

# GUIDE TO K-12 EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT:

Proven Strategies to Protect Your School



**RAPTOR**<sup>®</sup>  
TECHNOLOGIES  
THE GOLD STANDARD IN SCHOOL SAFETY

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## CHAPTER 1

# MEETING AND EXCEEDING EXPECTATIONS FOR EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

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When parents send their children to school, they expect that school to keep them safe. Teachers and staff also expect safety in their workplace. These expectations encompass manmade incidents like violence and crime as well as natural dangers such as inclement weather and pandemics.

Schools are trusted—and obligated—to collectively protect the over 55 million K-12 students across the United States. This protection requires robust planning that can facilitate immediate action. It's not just a matter of everyone feeling safe but also maintaining the integrity of the educational environment. A safe environment is crucial to student learning.

We all understand the need for emergency management, but what does *successful* emergency management look like? Why should we go above and beyond so that our community not only feels safe but trusts us? How do we not just meet expectations but exceed them?

# THE BASICS OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

**Emergency management covers** the entire timeline of an incident. It clearly describes what actions each stakeholder will take before, during, and after incidents.

## Stakeholders

- ➔ Students
- ➔ Faculty
- ➔ Staff
- ➔ Volunteers and substitute teachers
- ➔ Guardians
- ➔ District administrators
- ➔ Elected officials
- ➔ Medical staff
- ➔ Mental health professionals
- ➔ Community support
- ➔ Local first responder agencies (police, fire, and EMS)

**Emergency management includes** preparing for emergencies, managing localized incidents, alerting first responders, accounting for students, reunifying students with their parents/guardians, and continuously adjusting policies in light of new threats.

**Emergency management integrates** policies, personnel, partners, and technology to accomplish the following to prepare for and respond to an emergency:

- Manage drills that enable students, teachers, and staff to respond to events confidently based on “muscle memory” developed through practice
- Instantly summon the appropriate help, whether that’s onsite security personnel, law enforcement, the fire department, and/or health officials
- Provide first responders and staff with immediate access to your school’s most up-to-date emergency operations plan and building diagrams
- Seamlessly monitor and account for the status of everyone on campus throughout an incident
- Efficiently reunify each student with their approved guardian

# CONTEXT AROUND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Safety is the number one consideration in any discussion about emergency management. Yet that discussion is informed by several factors from the immediate community to the larger social and political landscape. All of these factors will influence our discussion of emergency management, but here is a brief overview:

Federal, state, and local legislation as well as district requirements and policies

Safety concerns voiced by parent-teacher associations and teacher unions

Nuances of responding to “everyday” emergencies such as vandalism, injury during recreational activities, student fights, irate visitors, and other incidents that require a different level of attention



Relationships with community groups and law enforcement

Concerns about the coronavirus pandemic

The role of partners and technology

Issues raised by mass shootings, school shootings, and organized violence



# EXCELLENCE IN EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

This guide covers the best practices and examples of emergency management. It first discusses some underlying ideas and considerations and then examines how to design and implement emergency management for *your* school.

Our goal is not to describe one standard approach. As you'll learn, the best emergency management practices are anything but generic. Instead, we'd like to position you to design the best approach for your school and every person inside it.

*Each step of the way, try to imagine how you can integrate or adapt this content for your own school.*



**LEARN ABOUT THE STAGES OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT  
AND SOME PRACTICES THAT CAN HELP YOU RESPOND TO  
ANY EMERGENCY IN THE NEXT CHAPTER**

Chapter 2 >>

## CHAPTER 2

# THE THREE STAGES OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

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We've organized emergency management around three central themes: *prepare*, *respond*, and *recover*. These stages roughly correspond to *before*, *during*, and *after* an incident, but they all reinforce each other and rely on many of the same principles.

During an actual crisis, these practices can help you to expedite awareness, respond to the situation, and ultimately save lives.

”

Time Equals Life.

[Make Our Schools Safe](#)

# PREPARE

It's no surprise that the first step we're outlining is also the lengthiest. Every second counts during a crisis, so being prepared is imperative. It is virtually impossible to predict every emergency, but schools still have the opportunity—and responsibility—to accomplish a lot by preparing for any type of crisis.

## EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLAN

Your emergency operations plan (EOP) is the first major step in effective school safety. It covers the entire timeline of different possible incidents, including how to alert first responders, account for students, and reunify them with approved guardians.

While thinking through your EOP, concentrate on these five objectives:

