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Best Practice Considerations for Schools in Active Shooter and Other Armed Assailant Drills

Guidance From the National Association of School Psychologists and the National Association of School Resource Officers

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Executive Summary

The National Association of School Psychologists and the National Association of School Resource Officers have partnered to provide this guidance on armed assailant training. We received input from Safe and Sound Schools: A Sandy Hook Initiative and the ALiCE Training Institute. This document provides guidance on the important factors schools must take into account when considering and choosing to conduct armed assailant drills. It does not constitute an endorsement of a particular approach to training nor a specific training program.

OVERVIEW

A. Response to armed assailants has focused on implementing a school lockdown. Recently, discussion has emphasized options-based approaches, which sometimes include the "Run, Hide, Fight" model.
B. Armed assailant drills have both benefits and concerns associated with their implementation.
   - Armed assailants in schools account for only 1% of homicides among school-age youth; schools must balance costs and benefits when allocating crisis preparedness resources.
   - Such drills have the potential to empower staff and save lives, but without proper caution, they can risk causing harm to participants.
   - Available research supports the effectiveness of lockdown drills implemented according to best practices, but research is still needed on the effectiveness of armed assailant drills.

DRILL APPROACHES AND PLANNING

A. Traditional lockdowns should remain the foundation of an options-based approach to active assailant training, which allows participants to make independent decisions in evolving situations.
B. Exercises should be considered in a hierarchy with simple discussion-based exercises before complex operations-based drills are practiced.
C. Schools should consider the potential benefits and consequences of simulation techniques and keep such approaches appropriate to the participants' developmental maturity.
   - If determined the use of props is necessary, inform participants of the use and purpose of props and simulation aids prior to the drill.
   - Using Airsoft guns as simulation aids requires careful safety measures and opt-out opportunities.
D. Regular practice helps participants develop readiness and quickly access and apply knowledge.

DEVELOPMENTAL AND MENTAL HEALTH CONSIDERATIONS

A. Children model their reactions on adult behavior, so effective drills should result in staff who inspire calm and confidence in students.
B. It is critical that participation in drills be appropriate to individual development levels, and take into consideration prior traumatic experiences, special needs, and personalities.
C. School-employed mental health professionals should be involved in every stage of preparation.
   - Prior to the drill, staff should be trained to recognize common trauma reactions.
   - Adults should monitor participants during the drill and remove anyone exhibiting signs of trauma.
   - After completion, staff and students should have access to mental health support, if needed.
D. Participation should never be mandatory, and parental consent should be required for all students.
E. If staff choose to opt-out of intense drills, they should receive comparable, less intense instruction.

STEPS FOR CONDUCTING SAFE, EFFECTIVE, AND APPROPRIATE DRILLS

1. Create a school safety team (including an administrator, a school mental health professional, a school nurse; security personnel, teachers, and parents) that also coordinates with local law enforcement and emergency responders.
2. Conduct a needs assessment of the school community.
3. Implement a cost–benefit analysis that considers all emergency preparedness needs and options.
4. Tailor drills to the context of the school environment.
5. Create a plan of progression that builds from simplest, lowest-cost training; identifies obstacles and goals; and establishes a timeline.
6. Prepare for drill logistics that ensure physical and psychological safety as well as skills and knowledge acquisition.
7. Develop a communications plan that gives all participants advance warning and the ability to opt out and/or provide feedback.
8. Establish a long-term follow-up plan to support sustainability that includes assessing ongoing and/or changing preparedness training needs.

Best Practice Considerations for Schools in Active Shooter and Other Armed Assailant Drills

INTRODUCTION

The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) and the National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO) represent key members of school safety and crisis teams. We are committed to supporting school communities' understanding and implementation of best practices related to school safety, school mental health, and crisis prevention and response. We have partnered to provide this guidance on armed assailant training. We received input from Safe and Sound Schools, a nonprofit organization of parents, educators, and other members of the school community, and the ALiCE Training Institute, a for-profit company that provides active shooter training.

Neither this document nor the author organizations, NASP, NASRO, and contributor Safe and Sound Schools, endorse a specific approach to armed assailant training or any particular training program. We do not intend for this document to be an endorsement of armed assailant training; rather we hope it will provide helpful guidance to those school districts that choose to engage in this type of training. Further, we believe that lockdown is an essential component, if not the foundation, of any such training and that the hierarchy of training and education offers effective options for how to provide training.

Critical elements to effective crisis preparedness and response of any kind are a common understanding of purpose and procedures among all participants, a respect for each other's roles and perspectives, and a shared commitment to ensure the safety and well-being of all members of the school community. Our common goals in this document are to provide best practice information to **help schools determine *to what extent* they need armed assailant training and to conduct trainings that make best use of resources, maximize effectiveness, and minimize physical and psychological risks.** Importantly, training includes everything from orientations and table top drills to actual full scale drills and for many schools, full scale drills may not be necessary or desirable Equally important, this document is not intended to provide specific guidance on *how* to conduct active assailant drills but rather to provide guidance on many of the issues that must be considered when planning for and implementing such training. The specifics of any training should be determined at the local level by appropriately trained school leadership, school safety and mental health personnel, and law enforcement.

Please note that the appendices in this document contain very important decision-making information. They are referenced within and at the end of the document.

PART I: OVERVIEW

Schools have a responsibility to protect the physical and psychological well-being of their students and staff. This includes creating positive school climates, preventing negative behaviors such as bullying and harassment, and being prepared to respond to potential threats such as weather emergencies, fires, and acts of violence. Effective crisis planning, prevention, response, and recovery capabilities are essential for schools to meet this responsibility (Cowan, Vaillancourt, Rossen, & Pollitt, 2013). Although situations involving an active, armed assailant on school property are extremely rare, schools are increasingly considering how to best prepare for and respond to this type of event.

