

The 2024 Comprehensive School Safety Plan Checklist

Ask any administrator about their top priority, and most will respond with “safety.” However, creating a [school safety plan](#) that meets state and federal requirements, individual school needs, district policies, and shrinking budgets can be a tall order.

This CENTEGIX safety planning checklist will help your team create a comprehensive plan for assessing, responding to, and recovering from a crisis when it strikes.

Every school safety plan should include:

- Reporting systems
- Threat assessment
- Site assessment
- Emergency response plan
- Reunification and recovery plans
- Staff and faculty training
- Exercises and drills



Reporting Systems

- Ensure the reporting process is clear, easy, and safe for your community members.
- Make reporting a daily discussion at school.
- Create an environment where reporting is valued and respected.
- Encourage bystanders to report concerns.
- Be consistent, fair, and transparent about follow-up action.

Your students know more about your school than you do. They may not understand the line-item budget, but they know who said what, who broke up with who, and who acted weird last week.

Since students are the first line of information gathering, they must feel safe and respected when they share that information. They must also know that administrators will take swift but fair action.

Ensure the reporting process is clear, easy, and safe.

Every school needs a clear, written, and accessible reporting policy so that anyone can safely, anonymously, and quickly report suspicious activity.

When a community member sees suspicious activity, they should not have to weigh reporting against fear of reprisal, complicated policies, office politics, social hierarchy, or aggressive administrators.

Make reporting a daily discussion.

Creating a reporting policy doesn't create a reporting culture. For teachers, students, and staff to feel comfortable communicating, you have to take the first step and communicate with them.

Include reminders in daily discussions and make a point of talking about safety at regular student-body gatherings.

Create a culture of reporting.

When an organization's culture conflicts with its policies, culture wins. Students, teachers, and staff need to know they will be respected for reporting, not shamed for being tattletales.

They should know you will handle the situation well.

Encourage bystanders to report.

Visitors aren't usually around for your school-wide reporting safety assemblies. But when a visitor steps onto your campus, they should know that they are empowered to report suspicious activity. And they should also know the campus has the kind of safety culture that takes reporting seriously.

Be consistent, fair, and transparent.

When someone reports, let them know what will happen next. Inform them of any FERPA restrictions keeping you from disclosing information. Volunteer what is allowable and let them know what options you have, as a school, to take action.

Threat Assessment

- Build an assessment committee.
- Categorize potential threats.
- Consider the probability and severity of threats.
- Estimate the threat timeline.
- Assign a threat priority.

The threat assessment is the first step in developing a response plan. It allows your team to honestly assess campus and community vulnerabilities.

Build an assessment committee.

A threat assessment committee should be broader than school administrators and security staff. It should incorporate the concerns and knowledge of everyone involved in the community.

Include teachers, students, volunteers, a local emergency responder, and anyone with specific knowledge of your campus or community.

Categorize potential threats.

List potential threats ranging from personal emergencies to a campus-wide crisis.

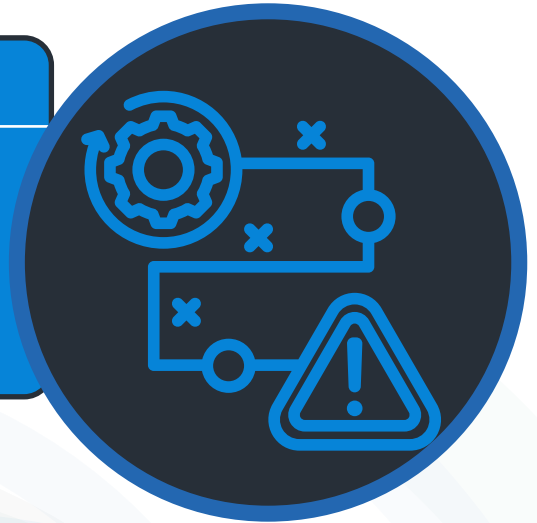
Most community members fear these events, so be patient, take care, and encourage everyone to be open and supportive.

Consider the probability and severity of threats.

For each threat, establish the probability it will happen and the magnitude it would likely be if it occurred.

FEMA recommends planners plot these assessments on a simple Likert scale that can be referenced in a spreadsheet or chart.

Probability	Magnitude
① Unlikely	① Negligible
② Possible	② Limited
③ Likely	③ Critical
④ Highly likely	④ Catastrophic



Estimate the threat timeline.

Estimate the warning window and duration of each threat or threat category. You can also create these in your chart using a Likert scale.

For your warning window, estimate how long you will have to prepare from the time you are made aware of the threat until the crisis occurs. For the duration, estimate how long you think the danger will last.

Assign a threat priority.

