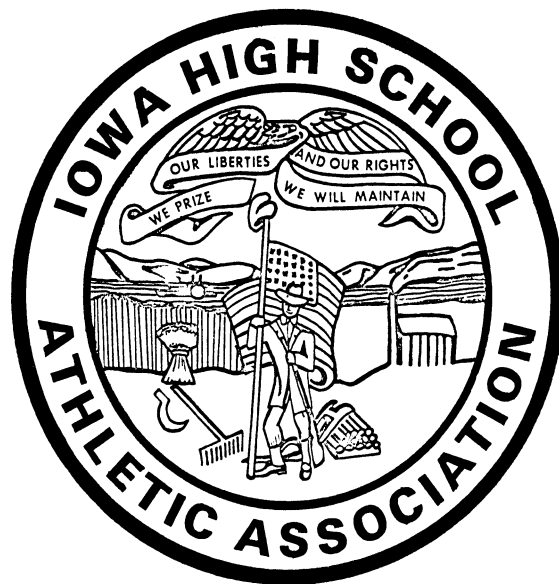


SAFE SCHOOL PLANNING AND CRISIS MANAGEMENT



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FOREWORD

While schools are almost always safe places, educators now realize the issue of school violence cannot be ignored and violence could occur in any school district in the country, including any district in Iowa. This booklet is meant to provide basic information on planning for, and dealing with, school violence. The concepts presented are not new, nor necessarily original. All information presented is referenced so school administrators can access it in more detail, if they wish. Whether violence has directly affected your school or not, now is the time to develop, or review, your plan so it will address your school's specific needs.

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PART I – SAFE SCHOOL PLANNING

COMMUNITY AND SCHOOL WORKING TOGETHER

Violence in schools is not just a school issue, it's a community issue. Studies have shown schools are still the safest place for students, but the fact violence can occur cannot be ignored. The most promising violence prevention and intervention programs extend beyond the school and involve the entire community. (1,2,5,7,8)

Comprehensive prevention and early intervention efforts can reduce the risk of violent incidents in schools. Research indicates these efforts are most effective when the entire educational “community” is involved. This “community” includes administrators, teachers, support staff, parents, students, and community members. Schools that are safe require everyone to take responsibility for reducing the risk of violence, to understand the early warning signs and be responsive to them, and to know how to respond appropriately in a crisis situation. (2,6)

The following are characteristics of schools that are safe and responsive to all students: (6)

1. Focus on academic achievement. Teach children they can achieve and behave appropriately, and that individual differences can be appreciated.
2. Involve families in meaningful ways. Create ways to get, and keep parents, involved. Children whose parents are involved in their growth are more likely to achieve success. When parents feel welcome at school, children do to.
3. Develop links to the community. Finds ways to get students involved in the community and the community involved in school. Schools with close ties to community organizations are at less risk for violence.
4. Encourage positive relationships between students and staff. Research shows that when children have a positive, meaningful connection with at least one adult the potential for violence is significantly reduced.
5. Discuss safety issues openly. Teach about the dangers of firearms, as well as, appropriate ways to deal with anger and resolving conflict.
6. Treat students with equal respect. A major source of conflict in many schools is the unfair treatment, or perception of unfair treatment, of students due to race, social class, religion, disability, etc. Make deliberate efforts to establish an environment of diversity, community and caring for all students.
7. Help children feel safe expressing their feelings. Children are less likely to behave inappropriately when they feel safe expressing their feelings and needs.

8. Have a system for referring students who are suspected of being abused or neglected.
9. Offer extended day programs for children. School-based before- and after-school programs can help reduce violence. Effective programs must be well supervised and provide a variety of opportunities for children.
10. Promote citizenship, sportsmanship and character development. Schools must help students become good citizens as well as having solid academic programs.
11. Identify problems and assess progress toward solutions. Objectively examine any circumstances that might be potentially dangerous for students or staff and work toward an effective solution.
12. Support students in making the transition to adult life and workplace. Community service, work study, and apprenticeship opportunities should be provided to help students connect with the community.

The goal of safe school planning is for the school environment to be free from the threat of violence. A safe school environment is one in which teachers can teach effectively and students can learn effectively. Planning for a safe school environment must address both student behaviors and the physical school building. (5)

The following is a brief checklist of the basic components of a safe school plan: (5)

- Conduct a school site assessment, including an evaluation of the school climate, policies, and buildings.
 - ◆ Develop and implement strategies and programs for violence prevention
 - ◆ Develop and review codes of conduct
 - ◆ Provide positive activities, and promote positive relationships, for all youth
 - ◆ Review all laws pertaining to students and safety
 - ◆ Control campus access and review all visitor policies
 - ◆ Keep accurate records related to all school crime incidents
 - ◆ Promote school and student relationships with law enforcement and other community organizations
 - ◆ Establish guidelines for identifying students at risk for potential violence
 - ◆ Identify and implement violence prevention strategies at all grade levels
- Develop an effective crisis response plan.

Research on safe schools shows a three level approach is the most effective way to reduce the risk of violence. The three levels are: 1) building a strong school-wide foundation, 2) intervening early with those children at risk for academic failure or behavior problems, and 3) intensive interventions for those students whose needs cannot be addressed by early intervention. (7)

Building a school-wide foundation should provide teachers with the skills and supports they need to teach effectively and students with the skills and supports they need to learn effectively. Just as students are taught to read and write, they must also be taught to interact with others appropriately and to solve conflict in nonviolent ways. To effectively teach these skills it is important to create a school climate of support and to have trained staff model appropriate behavior and are committed to working with students. The curriculum must be interesting and utilize effective teaching practices which teach, and reinforce, social and problem-solving skills and be developmentally appropriate for all students. The school's programs should use child- and family-focused approaches which take into account cultural differences and emphasize collaborative relationships with families and community agencies. (7)

Providing this strong school foundation will be sufficient to meet the needs of most students and prevent most problems from occurring. It will not, of course, meet the needs of all students. Approximately 10% - 15% of students will exhibit problem behaviors serious enough to warrant an early intervention. Those students who require early intervention will be easier to identify if a solid foundation is present. (7)

In order for early intervention to be effective, staff must understand the urgency of responding to children exhibiting early warning signs of potential violent behavior. They need to know with whom to share their concerns and that they will be supported in doing so. Students also need to be involved in identifying early warning signs and sharing their concerns about other students. Schools should consider creating a hotline students can use anonymously, having safe school boxes for written concerns, or designating students at each grade level whom students can go to with concerns. These techniques will be most effective if students believe they share responsibility for sharing concerns and if they know confidentiality will be kept. (7)

