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School Security *Lockdown Procedures*

Catholic schools take great pride in the safe, caring environments provided to their students. However, recent events serve as a reminder that wide-scale violent acts can occur anywhere, at any time. Catholic schools are not immune from this type of violence. The following guidelines should be followed to ensure a plan is in place and practiced to keep your students and staff safe.

Monitored Entrances

All secondary entrance doors to the building should remain locked. The main entrance door to the school should be monitored at all times by qualified personnel or a buzz-in system should be in place. When possible, security cameras are recommended at each entry point. All visitors should be required to sign in/out at the main office and Visitor Badges should be provided. Staff members should be instructed to be on alert and use caution when spotting an unknown individual in the building not wearing a Visitor Badge.

Developing Lockdown Procedures

Schools are strongly encouraged to develop written lockdown procedures. In addition to having a plan, it is critical that the plan be put into practice with drills conducted on a regular basis.

Identifying Means of Communication

To begin, identify the system you will use to warn faculty, staff and students to lockdown the school. A public address system that can be heard throughout the school is best. Test your communication system in each room of the building, including restrooms and lounges. Be sure your communication system can reach every area of the building, as well as the areas outside of the building where students or faculty may be present. Ideally, this would include any neighboring parish buildings.

In addition, the Principal and another designee should keep a group contact list on their mobile device and use it to send a quick text message to the group such as "lockdown in place." The contact list should include the pastor and other primary contacts.

Developing a Script

Use simple language to make emergency announcements. The Federal Emergency Management Agency discourages using codes and signals as these can be confusing, especially for substitute teachers, school visitors, or contractors. A sample script could include the following:

- This is Principal (name).
- This is a lockdown order for the entire school.
- I repeat - This is a lockdown order for the entire school.
- Remain in lockdown until further notice.

Meet with Local First Responders

A positive, collaborative relationship with first responders is critical. Law enforcement, fire officials and other emergency responders should visit your school and provide consultation when developing your plan. Submit floor plans of your school to first responders and update plans when necessary.

Train Staff

Educate staff – be sure they know their specific roles and responsibilities if a lockdown occurs. Emphasize the importance of emergency drills during staff meetings. Encourage feedback from staff on drills and procedures. Be sure to include emergency procedures in informational packets for substitutes and new staff members. Work with staff to provide provisions during emergencies for any students with special needs.

Conduct Drills

Schedule drills on a regular basis. Once every nine weeks or once per semester is recommended. Drills are critical for a few reasons. First, they assure a predictable response in the event of an actual emergency. Second, drills help identify problems or weaknesses in your procedures so they can be corrected. Third, staff and students get a better idea on what is expected of them during an actual emergency when participating in regular practice drills.

Notify emergency responders at least 48 hours prior to holding a drill and invite them to observe and give feedback. Also, notify parents/guardians of drills **after** a drill occurs, preferably on the same day so they won't be alarmed if their child mentions it. At the beginning of the school year, inform parents/guardians that first responders may be present during drills throughout the school year. The sight of law enforcement officials on school grounds may cause parents to be alarmed.

Lockdown Instructions: If the Assailant is in the Building

Take refuge in the nearest classroom, office or other room. If students are in the hall, bring them to a secure location.

Secure the immediate area – classroom, office, restroom, etc.

- Lock and/or barricade the door using whatever is available – desks, table, file cabinets, books, etc.
- After securing door, stay behind objects and away from door.
- If it is safe to do so, allow others to seek refuge with you.

Reduce your vulnerability

- Close blinds.
- Block windows.
- Silence cell phones.
- Keep people/students calm and quiet.
- After securing room, people should be positioned out of sight and behind items that might offer additional protection – walls, desks, file cabinets, etc.

Take attendance in order to account for students and staff in your class.

Remain in lockdown and do not communicate with anyone at your door until you hear official instructions from a recognized administrator or law enforcement.

If you find yourself in an open area, immediately seek protection:

- Put something between you and assailant.
- Consider trying to escape.

Call 911. Stay on the line until it is answered – do not hang up, even if you are unable to talk. Be prepared to give the following information:

- Your location (building name and room number).
- Description of what is occurring.
- Number of people at your location.
- Injuries, if any.
- Description of assailant(s) – try to be as specific as possible.

Other Considerations

If the Assailant is on School Grounds

If the assailant is outside, the exterior of the school must be immediately secured to prevent the assailant from entering the school.

If Students are Enroute to School When Incident Occurs

Have a plan if a lockdown takes place while students are on school grounds or on their way to campus (i.e. students returning from a field trip; students at recess.) Designate a meeting area for these students/staff ahead of time and inform parents of the designated meeting area to be used. Determine how you will communicate the emergency situation to the staff accompanying students.

Recovery

In the event of an incident, is your school prepared to immediately provide mental health services? Consult with local mental health professionals as part of your planning and procedure.

Every school is different and it is impossible to create a “one-size-fits-all” plan to cover all the different variables at each school. **Therefore, it is imperative that each school works closely with local officials (i.e. fire, police, emergency management, etc.) to develop a workable plan which is site-specific for your school.**

If you have any questions or would like further assistance or consultation, please contact Catholic Mutual Group’s Risk Management Department at 1.800.228.6108 or rm@catholicmutual.org.

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