Finally, consider each of your chart's four columns, assign a risk priority.

All risks should be taken seriously, but planning and preparation should start with the most imminent.

Hazard	Probability	Magnitude	Warning	Duration	Risk Priority
Medical Emergency	① Unlikely ② Possible ③ Likely ④ Highly likely	① Catastrophic ② Critical ③ Limited ④ Negligible	① Minimal ② 6-12 Hours ③ 3-6 Hours ④ < 3 Hours	① 12 + Hours ② 6-12 Hours ③ 3-6 Hours ④ < 3 Hours	① High ② Medium ③ Low
Campus Intruder	① Unlikely ② Possible ③ Likely ④ Highly likely	① Catastrophic ② Critical ③ Limited ④ Negligible	① Minimal ② 6-12 Hours ③ 3-6 Hours ④ < 3 Hours	① 12 + Hours ② 6-12 Hours ③ 3-6 Hours ④ < 3 Hours	① High ② Medium ③ Low
Active Shooter	① Unlikely ② Possible ③ Likely ④ Highly likely	① Catastrophic ② Critical ③ Limited ④ Negligible	① Minimal ② 6-12 Hours ③ 3-6 Hours ④ < 3 Hours	① 12 + Hours ② 6-12 Hours ③ 3-6 Hours ④ < 3 Hours	① High ② Medium ③ Low

Site Assessment

A site assessment is instrumental in creating a response plan. Conducting recurring site walkthroughs is also an excellent ongoing practice for keeping administrators and safety officials informed about the campus.

Your site assessment should include the following:

- Notate your maps as you walk the campus.**
- Involve emergency responders and experts.**
- Ensure ADA compliance.**
- Analyze structural integrity.**
- Review emergency vehicle access.**

Notate your maps as you walk the campus.

Emergency responders seeking an AED will lose valuable seconds, even minutes, if their location is incorrectly marked.

On a walkthrough of your campus, make notes of changes or inconsistencies with your current maps. Use the notes to update your maps with clearly marked utilities, IT hardware, and emergency assets.

Ensure ADA compliance.

Review all ingresses and egresses for ADA compliance, and ensure all areas of your building are accessible, especially those used to navigate emergency exits.

Analyze structural integrity.

Enlist the help of your district's architect or engineer to analyze the structural integrity of the structures on your campus, from the visiting section of your football bleachers to the brand-new auditorium.

Understanding potential risks or weak points in your infrastructure helps in evaluating risk. Additionally, it allows you and your district to plan for and prioritize maintenance and safety updates according to need.

Review emergency vehicle access.

How quickly emergency responders can access your campus directly impacts response times. Invite emergency responders to test accessibility and work together to improve access and decrease response times.

Your campus is bigger than its main entrance, so test accessibility from every access point.

Emergency Response Plan

Now, it's time to put it all together. Your emergency response plan will reflect everything you learned during your site and threat assessments.

Depict the scenario.

Take the first threat on your list and imagine a scenario in your school. You can do this as a tabletop exercise, a narrative, or a timeline.


Conduct this exercise with all of your threats, but consider starting with an easier or lower-stakes scenario. Once your team is comfortable with the exercise, move to your highest-priority threat.

Identify decision points.

Decision points are the moments throughout the crisis when you're required to act. Your first decision point will be learning about a threat or crisis. What do you do next? When do you alert local law enforcement? When do you evacuate? When do you order a lockdown?

As you depict your threat scenario, develop decision trees. These logic paths and decision points will help you pre-determine some of the effects your decisions may have.

Develop a course of action.

Assign event triggers, timelines, and responsibilities for each action or decision in your scenario. Here is the list of action considerations provided by [FEMA](#): 

Maintain accessibility.

The final point in FEMA's planning guide is to consider how the action will "affect specific populations, such as individuals with disabilities and others with access and functional needs who may require medication, wayfinding, evacuation assistance, or personal assistance services, or who may experience severe anxiety during traumatic events."

In developing an emergency response plan, your most vulnerable students, teachers, and staff will be the ones relying on assistance when evacuating.

- Depict the scenario.
- Determine available response time.
- Identify decision points.
- Develop courses of action.
- Keep it accessible.

- What is the action?
- Who is responsible for the action?
- When does the action take place?
- How long does the action take, and how much time is available?
- What has to happen before?
- What happens after?
- What resources are needed to act?

Reunification & Recovery Plans

- Create reunification go kits.
- Determine reunification sites.
- Establish the notification process.
- Assign responsibility.
- Communicate the plan.

Reunification is the gateway between crisis response and crisis recovery. Creating and clearly communicating your reunification and recovery plans with your team, emergency responders, and parents sets the stage for a full recovery.

