

**WHITEHALL CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
2019-2020
DISTRICT-WIDE SCHOOL SAFETY PLAN
PROJECT SAVE - Commissioner's Regulation 155.17
(Safe Schools Against Violence in Education)**

Introduction

Emergencies and violent incidents in school districts are critical issues that must be addressed in an expeditious and effective manner. Districts are required to develop a district-wide school safety plan designed to prevent or minimize the effects of serious violent incidents and emergencies and to facilitate the coordination of the district with local and county resources in the event of such incidents or emergencies. The district-wide plan is responsive to the needs of all schools within the district and is consistent with the more detailed emergency response plans required at the building level. Districts stand at risk from a wide variety of acts of violence, natural, and manmade disasters. To address these threats, the State of New York has enacted the Safe Schools Against Violence in Education (SAVE) law. Project SAVE is a comprehensive planning effort that addresses prevention, response, and recovery with respect to a variety of emergencies in each school district and its schools.

The Whitehall Central School District supports the SAVE Legislation and intends to facilitate the planning process. The Superintendent of Schools encourages and advocates on-going district-wide cooperation and support of Project SAVE.

Section I: General Considerations and Planning Guidelines

A. Purpose

The Whitehall Central School District's District-Wide School Safety Plan was developed pursuant to Commissioner's Regulation 155.17. At the direction of the Whitehall Central School District's Board of Education, the Superintendent of the Whitehall Central School District appointed a District-Wide School Safety Team and charged it with the development and maintenance of the District-Wide School Safety Plan.

B. Identification of School Teams

The Whitehall Central School District has created a District-Wide School Safety Team consisting of, but not limited to, representatives of the board of education, students, teachers, administrators, parent organizations, school safety personnel and other school personnel. The District has also created Building Level Emergency Response Teams

C. Concept of Operations

- The District-Wide School Safety Plan is directly linked to the individual Building-Level Safety Plans for each school building. Protocols reflected in the District-Wide School Safety Plan guide the development and implementation of individual Building-level Safety Plans.
- In the event of an emergency or violent incident, the initial response to all emergencies at an individual school will be by the building-level safety team.

- Upon the activation of the building-level safety team, the Superintendent of Schools or his/her designee will be notified and, where appropriate, local emergency officials will also be notified.
- Efforts may be supplemented by Washington County and New York State resources through existing protocols when needed.

D. Plan review and public comment

- This plan shall be reviewed and maintained by the Whitehall Central School District's District-Wide School Safety Team and reviewed on an annual basis on or before July 1 of each year. A copy of the plan will be available at the District Office located at 87 Buckley Drive, Whitehall, NY 12887.
- Pursuant to Commissioner's Regulation 155.17(e)(3), the 2001-02 District-Wide School Safety Plan was made available for public comment on May 25, 2001, which was 30 days prior to its adoption. The public hearing was held on June 18, 2001 and the plan was adopted by the board of education on June 18, 2001.
- Period (annual) updates have been made to the District Level Safety Plan since the original Plan was developed and approved. The most recent revisions reflect changes to Commissioner's Regulation 1555.17 which went into effect July 1st, 2016. A public hearing was held on to address the updates to the plan. This public hearing provided for the participation of school personnel, parents, students and any other interested parties in attendance.
- Full copies of the District-Wide School Safety Plan and any amendments will be submitted to the New York State Education Department (NYSED) within 30 days of adoption and available on the Whitehall Central School District Website.
- While linked to the District-Wide School Safety Plan, Building-level Emergency Response Plans shall be confidential and shall not be subject to disclosure under Article 6 of the Public Officers Law or any other provision of law, in accordance with Education Law Section 2801-a. Original Building-level Emergency Response Plans and all updates are given to the New York State Police and other pertinent parties within 30 days of adoption.

Section II: General Emergency Response Planning

The District-Wide School Safety Plan provides the framework for the Building-level Emergency Response Plan. The purpose of a uniform plan is to ensure district-wide continuity for emergency responses. These general emergency responses will be used to assist school employees, students, parents and emergency responders learn one system that can be used in either of the Whitehall school buildings. This is particularly beneficial as students move from elementary to high school, and as full-time, part-time and substitute employees travel between the schools.

