

# CATHEDRAL SCHOOL SAFETY PLAN

2015-2016

*Cathedral School  
Natchez, Mississippi*



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# **SCHOOL SAFETY**

## **A PLAN FOR THE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS OF THE DIOCESE OF JACKSON**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Recent events on campuses across the United States have caused understandable concern among parents, teachers and administrators. Something is happening in our society that leads people, and even youth, to resolve problems in tragic ways. Ensuring that basic safety needs are met is an essential first step in providing children with an educational environment that is conducive to learning and socialization.

The Office of Catholic Schools understands that it will never be possible to eliminate all causes of accidents or crime. Sometimes, a proposed safety measure which could provide a modest increase in security, puts such grave restrictions on the freedom of the students that a school\* community has to ask itself whether the advantage balances the loss of freedom. We need, even in this area, to maintain balance.

Effective schools have in place a violence prevention and response plan and form a team that can ensure it is implemented. They use approaches and strategies based on research and based on a study of programs that have brought about positive results.

According to R. Stephens (*Safe Schools 1995*), any approach to violence prevention in the schools needs to be a multi-component and multi-context intervention. An effective approach includes parents, students, school staff, police and community based organizations. Research indicates that sometimes the most successful programs need to meaningfully alter the climate or culture of the entire school.

Schools can overcome violence by focusing on comprehensive prevention programs. Comprehensive prevention begins with proper training for teachers and other staff—on their first day of employment. Prevention begins with student awareness training—on the first day of school. Prevention begins when parents are viewed as appropriate stakeholders in the security concerns of schools. Prevention begins when a school establishes a safety committee that continuously reviews and modifies the crisis procedures in place at a particular school.

The School Safety Committee consists of administrators, teachers, students, two parents, and a school board member. The committee reviews the School Safety Plan annually. The principal presents the plan to the faculty in August each year as a staff development on school safety.

Daniel J. Flannery in a paper entitled *School Violence* offers several significant guidelines to consider when implementing a school safety plan. A few of his guidelines are offered for consideration:

- Violence is behavior that is learned and can be unlearned.
- Effective prevention is systematic and long term.
- Successful programs are comprehensive, intensive and flexible.
- Issues related to school safety, discipline, and student victimization and its impact should be integrated into teacher orientation.

With this as background, the Office of Catholic Schools offers the following suggested elements for each of the required components of our School Safety Plan. **It is understood that no school could, or even should, consider all aspects as appropriate for its school setting, but all schools should include some of these.** We understand that no safety plan can anticipate every problem or situation, but a safety plan does indicate that a school has made serious preparation in the event a crisis does occur.

Authorities state that a safety plan is incomplete if it does not include a mechanism for an annual review and an outside safety audit. Each school safety plan should be reviewed on a regular basis by school staff. Schools should also remember that this Diocesan plan is not intended to be definitive, but rather is offered to the schools as a guideline with suggested elements for each component.

Grateful acknowledgment is made to Mr. William Heller, the author of this School Safety Plan, and to the Archdiocese of Miami, for making this document available to the Diocese of Jackson for use in its education institutions.

May, 2015

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## COMPONENT 1: ESTABLISHING A SAFETY COMMITTEE

A significant aspect of the overall school safety plan is the establishment of a school safety committee. This committee would serve in an advisory capacity to the school administration and assist the school leaders in helping to create a safe teaching and learning environment for students, faculty, and staff. The members of the committee are listed on the front page.

The school safety committee informs the administration of safety concerns and introduces new ideas for consideration. The committee serves as the liaison to the school community and its stakeholders. The School Safety Committee consists of administrators, teachers, students, two parents, and a school board member. The committee reviews the School Safety Plan annually. The principal presents the plan to the faculty in August each year as a staff development on school safety.

This school committee will deal with broad concerns related to issues of safety and violence. This committee may also serve in the capacity of a crisis response team or, if a separate team is appointed, works with them if an emergency situation does occur.