Reunification plans can be built and executed manually or [automated through modern safety planning tools](#).

Create reunification go kits.

Updated student rosters and approved guardian contact cards should be kept in go-kits for teachers. These kits should be kept somewhere easily accessible in an emergency since teachers will likely only use them when leaving their rooms.

Automated visitor rolls also help you keep accurate records of who was on your campus, where they went, and how long they stayed.

Determine reunification sites.

The first step after an evacuation is to account for all students. This is best done in one predetermined location.

Parents should also be assigned a reunification point. As a general rule, reunification plans should keep the parents and students separate until your staff can account for all students and approved guardians. Choosing a location out of sight of students can help achieve this goal.

Establish the notification process.

What constitutes a reunification event? When should parents be notified? How do we ensure everyone is on the same page?

Plan how you will communicate with stakeholders and even craft potential messages in advance so you don't have to while evacuating.

Assign responsibility.

The [I Love U Guys Foundation](#) established best practices criteria for recovery that begin with communicating responsibility:

- Cops own the crime.
- Fire owns the flames.
- Schools own the kids.
- Paramedics own the patient.

Communicate the plan.

Communicating these procedures and responsibilities with parents, students, staff, and emergency responders in advance prevents time-wasting conflicts during the crisis response and reunification process.



Training & Drills

- Create an ongoing training schedule.
- Start with discussion-based exercises.
- Consider live exercises.
- Communicate drills in advance.
- Consider the potential negative impacts of training.

Communities often rally together in moments of crisis. But as individuals, these are the moments when we become reactionary. Ongoing training is the best way to reinforce safe and effective routines.

Create an ongoing training schedule.

Some states require schools to conduct emergency drills at a certain frequency. Here is an example of a typical schedule:

- 2 Fire evacuation drills per semester
- 1 Lockdown drill per semester
- 1 Secure drill per year
- 1 Evacuation drill per year
- 1 Shelter-in-place drill per year
- 1 Severe weather drill per year

Whether your state mandates a minimum drill schedule or not, planning ensures your community will be ready when a threat becomes a reality.

Facilitate discussion-based exercises.

Conducting theoretical exercises helps students understand the concepts and risks involved in each crisis without introducing the anxiety and fear that can accompany live drills.

A discussion-based exercise can include:

- **Staff and student orientations**, facilitated by safety officials, last an hour or less and give large groups an overview of the plan.
- **Workshops** take longer but give participants more opportunities to engage with the material, ask questions, and discuss possible responses.
- **Tabletop drills** put participants in an imagined crisis. A facilitator outlines the event as participants make decisions and explore the consequences of their action plan.

Conduct live training.

Live training gives your community a chance to implement the plan in a low-stakes environment. When done well, it can create a sense of muscle memory for participants to rely on in a real crisis. The three primary live drills are as follows:

- **Emergency drills** can last 30 minutes or more and give everyone an opportunity to walk through the steps involved in common emergencies.
- **Functional exercises** happen at the administrative level and allow administrators to practice their plans in a simulated event without involving students and teachers.
- **Full-scale drills** involve the school population, district administrators, emergency responders, local health departments, and anyone else who may be involved in a crisis.

Communicate drills in advance.

Training for a crisis often involves play-acting a crisis, which can be difficult. Your community should have advance notice so they can prepare. Some may even opt out of training, which some experts say should be allowed.



Consider the potential impacts of training.

Before conducting training exercises for future threats, consider the potential negative impacts these exercises may have on students and staff now. Conducting live training for a natural disaster or active shooter could increase anxiety and fear surrounding those events, which will decrease the impact of the training, so it is important to be sensitive to those considerations when planning.

Start Your Plan with the CENTEGIX Safety Platform™

The CENTEGIX Safety Platform is designed and maintained with your school's safety planning needs in mind. Its components individually address most schools' safety planning needs, from asset mapping to student-parent reunification. The Safety Platform unifies all of your safety assets and software into one platform that easily integrates with third-party attendance and safety systems.

The CENTEGIX Safety Platform

- **CrisisAlert™** allows teachers and staff to request help immediately, from anywhere on campus, with pinpoint location accuracy.
- **Safety Blueprint™** overlays real-time emergency location data on interactive campus maps with emergency asset mapping.
- **CENTEGIX Visitor Management** uses state-issued IDs to vet every visitor against state and propriety lists every time they visit.
- **CENTEGIX Reunification** maintains updated rosters and digitizes the reunification process, accelerating reunification and reducing human error.



For more information on our school safety solutions and how we can help protect your district, visit our CENTEGIX Education page at centegix.com/education.

Learn more today. Because every second matters.™
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