

Cato-Meridian Central School District

District-Wide School Safety Plan

Education Law 2801-a and Commissioner's Regulation 155.17

Adopted: October 13, 2020

Introduction

Emergencies and violent incidents in school districts are critical issues that must be addressed in an expeditiously and effective manner. School districts are required to develop a District-Wide School Safety Plan designed to prevent or minimize the effects of serious violent incidents and emergencies and to facilitate the coordination of the district with local and county resources in the event of such incidents or emergencies.

The District-Wide Plan is responsive to the needs of all programs within the district and is consistent with the more detailed emergency response plans required at the school building level. School districts are at risk of a wide variety of acts of violence, natural, and technological disasters. To address these threats, the State of New York has enacted the Safe Schools Against Violence in Education (SAVE) law. This component of Project SAVE is a comprehensive planning effort that addresses risk reduction/prevention, response, and recovery with respect to a variety of emergencies in the school district and its schools.

The Cato-Meridian Central School District continues to support this integral component of the SAVE Legislation through the regular review and updating of its contents. The Superintendent of Schools encourages and advocates this ongoing District-Wide cooperation and support of Project SAVE.

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SECTION I: GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS AND PLANNING GUIDELINES

A. Purpose

The Cato-Meridian Central School District-Wide School Safety Plan was developed pursuant to Education Law 2801-a and Commissioner’s Regulation 155.17. At the direction of the District Superintendent, the Cato-Meridian Board of Education appointed a District-Wide School Safety Team and charged it with the development and maintenance of the District-Wide School Safety Plan.

B. Identification of School Teams

As referenced in the previous section, the Cato-Meridian Board of Education has appointed a District-Wide School Safety Team consisting of, but not limited to, representatives of the School Board, faculty, administration, parents, school safety personnel, and other school personnel. The members of the team and their positions or affiliations are as follows:

Member’s Name	Position of Affiliation
Terry Ward	Superintendent of Schools
Mark Lovell	Guard (School Resource Officer)
Roger Misso	Guard (School Resource Officer)
Brenda Semeraro	School Business Administrator
Danielle Mahoney	Elementary School Principal
Sean Gleason	Jr/Sr High School Principal
Rob Wren	Athletic Director/Student Affairs
Elizabeth Kupiec	CSE Chairperson
Joseph Phillips	Director of Facilities
Aaron Berube	Coordinator for Information Technology
Kathleen Nodine	Nurse – Jr/Sr High School
Wendy Stavenhagen	Nurse – Elementary School
Eric Robinson	Special Education Teacher
Carol Czarnecki	K-4 RTI Reading Teacher
Tammy Cady	Director of Transportation
Kimberly Bratt	Recreation Center Director
Sue Cutri	Librarian
Kathleen Bratt	Board of Education Member
Jenny Kyle	Board of Education Member
Timothy Hulbert	Board of Education Member
Jack Mekeel	Safety Coordinator, BOCES
Trevor Cady	C-M Parent Rep

C. Concept of Operations

General protocols reflected in the District-Wide School Safety Plan guide the development and implementation of the Building-Level Emergency Response Plan (BLERP). The District-Wide Safety Plan sets forth the general procedures and protocols to be adhered to at each school and serve as the standard operating procedures.

In developing the District-Wide Plan, key internal and external stakeholders were involved in order to garner the best local operational knowledge and the best emergency management and safety expertise in creating and revising the Plan. The Cato-Meridian CSD is an integral part of the community and, as such, it is important that community stakeholders are involved and understand the role of the school district and its relationship to the safety of the community at large.

In the event of an emergency or violent incident, the initial response to all emergencies at an individual school will be by the Building Emergency Response Team.

Upon activation of the Building Emergency Response Team, the Superintendent of Schools or his/her designee will be notified and, where appropriate, local emergency officials will also be notified. Efforts may be supplemented by county and state resources through existing protocols.

Chief Emergency Officer

Terry Ward, Superintendent of Schools, is the Cato-Meridian CSD Chief Emergency Officer. The responsibilities of the Chief Emergency officer are:

- Coordinating communication between school staff and first responders
- Ensuring understanding of the District-Wide Safety Plan
- Ensuring completion of the BLERPs
- Ensuring the amendment of all plans as needed

Guard (School Resource Officer)

The Plan will be maintained and controlled by the Guards (School Resource Officers). Any changes would be brought to the Board of Education for review and adoption.

If the Superintendent of Schools is unavailable or not on site, the School Resource Officers will act in his/her absence with the same authority and responsibility.

D. Plan Review and Public Comment

Pursuant to Commissioner's Regulation, Section 155.17 (e)(3), this District-Wide Plan will be made available for public comments at least 30 days prior to its adoption. The Plan may be adopted by the Board of Education only after at least one public hearing that provides for the participation of school personnel, parents, students, and other interested parties. The Plan must be formally adopted by the Board of Education.