According to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (2008) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (Blair & Schweit, 2014) an *armed assailant* is defined as an armed person who attempts to use deadly

force on others, typically in a confined and populated area. The term *active shooter* refers to those assailants who use firearms, as opposed to knives or other weapons. Some U.S. states have mandated active shooter drills for schools, but have offered little to no guidance on proper implementation.

Schools should plan for the rare possibility of an armed assailant as part of a comprehensive crisis/emergency preparedness effort; however, the nature and extent of those preparedness activities should be based upon a risk assessment of the crisis events a given school is most likely to confront. How this training is conducted must carefully account for students' developmental levels, school culture and climate, and features specific to each school community (such as geography, weather, crime, and environment). While one of the primary goals of crisis preparedness is to develop a sense of empowerment and control, armed assailant drills not conducted appropriately may cause physical and psychological harm to students, staff, and the overall learning environment. It is critical that administrators, school-employed mental health professionals, school resource and police officers, and crisis team members work closely together to carefully develop a staff and student training protocol that follows the best practice considerations outlined below.

A. Background

The 1999 shootings at Columbine High School ushered in heightened attention to the need for schools—and law enforcement—to be better prepared to respond to armed assailant situations. Subsequently, schools focused primarily on lockdown practices, while law enforcement focused on improving tactics to find and stop the assailant as quickly as possible. Following the 2012 Sandy Hook school shooting, the U.S. Department of Education recommended expanding the lockdown-only approach for schools (i.e., confining students and staff to their rooms) to an options-based approach that allows school staff to make more independent decisions about how to protect their students depending on evolving circumstances (e.g., evacuate the building rather than stay locked in a classroom). These approaches include adapting the "Run, Hide, Fight" model that was originally developed for adults in response to workplace violence. This expansion has spurred a range of approaches to armed assailant training and an increase in the number of school districts conducting drills with varying degrees of intensity and involvement of school staff and students. In some instances, drills are conducted with insufficient consideration of the potential psychological impact or appropriateness of a particular drill based on the developmental level or psychological risk factors of participants.

B. Benefits and Concerns Associated With Armed Assailant Drills

***Costs versus benefits*.** School-associated homicides are extremely rare accounting for less than 1% of all homicides among school-age youth (Robers, Kemp, Rathbun, & Morgan, 2014). While an attack by an armed assailant on school grounds is possible—and can have significant psychological and educational impact if it happens—it is not as probable as other types of crisis events. Schools must consider the cost of some types of drills (e.g., full scale simulations), and whether investment in them will reduce resources available for other critical safety preparation activities such as first aid training, environmental design measures, and staff development focused on more comprehensive school safety preparedness.

***Empowerment versus potential harm*.** The primary purposes of an armed assailant drill are to provide law enforcement and relevant school leadership and staff the opportunity to practice skills and protocols and to identify and correct areas of weakness in knowledge, communication, coordination, and decision-making. The goal is to empower participants and save lives, and prepare professionals and staff for this role and responsibility. As the focus of such drills expands to include all staff and students, the potential for causing harm to participants expands as well. The level of drill intensity (e.g., use of loud gun fire and airsoft guns), extent of warning that a drill will occur, and whether participation is required or voluntary may affect reactions to the experience. Additionally, an individual's cognitive

and developmental levels, personality, history of adverse or traumatic experiences, and psychological makeup are among the many factors that influence the potential for harm.

It is essential to include parents in discussions of their child's developmental level, education, and readiness for armed assailant drills. Highly sensorial armed assailant drills for students in preschool and elementary classrooms are not recommended. Any such drills should be conducted using age appropriate simulation stimuli (e.g., the sound of gunshots near a preschool room would not be appropriate).

***Available research*.** Practicing disaster response procedures has been found to increase the probability of adaptive behavior during a crisis (Jones & Randall, 1994; Miltenberger et al., 2005). Specifically, lockdown drills implemented according to best practices have been suggested to increase knowledge and skills of how to respond appropriately without elevating anxiety or perceived safety risk (Zhe & Nickerson, 2007). However, at present there is no empirical research regarding school-based armed assailant drills.

***Potential lawsuits*.** The manner in which some armed assailant drills (e.g., unannounced) have been conducted in the workplace has led to lawsuits imposed on employers due to psychological and physical harm sustained by some participants (Frosch, 2014). Schools need to determine to what extent advanced armed assailant drills are necessary and carefully construct these drills to avoid physical and/or psychological harm. Regardless of the projected benefits and perceived concerns, the fact remains that armed assailant drills are uncharted territory for schools. Schools that decide to conduct a drill should use a multidisciplinary safety team (including parents) that educates and trains all participants in relevant curricula and protocols. With careful planning, data collection, and continual review of these programs, schools can begin to develop an approach that minimizes negative effects and improves preparedness.

PART II: DRILL APPROACHES AND PLANNING

A. Traditional Lockdown Versus Options-Based Drills

Lockdowns have been the standard approach for the school response to threatening situations for nearly two decades. Lockdowns involve locking the door, moving students out of sight, and requiring students to remain quiet within the room. Lockdowns should continue to be included in any an options-based approach to active assailant training.

