

District Active Assailant Response Protocol

Purpose:

The purpose of this protocol is to provide guidance to help protect students, staff and visitors in the event of an active killer or armed intruder on school grounds or in District buildings. This protocol provides options designed to address a variety of predominant attack patterns as well as emerging attack methods. The options in this protocol are not designed to serve as a checklist nor information to be memorized. Instead, becoming familiar with the options, as well as important considerations described in this protocol, combined with active participation in training and drills can improve your ability to more effectively address almost any type of active assailant attack.

Definition of Active Assailant:

Situations where one or more aggressors carry-out a single violent act or a series of connected violent events, in which the attacker(s) actively kill or attempt to kill people in one or more buildings, in outdoor area(s) or in multiple locations using any type of deadly weapon or combination of weapons. Each active assailant event is different in some way, and different people in various locations of a campus may need to react in different ways to the same event.

Remember that you are not expected to memorize terms nor all action steps but instead focus on understanding the various concepts described in the protocol.

Situational Awareness:

Situational awareness is critical to making sure that you are able to more quickly recognize and respond to any hazard. Staff and students are more familiar with their individual environments than intruders and outdoor campus areas, classrooms, offices and buildings are different in some way. Situational awareness encourages individuals to understand the elements of the environment where they live, learn and work to better understand changes to that environment that may require changes in behavior or response.

The responses outlined below encourage staff to understand the nature and location of any threat and empowers them to **notify and respond** as they deem most appropriate to protect their lives and those in their care.

Part of **Situational awareness** includes making sure that all classroom doors are closed and locked during instructional periods as per District Policy.

The options presented in this protocol should not be viewed as being applied in any particular order. The timing, location, weapon type(s), attack method, your specific location at the time of an attack are all factors that impact which option(s) are practical based on what you see, hear and in some instances, smell. However, **RECOGNIZE is always the first action** and ASSIST is usually the last action to be taken sequentially in most events regardless of the specifics of the attack.

Faculty & Staff Response:

Upon detecting indications of a possible active assailant event, take action to protect yourself and if practical to warn and protect others in the immediate area. The protective actions will depend on your proximity to the threat and other factors. If you have significant distance from the active assailant your options will differ from those who are in close proximity or who are in direct contact with the aggressor.



RECOGNIZE an active assailant event:

Your ability to rapidly recognize that an active assailant event may be or is occurring can help reduce casualties. Awareness of the following potential indicators can help you recognize that an attack is about to occur or is already being carried out:

- Recognizing concerning behaviors that are incongruent with what is typical for the individual, the time, place and setting.
- Spotting and reacting quickly to specific visual cues that indicate that a person may be concealing a weapon.
- Hearing sounds that could be gunshots in the vicinity. Note that it is common for people not to recognize the sound of gunfire.
- Observing a person initiate an attack by firing a gun, using a knife, blunt object, rapidly accelerating while driving a vehicle towards a group of people, or using another type of weapon (or combination of weapons) to attack others.
- Seeing people flee from an area in a visibly alarmed or panicked manner.
- Hearing multiple people screaming especially if accompanied by other sounds of concern such as sounds that may be gunfire.
- Smelling smoke, chemicals or irritants, especially if accompanied by sounds of distress such as screaming, loud moaning and/or significant irritation of your nose and/or eyes.
- Observing abnormal operation of motor vehicles such as rapid acceleration in a congested area, leaving the roadway suddenly, or driving at a high rate of speed off of roadways.

While we do not want to cause you to overreact to situations, the consequences of under-reacting to an active assailant event can be severe. For this reason, you are empowered to implement emergency protective actions if you believe that an active assailant event may be imminent or is already occurring.

Based on District Policy, anyone may initiate a Code Red, Code Yellow or other Emergency Protocol.

Protective actions can include:



WARN – If you are able to warn others in the immediate area and/or in other areas while you take action to protect yourself, doing so may save lives. **All employees and visitors are empowered to call a Code Red using all available means at their disposal.** This may include using cell phones, intercoms, desk phones, hand-held radios and other technologies for emergency warning and communications. If you become aware of a possible active assailant, and if it is safe for you to do so, dial or text 911 as soon as you have taken action to warn others who are at risk. You should not take any notification steps that put you or your students in more danger by doing so. Do not place yourself or others at risk by trying to photograph or video attackers.



