

# SSID

## Fact Sheet Critical Incident Planning

In the wake of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, there is a growing concern in our Nation about the preparedness of schools to combat acts of terrorism. Recent tragedies, such as the terrible events that occurred at Columbine High School in 1999, have shown us that our schools are not immune to outbreaks of violence. If the attack at Columbine had gone as planned, more than 500 students could have perished.

To ensure the safety of students and staff, each school district should have a critical incident plan in place to prepare for *any* critical incident that may occur, be it a terrorist attack, a hazardous chemical spill, or a severe weather threat. When creating such a plan, there are many important factors that should be considered.

### Developing the Plan

- Develop the plan with input from law enforcement, fire, emergency medical services, teachers, and emergency management coordinators.
- Ensure the plan meets the requirements of the school district, as well as any local or statewide regulations.
- Identify several evacuation routes that will lead students and staff away from the incident and post it in all classrooms and offices.
- Conduct a physical site assessment of the school and identify areas that are vulnerable or provide easy access to unauthorized persons.
- Develop an internal and external communication plan that incorporates redundancy should traditional communications be interrupted.

### Implementing the Plan

- Ensure that all teachers and staff are familiar with the plan and know what is expected of them should a critical incident occur.
- Identify staff members who will assume key roles during implementation of the plan, such as the person in command, the media liaison, the parental liaison, etc.
- Identify key areas to be utilized during a crisis, including a command post, triage area, student evacuation area, parental staging area, and media staging area.
- Conduct drills with staff and students to ensure they have knowledge of the plan.
- Provide every classroom and office with information on the proper response to various types of emergencies.

## Fact Sheet: Critical Incident Planning

---

### Supplementing the Plan

- Utilize a School Resource Officer or security personnel on a daily basis to enhance security.
- Determine if security measures, such as metal detectors or surveillance cameras, are a cost effective method of improving on-campus security.
- Put together a Critical Incident Kit that can be easily transported by a designated individual. This kit should contain back up communications, the school safety plan, student rosters, a first aid kit, floor plans for the school, and sign out sheets for students who are evacuated and sent home.
- Develop a post-incident plan for dealing with the emotional needs of students and staff.

While there is no way to eliminate the threat of a critical incident or terrorist event at a given school, having a comprehensive plan in place will reduce the confusion during and immediately after the incident occurs. The plan needs to be a living document, constantly reviewed and revised as needed.

Sources: Guide for Preventing and Responding to School Violence International Association of Chiefs  
Of Police  
A Quick Reference Guide for School Crisis Management National Association of School  
Psychologists