Options-based drills provide students and staff with a range of alternative strategies to save lives, and the permission to use them, depending on the situation. For instance, the nature of the threat, time of day, and the location of students interact to affect the best options. The premise of options-based drills is to allow participants to make independent decisions including when and whether to evacuate, barricade classroom doors, or as a last resort, counter the attack of the armed assailant. As with other safety drills (e.g., fire or tornado), it is important that options-based drills take into account the developmental levels of students as well as the physical layout of the school campus (e.g., ease of access to outside doors and proximity of places to hide other than classrooms).

B. Hierarchy of Education and Training Activities

Crisis preparedness exercises and drills should be conducted in a progression of steps that begin with basic activities and progress to more advanced drills and exercises as needed (with advanced simulations being a more advanced type of crisis preparedness activity; Safe and Sound Schools,

2014; Reeves, et al, 2011). Schools should start with simple, low-cost, discussion-based exercises (e.g., introductions to crisis responders, orientation activities, use of instructional media, or tabletop drills) and, if the school safety team determines it appropriate, work their way toward more complex and expensive, operations-based exercises (e.g., walk-throughs, specific emergency drills, and crisis simulations; NASP, 2013; U.S. Department of Education, 2006a). ***Appendix 1 summarizes this hierarchy of education and training activities (Safe and Sound Schools, 2014) and provides an example of how armed assailant preparation could occur at each level.***

C. Simulations and Simulation Techniques

Many schools are also using or considering simulation exercises. Simulations require that participants are provided with real time information and stimuli (e.g., simulated gunshots, PA announcements, and electronic communications) to determine the movements of an armed assailant in order to make the best decisions. It is important that simulation drills are preceded by extensive prior education and preparation, and consideration for individual readiness. For some participants, this intense exposure and practice may empower them with experience, options, and a sense of control. For others, this type of drill may be emotionally traumatic (Frosch, 2014).

If a school deems it necessary to simulate an armed assailant, safety teams should carefully consider the number of different strategies for simulation during a drill, taking into account developmental age and readiness of staff before determining what techniques are most appropriate.

Drills utilizing props and simulation aids. Props and other aids may be used to simulate a weapon, gunfire, or other desired circumstances that are associated with an armed assailant event. In advance of any drill, participants must be aware of the prop's purpose and potential presence, particularly when the purpose of the prop is not obvious. For example, the use of an air horn, or other prop to simulate gunfire, may traumatize participants if they have not been instructed on the prop's purpose in advance of the drill.

Airsoft as a simulation aid. Airsoft guns (simulated weapons that shoot plastic BBs) may be used as a simulation aid during armed assailant drills. Caution must be exercised to ensure the safety of all participants prior to any drill involving airsoft guns. The authors of these guidelines have received anecdotal reports from school professionals of armed assailant drill participants being physically harmed from the use of simulation aids. In addition, for those with trauma histories, involvement in a highly sensorial armed assailant drill could trigger strong psychological reactions. Thus, to mitigate potential physical or psychological harm, opt-out opportunities should be offered to all participants after being fully informed about the drill. ***Appendix 2 provides the safety instructions that come with an airsoft gun.***

B. Considerations

Schools must carefully consider the decision-making protocol for people to engage in a strategy other than lockdown. For instance, run/escape may lead to safety for some, but it might inadvertently lead to danger for others as students unknowingly "escape" into the path of an unknown assailant, expose them to the sight of injured or dead classmates and teachers, or result in students trampling each other to get to the exit door. These concerns need to be addressed when planning and practicing active assailant drills. Students should be taught to first and foremost follow the direction of their teacher, and how to make decisions if that teacher is incapacitated. Helping students and staff understand the decision-making-criteria is crucial. It is also important to consider the special needs of students with disabilities, both in terms of a drill and the expectations for their functioning in the event of real emergency (U.S. Department of Education, 2006b). ***Appendix 3 provides additional information on students with disabilities.***

C. Regular Practice

As part of the initial planning process for crisis preparedness, schools should identify how to integrate and reinforce the concepts taught during the drills. Introductions, orientations, walk-throughs, and tabletop exercises should continue to be integrated into yearly crisis preparation activities so learned skills are refreshed and rehearsed. Frequent and varied practice, training, and discussion activities aid the development of readiness, providing staff and students the means to quickly access and apply their knowledge.

PART III: DEVELOPMENTAL AND MENTAL HEALTH CONSIDERATIONS

A. Impact of Adult Behavior on Children's Behavior

The behavior of an adult in an emergency directly affects the physical and psychological safety of students in crisis. Therefore, the effectiveness of armed assailant drills relies on educating and training adults carefully, responsibly, and continually. Students look to faculty and staff—the designated trusted adults on site—for direction and guidance. When adults are well-trained and stay calm, the students will follow and gain confidence and ability.

B. Developmental Levels of Safety Awareness

Developmental levels of safety awareness must be addressed (Safe and Sound Schools, 2014). If schools opt to conduct an options-based or more advanced armed assailant training, it is critical that those planning and facilitating the training consider the cognitive and emotional development of all those involved. Safety and security professionals (e.g., SROs, police officers) often have a leadership role in conducting drills but must work collaboratively with school administration and school-employed mental health professionals in joint planning to ensure best practice guidelines are followed. School districts, educators, and parents are encouraged to adapt policies and training programs that consider their unique situations. Grade levels are not an absolute determinant. Individual levels may vary greatly due to cultural, educational level, and personal profiles within a community or classroom. It is also imperative that schools consider the individual psychological backgrounds, previous trauma experiences (including community trauma history), special needs, and personalities of students and staff. Regardless of training level, some individual personality types are better able to respond assertively than others in moments of crisis. ***Appendix 4 offers developmental levels of awareness and understanding to assist schools in determining the capabilities and readiness of students and staff to participate in armed assailant drills*** (Safe and Sound Schools, 2014). Each level has a corresponding age range and examples of appropriate types of activities and instructions to provide general guidance when preparing for an armed assailant training.