LOCKDOWN – If you are in a rapidly lockable space which will also allow you to move out of view, implementing emergency lockdown may be your safest option. If this option is selected, in rooms where a safer spaces logo exists, the safer spaces logo may help you determine what area(s) of the space are out of view from the hallway. Remember, that you may opt not to move to the area indicated by the safer spaces logo if what you see, hear or smell indicates that it would be less safe to do so. Closets, bathrooms and other interior rooms may be used if available and deemed safe to move to during an event. Take caution that these areas may require a key to enter or may be locked and/or in use during an event which would make them more difficult to utilize. Consider this when performing drills and practice discussions in classrooms. *Silence portable phones and turn down portable radios.*



MOVE – If you are outdoors or in a room that does not provide cover or concealment, you may be required to quickly and safely move locations, evacuate campus or return to a building and enter a suitable lockdown area (reverse evacuation). When moving to safety, consider whether running will be faster or slower than a brisk walk. **Running can and often does significantly slow emergency egress.**



HIDE - If you cannot lockdown or evacuate safely based on what you see, hear and smell, finding a place of concealment and if available, cover may be your best option. Cover means taking refuge behind something that will offer at least some protection from gunfire such as a concrete wall, berm or other substantial physical feature. Concealment involves hiding behind a visual barrier that does not provide cover. Historically, active assailants target those they can see and avoid areas where individuals are fully hidden. This is not meant to encourage hiding when other escape or cover options are available.



DISTRACT – Distraction techniques can sometimes briefly confuse attackers. Distraction can involve creating an extremely loud noise or throwing objects at an attacker's face to cause a brief disruption of the attacker's ability to focus on using a weapon. Throwing hard objects at a person's head can result in serious injury or death to an attacker. This option should only be used if killing an attacker would be justified - usually in the case of an armed attacker.

The distract option should not be used in situations where an armed person is not using the weapon to attack others but could be prompted to do so. For example, throwing objects at a hostage taker or individual who is threatening self-harm could cause them to use a weapon they did not plan to use.



INTERVENE- Often referred to as the “fight” option, this approach involves direct physical force to try to interrupt and if possible, stop an active assailant. This option should be used only when

you believe that other options would be less effective and/or safe for you and others. This option should only be used when you are in immediate proximity of the attacker who is actively using a weapon or whose actions demonstrate that the use of a weapon appears to be imminent. If this option is called for, use force aggressively, rapidly and without stopping until the attacker is incapacitated, subdued or you can escape.



ASSIST—When it is safe for you to do so, provide aid to victims, and assist emergency responders by communicating urgent life-saving information to obtain help for victims with life-threatening injuries. Follow instructions of emergency responders and do not interfere with their life-saving efforts. If you are qualified to do so, use appropriate bleeding control techniques and other emergency first-aid measures to assist victims who appear to be in grave danger.

Once You Determine That an Attack is Over:

- Provide emergency medical assistance and/or help obtain assistance for victims who have been injured.
- Calm students and direct them to a safer location as appropriate.
- If one or more weapons have been dropped or discarded, secure the area where the weapon(s) are located, but do not attempt to handle the weapon(s). Notify responding law enforcement personnel of the location of the weapon(s).
- Assist in the offsite family reunification process utilizing your SAFE team Student-Parent Reunion Coordinator.
- Carefully consider the potential for emotional harm that can be caused by activities such as taking and transmitting photographs, audio recording or video captured during or after an active assailant event. Consider the adverse impact on others that social media posts, text message and other forms of modern communication can have.
- Remember that inaccurate information and rumors are extremely common during and in the wake of active assailant events. Exercise caution in relying on information you hear that may not be accurate. Consider the negative impact that disseminating what may turn out to be inaccurate information can impede response and recovery efforts, investigations and can cause emotional pain for others.
- Be mindful that there are those who will attempt to capitalize on these tragic events for a variety of reasons and that their integrity, goals and objectives may not match yours.

Assisting Individuals with Special Needs

These individuals include, but are not limited to, students and staff with physical, cognitive or developmental disabilities.

- Students/staff with special needs which might impact their ability to respond to an emergency should be identified and their daily location and special requirements noted in a quick access document for ease of use in an emergency. A copy of this quick access document should be placed at appropriate locations for ease of access to the individual student/staff. For example,

posted on the wall or in a file in a treatment room, on their person, attached to their support equipment, on their IPAD or digital device, on their phone, or in a red pouch appropriately labeled (Student/Staff Name, Emergency Plan). In some cases, the emergency plan itself may include guidance as to where best to place copies.

