Safe Communities ~ Safe Schools
SCHOOL SAFETY GLOSSARY

After-Action Report
A debriefing after an incident for the purpose of identifying areas for improvement.

Aggression
Physical or verbal behavior that is intended to harm another person.

All-Hazards Plan
A plan that provides a basic framework for responding to a wide variety of possible disasters, as well as unexpected events.

Anonymous Reporting
The ability to communicate safety concerns to authorities confidentially, without fear of being identified.

Assessment
The evaluation and interpretation of measurements and other information to provide a basis for decision-making.

Assessment Tool
A method (such as a questionnaire or online survey) for identifying school safety vulnerabilities.

At-Risk Student
Students who are not experiencing success in school or who are subject to some other dysfunctional health-compromising behavior. Factors that may place a student at risk for educational failure and/or violent behavior may be found in individual, family, school, peer group or community contexts. Examples may include limited English proficiency, poverty, physical or emotional disabilities, race, substance abuse, geographic location, abuse or neglect, or economic disadvantage, etc.

Best Practice Procedure
A strategy, activity or approach that has been shown to be effective through practice and/or research.

Blueprints Model Program
A violence, drug or delinquency prevention program which has demonstrated significant and sustained deterrence effects and quality replication success across multiple sites.

Blueprints Promising Program
A violence, drug or delinquency prevention program which has demonstrated evidence of deterrent effects in at least one rigorous evaluation study.

Bullying
Repeated aggressive behavior, over time that involves unwanted, negative actions in the context of a perceived or actual imbalance of power or strength.

Bystander
One who assumes the role of a witness. In bullying incidents, some may encourage bullies while others may defend the victim or stand by and simply witness the event. Bystanders to school violence are often students but include a wide range of adults, such as parents, teachers, guidance counselors, school psychologists, bus drivers, librarians, cafeteria workers, and school security officers. Bystanders frequently have knowledge that, if acted on, could prevent or diffuse violence.

Climate
Multi-dimensional characteristics of a school's culture, including academic performance, shared norms and values, attitudes, the quality of interactions between students, teachers, staff and parents, and the feelings of respect, trust and safety which give a school its individual identity.

Crisis Response Plan
A comprehensive strategy to deal with the aftermath of a crisis. This usually includes plans for emotional support of all those affected by the crisis, plans for disseminating information to interested parties (including the media), arrangements for resuming normal school activities as soon as possible after a crisis, accurately addressing concerns, fears and questions and supporting care givers, such as clergy, school faculty, counselors, and emergency teams who assisted during the crisis.

Crisis Response Team (CRT)

An organizational unit for dealing with a variety of crises. Such teams operate at the individual school level, at the district level and community-wide. Well-functioning teams at each level provide a network that can support appropriate action whenever crises arise. Members can include law enforcement, educators, medical and mental health professionals, operations and facilities personnel, communications specialists, and administration and financial professionals.

Cross-Sectional Research

A study design which involves a single contact with participants at a given point in time for data collection.

Cyber Bullying

Bullying through email, instant messaging, chat room, website, gaming site, digital messages, images sent to a cellular phone, or other forms of harassment using electronic media.

Drill/Exercise

A training to test a particular function of preparedness or to test the many facets of a response organization. (See Full Scale Drill/Exercise)

Drop Cover and Hold

A method of remaining safe (particularly during an earthquake) by dropping to the ground, finding cover (such as a desk or table), and holding on to it firmly until the danger has passed.

Early Intervention

Involvement in a situation when risk conditions first appear. The belief that getting involved early in a child's life, or before problems occur, promotes healthy development and prevents violence.

Emergency Management

The overall coordination of emergency operations responsible for creating the framework within which communities reduce vulnerability to hazards and cope with disasters.

Emergency Response and Crisis Management (ERCM) Plan

The processes and procedures for developing comprehensive safe school plans. The ERCM Department of Education grant program provides grants to local educational agencies (LEAs) to improve and strengthen emergency response and crisis management plans, including training school personnel, students, and parents in emergency response procedures and coordinating with local law enforcement, public safety, health, and mental health agencies.