Schools must carefully consider developmental appropriateness of safety vocabulary and verbiage. Terminology should be clear, direct, and developmentally appropriate. As an example, opting for vocabulary such as "go," "get out," and "evacuate" (depending upon developmental maturity) instead of "escape" or "run" may help support calm and orderly action and mitigate psychological impact of crisis.

C. Mental Health Support and Considerations

School-employed mental health professionals should be a part of all stages of armed assailant drill preparation.

***Before an armed assailant drill or simulation*.** Drills may lead to stressful or traumatic reactions. If the drill will be a sensorial experience with, for example, simulated gunfire or individuals being tackled

by the assailant, then participation should never be mandated for staff or students. Staff should also be taught to recognize common trauma reactions to help identify when a student, fellow staff member, or him/herself needs to be removed from the drill. Additionally, drills should be conducted early enough in the day to allow for debriefing participants afterward and assessing any adverse reaction.

***During an armed assailant drill or simulation*.** Educators must monitor the reactions of themselves, each other, and students during the drill and have a means to quickly notify drill coordinators if a person exhibits physical (e.g., asthma or panic attack) or emotional (e.g., hysterical) reactions. Such reactions would necessitate removal from the drill and immediate support. School-employed health and mental health professionals must be present during the drill and available for assistance.

***After an armed assailant drill or simulation*.** Emotional or physical reactions can be delayed following a highly intense simulation drill. School staff and students should have access to school-employed mental health professionals after the event to provide additional assistance if needed.

D. Parent Consent

Participation in an armed assailant drill should never be required for students or staff. Parent consent can come in the form of:

- Parent permission – parents return a permission slip allowing their child to participate.
- Passive consent – parents return a form only if they do NOT want their child to participate; no form returned implies permission.
- Parent notification – parents are notified, but no consent form is used; thus schools assume participation is granted unless parents assertively state otherwise.

E. Balancing Staff Opt-Out With the Need for Universal Preparedness

It is important to have all staff operating with the same understanding in an emergency situation. In cases where staff opt-out of a more advanced armed assailant drill, schools should provide the essential information and training through additional, less sensorial training exercises, such as a tabletop activity, as outlined in the hierarchy of education and training activities (Safe and Sound Schools, 2014).

PART IV: STEPS TO CONDUCTING SAFE, EFFECTIVE, AND APPROPRIATE DRILLS

1. Create a school safety team—ideally made up of an administrator; school mental health professional; school nurse; teachers; security personnel; parents; and students—that:
   - Identifies a lead person to coordinate school safety efforts, including drills;
   - Establishes and communicates the roles and responsibilities during drills and in real-life crisis situations;
   - Takes a lead in identifying the most appropriate preparedness activities for the school;
   - Provides ongoing professional development and training as needed; and
   - Ensures that the school's policies are in compliance with state laws and school board policies.

2. Conduct an assessment of the school community to:
   - Identify the types of crisis events most likely to occur,
   - Determine the current school culture and climate,
   - Map existing resources and capacities of school personnel or school safety teams, and

- Identify any related policies that should be considered in the planning of drills.

3. Implement a cost–benefit analysis that:
   - Considers financial costs in relation to the likelihood of a particular crisis;
   - Identifies what resources, activities, or preparedness training must be replaced or postponed to engage in active shooter or other armed assailant drills;
   - Balances the need to empower school staff while minimizing potential harm (e.g., triggering stressful or traumatic reactions to live simulation drills);
   - Considers the current knowledge and identified needs of the staff; and
   - Considers legal requirements (e.g., state law) related to conducting active assailant drills and to what degree drills are required to be full-scale simulations versus other lower cost exercises.

4. Tailor drills to the context of the school environment, taking into consideration:
   - The primary goal of the drill (e.g., training for law enforcement versus staff and/or students);
   - Age, cognitive, and developmental levels of awareness of students;
   - Students with physical, sensory, or other disabilities that may require unique instructions during a drill or real-life event;
   - The capacity, comfort level, and trust among staff;
   - Administrative support;
   - Optimal timing, including time of year, day of the week, and time of the day;
   - Relationships with external partners, law enforcement, and other first responders; and
   - The layout of the school building and campus.

5. Create a plan of progression that:
   - Considers whether any previous activities have been conducted in the school;
   - Starts with simple, low-cost, discussion-based exercises;
   - Considers all available types of drills;
   - Identifies specific objectives and goals for the drills; and
   - Identifies a timeline and metrics to help determine whether more complex exercises are needed.

6. Prepare for logistics of the drill to ensure that:
   - Previous traumatic experiences of those involved are considered;
   - School staff learn to recognize stressful reactions to drills;
   - Methods exist to opt out (for staff and students) or remove someone from a drill, including parental consent/permission if students are involved;
   - School-employed mental health professionals are available to provide support to those experiencing a negative reaction to the drill;
   - Adequate follow up is available for students or staff with questions; and
   - Appropriate methods to evaluate outcomes are implemented.

7. Develop a communications plan that:
   - Informs members of the school community of planned drills and what will be entailed;
   - Facilitates open communications with families, including translated materials and the opportunity for family members to talk with relevant staff about concerns;
   - Provides opt-out options for staff and students; and
   - Encourages feedback and evaluation by participants after the fact.

