

# DISTRICT-WIDE SCHOOL SAFETY PLAN - VOICE

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Providing students with a safe, stable and welcoming environment that enables learning at the highest levels is a key component of the mission of VOICE Charter School.

VOICE has made preparation for unforeseen emergencies that could compromise continuity a high priority. A school may be at risk of acts of violence, or natural or manmade disasters and emergencies in the school must be addressed in an expeditious and effective manner. Comprehensive building safety plans which include more detail than this district wide plan have already been completed and filed. This plan will speak to the generalized approaches to keeping students safe.

## Implied or Direct Threats of Violence

VOICE has established policies and procedures for responding to implied or direct threats of violence by students, teachers, other school personnel as well as visitors to the school, including threats by students against themselves, which include suicide.

All threats of violence are taken seriously at VOICE. Threats of violence from children will be reported to the parent, police and/or ACS based on the situation and appropriateness as determined by the Principal, School Director(s), Social work team members or other school leadership. The Principal will ensure appropriate follow up actions are taken. Threats of violence from adults will be reported to the police.

All threats of suicide are considered serious. In emergency situations, we will call 911.

Depending on how the threat was uncovered a member of the respective school division leadership and/or social work team must follow up with the person that heard or learned of the threat and gather details. A member of the school division from which the student is from should notify the Principal, the social work team (if not already involved), and the parents or guardians of the student. School staff will encourage parents to call 911 (if the school has not already called 911) or to take the student to ER for risk assessment. School staff will provide parents with mental health resources including

referrals and mental health contact numbers. A link to mental health resources for educators compiled by the New York State Education Department is [here](#).

### Acts of Violence

VOICE Charter School has established policies and procedures for responding to acts of violence by students, teachers, other school personnel as well as visitors to the school.

When a student engages in behavior that poses a substantial risk of serious injury to the student or others, schools must determine the appropriate way to manage the behavior and consider whether the situation can be safely de-escalated by school staff as set forth below. In such situations, the following procedures must be followed:

1. The school director or their designee must be notified of the situation and must attempt to reach the parent.
2. Every effort must be made by responding school staff to safely de-escalate the behavior where possible using strategies and interventions for addressing behavioral crises.
3. If the classroom teacher or the responding staff member is unable to de-escalate the behavior, the teacher/staff member should seek assistance from other appropriate staff and resources including the Principal, School Director, social work or other appropriate personnel.
4. Where a student's behavior poses an imminent and substantial risk of serious injury to himself or others and the situation cannot be safely addressed by school staff or the support services set forth above, the principal, school director or designee must call 911. In such situations where it is not practicable to contact the principal, the responding staff member/School Safety Agent must call 911 and immediately thereafter notify the principal.

### Prevention and Intervention Strategies

VOICE has established appropriate prevention and intervention strategies. The administration of VOICE and the school's assigned school safety agent/security guard has a good working relationship with the NYPD's local precinct. The school also has good working relationships with local emergency response agencies and medical personnel. Building personnel including emergency teams and safety officers receive training, including de-escalation training, fire safety training, use of emergency technology and communication tools, training regarding exits/potential emergency spaces/location of first-aid tools, lockdown protocols and AED/CPR training for designated personnel.

Accomplishing VOICE's mission requires maintaining a safe and positive learning environment for teachers and students. A safe learning environment is at the very core of VOICE's school culture. Teachers are trained in school safety and conflict mediation through professional development programs. VOICE teachers model appropriate behavior and teach character and values as part of daily instruction during our extended school day. The school community plays no small part in maintaining a safe and positive learning environment, with active participation in school-wide events and participation in the Parent Association. The school ensures that any incidents that may endanger school safety are dealt with effectively and expediently. This includes any threat, implicit or explicit.

### Contacting Appropriate Law Enforcement Officials

VOICE Charter School has established policies and procedures for contacting appropriate law enforcement officials in the event of a violent incident. In the event of a safety issue which requires a response from the police, staff are directed to escalate within the local precinct.

### Contacting Parents and Guardians

VOICE Charter School has established policies and procedures for contacting parents, guardians or persons in parental relation to the students of the district in the event of a violent incident and policies and procedures for contacting parents, guardians or persons in parental relation to an individual student of the district in the event of an implied or direct threat of violence by such student against themselves, including suicide.

When a student engages in behavior that poses a substantial risk of serious injury to themselves or others, the principal, school director or designee must be notified of the situation and must attempt to reach the parent. In the event of a violent incident or any other emergency-related early dismissal, the Principal or his/her designee will contact parents/guardians or persons in parental relation to the students. Parents will be contacted via recorded phone message, mass text message, mass e-mail, and/or posted on the school's website. Additionally, master lists of parent contacts and emergency contacts are kept in the Main Office and accessible electronically by school division staff.

### School Building Security

VOICE has established policies and procedures relating to school building security, including where appropriate the use of school safety officers and/or security devices or procedures, the duties of hall monitors and any other school safety personnel, the training required of all personnel acting in a school security capacity, and the hiring and screening process for all personnel acting in a school security capacity.