Intensive intervention will be necessary for approximately 3% - 10% of children experiencing significant emotional and behavioral problems. Intensive interventions should include access to mental health professionals, special education services and alternate programs and schools. Through a

comprehensive effort it is possible to deal with the majority of problems students may experience. (7)

In order to effectively create and implement a comprehensive safe school plan, it is recommended school districts organize two types of teams (*example*: School-wide Team and Student Support Team. The School-wide Team should have expertise in the following seven areas: 1) prevention (*through building a solid school-wide foundation*), early intervention, & intensive intervention, 2) school reform, 3) community resources, 4) family concerns, 5) student concerns, 6) staff concerns, and 7) administrative concerns. The School-wide Team should discuss what is currently being done to prevent violence from occurring and what procedures are in place should a violent situation occur. Each representative should be allowed to assume ownership by being given a role in the prevention and intervention of school violence. It is suggested the following organizations be involved in the School-wide Team: school personnel, law enforcement, county attorney and juvenile court system, emergency management and medical personnel, local fire department, local counselors and ministers, local hospital and medical clinics, and the local media. A meeting of this type should conclude with an overall action plan and individual action plans for each organization represented. (1,7)

The Student Support Team should have expertise in the following six areas: 1) diagnosing mental health problems, 2) evaluating academic difficulties, 3) conducting a functional assessment of student behavior to determine the “why” behind a behavioral problem or incident, 4) consulting with and supporting school staff, students, and families, 5) coordinating school and community services, and 6) collaborating with students and families. The Student Support Team assesses the needs of students who exhibit early warning signs. Family members, classroom teachers, special educators, mental health professionals, school counselors, and community agencies should be represented on this team. (7)

PLANNING FOR A SAFE SCHOOL SITE

While no two schools or communities are exactly alike, comprehensive school safety plans should share similar features. (5,8) Each school should identify its own needs and devise strategies to address those needs. Developing, and reviewing, the strategies to be utilized should involve a team of school and community leaders. (5)

Schools should consider including these specific policies and practices as part of their comprehensive school site safety plan: (8)

- Utilize School Resource Officers so students and SROs have the opportunity to develop rapport.
- Consider seeking one or more probation officers for use on campus to help supervise and counsel students, especially on campuses where caseload is high.
- Utilize paid, trained personnel hired specifically to assist teachers and administrators in monitoring student behavior and activities.
- Encourage screened and trained parents/guardians and other volunteers to provide monitoring of students. Ensure volunteers have adequate training and guidelines outlining their duties.
- Develop, publish and enforce restrictions about student loitering in parking lots, hallways, bathrooms, and other areas.
- Consider the use of metal detectors only in special circumstances to deter weapons on campus.
- Adopt policies for conducting searches for weapons and drugs. Publish policies in the student handbook/code of conduct.
- Require visitors to sign in and sign out at the school office and to wear visible visitors' passes. Post prominent signs at all school entrances instructing visitors where to sign in and out. Publish the policy in the student handbook/code of conduct.
- Encourage school personnel to greet strangers on campus and direct them to sign in if they have not. Also instruct school personnel to report visitors who have not signed in.
- Require students and staff to carry with them and/or wear school photo ID's during school and at all school-related activities.
- Establish a closed campus policy prohibiting students from leaving campus during lunch.
- Establish a cooperative relationship with law enforcement and owners of adjacent properties to the school that allow for joint monitoring of student conduct during school hours. Encourage neighboring residents and businesses to report all criminal activity and unusual incidents. Establish a protocol within the school to handle calls from the neighborhood.
- Consider providing and making use of alarm, intercom, cell phone, building paging, two-way radio, and mounted and hand-held camera monitoring systems on buses and school campuses.
- Develop a school bus rider attendance checklist for each bus and use it daily.
- Consider the need for employing outside security personnel during school functions.
- Patrol school grounds, especially in areas where students tend to congregate such as parking lots, hallways, stairs, bathrooms, cafeterias, and schoolyards.
- Develop threat and crisis management plans and provisions.

- Develop a comprehensive set of violence prevention strategies and ensure they are fully implemented.

CREATING A SAFE SCHOOL CLIMATE

When the school climate is organized, and appropriate discipline is present, there are fewer opportunities for students to misbehave. Being proactive in the approach to discipline will reduce student misbehavior and create a safer school environment. Being proactive means reinforcing positive behaviors and having fair rules regarding misbehavior. Being proactive also means everyone in the school must help enforce the rules and follow through with consequences. (6)

Suggestions for being proactive in the approach to discipline include: (6)

- Have a school-wide disciplinary policy that includes rules and fair consequences for misbehavior. Be sure the policy includes due process and takes into account different circumstances that may occur regarding similar violations. Also, be sure the policy provides for cultural diversity and reflects the educational goals of the school.
- Involve school staff, students, parents and community members when developing the policy. Be sure the process of developing the policy and the final product are effectively communicated to all these groups.
- Include in the policy a zero tolerance for illegal possession of weapons and drugs.
- Stress the importance to staff of applying rules in a nondiscriminatory manner.
- Whenever possible, intertwine caring and concern for the student along with negative consequences. This can be done by helping the student find ways to replace socially acceptable behaviors for the negative behaviors causing the disciplinary problem.
- Provide opportunities for educational and emotional support for students who are expelled or suspended.

In 1998, the Iowa Safe School Task Force, comprised of education and law enforcement representatives) developed guidelines for the prevention of and reaction to school violence. The following checklists were developed to help identify the roles various groups may have related to school violence: (1)

Proactive school counselors should:

- Know the early warning signs of someone who may be considering violence.
- Educate students, parents, and staff about the early warning signs.

- Work to improve faculty member's and student's self-esteem, general social skills, appropriate ways to channel anger, problems caused by substance abuse, and how to address concerns they may have for a friend.
- Establish support groups for students experiencing problems dealing with anger or exhibiting self-destructive behaviors, and their parents.
- Maintain a list of available resources for students and parents.
- Collaborate with community agencies to identify and meet the needs of students.
- Monitor violent incidents in other schools as they may trigger feelings or incidents in your own school.
- Be an active member of the crisis response team.
- Follow the developed plan should an incident occur.
- Be prepared to answer the "why" questions when a violent situation occurs.
- Be ready to deal with students and staff suffering from post-traumatic stress following an incident.
- Be alert for "copycats" and provide appropriate information to prevent "copycat" incidents.
- Target classrooms, or groups, where students may be directly affected by the incident.