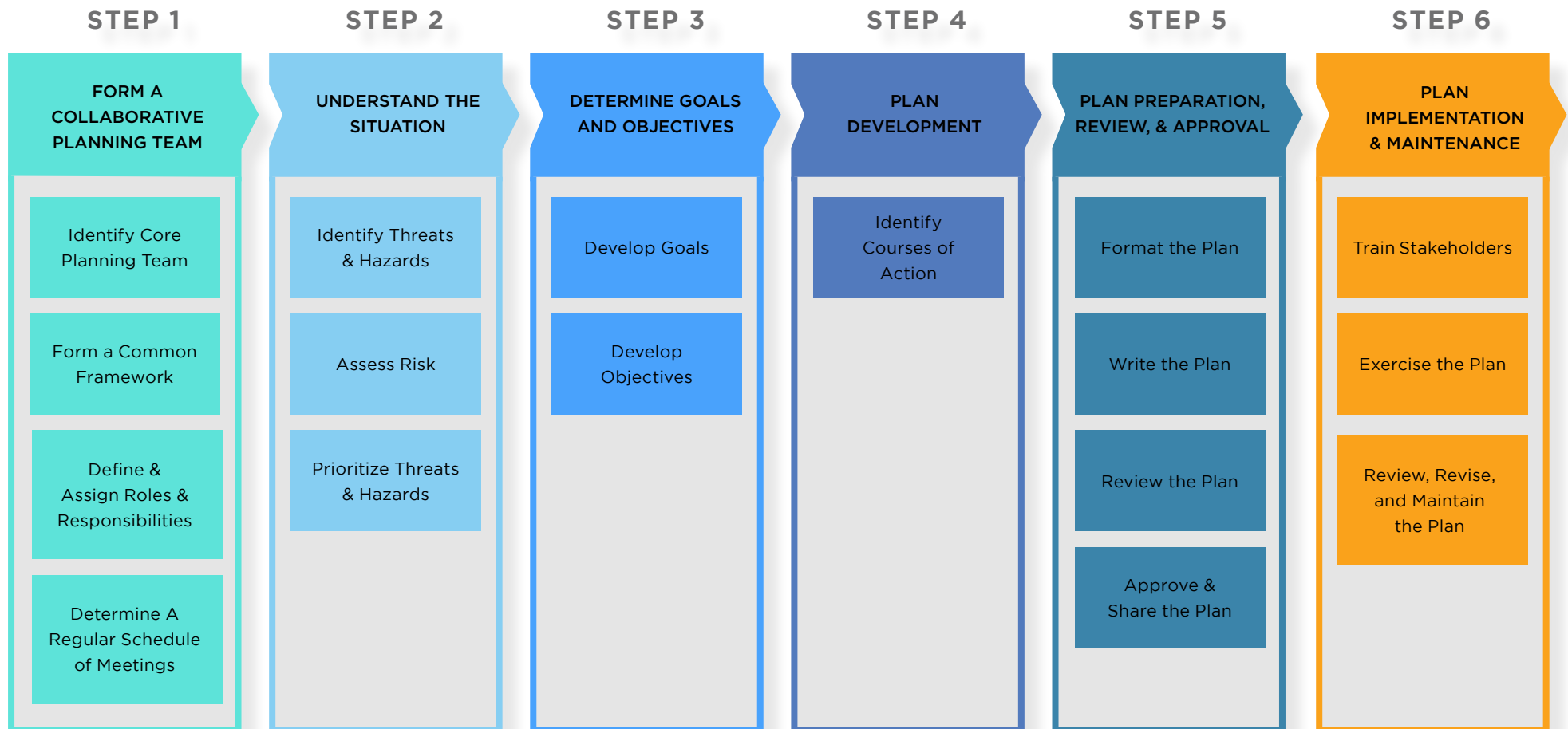
## Develop Your EOP





# GUIDE FOR DEVELOPING HIGH-QUALITY SCHOOL EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLANS

The U.S. Department of Education (ED) has developed this helpful framework for the design and implementation of an EOP:



ED's [Guide for Developing High-Quality School Emergency Operations Plans](#) provides detailed guidance through these steps.

Any framework you use should accomplish the following:

- **Customize plans** according to your district's unique circumstances and resources (down to the building level)
- **Account for a wide range of possible threats and hazards** while addressing safety needs before, during, and after an incident
- **Accommodate the functional needs of the whole school community** including individuals with disabilities and from culturally diverse backgrounds
- **Consider all settings and times** during and outside the school day as well as on and off campus (such as sporting events, assemblies, or field trips)
- **Collaborate throughout the entire process** of creating and revising your EOP
- **Practice and update your EOP regularly** according to legislation and public health considerations so that your plan remains responsive and relevant



## DEFINE YOUR EMERGENCY PROTOCOLS

Defining protocols—the designated actions everyone should take in the event of an incident—is a necessary step in developing your EOP. Protocols provide consistent and clear shared instructions for students, staff, and first responders. They also provide a shared language—a common understanding of what everyone is referring to—that allows for quick and coordinated action. These instructions and vocabulary also act as training tools to develop muscle memory for quick action in a crisis. A set of protocols should be action-based, flexible, and easy to learn. When protocols align with people, it enables a swift and coordinated response.

The “I Love U Guys” Foundation®, a well-known school safety organization, has designed an extensive set of such protocols, including the Standard Response Protocol® (SRP) and the Standard Reunification Method™ (SRM). For more information about these protocols as well as other documentation and training materials, [visit their website](#).

## DOCUMENT YOUR EOP

The guide from ED also outlines the content of a basic EOP. Here is a brief checklist of some key information you should have “on paper” that informs how you train staff and revise your plan over time.

- ☐ Who is responsible for initiating an emergency
- ☐ Procedures for evacuation, lockdown, shelter-in-place, and reunification
- ☐ Protocols to account for students
- ☐ Roles and responsibilities of school personnel (such as what a teacher needs to do as soon an emergency is declared)
- ☐ Which authorities are alerted for specific emergencies and how they should be contacted
- ☐ What information needs to be collected and distributed before, during, and after an incident (for example weather reports or law enforcement bulletins)



## **IMPLEMENT YOUR EOP**

When drafting your EOP, circulate copies throughout the team for their review. Stakeholders should determine if the plan has adequately determined threats, hazards, functions, and courses of action. They should also consider whether the plan is feasible and within the limits of time and cost. It is also imperative that the team reviews the draft for compliance with laws and regulations. Once everyone on your team has finished reviewing the plan, and before sharing it with others, it should be sent to the appropriate leadership for their final approval.

