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Vermont School Safety Center Newsletter

January 2025

The Vermont Agency of Education, in partnership with the Department of Public Safety and Vermont School Safety Center, is piloting a monthly newsletter dedicated to school safety. This newsletter is intended to provide information about various school safety resources, including training opportunities, intra-agency guidance, notes from leadership, and more.

Notes from DPS and VSSC

Safety Reminder from Vermont's School Safety Liaison Officer Rob Evans

Winter weather can often complicate transportation issues for schools across the state. Schools should remind parents, staff, students and transportation officials of the challenges associated with student drop off/pick and along bus routes during extreme weather conditions. Planning additional time for travel, exercising due care while driving and ensuring staff assisting with student drop off/pick up are outfitted with the appropriate reflective vests can mitigate some of the risks associated with traveling during challenging weather conditions.

DPS and VSSC Winter Weather School Preparedness Guidance

Winter weather can bring unexpected delays or power outages, which require additional preparedness measures to be taken. If school is delayed or canceled, students and staff may find themselves remaining at school for longer than anticipated. To be fully prepared, it's important to stock up on emergency supplies.

The Department of Public Safety and the Vermont School Safety Center encourage schools to consider the following:

- **Classroom Kits:** Each classroom should have its own emergency kit that includes essential items like first-aid supplies, flashlights, blankets, bottled water, and non-perishable snacks. Teachers should also have a list of emergency contacts and instructions on what to do in case of a power outage or other disruptions.
- **Centralized School Supplies:** Store larger emergency supplies like backup generators, extra blankets, bottled water, and a



portable heating unit in a centralized location. This ensures quick access if there's an unexpected weather event.

- **Teacher Checklists:** Classroom teachers should have a checklist for winter preparedness. This checklist should include items like checking classroom kits, ensuring that students have warm clothing, and reviewing emergency procedures on a regular basis.

Cybersecurity Incident

Please see the message below from AOE's Lisa Helme, sent to school technology staff on January 4th:

Vermont school districts that utilize PowerSchool should have received a notice that the company experienced a cybersecurity incident on December 28. The incident involved an unauthorized party gaining access to certain PowerSchool SIS customer data using a compromised credential. The company sent notices to inform customers whether or not their data was impacted. If your district uses PowerSchool and has not received a notice, I would urge you to reach out to the company to ensure your data was not impacted. [PowerSchool has posted an FAQ on the incident.](#) The document is only available to PowerSchool customers. You will have to enter your username, a password, and a valid email address to access it. The annual technology survey indicates that while many Vermont districts have data breach plans in place, not every district had completed this planning. Incidents like this point to the importance of having a response plan in place. [AOE has resources for districts](#) posted on the website to assist schools with such planning. Please contact me if you need assistance in preparing a plan or have questions about responding to a cyber-attack.

Critical Incident Reporting Form

Please note: *this form should only be used by Superintendents, Independent School Heads, Principals or other Key School Safety staff. It should **not** be distributed or used by other members of the school community.*

In an effort to share timely and accurate information and to support schools/school districts when managing a critical incident, the Agency of Education, Department of Public Safety and the Vermont School Safety Center have developed a Critical Incident Report webform.

The intent of this form is to ensure state level school safety stakeholders are informed of a school based critical incident and to provide insight into any regional or statewide school threats schools/school districts may be experiencing.

This form does NOT replace the need to call (911) if you are in need of emergency response resources to assist with managing a critical incident. This form should be

completed once the situation is being effectively managed and school leaders are in a position to submit this form with the level of accuracy and detail requested.

The types of incidents that we request a report be submitted include:

- Bomb threat
- Swatting
- Death of a student or faculty/staff member during the academic day or during recognized after school activities
- Other than drills or exercises, any event that results in a partial or total evacuation of the school
- Lockdown
- Threat of targeted violence
- School bus accident where students and/or staff have sustained serious injury
- Any critical incident response that may result in significant media attention

Please contact Sunni Eriksen (sunni.eriksen@vermont.gov) and/or Rob Evans (revans@cosecure.com) from the Vermont School Safety Center with questions about potential critical incidents. Please contact Taylor Goodwin (taylor.goodwin@vermont.gov) for access to the form.

