

# ***Catholic Mutual... "CARES"***

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## Conceal Carry Policy for School Faculty Members, Volunteers and Parents

Historically, the violence occurring at schools was limited to shouting matches and occasional fistfights. School was considered a safe haven for children where they could learn in a structured environment and socially interact with their peers.

Unfortunately, violence with fatal results has increased in schools in the last several years. This is evidenced by the numerous school shootings across the nation. Given the vast attention paid to these tragedies in the media, parents are calling for heightened security. Many schools have already established a Violence Prevention and Preparedness Policy or are in the process of completing one in addition to heightening the security and limiting school access.

A growing number of states have passed, or are in the process of passing, laws that would allow certain individuals to carry firearms in public buildings and schools, with specific language allowing teachers and faculty members to carry concealed-carry firearms inside school property.

Although these laws are meant with good intentions, Catholic Mutual strongly recommends that all schools in those states continue to ban firearms on school property. This will include posting signs on school grounds and at all entrances stating that the school does not allow firearms on the premises, unless given specific permission to do so. Catholic Mutual also recommends that all schools have a Post-Shooting Incident and Preparedness policy. (A sample policy is provided).

If armed security at the school is necessary and requested by the majority of the students' parents, you will need to understand and comply with state statutes related to who is permitted to carry firearms. The first step is contacting your attorney or State Attorney General for additional information. Contacting your local police/law enforcement department is the next step. The police department may be able to assign an officer to your school for security purposes. If this is not an option, then the final step would be to contract with a "qualified" security company that is insured, bonded and has specially trained personnel in handling firearms.

Catholic Mutual strongly recommends that you do not allow principals, teachers, faculty, volunteers, parents or any other individual that is not an "on-duty" police officer, or other law enforcement agency, to bring firearms into the school.

## Risk Management Recommendations and Best Practices

Catholic Mutual does not require members to take a specific stance on the decision to allow concealed carry weapons on your property. However, we have developed strong recommendations that are consistent with the Catholic Church's position and intended to enhance the safety of your operations.

1. Schools should post signage similar to: "School Grounds: all weapons and firearms are prohibited". We suggest you review the requirements in your state law that gives guidance to specific verbiage and allows pictorial signage. We recommend signs that meet the requirements for owners of private property, which is that signs are at least 5 inches x 7 inches and located in a prominent place near all entrances, such that any individual entering the building can be reasonable expected to see the sign. For example, the sign may be affixed to the glass of an entrance door, or posted on a building wall near the entrance. If the school has multiple exterior doors, but only a few are opened to students or the public, signage would not be required at those doors that are not used as entrances. In addition to school buildings, signage should be posted at the entrances to administrative buildings, athletic stadiums and fields.
2. In churches and other buildings that share use with school operations, we recommend implementing a weapons ban consistent with the school building. Our recommendation is: "School Operations: all weapons and firearms are prohibited". We suggest you review the requirements in your state law that gives guidance to specific verbiage and allows pictorial signage. We recommend signs that meet the requirements for owners of private property, which is that signs are at least 5 inches x 7 inches and located in a prominent place near all entrances, such that any individual entering the building can be reasonable expected to see the sign. For example, the sign may be affixed to the glass of an entrance door, or posted on a building wall near the entrance. Posting should occur in areas where and whenever school children are frequently in the church and other buildings during the day. Examples are: regular classroom or extra-curricular instruction in the church/convent/rectory, meals in the church halls, before/after school care programs, school Mass and special programs.
3. We recommend that churches without operating schools, service agencies, and cemeteries adopt a ban on CCW and comply with the posting requirements described above, except the signage wouldn't include "school grounds." Youth religious educations are one reason for this recommendation. Youth religious education programs bring the same concentration of children. Unless churches, service agencies, and cemeteries post a ban in accordance with the signage requirements, the new laws being passed allows CCW licensees to carry their firearm.

## **Security, Special Events and Exceptions for CCW Bans**

Law enforcement officers acting in their official capacity are exempted from any weapon or firearm ban. If your school/church/agency/cemetery utilizes armed security on a regular basis for special events, we recommend that you contract with a licensed company that has specifically trained staff in enforcing CCW weapon bans or hire/contract police officers (either on-duty or off-duty).

## **Actions in Enforcement of Concealed Carry Weapon Bans**

On school grounds, if an unknown person with a weapon is spotted, we recommend quickly removing children and staff to a place of safety and immediately contacting law enforcement. On school grounds, if a person known to staff is noticed carrying a concealed weapon, the school may use its discretion in contacting law enforcement immediately or verbally telling the offender that they are on school property, that no weapons are allowed, and that they must immediately leave the property. School personnel should not attempt to detain a person carrying a weapon while law enforcement is contacted.

In churches and other non-school property where a weapons ban has been posed, if a person is spotted carrying a concealed weapon, we recommend immediately communicating with that person that weapons are not allowed in the building (or property) and ask them to immediately leave. If the person refuses to comply with your request to leave the premises, then call law enforcement. You should not attempt to detain a person carrying a weapon while law enforcement is contacted.

