



PRESENTS

POLICY HIGHLIGHTS

August 25, 2025

School Safety: Preparation, Response, and After Action (Model Policy and Regs 5142)

A new school year brings the opportunity for a fresh beginning, a chance to reconnect with familiar faces and embrace the new.

Unfortunately, for many school districts across Connecticut and the nation, the beginning of the last school year quickly turned from celebratory to anxiety-ridden, with widespread threats to schools. In Connecticut, there were approximately 50 school threats leading to twenty arrests in a span of three weeks beginning September fourth. As a result, many of our districts experienced lockdowns, evacuations, delays, closures, and increased security. While police departments investigating these various incidents determined that many of the threats were not credible, they still brought about fear and anxiety to our communities.

Many theorized the threats began after a 14-year-old student opened fire at a high school in Georgia, killing four and injuring nine on the same day the threats began. Typically, there are copycat incidents of threats after such a widely publicized traumatic incident. These threats targeted high schools, middle schools, and even elementary schools. Some encompassed multiple schools and prompted widespread responses. However, even threats on single schools resulted in a broader impact, as news spread through various social media platforms.

Along with the concerns regarding the threats themselves, others feared policy overcorrection – reacting by implementing harsh consequences, which could further alienate students, making them uncomfortable speaking to an adult about a legitimate concern. Reacting to these disruptions, many sought to further fortify schools with more security guards and metal detectors, sometimes at the exclusion of building a stronger school climate. While the threats didn't result in any physical injuries, students, teachers, and parents were still being exposed to trauma, as police and school personnel appropriately responded as though the threats were credible and took every measure of caution.

As districts begin the school year, now is a good time for superintendents and their teams to meet with law enforcement to review and discuss “after-action” reports from previous incidents, along with taking the following steps:

- Review and update policies related to school security and safety: preparation, response, and after-action.
- Review and update your security and safety committees to ensure full membership.

- Meet with your school and district security and safety teams to review plans and update for the new year.
- Review and update your crisis communication plans and make your community aware of those plans.
 - When can your community expect to hear from you?
 - How and where will they hear from you?
 - When they hear from you, what will you/will not be able to share with them?
 - How will you manage internal communications with your staff?

Hearing that your child’s school is in a Code Red lockdown is very unsettling: Parents will likely be receiving information from texts and social media. The news will likely be alerted to what’s going on and call you for information as you’re managing the crisis, and frankly, trying to determine what *is* going on.

Determining how to communicate amid a crisis will likely result in greater confusion, heightened anxiety, and a loss of confidence from your students, staff, and community. Lack of communication provides space for counter-narratives, incorrect logistical information and direction, and a potential for greater harm.

In addition to updating CAGE’s model policy on school safety to include new legislation related to the protocols developed by the Connecticut State Department of Education’s “Guidance to K-12 Public Schools Pertaining to Immigration Activities,” our model policy 5142 combines three previous model policies – Student Safety (5142), Emergencies and Disaster Preparedness (6114), and Crisis Management Plan (5141.6) – to provide districts necessary guidance related to school safety in one policy.

Of course, as with most model policies, the intention is to provide boards of education and superintendents a starting point for developing their own policies to best serve the needs of their individual school communities. The conversations, deliberations, reviews, and adoption steps each play a critical role in preparing school personnel to meet the expectations of the board.

Model Policy [5142](#), School Safety: Preparation, Response, and After Action, delineates what is required in the School Security and Safety Plan, and the roles and membership of the School and District Security and Safety Committees. The model administrative regulations also include protocols for interacting with Federal Immigration Authorities, and the Four Phases of Emergency Management for Schools, All Hazards School Security and Safety Plan Standards.

Significantly, we’ve added a fifth “phase” under the “Four Phases of Emergency Management for Schools” to cover the topic of *communication*. Often, when it comes to managing a crisis, administrators are confronted with a wide range of challenges with internal and external communication. Information, and more importantly, misinformation, travels faster than our ability to stay ahead. Therefore, preplanning is essential. Here, the model regulations provide three key areas for strategic thinking related to communication:

1. Setting the table: Preparing the community on what it can expect regarding crisis communication, such as how information will be shared, what it will (and will not) include, and how often it will be sent.

2. Real-Time Communication: Providing internal communication to staff and the board of education and external communication to parents, the community, and the media.
3. After-action communication: Reviewing and sharing the factual account of what had occurred and the outcomes that can be shared.

The beginning of a school year should be a time for celebration and great expectations. A little planning and foresight can go a long way toward ensuring we remain in this mode for as long as possible. All the best for a great school year ahead.