



# School Safety Lexicon

## A Glossary & Acronym Resource for School Safety Stakeholders

*This Lexicon is a collection of key definitions, terms, and acronyms related to school safety, gathered by the National School Safety Alliance (NSSA) from multiple sources, including the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the US Department of Education Readiness and Emergency Management Technical Assistance Center, and NSSA partners. It is a work in progress, and any suggestions for additions, corrections, etc. can be submitted to: [Administrator@nssanet.org](mailto:Administrator@nssanet.org). This resource may be freely copied and disseminated as long as credit is given to NSSA for providing this resource.*

### 1. Glossary

#### A

**Active Shooter Incident/Active Shooter Assailant/Active Shooter Offender:** Sometimes referred to simply as “active shooter” to denote an incident involving mass killing or an individual is “actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill people in a confined and populated area.”

**Alert/Alert Networks and Systems:** To notify. Schools often employ alerting networks and systems for specific groups such as parents of students in an athletic program, to alert parents to unplanned changes. They are often deployed school-wide to keep parents informed in emergency situations. Alert networks and systems usually provide messaging via text message to cell phones, e-mails, and phone messages with pre-recorded information or directing parents to additional information.

**ALICE:** (Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, Evacuate) – a method of training that prepares individuals to handle the threat of an active shooter. ALICE teaches individuals to participate in their own survival, while helping to lead others to safety. (Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, Evacuate) – a method of training that prepares individuals to handle the threat of an active shooter. ALICE teaches individuals to participate in their own survival, while helping to lead others to safety.

**Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA):** The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) prohibits discrimination and ensures equal opportunity for persons with disabilities in employment, State and local government services, public accommodations, commercial facilities, and transportation.

## B

**“Basic Plan”** Section of an Emergency Operations Plan: Provides an overview of the approach to emergency operations. Although the “Basic Plan” section guides development of the more operationally oriented annexes, its primary audiences consist of the school principal or SCHOOL administrator, local emergency officials, and the community (as appropriate). The elements listed in this section should meet the needs of these audiences while providing a solid foundation for the development of supporting annexes.

**Behavioral Risk Assessment/Behavioral Threat Assessment:** A program or initiative designed to identify, investigate, assess and manage risks and potentially dangerous behavior a specific individual. Model programs may be school based, but to be effective should focus on a “team” and “community” based approach, defining team roles, incorporation the program into the school crisis plan and stressing school and community engagement to both develop assessment procedures as well as case management. A single snapshot of an individual’s behavior may not be an accurate predictor of future behaviors. An ongoing case management that tracks trajectories of behaviors and using the team approach to determine the best intervention strategies is usually more effective.

**Behavioral Risk Assessment Team/Behavioral Threat Assessment Team:** Usually denotes a multi-disciplinary team with the responsibility to assess individuals exhibiting behavioral risk to themselves and others. To be effective, they should include stakeholders from not only a school, such as school counselors, school nurses, and school management, but also community-based stakeholders such as law enforcement, mental health professionals, and social service agencies. Using a team approach, behaviors are usually tracked through a case management system until an individual is determined to no-longer pose a threat to themselves or others. An individual leaving a school system should not necessarily eliminate the need for continuous monitoring of that specific case.

**Breach:** Disregarding boundaries and engaging in behavior designed to assess the viability of gaining access or determining whether rules and consequences will be upheld. Breaching is considered a serious warning sign on the pathway toward violence and often occurs when a perpetrator is getting close to implementing attack plans.

## C

**Chain of Command:** The orderly line of authority within the ranks of the incident management organization and is a key concept of the National Incident Management System (NIMS).

**Code of Silence:** An unwritten, and occasionally unspoken, code of conduct between peers. Students typically believe that telling an adult about worrisome statements or behaviors of another student would carry negative consequences for the person who tells.

**Cognitive Bias:** The drawing of incorrect or illogical inferences due to the subjective perception of information used to draw a conclusion. It is considered a genuine limitation in our thinking and can result in mistakes and errors in judgment. One example of a cognitive bias that shows up in violence threat assessment can be referred to as an “attachment to existing beliefs”. It may be challenging to detect a deviation in a subject’s behavior if it differs from one’s prior experience with the individual. If one has a long-standing history with the subject in that has been favorable, it can be difficult for this assessor to see that the subject may actually be capable of inflicting violence and harm on others. This can be further complicated by so-called “blind-spot bias” that keeps one from seeing his or her own bias.