## **Place of Employment Recommendation**

Many of the new CCW laws not only affect guests to your property, but also affect your employees and volunteers. We recommend that you implement a complete weapons ban, including CCW licensees, for all employees and volunteers. The concealed weapons ban should be in the form of a written policy that is communicated to all employees and volunteers and included in your policy manual. If your organization owns vehicles, the concealed weapons ban should extend to your employee while in your owned vehicles. However, most laws do not allow an employer to ban employees with a CCW license from keeping a firearm in their own vehicle, even if that vehicle is used in the course of their work for you.

# Post-Shooting Incident

If a shooting incident has occurred and the safety of the school or property has been restored, follow-up measures are necessary in the aftermath of such a violent situation and its impact on the future operations of the school.

## The Day After

Administrators should meet with the Crisis/Threat Management Teams and Faculty/Staff members to update them with any additional information and procedures:

- Discuss success (if any) and list all the problems;
- Discuss things to do or handle differently if this should ever reoccur
- Allow staff the opportunity to discuss their feelings and reactions.

In case of death(s), provide funeral information. Often people will want to find ways to memorialize the student(s) or staff member(s). Carefully, think through the kind of tribute paid to a person who has died. Parents and loved ones especially want to know people miss the person, that there was great sadness at the loss, and that assistance was given to the grieving friends.

Identify vulnerable students/families in need of follow-up support and assign staff member to monitor and assist them.

- Coordinate counseling and EAP opportunities;
- Call Student Assembly to announce support and offer post-trauma counseling for those in need;
- Provide parents/families with a list of community resources available to them.

## Long-Term Follow-up and Evaluation

- Provide a list of suggested reading to teachers, parents and students;
- Review your preventive and preparedness policies with the Crisis/Threat Teams for amending management protocols, if needed;
- Be alert to anniversaries and holidays. Often students will experience an “anniversary grief” reaction the following month or year the date of the incident;
- Be aware of common reactions, which may be displayed following a traumatic event.

Teachers can assist students by:

- Coping with their own feelings of helplessness, fear, and anger in order to effectively help the students;
- Learn to recognize the signs and symptoms of distress and post-traumatic stress reactions;
- Put the situation in context providing a perspective. Communicate a positive attitude;
- Start the healing process by helping students feel relieved and soothed. Help them “talk it out”.

Creating a violence prevention attitude in the schools will depend upon the involvement of administration in:

- Developing a school discipline code of student behavior and conduct;
- Developing extended day programs, extracurricular activities and recreation plans that provide a positive alternative to juvenile crime and violence;
- Developing a referral system for the abused;
- Developing specific plans directed at eliminating gang influence in schools;
- Preventing school drug trafficking;
- Communicating to the community a clear directive of zero-tolerance for school violence;
- Continuing inspection and maintenance of security and preventative measures including the physical plant.

The faculty and staff must continue to:

- Focus on academic achievement;
- Continue to involve families in a meaningful way;
- Develop links to the community;
- Support student/staff relationships, treating students with equal respect;
- Discuss safety issues openly with students and their peers;
- Emphasize safe expression of student feelings;
- Promote stewardship, citizenship and character;
- Be aware of imminent warning signs for violent situations;
- See problems and assess progress in reducing the potential for violent behavior;
- Keep open lines of communication among the school and local community.

The goal is to maintain a positive, safe and welcoming environment, which promotes wellbeing and growth of all students, and in which all members take pride (free of drugs, gangs, bullying, violence, intimidation, fear, and shaming). At the same time, the school should continue to provide firm, consistent rules and guidelines for appropriate behavior.

Before finalizing your plan, Catholic Mutual recommends consulting with your Arch/Diocese, local law enforcement, fire, civil defense and mental health authorities to assure the plan is individualized to fit your school and community's needs.

### Incident Management Response

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
1. Has key team members and alternates been identified?	___	___
2. Have rolls and responsibilities been determined?	___	___
3. Have any training requirements been determined and practiced?	___	___
4. Has a primary and secondary meeting location been established?	___	___
5. Do you have protocols if key staff are not physically present?	___	___

### Notification and Communication

1. Do you have a mass notification system in place?	___	___
2. Do you have a script or determined message content?	___	___
3. Are evacuation plans/routes posted and practiced?	___	___
4. Are rallying points determined and disseminated?	___	___
5. Do you have an updated emergency call-out listing?	___	___

### Security and Safety

1. Do you have security personnel available?	___	___
2. Are first responder kits available in every classroom?	___	___
3. Do you have an Employee Assistance Program (EAP)?	___	___

### Staging and Execution

1. Have you identified trauma centers and their capabilities?	___	___
2. Has a primary and secondary location to manage family and friends been established?	___	___
3. Has a primary and secondary location for an Emergency Operations Center been established?	___	___
4. Is your plan reviewed and exercised at least annually?	___	___