



# STATE OF NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

A Memo from the New Jersey Department of Education

Date: February 20, 2018  
To: Chief School Administrators, Charter School and Renaissance School Project Leads, Administrators of Approved Private Schools for Students with Disabilities, Nonpublic Schools  
From: Ben Castillo, Director  
Office of School Preparedness and Emergency Planning

## School Safety and Security Information and Resources for Schools

In the wake of the tragic events in Florida last week, this is a reminder that school safety and security is a high priority involving the entire school community: administrators, principals, teachers, students, staff, parents, and the students themselves.

The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) takes proactive measures to work with school districts to protect the safety and security of all our students and staff members. The NJDOE's Office of School Preparedness and Emergency Planning (OSPEP) provides direct support to New Jersey's schools in establishing safe and secure school environments and increasing their capacity to prepare for the possibility of a school crisis.

Through the OSPEP, the NJDOE is committed to providing security assistance to both public and nonpublic schools. To achieve this, the OSPEP works in conjunction with the New Jersey Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness, the New Jersey State Police, the New Jersey Association of School Resource Officers, and other state and federal partners.

Support to district and school leaders includes assistance with the establishment and maintenance of school safety and security plans that address all hazards and follows the phases of crisis management planning – mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery. In addition, New Jersey continues to lead the nation in the practice of unannounced school shooter drill observations. Such drills – in which the chief school administrator invites NJDOE staff to conduct the unannounced drill – not only provide school staff and students with opportunities to practice and test their responses, but also allow representatives of the Department of Education to offer guidance and share best practices in school security. Since 2014, more than 800 schools throughout the state have benefitted from unannounced security drills performed in collaboration with the NJDOE.

**Technical assistance.** During that same period, the OSPEP responded to over 200 requests for technical assistance. These include information dissemination, professional development, training on topics such as lockdown, reunification, continuity of operations planning, and more. OSPEP also provides regional school security symposiums, hosts national speakers and presents to professional organizations throughout the year.

Current trainings available include, but are not limited to:

- Emergency Operations Plan Review
- Continuity of Operations Planning
- Drill Observations
- Reunification
- Behavioral Threat Assessment
- Tabletop Exercises
- Bomb Threat: Assessment and Response
- Front Office Staff Training
- Site Observation
- Transportation Safety
- Exercise/Drilling
- After School/Sporting events

**Online resources.** Please visit the [OSPEP webpage](#) for additional information or to request technical assistance. For information on student health, behavior, school culture and climate, and social-emotional skills, turn to the NJDOE's [Keeping Our Kids Safe, Healthy and In School](#) webpage.

**Legislation.** The New Jersey Legislature continues to address important issues in school security. Many recommendations offered by the recent New Jersey School Security Task Force have resulted in revisions to and enactment of new statutes pertaining to school safety. These include updates to the school drill law ([N.J.S.A. 18A:41](#)) and requirements of school safety and security plans ([N.J.A.C. 6A:16-5.1](#)).

A notable statute is the recent mandate to train and certify a school administrator as a School Safety Specialist ([N.J.S.A. 18A:17-43.2 to 43.3](#)) in each district. The NJDOE has been collaborating with school officials throughout the state as it continues its work to establish a School Safety Specialist Academy to train the school staff holding those positions.

**Important reminders.** The NJDOE offers these reminders to consider when evaluating school security:

1. Review your access control measures and visitor policy with staff.
2. Ensure exterior doors are not propped open and remain locked.
3. Discuss safety with staff and students. Review your school safety and security plans and procedures.
4. Expect incidents, threats and rumors per the "contagion effect" that impacts communities after a highly publicized event. Social media will play a role. All threats should be taken seriously.
5. Reinforce relationships with emergency responders.
6. Expect questions and emotional response from the community. If necessary, utilize mental health resources.
7. Provide timely communication in circumstances.

Contact the NJDOE's Office of School Preparedness and Emergency Planning at [school.security@doe.state.nj.us](mailto:school.security@doe.state.nj.us) or (609) 588-2323 for any questions.

c: Members, State Board of Education  
Dr. Lamont O. Repollet, Acting Commissioner  
NJDOE Staff  
Statewide Parent Advocacy Network  
Garden State Coalition of Schools  
NJ LEE Group