Act 29 Resources

As a reminder, all public and approved or recognized independent schools are subject to Act 29. Please see the full [Act 29 statute](#) and the [AOE Act 29 website](#) for more information.

Emergency Operations Plans (EOPs)

Under Act 29 Statute, all public and approved or recognized independent schools shall have an Emergency Operations Plan (EOP). Please see the [AOE Act 29 website](#) for more information.

EOP Office Hours

Sunni Eriksen and Rob Evans of the Vermont School Safety Center will host a monthly EOP Office Hour meeting on the third Thursday of each month from 12pm-1pm, with the next meeting taking place on **February 20th**. Meetings will include opportunities for school safety partners to obtain guidance in developing and maintaining EOPs, development of priority all-hazards annexes, presentations from school safety experts, and more. Please see the [EOP Office Hours meeting link](#) to join.

EOP Communications Package

Please see the [EOP Communications Package](#) that was provided by the AOE on November 22, 2024, as well as the below relevant resources.

[Template – All-Hazards Emergency Operations Plan](#)
[Planning Guide – All-Hazards Emergency Operations Plan](#)

REMS EOP Planning for Rural Schools – Downloadable Training Package

The REMS TA Center has developed a package of materials about [Planning Considerations for Developing Emergency Operations Plans \(EOPs\) for K-12 Rural Schools](#). This 90-minute training module aims to equip rural-serving school and school district leaders, educators, staff, and community partners with resources and strategies for using the six-step planning process to meet the unique challenges and opportunities in rural school communities. Download the zip file of materials from the Training Packages web page to engage in independent study or deliver the training to your site. These trainings complement an existing [fact sheet](#) that provides rural school leaders and core planning teams with additional information on how to engage in emergency management planning in collaboration with community partners.

REMS Role-Based Resources for K-12 School Communities

EOP creation and revision are best accomplished through a collaborative process with a multidisciplinary planning team. The REMS TA Center created a web page to help K-12 schools and school districts understand this important concept, implement it at their education agency, and collect resources on why each role is important. Found within the “Topics” section of the site navigation, the [Collaborative Planning Teams at K-12 Schools and School Districts web page](#) outlines potential roles to consider inviting to join a planning team and identifies relevant resources. Roles include school district staff, school community members and community partners.

REMS Webinar (archived): Understanding the Role of School Nurses in Emergencies

School nurses provide leadership and expertise in school health services, trauma-informed practices, and the provision of emergency health care. Their skills can help enhance hazard mitigation, facilitate evacuation, implement triage, support health education, and conduct surveillance before, during, and after an emergency. School nurses can contribute to all sections of the EOP, including, but not limited to, the Public Health, Medical, and Mental Health Annex and the Infectious Disease Annex. For these reasons, they are integral members of the core planning team at K-12 schools.

To learn more about how school nurses can contribute to EOP development, watch the archived webinar [Understanding the Role of School Nurses in Supporting School Safety Before, During, and After an Emergency](#). The National Association of School Nurses joins the REMS TA Center to provide more perspective on how school nurses enhance all-hazards preparedness at K-12 schools.

Behavior Threat Assessment Management (BTAM)

Under Act 29 statute, all public and approved and recognized independent schools must have a Behavior Threat Assessment team in place. Please see the [AOE Act 29 website](#) for more information.

BTA Memo

Please see the [BTA Reporting Requirements memo](#), released by the Agency of Education on January 10, 2025.

BTA Reporting Form

Act 29 of 2023 (16 VSA 1485) requires that, “annually, each supervisory union, supervisory district, and approved or recognized independent school shall report data related to completion of and outcomes of all behavioral threat assessments and manifestation determination reviews to the Agency in a format approved by the Secretary.” The AOE has released the [BTA Reporting Form](#) to serve as the reporting mechanism for all Behavior Threat Assessments that have taken place in schools. Please see the link to the form above for more information. For questions, please contact Taylor Goodwin (taylor.goodwin@vermont.gov).

BTA Reporting Form Webinar

To support schools with the upcoming statutory requirement for the reporting Behavior Threat Assessments, the AOE is hosting a BTA Reporting Form Webinar on Wednesday, January 22nd from 3pm-4pm. The webinar will be recorded and posted on the AOE website for those unable to attend live. Please see the [BTA Reporting Form Webinar meeting link](#) to register and join the meeting. Please email Taylor Goodwin (taylor.goodwin@vermont.gov) with questions.

