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To: District Superintendents of BOCES
Superintendents of Public School Districts
Principals of Public Schools
Superintendents and Principals of State-Operated Schools
Charter School Leaders
Chief Emergency Officers

From: Gemma C. Rinefierd, Ed.D.

Subject: Recent Amendments to Commissioner's Regulation §155.17

In recent years, concerns have been shared with the Safe Schools Task Force and School Safety Improvement Team (SSIT) about the need for statewide standardization in language related to emergency procedures. A wide range of stakeholders have emphasized the importance of universal terminology and understanding of emergency protocols for the benefit of students, staff, parents, and first responders/emergency personnel. In particular, the similarity of the terms “lockdown” and “lockout” demonstrated a need for greater clarity among parents, students, schools, and emergency responders when the incorrect term is inadvertently used in a time of great stress.

Therefore, in September 2024, the Board of Regents permanently adopted [amendments to Commissioner's Regulation §155.17](#) that become effective July 1, 2025. The changes require that all schools and districts use required terminology and definitions in their emergency procedures and training to students and staff as described below.

- All schools and districts must use the following required terms and definitions in their building-level emergency response plans. Note that where two terms are listed, schools may choose to use one or the other (e.g., shelter/shelter in place).
 - **Evacuate** and **evacuation** means to move students for their protection from a school building to a predetermined location in response to an emergency.
 - **Shelter** and **shelter-in-place** mean keeping students in school buildings and sheltering them when it is deemed safer for students to remain inside rather than to return home or be evacuated.
 - **Lockdown** means to immediately clear the hallways, lock, and/or barricade doors, hide from view, and remain silent while readying a plan of evacuation as a last resort. Lockdown will only end upon physical release from the room or secured area by law enforcement. Lockdown is initiated during incidents that pose an immediate threat of violence in or around the school.
 - **Hold** and **Hold-in-place** mean the restriction of movement of students and staff within the building while dealing with short-term emergencies.
 - **Secure lockout** means students and staff remain inside school buildings that are locked and secured during incidents that pose an imminent concern outside the school.
- Annual training for staff must include a description of the roles and responsibilities of the building-level emergency response team, the building-level Incident Command System including the roles

and responsibilities of designated staff, and the building level-emergency response plan procedures for implementing the following required emergency response terms: shelter/shelter-in place, hold/hold-in place, evacuate/evacuation, secure lockdown, and lockdown. The required training must also include the procedures for conducting drills, including whether classrooms will be released from lockdown by law enforcement or school or district administrators during drills, and the district and building policies, procedures, and programs related to safety including those which include components on violence prevention and mental health. New employees hired after the start of the school year must receive such training within 30 days of hire or as part of the district's existing new hire training program, whichever occurs first.

- Policies and procedures for the response to emergencies including those requiring the school to shelter/shelter-in place, hold/hold-in place, evacuate, secure lockdown, and lockdown. Such policies and procedures must include, at a minimum, the description of plans of action for students and staff, and the recommended emergency response action in response to potential threats and hazards including, but not limited to threats that may require evacuation, shelter/shelter-in place, hold/hold-in place, secure lockdown or lockdown, evacuation routes and shelter sites, procedures for addressing medical needs, considerations for the access and functional needs of students and staff, transportation and emergency notification to parents or persons in parental relation to a student, and procedures for reunification of students with parents or persons in parental relation following an emergency.

Implementing Required Terminology in Emergency Plans

To support schools and districts in implementing the required terminology and in developing emergency response plans and procedures, NYSED has developed the following:

- Resources on [NYSED's webpage](#) and the [Center for School Safety webpage](#) have been updated with the new required terminology, including the [Emergency Response Term chart](#) that includes recommended actions for each required response.
- In partnership with the national not-for-profit The "I Love U Guys" Foundation, an optional New York-specific edition of the Standard Response Protocol (SRP) Operational Guidance and Standard Reunification Method (SRM) that includes required New York terminology. Schools and districts may choose to utilize the New York-specific edition of the SRP/SRM materials into their emergency planning and building and district plans. In addition to the [Operational Guide](#), there are [posters](#), [parent handouts](#), and other support and training materials posted on our [website](#).

These resources are aligned with Education Law §2801-a and Commissioner's Regulations §155.17 regarding the development and adoption of building-level emergency response plans and district-wide school safety plans. Schools, districts and BOCES may opt to implement these resources in consultation with their required emergency response teams, local law enforcement, and other first responders.

Thank you for all you do to keep students and staff safe every day. If you have questions about these changes, or suggestions for how NYSED may support schools in this area, please contact the Office of Student Support Services at SafetyPlans@nysed.gov.