Reactive school counselors should:

- Follow the developed crisis plan.
- Contact the outside counselors – ministers with special counseling training, private counselors/psychologists.
- Set up the environment where the counseling is to take place.
- Schedule individual and group counseling sessions.
- Determine facts of the incident from discussions with administrators, law enforcement, etc. to be able to address some of the "why", "how", etc. questions.
- Be alert for copycats and get out appropriate information to prevent copycats.
- Target classroom or activity groups where kids are most directly affected (e.g. if a football player is the victim, the football team may need more assistance.)
- Counselors should monitor violent incidents in other school districts as they may trigger feelings in own school district.

Proactive Law enforcement should:

- Work with neighboring law enforcement to organize assistance in the event of an incident.

- Consider having a uniformed police office at each school. Either full-time, part-time or randomly assigned.
- Randomly patrol the school and school grounds.
- Increase law enforcement's presence in neighborhoods, especially those surrounding schools.
- Provide information on how to secure weapons that may be discovered at school.
- Provide information on the warning signs of self-destructive behaviors to the community.
- Sponsor programs to educate parents about specific types of violence and aggressive behaviors.
- Distribute information on gun locks.
- Develop a program to involve youth in law enforcement. This will improve relations between law enforcement and youth, and reinforce to youth that it is OK to notify police of potential problems.
- Address the issue of violence on the bus or at the bus stop with students, parents and bus drivers.
- Help the school develop a communication plan that is not reliant on the phone system.
- Be prepared for "copycat" crimes if an incident occurs.

Reactive law enforcement should:

- Focus on disarming the perpetrators and protecting others to ensure safety.
- Declare the entire school grounds as a crime scene. Doing so will protect the integrity of the crime scene and control access to the property.
- Consider incarcerating the perpetrator in another community to protect the individual and protect security.
- Be prepared for copycat crimes.

Proactive Fire/Emergency Medical Services should:

- Have representatives participate in the in-service to learn school district and law enforcement procedures.
- Ensure that the local fire department has a blueprint of each school district facility including the location of utility service entrances.
- Let the school district know what types of equipment are available in time of crisis.
- Work with other agencies to sponsor first aid/CPR classes for school district employees.

- Determine methods to be used to identify victims.
- Coordinate with school nurse about how to access health records in an emergency.
- Designate a triage location in/near the school.
- Coordinate with local emergency management commission and coordinator.

Proactive hospitals should:

- Sponsor, or co-sponsor with other agencies, parent or community education programs such as Parent Awareness Seminars or workshops on gun safety.
- Develop media kits to use at the time of a crisis – include sample press releases, name of spokesperson, etc.
- Designate a spokesperson. The spokesperson should know, in advance, what information the spokesperson can release and when it can be released.
- Assist in training school district employees in first aid, CPR, etc.
- Get copies of pre-designated counselors' list from the school district.

Reactive hospitals should:

- Give status reports of victims with regular updates, e.g. every 20 minutes.
- Grant access to the counselors on the school district's pre-designated list.
- Grant access to the local clergy whose members are victims.

How to proactively involve the media:

- Have a current school district information policy.
- Inform the media about what prevention techniques are being used and what intervention procedures are in place.
- Maintain a list of media contacts.
- The school, law enforcement and hospital should agree, in advance, to a single media center that will be located away from the school, law enforcement center and hospital.
- Hold regular briefings at the media center so the media can help disseminate information.
- Have designated spokespersons for the school, law enforcement, hospital, etc.
- Notify the media as to what information can and will be released in an emergency.
- Develop a media kit containing a school map and a list of what information can and will be released.

How to reactively involve the media:

- Initiate media contacts.
- Use the media as information disseminators.
- Hold regular media briefings and updates at the off-site location.

WARNING SIGNS OF POTENTIAL VIOLENCE

When a violent incident occurs people often spend a great deal of time trying to understand how it could have happened in their community and how it could have been prevented. While it is not possible to predict behavior that will lead to violence in all circumstances, it is possible for teachers, parents and students to recognize some early warning signs of potential violence. These warning signs, especially when more than one is present, may indicate a need for help. The key is to train all staff to observe behaviors of concern and to respond appropriately to those behaviors. The intent of observing early warning signs must be to provide early help for the child, not to punish, label, stereotype, etc. The caution is for staff not to jump to conclusions when they observe a single warning sign. (6)

The early warning signs that a child may need help and of possible potential for violent behavior are: (6)

- Being the victim of violence
- Drug and alcohol use
- Excessive feelings of rejection
- Excessive feelings of isolation and being alone
- Expressions of violence in writings and drawings
- Feelings of being picked on and persecuted
- History of discipline problems
- Inappropriate access to, possession of, and use of firearms.
- Intolerance for differences and prejudicial attitudes
- Little interest in school and poor academic performance
- Past history of violent and aggressive behavior
- Patterns of impulsive and chronic hitting, intimidating, and bullying behaviors
- Serious threats of violence
- Social withdrawal
- Uncontrolled anger

To assist staff, students, and community members in identifying the early warning signs the following policies, procedures and practices should be considered: (7)

- Policies that sanction and promote the identification of early warning signs and supported by adequate resources. Schools should assist the entire community in understanding the warning signs and the urgency of the appropriate response to them.
- Procedures that encourage and expect individuals to report concerns about a student exhibiting early warning signs. Have procedures that allow students and staff to easily report concerns.
- Practices that encourage individuals to raise concerns about observed early warning signs and to report all observations of imminent danger immediately. Schools should encourage the entire community to raise concerns.
- Policies that support ongoing training and consultation. Ensure that school staff receive adequate, on-going training on the early warning signs.
- Policies and procedures that ensure staff and students use the early warning signs only for preliminary identification and referral purposes. A student should never be diagnosed or stereotyped based on early warning signs.
- School practices that encourage and provide opportunities for staff and families to establish close, caring, and supportive relationships with children and youth. Adults should know students well enough to be aware of their feelings, attitudes, needs, and behavior patterns.
- Policies, practices, and procedures that foster collaboration between the school and the students' families. Schools and families working together provide the safest environment for everyone.