8. Establish a long-term follow up plan to support sustainability that considers:
   - What additional training is required;
   - How the drill integrates with other school safety and crisis prevention efforts;
   - How current and previous training and knowledge can be maintained and built upon; and

- When follow-up should be conducted and how often.

CONCLUSION

Training exercises and drills to prepare for active shooters or other armed assailants should be based on the specific needs and context of each school and community. It is critical that schools recognize that this type of drill is just one specific component of comprehensive crisis preparedness and response that includes prevention, protection, mitigation, response, and recovery. Schools should consider the most cost-effective method of preparing students and staff for an active shooter situation while balancing the physical and psychological risks associated with such drills. Regardless of the nature of the drills a school chooses, the school resource officer and school-employed mental health professionals must be integrally involved in the planning and evaluation process to ensure appropriate implementation. ***Appendix 5 offers a list questions to guide decision making when considering armed assailant drills.*** Lastly, it is imperative that schools have a clearly defined evaluation process that identifies areas of strength and areas in need of improvement as the school community continues to refine ongoing comprehensive crisis preparedness and response plans.

LIST OF APPENDICES

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Appendix 2: Safety Instructions for Use of Airsoft Guns
Appendix 3: Considerations for Students With Special Needs
Appendix 4: Developmental Levels of Safety Awareness
Appendix 5: Questions to Ask When Considering Armed Assailant Training

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APPENDIX 1. HIERARCHY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES

Based upon an assessment of risk and preparedness priorities, crisis drills and exercises should be conducted in a progression of steps that begins with basic activities and, if needed, progresses to more advanced drills and exercises.

DISCUSSION-BASED EXERCISES		
	DESCRIPTION	ARMED ASSAILANT TRAINING EXAMPLE
Introductions	Brief reviews of the school's crisis response procedures appropriate for all developmental levels (students as well as staff). Activities involve simply introducing and familiarizing the school community to professionals who will help them during a crisis, what they might look like, what they do, and what kinds of tools they carry as helpers.	Introduce students and staff to a police officer who would discuss (a) how they would keep students and teachers safe in the event of an armed assailant situation and (b) how the school can best support their actions.
Orientations	More involved and concrete reviews of the school's crisis response procedures, which can be made appropriate for all developmental levels. All students and staff should have some familiarity with all parts of the school campus, even (as indicated) with areas that are typically off limits during normal school days (such as the staff lounge, behind the front office counter, and other connecting halls and doors that may be needed for evacuation or shelter during an emergency).	Teachers use orientations when they tour the classroom and building with students or hold scavenger hunts to familiarize students with school exits, the location of the telephone, first aid materials, light switches, Go Bags[1], and bathroom passes (all of which provide resources that may be needed in an armed assailant situation). Building and campus field trips can be used to orient students and new staff members (including substitute teachers) to the layout of the school and campus.
Seminars/ Workshops	Instruct staff on safety protocols and crisis response procedures and provide safety information in an objective and calm manner to children. Instructional media can also be used. It is critical when developing any materials for students that a multidisciplinary team is involved in developing the visual materials, representations, or dramatizations of emergency scenarios, and that there is agreement upon the content and appropriateness of the material. Materials that may be appropriate for adult staff members will not be appropriate for younger students. Further, parents should be given the opportunity to preview these materials and allowed to opt their children out of such presentations.	Reading the students a storybook, telling a social story, and/or showing a video that incorporates crisis response messages. Appropriate for the armed assailant training would be messages linked to the so-called "stranger danger" concept.
Tabletops	Low-stress opportunities to talk through safety scenarios in small discussion groups. Tabletops may assign roles to each group member using a vignette,	Young children's tabletops can be formatted like a game, such as "What Are Sammy's Stay-Safe Choices?"

[1] Go Bags include essential materials a classroom would take with them (e.g., student mediations) if forced to evacuate the classroom.

	requiring them to cooperatively discuss, solve problems, and report back to the larger group. Tabletops can be used by crisis team leaders and teachers and are easily modified for a variety of developmental levels that can span from elementary-age children through to adult staff members.	Young adults can engage in more intensive strategic discussions. A seated discussion format enables participants to brainstorm and solve problems in a small group, allowing mental preparation, improved awareness, active discussion, and evaluation of readiness for potential emergencies.
OPERATIONS-BASED EXERCISES		
	DESCRIPTION	ARMED ASSAILANT TRAINING EXAMPLE
Drills	***Walk-Throughs*** A way to act out the steps or actions that might occur during an emergency. School crisis teams and local emergency professionals can conduct a joint walk-through to understand each other's roles. This is not a timed or rushed activity. A walk-through can be thought of as a slow motion drill, one that allows for questions and discussion along the way. Schools commonly use walk-throughs to prepare students for fire drills.	Students walk through and/or rehearse the actions they might take if a person entered the building that was a risk to their safety. They are given permission to ask questions. Evacuating to an off-campus evacuation site can also be practiced during this walk-through.
	Preannounced Drills This type of drill is an announced rehearsal of emergency responses and protocols, and it occurs in real time. All participants are notified that it is not a true emergency.	Armed assailant drills should be disclosed to all participants as there is too much risk for students and staff to believe an unannounced drill is real, causing unnecessary fear or strong physical reactions to defend oneself. These drills should always be preceded by an announcement such as: "This is an emergency drill. It is not an actual emergency. This is a drill. We are now pretending that there is a person with a weapon in the middle hallway, please lockdown and take the appropriate actions."
	Unannounced Drills This type of drill is unannounced in order to rehearse real-time responses and protocols (e.g., fire drill or earthquake drills). It is not as complex as a functional exercise, as it does not involve emergency responders. At the end of the drill, all participants are notified it is not a true emergency.	Armed assailant drills should NEVER be unannounced. Unannounced drills can cause unnecessary fear and strong emotional and physical reactions (e.g., students texting their parents saying they are going to die). They could also unintentionally put the individual who is pretending to be the armed intruder in harm's way (e.g., if states allow concealed weapons, an armed school staff member could shoot the pretend armed intruder.)