**Copycat Effect:** The idea that a given behavior is increased by a recent occurrence of the same behavior. Suicide has been found to have a copycat effect. Suicide rates rise following the suicide of someone with whom a person identifies. A study conducted by Sherry Towers of Arizona State University, determined that 30% of mass shootings with a high number of victims (greater than 4) and national media exposure occur within 13 days of a previous mass shooting. This is referred to as the “contagion period.”

**Command Staff:** The staff who report directly to the Incident Commander, including the Public Information Officer, Safety Officer, Liaison Officer, and other positions as required per the Incident Command System (ICS). They may have an assistant or assistants, as needed.

**Common Operating Picture:** An overview of an incident by all relevant parties that provides incident information enabling the Incident Commander/Unified Command and any supporting agencies and organizations to make effective, consistent, and timely decisions.

**Computer Security:** A general term which can describe everything from security of digital records and the systems that store this information, to the security and safety of the user of a computer system or digital device. (see also Cyber Security & Internet Safety/Internet Security).

**Community Organizations:** Those entities within the community that can support emergency management for schools (e.g., Red Cross, Boys & Girls Club, faith-based organizations).

**Community Partners:** Those with a responsibility in school emergency management, including local government, first responders (law enforcement officers, fire officials, and emergency medical services personnel), as well as public and mental health entities.

**Continuity of Operations (COOP):** An effort within individual executive departments and agencies to ensure that primary and essential functions continue to be performed during a wide range of emergencies, including localized acts of nature, accidents and technological or attack-related emergencies.

**Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED):** Strategies implemented to directly modify the environment to take advantage of pre-existing environmental assets or

change the design features and condition of particular targets (e.g., school buildings, doors, and windows) or areas in an effort to reduce crime. Natural surveillance, natural access control, territoriality reinforcement, and management and maintenance are key principles of CPTED. In some instances, CPTED strategies are implemented during the beginning phases of a project (e.g., during planning of a new housing development).

The National Association of School Resource Officers, among others, provides CPTED training and certification focused on schools. (<https://nasro.org/school-cpted-practitioner-certification/>) Additionally, the International CPTED Association (ICA) provides certification oversight and guidance, as well as additional resources in support of the CPTED concept. (<http://www.cpted.net/>).

**Cyber Security/Cyber Security Assessment:** Cyber Security is related to the privacy, security, and confidentiality of student records, and other information protected by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). The US Department of Education maintains a Privacy Technical Assistance Center at: <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/ptac/> The term “cyber Security is often mistakenly used to describe “internet security”, which more accurately describes personal safety related to internet and specifically social media access and usage.

## D

**DHS (Department of Homeland Security):** A Federal agency with the missions of: preventing terrorism and enhancing security, managing U.S. borders, administering immigration laws, securing cyberspace, and ensuring disaster resilience.

**Direct Threat – Direct Threat Assessment:** A direct threat is a threat that is communicated via one of a number of communication mediums, to include phone call, e-mail, text message, social media, and others. It can include both bomb threats and terrorist threats. The FBI, US Secret Service, US Postal Service, and other organizations have developed a number of resources and guide to assist in conducting direct threat assessments. The US Secret Service maintains a National Threat Assessment Center (<https://www.secretservice.gov/protection/ntac/>) and the FBI – National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime has published Making Prevention a Reality: Identifying, Assessing, and Managing the Threat of Targeted Attacks (<https://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/making-prevention-a-reality.pdf/view>) .

**Drill:** Events designed to simulate a response to an actual emergency. In school safety, drills are a critical tool to help condition our brains and bodies to follow a specific protocol when we are under duress. Drills conducted in schools include fire, evacuation, lockdown and reverse evacuation. The term “Exercise” is often incorrectly interchangeably with the term “Drill”.

## E

**Emergency Operations Plan (EOP):** A safety plan that specifies procedures sites must follow before, during, and after potential emergency events, and in response to both threats and hazards. A document or guide developed by a school to facilitate prevention, protection, mitigation, response, and recovery associated with a school emergency. The US Department of Education, in conjunction with the Federal Emergency Management Agency, has developed planning guides to facilitate EOPs for both K-12 and higher education institutions. (<https://rems.ed.gov/>) They have also developed a free computer based EOP tool called “EOP Assist, which supports high quality school emergency operations planning (<https://rems.ed.gov/EOPASSIST/EOPASSIST.aspx>).

**Evacuation/Evacuation Plan:** As a disaster or emergency unfolds, often those able to move or be moved are evacuated to a pre-designated location, either in close proximity to the school, or at a more-removed location. The Evacuation plan is part of a broader school emergency plan, and designated how an evacuation is to take place. The evacuation plan should be complimented with a re-unification plan.