When training staff to identify the early warning signs, it is also important to teach them the appropriate response to those warning signs. The following five principles should be emphasized when training staff about the early warning signs of violence: (7)

- Do no harm. The intent of identifying early warning signs is to get help for the child as soon as possible. Early warning signs should never be used as a reason to punish, label or stereotype a child.
- Understand violence and aggression within a context. Violence and aggressive behaviors are learned behaviors which express emotions that maybe caused by a variety of factors.
- Avoid stereotypes. The ability of people to identify and help children is hampered when the early warning signs are used to stereotype children based on race, socioeconomic, status, physical appearance, etc.
- View warning signs within a developmental context. It is important for staff to understand what is developmentally appropriate behavior for various grade levels so behaviors are not misinterpreted.

- Understand that children typically exhibit multiple warning signs. Research shows troubled children exhibit more than one warning sign, repeatedly, and with increasing intensity over time. This reinforces the concept the importance of not overreacting to the observation of a single early warning sign.

As well as training school staff to identify the early warning signs of violence, a school must also create an atmosphere in which everyone realizes people can overcome difficult situations and control negative emotions. In order to effectively create this atmosphere, a school must assist staff, students and parents in understanding the early warning signs and knowing to them. The following support strategies should be helpful: (6)

- School board policies that support training the entire school in knowing and understanding the early warning signs.
- Administrators who encourage students and staff to share concerns with the appropriate people about observed early warning signs and to report all observed signs of imminent warning signs immediately.
- Access to professionals trained in evaluating and dealing with serious behavioral concerns.

While early warning signs indicate the child may need help, imminent warning signs indicate a child is very close to behaving in a violent manner. Imminent warning signs usually occur in combination with each other and are usually evident to several people. Imminent warning signs require an immediate response! Action must be taken for the safety of the student and others! (6)

Imminent warning signs of violence are: (6)

- Serious physical fighting with peers or family members
- Severe destruction of property
- Severe rage for seemingly minor reasons
- Detailed threats of lethal violence
- Possession and/or use of firearms or other weapons
- Other self-injurious behaviors or threats of suicide

CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLANNING

This information describes various aspects to consider when developing written guidelines for crisis events. Plans should be tailored to each school as necessary.

The primary goal of a crisis management plan is to ensure an orderly response designed to keep students and staff safe. Responses for various crisis situations should be planned in advance and reviewed, updated and practiced periodically. The disorder created by these events cannot be effectively handled without a pre-established plan of action. Staff should be prepared for chaos and panic from students, pressure and the need for flexible response depending on the situation.

I. Brainstorming and Planning

- Identify Emergency Situations
 - ◆ Consider the following emergencies during your plan development: school violence, hostage situation, weapon or drug possession, bomb threats, fire, natural disasters, hazardous materials, car/bus accidents, suicide threats, and staff or student illness, injury or death. (11)
 - ◆ Create plans for response to after normal hour events, off-site or extracurricular events, such as field trips, and athletic activities. Also evaluate “what-if” scenarios such as a bus accident while returning from a field trip or shots fired at a football game. (15)
- Involve the law enforcement and fire/EMS in your crisis plan development. Learn how and what their response will be for the various crisis situations and coordinate plans. (15)
- List who to contact and how for emergencies. Develop clear emergency procedures and instructions that include notifying local law enforcement officials, the fire department, and medical assistance agencies as necessary.
- Identify the types of information the emergency response personnel will need to respond to different types of crises (when the event occurred, where it happened, how many are involved, whether lock-down or evacuation has occurred, etc.). (11)
- Recognize the available and needed resources for handling and responding to a crisis. During planning, work with school personnel to determine resources available within the building and the district. Emergency response personnel from the community can assist determining the availability of resources within the community. Such resources may include communication capabilities, facilities, first aid, emergency personnel, and transportation. (8)

A. The Role of School Administrators, Teachers and Staff: Designating Responsibilities

- Assign roles and responsibilities for individuals. Decide who will serve as a substitute if the appointed person is unavailable, especially who will be in charge when the principal or other administrators are out of the building. Include the chain of command and communication duties. (9)
- Consider forming an Emergency Support Team. Designated members may include; school officials, the police department, fire department, emergency personnel, media contacts, parent liaisons, community members, clergy, and mental health professionals. (11) Identify alternate members, such as support from other schools, districts or other organizations in case primary individuals are unavailable. (15)
- Identify personnel who will have master keys, codes, and access to secured areas at the site.
- Identify and train on-site building custodial/maintenance staff (primary and backup) and off-site personnel who will take responsibility for dealing with fire alarms, sprinkler systems, gas, etc. Develop a procedure where these personnel can be immediately located. Designate responsibilities to ensure all of the mains are shut off to the building as soon as possible, if necessary (especially in the event of a bomb threat).

B. The Role of Law Enforcement and Emergency Response Personnel (8)

- Conduct meetings with representatives from the school community and from all local law enforcement, fire and other emergency response agencies to obtain, develop and coordinate school site safety plans.
- Maintain information in first responder vehicles about school sites' layouts, and building floor plans. Update as needed.
- Create systems by which students, teachers and/or staff hearing commands (e.g. "Open the door") may be better able to identify that they came from official law enforcement or school personnel, instead of from offenders. Consider the possibility that the offenders could be students, faculty or staff when designing and communication details about those systems to school personnel.

C. Points of Consideration for the Crisis Plan

- Include a procedure for identifying present and absent students. It is extremely important to be able to account for every student. (9)

- Specify temporary, safe housing/shelter locations away from the school where students will be taken in the event of an evacuation.
- Prepare a dismissal plan if students need to be sent home early. Have a system for notifying parents/guardians and media. Never send students home alone. Make arrangements for special needs students. (8)
- Identify transportation resources to move students to shelters or for early dismissal. Take various/adverse weather conditions into consideration.
- Develop an emergency traffic plan to accommodate emergency response vehicles and buses in evacuation procedures. The traffic and parking needs of parents/guardians and media may also need to be evaluated. (8)
- Pre-designate places, depending on the nature of the crisis, for personnel to perform their responsibilities. Include:
 - ◆ Areas for transportation, etc.
 - ◆ A designated place for emergency services.
 - ◆ A designated media contact location.
 - ◆ A designated place for parents/guardians to congregate.
 - ◆ A designated place for clergy.
- Assemble school emergency crisis kits (see Appendix D).

D. Communication Issues

Communication is a critical part of crisis management. School personnel and students must be told what is happening and what to do. Rapid contact with law enforcement and other emergency services is necessary for effective response. School Board members should be kept informed and updated information must be transmitted to the central office.