Best practice considerations for schools in active shooter and other armed assailant drills, NASP, NASRO (2017).

Advanced Simulations and Exercises	***Simulation Drills*** The most advanced type of training involves simulated emergency conditions and stimuli to condition participants to the emergency environment, as well as to rehearse emergency response. Advanced simulations are designed for highly trained emergency responders, and simulate the emergency conditions and stimuli they may encounter in a real emergency. While these drills can be part of overall preparedness they require careful planning and should be conducted in a manner that minimizes physical and psychological harm. These drills should always be preannounced.	Armed assailant exercises are typically considered to be *options-based* trainings, which give participants permission to make independent decisions when necessary. The local police department assigns an officer to role-play an armed assailant who has entered the building. The assailant may use air soft bullets, and actors may be told to scream to simulate real world emotions. Functional exercises typically only involve school personnel and police agencies.
	Full-Scale Simulation Exercises Involve not only school students and personnel, but also include multiple emergency responder agencies (e.g., police, fire, EMT, local departments of emergency planning) and district-level support. Often multiple emergency protocols are practiced within the exercise (e.g., armed intruder, hostage situation, and a bomb threat). These often take months to plan and are costly. If school staff and students are going to be involved, they need to volunteer and be carefully screened to ensure they are emotionally stable enough to participate.	The school district and first responder agencies plan the complexity of the scenario and advertise to students, staff, and the community the date of the exercise to avoid confusion with a real scenario. Volunteer actors play the role of the armed intruder, injured students and staff, and multiple first responder agencies practice their response protocols. Full-scale exercises typically involve school, police, fire, first responder, and community response agencies (including mental health).

Note. Adapted from Hierarchy of Education and Training Activities, 2014. Safe and Sound Schools: A Sandy Hook Initiative.

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APPENDIX 2. SAFETY INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE USE OF AIRSOFT GUNS

It is common in more advanced drills to use props and simulation aids. The following guidelines are provided by the manufacturer for the use of airsoft guns in full-scale simulations.

WHEN	SAFETY PRECAUTION
Prior to Drill	● Notify local law enforcement in advance of any drill that includes any simulated weapon. ● Provide appropriate notification for school occupants who may be unaware of a drill that includes a simulated weapon. This should include audible announcements and posted written notices for those who may enter the building during a drill. ● Ensure orange tipped barrels are present on all airsoft guns so they are not mistaken for real firearms. ● Issue participants eye protection that meets ANSI Z87.1 safety requirements. A full face mask/goggle system, providing full seal eye protection with nose, mouth, and ear protection is best. ● Make sure participants are wearing long pants and sleeves. ● Clearly identity to all participants no-fire zones where airsoft guns will be completely safe, with no magazines in the weapons, their chambers cleared, and their safeties on.
During Drill	● Ensure participants wear eye protection and or mask/goggle system. ● Aim airsoft below the intended target's waistline and at a distance of at least 6 feet. ● Ensure proper supervision of all participants during drills, including terminating the drill immediately if there is any safety concern or potential for injurious physical contact.
After Drill	● Notify local law enforcement that all armed assailant drills have concluded. ● Make all airsoft weapons safe and secure.

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APPENDIX 3: CONSIDERATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

When planning for armed assailant drills, it is critical that the school crisis planning team consider the unique needs of students with disabilities. If available, the school crisis team should consider including a disability specialist as a member of the team, or as a consultant when planning for these types of drills. School psychologists who are members of crisis teams can provide both mental health and disabilities expertise. There are several Federal policies (e.g., Americans with Disabilities Act; Individuals with Disabilities in Emergency Preparedness, Executive Order 13347; Individuals with Disabilities Act) that require public entities, including schools, to consider the needs of individuals with disabilities in any type of crisis preparedness training. Considerations include:

- Physical disabilities that might impede mobility
- Physical disabilities that might impede access to instructions (e.g., hearing or sight impairment)
- Sensory disabilities that might heighten a distress reaction and/or impede response to instruction (e.g., autism)
- Cognitive disabilities that might impede understanding a situation and/or instructions

The resources below may be helpful; however, school teams are urged to consult district leaders to ensure compliance with local, state, and federal requirements.

National Council on Disability. (2005). *Saving lives: Including people with disabilities in emergency planning.*

ADA Best Practices Toolkit for State and Local Governments Emergency Management Checklist, http://www.ada.gov/pcatoolkit/chap7emergencymgmtadd1.htm

Readiness for Emergency Management for Schools Technical Assistance Center. (n.d.) *Integrating the needs of students and staff with disabilities and other access and functional needs*. Retrieved from http://rems.ed.gov/TrainingPackage.aspx

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APPENDIX 4. DEVELOPMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS ASSOCIATED WITH SCHOOL SAFETY PROCEDURES, ACTIVITIES, AND DRILLS

Schools must target crisis training activities to the developmental and awareness levels of students and also take into account the role and awareness levels of staff. Awareness levels are for general guidance purposes only. Individual awareness and capacity will vary depending on individual factors.