**Exercise:** Events designed to simulate and/or test a response to an actual emergency, and often involve multiple agencies. The term “Drill” is often incorrectly used interchangeably with “Exercise”.

## F

**Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA):** Protects the privacy of student education records. The law applies to all schools that receive funds under an applicable program of the U.S. Department of Education. FERPA gives parents certain rights with respect to their children's education records. These rights transfer to the student when he or she reaches the age of 18 or attends a school beyond the high school level. Students to whom the rights have transferred are "eligible students." (<https://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html>)

**Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA):** FEMA is the federal agency designated to help people before, during, and after disasters. (<https://www.fema.gov/>)

**Finance / Administration Section:** The Incident Command System Section responsible for all administrative and financial considerations surrounding an emergency incident where the Incident command system has been activated and utilized to manage an emergency incident.

**FirstNet:** Short for First Responder Network Authority. A US Government sponsored initiative to provide to first responders a robust, redundant and secure multi-platform communication platform to support emergency response. While schools have not been a primary focus of the FirstNet initiative, schools can still benefit from having access to FirstNet communication resources in a school emergency or disaster. More information on FirstNet can be found at: <https://firstnet.gov/about>

**Functional Annex:** The part of an emergency plan which details the goals, objectives, and courses of action of functions (e.g., evacuation, communications, and recovery) that apply across multiple threats or hazards. Functional annexes set forth how a school manages a function before, during, and after an emergency. Both the Functional Annex and Threat & Hazard-Specific Annex are important parts of a school emergency plan.

## G

**Goals:** Goals are broad, general statements that indicate the desired outcome. Goals can be utilized in school safety strategic planning, school emergency planning, and a variety of other planning documents. They are what personnel and other resources are supposed to achieve. They also help identify when major activities are complete and what defines a successful outcome.

## H

**Hard Lockdown:** A situation where a specific threat causes both exterior entrances of a school as well as individual room doors to be secured and individuals “shelter-in-place”, and no movement by the general population of a building is allowed in and out of classrooms. Other actions in a “hard lock-down include turning off lights, televisions, music and any other sound, silencing cell phones, closing blinds, and moving students away from windows and doors. Additionally, window coverings may also be deployed so a potential assailant cannot see into classrooms and offices to determine if they are occupied.

**Hazards/ Vulnerabilities Risk Assessment:** Hazards/Vulnerabilities Risk Assessment, also often called “Hazard vulnerability analysis” (HVA) are systematic approaches to identifying hazards or risks that are most likely to have an impact on an organization and the surrounding community. Multiple tools and resources are available to help schools prioritize their planning efforts based on these identified hazards. Ready.gov has numerous resources available related to Hazards/Vulnerabilities Risk Assessment (<https://www.ready.gov/risk-assessment>)

**Higher Ed or Higher Education (HE):** Denotes a level of educational institution usually above the K-12 school level. Normally associated with colleges and universities, but can also include technical schools and other institutions.

**Higher Ed Guide:** This is the common name for the Federal “Guide for Developing High-Quality Emergency Operations Plans (EOPs) for Institutions of Higher Education developed by the US Department of Education, Readiness and Emergency Management Technical Assistance Center (REMS TA Center)

**Higher Ed Emergency Operations Plan/Higher Ed EOP:** An emergency operations plan (EOP) developed for and by postsecondary college and university level emergency planning and response teams. (<https://rems.ed.gov/IHEGuideIntro.aspx>)

**Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA):** Provides federal protections for individually identifiable health information held by covered entities and their business associates and gives patients an array of rights with respect to that information. At the same time, the Privacy Rule is balanced so that it permits the disclosure of health information needed for patient care and other important purposes.

**HIPPA Privacy Rules:** the US Department of Health & Human Services (HHS) establishes national standards to protect individuals' medical records and other personal health information. (<https://www.hhs.gov/hipaa/index.html>)

**Howlers & Hunters:** Groundbreaking research by Frederick S. Calhoun and Stephen J. Weston. They categorized individuals who make threats into “hunters” and “howlers”. Howlers are individuals who make contact, often from a distance, frightening or threatening a target. This “howling” can occur over an extended period of time but does not include actions that move the subject closer to violence. If this changes and the howler moves toward violence, he or she becomes a hunter.

Hunters are individuals who take actions demonstrating that they are moving toward an act of violence. Such actions include constructing a plan, acquiring weapons and moving geographically closer to the target.

