

Active Shooter Preparedness: Avoid, Deny, Defend

Be Prepared. Stay Aware. Save Lives.

Active shooter and hostile intruder incidents are rare, but they can occur anywhere and often unfold rapidly. During these events, individuals must be prepared to make quick decisions to protect themselves and others.

Research conducted by law enforcement, emergency management professionals, and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security demonstrates that people who understand their response options before an incident occurs are better equipped to survive a violent attack.

Colby-Sawyer College utilizes the nationally recognized **Avoid, Deny, Defend** model developed by the Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training (ALERT)™ Program. This framework provides practical response options that can be adapted to the circumstances of the incident.

Avoid (Run)

Your first and best option is to leave the area if it is safe to do so.

If you become aware of a threat and have a safe path to escape:

- Leave immediately.
- Move away from the danger area as quickly as possible.
- Encourage others to leave with you, but do not delay your escape if they choose not to go.
- Leave belongings behind.
- Keep your hands visible when approaching law enforcement.
- Once safe, call 911 and Campus Safety.

Distance from the threat is one of the most effective ways to increase your safety.

Deny (Hide)

If evacuation is not possible, deny the attacker access to you.

Move to a room or area that can be secured and:

- Lock the door if possible.
- Barricade the door using desks, tables, chairs, or other heavy objects.
- Turn off lights.
- Silence cell phones and other electronic devices.
- Close blinds and cover windows when possible.
- Remain out of sight and as quiet as possible.

- Spread out rather than clustering together in one location.

The goal is to make it difficult for an attacker to enter the space and to create uncertainty about whether anyone is present.

Defend (Fight)

If confronted directly and your life is in immediate danger, be prepared to defend yourself.

Defending yourself should only be considered when Avoiding or Denying is no longer possible.

Actions may include:

- Using improvised objects as defensive tools.
- Committing fully to your actions.
- Working together with others if present.
- Targeting the attacker's ability to continue the assault.
- Creating opportunities to escape.

While this option can be intimidating to consider, individuals have successfully stopped attacks and saved lives by taking decisive action when no other options remained.

Calling for Help

As soon as it is safe to do so:

- Call 911.
- Contact Campus Safety.
- Provide your location.
- Describe the suspect, including clothing, physical characteristics, and any weapons observed.
- Share any information about injuries or victims.

Do not assume someone else has already called.

When Law Enforcement Arrives

The first officers on scene are focused on stopping the threat.

Remember:

- Remain calm.
- Follow all commands immediately.
- Keep your hands empty and visible.

- Avoid sudden movements.
- Do not run toward officers.
- Do not stop officers to ask questions while they are responding.

Once the threat is neutralized, emergency responders will provide instructions for evacuation, reunification, and medical assistance.

Training Opportunities

Watch the Avoid | Deny | Defend video (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j0lt68YxLQQ>) for an overview of how to save your life in an active attack event. Always remember - What You Do Matters.

FEMA Independent Study Course - The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) offers a free online course that provides additional information about active shooter preparedness and response. **IS-907: Active Shooter – What You Can Do** - <https://training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=is-907&lang=en>

Stop the Bleed and AED Training:

Emergency opioid overdose reversal kits, bleed control kits and AEDs are available throughout campus. Learn how to use these critical life-saving tools through the following asynchronous training:

Stop the Bleed Training Video: [Videos | ACS Stop the Bleed](#)

AED Demo Video: [Zoll AED Plus | CPR/AED Training](#)

NARCAN Spray (how to use): <https://www.yout-ube.com/watch?v=B9Sv64FJPhg>

Campus-Based Training

Personal Safety & Emergency Preparedness Training

This interactive training provides students, faculty and staff with practical knowledge and skills to recognize, respond to, and recover from a variety of emergency situations. Participants will learn about the psychology of crisis response, including the Survival Arc, normalcy bias, the bystander effect, and the FBI's Survival Mindset. The course covers essential emergency procedures such as making effective 911 calls, responding to fires, bomb threats, suspicious persons or vehicles, and active threats using the Avoid-Deny-Defend response model. Through discussion, awareness-building, and mental rehearsal techniques, participants will develop the confidence and preparedness needed to make informed decisions during emergencies and contribute to a safer campus community.

To schedule a workshop or request training for your department, student organization, residence hall, or class, contact:

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Remember

There is no single "correct" response to every active threat situation. Your response should be based on the circumstances you face. Understanding the principles of Avoid, Deny, Defend before an emergency occurs can help you make informed decisions under stress and improve your chances of survival.

Preparation, awareness, and decisive action save lives.