		What individuals at this developmental level typically know and understand about school associated dangers	What individuals at this developmental level are typically able to do in response to school associated dangers	Appropriate school safety explanations, procedures, activities, and/or drills for this developmental level
Awareness Levels	*Developmental Levels*	*Developmentally Typical Knowledge/Understanding*	*Developmentally Typical Capabilities*	*Developmentally Appropriate Safety Explanations/Activities*

Early Awareness	*Preschool–Kindergarten Students*	• Demonstrate basic understanding of "danger."
		• Require adult guidance to determine what is, and is not, dangerous.
		• Have difficulty distinguishing probable dangers from all possible dangers, and between reality and fantasy.
		• Understand:
		  • "Get-Out" or evacuate;
		  • "Hide-Out" or stay out of sight with lights off;
		  • "Keep-Out" (i.e., that adults will lock and barricade classroom doors to keep danger out and students safe).
			• Dependent on adult management and direction during emergencies.
			• Able to follow basic safety directions (e.g., "Get-Out" or evacuate; and "Hide Out" or stay out of sight with lights off).
				• Explain that adults at school work hard to keep school safe.
				• Offer concrete examples of common dangers that adults address (e.g., a stray dog on campus and not knowing if it is a good or sick dog).
				• Use the word *safety* when describing/conducting drills (e.g., use "Get-Out Safety Drill" to describe an evacuation).
				• Practice following atypical adult directions associated with elements of safety drills (e.g., during art, ask students to quickly line up at the door).
				• Conduct "Get Out" and "Hide Out" safety drills.

Developing Awareness	*Early Elementary Students*	• Demonstrate evolving understanding of "danger." • Require some adult guidance to determine what is, and is not, dangerous. • Have difficulty distinguishing probable dangers from all possible dangers, and may have difficulty distinguishing between reality and fantasy. • Understand: "Get-Out," "Hide-Out," and "Keep-Out."	• Need adult management and direction during emergencies. • Able to follow basic safety directions. • Can provide assistance with simple safety tasks in an emergency (e.g., following adult direction to turn off lights, close blinds).	• Explain that teachers and school staff members always work to keep school safe. • Offer concrete examples of common dangers that adults address. • Use the word *safety* when describing/conducting drills. • Practice following atypical adult directions associated with elements of safety drills. • Conduct "Get Out" (evacuations) and "Hide Out" (lockdown) safety drills.

Practiced Awareness	*Upper Elementary Students*	• Require limited adult guidance to determine what is, and is not, dangerous. • May have some difficulty distinguishing probable dangers from all possible dangers. • Capable of understanding why school safety drills are conducted. • Understand all safety directions and instructions.	• Need adult direction during emergencies. • Able to follow all safety directions and instructions. • Can assist with many safety tasks during an emergency (e.g., following adult direction to turn off lights, closing blinds and doors, moving furniture, barricading doors, calling 911).	• Explain that teachers and school staff members always work to keep school safe. • Offer examples of common dangers that adults address. • Teach the difference between possible dangers and common dangers. • Use the word *safety* when describing/conducting drills. • Conduct "Get Out" (evacuation) "Hide Out" (lockdown), and "Keep-out" (barricade) safety drills.
Proficient Awareness	*Intermediate, Junior High, and Middle School Students*	• Have all *Practiced Awareness* knowledge and understanding. • Able to distinguishing probable dangers from all possible dangers. • Capable of understanding why school safety drills are conducted.	• Benefit from adult direction, but are able to perform practiced actions independently during emergencies. • Can assist with most safety tasks during an emergency. • May or may not demonstrate the ability to disrupt the actions of an intruder.	• Engage in discussions regarding the need for school safety procedures. • Allow students to generate examples of common dangers that school safety procedures are designed to address (verify understanding of the difference between probable and possible dangers). • Use the word *safety* when describing/conducting drills. • Conduct evacuation and lockdown safety drills. • If indicated, conduct options-based safety drills (e.g., drills wherein the option to lockdown, barricade, evacuate, or fight back/encounter are considered).
Independent Awareness	*High School Students, Adult Students, and Volunteers*	• Have all *Proficient Awareness* knowledge and understanding. • Have knowledge of a range of emergency safety actions and can match them to the appropriate situation (e.g., know the situations that require evacuation versus lockdown).	• Benefit from adult direction, but are able to perform practiced actions independently during emergencies. • Able to help identify probable dangers confronting a school. • Able to assist in the development of school safety protocols. • Able to appropriately adapt safety actions to a range of dangers. • Can assist with all safety tasks during an emergency. • May or may not demonstrate ability to disrupt the actions of an intruder.	• Engage in discussions regarding the need for school safety procedures. • Engage in discussions regarding the specific types of school safety procedures required at a given school. • Use the word *safety* when describing/conducting drills. • Conduct evacuation and lockdown safety drills. • If indicated, conduct options-based safety drills.