## I

**Incident Command System (ICS):** A standardized on-scene incident management concept designed specifically to allow responders to adopt an integrated organizational structure equal to the complexity and demands of any single incident or multiple incidents without being hindered by jurisdictional boundaries. (<https://training.fema.gov/emiweb/is/icsresource/index.htm>) A standardized approach for incident management, regardless of cause, size, location, or complexity.

**Incident Commander (IC):** The individual responsible for all incident activities, including the development of strategies and tactics and the ordering and release of resources. The IC has overall authority and responsibility for conducting incident operations and is responsible for the management of all incident operations at the incident site. (See ICS)

**Intelligence Fusion Center:** Often simply called “Fusion Center”, a program bringing together law-enforcement agencies to collect, analyze, and disseminate intelligence information relating to criminal or terrorist activity. Every state has a designated by DHS “Primary” fusion center, but some states can have multiple fusion centers if there is a large population density concentrated in a single geographic location.

**Interoperability:** Often associated with communication systems, but often used in other contexts. The term interoperability describes the ability of systems, personnel, and equipment to

provide and receive functionality, data, information and/or services to and from other systems, personnel, and equipment, between both public and private agencies, departments, and other organizations, in a manner enabling them to operate effectively together. Allows emergency management/response personnel and their affiliated organizations to communicate within and across agencies and jurisdictions via voice, data, or video-on-demand, in real time, when needed, and when authorized.

**Internet Safety/Internet Security:** Internet safety/internet security is a branch of computer security that involves various security measures taken for ensuring safety of the user and the user's system when browsing the internet via a computer or mobile device.

**Intruder:** Someone who breaches boundaries and enters another person's space. In schools, we typically react to an intruder's presence by activating a "lockdown" protocol.

## **J**

**Joint Operations Center (JOC):** When the National Incident Management System has been activated to manage a crisis event or emergency, where multiple local, state, and possibly federal agencies are involved, a Joint Operations Center (JOC) is normally established to manage the crisis. Normally a Incident Commander is designated according to pre-established emergency management protocol, to have ultimate responsibility for decisions coming out of the JOC.

## **K**

**K-12 Schools:** Designation for schools which normally educate children from kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

**K-12 Emergency Operations Planning Guide:** A "best practice" guide to facilitate k-12 school emergency operations planning, developed by the REMS TA Center, in conjunction with FEMA and others.

## **L**

**Liaison Officer:** Within the ICS, the Liaison Officer is a member of the Command Staff responsible for coordinating with representatives from cooperating and assisting agencies or organizations.

**LEA:** Local Education Agency; a school district; Law Enforcement Agency

**Leakage:** A term related to behavioral risk assessments, representing a warning behavior that indicates preoccupation with, or plans for, violence. Leakage may be verbal or take the form of



written or visual communication. Examples of leakage include threats, boasting, innuendo, jokes, drawing, social media posting, videos, or journal writing.

**LEO:** Law Enforcement Officer

**Lock-Down:** The act of securing a premise by locking all exterior exits and sometimes as well as interior doors. The nature of a lock-down is determined on whether the threat is inside or outside of a school. A lock-down can be designated a “soft” lock-down, where exits are secured, but other normal activity takes place within a school, or a “hard” lock-down, where individual room doors are also secured and individuals “shelter-in-place”, and no movement by the general population of a building is allowed in and out of classrooms. Other actions in a “hard” lock-down include turning off lights, televisions, music and any other sound, silencing cell phones, closing blinds, and moving students away from windows and doors.

**Logistics:** Per NIMS, the process and procedure for providing resources and other services to support incident management.

## M

**Manifesto:** A document or video left behind by an attacker that often details grievances, a sense of unfairness, commitment to a cause or other clues or reasons behind the perpetrator’s decision to commit the attack.

**Mass Shooting:** A mass murderer that kills four or more people in a single incident (not including him or herself), typically in a single location that has public access. This definition does not include shooting that results from domestic, drug or gang violence (FBI, 2005).

**Mitigation:** One of the core capabilities associated with a school emergency operations plan. As described in the REMS TA Center K-12 School Guide and the Higher Ed Guide (<https://rems.ed.gov/K12GuideForDevelHQSchool.aspx>) Mitigation capabilities are necessary to eliminate or reduce the loss of life and property damage by lessening the impact of an event or emergency. In this document, mitigation also means reducing the likelihood that threats and hazards will happen.

## N

**National Incident Management System (NIMS):** A systematic, proactive approach to guide departments and agencies at all levels of government, nongovernmental organizations, and the private sector to work together seamlessly and manage incidents involving all threats and hazards— regardless of cause, size, location, or complexity—in order to reduce loss of life, property and harm to the environment.