*Cathedral Catholic School has appointed a school safety committee which will...*

- *meet quarterly to review school safety plan – on going*
- *assist the faculty and staff in identifying crisis warning signals – August 2015 monitoring on going*
- *recommend prevention and intervention programs related to school violence issues – on going*
- *recommend to the administration potential members of a crisis response team or serve as the crisis response team – Code Blue Meeting in August 2004 and retrained in January 2005, and August of each year and scheduled meeting in August 2015*
- *participate in the preparations for training programs as they relate to safety and violence issues – on going*
- *participate in orientation programs for new faculty and staff and programs for students regarding safety and violence issues – Code Blue Meeting in August 2015*
- *review Safety Plan and crisis management issues with faculty – August 2015*
- *assist school administration in handling issues which occur after a crisis event – on going*
- *audit the effectiveness of the school's safety plan – annually by the School Safety Committee -- met in April 2015*
- *assist in updating the crisis response plan – April 15 by School Safety Committee*
- *hold at least two meetings annually with the entire faculty to discuss safety issues (A staff development will be held in August each year to restate the Safety Plan.) August 2015*

## COMPONENT 2: EDUCATIONAL COMPONENT

It is the gift of Catholic school educators to move students into a close relationship with God. Religious instruction has as a goal the inclusion and acceptance of all God's children. A school should not tolerate exclusion of any individual at any grade level. This can be accomplished through character education, problem solving techniques and the teaching of Christian values. A Catholic school should teach respect for God, authority, each other, and ourselves. This education needs to cross the curriculum and extend into extracurricular activities. Through awareness and education, the school faculty must model the behavior that is expected from the students that we teach.

*Cathedral Catholic School has developed/will develop...*

- *a commitment to place school safety on our educational agenda - August 2015*
- *a curriculum which enhances multi-cultural understanding- January & February of each year*
- *educational programs that address issues of social dysfunction which can lead to feelings of exclusion or to acts of violence - on going*
- *educational programs that address the reality of cliques and/or gangs – Harmony Day January 2015*
- *a curriculum which includes violence prevention programs (i.e. Peace Builders, Positive Adolescent Choices Training, Rites of Passage, Creating Circles of Peace) – on going*
- *programs on conflict resolution and bullying – Harmony Day January 2015 and Peer Mentoring throughout the year*
- *programs that strengthen aspects of inclusion and conflict resolution – on going*
- *retreat programs that complement the efforts to address inclusion within our curriculum – on going*
- *peer counseling or peer mediation programs which assist troubled students – on going*
- *a student advisory board on issues of safety and violence – students on School Safety Committee*
- *mentoring programs in which older students work with younger students in academic and non-academic areas – Retreat Team*
- *extracurricular offerings to provide students with experiences which increase their sense of belonging – integral part of the day-to-day schooling*
- *a reminder to students that a statement appears in our Parent-Student Handbook regarding respect, gangs and gang affiliation, fighting and threats and public displays of affection – met with students and Parents in August 2014 – will meet with students and parents in August 2015*

### **COMPONENT 3: ENCOURAGING STUDENT REPORTING**

Student reporting of safety related issues is a critical component in a school safety plan, but it cannot be mandated. Therefore, effective schools create an environment where students are comfortable in reporting information related to their concerns regarding safety and violence. There must be a mechanism by which students can report wrongdoing without fear or intimidation. We need to encourage students to accept the moral responsibility to share information that impacts the entire school community. Fostering mutual respect among students and adults provides an avenue of communication in which exchanges of information can be made.

*Cathedral Catholic School has developed/will develop...*

- *a curriculum that focuses on responsible decision-making, e.g. a life skills curriculum – on going*
- *curriculum lessons on values of good citizenship with applications made to citizenship in the school community – additions to current curriculum*
- *educational programs stressing themes of group responsibility – Safety Committee, on going*
- *programs which help students understand the “price” of remaining quiet – Safety Committee, on going*
- *programs which stress our commonality, such as “We Are All One” – Safety Committee, on going*
- *programs which stress that all students are valued and appreciated – Religion Classes and Retreats, on going*
- *a handbook statement which assures students confidentiality when they report violence or threats of violence –in the 2015 – 2016 Family Handbook*
- *an atmosphere where adults take what students say seriously – Faculty In-Service, on going*

#### **COMPONENT 4: ACCESS TO SCHOOL PROPERTY AND SCHOOL BUILDING**

The issue of providing a safe school facility for the students, faculty, and staff is an extremely important one. The process of establishing a safe environment includes many variables, due to the differing school structures and property accessibility. Each school should study their existing physical plant and develop an individualized plan to control access to the property and building.