- Establish a distinguishable communication system for announcing an emergency and when the crisis has passed, signaling an “all clear”. (PA announcements, bell system, phone trees)
 - ◆ Use coded words in the warning announcement if necessary. Codes should be used in situations in which immediate warning is necessary, but the safety of students and staff may be at risk if everyone knows of the emergency. For example, a hostile intruder may panic if the principal announces the intruder’s presence over the PA system. Codes will inform staff of the type of emergency and appropriate actions.
- Establish a “Calling Tree” or “Phone Tree” allowing the Emergency Support Team to be notified immediately. Post the phone tree lists in strategic locations, such as superintendents’, principals’, nursing, counseling, custodians’, crisis team representatives’, and school department offices; as

well as at the local police department, and other designated off-site locations. Guidelines should also be made available at each school and kept in a readily accessible location. (8)

- Color code guidelines and number doors in building for easy identification. (8)
- Develop written summaries of crisis response instructions to be provided to new substitutes along with their specific classroom materials. (8)
- Provide copies in advance, of all emergency and evacuation plans, as well as blueprints, layouts and floor plans of school buildings and grounds. Consider including information about main leads for water, gas, electricity, cable, telephone, HVAC, alarm and sprinkler systems, and locations of hazardous materials, elevators, and entrances of the facilities to local law enforcement, fire, and other emergency response agencies. Update and check over annually or as needed. (8)
- Establish a back-up command post, equipped with necessary communication devices near school, not on the grounds. In the event of a bomb threat, the bomb could be in administration facilities, causing a problem with vital communication resources.

E. Review and Training

- Review plans with:
 - ◆ All school personnel including custodians, food service, and bus drivers.
 - ◆ Local law enforcement and fire/EMS responders.
 - ◆ Parents (8)
 - Educate them about the school crisis plan, its objectives, and the need for it.
 - Inform them where they should go to meet with the designated spokespersons, where to retrieve their children and get information about the status of the crisis, and what they can do to help during and after the crisis.
 - Information can be included in the school handout, handbook or other informational materials for parents, at parent orientations or other meetings.
- Review and update the crisis plan annually (especially phone numbers). (15)
- Coordinate and schedule regular training sessions that include law enforcement, other emergency response personnel, teachers and staff.
- Decide on a fitting balance of crisis response information and drills for students that leave them feeling safe without causing unnecessary fear. (8)
- Provide staff, teachers and students with instructions on personal safety awareness and survival skills, on how to report and respond to persons

making threats or displaying weapons, and about establishing safe positions.
(8)

F. Media Relations (15)

The *main focus* should be to keep the public informed about the situation while trying to maintain the privacy of students and ensure minimal interruption of the educational process as possible.

- Develop a media relations procedure to communicate with reporters and other forms of media. Consult with law enforcement to identify the nature of information and questions and responses that may violate confidentiality and the police investigation. Establish plans to coordinate releases with emergency officials.
- Prepare factual statements of what has happened and the current status that may be read by the appropriate school officials (administration, individuals answering phones).
- Designate a spokesperson. Staff members should not comment on the incident. All inquiries should be directed to the spokesperson.
- For the designated spokesperson:
 - ◆ Focus on factual information; do not draw conclusions.
 - ◆ Do NOT release the names of victims until authorized to do so.
 - ◆ It is best not to answer a question with “No comment.” This may seem like avoidance or reporters may interpret for themselves why you wouldn’t answer.
 - If you can’t reveal information, tell reporters why. Example: Family of injured students has not been notified yet or giving the identity of a witness would harm the investigation.
- If a press conference is necessary, prepare statements for the individuals speaking.
- Set up a media staging area.
- Attempt to have a staff member present during student interviews.
- If media is present on the scene, ask they refrain from taping or taking pictures until proper authorization is given.

II. Incident Procedures

The responsibilities and actions identified are examples of probable tasks needing to be performed during a crisis situation. The following situations are not the only emergency incidents to consider when developing crisis management procedures. It is important to plan for other situations requiring an immediate, organized response as well.

Administrative Responsibilities (12)

1. Typically, the principal (or designee) verifies information and assesses safety issues immediately then declares an emergency and is responsible for requesting assistance.
2. Implement emergency procedures to notify law enforcement agencies, the fire department and medical assistance agencies as appropriate.
3. Notify the Superintendent.
4. Administration seals off the high-risk area, with the assistance of custodians.
5. Notify students and staff (depending on emergency; students may be notified by teachers).
6. Evacuate students and staff if necessary.
7. Notify community agencies if necessary.
8. Implement post-crisis procedures.
9. Keep detailed notes of crisis event.

Teachers/Staff (12)

1. Verify information, assess safety issues immediately
2. Provide immediate emergency medical care if necessary.
3. Follow procedures according to the emergency; remain calm.
4. Account for all students, take role and stay with them.

A. Hostage Situations (9)

A hostage situation is a situation in which a person or persons are forced to stay in one location by one or more individuals. Weapons are usually in the possession of the hostage taker(s) and hostages are threatened with some amount of harm should they not obey with the hostage taker(s). When a hostage situation occurs, it is the role of the police to resolve the situation whether through negotiations or by force. Hostage situations vary greatly and no two incidents will be the same.

General Procedures (12)

1. If hostage taker is unaware of your presence, do not intervene.
2. Call 911 immediately. Give dispatcher details of the situation; ask for assistance from a hostage negotiation team.
3. Stay out of sight of the hostage taker but secure the area near the hostage scene so other staff and students can be kept from entering the area.
4. Notify the principal.
5. Give control of scene to police and hostage negotiation team.

B. Lock-Down Situations

Lock-down procedures may be implemented in situations involving dangerous intruders or other incidents that may result in harm to individuals in the school building. During the planning process, it is important to recognize situations where a lock-down is preferred over evacuation. Develop alternate evacuation routes to avoid placing students in harms way and consider special needs students. Also, implement strategies for out-of-class (lunch, recess, passing time) situations.

General Procedures (15)

1. Principal will issue lock-down procedures using planned warning procedures (coded or basic alert, as determined by school).
2. Direct all students, staff and visitors into classrooms, have a contingency plan to prevent students from immediate danger.
3. Move away from glass and doors. Direct students to safety out of direct line with classroom door and potential shooting range. Down on the floor if gunshots are detected, use desks as cover for additional protection.
4. Lock classroom doors.
5. Cover windows of classrooms.
6. Be able to account for every student.
7. Release no one except by direction of principal/authority.
8. No bathroom breaks.
9. No use of radio or television.
10. Do not call office for general information, call only with vital information.
11. Be prepared to stay in lock down for an extensive time.