**National Institute of Justice:** A program under the US Department of Justice where the NIJ – Comprehensive School Safety Initiative resides. This program promotes best practice research and other support related to school safety. (<https://nij.gov/topics/crime/school-crime/pages/school-safety-initiative.aspx>)

**National School Safety Alliance (NSSA):** The National School Safety Alliance is a state driven grassroots school safety information sharing and communications network that host monthly conference calls/virtual meeting in which all states having a designated school safety center or other designated point of contact for school safety in their State Education Agency (SEA), can participate. NSSA also disseminates relevant school safety threat and other information as need and the situation dictates and shares other relevant information between all state and federal/national partners and stakeholders. [www.nssanet.org](http://www.nssanet.org)

## O

**Objectives:** Specific, measurable actions that are necessary to achieve specific stated goals. “Objectives” can be utilized in school safety strategic planning, school emergency planning, and a variety of other planning context. Often, a planning team will need to identify multiple objectives in support of a single goal.

**OODA Loop:** Observe, Orient, Decide, Act – The OODA Loop is a 4-point decision-making strategy developed by U.S. Air Force Colonel John Boyd. It was originally a military term that has been used in other settings. Some school safety programs teach the OODA Loop to facilitate effective decision-making and action during an emergency.

The 4 steps are as follows and can be repeated as needed:

1. Observe – collect current information from as many sources as possible
2. Orient – analyze information and use it to inform your situation
3. Decide – determine a course of action
4. Act – follow through on your decision

**Operations Section:** In the context of emergency planning and the National Incident Management System (NIMS), the Incident Command System (ICS) Section responsible for all tactical incident operations and implementation of the Incident Action Plan. In ICS, the Operations Section normally includes subordinate Branches, Divisions, and/or Groups.

## P

**Panic Button:** A mechanism to alert school staff and/or first responders of an emergency. They are often deployed school-wide in classrooms, or in a central office. They can either be “hard-wired” or via radio signal or mobile device.

**Physical Risk Assessment/Physical Security Risk Assessment/Physical Security Audit:** Physical Risk Assessment and Physical Security Risk Assessment describe a process involving a comprehensive physical inspection and evaluation of all security systems, controls, and their

parameters in a particular public/private property, asset or an organization. Generally, it is the combined process of conducting intensive evaluation/audit and analyzing the results pertaining to the entire physical security mechanism of any particular facility.

The REMS TA Center has developed a free, secure mobile app which allows K-12 school and school district personnel to walk around a school building and grounds and examine their safety, security, accessibility, and emergency preparedness. SITE ASSESS generates a customized to-do list that may be used in the short term and long term to address facility improvements, prompts teams to share pertinent information with first responders, and contains relevant resources on several education facility and safety topics. (<https://rems.ed.gov/SITEASSESS.aspx>)

**Planning Section:** The ICS Section responsible for the collection, evaluation, and dissemination of operational information related to the incident, and for the preparation and documentation of the Incident Action Plan. This Section also maintains information on the current and forecasted situation and on the status of resources assigned to the incident.

**Positive Behaviors Intervention Support (PBIS):** PBIS is an identified “best practice” program endorsed by the US Department of Education through its PBIS Technical Assistance Center. PBIS is an approach that schools can use to proactively improve school safety and promote positive behavior.

**Positive Behaviors Intervention support Technical Assistance Center (PBIS TA Center):** Funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), the Technical Assistance Center on PBIS supports schools, districts, and states to build systems capacity for implementing a multi-tiered approach to social, emotional and behavior support. The broad purpose of PBIS is to improve the effectiveness, efficiency and equity of schools and other agencies. PBIS improves social, emotional and academic outcomes for all students, including students with disabilities and students from underrepresented groups. (<https://www.pbis.org/>)

**Presidential Policy Directive 8 (PPD-8):** Signed by the president in March 2011 and describes the nation’s approach to preparedness. This directive represents an evolution in our collective understanding of national preparedness, based on the lessons learned from terrorist attacks, hurricanes, school incidents, and other experiences. It defines preparedness around five mission areas: Prevention, Protection, Mitigation, Response, and Recovery.

**Psychological First Aid for Schools (PFA-S):** An evidence-informed approach for assisting children, adolescents, adults, and families in the aftermath of a school crisis, disaster, or terrorism event. PFA- S is designed to reduce the initial distress caused by emergencies, and to foster short- and long-term adaptive functioning and coping.

