



POLICY P.145.SCO

TITLE: SAFE SCHOOLS (EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE)

Date issued: 26 April 2022

Last revised:

Authorization: Board: 26 April 2022

1.0 OBJECTIVE

To protect the physical safety of students, staff, and volunteers in schools in response to emergencies and tragic events while fulfilling both the education and law enforcement systems requirements.

2.0 DEFINITIONS

In this policy,

- 2.1 **Board** means the Board of Trustees.
- 2.2 **District** means Ottawa-Carleton District School Board.
- 2.3 **Lockdown** means an emergency course of action to secure persons in a school, out of sight, in a safe location in the event of an active threat where serious injury or death is imminent or occurring.
- 2.4 **Secure School** means a course of action taken by the principal or designate to restrict the movement of persons within the school. Secure school can be called for a variety of reasons. Staff and students can continue with their regular routine but must remain within the designated safe area.
- 2.5 **Shelter in Place** means a course of action taken by the principal or designate to restrict movement so that no individual can come into the school or leave it. Typically called in response to a hazard or threat outside of the building, exterior doors may be locked and people will not be permitted to leave the building. Regular routines may continue within the school.
- 2.6 **Violent/Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA)** means a process completed at the school level by a multidisciplinary team to determine the level of risk for violence in response to a threat or threat making behaviour by a student. VTRAs are used to construct plans with interventions and preventative strategies to support a student(s) and/or address a situation for which there is an elevated risk of violence.

3.0 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- 3.1 The Board recognizes that being and feeling physically safe is a precondition for student learning, achievement, and well-being.
- 3.2 The Board strives to ensure the continuation of quality education delivery to our students during emergencies through the careful planning and preparedness for emergencies and tragic events.
- 3.3 The Board recognizes its vital role along with community health and social services partners, including the Ottawa Police Services, in preparing for and dealing with emergencies and/or tragic events.
- 3.4 The Board believes an effective implementation of a community violence/threat risk assessment (VTRA) protocol requires collaborative planning and timely sharing of relevant information with relevant partners in order to prevent school-based violence.
- 3.5 The Board recognizes there will be occasions when schools will have to be evacuated or closed for a temporary period in response to emergency situations.
- 3.6 The Board believes that there should be a collaborative response to incidents addressed in this policy where the students' rights to privacy is respected and the safety of all students and staff is prioritized.

4.0 SPECIFIC DIRECTIVES

Application and Scope

- 4.1 When dealing with emergencies addressed in this policy, schools will ensure compliance with the *Criminal Code*, the *Education Act*, the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, [the Provincial Model for a Local Police/School Board Protocol](#), the [local Protocol to Accompany Safe Schools Policies in the City of Ottawa](#), and, for students under the age of 12, *the Child and Family Services Act*.
- 4.2 This policy applies to school premises and school related activities, and other activities where an event may have a negative impact on students' safety and well-being.

Planning for External Safety Concerns

- 4.3 Schools shall annually prepare the following emergency plans:
 - a) Fire Safety Plan in compliance with [PR 575 HS - Emergency Planning - Fire Drills and Fire Safety Plan](#);
 - b) Emergency Evacuation Plan in response to emergencies in compliance with [PR 506 SCO - Emergency School Evacuations & School Closings](#).
- 4.4 Additionally, schools shall be prepared to respond to the following emergency scenarios:
 - a) bomb threat, suspicious package or device in accordance with [Procedure PR 604 SCO - Bomb Threats](#);
 - b) active threats in alignment with Lockdown procedures covered in [the Protocol to Accompany Safe Schools in the City of Ottawa](#);

- c) intruders not authorized to be present in a Board property in compliance with the *Trespass to Property Act 1990* following [OCDSB PR.524.SCO: Access to School/Board Premises](#);
- d) serious or critical injury;
- e) fires, hazardous materials, or explosive incidents; and
- f) other emergency response scenarios where a Secure School or Shelter in Place response, as covered in [the Protocol to Accompany Safe Schools in the City of Ottawa](#), would be appropriate.

Emergency School Evacuations

- 4.5 Based on the nature of the emergency, schools may be evacuated/closed for a temporary period on an individual, group, or system-wide basis.
- 4.6 Decisions regarding the emergency evacuation/closing of a school or schools shall be made in the best interests of student safety.
- 4.7 Emergency evacuation/closing plans shall include plans to inform parents/guardians/caregivers of the emergency evacuation/closing insofar as may be feasible in the circumstances.
- 4.8 Following a state of emergency or crisis involving one or more schools, the OCDSB shall conduct an after action review with relevant stakeholders with the intent of drawing out lessons learned to inform practice.

Emergency Response Drills

- 4.9 Schools shall annually conduct a minimum of two Lockdown drills in accordance with the Provincial Model for a Local Police/School Board Protocol.
- 4.10 Schools shall annually conduct fire drills in accordance with [PR 575 HS - Emergency Planning - Fire Drills and Fire Safety Plan](#).
- 4.11 The District shall train staff and students on the deployment of emergency drills.
- 4.12 Parents/guardians shall inform the school if their child requires an accommodation in relation to an emergency drill and shall provide sufficient information to enable an appropriate accommodation to be collaboratively determined.
- 4.13 Schools shall ensure that, where appropriate, parents/guardians/caregivers are made aware of the timing and procedural requirements of emergency drills.