- The Board of Education has appointed the Superintendent Patrick Dee as the Chief Emergency Officer. The Chief Emergency Officer or designee, is responsible for coordinating communication between staff and law enforcement and first responders and for ensuring the staff's

understanding

of the district-level safety plan. The chief emergency officer or designee shall also be responsible for ensuring completion and yearly update of building-level emergency response plans.

A. Identification of sites of potential emergency:

- The district-wide school safety team in conjunction with Washington County Emergency Management Office, New York State Police, and the Washington County Sheriff have contributed information that has identified areas outside of school property that may impact a district facility during an emergency. Factors that were considered include population, presence of hazardous materials, potential for emergency based on geographical potential and/or national trends and proximity to district property, such as airports, bridges, dams, and major intersections, primary routes of hazardous cartage and SARA Title III locations of hazardous materials. The detailed list is included in the confidential Building-Level Safety Plans and is reviewed on a regular basis.
- The district team has recognized that there are many factors that could cause an emergency in our schools and facilities within the district. There are also factors that need to be considered when responding to an emergency. The detailed list of potential internal and external hazards or emergency situations is included in the confidential Building-Level Safety Plan.

B. The district has developed multi-hazard response plans specific to each building. These guidelines are included in the Building-Level Safety Plan and are in Incident Command System (ICS) format. Plans for taking the following actions in response to an emergency where appropriate are, including but not limited to:

- Initial Actions
- Command Post Location (primary and secondary)
- School Cancellation
- Early Dismissal
- Evacuation (before, during and after school hours, including security during evacuation and evacuation routes)
- Evacuation/Relocation Sites (internal and external)
- Shelter in Place procedures
- Hold in Place procedures
- Lockdown procedures
- Lockout procedures
- Other emergency procedures

Emergency School Closing and Delays details for parents, students, faculty and staff is also posted on the district's website and is listed in the district calendar.

B. The district has identified various resources that may be available for use during an

emergency, including the identification of personnel via school building teams and use of ICS, a list of volunteer faculty/staff trained in first aid and CPR, equipment, master list of all vehicles in the Transportation Department, building floor plans/maps with shut-offs and potential hazards noted, American Red Cross Sheltering Agreements and designated shelter sites with backup shelter sites. The district has agreements with any shelters that are used within the community. The specific, detailed information is included in the confidential Building-level Emergency Response Plans upon the advice of the New York State Police.

- C. Using Incident Command System (ICS), the district has identified the school personnel authorized to make decisions during an emergency. Through ICS the procedures to coordinate the use of school district resources and manpower during emergencies are clearly defined. ICS identified the staff members and their backups assigned to provide assistance during emergencies.

Each school building has an Emergency Response Team which works under the Incident Command System (ICS) The specific details of each buildings' Emergency Response Team are located in the confidential Building-level Emergency Response Plans. Each school building Emergency Response Team has been given an overview of the Incident Command System (ICS), an ICS flow chart, ICS training and specific ICS roles and responsibilities along with procedures to use during a drill, exercise and/or emergency.

D. The district has developed policies and procedures for annual multi-hazard school safety training for staff and students, including the strategies for implementing training related to multi-hazards. Procedures have been established to provide this training on an annual basis to include but not limited to: early dismissal/go home drill, fire drills, lockdown drills, table top exercises, New York State Police Safe Schools training, and Incident Command System training. Individual schools use various faculty/staff surveys and forms, in order to obtain feedback on the drill practiced. School administrators then address any concerns or questions noted and share them either in written form or in faculty/staff meetings. On a monthly basis, the district administrators and principals meet to discuss all reports of multi-hazard training, actual and potential hazards and/or violence (implied threats, direct threats and/or actual acts of violence). The discussions are the key to debriefing as a district. Actions and procedures that are carried out well are verified and areas in need of improvement are noted as needed. This level of district awareness assists each principal and administrator in responding to future training, actual emergency responses and implied threat, direct threats and/or actual acts of violence.

- E. The district conducts drills and other training 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. The district administrators and Building-level teams participate in tabletop exercises with local responders. The New York State Police have been instrumental in conducting tabletop exercises at the district and school building levels. They have provided valuable debriefing assistance in tabletops involving criminal offences and threats/acts of violence. A debriefing is conducted after each drill and/or exercise to determine if changes to the plan are necessary and to assist in returning to routine school activities. Schools that have multiple floor levels also prepare and practice a Non-Ambulatory Emergency Evacuation Plan.