**Prevention:** One of the core capabilities associated with a school emergency operations plan. As described in the REMS TA Center K-12 School Guide and the Higher Ed Guide (<https://rems.ed.gov/K12GuideForDevelHQSchool.aspx>) “Prevention” refers to those capabilities

necessary to avoid, prevent, or stop a threatened or actual act of terrorism. The term “prevention” also refers to preventing imminent threats.

**Protection:** One of the core capabilities associated with a school emergency operations plan. As described in the REMS TA Center K-12 School Guide and the Higher Ed Guide (<https://rems.ed.gov/K12GuideForDevelHQSchool.aspx>), protection is the capabilities to secure the campus against acts of violence and manmade or natural disasters. Protection focuses on ongoing actions that protect students, educators, staff, visitors, networks, and property from a threat or hazard.

**Public Information Officer (PIO):** As member of the Command Staff, the PIO is responsible for interfacing with the public and media and/or with other agencies with incident-related information requirements.

**Q**

**R**

**Readiness and Emergency Management Technical Assistance Center (REMS TA Center):** The Readiness and Emergency Management Technical Assistance Center (REMS TA Center) is a program funded by the US Department of Education to provide training and resources to support school emergency planning as well as other school safety programs such as behavioral risk, positive school climate, etc. REMS TA Center supports both K-12 and Higher Ed schools. (<https://rems.ed.gov/>)

**Recovery:** One of the core capabilities associated with a school emergency operations plan. As described in the REMS TA Center K-12 School Guide and the Higher Ed Guide (<https://rems.ed.gov/K12GuideForDevelHQSchool.aspx>) Recover is the capability necessary to assist SCHOOLS affected by an event or emergency in restoring the learning environment.

**Response:** One of the core capabilities associated with a school emergency operations plan. As described in the REMS TA Center K-12 School Guide and the Higher Ed Guide (<https://rems.ed.gov/K12GuideForDevelHQSchool.aspx>) Response is the capability necessary to stabilize an emergency once it has already happened or is certain to happen in an unpreventable way, establish a safe and secure environment, save lives and property, and facilitate the transition to recovery.

**Reunification Plan:** Part of a school emergency plan that covers where students and staff are to be evacuated, and the procedure for them to be reunited with family and friends.

**Risk Assessment:** “Risk Assessment” is a general term that is often misused without further defining the context of the assessment. It can be used in the context of “Behavioral Risk

Assessment”; “Direct Threat Assessment” such as a bomb threat or terrorist threat; “Hazards/Vulnerabilities Risk Assessment”; and even “Physical Security Risk Assessment”.

**Risk Factors:** Circumstances that create a susceptibility or propensity toward a given outcome. Usually associated with a behavioral risk assessment program. Risk factors do not guarantee that a specific outcome will occur, as many variables contribute to process. There are opportunities to reduce the likelihood of an outcome linked to risk factors. Risk factors for violence include role models for using violence to solve problems, antisocial behavior or legal involvement at an early age and involvement with antisocial peers as a pre-teen and/or young teen.

**Run, Hide, Fight:** A DHS response strategy for protecting oneself and others during an incident that involves an active shooter or attacker. This response requires assessing the situation quickly, running/evacuating if possible; hiding or locking down in a secure space if evacuation is not possible; taking actions against the attacker to protect and save lives if the run and hide options do not exist.

## S

**School Safety Center:** Usually denotes a state level agency that has been designated to promote school safety across a state, in support of K-12 schools, and sometimes institutes of higher education. Some, but not all support all schools, public and private, while other only support public schools. Not all states have state level school safety centers, and not all school safety centers provide the same level of programs and training. A comprehensive listing of state level school safety centers and “points of contact” in states that do not have school safety centers at <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1sQ0twe5K-qYUSFH9SEXKrnAmVHWspntD/view>. Also, the REMS TA Center maintains a list of school safety centers under Emergency Management Resources through an interactive map at their web site: <https://rems.ed.gov/StateResources.aspx>

**School Safety Coordinator:** In many states, schools are required to have a designated school safety coordinator, or the functional equivalent of this position. In some states this position is required by law, and specific qualifications, certifications, and training requirements are spelled out, while in others, this position is less defined, and there are no requirements re qualifications, certifications, or training.

**School Safety Officer:** Per ICS, a member of the Command Staff responsible for monitoring incident operations and advising the Incident Commander on all matters relating to operational safety, including the health and safety of emergency responder personnel.

**School Climate/School Culture:** A school’s climate is determined by the environment and quality of relationships among students, staff and teachers. A school culture is determined by local customs and factors that may be unique to a specific geographic location, and sometimes differ between rural and urban schools.