All security personnel must be registered with New York State as security officers. As a Security Guard (also referred to as a School Safety Agent), each guard must complete

an eight hour and a sixteen hour security officer's course. In addition, the Security Guards have received further training in observing behaviors, assessing situations to prevent, identify and respond to any given situation. The DOE or the Security Guard contractor ensures that such training requirements have been met. The Security Guards and other staff who cover the front entrance have received training in maintenance of sign-in and sign-out logs and in requiring all visitors to show ID and to sign in and sign out. Procedures are in place and practiced for notifying administration and staff of visitors and for not permitting visitors to pass the security desk without notice. If there is a situation where an adult cannot be secured at the security desk, 911 will be called.

#### Annual School Safety Training and Professional Development

VOICE has established policies and procedures for annual school safety training for staff and students. This training includes annual training on the emergency response plan, including components on violence prevention and mental health. Further, new employees hired after the start of the school year shall receive training within thirty days of such hire or as part of VOICE's existing new hire training program, whichever is sooner.

#### Bomb Threats

VOICE Charter School has established the following protocols for responding to bomb threats:

1. If a suspicious package is observed. DO NOT TOUCH.
2. Notification to Principal, School Director or designee, School Safety officer, facilities personnel and NYPD SSD of a written, emailed or phoned in threat.
3. PA system or Fire Drill Bell Notification, to staff alerting them of situation.
4. Decision to evacuate to be made by Principal in consultation with NYPD SSD.

5. Notify the Emergency Information Center (718) 935-3210.
6. No transmissions to 911 via radio (walkie talkie) or Cell/Mobile Telephone. All notifications must be made by regular land lines.
7. Identify location, number and extent of injured in event of an explosion. If possible retrieve the contact info of victims and make notification as necessary.
8. If the building cannot be re-entered, evacuated students and staff are to be sent to the school prescribed in the Building Safety Plan.
9. Floor Wardens as per the Building Safety Plan should be appointed to each floor to assist in the evacuation.
10. SSAs and/or NYPD will secure the area affected.
11. No one is to re-enter the building/affected area without authorization from the appropriate law enforcement agency.
12. If building cannot be re-entered the Principal or his/her designee will contact parents/guardians via recorded call, mass text message, and/or mass e-mail to arrange for early pick-up times for students needing to go home.

### Intruders / Lockdowns

VOICE will follow the established DOE protocols for responding to intruders including language and terminology to ensure BRT teams, building occupants and first responders are all on the same page:

If an intruder is discovered in the building, a lockdown will be announced over the public address system by the person discovering the breach or intrusion. Depending on the threat level VOICE will call for a soft or hard lockdown (the lockdown type called for is based on the threat level to those tasked with sweeping). The authorities will also be notified.

In response to this announcement the following steps will be taken immediately:

1. Any students in the hallway will be taken into nearest classroom. If the event occurs during lunch or during arrival, if the lunch room can be secured, then cafeteria doors will be locked and students and staff shall remain inside until the all clear announcement is issued. If the cafeteria cannot be secured, faculty and staff supervising the arrival or cafeteria will immediately escort the students out of the building to the designated safe area..
2. All teachers will lock their classroom doors and will not issue any passes.
3. The Principal, along with the personnel designated in the building's safety plan will conduct a building sweep to locate the intruder.
4. If the intruder is found and the situation is stable or NO intruder is found an ALL CLEAR announcement will be made.
5. If the intruder has used a weapon or is observed with a weapon, a previously declared soft lockdown will be changed to a hard lockdown and sweepers shall take shelter and await first responders to secure the building.

#### Hostage Situation

VOICE Charter School has established the following protocols for responding to a hostage situation which follow the Intruder / Lockdown protocols initially but differ in the following manner if the intruder/perpetrator manages to hold individuals in one or more locations against their will by use of force :

1. Decision to evacuate those not held hostage to be made by Principal/other BRT members in consultation with the NYPD SSD or hostage negotiation team.
2. Notify the Emergency Center (718) 935-3210. Floor Wardens as per the School Safety Plan should be appointed to each floor to assist in the evacuation.
3. Evacuate the premises following Egress Route(s) outlined in the School Safety Plan.
4. Floor Plans are to be readily available in the Principal's Office, Library, Custodians Office, Security Office and Neighboring Schools.

5. Identify means of communication with Perpetrator(s) via telephone, PAS Phone or PA system. Assist with the hostage negotiation team as requested.
6. If the building cannot be re-entered, evacuated students and staff with attendance information are to be sent to the Evacuation location(s) as identified in the building specific safety plan.
7. Identify location, number and extent of those injured outside of the hostage situation and make notifications as necessary.
8. SSA/Principal or BRT member will notify respective Supervisors and arriving agencies, with pertinent and vital information including the details on those still held captive.
9. If building cannot be re-entered the Principal or his/her designee will contact parents/guardians via recorded call, mass text message, and/or mass e-mail to arrange for early pick-up times for students needing to go home.