When your EOP is approved, share the plan and make sure everyone involved knows their roles and responsibilities. Conduct regular trainings to refresh the team on their commitments. Key training components include consistently practicing the EOP and meeting at least once per year to review it.

# PRACTICE

An EOP is only valuable if the policies are routinely practiced. Drills familiarize your school and community with your EOP as well as individual responsibilities, roles, and actions. This helps everyone feel prepared so they can confidently respond and keep everyone safe in an actual crisis.

## SCHEDULING

Drills require a lot of upfront planning, like deciding what scenario to perform and when. Think about the location, duration, time, and frequency. Let stakeholders—including guardians—know about drills well in advance so no one is caught off guard. Schedule them to ensure everyone is on the same page and can get the most out of each drill. Make sure you comply with your district and state requirements.

Actual emergencies can happen at any time, so practice at different times of the day. Map out every scenario someone may be in when a crisis strikes. For instance, if a student is in the bathroom or on the baseball field when an active threat arises, they need to know what to do and where to go.

## 3 Ways Your School Can Practice Year-Round

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1

Informal tabletop activities to brainstorm scenarios

2

Drills to test a single scenario like a student injury, bomb threat, or gas leak

3

Full-scale exercises that simulate an active incident and involve all stakeholders, such as law enforcement and guardians participating in a mock reunification

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*To learn more, see*  
[FEMA's guide to conducting and exercising drills.](#)



## EXECUTING

Every drill should strictly follow your EOP. This allows your school community to gain more familiarity with the plan and become more confident with each drill. It creates “muscle memory” in participants that increases response efficiency.

Everyone should treat every drill as if it’s a real emergency, whether it’s for a localized flood or a violent intruder. Taking shortcuts, allowing staff to sit out, or students not taking the drill seriously will diminish your school’s responses during an actual incident.



It’s one thing to say you conducted a drill; it’s another to prove it with documentation and to have that documentation at your fingertips.

Director of the Duval County  
School Police Department

## ASSESSING

Safety hinges not just on how well you conduct your drills but what you learn from them. It’s easy to fall into a routine and continue to conduct the same drills every year, but that is dangerous.

Drills should also be conducted to test your school’s procedures and policies and reveal areas of weakness. Your safety team should immediately debrief after every drill. Teachers and students should also be encouraged to provide feedback.

The best assessment requires a method to track data and create comprehensive reports. Technology collects performance data to show what is working and how you can better protect your students and staff. Reports enable you to demonstrate compliance with state and district requirements. Later on in the guide, we’ll look at how to select the right solution to assess and empower every aspect of emergency management.

## CULTURE OF SAFETY

Students, teachers, and staff must all be comfortable with your EOP. It is important to encourage the right attitudes toward safety and security both for efficient emergency management and an overall healthy educational environment.

Given the variety of threats, students need to be confident in several different situations. The right approach builds



their decision-making skills and the ability to respond to incidents in school or at home. It's important to tailor drills to your specific school environment, participants' developmental levels, and students with disabilities.

It's crucial to empower everyone to feel confident in the face of any kind of violence. [Research](#) shows that teachers' demeanors directly impact students' physical and psychological safety. If a teacher lacks confidence, it makes it nearly impossible for them to stay calm or be viewed as a trusted leader. The more a teacher or staff member remains calm, the more the students stay calm—and the more likely they will follow your emergency operations plan.

## STUDENT AND STAFF TRAINING

Training, including active shooter training, can teach students, teachers, and other staff how to prevent and survive these incidents and other violent threats. Training should include evidence-based lessons and drills that give everyone the confidence to respond to any kind of violence.

These programs should also be tailored according to the age of students. Some programs use realistic simulations that invoke fear or stress such as firing blank rounds of ammunition or using special effects like smoke and fake blood. These programs can trigger past traumas or develop new ones in young

people and adults. [The Partner Alliance for Safer Schools \(PASS\)](#) recommends conducting drills and exercises in an educational way—without violent simulations—to avoid causing trauma. Schools should also announce drills ahead of time and clearly announce that “this is not an actual emergency.”

The best programs are teacher-led, interactive, adaptable, problem-based, and developed by both school safety and mental health professionals. The curriculum should also be reviewed and updated annually to incorporate the latest best practices and have easy-to-remember strategies.

One such example is Safe Kids Inc.'s [H.E.R.O.](#) Program, designed by experts from law enforcement, education, and school psychology. H.E.R.O.'s training does not subject anyone to scary videos, physical harm, or uncomfortable conversations. It instead emphasizes empowerment based on successful outcomes.



# RESPOND

In the event of an actual emergency, you'll want the right people, actions, and tools in the field to keep people safe and resolve the issue as soon as possible.

## EXPEDITE AWARENESS

In an emergency—when a delayed reaction could be the difference between life and death—it is critical that your school community and first responders are quickly made aware of the situation.

A [mobile panic alert system](#) should link directly to law enforcement and first responder agencies. It should also enable all teachers and staff to quickly summon help and send detailed, situation-specific alerts to a custom list of recipients from wherever they are on campus.

Recipients might include school and district administrators as well as multiple first responder agencies. Being able to quickly connect to 9-1-1 through the panic alert system and share your location on an interactive map are also imperative to expedite awareness and response.