Research indicates that nearly 90% of all school violence could be avoided by controlling the access/egress to the school facilities. Effective schools, therefore, establish some security controls so that school officials will, to the best of their ability, be aware of who is entering and leaving the facility.

*Cathedral Catholic School has made a decision to/will*

- *define campus perimeters with appropriate landscaping – on going*
- *maintain trees and vegetation so that they do not become a safety hazard in blocking sight of the school – on going*
- *perform a security audit regularly to be sure that ladders, walls, dumpsters do not allow access to roof areas – on going*
- *post signs which state that all visitors must report to a designated office with clear directions to that office – were posted in September 2003 and monitored annually*
- *initiate a procedure to control the number of people who are issued keys to the facility and hold all accountable for those keys – August 2015*
- *carefully manage and monitor hall passes – on going*
- *install panic buttons, phones, or some type of communication system, with the main office, in all classrooms, offices and rooms – installed in 1997*
- *install appropriate outdoor lighting especially for night functions – lights installed, monitoring on going*
- *have a complete set of keys located in the elementary secretary, high school secretary and business office to all doors located on the school campus*
- *installed new doors throughout the building so that individuals can exit without it being chained lock – July 2008*
- *installed two door bell systems with remote control door openings with camera, to be opened by secretary, one for front of high school and one for front of elementary school – November 2009*
- *installed a surveillance camera system (5 cameras) for outside the buildings, it is monitored in the front office of the high school – summer & fall 2009*
- *all outside campus lighting was replaced and updated with better lighting – Spring 2010*

## COMPONENT 5: VISITOR POLICIES

An integral aspect of controlling access to school buildings and property is the development of a consistent policy relating to visitors to the school campus and school buildings. School administrators need to stress to their faculty, staff and students that while the school is a welcoming place, visitors may not wander the facility nor be on campus without authorization.

*Cathedral Catholic School has developed/will develop...*

- *a visitors' policy statement which is placed in the Parent-Student Handbook and the Faculty Handbook - 2015 – 2016 Family Handbook & Faculty Handbook*
- *a program to post signs which state that all visitors must report to a designated office with clear directions to that office – August 2001 and ongoing to make sure signs remain visible*
- *a procedure to require all visitors to sign a Visitor Log – on going*
- *a policy which requires all school volunteers to register with the office and wear an identification badge – Policy in Place – monitoring on going*
- *a plan to issue all visitors identification badges –Plan in place – monitoring on going*
- *a designated code, known to all school personnel, which alerts them that there is an unauthorized visitor on campus – August 2015*
- *a plan to carefully manage and monitor hall passes – on going*
- *a security plan to remove undesired visitors – implemented – process ongoing*
- *a plan to train faculty, staff and students to deal with strangers that they may encounter on campus – in process*
- *a handbook statement requiring that all school personnel and students report any visitor to the proper authority - 2015 – 2016 Family Handbook & Faculty Handbook*
- *have posted private property signs – No Trespassing – September 2003 & ongoing to make sure signs remain visible*



## COMPONENT 6: SUPERVISION POLICIES

Proper supervision of students is essential to maintaining a safe learning environment. The degree of supervision will depend on the age of the students and the nature of their activity. Ordinarily, children should not be unsupervised during the school day. Experience demonstrates that this cannot mean that at every moment during the school day a child is under the eye of a teacher or an administrator. It does mean, however, that every reasonable effort is made to provide continuous supervision.

School supervision policy should reflect reasonable expectations for care of students as well as legal realities. The policy should also be coherent, be coordinated and demonstrate a commitment to safety.

