# School Closure Toolkit: Safety & Operations

## Summary

**During times of unexpected school closure, district and school leaders must plan for any needs related to ongoing essential operations and for the safety of all school sites and stakeholders.**

These routines and procedures ensure schools are safe for essential staff still working onsite and that the sites will be ready to welcome back students and staff after closures.

For questions, please contact Brian.Stockton@tn.gov, Assistant Commissioner of District Operations, or for safety and security questions, please contact Derek.Fregeolle@tn.gov, School Safety Planning Coordinator or Mike.Herrmann@tn.gov, Senior Director of Safety & Transportation.

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### CHECKLIST

For keeping buildings secure and resources safe.

**2**

### BEST PRACTICES

For oversight of facility usage, materials and alarm systems during closure periods.

**3**

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Sample schedules and procedures.

**Guidance**
Guidance documents to support security.

**Facilities**
Supports in maintaining secure facilities and sites.

**Trackers**
Template for tracking resource use for possible federal reimbursement.

# Checklist

Below is a checklist of operations and safety action items for district leaders to complete in partnership with school leaders, building managers, and safety leads.

☐ **Site List of Closures and Ongoing Operations**

Establish a list of which sites will remain open and for what purposes. For sites remaining open, this list should state what ongoing operations are expected and needed at the school (e.g. meal service, custodial support, etc.) and who is expected to be on site (e.g. nutrition staff, families for meal pick-up). This will allow your team to plan needed staffing capacity.

☐ **Set Protocols for Staff & School Sites**

- Establish what access will be permitted to sites (whether open or closed) for whom, when, and under what protocols. This procedure should consider all staff including administrators, teachers, nurses, and support staff and what they may need to get from building, either with one visit or ongoing through the closure. Be clear on what staff must do to gain access to avoid false alarms in security measures, and stagger availability times for staff to enter the building to maximize social distancing.
- Identify site leads for any open sites to own building level operations and security, and plan regular cadence of briefings to central office team to identify needs.

☐ **Implement Closure Procedures**

For all sites without ongoing operations, implement the district's standard closure procedures, including all security measures. Please note that these procedures should include non-school sites that will not be utilized, including professional development sites, bus lots, etc. as applicable. (See Recommended Procedures for building level security checklist.)

☐ **Communicate Closure and Ongoing Operations Plans**

Use existing channels of communication to ensure all staff and stakeholders are aware of the district's plans and protocols for sites through unexpected closures. Identifying any capacity needs required for the continuing operations, and communicate specifically with any staff impacted to assign duties (See Staffing or Nutrition Toolkits for ideas on using hourly employees to assist with unique responsibilities during unexpected closures.)

☐ **Conduct Regular Site Checks**

Leverage SROs or other staff to conduct regular checks on all closed school sites as you would during summer months. In the event SROs are not available, contact local law enforcement to request additional patrols. Use existing reporting channels to flag any issues to district operations leads.

☐ **Document Resources Used**

All site leads and central support staff should maintain documentation on the staff and resources used through the unexpected closure in response to COVID-19. These records may be used to file for potential federal reimbursement under the Stafford Act in the future. (See Recommended Procedures for documentation template.)

# Best Practices

**Leverage the Plans Already in Place**
Districts and schools should draw on the operational logistics already mapped out in school closure plans for summer and emergency operations plans. Follow existing school closure plans on what needs to be completed in each site's context, generally including specific checklist items. Additionally, review emergency operations plans for each school facility and the district for key action items for school safety and communication protocols with students, staff, and community members. (For questions or assistance on emergency operations plans, contact Brenna.Morse@tn.gov.) Local teams have invested in these plans over time, and leveraging them now provides districts and schools with familiar protocols rather than attempting to develop a different set of actions for the unexpected closure.

**Keep Communicating**
Ensure clear channels of ongoing communication are established with staff and external partners. Building managers, custodial staff, SROs, local law enforcement, local emergency management agencies, and other key stakeholders will prove essential in closings schools efficiently, monitoring them, supporting any ongoing operations, and ultimately reopening sites. Whether through daily briefing emails or regular team calls, be sure these team members have regular updates on what is needed in closures, ongoing operations, and in preparation to reopen.

**Continue to Monitor Student Safety**
If the district or school operates a threat assessment team or other safety reporting and outreach protocols to help monitor for school site and student safety, make plans to continue these supports through the closure. These approaches help to foster a safe, supportive, and effective school environment by coordinating collaborative teams of district staff, law enforcement, and mental health personnel to monitor behaviors of students on social media, in the home, or in community settings that may impact the safety of the school community. The Department of Safety and Homeland Security continues to provide the SAFETN app, and district teams will continue to receive calls on any activity related to respective schools sites. All school-based teams should continue to monitor for mental health challenges in students through any interactions during closures and once school resumes (Common Signs & Symptoms).

**Plan for the Return - TDOE Guidance for Crisis Response and Recovery**
The department has developed the Tennessee Schools: PREPARE manual to assist districts and schools in advancing the response and recovery portions of their emergency management plans. This manual includes planning and postvention checklists on restoring community on the first days back at school, typical trauma responses by developmental age, typical trauma reactions, and many other resources.

- Identify licensed professionals in the community.
- Develop and maintain several critical phone trees of members of your crisis team, community supporters, faculty and staff, and district personnel that need to be notified of a crisis.
- Develop and distribute a postvention plan for your staff.