As the foundation of your response, it is critical that your system is customized to your emergency response protocols to stay in compliance with your specific policies and procedures.

## DON'T FORGET EVERYDAY INCIDENTS

Planning for wide-scale emergencies is absolutely critical, but issues related to localized incidents are more frequent. You've probably already responded to more than one sprained ankle or flooded restroom. You know how these everyday situations can quickly escalate without the presence of the appropriate personnel to identify and resolve the issue.

**Here are eight incidents** most likely to occur in schools:

- Medical incidents such as an allergic reaction or injury
- Fights between students in common spaces
- Suspicious activity like an unknown person on campus
- Spills/flooding due to a plumbing or cafeteria accident
- Disruptive activity, for example from an irate parent
- Foul odor that may be a mistake in the lab or a prank
- Vandalism such as graffiti or property damage
- Other personal incidents requiring an administrator

Schools must ensure they are prepared to respond to these common issues immediately. That may include planning for scenarios which can be handled by your custodial staff, school resource officer (SRO), or school nurse. Staff will need proper communication tools for these particular situations to quickly summon help at the touch of a button.

## PROVIDE ACCURATE INFORMATION

It is just as critical that teachers, staff, incident commanders, and first responders can communicate during the crisis and access important emergency documents. The most powerful panic alert systems allow users to communicate through group messaging channels while also accessing your EOP in one application.

It is also key that first responders can immediately access detailed school maps. These maps ideally combine floor plans, high-resolution imagery, and a gridded overlay together into one map. This allows first responders to better react to emergencies in unfamiliar locations. Having detailed maps like these (such as the ones created by [Critical Response Group](#)) will reduce response time and ultimately save lives.

## ACCOUNT FOR EVERYONE

Empowering teachers and staff to account for themselves as well as everyone else on campus—including students, visitors, guardians, and contractors—immediately after an alert goes out is critical.

It's important that teachers and staff can account for anyone, not necessarily just the students on their rosters. If an emergency begins during an assembly when students and visitors are dispersed throughout the auditorium, an accountability solution—ideally one that is integrated with the panic alert system—enables them to quickly see their class rosters, search for others by name, and share statuses with first responders and incident commanders.

Incident commanders also need a clear, real-time line of sight for every person on campus. The best solutions allow first responders to see details of each individual, including their location, status, medical conditions, and allergies. If they are students, it should also list their guardians' contact information.







# RECOVER

An evacuation, especially one due to an extreme crisis, can cause physical reactions and strong emotions like terror, fear, and helplessness. Alongside how to respond to an incident, you also need a robust plan for every component of reunifying students with their guardian.

According to the [National Association of School Psychologists](#), the more time it takes to reunify a student with their guardian, the more likely they are to suffer from traumatic stress that can trigger anxiety, behavioral changes, and substance usage that can have long-term effects.

A solid reunification plan will include:

- recovery teams and their responsibilities
- reunification site locations and staging
- transportation to the site for students, staff, and emergency supplies
- roles for law enforcement and mental health professionals
- protocols for confirming students are reunified with approved guardians

Just like any aspect of emergency management, you should rehearse reunification multiple times so faculty understand the established protocols and their specific responsibilities.

## REUNIFICATION SITES

When picking a reunification site, consider a nearby facility that is unoccupied during the school day and is large enough to hold your school population, guardians, and volunteers. The facility should have large rooms where you can divide your students into groups. A place of worship or recreation center is typically an ideal size.

The chosen reunification site should be as centrally located as possible to allow easy access for schools. A geographically widespread district can plan for more than one reunification site. Regardless of location, there is usually still one district reunification team dispatched to the site.

The school's reunification procedure also needs to specify predetermined routes for getting students,

staff, security, first responders, and other personnel to and from the site. Ideally, faculty will walk students to the facility. If the facility is not within walking distance, other means of transportation will be necessary to safely evacuate your school.

It's best to direct students to an area that is out of view; you do not want guardians to spot their children as they are entering the facility. Outline how faculty should communicate information to guardians about the reunification process. It is important, however, to keep the location of reunification sites confidential until the district chooses to notify guardians. Otherwise, they may arrive before the students get to the site and complicate an already difficult situation. Make sure to include information on nearby hospitals and fire stations for quick reference.

## *What to do before the school year starts:*



Verify and visit all locations included in your reunification plan before the start of the school year



Confirm that the locations' employees and staff are aware that their facility may be used as part of your plan



Check that they are aligned with your procedures



If a location is typically closed during school hours, make sure that you have access whenever it might be needed during an emergency

## RECOVERY TEAMS

We recommend having two teams in place for reunification.

The **reunification team** should immediately go to the reunification site during the crisis to stage the site, including hanging signage to direct guardians, and prepare for reunification. This team is responsible for reunification of students with their guardian and transportation for teachers and staff to return to the school.

It is imperative that this team has supplies and resources readily available at the site. They should create an “evacuation go-kit” and multiple “reunification go-kits.” These kits can include floor plans, emergency contact information, writing utensils, flashlights with batteries, and other necessary materials that won’t be readily available at the reunification site.

The **transport team** facilitates transportation and initiates accountability processing in off-site reunifications. Their main responsibilities are to identify a reunification site and safely transport students and staff to the site. They should also select two back-up facilities. Ideally this happens over the summer, long before any incidents can occur.