*Cathedral Catholic School has developed/will develop...*

- *a statement In the Faculty Handbook on school policy concerning supervision of classrooms and activities – August 2015*
- *an official school policy on supervision specifically related to after school activities, athletic practices, athletic events and playgrounds – Faculty Handbook – monitoring on going*
- *a plan to monitor the supervision efforts by the faculty and staff – Faculty Handbook – monitoring on going*
- *a proactive program to deal with faculty and staff who do not meet supervision responsibilities – on going*
- *a policy for student reporting when adult supervision is not present – on going*
- *a close law enforcement partnership – on going*
- *utilize paid, trained personnel specifically to assist in monitoring and supervising all school events – on going*
- *a plan to establish a working relationship with owners of property adjacent to the school and with neighboring residents to report any unusual activity – in process – monitoring on going*

## COMPONENT 7: DISCIPLINARY POLICIES

Schools should understand that a significant aspect of providing a safe atmosphere at school is to establish appropriate discipline policies. These policies must be enforced to create an educational environment that enhances student learning and allows for the student to experience a safe campus, relatively free from threats and danger.

Each school's safety plan should address the areas of discipline which are intended to prevent any serious harm coming to the student. Students, in turn, should be fully aware that these disciplinary policies exist and that they will be enforced by the school administration. The Parent-Student Handbook should clearly state those policies related to disciplinary and safety issues. It should also state the responsibilities which the school will accept in the area of school safety.

*Cathedral Catholic School has developed/will develop...*

- *faculty in-service material on early warning signs of violence and warning signs of aggressive behavior – August 2015*
- *faculty in-service related to student victimization and its impact into teacher orientation programs – August 2015*
- *a protocol to outline how teachers and administrators should report and investigate threats or violent acts – August 2015*
- *a plan to include in the student handbook a clearly communicated statement on behavior expectations. The school requires student and parent signatures indicating that they have received, reviewed and agree to abide by the code of behavior – August 2015*
- *a program for tracking student behavior to discern patterns of disruptive or violent behavior - on going*
- *a clearly defined locker policy which includes a statement on the school's legal right to search – statement in Parent-Student Handbook, August 2015*
- *the use of zero tolerance policies for weapons, drugs ( as stated in Mississippi Code 37-11-18), gang affiliation, threats, physical assaults – Parent-Student Handbook August 2015*
- *restrictions which prevent students from loitering in parking lots, hallways and bathrooms – Parent-Student Handbook August 2015 monitoring on going*
- *clearly defined rules and appropriate consequences for all types of harassment, intimidation and disrespect – Parent- Student Handbook August 2015 monitoring on going*
- *a firm and consistent policy to enforce dress code – Parent-Student Handbook August 2015 monitoring on going*

- *a statement which stresses that campus parking is a privilege, not a right – Parent-Student Handbook August 2015*
- *a program of behavior modification, which includes the parent, aimed at improving a student's attitude and/or behavior – Parent-Student Handbook August 2015 monitoring on going*
- *a program to communicate to students the different types of counseling service available to them and how to obtain those services – on going*

## **COMPONENT 8: ESTABLISHING A CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM**

Crisis response is an important component of any violence prevention and response plan. It is important to prepare a strategy so that, if a violent act occurs, the school population understands what actions to take. Establishing a response team permits the school administration to plan for and manage a crisis situation.

The crisis team provides overall direction during a crisis and acts as a liaison with outside personnel. It also provides for coordination of all necessary safety activities and acts as a spokesperson by providing information.

This team sometimes serves as a threat assessment team called in to assess the credibility of, and needed response for, serious crime.

*Cathedral Catholic School has appointed a Crisis Response team which will...*

- *develop a protocol to assure that reports of threats are routed to the appropriate administrator and investigated – School Safety Plan*
- *practice lockdown and evacuation procedures, including where students should go during different types of crises – on going*
- *provide information to and answer questions from parent/guardians and family members of the school community in the event of a crisis – School Safety Plan – monitoring on going*
- *arrange for counselors to counsel students after a crisis occurs – to be arranged as needed*
- *work with the Safety Committee to review school safety and crisis plans – on going*

## COMPONENT 9: EMERGENCY PLANS

A concomitant part of the School Safety Plan should be a set of emergency procedures to deal with specific emergency situations. A school should establish a plan for each of the following conditions:

- Fire
  - Bomb threat
  - Weather emergency
  - Power failure
  - Serious illness or injury
  - Intruder on campus
  - Hazardous spill or gas leak
  - Tornado
- Flip Charts provided to each staff member and School Safety Team members.  
Posted in each classroom.