The District-Wide School Safety Plan and any amendments will be submitted to the New York State Education Department within 30 days of adoption. In addition, the BLERPs will be sent to the New York State Police and the Cayuga County Sheriff's Department. This Plan will be reviewed periodically during the year and will be maintained by the District-Wide Safety Team. The required annual review will be completed on or before September 1 of each year after its adoption by the Board of Education. A copy of the Plan will be available on the District website.

SECTION II: RISK REDUCTION/PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION

A. Prevention/Intervention Strategies

Initiatives that improve the culture and climate in our schools and improve communication at all levels can substantially enhance our ability to truly prevent any negative event from occurring. Prevention would always be preferred over risk reduction. However, not all such events will be prevented despite our best efforts. Therefore, we must formulate plans to intervene and reduce risk by minimizing the impact of any negative event.

This section will identify specific prevention and risk reduction strategies that have been implemented within Cato-Meridian CSD. Many of these components serve as both prevention and risk reduction tools.

Program Initiatives

The Cato-Meridian CSD recognizes the importance of programs and activities that improve the school climate and communication throughout the school community and that encourages the reporting of potentially dangerous, suspicious, or violent behavior. Such efforts serve to improve the security, safety, and quality of life for all those in the Cato-Meridian CSD school community. The following is a partial list of such current initiatives:

- Assemblies are provided throughout the year in each building of the District to discuss pertinent issues with ALL STUDENTS K-12.
 - Increased awareness and tolerance training
 - Orientation to Code of Conduct
 - Hall monitoring
- Interventions by teachers, counselors, psychologists, aides and monitors, SROs, and administrators
 - Increased awareness training for staff on detection of potentially violent tendencies
- Safe Schools Curriculum
 - Orientation to counseling services available for staff and students
- Advisory/Counseling
 - Non-violence training programs
 - Peer mediation
- Character Education
 - Implemented with tolerance training

- Self-respect and self-esteem training for staff and students
- Peer mediation training for staff and students in Grades K-12
- HS Youth court
- Positivity Project (P2)
- S.A.V.A.R. (Sexual Assault Victims Advocate Resource) of Cayuga County
- T.C.I. (Therapeutic Crisis Intervention)
- Programs from SAFE SCHOOLS/HEALTHY STUDENTS
 - Juvenile Intensive Supervision Team (J.I.S.T.)
 - M.O.S.T. SS/HS
 - Filial M.O.S.T. SS/HS
 - Therapeutic crisis Intervention
 - Safe Dates
 - Guiding Good Choices
 - DASA/Anti-Bullying – Grades K-12

The Cato-Meridian CSD encourages its leadership to develop strategies that support a positive safe learning environment for students, such as community involvement in the schools, mentoring programs, or adjusting scheduling to minimize potential for conflicts or altercations.

Training, Drills, and Exercises

- The Cato-Meridian CSD will provide annual multi-hazard school safety training for all staff and students. The components of this training will be consistent across the district while the means of dissemination will likely be varied due to the specific needs of program participants involved. Staff training will be routinely conducted at the beginning of the school year and will be followed by drills that include the entire school population.
- The Cato-Meridian CSD will conduct drills and exercises to test the components of the BLERPs. The use of tabletop exercises to accomplish this task in coordination with local and county emergency response and preparedness officials may be considered when live drills are impractical or not sufficient to meet training goals. At a minimum, eight evacuation drills (fire drills) and four lockdown drills will be conducted each school year.
- The SRO's will monitor and evaluate the drills for completeness/thoroughness.
- In addition, an annual early dismissal drill will occur, not more than 15 minutes earlier than normal dismissal time. Transportation and communication procedures will be included in the test, and parents and guardians will be notified in writing at least one week prior to such drill.

- The emergency back-up generator and lighting systems are also tested annually and all systems are verified functional without electricity.
- Annual training on BLERP by September 15 which must provide training, including components on violence protection and mental health.

Implementation of School Safety

- Routine Precautions by All Staff
 - All staff are expected to immediately report to their building principal and the SRO's any information they have received or observations they have made regarding anything that could possibly impact the safety and security of anyone within the school community.
 - Note: Staff should always err on the side of safety and share such information each and every time. No detail is too small or inconsequential as individual staff may not be aware of all circumstances surrounding a particular student or concern.