Emergency Response Team

A group of individuals who develop and implement the plan to prepare for and respond to emergencies.

Evacuate

The protocol for orderly moving students and staff from one location to another, in or out of the building.

Evidenced-Based Program

A program which has demonstrated effectiveness, sustainability and replication success through rigorous research.

Facility Assessment

A tool for determining the safety and security of school buildings and grounds.

Fidelity

The degree of fit between the developer-defined elements of a prevention program and its actual implementation in a given setting. Fidelity is the faithful replication of proven program components which include adherence to the program design, exposure or dosage of sessions, quality of delivery, participant responsiveness and program differentiation. Deviations from, or dilutions of the program components can adversely affect program effectiveness.

First Responders

Individuals who in the early stages of an incident are responsible for the protection and preservation of life, property, evidence, and the environment. First responders may be police or other law enforcement, fire fighters, emergency medical technicians, search and rescue volunteers, lay rescuers, etc.

Full-Scale Drill/Exercise
A fully simulated training in which participants create a mock crisis event in order to practice their multiple agency coordinated emergency operations and procedures.

Hazards Assessment
An instrument used to determine which unavoidable dangers (e.g. chemical spills, fires, floods, etc.) might pose a future threat.

Hazardous Materials
Materials that are explosive, flammable, poisonous, corrosive, reactive or radioactive, or any combination of these.

Incident Command System (ICS)
The process that unifies different public safety commands (fire, police, EMS) at major disasters. ICS details the need for a consistent hierarchy with the appropriate ratio of supervision levels and with clear organizational lines of authority. In using ICS, responders are encouraged to use common terminology, operations, planning, intelligence, logistics, finance and administration. This is also known as the Incident Management System (IMS).

Information Sharing Agreement
An interagency contract which spells out what kinds of information each agency or organization can legally share or not share with another.

Lockdown
A classroom-based protocol used to secure individual rooms and keep students quiet and in place. Lockdown requires students and staff to remain in the school building as protection from a dangerous external event. Outside doors do not have to be locked.

Lockout
The protocol used to secure the building's outside perimeter. Lockout requires that students and staff return to the inside of the building and lock all outside doors.

Meta-Analyses
A statistical technique for amalgamating, summarizing, and reviewing previous quantitative research. Meta-analyses combines the results of several studies that address a set of related research hypotheses which, overall, provide more powerful estimates of the true effect size than those obtained from a single study.

Mission
A specific task or duty assigned to a person or group of people. The fundamental purpose of an organization that describes why it exists.

Mitigation
Sustained action taken to reduce or eliminate adverse effects or long-term risk to life and property from a hazard event. Mitigation measures can be implemented before, during or recovering from an emergency. These actions can include eliminating existing hazards, responding effectively when an emergency arises, or assisting in recovery in the aftermath of an emergency.

Multi-Hazard
Many different kinds of dangers or risks.

Natural Hazard
An unexpected or uncontrollable natural event of unusual magnitude (such as an earthquake, flood, hurricane, landslide, tsunami, volcano, or wildfire) that threatens a population of people.

Needs Assessment
A systematic process for determining current strengths and weaknesses in order to create beneficial solutions and positive outcomes in the future.

NIMS (National Incident Management System)
The first-ever standardized approach to incident management and response in the United States. NIMS was developed by the Department of Homeland Security and released in March 2004. It establishes a uniform set of processes and procedures that emergency responders at all levels of government will use to conduct response operations. NIMS enables responders at all levels to work together more effectively and efficiently to manage emergencies and disasters.

NIPP (National Infrastructure Protection Plan)
The Department of Homeland Security's plan to provide a coordinated approach to establish national priorities, goals, and requirements for the protection of critical infrastructure. Its goal is to help ensure that federal funding and resources reduce vulnerability, deter threats, and minimize consequences.

