OTTAWA-CARLETON
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

POLICY P.145.SCO

TITLE: SAFE SCHOOLS (EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE)

Date issued: XX Month 2021
Last revised: XX Month 20XX
Authorization: Board: (XX Month 20XX)

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 **School Climate** refers to the learning environment and relationships found within a school and school community.

2.5 **School Community** refers to students, parents/guardians, trustees, staff, contractors and service providers, volunteers, visitors and community members.

2.6 **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.

2.7 **Shelter in Place** means a course of action taken by the principal or designate to contain the movement of persons to within the school. 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.

2.8 **Violence/Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA) protocol** means a document that outlines how a school responds immediately to threatening incidents while providing the best supports to the students so their behaviour does not become violent or self-injurious.

3.0 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

3.1 The Board believes 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 Provincial Model for a Local Police/School Board Protocol, the Regional Safe Schools Committee's Protocol to Accompany Safe Schools Policies in the City of Ottawa; the Youth Criminal Justice Act and, for students under the age of 12, the Child and Family Services Act.

4.2 Nothing in the Protocol to Accompany Safe Schools Policies in the City of Ottawa is to be applied so as to contravene the *Criminal Code*, the *Education Act*, or the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

4.3 This policy applies to schools 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

4.4 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.

4.5 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; and

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; and

e) fires, hazardous materials or explosive incidents.

Emergency School Evacuations

4.6 Based on the nature of the emergency, schools may be evacuated/closed for a temporary period on an individual, group, or system-wide basis.

4.7 Decisions regarding the emergency evacuation/closing of a school or schools shall be made in the best interests of student safety.

4.8 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.

Emergency Response Drills

4.9 Schools shall annually conduct lockdown drills in collaboration with Ottawa Police Services and in accordance with the Protocol to Accompany Safe School Policies in the City of Ottawa.

4.10 Schools shall annually conduct fire drills in accordance with PR 575 HS - Emergency Planning - Fire Drills and Fire Safety Plan.

Lockdowns, Secure Schools, Shelter in Place

4.11 Schools will train staff and students on the deployment of lockdown, secure school, shelter in place procedures.

Planning for Student-related Safety Concerns

4.12 In collaboration with community partners, the District will develop multi-disciplinary Violence Threat Risk Assessments (VTRAs) for schools as a highly effective means of preventing and managing situations that could otherwise negatively impact the safety of students and/or school staff.

4.13 Schools, in consultation with concerned students and their families, will collect information, analyze data and consult with local partners and service providers to determine an appropriate response and support plan.

4.14 While prioritizing students' safety, schools shall respect students' right to privacy when their personal information is shared throughout this process.

4.15 Schools shall form VTRA teams along with relevant stakeholders and train member staff on their protocol.

4.16 Where a criminal investigation results from the actions of a student(s) that brings about a violence/threat risk assessment, the District will ensure an open line of communication with other investigating parties, whenever possible and allowable. This will ensure that any resulting criminal investigation is not jeopardized by the District's investigations or other community partners'.

4.17 The District shall review its community-based VTRA Protocol biannually together with police and community partners.

Suicidal/Life Threatening Behaviour

4.18 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.

4.19 Through collaboration with community partners, such as CHEO, the Board shall support schools' proactive response to indicators of suicidal behaviours in a student.

4.20 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.

Tragic Events

4.21 Schools shall establish Tragic Events Response Teams in compliance with PR.607.SCO Crisis Prevention, Intervention and Postvention.

Caring for Students with Life-threatening Medical Conditions

4.22 Parents must provide the school with enough back-up medication as a precautionary measure for emergency situations.

4.23 Daily care for students with life-threatening medical conditions is performed in compliance with Board Policy P.108.SCO Care for Students with Severe or Life-threatening Medical Conditions.

Communications

4.24 The District shall provide administrators, teachers, occasional teachers and support staff with procedures and guidelines that support the implementation of this policy.

4.25 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.

4.26 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.

Implementation

4.27 Following drills and emergencies or tragic events, involved staff shall engage in a debrief making recommendations for corrective actions where opportunities for improvement exist.

4.28 The District shall regularly review its emergency preparedness and response procedures and revise them as necessary.

4.29 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.

4.30 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
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) 141
Ministry of Education Policy/Program Memoranda (PPM) 142
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 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.