Drill Reporting

All public and approved or recognized independent schools must report school safety drills to the AOE at least twice annually. Please see the [2024-2025 Drill Reporting Memo](#) for more information. Please use this [Drill Reporting Tool](#) to report all school safety drills.

Upcoming Trainings

I Love U Guys Foundation Reunification Training – January 31, 2025

The I Love U Guys Foundation will host a reunification training for school safety partners. This in-person, 4-hour training will take place from 10am-2pm on Friday, January 31, 2025. Further information can be found via the [reunification training flyer](#). Please contact Sunni Eriksen (sunni.eriksen@vermont.gov), Vermont Emergency Management to register or for questions.

Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) Development for Rural Schools – February 18, 2025

The Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools Technical Assistance Center (REMS) is hosting an EOP Development for Rural Schools Training on Tuesday, February 18, 2025. This one-day, virtual training will provide valuable resources and information regarding EOP development, specifically for schools in a more rural setting. Please see this [EOP training flyer](#) for more information and the [EOP training registration link](#) to register. Please contact Sunni Eriksen (sunni.eriksen@vermont.gov), Vermont Emergency Management, with questions.

Vermont Department of Health Narcan/Naloxone Training for Schools

The Vermont Department of Health is supporting pK-12 schools to prepare to respond to a suspected opioid overdose. As a part of this work, the Department is hosting virtual training sessions specifically for schools on recognizing the signs of overdose and using naloxone. These training courses are open to all school staff. The AOE also recognizes the potential usefulness of including an opioid overdose and Narcan use plan into a medical emergency annex in an Emergency Operations Plan (EOP). Schools can learn find brief training videos, and school specific resources on <https://www.healthvermont.gov/naloxone> under **Naloxone/Narcan® in K-12 Schools**. The 2024 Slide deck, example protocol, optional community letters, and other resources are located here to support schools.

Live trainings will be held:

- Thursday, 2/13/25, 8-9 am (refresher training)
- Monday, 3/3/25 3:30-5 pm

If your school is interested in ordering naloxone, please complete this [Community Interest Form](#) or contact naloxone@vermont.gov. If you would like to sign up for trainings, please email naloxone@vermont.gov program and include email addresses of interested attendees.

Resources

VEM Training Calendar

Please visit the [Vermont Emergency Management Training Calendar](#) to learn more about upcoming school safety-related trainings provided by the Vermont School Safety Center.

Grants

The Vermont School Boards Insurance Trust (VSBIT) offer a safety assistance grant of \$7,500 (up to \$10,000 with VSBIT audit or inspection) per fiscal year for Multi-Line

Program Members. Please see the [VSBIT Grants webpage](#), [Grant Description and Guidelines page](#), or [contact VSBIT](#) for more information.

Websites

Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools Technical Assistance Center (REMS TA Center)

The [REMS TA Center](#) is your federal partner to boost your 2025 school safety efforts. We offer a variety of resources, trainings, and interactive tools for K-12 schools, school districts, and institutions of higher education (IHEs) to improve school and campus safety all year long.

SchoolSafety.gov

[SchoolSafety.gov](#) was created by the federal government to provide schools and districts with actionable recommendations to create safe and supportive learning environments for students and educators.

[December 2024 School Safety Community Bulletin: Events, Opportunities, and Resources](#)

AOE School Climate and Belonging Website

Safety extends to school culture and climate. Explore this AOE webpage for additional resources about [School Climate and Belonging](#).

Articles

[3 Tips for Districts to Maximize FEMA Funding After a Natural Disaster](#)

Reminders

Drill Reporting

To meet the AOE's request of biannual school safety drill reporting, please ensure that drills are reported by the end of the fall semester via the [Drill Reporting Tool](#).

Contact:

For questions about school safety needs, please email Sunni Eriksen (sunni.eriksen@vermont.gov) of Vermont Emergency Management and/or Rob Evans (revans@cosecure.com), School Safety Liaison Officer.

For questions about this newsletter or Act 29 requirements, please email Taylor Goodwin (taylor.goodwin@vermont.gov), AOE Safe and Healthy Schools Coordinator.