collected on such behavior to analyze trends and develop or adjust response plans. This is done at a higher frequency with behavior that may be dangerous to the student themselves or to others. Instructional and non-instructional staff who are concerned about the behavior of a student are directed to communicate those concerns to their immediate supervisor, Head of School or Executive Director.

G. Hazard Identification

- Every NYCACS building is evaluated annually for potential hazards within the building and on school grounds. The Building Emergency Response Plan, located in the School Office along includes the identification of hazardous roadways and intersections in proximity to the school building. There are no storage facilities for hazardous chemicals adjacent to School facilities that have been identified by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.

Section III: Response

A. Notification and Activation (Internal and External Communications)

- The policies and procedures for contacting appropriate law enforcement officials in the event of a violent incident are included in the Building-level Emergency Response Plan. Each plan outlines when school staff should contact emergency services using the 911 system.
- In the event of an emergency, staff, scholars, and parents/guardians will be contacted in one or more of the following manners:

- ✓REMIND Text Message
- ✓Telephone
- ✓Email
- ✓Others as appropriate

H. Situational Responses

- **Multi-Hazard Response**

The District has developed multi-hazard response plans which are included in the Building-level Emergency Response Plan. The emergencies addressed in the plan include, but are not limited to:

- Threats of Violence (Intruder)
- Hostage/Kidnapping
- Explosive/Bomb Threat
- Natural/Weather Related Hazardous Material
- Missing Students

- **Responses to Acts of Violence: Implied or Direct Threats**

The Building-level Emergency Response Plan includes policies and procedures for responding to implied or direct threats of violence by students, teachers, other school personnel and visitors to the school. The following types of procedure(s) could be used by the district:

- Use of staff trained in de-escalation or other strategies to diffuse the situation.
- Inform Head of School or Executive Director of implied or direct threat.
- Determine level of threat with Executive Director/Designee.
- Contact appropriate law enforcement agency, if necessary.
- Monitor situation, adjust response as appropriate, include the possible use of the Emergency Response Team.

- **Acts of Violence**

Multi-Hazard response in each Building-level Emergency Response plan include 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. The following types of procedure(s) could be used by the district:

- Determine level of threat with Executive Director/Designee.
- If the situation warrants, isolate the immediate area and evacuate.
- Inform Head of School/Executive Director.
- If necessary, initiate lockdown procedure, and contact appropriate law enforcement agency.
- Monitor situation; adjust response as appropriate; if necessary, initiate early dismissal, sheltering or evacuation procedures.

- **Response Protocols**

The Building-level Emergency Response plans include protocols for responding to bomb threats, hostage takings, intrusions, and kidnappings. The following protocols are provided as examples:

- Identification of decision makers.
- Plans to safeguard students and staff.
- Procedures to provide transportation, if necessary.
- Procedures to notify parents.
- Procedures to notify media.
- Debriefing procedures.

- **Arrangements for Obtaining Emergency Assistance from Local Government**

The Building- level Emergency response plan includes guidance on obtaining assistance during emergencies from local emergency services and government agencies. The following examples are the types of arrangements that could be used by the district:

- Executive Director/Designee in an emergency contacts dispatch point or 911 center for fire or EMS response.
- Executive Director/Designee contacts highest-ranking local government official for notification and/or assistance.

- **Procedures for Obtaining Advice and Assistance from Local Government Officials**

The District will utilize procedures for obtaining advice and assistance from local government officials including the city officials responsible for implementation of Article 2-B of the Executive Law. The types of procedures for obtaining advice and assistance from local governments during city- or state-wide emergencies could include the following:

- Executive Director/Designee in an emergency will contact emergency management coordinator and/or the highest-ranking local government official for obtaining advice and assistance.
- The District has identified resources for an emergency from local agencies closest to each NYCACS building.

- **District Resources Available for Use in an Emergency**

Each Building-level Emergency Response Plan identifies district resources, which may be available during an emergency, such as available facilities, food supply, communications equipment, fire extinguishers, first aid supplies, flashlights, bull horn, etc.

- **Procedures to Coordinate the Use of District Resources and Manpower during Emergencies**

Each Building-level Emergency Response plan includes procedures to coordinate the use of school district resources and manpower during emergencies, including the identification of the officials authorized to make decisions and the staff members assigned to provide assistance during emergencies.

- **Protective Action Options**

Each Building-level Emergency Response plan describes plans for taking the following actions in response to an emergency where appropriate: school cancellation, early dismissal, evacuation, and sheltering.

Section IV: Recovery

A. District Support for Buildings

- Building-level Emergency Response Plans provides resources for guiding the Post-Incident Response within each building. The School Response team is required to debrief incidents afterwards in a controlled environment in order to evaluate the strength of response procedures.

B. Disaster Mental Health Services

- School leadership teams will be advised by the Executive Director who will assist in coordinating mental health resources post disaster.