# Recommended Schedules and Procedures

**Safety & Operations Checklist**
The below action items provide a quick check for operations leads to ensure students, staff, and sites are safe and supportive before, during, and after unexpected closures.

Before closing:

- Create district level policies or protocols for ensuring the safety and security of staff and students, communicating those expectations and opportunities to schools. If possible, provide a collection of local resources that can be shared with students and staff.
- Identify students who will need extra support and connections during the closing and develop a plan for service.
- Communicate any developed plans with staff, students and families.
- Make sure district level and school level emergency operations plans are up to date and include postvention plans.
- Develop a protocol for staff to access the building if absolutely necessary, in order to reduce false alarms. This could include an email or phone request to a designated point of contact for approval. Building access should only be granted when absolutely necessary.
- Work with local law enforcement on the current assignments of School Resource Officers (SROs) to reduce the risk of vandalism or theft in empty school buildings
- Plan for alternative meal delivery options that include safety and security considerations for both staff and recipients.

During closing:

- Continue threat assessment team policy and procedures.
- Provide additional supports and services to students, which could include innovative service methods such as tele mental health and involvement from community mental health service providers.
- Communicate with students who may benefit from school staff checking in on them.
- Implement emergency operations plans and postvention plans as needed.
- Implement protocol for staff to access the building if absolutely necessary, in order to reduce false alarms. This could include an email or phone request to a designated point of contact for approval. Building access should only be granted when absolutely necessary.
- Continue monitoring anonymous reporting apps such as SafeTN.
- Implement plan made with local law enforcement for School Resource Officers (SROs) to reduce the risk of vandalism and theft in empty school buildings.
- Implement alternative meal delivery options plans that include safety and security considerations for both staff and recipients.

Upon reopening:

- Develop plans to transition students back to school and back to class.
- Continue to meet with students identified to need extra support.
- Implement regular staff scheduling plans.
- Continue threat assessment team procedures.
- Continue to implement emergency operations plans and postvention plans as needed.

**Site Security Checklist**

Principals, building managers, and other operations leads may use the following checklists to ensure sites are secure during closures.

Standard Security Measures

□ Walk around the building and physically ensure all exterior doors are closed and locked
□ Ensure all outdoor buildings (i.e., portable classrooms, athletic facilities) are closed and locked
□ Close and lock all pedestrian access gates along school perimeter fencing
□ Close and lock all vehicle access gates
□ Close window coverings, especially in areas containing an abundance of high-value items, such as computer labs and libraries

Alarm System

□ Activate the building's alarm system
□ Ensure all of the building's motion and burglary detection sensors are in good repair, if applicable
□ Check the battery backup and ensure there is no low battery signal; replace with new battery if possible
□ Contact the company who monitors your alarms system and advise them that the school building will be closed for an extended period of time
□ Advise staff that the building will be secured and that it should not be entered without approval. In your communication, note that in times of emergencies, law enforcement agencies and first responders are often overextended, and that reducing the number of false alarms is of great assistance to them.
□ Develop a protocol for staff to access the building if absolutely necessary, in order to reduce false alarms. This could include an email or phone request to a designated point of contact for approval. Building access should only be granted when absolutely necessary.

Surveillance

□ Ensure surveillance cameras are operational and are recording without issue
□ Check that the ability to view the surveillance remotely is working, if applicable.
□ If you have the capability of remote viewing, set-up an ongoing monitoring during the closure.
□ Ensure surveillance cameras have an unobstructed view of possible intrusion sites

**Resource Documentation**
District and school leads should maintain records of any staff time or resources dedicated to the COVID-19 response efforts. These records may be used in the future to file for potential federal reimbursement. The table below provides a basic template to use in capturing these expenses throughout the closures.

**SITE:**_____ **DESIGNATED SITE LEAD:**_____

| Date | Start Time | End Time | Name of Staff/ Resources Provided | Notes |
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**Specific Operations Planning Checklist**

Meal Service
- ☐ If an entrance other than the main entrance is being utilized for meal service, ensure that the door is staffed.
- ☐ If possible, isolate the meal service area from the remaining areas of the school.
- ☐ Before locking hallway doors and cordoning hallways, check with your local fire marshal for compliance standards.
- ☐ Planning for alternative meal delivery options should include safety and security planning for both staff and recipients.

School Resource Officers
- ☐ Work with local law enforcement on the current assignments of School Resource Officers (SROs) to reduce the risk of vandalism or theft in empty school buildings
- ☐ If your district is opening feeding sites, SROs could be utilized to maintain a presence during disbursement hours.

Transportation
- ☐ Transportation supervisors should be involved in documenting the use of transportation personnel and resources committed to the COVID-19 response.
- ☐ Supervisors should support the coordination of meal delivery for the district's nutrition program.
- ☐ Supervisors should manage the cleaning/disinfecting of school buses during closures and prior to reopening.
- ☐ Supervisors should remind and ensure all drivers to complete thorough pre-trip inspections of school buses prior to transporting students after an extended school closure.

# Resource List

- Safe and Sound Schools COVID-19 Resource Library
- Local and Regional Health Department Contacts
- Tennessee Suicide Prevention Resources
- Local Emergency Management Office Contacts
  - East Tennessee
  - Middle Tennessee
  - West Tennessee
- U.S. Secret Service Analysis of Targeted School Violence
- Enhancing School Safety Using a Threat Assessment Model
- Guide for Developing High Quality School Emergency Operations Plans
- Schools Against Violence in Education Act (SAVE) Act
- Talking to Children about Coronavirus