Advanced Awareness	*Professionally Trained School Staff Members*	• Have all *Independent Awareness* knowledge and understanding. • Have knowledge of the probable dangers confronting a given school. • Have detailed knowledge of all school emergency safety protocols.	• Able to identify probable dangers confronting a school. • Able to develop school safety protocols. • Able to direct student safety actions and leading others in an emergency. • Capable of independent decision-making during an emergency. • Have first aid training and skills. • May or may not demonstrate the ability to disrupt the actions of an intruder.	• Conduct threat assessments to identify the specific dangers specific schools confront. • Engage in conversations about the specific school safety protocols needed. • From threat assessment data, develop specific school safety protocols. • Engage in advanced training in the selected school safety protocols. • Engage in first aid training. • Practice managing and directing the selected school safety protocols (e.g., conduct evacuation, lockdown, and options-based safety drills).
Professional Awareness	*First Responders and School Safety Professionals*	• Have all *Advanced Awareness* knowledge and understanding. • Have knowledge of tactical responses and counterattack measures.	• Capable of high-level decision-making during an emergency. • Trained and equipped to provide tactical response and counterattack measures to protect self and others in an emergency. • Trained and equipped to provide advanced emergency medical assistance to others. • Have the ability to disrupt the actions of an intruder.	• Establish a process to screen potential school based law enforcement officer's decision-making ability in high stress events. • Provide training in specific tactics for confronting and ending an active shooter event. First responders should be trained in tactical first-aid strategies.

Note. Adapted from Development Levels of Safety Awareness, 2014. Safe and Sound Schools: A Sandy Hook Initiative

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APPENDIX 5: QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN CONSIDERING ARMED ASSAILANT TRAINING

Emergency Operations Plan Development/Revision

1. How does this fit into a comprehensive school emergency operations plan (EOP)?
2. Have all relevant stakeholders been consulted and involved in reviewing possible programs/approaches?
    a. Superintendent and district leadership staff
    b. Law enforcement (district and community law enforcement agencies; school resource officers)
    c. District safety and security officers
    d. Mental health professionals (school psychologists, counselors, and social workers)
    e. Health Services
    f. Principals and teachers
    g. Parents and students (as age appropriate)
    h. School Board members
3. Is this supported by a needs assessment that determined the most likely crises to occur in the district?
4. Has a cost-benefit analysis of the potential training been done, considering financial costs in relation to the likelihood of a particular crisis?
5. What evidence is there that the procedures being considered have been evaluated for effectiveness?
6. What evidence is there that the procedures are aligned with the guidelines of the U.S. Department of Education (2013) and allied professional organizations (National Association of School Psychologists and National Association of School Resource Officers (2014)? Note: The US Dept of Ed. does not mandate school districts to conduct armed assailant/active shooter exercises.
7. Are the procedures in compliance with state laws and school board policies?

Designing and Selecting the Types of Threat-and Hazard-Specific Annexes and Drills

1. Does the training teach multiple types of annexes to respond to an armed assailant scenario (i.e. lockdown, evacuation, etc.)?
2. Does the training consider all available types of drills to teach participants the appropriate annexes?
3. Does it follow a hierarchy from simple low-cost discussion-based activities to operations-based activities?
    a. Orientations
    b. Workshops
    c. Tabletops
    d. Drills
    e. Advanced Simulation Drills and Exercises

Best practice considerations for schools in active shooter and other armed assailant drills, NASP, NASRO (2017).

4. Has the readiness and trauma histories of the staff members and students been assessed before determining what drills are most appropriate?
5. How will the types of drills be selected to use with students?
6. What accommodations will be made in the drills for students with physical, sensory or other disabilities?
7. Will simulations be used? Will students and staff practice “counter-type” strategies (i.e. throwing books, chairs, backpacks, etc.), if applicable? If so, how will they be designed to be developmentally appropriate?
8. If simulations will be used, has the district consulted with their legal team and insurance provider to identify possible risks and liabilities (i.e. there have been lawsuits filed by school staff for physical injuries and emotional trauma as a result of forced participation in armed assailant/active shooter exercises).
9. Has the district set monies aside to repair possible damages to building and district goods as a result of a simulation exercise?

Designing Student Instruction

1. Is there a lesson plan for providing developmentally appropriate training for students?
2. Are instructional experts and school employed mental health professionals involved in designing and implementing developmentally appropriate curriculums for elementary, middle and high school students?
3. Does the plan identify potential training goals, objectives, measurable outcomes, and obstacles?
4. What accommodations will be made in the lessons for students with special needs?
5. How will teachers receive critical background information, including:
    a. Considerations for students with physical, sensory or other disabilities
    b. Developmental guidelines for instruction and drills, i.e. typical knowledge/understanding; typical response capabilities; age-appropriate explanations, procedures, activities and drills.
    c. Recognizing common trauma reactions to help identify when a student, fellow staff member or him/herself needs to be removed from a drill.
    d. Identifying someone that needs mental health support after the drill.

Physical and Mental Health Considerations

1. Does the training balance the need to empower school staff while minimizing potential harm (e.g., triggering stressful or traumatic reactions to live simulation drills)?
2. What are the considerations to mitigate potential physical harm during drills?
3. What financial and medical support is available to address potential physical damage during the drills?
4. What are the mental health supports to mitigate potential psychological harm, such as identifying prior traumatic experiences in participants?
5. What emotional supports will be in place during and after drills for students and staff?

Opt Out Options

1. How can students or staff members opt out of drills or simulations?
2. If staff or students opt out, how will they receive comparable, less intense instruction?
3. Can parents opt their student out of the drills?

Best practice considerations for schools in active shooter and other armed assailant drills, NASP, NASRO (2017).

Communication

1. What is the parent and community education and communication plan prior to implementing the training?
2. Will parent consent be obtained prior to student participation in the training? Will it be active or passive?
3. What is the parent and community education and communication plan whenever drills are conducted?
4. How will parents and the community receive communication during an actual armed assailant crisis?

Evaluation

1. What is the feedback and evaluation process from participants and parents?
2. How will the knowledge and training be maintained and built upon?
3. How will new staff members and students be trained?
4. What is the evaluation process for determining the efficacy of the training and assessing ongoing and/or changing preparedness training needs?

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