#### Custodial Interference / Abduction

VOICE has established the following protocols for responding to ensure safe hand-offs / sign-outs of children under our care:

1. Check the Emergency Contact card to ensure that only the legal guardian is taking the student out of the building during the school day and verify the authenticity of notes allowing non-guardian adult pick-ups
2. Have a singular list of those students who have people who are not allowed to pick them up ready in all parent facing offices and on dismissal sheets for teachers.
3. Ask all parents each year to update authorized pick up lists and no-contact lists for their children.
4. All students in K-5 must be signed out by an adult unless the parent signs a release to allow the child to leave on their own or be picked up by another minor.

5. All students in grades 6-8 may sign themselves out unless parents submit a written request not to.
6. If a parent or other adult attempts to go past the office / security check point without permission, the soft lockdown protocol should be followed.
7. If a parent or another adult is observed removing a child from the school grounds without permission, against a valid restraining order and/or by the use of force the school notify the emergency center
8. SSA/Principal will notify respective Supervisors and arriving agencies, with pertinent and vital information.

### Strategies for Improving School Culture and Dialog

VOICE Charter has established strategies for improving school culture and fostering communication among students and between students and staff to head off potentially violent incidents.

Every morning, teachers begin the day with morning meetings, during which students are given an opportunity to express their thoughts and concerns. The school coordinates mentoring programs and ensures that any incidents that may endanger school safety are dealt with effectively and expediently. Teachers are trained to establish a positive school and classroom culture and to address even minor incidents of disrespect. Teachers must supervise bullying “hot spots” (lunch, recess, bathrooms) and create ways for safe reporting of potentially violent incidents. VOICE encourages students and parents to immediately report potentially violent incidents, bullying, or harassment to teachers, leaders or any other adult. This includes behavior that occurs outside of school hours between students. All divisions are staffed with social workers who can support students expressing concerning worries or behaviors. VOICE also takes cyber-bullying seriously and will address specific incidents. As students get older teachers and social workers discuss safe and appropriate online behavior.

### Designation of District Chief Emergency Officer

VOICE Charter School designates the Senior Manager of Operations as the district chief emergency officer responsible for establishing the communication between school staff and law enforcement and first responders, and ensuring staff understanding of the district-level safety plan. The chief emergency officer shall also be responsible for ensuring the completion and yearly updating of building-level emergency response plans.

The District Chief Emergency Officer will be responsible for:

1. coordination of the communication between school staff, law enforcement, and other first responders;
2. leading the efforts of the district-wide school safety team in the completion and yearly update of the district-wide school safety plan and the coordination of the district-wide plan with the building-level emergency response plans;
3. ensure staff understanding of the district-wide school safety plan;
4. ensure the completion and yearly update of building-level emergency response plans for each school building;
5. assist in the selection of security related technology and development of procedures for the use of such technology;
6. coordinate appropriate safety, security, and emergency training for district and school staff, including required training in the emergency response plan;
7. ensure the conduct of required evacuation and lock-down drills in all district buildings as required by Education Law section 807; and
8. ensure the completion and yearly update of building-level emergency response plans by the dates designated by the commissioner.

## Conduct of Drills

VOICE has established procedures for review and the conduct of drills and other exercises to test components of the emergency response plan, including the use of tabletop exercises, in coordination with local and county emergency responders and preparedness officials. VOICE adheres to the state's schedule of emergency drills that all schools are required to follow.

Evacuation Drills: The purpose of evacuation drills is to instruct and train students and staff in emergency evacuation procedures so that they might leave the school building in the shortest time possible and without panic in the event of an actual emergency. On hearing the fire alarm, students under the leadership of teachers and other staff must go to the street without delay while designated employees identified in the respective building safety plans sweep the floors and ensure complete evacuation.

Soft Lockdown Drills: The purpose of lockdown drills is to instruct and train students and staff in the emergency procedures so that if an intruder enters the building they will know what actions to take without panicking in the event of an actual emergency. On hearing the "soft lockdown announcement," students under the leadership staff must lock the room door go to the corner of the room out of view the windows on the doors without delay. BRT members, school leadership and School Safety Agents will be included in these drills and sweep the floors.

Review of Drills: Following the first fire drill of the school year, the District Chief Emergency Officer, the Principal and School Directors will meet with school security personnel, building staff, and other members of the emergency response team to evaluate the effectiveness of response to the drill. The building council will discuss the execution of the previous drills, including the response time, effectiveness of response to novel situations (such as blocked exits), and the level of communication between students, staff, and personnel managing the drill. The council will also create

recommendations, as necessary, to improve the execution of future drills or evacuations.

## **Appendix A**

This District School Safety Plan applies to the following locations, both of which are part of VOICE Charter School of NY. Building specific emergency plans are available for each location:

1. VOICE Charter School Lower Campus - Co-Located with NYC DOE 30Q111 Jacob Blackwell School.
2. VOICE Charter School Upper Campus - Privately leased space near the 30Q111 bldg and not shared with any other school or tenant.

Per NYSED guidelines, building level safety plans are only viewable by first responders, educational officials/authorizers, and school staff.

Adopted March 17, 2021 Board Meeting after review and consideration by school community stakeholders.