- Limited Access
 - The Cato-Meridian CSD is tasked with implementation of this policy while tailoring it to specific needs of each building. Generally, this means that the fewest exterior doors necessary to maintain normal business will remain unlocked during portions of the regular school day – most commonly to facilitate morning arrival. Those doors that may need to remain unlocked during a portion of the school/business day should be monitored in some fashion. All entrances are to be secured shortly after the start of the instructional day. Once secured for the instructional day, the District utilizes an audio and video electronic, visitor access control system at their primary entrances that provide a means for school staff to remotely screen and approve visitors prior to actually granting them access into the building.
 - The District also utilizes a keyless entry/electronic access control system at designated doors allowing specific access (designated days/times, and entrances) to authorized personnel by presenting a programmed proximity identification card to a reading device at those entrances. This system also automatically unlocks and locks specific entrances to accommodate normal arrival, dismissal, and after school activity.

- Staff Photo Identification Badges
 - All Cato-Meridian CSD employees are issued photo identification (proximity) badges that are to be displayed at all times while on

school district property to assist visitors, students, and staff in identifying employees as well as possible intruders.

- Visitor Policy
 - The District Visitors to Schools policy will provide the detail related to how visitors are handled at each building. Should an unannounced visitor appear at a classroom, office or be observed in the hallways without proper identification (visitor pass or note from the office), staff may approach and inquire as to a subject's business or contact their school's main office immediately.

- Student Sign-Out Procedures
 - Schools are diligent in ensuring that only those persons authorized to sign-out students are allowed to do so utilizing the applicable data maintained within School Tool. Staff may also require a photo ID if the requesting party is unknown to them and may contact a parent or guardian for confirmation when deemed appropriate.

- Video Surveillance
 - A digital video surveillance system is in service at all Cato-meridian CSD facilities to assist in monitoring, deterring, and recording activity in high use areas of chronic concern or perceived vulnerability.

- Fire Alarm
 - A fire detection alarm that is linked to a central monitoring station is in service at all Cato-Meridian CSD facilities. These alarms and fire response procedures are tested regularly consistent with New York State Education Department regulations.

Vital Educational Agency Information

The Cato-Meridian CSD maintains general information about each educational agency located in the BOCES service area, including information on: school population, number of staff, SRO's, transportation needs, and the business and home telephone numbers of key officials of each such educational agency.

B. Early Detection of Potentially Violent Behaviors

The District recognizes the importance of early recognition and intervention into conflicts and potentially violent or threatening behaviors. As such, the District will ensure that appropriate school violence prevention and intervention training will be incorporated into all phases of staff professional development.

Informative materials regarding the early detection of potentially violent behaviors shall be made available to the school community through various means that may include brochures, district-wide newsletters, and the district website.

Students, parents, and all staff are encouraged to share information regarding any student conflicts, threats or troubling behaviors with the appropriate school administrator and/or the SRO's so that an investigation can commence in a timely fashion if deemed necessary.

To assist students, parents, and community, the District has a 100% anonymous mobile app (CMTIPS) in place for reporting violent behavior or information about bullying, drug use, vaping, suspicious or potential criminal activity, or any other important information they need to share.

This communication may extend beyond Cato-Meridian CSD personnel to include members of the District's Safety Team, Law Enforcement, Mental health Professionals, etc., when deemed appropriate and within existing legal parameters.

C. Hazard Identification

The list of sites of potential emergency include: all school buildings, playground areas, properties adjacent to schools, buses, and off-site field trips. The School Safety Team has assessed Cato-Meridian CSD facilities for unique hazards and has documented them on the Building-Level Emergency Response Plans.

D. Construction and Capital Project Safety

Each school under the direction of the Superintendent of Schools and the Director of Facilities, as well as the involved construction manager (if applicable) will take steps to ensure the safety and security of the students and staff during periods of construction. This requirement may include background checks on workers, maintaining sufficient and appropriate emergency egress routes, and notifying building occupants of any changes. School Resource Officers (SRO's) will monitor such projects for safety issues and address them as needed.

The District Safety Team, or a subcommittee thereof, will be involved in monitoring safety during construction projects as needed. The Committee may include the Director of Facilities, Superintendent of Schools, architect, construction manager, and contractors. The committee will hold additional meetings as needed to review issues and address complaints related to health and safety resulting from the construction project.

SECTION III: RESPONSE

A. Notification and Activation (Internal and External Communications)

Incident Commanders are authorized to and will initiate contact with the appropriate law enforcement officials in the event of a violent incident. The district maintains a list of local law enforcement agencies, and the designation of the individual who is authorized to contact the law enforcement agencies. The responding law Enforcement Officers have been provided access cards to the school buildings.

The process for informing educational agencies within a school district of a disaster or an act of violence include the following forms of communication: telephone, email, district radio system, NOAA weather radio, district website, intercom or PA system, local media, and others as appropriate or necessary.

The system may specify that in the event of an emergency, or impending emergency, the District will notify all principals/SRO's within the district to take the appropriate action. The Superintendent of Schools will utilize media outlets to contact parents, guardians or persons in parental relation to the students in the event of a violent incident or early dismissal.