F. Section III: Responding to Threats and Acts of Violence

A. Schools will activate their Emergency Response Team and review and implement procedures using the Multi-hazard Response Guides found in the Building Level Emergency Response Plan. The Multi-hazard Response Guides are reviewed by the District and Building Level Teams to ensure content and consistency throughout the district. These policies and procedures are for responding to implied or direct threats of violence by students, teachers, other school personnel and visitors to the school. The following types of procedures are addressed in the confidential Building-level Emergency Response Plans:

- The use of staff trained in de-escalation or other strategies to diffuse the situation. (Training offered through the NYS Police Safe Schools Program on an annual basis.)
- Informing the building principal of implied or direct threats.
- Determining the level of threat with the Superintendent or designee.
- Contacting appropriate law enforcement agency, if necessary.
- Monitoring the situation, adjusting the district's response as appropriate to include possible implementation of the Emergency Response Team.
- Communication with parent/guardian.

B. The Multi-Hazard Emergency Response Guides, located in the confidential Building-level Emergency Response Plans, provide guidance on the district's policies and procedures for responding to direct acts of violence by students, teachers, other school personnel and visitors to the school, including consideration of zero-tolerance policies for school violence. The following types of procedures are addressed in the plan:

- Inform the building principal and superintendent.
- Determine the level of threat with principal and superintendent/designee.
- If the situation warrants, isolate the immediate area and evacuate if appropriate.
- If necessary, initiate lockdown procedure and contact appropriate law enforcement agency.
- Monitor the situation; adjust the level of response as appropriate; if necessary, initiate early dismissal, sheltering or evacuation procedures.

NOTE: The Whitehall "Code of Conduct" describes policies and procedures for responding to acts of violence by students, teachers, other school personnel and visitors to the school.

C. The following protocols for appropriate responses to emergencies are provided as examples of responses to bomb threats, hostage takings, intrusions and kidnappings:

- Identification of decision-makers.
- Plans to safeguard students and staff.
- Procedures to provide transportation, if necessary.
- Procedures to notify parents.
- Procedures to notify media.
- Debriefing procedures.

- All district administrators, principals, their secretaries and building custodians have a “Whitehall Central Schools Emergency Reference Card.” This specifically outlines which agency and which administrator(s) need to be contacted under which emergency circumstances. This two-sided page is updated on an annual basis and designed to be kept near the phones at work and at home if needed during “off” hours.
- D. The district has established policies and procedures to contact parents, guardians or persons in parental relation to the students in the event of a violent incident or an early dismissal. In the Whitehall Central School District, the following communication methods will be taken:
- For small-scale incidents, school personnel will directly call the parents/guardians of all students directly impacted by any acts of violence. All other parents/guardians will receive an informational letter. The Crisis Intervention Plans and Post-Incident Response Team will be activated and available. If needed, meetings will be scheduled in a timely manner for further discussion.
 - For any major incident, the district will be working with the media (TV, radio, Times Union Source Line) to relay pertinent school related information (i.e. how and where parents can be reunited with children, etc.). Major emergencies can quickly tie up phone lines with incoming and outgoing calls and roads can be quickly blocked by the traffic of emergency vehicles, concerned parents and community members. School personnel will directly call the parents/guardians of all students directly impacted by any acts of violence. All other parents/guardians will receive an information letter. Community meetings and/or press conferences may be scheduled in a timely manner to discuss the particulars of the incidents and the district’s response. The District and/or Building Level Response Team(s) will implement the Crisis Intervention Plans or other response plans as needed.

Section IV: Communication with Others

The District-Wide School Safety Plan provides the framework for the Building-level Emergency Response Plan with regard to communication with others.

- A. The Whitehall Central Schools is fortunate to have substantial ties to the community. If there were to be an emergency within any one of our facilities, that facility would call 911 for emergency assistance. If involvement were needed from other local government agencies, then the Superintendent or designee would act as that contact person. Additional procedures for communications can be found in the Building-level Emergency Response Plans and the Capital Region BOCES Emergency Communications Network flowchart. The following examples are the types of arrangements that could be used by the district:
- Principal (Building-level IC or backup IC) or Superintendent (District-Wide IC or backup IC) in an emergency would contact the county dispatch center for fire, EMS, or police by calling 911.
 - Principal (Building-level IC or backup IC) or Superintendent (District-Wide IC or backup IC) contacts the highest-ranking local government official for notification and/or assistance.