A positive school climate fosters trust, respect, support, fairness, and connectedness throughout the entire school community. School climate is an important element of a school safety program, as a positive school climate has an inhibiting effect on school violence. In addition, a positive school climate increases parent involvement, learning and academic success.

**School Climate Survey:** A school climate survey is a tool used to assess the perceptions of students, staff members, and parents regarding areas of school climate such as equitable treatment, respect, support, friendliness, and responsiveness. It is a valuable step for determining specific areas in need of improvement. The National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments keeps a database of valid and reliable school climate surveys on its website (<https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/topic-research/school-climate-measurement/school-climate-survey-compendium>) .

**School Emergency Operations Plan/School EOP:** An emergency operations plan (EOP) developed for and by school level emergency planning and response teams. The US Department of Education - REMS TA Center has best practice planning guidelines available for both K-12 and Higher Ed EOPs. (<https://rems.ed.gov/>)

**School Shootings:** Numerous terms such as “Columbine”, “Parkland”, “Virginia Tech”, “Sandy Hook”, and multiple others have become synonymous with school shooting incidents in the US. A comprehensive listing of school shooting incidents in the US can be found at: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_school\\_shootings\\_in\\_the\\_United\\_States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_school_shootings_in_the_United_States)

**SEA:** State Education Agency – Usually a department within state government that is responsible for programs related to K-12 and Institutes of Higher Education.

**Situational Awareness:** In technical terms, Situational Awareness is defined as: “Within a volume of time and space, the perception of an enterprise's security posture and its threat environment; the comprehension/meaning of both taken together (risk); and the projection of their status into the near future.” In general terms, it means being aware of what is going on in the immediate surrounding area at the present time.

**Situation Report:** Confirmed or verified information regarding the specific details relating to an incident and is a key component of NIMS.

**Stalking:** Stalking is a pattern of unwanted attention and behavior that causes discomfort, fear and a sense of intimidation in the victim. Stalking behaviors include, following the victim; showing up uninvited at the same location as the victim; sending notes, letters, emails, or gifts; calling or texting repeatedly; and knowing the victim’s schedule. Stalking is a crime and can be dangerous. A number of stalking victims have been later assaulted or killed by their stalker.

**Soft Lockdown:** A situation which is a reaction to an external threat such as an armed individual in the vicinity of a school, where exits are secured, but other normal activity takes place within the confines of a school.

## T

**Tactical Interoperation Communication (TIC) / Tactical Interoperation Communication Plan (TICP):** A US Government initiative to synchronize communication platforms and frequencies for communication devices, so that in any emergency, first responders can communicate at the desired level to help reduce loss of life, pain, and suffering. Each state has it's own TICP.

**Tarasoff Warning:** The Tarasoff Warning, often called “duty to warn” outlines a mental health professional’s duty not only to a patient or client, but also to individuals who are specifically threatened by them. It is named for Tatiana Tarasoff who was killed by Prosenjit Poddar, an acquaintance who had confided in his psychologist that he intended to kill Tatiana. This decision was first adopted by the California Supreme Court and has since been adopted by most states in the U.S. A list of state laws re Tarasoff Warning can be found at:

<http://www.ncsl.org/research/health/mental-health-professionals-duty-to-warn.aspx> .

**Threats:** Potentially dangerous events which are human-caused such as crime and violence, but can also be related to natural causes such as a tornado or severe weather threat. They usually cause additional evaluation and analysis in order to make a sound decision re any response to the threat, including input from outside agencies such as law enforcement or emergency management. Threats can also be viewed in the context of the presence of a collection of behaviors known to indicate that an individual is intent and capable of inflicting harm and pose a threat to themselves or others. (See also Behavioral Risk Assessment, Direct Threat/Direct Threat Assessment, and Hazards/Vulnerabilities Risk Assessment.)

**Threat Assessment Team:** A generic term that does not specifically describe what category of threat is being assessed. Usually used to describe a multidisciplinary team within a school district, school building, workplace, or government entity whose purpose is to evaluate, investigate, and assess a specific category of potential threats to safety. Teams can be both internal only, or more multi-disciplinary and multi-agency. Threat categories can include direct threats such as a bomb or terrorist threat, behavioral risk on the part of an individual, or for a broader hazards/vulnerability risk assessment for the school enterprise. The more “inclusive” a threat assessment team can be of school safety stakeholders, both internal and external to a school, the better the chances any threat assessment is relevant and valid. (see also Behavioral Risk Assessment Team/Behavioral Threat Assessment Team)

**Threat Analysis/Threat Assessment:** The process of evaluating a threat, with input from appropriate stakeholders such as local law enforcement. The process involves and can include assessing risks to a particular target, individual, or group of individuals, and designing and

implementing intervention and management strategies to reduce the risk or threat. It can related to a direct threat, behavioral risk assessments, and hazard/vulnerability risk assessment, among other things.

