

## School Safety Planning Guide

### *For New Public Charter Schools*

This document is intended to provide information to new public charter schools that are in the planning process for welcoming students to the school campus for the first time in future school years. This document provides a baseline of considerations and laws; for more information for school safety coordinators, click [here](#).

#### Emergency Operations Plan (EOP)/Safety Plan

[Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-804](#) establishes the requirement for a comprehensive district-wide and school-level safety plan regarding crisis intervention, emergency response, and emergency management. These plans must be developed by the district and school-level safety teams and must follow the template developed by the state-level safety team. [Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-806](#) requires that school building-level safety teams include representatives of teacher, administrator, parent organizations, and school personnel, including school safety personnel, as well as community members, local law enforcement officials, local ambulance or other emergency response agencies, etc.

#### State Templates

[2025-26 District EOP Template](#)

[2025-26 School EOP Template](#)

[Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools \(REMS\) Technical Assistance Center](#) recommends a [six-step planning process](#) for developing high-quality emergency operations plans, which includes the following:

- **Step 1: Form a Collaborative Planning Team**
  - Plans should not be created in isolation. Collaborate with the [county emergency management agency](#), law enforcement, local fire and emergency management services, [homeland security agent](#), district and school administration, transportation supervisor, facility manager, cafeteria supervisor, nursing supervisor, school counselor/student supports supervisor, athletic director, coordinated school health coordinator, etc. Tennessee Emergency Management System (TEMA) also has a [local and county mitigation planning dashboard](#) to help see the hazards at the local level.
- **Step 2: Understand the Situation**
  - TEMA indicates that [Tennessee has 13 threats](#), including: [drought](#), [earthquake](#), [extreme temperatures](#), [wildfire](#), [flood](#), [geologic](#), [severe weather](#), [tornado](#), [communicable disease](#), [dam/levee failure](#), [hazardous material release](#), [terrorism](#), and [critical infrastructure](#). In addition, some communities in Tennessee have technological hazards, including [nuclear](#) and [energy](#). TEMA also has a [local and county mitigation planning dashboard](#) to help see the hazards at the local level.
- **Step 3: Determine the Goals and Objectives**
  - The district and school emergency operations planning templates have hazard sheets that allow for planning before, during, and after the following threats: active aggressor/active shooter, bomb threat, bullying, communicable disease, crime in community, cybersecurity,

earthquake, fire/explosion, flood, foodborne outbreak, hazardous material release, hostage, intruder, medical emergency, missing student/abduction, nuclear power plant accident, severe storms, suicide threat or attempt, and tornado. In addition, the district emergency operations planning template has a transportation annex to help plan for emergencies that may occur on school buses.

- **Step 4: [Plan Development \(Identifying Courses of Action\)](#)**
  - Possible courses of action can be developed using the following steps:
    - Create a potential scenario based on the identified threats and hazards.
    - Determine the amount of time available to respond.
    - Identify decision points.
    - Develop courses of action: goals, objectives, and courses of action for threats and hazards will go into the hazard sheets of the district and school emergency operations planning templates.
- **Step 5: [Prepare, Review, and Approve the Plan](#)**
  - Stakeholders review the plan, obtain official approval of the plan, and share the plan with community partners and stakeholders.
- **Step 6: [Implement and Maintain the Plan](#)**
  - Educate and train all parties on the plan.
  - Visit evacuation sites.
  - Give involved parties the appropriate and relevant literature on the plan, policies, and procedures.
  - Post key information throughout the school building.
  - Familiarize students and staff with the plan.
  - Train staff in the skills necessary to fulfill their roles and responsibilities.
  - Exercise the plan: [tabletop exercises](#), [drills](#), [functional exercises](#), [full-scale exercises](#).
  - Review, Revise, and Maintain the plan.

Each Emergency Operations Plan should be considered a **living document** and remain up to date throughout the school year. It is essential to have a comprehensive plan that is created through collaborative efforts with local law enforcement, emergency services, safety team members and other important stakeholders to include transportation supervisors, facility managers, nursing supervisors, school counselors, cafeteria workers, athletic directors, and coordinated school health coordinators to ensure that your schools are successful in preventing, mitigating, responding to and recovering from incidents to ensure the safety of students and staff in schools.

[Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-804](#) requires that safety plans or Emergency Operations Plans (EOPs) must be submitted by **July 1 of each year** to local law enforcement agencies with jurisdiction, the Tennessee Department of Education (department), and the Tennessee Department of Safety. Also, the safety plan should follow the template minimum requirements, as prescribed by [Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-805](#).

[Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-804](#) also requires that public charter schools provide other plans, information, or records regarding school security upon request. The department requires the **prior year drill logs** to also be submitted by **July 1 of each year**. Also, during a drill or in an emergency situation, public charter schools shall, to the greatest extent possible, provide a responding law enforcement agency with access to security systems that may be required for the law enforcement agency's response. Security systems include, but are

not limited to, audio recording systems, visual recording systems, any other camera systems, fire systems, communications systems, or other security measures in the school building.

### ***Additional Resources for Emergency Operations Planning***

[Virtual Emergency Operations Planning Training](#)

[Campus Safety Training: Introduction to Incident Command System \(ICS\) for School Personnel](#)

### ***Uploading the Emergency Operations Plan to ePlan:***

[Video example](#) of how to upload to FY2026 local education agency (LEA) Document Library

If you do not already have access to [ePlan](#), charter schools can submit this [user access form](#) to [ePlan.Help@tn.gov](mailto:ePlan.Help@tn.gov).

### ***School EOPs***

LEA Document Library > FY2026 > Public School Security Grant > Public School Security Grant School Emergency Operations Plans

### **Security Assessment**

According to [Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-4302](#), each Tennessee public school is required to conduct a school security assessment using the assessment tool developed by the Tennessee Department of Homeland Security (TDOHS). Assessments are to be completed on an annual basis. For further information, contact [Homeland.Security@tn.gov](mailto:Homeland.Security@tn.gov).

### **Requirements of School Buildings Constructed or Remodeled after July 1, 2023**

According to [Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-818](#), public schools, including public charter school buildings, constructed or remodeled after July 1, 2023, must, at minimum:

- include a **door-locking mechanism on each classroom door that allows the classroom door to be locked from the inside**;
- have installed a clear **entry-resistant film on the glass panel of each exterior entry** or basement level window and door to prevent individuals from entering the school building without authorization by breaking the glass in an exterior entry or basement level window or door;
- include a **camera system** that continuously monitors each entrance, hallway, and communal area in the school building during regular school hours and during school-related events and activities conducted on school grounds that is accessible by a local law enforcement agency in an emergency situation; and
- include at least one (1) **secure vestibule** that serves as the primary entrance to the school building that contains two (2) separate sets of doors through which a person must pass to gain entrance into the school building that are each capable of being locked separately to prevent a person from entering the school building until an LEA or school employee authorizes a person to enter.

### **Door Safety Compliance**

[Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-817](#) requires that each public school operated by an LEA, public charter school, non-public school, and church related school shall ensure that all exterior doors leading into a school building are locked at all times and access to the buildings is limited to the school's primary entrance. Outside or regular hours, the primary entrance can be unlocked if continuously monitored by a school or LEA

employee who is physically present at the door to ensure access is limited to only authorized persons and will alert others if an unauthorized person enters.

State and local law enforcement are authorized to inspect a door serving as an entrance to or exit from a school building to determine whether the door is locked as required. There is no limit to the number of inspections law enforcement personnel may conduct. If law enforcement personnel find that the door to an entrance or exit from a school building is unlocked, the school must immediately lock the door, and the law enforcement that found the unlocked door shall, within twenty-four (24) hours, send written notification to:

- the LEA's director of schools or the leader of the public charter school, as applicable;
- the chair of the local board of education or public charter school governing body, as applicable;
- the head of the parent-teacher organization for the LEA or public charter school, if there is such an organization for the public charter school;
- the school principal;
- the Department of Safety ([Homeland.Security@tn.gov](mailto:Homeland.Security@tn.gov));
- the Department of Education ([Door.Safety@tn.gov](mailto:Door.Safety@tn.gov)); and
- each local law enforcement agency with jurisdiction.

The LEA's director of schools, the leader of the public charter school, or their respective designees, shall within forty-eight (48) hours of receiving notification from the law enforcement agency send written confirmation to the notifying law enforcement agency that the door was immediately locked as required and that processes are in place to ensure that the door remains locked as required. The director, leader, or their respective designee shall send a copy of the written confirmation to the recipients listed above. The written confirmation must state whether the LEA or public charter school has a full-time school resource officer whose primary location is the school found to be in violation.

Information about more than one exterior door lock violation can be found [here](#). Please contact [Brian.Yarbro@tn.gov](mailto:Brian.Yarbro@tn.gov) for further questions.

