



THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT / THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK

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- REVISED -

To: District Superintendents of BOCES
Superintendents of Public School Districts
Principals of Public Schools
Superintendents and Principals of State-Operated Schools

From: Betty A. Rosa, Commissioner

Subject: Review of School Safety Plans and Procedures for Afterschool Activities and Events

Date: September 16, 2024

As we embark on a new school year, we have taken note of the unfortunate school safety incidents happening across the country and even in our own state. In order for the 2024-25 school year to present a new chapter in learning, growth, exploration, and relationship-building for our children and families, it is essential that we take this time to review and strengthen our safety plans, particularly for activities that take place beyond regular school hours.

School campuses are vibrant centers of learning and community, often extending their reach well into afterschool hours through athletic events, concerts, theatre, and other extracurricular activities. This provides us with an important opportunity to evaluate how we manage safety for all students, staff, and visitors during these times.

While many schools and districts already have strong safety protocols, now is a crucial time to review these plans—particularly for afterschool activities and events, where students and visitors may be on campus beyond the typical school day.

Afterschool Safety Procedures

Every school and district must ensure that there are clear procedures in place for greeting and managing out-of-district visitors who attend athletic events, afterschool programs, and other activities. Visitor management is a key element in maintaining safety. District and school leaders should take stock of how they are providing training to leaders of afterschool programs, such as coaches and program directors. This includes articulating procedures that are in place to make visitors aware of school safety protocols, not only informing them of exits but also of broader safety procedures. Consider posting memos or signage that clearly communicates safety information to visitors and parents during these activities.¹

Parent Communication During Emergencies

In addition to physical safety measures, communication with parents and stakeholders during emergencies is of paramount importance. Schools should proactively ensure that parents are informed about safety

¹ A Parent and Guardian resource about emergency response actions is available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#).

protocols and will be informed in the event of an emergency.² It is vital that parents do not learn about emergencies from news outlets or social media, as this can lead to disinformation. We encourage schools to develop processes for timely communication with families, particularly in scenarios where students may not have immediate access to their phones.

Collaboration with Law Enforcement

In accordance with New York State Education Department (NYSED) regulations, safety plans must be in place by September 1 and formally submitted to NYSED and local/state police by October 1.³ Close collaboration with law enforcement agencies remains critical. NYSED urges schools to maintain regular communication with local authorities and review emergency procedures to ensure coordination during any event. Updated safety plans should reflect these partnerships, ensuring that law enforcement is promptly notified of emergencies and any incidents requiring intervention.

NYSED Resources and Support

NYSED provides comprehensive resources to support schools in the development and implementation of safety plans. We encourage all school leaders to consult the School Safety Plans page on the NYSED website at [NYSED School Safety Plans](#). Additionally, the New York Center for School Safety, which provides technical assistance and resources for districts, can be accessed at [New York Center for School Safety](#). Resources include the following:

- [New York edition](#) of the I Love U Guys Foundation's Standard Response Protocol (SRP) Operational Guidance and Standard Reunification Method (SRM). These optional resources may be incorporated into building-level emergency response plans.
- [Guide for Developing and Reviewing Functional Annexes](#)
- [School Safety Communications Planning Guide](#) from the National Center for School Safety
- [Lockdown Drill](#) video series

Next Steps: Reviewing and Refining Plans

As part of our commitment to keeping schools safe, NYSED is actively considering new regulations that would further strengthen safety plans for afterschool activities and events. We urge schools and districts to be proactive in reviewing their safety plans and consider the unique challenges of afterschool and outdoor events, ensuring adequate staffing, communication, and visitor awareness.

Conclusion

NYSED is aware of the national context around school safety and acknowledges the stress and pressure this places on school communities. Schools are, and will continue to be, safe spaces for students to learn and grow. However, it is imperative that we continuously evaluate and improve our safety procedures to ensure that we are prepared for all scenarios, including those outside of regular school hours. We encourage you to take advantage of the resources available through NYSED and the Center for School Safety, and to continue prioritizing the safety and well-being of all members of your school community.

Thank you for your continued efforts to ensure safe, supportive, and engaging environments for students, families, and staff. Please contact the Office of Student Support Services at SafetyPlans@nysed.gov if you have questions or need assistance.

² A sample annual notification to parents and guardians about safety procedures is [available](#).

³ See memos to [BOCES and Public School Districts and Schools \(Excluding Charter Schools\)](#) and memo to [Charter Schools](#) regarding [School Building-Level Emergency Response Plans and District-Wide Safety Plans for the 2024-25 School Year](#).