Violent/Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA) Protocol

- 4.14 Where schools deem student behaviour to be threatening or non-threatening but worrisome, a VTRA process may be followed to prevent and manage situations that could otherwise negatively impact the safety of students and/or school staff.

- 4.15 Where a VTRA is not warranted, schools shall continue to consult with students and their parents/guardians/caregivers to collect information and analyze data, and consult with local partners and service providers to determine an appropriate response and support plan (Reference Appendix C in the [Protocol to Accompany Safe Schools in the City of Ottawa](#)).
- 4.16 Schools shall form VTRA teams along with relevant stakeholders. The District shall train member staff on the protocol.
- 4.17 While prioritizing students' safety, schools shall respect students' right to privacy when their personal information is shared throughout this process and shall comply with the obligations and requirements of the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.
- 4.18 In the case of a criminal investigation conducted in parallel or in addition to a VTRA, the principal shall maintain an open line of communication with other investigating parties, whenever possible and permitted. This will ensure that any resulting criminal investigation is not jeopardized by the investigations of the District or other community partners.
- 4.19 The District shall review its community-based VTRA Protocol biannually together with police and community partners.
- 4.20 While this policy and accompanying procedures cover the planning and response to unexpected emergencies related to student-behaviour through VTRAs, routine support for students is covered through:
 - a) safe plans, in accordance with [PR.607.SCO Crisis Prevention, Intervention and Postvention](#);
 - b) safety plans, in accordance with [PR 680 HS - Violence in the Workplace](#); and
 - c) Behaviour Management Plans (BMPs), in accordance with [PR 626 SES - Use of Physical Restraints](#).

Suicidal/Life Threatening Behaviour and Tragic Events

- 4.21 The District shall provide a range of prevention strategies including curriculum approaches that stress the development of positive self-esteem, responsible problem solving, and good mental health practices and social skills.
- 4.22 Through collaboration with community partners, such as CHEO, the District shall support schools' proactive response to indicators of suicidal ideation and/or behaviours by students. Safe plans may be developed in accordance with [PR.607.SCO Crisis Prevention, Intervention, and Postvention](#).
- 4.23 The District shall provide resource materials to schools on awareness of suicidal behaviours and associated responses for dealing with trauma, tragedy, and loss of life within the Board, its schools, and the community.

- 4.24 Schools shall establish a Tragic Events Response Team in accordance with the OCDSB TERT manual.

Caring for Students with Life-threatening Medical Conditions

- 4.25 Where administration of medication is required during school hours, parents/guardians/caregivers must provide the school with enough back-up medication as a precautionary measure for emergency situations.
- 4.26 Daily care for students with life-threatening medical conditions is performed in accordance with [Board Policy P.108.SCO Care for Students with Severe or Life-threatening Medical Conditions](#).

Communications

- 4.27 The District shall provide administrators, teachers, occasional teachers, and support staff with procedures and guidelines that support the implementation of this policy.
- 4.28 Subject to legislation governing disclosure of personal information, as appropriate and on an ongoing basis, trustees and school council chairs shall be made aware of emergencies and/or tragic events that have occurred in schools.
- 4.29 The District shall limit the sharing of personal information related to emergencies and/or tragic events without appropriate consent. Wherever possible and reasonable, informed consent should be obtained.
- 4.30 The Board shall annually review summary statistics about student information disclosures to law enforcement, including information on any disproportionalities by OCDSB-recognized Protected Grounds.

Implementation

- 4.31 Following drills and emergencies or tragic events, involved staff shall engage in a debrief to assess the impacts on involved individuals and make recommendations for corrective actions where opportunities for improvement exist.
- 4.32 The District shall regularly review its emergency preparedness and response procedures and revise them as necessary.
- 4.33 The Director of Education shall, on behalf of the Board, participate with other Ottawa area school boards and the Ottawa Police Service, in the revision of a [Protocol to Accompany Safe Schools Policies in the City of Ottawa, 2020](#).
- 4.34 The Director of Education is authorized to issue OCDSB procedures as may be necessary to support the implementation of this policy.

5.0 REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

[Education Act, Ontario Regulations 472/07 and 474](#)
[Provincial Model for a Local Police/ School Board Protocol, 2015](#)
[Protocol to Accompany Safe Schools Policies in the City of Ottawa, 2020](#)
[Ministry of Education Policy/Program Memoranda \(PPM\) 119](#)
[Ministry of Education Policy/Program Memoranda \(PPM\) 120](#)
[Ministry of Education Policy/Program Memoranda \(PPM\) 128](#)

[Ministry of Education Policy/Program Memoranda \(PPM\) 144](#)

[Ministry of Education Policy/Program Memoranda \(PPM\) 145](#)

OCDSB Policy [P.108.SCO Care for Students with Severe or Life-threatening Medical Conditions](#)

OCDSB Procedure [PR 506 SCO - Emergency School Evacuations & School Closings.](#)

OCDSB Procedure [PR.524.SCO - Access to School/Board Premises](#)

OCDSB Procedure [PR.533.SCO - Police Involvement In Schools](#)

OCDSB Procedure [PR 575 HS - Emergency Planning - Fire Drills and Fire Safety Plan](#)

OCDSB Procedure [PR 604 SCO - Bomb Threats](#)

OCDSB Procedure [PR.607.SCO - Crisis Prevention, Intervention and Postvention.](#)