Pandemic

A disease new to the population which infects humans, causing serious illness, and spreading easily and sustainably to others.

Positive Behavior Support (PBS)

A systems approach to establishing and maintaining effective school environments that maximize academic achievement and behavioral competence. The purpose of PBS is to enhance the capacity of schools, families, and communities to design effective environments that improve the link between research-validated practices and the school environment to increase school safety, enhance social-behavioral skills, and create a positive school climate.

Planning Team

A group of people who are the driving force behind a project and participate in all steps of the process. A safe school planning team usually consists of a variety of representatives from all aspects of the community such as school administrators, teachers, counselors, parents, students (if age appropriate), government representatives, business and religious leaders, law enforcement officials, etc.

Pre-Planning Checklist

A tool for aiding school-community planning teams in identifying areas of strength and weakness that could affect school and community safety. Often, these include assessments of parent/community involvement, discipline policy, school climate, school crime and violence reporting/monitoring, school safety and security, crisis management, at-risk student assessment and referral, student resources and information sharing.

Prevention

Any action that decreases the likelihood that a crisis or a negative pattern of behavior will occur. Prevention methods may consist of assessments, a review of discipline policies, safety checks, communications protocols, evidence-based anti-violence or anti-bullying programs, pro-social skill development, or wellness activities.

Prevention/Mitigation Phase

An ongoing process, linked to the other three phases of emergency management (preparedness, response and recovery) which combines decreasing the likelihood that a crisis will occur and decreasing (or eliminating) the risk of losing lives or property in a crisis.

Protective Factors

Those personal attributes and contextual conditions that reduce the likelihood (or risk) of someone becoming involved in a particular behavior or that protect against risk factors for that behavior. For example, in the field of youth violence such things as positive social orientation, supportive relationships with adults, commitment to school, and/or peers who engage in conventional behavior, etc. may protect an individual from becoming violent.

Public Information Officer (PIO)

The person who notifies the public concerning relevant facts about an incident in order to expedite effective and accurate communications and disseminate necessary information.

Recovery Phase

The final phase of emergency management (which includes prevention/mitigation, preparedness and response) that focuses on restoring the school to a learning environment as quickly as possible. This often entails dealing with the emotional needs of students, parents, and other staff members, planning for memorials, identifying needed follow-up services and detailing how the emergency was handled in order to incorporate what worked and didn't work into future plans.

Response Phase

The third phase of emergency management that is concerned with mobilizing resources needed to handle the emergency at hand. Response plans are designed to ensure that the other steps in the emergency plan (prevention/mitigation, preparedness and recovery) are carried out in an efficient and effective manner. Responses can include gathering relevant information, activating the emergency management system, taking protective actions (i.e. evacuation, lockdown, shelter, etc.), issuing instructions, maintaining communications with staff, students, families and the community, and providing for the care of those in need.

Risk Analysis

The calculation of specific risk levels to determine how vulnerable institutions or individuals would be to specific threats and what specific consequences schools could face in the event of a crisis. Risk analysis is usually conducted after specific hazards and threats are identified.

Risk Assessment

A tool to help prioritize prevention and mitigation concerns. In this process hazards are identified, and the risks that they pose are evaluated. Effective risk assessment leads to the development of useful and informed risk management strategies which in turn reduce the likelihood of serious incidents and/or losses. Risk assessment may also refer to the process of identifying and evaluating threats that an individual can pose to others.

Risk Factor

Those personal attributes and contextual conditions that increase the likelihood (or risk) that a person will become involved in a particular behavior. For example, in the field of youth violence such things as weak social ties, academic failure, drug use, gang membership, etc. may increase the probability that a young person will become violent.

Safe2Tell

An anonymous Colorado-based hotline for students to report information about anything that is of concern to school or community safety. Information can aid school staff and law enforcement officers in preventing crime and getting help for students in need.

Safe Room

A normal room in the school, such as a library or gymnasium, but designed and constructed to provide life-safety protection for their occupants in case of an emergency.