- B. Arrangements for obtaining advice and assistance from local government officials including the county or town officials responsible for implementation of Article 2-B of the Executive Law will be carried out through the protocols established in Capital Region BOCES Communication Flow Chart. The following are examples of the types of arrangements that could be used by the district during countywide emergencies:
- Superintendent (District-Wide IC or backup IC) in an emergency will contact the Washington County Emergency Management Coordinator and/or the highest-ranking local government official for obtaining advice and assistance.
 - The district has identified resources for an emergency from the following agencies: County Civil Defense Office, American Red Cross, County Emergency Services Office, New York State Police, Washington County Sheriff, Washington County Mental Health Office and Capital Region Health/Safety/Risk Management Office.
 - If the emergency is within the school district boundaries and has the potential to impact the surrounding community, the Superintendent or designee will notify the appropriate town officials (Ex: Highway Dept., Town Administrator, and/or Public Safety). Likewise, should there be an emergency within the community that has the potential to impact the facilities of the school district, the Superintendent should be notified immediately.

Section V: Prevention and Intervention Strategies

- A. The district has developed policies and procedures related to school building security including, visitor sign-in and badge procedures, and employee badges. The New York State Police, Washington County Sheriff's Department or other law enforcement agencies may also conduct random locker searches. If a crime occurs in or on school property, the district has procedures and will follow the NY State Police 'Crime Scene Management' brochure which is in the confidential Building Level Emergency Response Plan .

To further enhance school security and student, faculty and staff safety, the district has the following policies in place; Child Safety and Conditional or Emergency Appointments (Policy 9128 and 9128-R), Suspected Child Abuse by District Personnel (Policy 9130) and the Drug-Free Workplace Act (Policy 9125).

The district Code of Conduct also supports school safety and security.

- B. The Whitehall Central School District has implemented procedures for the dissemination of informative materials regarding the early detection of potentially violent behaviors, including, but not limited to: the identification of family, community and environmental factors to teachers, administrators, parents and other persons in parental relation to students of the school district or board, students and other persons deemed appropriate to receive such information. The district employs school psychologists and intervention counselors who assist the district in identifying early warning signs in students and early intervention/prevention strategies. The intervention counselors play a key role in violence prevention and suicide prevention programs.

The district currently disseminates informative materials regarding the early detection of potentially violent behaviors through the individual schools with guidance and direction from the District Office. For example, the Superintendent of Schools gave each principal the Age-Related Reactions of Children to Disasters in response to the 9/11 terrorist events. In turn, each principal disseminated this information to faculty, staff and parents to provide information about children's normal reactions within specific age groups and suggestions for enabling children to cope with disaster precipitated stress.

The district is in the process of expanding its dissemination of informative materials regarding the early detection of potentially violent behaviors and early warning signs. Additional annual mechanisms will be dedicated to the dissemination of the warning signs to parents, faculty and staff, and will combine information from various sources such as:

- New York State Police, Safe Schools Awareness Program; *Behavioral Indicators to Watch For*, *Violent Behavior Indicators*, and *Children's Threats: When Are They Serious*
- Brochure from the Office of the Lieutenant Governor, Protect Your Child from Violence, A Resource for Parents; (*Warning Signs, Media Violence and Talking with Your Child*)
- ETR Associates, Bullying, The ABC's
- New York State Center for School Safety, Helping Potentially Violent Children, Identifying Troubled Children, and Preventing Bullying, A Manual For Schools And Communities
- American Psychological Association, Communication Tips For Parents and Warning Signs; Fight For Your Rights: Take a Stand Against Violence

C. Appropriate prevention and intervention strategies such as:

- Collaborative efforts with state and local law enforcement officials designed to ensure that personnel are adequately trained including being trained to de-escalate potentially violent situations
- Non-violent conflict resolution training programs
- Peer mediation programs
- Extended day school programs
- Community-wide Character Counts program

D. Strategies for improving communication among students, between students and staff and the reporting of potentially violent incidents. Highlights of the major programs are noted below:

- District-Wide Programs:
 - Character Counts Program.
 - "Commitment to Excellence" Whitehall's long range plan for quality education which includes the "Profile of a Whitehall Graduate".
 - District School Calendar containing the Code of Conduct is mailed to all students.
 - Each school has a student/parent handbook that outlines the expectations of students.

