

Changes to School Emergency Response Planning and Safe Schools Against Violence in Education (Project SAVE)



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Overview

The Safe Schools Against Violence in Education (Project SAVE) has been in existence since July 2001. Components of Project SAVE include comprehensive District-wide School Safety Plans, Building-level School Safety Plans and School Violence Prevention Training, as well as other components. (See [NYSUT Project SAVE Information Bulletin](#))

To address ongoing issues of school safety, school violence and school emergency preparedness, the 2016-2017 enacted State budget included

amendments to Education Law §2801-a and 807 (Chapter 54 of the Laws of 2016) pertaining to district-wide school safety plans and building-level emergency response plans, fire and emergency drills, and violence prevention training. To conform to the legislative changes, the Board of Regents adopted amendments to Commissioner’s Regulations § 155.17, effective July 1, 2016.

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Summary of Changes

District-wide Safety plans

- District-wide school safety plans must include policies and procedures for responding to and notifying parents and guardians of students in the event of implied or direct threats of violence including threats by students against themselves, which now includes suicide. District-wide safety plans must be made available for public comment. Public comment is no longer required for the summary of the building-level response plan.
- The District-wide school safety team is a district-wide team appointed by the board of education, the chancellor in New York City or other governing board. The district-wide team includes, but is not limited to, representatives of the school board, teacher, administrator, and parent organizations, school safety personnel and other school personnel. As amended, at the

discretion of the board of education or the chancellor, a student may now be allowed to participate on the safety team with the exception of any portion of the confidential building-level emergency response plan or confidential parts of the district-wide emergency response strategy

Building-level Emergency Response Plans

- The building-level emergency response team is responsible for the designation of the emergency response team and the development of the building-level emergency response plan and its required components. Building-level emergency response plans must include policies and procedures for responding to emergency situations including those requiring evacuation, sheltering and lock-down. Building-level emergency plans must be kept confidential and not shared except with authorized department or school staff and law enforcement officers.
- The building-level emergency response team, appointed by the building principal, now explicitly includes fire officials. Representatives of teacher, administrator, and parent organizations, school safety personnel, other school personnel, community members, local law enforcement officials, local ambulance, or other emergency response agencies and any representatives of the school board, chancellor or other governing body are still required to be included.

Training

- All district and school staff are required to receive training on the building-level emergency response plan which must include violence prevention and, as amended, mental health components. The district must certify as part of the Basic Educational Data System (BEDS) as of October 2016, that all staff has received this training by September 15, 2016 and each subsequent September 15.

Chief Emergency Officer

- A Chief Emergency Officer, now required by Education Law § 2801-a, may be the superintendent or the superintendent's designee. It is a local decision whether to assign this responsibility to an existing staff person or to add an additional staff person. The duties of the Chief Emergency Officer include:
 - Coordinating communication between school staff, law enforcement and first responders;
 - Leading the district-wide school safety team in the completion and yearly update of the of the district-wide school safety plan and coordinate the district-wide plan with the building-level emergency response plans;
 - Ensuring staff are familiar with the district-level safety plan;
 - Providing for the completion of and yearly update to the building-level emergency response plans for each school building via an automated application that is accessed

through the State Education Department (SED) Business Portal to the New York State Police in fall 2016;¹

- Assisting in the selection of security related technology and development of policies for the use of technology; and
- Coordinating safety, security and emergency training for district staff.

Fire and Emergency Drills

- Schools are now required to conduct four annual lock-down drills and eight evacuation drills each year (12 total). Eight of the twelve required drills must now be completed by December 31 of each year, changed from Dec. 1.
- Lock-down drills require immediately clearing the hallways, lock and/or barricade the doors, hide from view and to remain silent while preparing a plan of evacuation as a last resort. Law enforcement involvement in lock-down drills is not required by the legislative mandate but recommended.

Advice to Local Leaders

- Local leaders should assume the right and responsibility to make teacher appointments to the district-wide school safety team and the building-level emergency response team.
- Local leaders should make certain that service on the district-wide school safety team and the building-level emergency response team is voluntary for those they represent.
- Some school employees, including teachers and school related professionals may also be licensed as emergency medical services personnel. These individuals should not be expected to assume the responsibilities of community emergency response agencies. The scope of responsibility of these teachers/paraprofessionals should be limited to those associated with the occupational title an individual holds in the school district (i.e., teacher; teaching assistant).
- Local leaders are advised to review and discuss the training in school violence prevention and mental health training with their superintendent as the manner and method of providing the training is a decision made at the local level. SED has provided resources and mental health guidance available here:
<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/ss/documents/MentalHealthResourcesforEducators.pdf>

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¹ Electronic submission of building-level plans will be optional for the 2016-17 school year. All schools must share their emergency response plans with local law enforcement for the 2016-17 school year