*Cathedral Catholic School has developed/will develop emergency plans that...*

- *provide for a clear and effective system of notifying the school population that an emergency condition exists – August 2015*
- *provide for a plan of action for each of the eight emergency conditions which are stated above. Each plan of action identifies (a) who declares the emergency (b) under what conditions an emergency is declared and (c) the responsibilities of each group within the school at the time of a given emergency – Flip Charts monitoring on going*
- *provide for an evacuation procedure, if an evacuation is necessary - yearly*
- *provide for a lockdown procedure, if a lockdown is necessary - yearly*
- *provide for the Emergency Response Team to act if the situation requires – on going*
- *safety audit by grounds committee of the School Board – June and December of each year*

## **COMPONENT 10: COMMUNICATION ISSUES—NOTIFICATION OF PARENTS AND/OR AUTHORITIES**

Various types of emergencies could occur during the normal school day. These range from weather events to disasters involving violence or threat of violence. While it is not possible to foresee every kind of emergency, schools must develop a general plan of action should a devastating event occur.

Many problems can be avoided through responsible planning, however, sometimes a crisis is unavoidable. A good crisis plan focuses on preparation, management, communication and resolution. Crisis response plans should include step by step procedures for any specified situation. Such plans need to be specific in assigning responsibilities for communication with the school's various publics.

It is of utmost importance for communication to take place in case of an emergency between school personnel and the police or fire officials, and the Superintendent of Schools.

Cathedral Catholic School has developed/will develop...

- a Crisis Planning Team which will help prepare an action plan for potential emergencies
- a program to provide in-service training for crisis prevention – *August 2015*
- a program to perform emergency drills (not just fire drills) – on going
- a school communications network linking all areas of the school facilities with a central location – School Safety Plan – location changes depending on the Crisis
- a school Crisis Management Team which includes a person (or persons) responsible for acting as liaison to local emergency response personnel and a person (or persons) responsible for communicating with the Superintendent of Schools and any required stakeholders in the event of actual emergencies – *August 2015*
- a “Calling Tree” or “Phone Tree” which allows the Crisis Management Team to be notified and communication efforts to begin – *August 2015*
- *a series of codes to notify personnel of a crisis (information about the codes should be restricted as a security measure) – August 2015*
- *a plan to provide all emergency and evacuation plans to local law enforcement agencies – September 2003 and updated yearly*
- *clear job descriptions of duties and responsibilities for those assigned to communicate with school's stakeholders – August 2015*
- *a pre-designated area to disseminate information – August 2015*
- *an emergency contact list – Phone Tree August 2015*
- *a list of emergency phone numbers made available to key personnel – August 2015*

- *contracted with School Reach – web based program to deliver personalized phone or text messages to every parent or staff – July 2009 and ongoing*
- *a dismissal plan in the event students need to be sent home early which establishes procedures for notifying parents/guardians – Handbook August 2015 monitoring on going*
- *a plan for post emergency communication with parents and students – Handbook August 2015 monitoring on going*

## **COMPONENT 11: LOCKDOWN/EVACUATION PLAN**

Of all the components in the Safety Plan, probably the one that is most difficult to define is the issue of lockdown/evacuation. The reason that this issue is so problematic is that authorities recognize that what works in one situation, may not work in another. Experts point out that each crisis really needs individual assessment.

It is recognized that responses for different types of crises should be planned in advance and reviewed, updated, and practiced periodically. The chaos and panic created by these crisis situations cannot be effectively handled without a pre-established specific plan of action.

Yet, whether an administrator chooses to lockdown the school or evacuate the facilities is determined by the specific set of circumstances faced by the school community. This is the *one* component where decisions have to be made at the time of the event. If there is a dangerous intruder on campus, the decision to lockdown might be the more appropriate. If the danger to the student body is isolated in one sector of the school, evacuation of other areas might be the more appropriate.

Whatever the circumstances, the safety plan must provide for acceptable crisis management principles.