- In those cases where the need for assistance in emergencies has been documented (in the IEP or supporting documentation), appropriate staff shall be assigned in advance to meet those needs and should be provided with training to do so competently.
- Also, designate an alternate staff (or two) in the event of an absence of the primary designee. Ensure that staff/faculty with these responsibilities are provided with information and training on the extent of assistance needed for the student to which they are assigned and that they can handle the duty in an emergency.
- For students/staff with mobility issues, (1) alternative evacuation routes should be identified along with (2) specific devices, methods or means of moving the student/staff who need assistance to safety.

Preventive Security Code Yellow Protocol May Be the Right Alternative:

While this protocol is focused on helping personnel rapidly recognize that an active assailant event is taking place, it is also important that staff be prepared to recognize and react to pre-attack indicators sometimes exhibited by attackers before they produce and begin using a weapon. For example, initiating the preventive security protocol – Code Yellow Protocol - for situations where one or more individuals exhibits behaviors of significant concern but there is no indication they are armed can help reduce exposure without shutting down a campus while the SRO(s) or Armed Guardian investigates the individual(s) of concern.

Drills/After-hours/Buses/Evacuation Considerations

Drills:

Active Assailant Drills should be conducted to allow staff to talk through, safely act out and move through the various options available in an age-appropriate manner. Administrators are encouraged to rotate lockdown, evacuation and reverse-evacuation (return to buildings quickly) as well as no-movement (chalkboard discussion) into the monthly drill options so that staff and students understand they have options beyond lockdown. The goals of these drills are to provide practice, education and to achieve improvement rather than attempting to realistically simulate an event. We want to encourage discussion by staff and students following these drills to make sure that the concept of situational awareness and the options are understood in the context of school but also in the context of being a valuable life-saving skill in any environment. Administrators should inform parents following any drill or actual event so that they are aware and can prepare to discuss these topics with their students at home.

- Active Assailant drills shall be conducted with the assistance of the School Resource Officer (SRO) and/or Guardian. Consult with the SRO and/or Guardian if any opportunities for improvement are identified during a drill.
- Incorporate rooms/assembly areas that present greater challenges (cafeteria, playing fields, playgrounds, outdoor congregation areas, auditorium, media center, gymnasium, etc.), into Active Assailant drills including walk-throughs of response specific to these areas.
- Properly document all drills.

Consider the following times/events when considering your plan for Active Assailant response: Lunch period, transition between class, arrival/departure, student body assembly (gym, auditorium, stadium), before/after school programs (before/after care, clubs, sporting events).

Staff Actions (After-hours):

- All after-hours staff should follow the same guidelines provided to daytime staff. Notification procedures may need to be modified to reflect changes in office staffing.
- An after-hours person in charge shall be predetermined. That person must be knowledgeable in the responsibilities and procedures related to this active assailant protocol.

Buses:

- Buses on campus during an active assailant incident shall immediately leave the campus. Bus drivers are authorized to evacuate students and direct them to safety if what they see and/or hear indicates that it would be safer to do so.
- Bus Operators shall contact dispatch by radio to report the situation and request a staging location.

Evacuation Considerations:

- The “MOVE” option can involve evacuation of students and staff to safer locations on a school campus as well as to off-campus locations. As with other protective options, this should not be seen as a choice that is automatically appropriate for all active assailant situations.

- The Student-Parent Reunion Coordinator at each school should coordinate with the SRO, local law enforcement and the school security staff to identify off-site locations for all school evacuation plans.
- When possible, multiple off-campus safer locations in easy proximity to campus should be identified and communicated to staff and students as options. Avoid a single evacuation area for all students to mitigate concerns about the area becoming a primary or secondary attack location.
- Administrators and safety personnel should consider ways to educate all staff and students to consider locations near their schools that could be suitable if any type of emergency requires it.
- Fire drills are an excellent opportunity to remind students of the off-campus evacuation locations that have been identified.
- As with lockdown locations, considering these sites in advance can help people remember them in an emergency.
- The age and developmentally appropriate education of students by teachers and staff is one way to help prepare both our students and school personnel for this possibility. Students should be advised that vehicular traffic can pose a significant hazard when evacuating from a school campus.
- In addition to the possibility of the evacuation of students and staff to off-campus sites, BCPS has plans for off-site family reunification for any emergency where it would be less safe or less effective to have parents and guardians sign students out at one or more schools impacted by an emergency on or near school property. This process can be used for any emergency that requires it, including an active assailant event.
- When developing the site Emergency Response Plan the Student-Parent Reunion Coordinator should be identifying and documenting appropriate off-campus locations for use in evacuations.