[The “I Love U Guys” Foundation](#) further defines these types of team roles and responsibilities in their SRM training materials.

## *Assemble Your Reunification Team:*

- ➡ Greeters
- ➡ Student Runners
- ➡ Guardian Runners
- ➡ Guardian Monitors
- ➡ Reunification Facilitators

\*Everyone gets cross-trained in all roles!







## **KEEP EVERYONE CALM**

Being involved in an emergency can be scary for everyone. Although it is nearly impossible to keep an anxiety-free environment during a crisis, schools can do a lot to help everyone cope with their emotions and keep the reunification process on track.

District security and/or law enforcement personnel should be present to help as students, faculty, and guardians arrive at the reunification site. Their presence will foster a sense of safety and minimize chaos. If media representatives show up, security and law enforcement officials can also ensure reporters won't interfere with reunification and (if authorized) address their questions.

You should also have school-employed mental health professionals at the reunification site to help with any immediate crisis-related needs. Written materials on mental health support, typical crisis reactions, and how to cope with traumatic situations should also be available to guardians. If the crisis is extreme, mental health professionals can also provide training on how to best support children as they heal from the crisis.

## STREAMLINE REUNIFICATION

As you are developing or reviewing your reunification protocols, consider how to help guardians reunite with their children even faster and reduce the already ample stress of the situation.

**Technology can improve your process and eliminate inaccuracy.** Knowing student status—including if the student is missing or injured—is critical. This information can easily be lost in the chaos of a reunification that relies on pen-and-paper methods. Give teachers, staff, first responders, and incident commanders instant access to real-time student data, status, and location.

When a guardian checks in to the reunification site, the greeter can quickly confirm if the student is safely at the site and that they can continue the reunification process. If a student is marked missing or injured, the greeter will immediately know to escort the guardian to a private waiting area for further information (and not have to break the news out in the open in front of everyone).

It's also imperative that personnel can accurately confirm the guardian's identity, check for sex offender status, check for custodial restrictions, and capture their signature at reunification. This eliminates

### *Reunification in Practice*

When Seminole County ran a full-scale exercise to test their plan, the exercise went well in large part because the district leveraged technology to streamline the process. “The [Marjory Stoneman Douglas] Commission surveyed different sized districts’ reunification policies and plans, and we were one of the few that not only had a plan in place, but we had a proven system that we’d actually practiced,” says School Safety Lieutenant Kelly Martin. “When the commission reviewed survey results, it described Seminole County as a ‘model’ for other Florida districts to emulate.”

inaccuracy, reduces liability, and ensures students are only reunified with approved guardians.

The most advanced reunification solutions—like the one [Seminole County Public Schools](#) uses—are tested and part of a comprehensive emergency management platform that gives schools full line of sight to everyone and every incident.

**LEARN ABOUT HOW EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT IS NOT A  
STATIC LIST OF IDEAS OR ACTIONS IN THE NEXT CHAPTER**

Chapter 3 >>

## CHAPTER 3

# MOVEMENTS AND CHANGES IN K-12 EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

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Emergency management is not a static set of ideas or actions. New threats as well as political and legal developments impact our world and make us reevaluate how we can continue to keep students safe. This chapter covers an example of new legislation, “Alyssa’s Law”, as well as the COVID-19 pandemic, and the impact they have had on how schools implement emergency management. Alignment with the aims and practices covered below further enables strong emergency management approaches and empowers your stakeholders.

# ALYSSA'S LAW

Alyssa's Law is legislation requiring public and charter schools to have silent panic alert systems linked directly to first responder and law enforcement agencies. A mobile panic button can instantly alert these authorities of any emergency so they can quickly get on scene, take down the threat, and triage victims.

The law is named after Alyssa Alhadeff, a 14-year-old victim of the 2018 tragedy at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. Alyssa's Law requirements vary by state, and it's always best to check for exactly what you need to do. You can look online at [Make Our Schools Safe](#) for the most updated information about its passage.

Alyssa's Law is one specific and excellent example of legislation that captures solid emergency management practices. Even if you're not legally obligated to comply with Alyssa's Law in your region, following its guidelines is simply part of well-rounded, comprehensive emergency management approach.

In their report [Ten Essential Actions to Improve Safety](#), the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Community Oriented Policing Services School Safety Working Group emphasized coordination with first responders.

A mobile panic alert system can greatly expedite awareness and response by enabling all teachers and staff to quickly summon help and send detailed, situation-specific alerts to a custom list of recipients including the school community, district administrators, and multiple first responder agencies from wherever they are on campus.

## ***Alignment for Both You and Your Partners***

Alyssa's Law represents best practices not just for schools but for anyone involved in the field of emergency management. If you're working with an external constituent or vendor, be sure to ask if they're also aligned with this movement.

Here are a few examples, based on legislation passed at the time of writing, of how Alyssa's Law aims to keep your school safer and how to implement it at your school.