When a Class Change is in Process

After an announcement is made, students should report immediately to their next class. Teachers should be at classroom doors, assisting in directing student traffic, and should lock their doors as soon as all have students arrived. Continue to follow the general procedures.

During the Lunch Period

Students in cafeteria should report immediately to an appropriate designated area (next classroom, gym or auditorium). Other students should report back to class immediately. Teachers lock classroom doors and continue to follow the general procedures.

C. Evacuation Situations

Develop alternate evacuation routes to avoid placing students in harms way and consider special needs students. Also, implement strategies for out-of-class (lunch, recess, passing time) situations.

General Procedures (12)

1. Principal warns students and staff. Use pre-arranged signal (may use standard fire drill procedures or one designated for an emergency evacuation) and follow communication directions. Develop alternate routes to account for obstructed primary paths and in a hostage situation, the area controlled by the hostage taker.
2. Teachers give directions and follow last student from classroom.
3. A designated person(s) should check adjacent restrooms, vacant rooms, storage areas, etc.
4. Lights off and doors closed.
5. Report to designated area.
6. Teachers take role after being evacuated.
7. No one may reenter until fire or police personnel declare entire building(s) safe.
8. Remain in assigned area until advised by principal.

During Times of Inclement Weather (13)

1. Evacuate directly to buses, with predetermined boarding locations.
2. Transport students to a safe, predetermined location away from the school building(s).

D. Bomb Threat Situations

Do not use radios, cellular phones, turn lights on or off, or otherwise create static within the building. Doing so may set off the bomb. Evacuation procedures previously stated may be put into effect.

General Procedures (13)

1. The principal will evacuate the school immediately using the designated procedure.
2. The bomb can be almost anything, from an unconcealed bundle of dynamite and clock to a masked ordinary object. A briefcase, shoebox, toolbox and piece of pipe have been used. It is important to look for something that seems out of place in the particular surrounding. Notify authorities or administration if any suspicious objects are noticed and use stick-notes on the outside of your

classroom door to identify the possible suspicion in your classroom when exiting the room.

3. If what appears to be a bomb is found, DO NOT TOUCH IT. Let trained authorities deal with it.
4. Check absence list for possible ideas to who may have phoned in the bomb threat.
5. Take attendance when the students are assembled at a safe location away from the school.
6. If released for the day, school buses should return town students to their homes before their regular routes. Vehicles may not be removed from parking lots until released by law enforcement officials. (4)

If a bomb threat call is received at school....

Person Receiving the Call (13)

1. Stay calm.
2. Use Threat Call Checklist (see Appendix E)
3. The person receiving the threat should make every attempt to:
 - a. Prolong the conversation as long as possible to gain as much information as you can.
 - b. Identify background noises.
 - c. Note distinguishable voice characteristics.
 - d. Interrogate the caller as to the description of the bomb, where it is, and when it is going to explode.
 - e. Determine the caller's knowledge of the facility.
 - f. DO NOT HANG UP THE PHONE!!! Use another phone/line to call the police.
 - g. If your phone displays the number calling, write it down.

Get someone else to immediately notify the building principal who will then call the police department - 911. Request fire department assistance for containment of the building and help with the evacuation process.

Discovery of a suspicious object or package received by mail (16)

- DO NOT handle the package or envelope.
- Leave the immediate area.
- Notify administrator who will implement designated crisis procedure and contact authorities.
- Secure area to prevent re-entry.

During Times of Inclement Weather (13)

- Evacuate directly to buses, with predetermined boarding locations.
- Transport students to a safe, predetermined location away from the school building(s).

E. Handling Fights, Threats or Aggressive Behavior Situations

Fights and conflicts can occur for numerous reasons. It is important to take into consideration personal safety and the safety of others during the intervention of the conflict.

General Procedures

1. Move quickly but cautiously to the conflict.
2. Assess and evaluate: (11)
 - a. The fight: Did it just begin? Is it winding down? Can an aggressor be identified?
 - b. The number of students involved.
 - c. Any weapons that may be present.
 - d. Proximity of individuals who can assist.
 - e. Recognize that there may be several subtle things going on simultaneously that are being expressed in the conflict. Is there gang involvement? What other alliances might exist?
3. Use your best authoritative, loud voice to make the fighters aware of your presence and you want the fight to end immediately.
4. If you know the names of the fighters, call them by name.
5. Verbally separate the students. Use commands such as: "Break it up. Stop right there. Everyone back off. Move away from each other, now!"
6. Avoid physical intervention if possible.
7. Attempt to calm students. (3)
8. Separate the students involved in the conflict and remove to neutral positions. If blood and/or body fluids are present, use universal precautions. (4)
9. Seek assistance from other staff if possible. (3)
10. Dismiss any crowds that may be present. Use students' names when directing them to leave if possible. Be specific.
11. Obtain identification if necessary.
12. Get medical attention if necessary.
13. Report the incident to administration.
14. Statements (written, signed, dated) should be taken from individuals who intervened, other witnesses, in addition to students involved. (4)
15. Notify parents of the situation and consequences. (4)
16. Refer students involved in the conflict to the school counselor.

17. Report incident to law enforcement and other child serving agencies who may be serving the youngster, if necessary. (4)

III. Response After the Crisis

This aspect of crisis planning addresses the emotional support for the school community and resources needed in the aftermath. A crisis response team, made of professional and experienced individuals, such as grief counselors and clergy, may be beneficial to restore and maintain activities after the crisis situation.

Why Develop a Crisis Response Team? (10)

1. To develop preplanned procedures, there is no time to think and plan when a crisis occurs.
2. The team understands the right and wrong methods to handling individuals.
3. To prevent oversight of important details.
4. To maintain effective communication.
5. To minimize the length of time school is disrupted.
6. To assist in resuming normal school procedures as soon as possible.
7. To deal effectively with “after shock” situations and be a stabilizer.

A. Psychological First-Aid

Make plans to reopen school as soon as possible to resume normal activities. Normal attendance policies should remain in effect. Encourage students to stay in school and be with their friends unless they are having an extremely difficult time functioning. Those experiencing such difficulty may be allowed to go home, but only with parental approval and if a parent/guardian is at home. Postpone testing or eliminate/shorten assignments, as students’ attention may not be fully focused on the task. (4)

Be sensitive to student concerns. (15) Deal with the healing process in a comprehensive way and through the use of trained professionals, grief counseling and/or pastoral care; request the assistance of outside agencies if needed. If necessary, designate an area to be the crisis center or “safe room”. Inform staff when and how to refer students. (9) Maintaining supervision and control of students is important. A staff member should escort students feeling troubled to the counseling area. Do not allow students to “hang around” in the hallways. Students are either to be in the classroom or in the counseling area. Consider assigning personnel to areas that are likely to be gathering places for students: cafeteria, restrooms, gym, etc.