**Threat & Hazard-Specific Annexes:** Addition to an organization’s emergency plan that specifies the goals, objectives, and courses of action that a school will follow to address a particular type of threat or hazard (e.g., hurricane, active shooter). Threat- and hazard-specific annexes, like functional annexes, set forth how the SCHOOL manages a function before, during, and after an emergency. Both the Functional Annex and Threat & Hazard-Specific Annex are important parts of a school emergency plan.

**Trajectory:** Refers to behavioral conduct where an individual is moving toward or further away from committing an act of violence, to either themselves or others.

**Triage:** An emergency management concept where injured can be brought into one location at the disaster site, and prioritized re severity of their injuries and chances of survival.

## U

**Unified Command:** In the Incident Command System, a Unified Command is an authority structure in which the role of incident commander is shared by two or more individuals, each already having authority in a different responding agency. A Unified Command may be needed for emergency incidents involving multiple jurisdictions or agencies.

**US Secret Service – National Threat Assessment Center:** A program within the US Secret Service designed to coordinate research and sharing of best-practice information related to threats against schools and other government entities.

<https://www.secretservice.gov/protection/ntac/>

## V.

**Vulnerabilities:** The characteristics of the campus (e.g., structures, equipment, information technology [IT] or electrical systems, grounds, surrounding area) that could make it more susceptible to the identified threats and hazards.

## W

**Watch & Warning Center:** Often simply referred to as a “Watch Center, a 24/7/365 operation where multiple agencies representing law enforcement, emergency management, fire, EMS, and possibly other staffing of local, state, and/or federal agencies come together to maintain a comprehensive and unified situational awareness of events of daily events.

## X



**Y**

**Z**

## **2. Acronyms:**

**A**

ADA Americans with Disabilities Act

**B**

BIA Bureau of Indian Affairs

BIE Bureau of Indian Education

**C**

CCSS Common Core State Standards

CCSSO Council of Chief State School Officers

CDC Center for Disease Control and Prevention

COOP Continuity of Operations Plan

CSO Campus Safety (Security) Officer

**D**

DHS Department of Homeland Security

DOE Department of Education

DOD Department of Defense

**E**

ECEAP Early Childhood Educational Assistance Program

EMD Emergency Management Department or Director

EOC Emergency Operations Center

EOP Emergency Operations Plan

ESEA Elementary & Secondary Education Act

ESSA Every Student Succeeds Act

**F**

FAQ Frequently Asked Questions

FEMA Federal Emergency Management Agency

FERPA Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act

FMLA Family and Medical Leave Act

**G**

GED General Education Development  
GETS Government Emergency Telephone System

## **H**

HBI Home-based Instruction  
HE Higher Education  
HIPAA Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act

## **I**

ICS Incident Command System  
IDEA Individuals with Disabilities ACT  
IHE Institute of Higher Education  
IT Information Technology  
ITS Information Technology Services

## **J**

JIC Joint Information Center  
JOC Joint Operations Center

## **K**

## **L**

LEA Local Education Agency/Law Enforcement Agency  
LGBTQ Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning Youth

## **M**

## **N**

NASRO National Association of School Resource Officers  
NGA National Governor's Association  
NIJ National Institute of Justice  
NIJ-CSSI National Institute of Justice – Comprehensive School Safety Initiative  
NIMS National Incident Management System  
NSBA National School Boards' Association  
NSSA National School Safety Alliance  
NTAC National Threat Assessment Center (US Secret Service)

## **O**

OEC Office of Emergency Communication in DHS  
ORI Originating Agency Identifier (law enforcement term)

## **P**

PBIS Positive Behavior and Intervention Supports  
PDD Presidential Decision Directive

PDF Portable Document Format

**Q**

Q&A Questions and Answers

**R**

REMS Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools

REMS TA Center REMS Technical Assistance Center

**S**

SAMHSA Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

SEA State Education Agency

SOS Secretary of State

SRO School Resource Officer (a commissioned law enforcement officer)

SSAC School Safety Advisory Committee

SSO School Security Officer (Also: CSO-Campus Safety/Security Officer);

**T**

TA Technical Assistance

TIC Tactical Interoperable Communications

TICP Tactical Interoperable Communications Plan

**U**

USDA United States Department of Agriculture

USDOE United States Department of Education

**V**

**W**

**X**

**Y**

**Z**