ALYSSA'S LAW OBJECTIVES	RECOMMENDED SOLUTION
Have at least one mobile panic alert system in each school building	Allow any authorized user to initiate a silent alert from their mobile device or desktop by manually pressing a digital button. Alerts should provide the type, location, time of emergency, and who initiated the emergency in real time.
Ensure real-time coordination between multiple first responder agencies	Allow teachers and administrators to initiate an emergency response that instantly notifies first responders and requests assistance from a tailored list of personnel with the touch of a button. Connect with 9-1-1 directly from a mobile app and communicate via instant messaging to other authorized users across all devices.
Customize according to each district/governing board's local emergency codes and naming conventions	Configure technology to fully support any safety protocol districts might decide to implement, including a preset list of emergency response protocols such as The "I Love U Guys" Foundation Standard Response Protocol.
Provide two-way communications	Enable users to stay in touch through real-time two-way messaging across all devices, including: smartphones, tablets, Chromebooks, laptops, and desktop computers.
Provide districts with administrative access to additional campus or facility information	Maintain real-time visibility during drills, active incidents, and reunification events on all devices.

# THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

COVID-19 has represented an unprecedented health crisis. In its wake, administrators and teachers have showed incredible dedication, flexibility, and innovation. They have adapted instruction and resource distribution to sustain learning while serving a range of their students' individual needs.

FEMA has advised schools to include pandemic response in their emergency operations plans (EOPs) for several years. Yet with the rise of safety concerns around school violence and without an actual public health emergency to respond to, there was little actionable need to prioritize it above other concerns.

COVID-19 has now changed that. While many people may have only associated emergencies with manmade or even natural disasters, health concerns on a previously unimagined scale are now on everyone's mind.

## MAINTAINING SCHOOL SAFETY

Schools have had to adapt many of their standard operating procedures due to the threat of a pandemic. Yet it's important to keep the basics of school safety in mind even with these new challenges. Not following key practices can put the school in harm. For example, schools may want to prop open doors to avoid people touching handles, but even during a pandemic, schools remain safer when doors are closed and can be immediately locked.

Suspending drills to reduce student contact may also sound like a good idea, but it makes it more difficult to respond in an actual emergency. Without practice, teachers, staff, students, and incident commanders may not be used to making the necessary decisions and movements. Stakeholders end up having to think through their responses.

### *Implementing Safety Solutions During a Pandemic*

There is an emphasis now more than ever on schools being equipped with the right solutions to keep their students and staff safe and maintain a safe environment. Implementing a safety solution during a pandemic does not have to be challenging. Read more in Chapter 4.



## UPDATING PROCEDURES

Updating your EOP for pandemic response—especially with any lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic—is imperative. It means you are prepared to respond to any emergency and provides assurance to students, staff, and families that your school takes safety from all kinds of threats seriously.

Many schools have had to adjust typical set-ups. As one example, some schools have used exterior tents and kiosks to reduce traffic in hallways. That can result in crowds of students waiting outside. Even the most expansive EOPs may not have accounted for this set-up. Think about what an emergency response would look like in this situation, and don't forget to communicate these changes with law enforcement, first responder agencies, and guardians.

Schools have also had to adjust how they perform drills. It's still possible—and important—to conduct drills to create muscle memory and test your processes. Your EOP should clearly state how you will adapt drills during a pandemic. As examples, some schools decided to conduct drills with one half of the school population at a time, while others continued typical drills but required everyone to wear masks and socially distance.

## ENSURING CONTINUITY

COVID-19 has also been instructional about how much schools and districts can do even in the worst of situations. Schools had to quickly develop plans for [distributing meals](#) and providing students with everything they need to continue their educations, including items such as homework and laptops.

Meal and resource distribution can be challenging, as schools must: ensure students receive the correct resources, streamline the process to make it efficient, and track and record the distribution for accurate recordkeeping. With hundreds of students that need meals and resources, distribution can quickly become a lengthy, overwhelming process. Technology can help streamline the process, [manage the logistics of distribution](#), and instantly record transactions for automatic, real-time recordkeeping.

The “I Love U Guys” Foundation also developed the [Standard Distribution Method™ \(SDM\)](#) to help schools safely and efficiently distribute food and instructional resources during crises and school closures.

**LEARN ABOUT HOW TO TURN THESE DISCUSSIONS INTO  
TANGIBLE AND ACTIONABLE STEPS FOR YOUR SCHOOL**

Chapter 4 >>

## CHAPTER 4

# CHAPTER 4: IMPLEMENTING AN END-TO-END EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM



This chapter focuses on how we turn everything we've discussed into actual practices: tangible and actionable steps you and your stakeholders.

Implementation begins with your team, brings in trusted partners, and utilizes robust solutions. You, your partners, and your tools create the conditions to catalyze the best emergency management practices.

# THE RIGHT PARTNERS

Addressing your complex school safety needs does not have to be daunting. You don't have to—nor should you—do this alone. Knowledgeable and trustworthy partners make all the difference.

You want a knowledgeable and proactive partner involved every step of the way. You should also seek partners already aligned with some of the best practices discussed here. For example, are they familiar with Alyssa's Law and The "I Love U Guys" Foundation's methods? The right partner will keep pace with industry leaders. Ideally, they will have an active affiliation with these movements and organizations.

It may seem unusual to consider the technology you use for emergency management in terms of a partnership. Isn't it just a matter of finding the right one that fits your school or district?

**When choosing software, it's just as important to pick the right company as it is the right product since the two will go hand in hand.** In addition to looking for the best app or platform and seeing how different products align with your needs, consider technology in terms of a relationship with the software provider.

They have to be more than just a software vendor. They should be a true collaborator with know-how and empathy who puts your mission and goals first.

Successful implementation is just one of the many pillars that define true success. The right partner will demonstrate a commitment to your success from the outset. For example, look for someone who asks you questions to tailor your emergency management implementation and solution rather than simply presents a menu of their products.