*Cathedral Catholic School has developed/will develop...*

- *guidelines for a lockdown situation which include code words made known to key personnel – August 2015*
- *guidelines for an evacuation situation which include code words or bell signals made known to key personnel – August 2015*
- *a plan to practice lockdown and evacuation procedures, including where students should go during different types of crises – on going*
- *a plan to establish safe areas on the campus in case of evacuation - on going*
- *a plan to identify personnel who will have master keys, codes and access to secured areas – on going*
- *a plan to provide all emergency and evacuation plans to local law enforcement and emergency personnel – on going*

- *a plan to identify specifically assigned roles and responsibilities concerning security and procedures – August 2015*
- *a back-up plan and back-up personnel for assigned responsibilities – on going*
- *a system by which teachers can alert the office of an intrusion – August 2015*
- *a plan to conduct periodic reviews of crisis management procedures – on going*
- *both sides of the campus have gone to a lockdown campus throughout the school day – March 2010*

## **COMPONENT 12: WORKING WITH THE MEDIA IN TIMES OF AN EMERGENCY**

All forms of communication help the media in informing the community concerning safety issues in schools and can help limit the adverse impact that results when violence does occur.

The school safety plan must develop procedures for dealing with the various segments of the media when an incident does occur. Schools must communicate information concerning any violent or threatening event in a controlled fashion. A well planned media relations component can help accomplish this goal.

It is of utmost importance that communication first take place between school personnel and the Superintendent of Schools. In certain situations, a Diocesan spokesperson will be named.

*Cathedral Catholic School has developed/will develop...*

- *a plan to designate a specific person or committee to deal with all media relations in cases of emergency – August 2015*
- *a list of media contacts for use in time of emergency – Phone Tree August 2015*
- *a plan for what type of information will be disseminated by the media contact person(s) – on going*
- *a plan to prepare in advance a set of general press releases to cover various safety or crisis issues—specific information can be added when necessary – on going*
- *a plan to insure that parents and media are not located together if an emergency occurs on going*
- *a plan to work with the media on communicating information about a crisis – on going*
- *a program to work with the media on presenting responsible information to the community following a violent occurrence – on going*

## COMPONENT 13: COLLABORATION WITH POLICE

Effective safety plans should include programs and procedures to establish working relationships with local law enforcement agencies. Police agencies are typically very willing and highly capable of assisting schools with their safety and emergency preparedness planning.

Law enforcement participation is necessary in order to develop and implement a well-coordinated and effective response to a crisis situation.

At a minimum, all schools should provide police and emergency agencies with the necessary plans—floor plans, air-conditioning plans, electrical plans—that would be helpful and necessary should an emergency occur.

*Cathedral Catholic School has developed/will develop...*

- *a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with local law enforcement to ascertain which agencies will provide what resources should a crisis occur – under study*
- *a crisis response team that is made up of decision makers who participate in developing the response plan and MOU – August 2015 – copies of School Safety Plan given to Law Enforcement Officials*
- *a list of appropriate law enforcement contacts with phone numbers – Phone Tree August 2014*
- an information sharing program with the police – on going
- a system of prompt reporting to the Superintendent of Schools and law enforcement personnel of incidents of violence – Policy on going
- a plan to encourage the local law enforcement agency to have patrol officers adopt a school on their beat – on going
- a program to bring police in to meet with staff and offer training on requested – on going
- a program to invite local law enforcement officials to speak to students on topics related to safety and violence – Harmony Day in January each year
- a program to invite local law enforcement officials to speak to parents on topics related to safety and violence – through the PTO
- a plan to invite law enforcement personnel into school to perform a security survey of the school building – on going



## **COMPONENT 14: PANDEMIC FLU OUTBREAK PROCEDURES**

Various types of illnesses could occur during the school year, ranging from minor to pandemic. A school should develop plans and policy guidance regarding pandemic flu outbreak.

Cathedral Catholic School has developed/will develop a pandemic flu outbreak plan that:

- Alert the local health department of a substantial increase in absenteeism among students – on going
- Work with local and state health departments to implement effective infection prevention policies and procedures (promotion of hand hygiene through soap based hand washing and alcohol-based hygiene products, cough/sneeze etiquette, proper tissue disposal) – on going
- Ensure that student or staff with fever or flu-like symptoms do not come to school or are sent home immediately – on going
- Collaborate with the local and state health departments and state education agencies recommendations on pandemic plans – on going
- Establish policies and procedures for students and staff sick leave absences unique to a pandemic influenza outbreak – on going
- A plan for communicating with staff, students, and families (telephone tree, website, local radio, School Reach, email, etc) about pandemic status and school closures – on going