- Whitehall High School (6-12)
 - Respect Club; the goal of this club is to foster mutual respect in the high school. An ongoing effort to accomplish this goal has involved many clubs and leadership groups together in pursuit of the common goal to improve the quality of human interaction in the high school at every level.
 - Mentoring Program; to improve school performance and/or social interactions. This program pairs a high school student with a 6th grader on a weekly basis for the school year.
 - Moot Court; students attend county trials and the Law Day Program. Weekly meetings are held.
 - Outdoor Adventure Club; students participate in indoor and outdoor activities to promote team building.
 - Peace Program; Exchange program between Shen students and students in France.
 - Youth Court/Peer Mediation; is a program designed to train student volunteers to perform the roles of judge, clerk, prosecutor, defender, foreperson and jury members in a peer sentencing court. Youth Court is sponsored in collaboration with the Washington County Prevention Council.
 - World of Difference; The World of Difference Peer Training Program is designed to infuse the ideals of diversity within the school community.
 - Key Club; organized to promote pride and service to school and community.
 - Middle School Rights and Expectations; provided in written form in the Student Agenda.
 - Words of Wisdom; Rights and Expectations reinforced daily by the 'Words of Wisdom' are read with the morning announcements. These are inspirational passages reflecting on the words of prominent people throughout history and applied to students' lives.
 - Counseling Center; all Middle School students are assigned a school counselor who works with the students and parents during their time at the Middle School. Counselors discuss study/organizational skills, goal setting, interim/report card grades, strategies for improving grades/attitudes, learning styles, getting along with others and related topics that concern a student and/or parents.
 - Child Study Team; Members (Principal, Assistant Principal, Psychologist, Intervention Counselor, School Counselors and School Nurse) meet weekly to discuss students who are referred by members of the committee or teachers. Specific interventions are developed and staff are assigned to monitor progress.
 - Extracurricular Activities; There are extensive opportunities for students to become involved in productive, fun activities before and after school.
 - Student Agenda; the 'What is Character' section of the student's agenda is provided for student reading and teacher use in school to help students learn the skills of making responsible choices and being proactive in facing

challenges. Teachers and parents use the Student Agenda as a communication tool between home and school. Teachers use the Student Agenda as a way of helping students learn how to manage time and work, and to be responsible for learning.

- Progressive Discipline Process; Teachers discuss behavior with students, communication with parents and use classroom behavior consequences. Teachers write referrals to document behavior that continues after teacher intervention. The student meets with the Assistance Principal or Principal to discuss the behavior and its consequences. This is communicated to parents by phone and in writing. Intervention may be sought through referral to STARRS or in-school counselors and the Child Study Team where possibility of Diversion or PINS may be discussed. Students may be assigned in school suspension, which is supervised by monitors, where students do school work and may receive help from their teachers. Out of school suspension (up to 5 days) may be assigned by the Principal.
- Other Communication Strategies; Mentor Program with the High School, Respect Week, Student Assemblies (e.g. PTA Arts in Education, Safety Programs with NYS Police, Nancy Sharples Assemblies, Living Voices (Anne Frank) Assembly, Craft Project, Bowling and Rights & Expectation Assemblies).
- Elementary Schools (K-6)(various programs are offered at the elementary level):
 - Spiral Curriculum to Promote Non-Violence; cooperation, communication, tolerance, positive emotional expression, personal responsibility, creative problem solving.
 - Character Counts Moment; each day a student reads a message improving behavior positive ideas.
 - Character Counts Assemblies.
 - Comprehensive approach to work toward an atmosphere of tolerance school-wide.
 - Conflict Resolution.
 - Social Skill Training.
 - Drug Abuse Resistance Education.
 - Bully Prevention Program;
 - the Puppet People created 'Bully Busters' which carries the themes of Stand Up For Yourself, Stand Up For Others and when to Tell a Grown Up.
 - Students participate in lessons and activities about 'Cooperation, Assertiveness, Responsibility, Empathy and Self-Control (CARES)'. Staff and parents receive CARES information with a focus on the dynamics of bullying and teasing.
 - K-5 classroom lessons with counselor and psychologist.
 - Reporting system to report serious offense school violence.