Beyond implementation, you need a partner that makes themselves available and provides resources to encourage your continued success for years to come. This may include opportunities for development sessions, data analysis and business reviews, webinars, and other events.

Chances are your own school or district may encounter changes to staff, protocols, requirements, and expectations once your emergency management solution is in place, so you need a partner dedicated to your continued success, from strategy to implementation to maintenance and updates.



# TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS

An integrated emergency management platform does just that: it integrates all aspects of emergency management into one platform shared among all stakeholders in real time.

The right platform will empower you to:

- Practice and analyze drills
- Initiate an emergency through a mobile panic button
- Send instant, detailed alerts and connect with 9-1-1
- Share critical information with staff and first responders, including your EOP, building floor plans, and your location on a map
- Stay up to date with staff, first responders, and incident commanders with real-time group messaging
- Account for each individual on campus
- Reunify students with guardians
- Create instantaneous and updated status reports and after-incident reports
- Summon help for localized incidents
- Integrate with your visitor management system

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Districts must be ready to adapt, have strong communication, and executive support. Having that support is going to help the project succeed...Another important item is to centralize your district-wide activity, so you can easily make reports instead of having to reach out to multiple schools and staff members for data.

Senior IT Project Manager at  
Broward County Public Schools



## CUSTOMIZATION

Every district has different priorities, procedures, and challenges. **The best technology is customizable according to your school and district needs.**

You do not want a generic off-the-shelf solution. These solutions may seem appetizing based on their often low cost, but they likely won't meet your needs. In the long run, they may even cost more if you require customization or need to eventually replace them with a more suitable product. More importantly, unless an emergency management platform meets the nuances of your physical infrastructure, offerings, and culture, it won't be the safest option.

## EASE OF USE

When evaluating solutions, also consider if it is an intuitive platform. How long will it take to train everyone? Will each staff member need to be trained by the vendor on every aspect of the technology, or does it empower you to train your own people to do exactly what they need to?

## INTEGRATION

When comparing solutions, consider an integrated technology that incorporates visitor management and volunteer management alongside emergency management. Visitor solutions account for guardians, contractors, temporary support, and others conducting specific time-bound business on campus. Linking your visitor, volunteer, and emergency management systems ensures that everyone on campus at any given time is logged into a unified platform and will be included in incident alerts and procedures.

The solution should also support single sign on and active directory integration to create a single point of user authentication and authorization. This integration streamlines sign in and user account creation while ensuring authorized personnel always have the appropriate system access.

The most powerful solutions also have geolocation capabilities to expedite response, let responders know exactly where they are needed, and reduce the potential of false alarms. Geolocation allows users to switch between campuses without having to worry about updating settings. This means if a user initiates the panic button and their geolocation is determined to be within the bounds of a specific campus zone, mass notifications are sent to everyone on that campus. It's important to choose a solution that only accesses geolocation during an active emergency.

## EFFICACY

If you're considering whether you need to move to a technology-based solution, think about its advantages over methods using paper checklists and walkie-talkies. By its nature, "pen and paper" creates lags in time and therefore uncertainty.

A digital emergency management solution allows you to share accurate and updated information instantaneously across multiple users. This also allows faster reunification, which reduces stress and trauma among students and their guardians.

### **Here's a checklist to use when you're considering both partners and solutions:**

- ☐ Reunification Time
- ☐ Accountability Time
- ☐ Annual Customer Retention Rate
- ☐ Average Call Answer Speed
- ☐ SLA Issue Resolution
- ☐ Average Issue Handle Time



# IMPLEMENTATION SERVICES

When selecting a school safety partner, ask about their portfolio of services. It should encompass more than installation and configuration. Their services show that the people at this company are focused on ensuring your staff is thoroughly familiar with the system and with providing support as your needs evolve.

The best providers are available live 24/7 to answer questions and provide troubleshooting. They're also thought leaders who have a library of resources such as online videos, how-to documentation, and training.

**Here is a quick checklist of what a top provider should offer you:**

## SET-UP AND TRAINING

- ☐ Tailored system configuration that fits your needs including custom categories, settings, and notifications
- ☐ Training and overview sessions that demo the system's functionality and answer questions
- ☐ Interactive workshops and tabletop exercises that provide actual hands-on experience using system tools
- ☐ Flexibility to help you implement an emergency management solution at any time of the school year, for example training faculty before the school year and conducting reunification drills throughout the year

## MAINTENANCE AND SUPPORT

- ☐ Ongoing drill review and evaluation of data such as usage of the emergency management system with action-oriented recommendations
- ☐ 24/7 support and guidance through readily accessible videos and documents

## KNOWLEDGE EXPANSION

- ☐ Regular live learning and development such as webinars and interactive Q&A
- ☐ Networking events that let you hear about changes in the industry, innovative practices, and new solutions

## IMPLEMENTATION BEST PRACTICES

### Executive Support

Successful implementation starts with strong executive support. From making decisions on policies and procedures to collaborating with the rest of the team and vendors on a training plan, an executive sponsor is the person within the district responsible for the overall success of the project. Their role includes establishing clear priorities, such as how many products or schools to implement simultaneously. Those priorities allow you and your partners to customize the implementation to meet your needs.

### Clear Communication

A robust emergency management initiative should include all stakeholders. Knowing there are multiple departments that need to be trained—from the safety team to your front office staff—means each department needs to be aligned on training plans as well as policies and procedures.