B. Situational Response

Multi-Hazard Response

In the event of a catastrophic emergency (fire, building collapse, etc.) the evacuation of the building and the preservation of life is the only consideration. It is anticipated that specific procedures outlined in this document, particularly as they relate to notifications, line of authority, etc., may well be violated in cases involving catastrophic emergencies.

There are many variables that could impact the manner in which the Building Emergency Response Team (BERT) responds to a particular occurrence. These variables could include: time of day, weather, age of students, and location of students, anticipated response time of emergency responders, availability of support personnel, and availability of transportation. Specific emergency situations are identified and standard response procedures are detailed in the Building-Level Emergency Response Plans. However, given the aforementioned variables, it is

impractical to try and map out the specific steps to take for every conceivable scenario. It is more practical to focus on just a few critical decisions that need to be made in every emergency pursuant to our primary goal of preventing injury and loss of life.

The Superintendent of Schools is designated as the person in charge – the Incident Commander – during the initial response to any emergency in the District. The Superintendent of Schools will provide leadership, organize activities and disseminate information with the assistance of the BERT if needed.

In most instances where the level of school response is warranted, the District will be seeking assistance from outside emergency responders in resolving the situation. As such, the immediate objective is generally to contain and manage the incident until the emergency responders arrive on scene.

Procedures for obtaining advice and assistance from local government officials, including county or city officials responsible for implementation of Article 2-B of the Executive Law. By contacting 9-1-1, the system for coordinating the delivery of assistance from both county and local agencies will be activated. The SRO's will work in tandem with law enforcement to resolve the issue at hand.

The Building-level Emergency Response Plans include procedures and actions that will be implemented in the event of the occurrence of a hazardous event. Such plans are not available to the public, nor are they to be included in the District-Level Safety Plan.

Responses to Acts of Violence: Implied or Direct Threats

The District policies and procedures for responding to implied or direct threats of violence, including suicide by students, teachers, other school personnel and visitors to the school, will be included in the Building-Level Emergency Response Plans. The following types of procedure(s) may be used by the District:

- Immediate contact of the building School Resource Officer (SRO)
- Use of staff trained in de-escalation or other strategies to diffuse the situation
- Inform Principal of implied or direct threat
- Determine level of threat with Superintendent of Schools/Designee
- Contact appropriate law enforcement agency, if necessary
- Monitor situation, adjust response as appropriate
- Include the possible use of the BERT

Acts of Violence

The District policies and procedures for responding to acts of violence by students, teachers, other school personnel and visitors to the school will be included in the Building-Level Emergency Response Plans. The following types of procedure(s) could be used by the District:

- Determine level of threat with the Superintendent of Schools/Designee
- If situation warrants, isolate the immediate area and evacuate, if appropriate
- Inform principal and building SRO
- If necessary, initiate lockdown procedure, and contact appropriate law enforcement agency
- Monitor situation and adjust response as appropriate
- If necessary initiate early dismissal, sheltering or evacuation procedures

Response Protocols

The District selection of appropriate responses to emergencies, including protocols for responding to bomb threats, hostage takings, intrusions and kidnappings will be included in the Building-Level Emergency Response Plans. The following possible protocols are provided as examples:

- Identification of decision-makers
- Plans to safeguard students and staff
- Procedures to provide transportation, if necessary
- Procedures to notify parents
- Procedures to notify media
- Debriefing procedures

Arrangements for Obtaining Emergency Assistance from Local Government

Arrangements for obtaining assistance during emergencies from emergency services organizations and local government agencies include contacting 9-1-1 immediately. Additional support can be obtained by contacting the Cayuga County Sheriff's Department, New York State Police, Ira Fire Department, Cato Fire Department, and the Cayuga County Emergency Management Office. SRO's will meet periodically with local law enforcement.

District resources Available for Use in an Emergency

District resources which may be available during an emergency include all of the District's vans, trucks, heavy equipment, and other vehicles. We can also contact the Town of Cato Highway Department or the Cayuga County Highway Department to request additional heavy equipment and other resources.

Procedures to Coordinate the Use of District Resources and Manpower during Emergencies

The Cato-Meridian CSD will use the Incident Command System to coordinate the use of school district resources and manpower during emergencies.

Protective Action Options

Plans for taking the following actions in response to an emergency, where appropriate, will be included in the Building-Level Emergency Response Plans:

- School cancellation
- Early dismissal
- Evacuation
- Sheltering

SECTION IV: RECOVERY

A. District Support for Buildings

After an incident, the District Crisis Plan will be initiated by the appropriate level emergency response team. Necessary resources will be deployed in order to support the Emergency Response Team and the Post-Incident Response Team.

B. Disaster Mental Health Services

Mental health services needed will be addressed by the appropriate emergency response team using the District Crisis Plan.