Identify high-risk students and staff (siblings, boy or girl friends, close friends, team members, etc.) and ask staff to assist in monitoring these individuals. Offer substitutes for staff, if necessary. (15) Support the caregivers: understand that clergy, school faculty, counselors and emergency teams may also experience emotional problems as a result of the tragedy. (11) Visit injured students and/or staff at the hospital. Bring closure. Be aware of the “anniversary of the crisis” and emotions may intensify. Do not pretend the incident never happened. (9)

B. Communication Considerations (9)

Notify teachers and include information about the incident, the school’s planned response, scheduling of future staff meetings, and how staff will be kept updated. Determine how students will be informed (e.g. by a school wide announcement or in the classroom) about the incident also. Work with mental health professionals and counselors to assist teachers in dealing with their concerns regarding the situation as well as how they can respond to student concerns. Teachers may wish to discuss feelings, concerns, etc. with students if they feel comfortable doing so.

It is important to address teachers’, parents’ and students’ concerns, fears, and questions. A community meeting with school and mental health representatives present may be necessary to address parent and community concerns and other issues that develop. Deliver honest and accurate responses.

Provide information regarding class schedules and student/staff attendance concerning the funeral. Create a written media response statement to ensure consistency and provide the administration, secretarial staff and other appropriate personnel a copy. All media personnel are to be directed to the office of the superintendent. He/she may arrange a meeting with media at an appropriate time, preferably off school properties. Staff members should not talk to the media, unless permission is received from the superintendent. Media should not be allowed to visit with a student on school properties.

C. Crisis Follow-Up

Acknowledge staff members, parents, students and others who were supportive and helpful. Notes of appreciation should be sent to volunteers and non-district professionals who assisted. (4)

A staff follow-up meeting should be held at the end of the first week and month to discuss the intervention process and current status. (10) A written report should

be developed and kept on file for future references. Keep a log of what occurred and what actions were taken. (15)

APPENDIX A

A COMMON SENSE 10 POINT PLAN TO ADDRESS THE PROBLEM OF SCHOOL VIOLENCE

by David Fassler, M.D.

Over the past year, we have witnessed a disturbing increase in violence and threats of violence in our nation's schools. The causes behind each of these incidents are unique and complex, and there are clearly no simple answers or magical solutions. However, there are some common sense steps that schools, communities and families can take to help keep our children safe and reduce the risk of future tragedies. Such steps include:

1. Identify kids with problems. Most kids who behave violently in school have a long history of emotional and behavioral problems. In many cases, signs and symptoms of trouble have existed for years. We know a lot about the early warning signs and situational risk factors which can lead to violent behavior. They include:

- intense anger
- suicidal thoughts or actions
- impulsiveness
- history of abuse or neglect
- drug or alcohol abuse
- fire-setting
- preoccupation with violent or morbid themes or fantasies
- bullying
- stealing
- social isolation
- cruelty to animals
- excessive interest in weapons or explosives
- family problems
- depression
- recent loss, disappointment or rejection
- low self-esteem

Kids who display such signs and symptoms should be referred for evaluation and treatment by a mental health professional who has specific training, experience and expertise in working with children and adolescents.

2. Reduce class sizes. In a large class, it's harder for the teacher to really know and monitor kids as closely. Smaller classes allow more contact between the

teacher and each child. As a result, kids with significant problems are more likely to be identified early.

3. Reduce access to guns. We have to get much more serious about limiting the overall access kids have to guns. This includes age limits on the purchase of guns and ammunition, mandatory trigger locks, increased penalties for illegal sales.

4. Promote tolerance and teach conflict resolution. Starting at an early age, schools need to help kids value each other's differences. We also need to teach kids how to resolve conflict without violent or aggressive behavior. Such programs should be implemented in the earliest grades and reinforced throughout school.

5. Eliminate bullying. Children should be able to go to school without fear of harassment. Bullying creates lifelong problems with self-esteem, and it interferes with learning and school performance. It can also lead to depression and, occasionally, aggressive behavior or violent retaliation. Schools should practice "zero tolerance" for bullying, starting in the early grades. Experience shows that bullying can be fully eliminated with a coordinated and consistent effort.

6. Provide access to mental health care. We need to do whatever we can to remove barriers to accessing appropriate mental health care. Receiving services in a school-based health center may be easier than going to a private office or a community clinic. We also need to make sure there is adequate funding to support both mental health evaluation and ongoing treatment, when indicated.

7. Improve awareness and communication. We need to educate kids about the signs and symptoms of mental illness, and encourage them to seek help when needed. We also need to teach our kids to tell us when their friends need help. As we've learned, most kids will tell someone before attempting suicide or engaging in violent or dangerous behavior. When kids hear such boasts, threats or warnings, they need to tell a responsible adult. They should not be put in the position of deciding whether the threat is "serious" or not.

8. Develop peer support programs. Kids benefit from the opportunity to spend time in a group talking in a preventive manner with other kids about their thoughts, feelings and frustrations. Many kids feel isolated and that they are the only ones with problems. Peer support groups provide an opportunity for kids to learn that others are dealing with similar issues and experiences. Such groups

can also serve as another early warning system for identifying kids who are particularly vulnerable, fragile or troubled.

9. Expand access to drug and alcohol treatment. We need to intensify our efforts to address the problem of child and adolescent drugs and alcohol abuse. We need to identify kids with problems as early as possible, and make sure they get the help they need. We also need to expand our drug education efforts in the early grades, and strictly enforce laws concerning the purchase or possession of alcohol by minors.

10. Enhance parent and community involvement. We know from research and experience that kids do better when parents are involved with their school. Schools need to be integrated into the community. They need to reflect and express the values of that community. Local businesses can also play a valuable role. Mentoring programs, after school jobs and in-service presentations all help kids stay connected to their communities, and less likely to have problems.