Clear, regular communication across all departments—ideally through a central communication hub—ensures that everybody is aware and comfortable with the project.

Clearly defined roles and responsibilities for the entire implementation team help keep things on track and form the foundation on which the entire implementation is built.

### Determine Your Implementation Team

While each district is unique, we recommend the following roles for your implementation team:

- Executive sponsor: responsible for the project's success
- Project manager: works closely with both internal committees as well as external stakeholders, vendors, and other external participants
- Implementation specialist: works with the vendor to customize and manage implementation based on recommendations and best practices supplied by the vendor
- Technical liaison: facilitates data and authentication integrations
- Internal long-term support contact: handles basic questions, maintenance, and general support of the system after implementation. Accounts for each individual on campus

# FUNDING YOUR EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT INITIATIVES

There are often funding and grant opportunities available to support your emergency management initiatives. For grants listed here, view the funding source's website for funding availability, eligibility requirements, and more information. Note that grant deadlines and availability may differ each year.

## STATE FUNDING SOURCES

Many state education departments offer school safety program grants that fund safety technologies. Examples of these include Tennessee's Safe Schools Act, the Pennsylvania Safe Schools Grant, and the Indiana Secured School Safety Grant (SSSG) Program. For more information on the funding available in your state, contact your state education department.



## FEDERAL FUNDING SOURCES

- **The U.S. Department of Education's School Emergency Response to Violence (SERV)** grant funds short-term and long-term education-related services to help schools recover from violent or traumatic events in which learning environments have been disrupted.
- **The Rural and Low-Income School Program** provides districts with funding to improve student achievement, which includes improving school safety.
- **The U.S. Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office)** administers the School Violence Prevention Program (SVPP), which provides funds for technology that expedites notification of local law enforcement during school safety situations.
- **The Bureau of Justice Assistance's Students, Teachers, and Officers Preventing (STOP) School Violence** provides funding for solutions that help prevent and/or respond to school violence.
- **The Department of Homeland Security's State Homeland Security Program (SHSP)** supports state, tribal, territorial, and local preparedness activities that address gaps in terrorism preparedness, including risk management for protection programs and activities.

## ADVOCATING FOR FUNDING SUPPORT

Many grant requirements directly relate to the core components of integrated solutions for emergency management. If you're approaching grant organizations, private donors, or other potential benefactors, point out a few examples of the value these solutions will add.

*An integrated technology solution integrates all phases of school safety—preparation, response, and recovery—to give schools complete line of sight during drills, active emergencies, and post-incident reunification.*

*Incorporating a mobile panic button solution and emergency notification system will expedite awareness and response to localized incidents and school- or district-wide emergency situations.*

*We want the ability to monitor the status of every student and staff member, access EOPs and building floor plans, and reunify students with their approved guardians as quickly as possible.*

When applying for grants, be sure to highlight these points and expand upon how they meet your unique needs or specific goals.





# Continuous Investment and Sustained Excellence

When it comes to emergency management, there is no final step. There are always new considerations around safety, changes to statutes and regulations, and professional as well as cultural shifts to account for.

Evaluating the effectiveness of your emergency management protocols, partners, and technology has to be a sustained process. It starts with your selection and vetting process and continues every time you seek to update or innovate. It's a constant process of reflection and evaluation aimed at continuous improvement.

Surround yourself with resources—and more importantly people and organizations—that are aligned with your priorities. The right ones will be with you every step of the way.



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*Emergency management is a long-term investment of your time, energy, and resources. When you invest in the right people and tools, it creates the ultimate benefit: safety and peace of mind for everyone in your community.*

# ABOUT THE AUTHORS

For nearly 20 years, Raptor Technologies has been the nation's leading provider of school safety software solutions, with over 35,000 schools across the nation using Raptor to protect their students, staff, and schools from any threat.

Purpose-built for K-12 schools and their unique challenges, Raptor® Emergency Management combines proven emergency practices with 21st-century technology to help schools prepare for, respond to, and recover from any emergency. The robust solution lets you practice drills, initiate an emergency with a mobile panic button, account for each individual on campus, and reunify students with approved guardians.

Raptor Emergency Management seamlessly integrates with Raptor® Visitor Management and Raptor® Volunteer Management to ensure that you remain in complete control and have line of sight to everyone—and every incident—in your schools every day.

We're a passionate organization driven by continuous improvement in everything we do. Our ultimate goal is to give our partner districts the confidence that they are prepared should an emergency arise. We have a team dedicated to helping our clients every step of the way, from customizing implementations and trainings, to ensuring customer success with ongoing account reviews,

to providing live 24/7 technical support and free on-demand resources. Our technical support team answers calls within 00:13 seconds on average. Our average resolution time is just over 9 minutes. We have the know-how, people, tools, and resources to help partners succeed with any configuration, training, or roll-out requirements they may have.

At the end of the day, we stay on the cutting edge of school safety solutions, and we never lose sight of our mission to **protect every child, every school, every day.**





# THE *proof* IS IN THE NUMBERS



MANAGES  
**THOUSANDS**  
OF SCHOOL SAFETY  
DRILLS ACROSS  
THE U.S.



REDUCES  
ACCOUNTABILITY  
TIME FOR STUDENTS  
AND STAFF FROM  
**HOURS TO  
MINUTES**



REUNIFIES STUDENTS  
**4X  
FASTER**  
THAN WITH  
PAPER-AND-PENCIL

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