- K-2 I-Care Rules.
- Peacemaker Songs.
- Feelings; Counselor works with all students on the four basic feelings; happy, sad, mad, scared.
- B.E.S.T. Program.
- Peace Pledge/Peace Tree.
- Assemblies; “Show of Love”, “On the Inside”.
- Conflict Escalator/Anger Thermometer.
- Problem Solving Strategies and “Stop and Think”.
- Kelso’s Choice.
- Rules for Fighting Fair.
- Pumsy in Pursuit of Excellence.
- D.A.R.E. Program.

E. The district has developed description of duties, hiring and screening process, and will require training of personnel. As required by the SAVE legislation, all new employees are fingerprinted and have a criminal background check via the NYS Education Department and the FBI.

F. Recovery: District Support for Buildings

- The district has elected to include in this plan, a description of how district resources will support the School Building-level Emergency Response Teams and the Post-Incident Response Teams in school(s) after threats of violence or actual violent incidents have occurred. The district realizes that some emergencies may be too much for an individual school building to manage on their own. If/when a School Building Emergency Response Team or Post-Incident Response Team is faced with threats of violence or actual violent incidents, the District-Wide Emergency Response Team will assist as follows:
 - Acting as a sounding board for the building principal/supervisor of implied or direct threats and/or violent acts.
 - Assisting in determining the level of threat and appropriate responses.
 - Sending a District-Wide Team member to support the building-level Emergency Response Team.
 - Monitoring the situation and adjusting the district’s response as appropriate.
 - Assisting with parent/guardian, faculty/staff, and media communication.
 - Assisting with coordinating building and grounds security.
 - Assisting with offering a “backup” Post-Incident Response Team (another school team and/or an outside group) if the affected team needs assistance.
 - At monthly administrator’s meetings, all implied or direct threats and/or violent acts are shared and discussed. A consensus is reached on how to best handle each incident in a manner that meets district and building approval. All administrators have this ongoing resource available.

G. Recovery: Disaster Mental Health Services

The district has elected to include in this plan, a description of how the district office will assist in the coordination of Disaster Mental Health Resources in the affected school(s). The district understands that some emergencies may be too much for an individual Post-Incident Response Team to manage on their own. If/when a Post-Incident Response Team is faced with threats of violence or actual violent incidents, the District-Wide Emergency Response Team and District-Wide Post-Incident Response Team will assist as follows:

- Sending a District-Wide Team member to each affected school building as a liaison between the school building and the District Office.
- Activating the District-Wide Post-Incident Response Team. The team consists of the school physicians, school nurse coordinator and school psychologists and district office administrative staff as needed. The team has with local connections to the Washington County Department of Health, Washington County Mental Health and Washington County Emergency Management Office.
- Continued feedback from those directly impacted is sought. Building and district support is offered during the incident with projected plans to assist if needed during heightened stressful times such as a re-occurrence of a similar event and anniversaries of the original incident.
- Assisting with parent/guardian, student, faculty/staff debriefing and/or post-incident crisis intervention. If needed, assisting in contacting additional outside mental health resources such as: the National Organization for Victim Assistance (1-800-try-nova) (www.try-nova.org).
- Assisting with written guidance and resources. A letter always goes home to respective parents/guardians after incidents such as a physical altercations, bomb threats, suicide, etc., to help offer assistance, list warning signs so they can watch their child for any signs of stress/concern and to help dispel rumors. For example, as a result of the National Incident on 9/11/01, the Superintendent of Schools had each building principal share the Age-Related Reactions of Children to Disasters with faculty, staff and parents to provide information about children's normal reactions within specific age groups and suggestions for enabling children to cope with disaster precipitated stress. Each Post-Incident Response Team had district level support and guidance.
- Assisting the schools with written statements going out to faculty/staff, parents/guardians, press releases and media requests through the district's Public Information Officer and Communications Office. The district has a large resource of letters, press releases and media procedures that take the burden off the individual school building team. Since such incidents may impact the entire district, either literally or psychologically, such communication needs to be processed and directed at the district level.