Safe School Initiative

A U.S. Secret Service project, in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Education, to study school shootings and other school-based attacks in order to identify information that may be helpful in preventing such attacks. Results indicated that school shootings are usually planned in advance, that others often had prior knowledge of the incident, that there is no "profile" of a typical school shooter and that attackers often exhibited behavior before an attack that concerned at least one adult.

Safety and Security Audit

A review of a school's practices, policies and needs to insure that the school is creating the safest possible physical environment for students.

School Climate Survey

A tool used in a school site assessment to determine the character of the school learning environment. This survey measures factors such as the quality of relationships between students, staff, and parents, the success of its academic program, perceptions of safety, satisfaction with some physical aspects of the school, the norms and values endorsed, attitudes towards other people and experiences at school and levels of bonding to the school.

School Mapping System

A method that provides all first responders with the information they need to be successful when disaster strikes. This often includes floor plans, fire protection information, evacuation plans, utility information, known hazards, and text and digital images showing emergency personnel contact information.

School Resource Officer (SRO)

A law enforcement officer deployed in community-oriented policing, and assigned to a local educational agency. An SRO works in collaboration with schools and community-based organizations to educate students about crime, illegal drug use prevention, and safety issues.

Self Report Study

A research tool that measures a particular aspect of behavior by asking respondents, in confidence, about that behavior. Self reports can be obtained from the same group of people over a long period of time (a longitudinal survey) or from different groups of people at the same point in time (a cross-sectional survey).

Shelter

Something that provides protection from a threat or hazard and varies depending on the type of threat or hazard. For example, during a tornado people may be encouraged to seek refuge on a lower level of a building in an interior room.

Shelter in Place

A precaution aimed to keep someone safe while remaining indoors. This means selecting a small, interior room, with no or few windows, and taking refuge there.

Student Support Team
A group (which may include administrators, counselors, school social workers, mental health workers, and law enforcement) which helps to improve the social climate of the school. This team is responsible for identifying students at-risk for violence and finding the most appropriate support for that student.

Stalking
Repeated visual or physical proximity, non-consensual communication, or verbal, written, or implied threats, (or a combination of these behaviors) that would cause a reasonable person fear.

Strategic Planning
The process of developing long-range goals and plans and making decisions on allocating resources including capital and people.

Substance Abuse
A maladaptive pattern of substance use (usually alcohol or a drug) manifested by recurrent and significant adverse consequences related to the repeated use of such substances.

Sustainability
Sustainability is the ability to strategically plan for and provide continuing services to meet identified needs. In an emergency situation, sustainability is the ability to continue response operations for the duration necessary.

Tabletop Exercise
A practice training in which participants simulate an emergency or disaster situation in discussion with each other. Tabletop participants are usually members of the Crisis Response Team and often include representatives from different departments, agencies and organizations who would be involved in an emergency situation. Tabletops are useful for participants to hone their skills, learn from each other, and test emergency response plans.

Targeted School Violence
An incident in which an individual or individuals purposely select a school for attacking one or more people at that school with lethal means (e.g. a gun, a bomb, or knife).

Technical Assistance
To facilitate and support, through expert knowledge sharing, by providing advice, assistance, and training to individuals or groups.

Threat Assessment
A process for identifying, evaluating, and managing students who may pose a threat of targeted violence in schools.

Threat Assessment Team
A multi-disciplinary group based in the school or in the school district which has been formed to respond to a wide range of threatening situations. This team gathers information from various sources and has established, formalized procedures to guide the evaluation and management of situations and/or students of concern. Members may include school administrators, school resource officers, guidance counselors, mental health professionals, teachers, or others who may have special knowledge applicable in a particular situation.

Truancy
A behavior described as a student being absent without an excuse by the parent/guardian or a student leaving school or a class without permission of the teacher or administrator in charge.

Vision
The desired or intended future ideal state of a specific organization. A vision should commit people, be easily quoted by all members of the team, be time-oriented, and measurable, if possible.

Periodically updated
Last modified 7/09