### **Fire Alarm Delayed Evacuation Response**

[Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-807](#) requires each public charter school to develop a procedure for determining the cause of a fire alarm activation, including the potential for an active shooter event. Click [here](#) for a guidance document on developing a procedure for fire alarm delayed evacuation response.

### **Safety Training**

[Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-805\(7\)](#) requires policies and procedures for annual school safety training for all students, teachers, and other school personnel. Instruction on firearm safety required under Tenn. Code Ann. 49-6-1016 must be credited toward the annual school safety training, required by the state-level safety team's template for building-level school safety plans for all students, teachers, and other school personnel who receive or provide instruction.

[Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-2-203\(a\)\(14\)](#) requires substitute teachers to receive annual school safety training as required by [Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-805\(7\)](#). Click [here](#) for tips and guidance on substitute teacher training.

[Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-819](#) establishes that each public charter school shall ensure that each teacher, administrator, and other school personnel employed by the public charter school annually receives **de-escalation training** as created by the department of safety. [Click here](#) for the training.

## Annual Drills

### **Fire Evacuation Drills**

[Tenn. Code Ann. § 68-102-137](#) requires fire drills in educational occupancies. Furthermore, fire drills requiring full evacuation in educational occupancies shall be held at least one (1) time every thirty (30) school days, with two (2) fire drills occurring during the first thirty (30) full days of the school year. Additionally, four (4) [fire safety educational announcements](#) will be conducted throughout the year. Best practices for fire evacuation drills can be found [here](#).

### **Armed Intruder Drill**

[Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-807](#) requires each school safety team, non-public school, and church related school to annually conduct an armed intruder drill. Each armed intruder drill must be conducted in coordination with the appropriate local law enforcement agency. Best Practices for armed intruder drills can be found [here](#).

### **Incident Command Drill**

[Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-807](#) requires each school safety team, non-public school, and church related school to conduct an incident command drill annually. Each incident command drill must be conducted without students present and must prepare school staff and law enforcement agencies on what to expect in the event of an emergency in the school. Best practices for incident command drill can be found [here](#).

### **Emergency Bus Safety Drill**

[Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-807](#) requires each school safety team, non-public school, and church-related school to conduct an emergency safety bus drill annually. Each emergency safety bus drill must be conducted without students present and must prepare school staff and law enforcement agencies on what to expect in the event of an emergency situation on a school bus. Best Practices for emergency bus safety drills can be found [here](#).

### **Shelter in Place Drills**

[Tenn. Code Ann. § 68-102-137\(f\)](#) requires that safety drills not requiring full evacuation of all persons from the building shall be conducted at least three (3) times during the school year. A record of all safety drills, including the time and date, shall be kept in the respective school offices and made available upon request to the state fire marshal, or the state fire marshal's deputies or assistants for inspection and review. Best practices for shelter-in-place drills can be found [here](#).

### **Behavioral Threat Assessment**

[Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-2701](#) establishes that each LEA shall adopt a policy to establish a threat assessment team within the LEA. The purpose of the threat assessment team is to develop comprehensive intervention-based approaches to prevent violence, manage reports of potential threat, and create a system that fosters a safe, supportive, and effective school environment. The threat assessment team must include LEA personnel and law enforcement personnel. The LEA may include juvenile justice services personnel, a representative of the local district attorney's office, a representative of children's services and mental health service providers. The U.S. Secret Service has developed a report on [Enhancing School Safety Using a Threat Assessment Model: An Operational Guide for Preventing Targeted School Violence](#).

## Due Dates

Throughout the year, there are specific deadlines to submit items to various departments and events that occur that safety coordinators may want to attend. Below is a timeline to assist safety coordinators with ensuring that items are submitted by the proper deadline. Please note that many other events occur throughout the school year that relate to school safety, and information will be sent out by the respective department.

- **July 1st:** New school year district and school emergency operations plans, and prior year school drill logs due to TDOE.
- **September 30th:** Signed assurances, annex M on safety spending, emergency contacts due to TDOE.
- **November, February, and May:** Mandatory Threat Assessment Reporting due quarterly to Homeland Security.
- **March to June:** Security Assessments Window.
- **Spring:** Coordinated School Health Institute
- **Monthly:** TDOE School Safety Communities of Practice Virtual Collaborative Calls

### Contacts

| Team Member     | Title                                         | Email                                                                        | TDOE Phone   |
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### Additional Resources:

[Tennessee Department of Commerce and Insurance](#)

[Tennessee Department of Safety and Homeland Security](#)

[Tennessee Emergency Management Agency](#)

[Coordinated School Health](#)

[School Safety and Transportation](#)

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