Some people may say that the job of a school system is to teach kids, not to deal with "social issues." But our schools are not and cannot be isolated from the social issues which face children in today's world. We will do better if the schools confront and address these issues head on and help kids figure out how to deal with real life problems. In addition, we need to broaden our definition of education. We need to educate kids for life, not just for test taking, college admissions or future employment. We need to teach them social skills and help them learn how to cope with success and failure, frustration and disappointment. By doing so, our educational efforts will ultimately be more successful.

Individually, none of the above suggestions will solve the problem of school violence. But collectively, they would represent a significant shift in the philosophy and orientation of our educational system. Our schools are full of troubled kids. By working together, parents, teachers and communities can develop effective strategies to identify kids who need help, and intervene as early as possible. Such an approach would ultimately lead to safer schools and a better educational experience for our children.

David Fassler, M.D. is a board certified child and adolescent psychiatrist practicing in Burlington, Vermont. He is a member of the Work Group on Consumer Issues of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, and is the coauthor of "Help Me, I'm Sad: Recognizing, Treating and Preventing Childhood and Adolescent Depression (Viking, 1997)."

APPENDIX B TIPS FOR PARENTS

The following ideas may be helpful to parents in assisting the school create a safer environment: (6)

- ✓ Discuss the school's discipline policy with your child. Explain the reasons for the rules.
- ✓ Involve your child in setting clear rules & limits for appropriate behavior.
- ✓ Talk with your child about the violence he or she sees on T.V., in video games, etc. and help your child understand some of the consequences of violent behavior.
- ✓ Help your child find positive ways of dealing with negative emotions and role model these behaviors.
- ✓ Help your child understand the value of accepting individual differences.
- ✓ Be aware of any disturbing behaviors your child may exhibit. Discuss those behaviors with your child's school counselor or another trusted professional. Get help as soon as possible.
- ✓ Get to know your child's friends. Know where your child is going, what he or she will be doing, when they will return, and who they will be with.
- ✓ Listen to your child if he or she shares concerns about a friend. Share this information with the friend's parents or a professional, if warranted.
- ✓ Be involved in your child's school by reviewing homework and going to school functions such as parent-teacher conferences, school activities, meetings, etc.
- ✓ Support your school's effort at providing before- and after-school programs.
- ✓ Support, or better yet become involved, in violence prevention efforts in your community.

APPENDIX C
KEYS TO AN EFFECTIVE SCHOOL CRISIS PLAN
(Adapted from "School Crisis: Under Control," video tape by the National School Safety Center, 1991.)

1. Know what to do in advance. Design your plan for the uniqueness of your school site.
2. Establish an emergency signal that is instantly known by all staff members.
3. Give the police department and central office a blueprint of your building.
4. Assign roles and responsibilities for key staff members. (Chain of command & communication)
5. Administrators must take charge of a crisis situation immediately.
6. Have a system in place which allow you to verify present and absent students. Be able to account for every student.
7. Have a media plan. Know where you want media to set up their headquarters. Be able to prepare for a structured news conference.
8. Establish a plan for transportation of children to hospitals or home.
9. Develop a crowd control procedure. You will have to deal with panicked parents and students when violence hits your campus. All parents will want to know of their child's status. Consider setting up a nearby area for parents.
10. Give clear, accurate information to media, parents, and students as soon as all possible.
11. Restore control as soon as possible. Reopen your school the next day if at all possible.
12. Deal with the healing process in a comprehensive way and through the use of trained professionals.

APPENDIX D

EMERGENCY CRISIS KITS ⁽⁸⁾

The following items may be assembled in a crisis kit and located at strategic locations inside and outside of schools. Recommended places include principals' offices, secretaries' offices, classrooms, local fire and police departments, police car trunks and other specially designated places throughout the school.

- Card listing individual duties during the crisis
- Laminated copy of emergency response plan
- Class roster and emergency phone numbers
- School system telephone directory
- List of teachers with cell phones and their cell phone numbers
- List of teachers/staff who are trained in first aid, CPR and/or EMT training
- Emergency response telephone numbers
- Bus rosters and routes
- Flashlight
- Batteries
- Disposable Camera
- Whistles
- First aid supplies
- Latex gloves
- Notebook
- Pens & markers
- Tape
- Name tags
- Blanket
- Current yearbook, class photos, if available

Administration and law/emergency enforcement may also want to include in their kit:

- Schedules of students, teachers and staff available
- School sites' layouts, building floor plans, and aerial maps
- Copies of student records, especially health information
- Master keys for all schools
- Master keys for the evacuation sites

APPENDIX E
THREAT CALL CHECKLIST (4)

DO NOT HANG UP PHONE!! --- USE ANOTHER PHONE TO CALL POLICE!!

TIME OF CALL _____ **DATE** _____

RECORD EXACT WORDS USED BY CALLER

QUESTIONS TO ASK

Who are you? _____ Why are you doing this? _____
When is the bomb going to explode? _____ Where is it? _____
What does it look like? _____ What will make it explode? _____
What kind of bomb is it? _____ Did you place the bomb? _____

VOICE ON PHONE (check list)

Man	Woman	Child
_____ Intoxicated	_____ Speech Impediment	_____ Accent
_____ Muffled	_____ Rushed	_____ Gruff
_____ Deep Breathing	_____ Whispered	_____ Angry

If the voice is familiar, whom did it sound like? _____

BACKGROUND NOISE (check list)

_____ Music	_____ Talk	_____ Children
_____ Static	_____ Traffic	_____ Machines
_____ Animal Noises	_____ Other (list) _____	

THREAT LANGUAGE

_____ Well Spoken	_____ Taped	_____ Incoherent
_____ Message Read	_____ Foul	_____ Irrational
_____ Other _____		

LENGTH OF CALL _____

PHONE NUMBER (if call can be traced) _____

CALL RECEIVED BY: _____

Person receiving the call should immediately notify the principal/person in charge and alert the Superintendent's office.

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Brooklyn-Guernsey-Malcom Community School District, Brooklyn, Iowa
Burlington Community High School, Burlington, Iowa
Prairie High School, Cedar Rapids, Cedar Rapids, Iowa
Central Decatur Community Schools, Leon, Iowa
Central Lee High School, Donnellson, Iowa
Colo-Nesco Community School, Colo, Iowa
Danville Community School District, Danville, Iowa
North High School, Davenport, Iowa
Emmetsburg High School, Emmetsburg, Iowa
Grundy Center Community School, Grundy Center, Iowa
Iowa Falls Community School District, Iowa Falls, Iowa
Muscatine High School, Muscatine, Iowa
Pella Community School, Pella, Iowa
Perry High School, Perry, Iowa
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