



Rhode Island Model for School Emergency Planning

Mitigation/Prevention, Preparedness, Response, and Recovery

Revised October 2013

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Lincoln D. Chafee
Governor

We all have a responsibility to provide a safe and secure learning environment for students, teachers and administrators. We want to ensure your schools are prepared for emergencies and security issues so that we can focus on the educational needs of our youth.

This Model School Safety Plan represents a significant volume of information to assist your community in developing a comprehensive school safety plan. It was developed with the expertise and guidance of the Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency in collaboration with the Rhode Island Department of Education, Rhode Island State Police, Rhode Island Department of Behavioral Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Hospitals, and other education and safety officials to incorporate best practices in school safety planning and state requirements. It provides guidance on all of the elements required in your school safety plans pursuant to Rhode Island General Law 16-21-24.

I am thankful for the collaboration that has developed throughout the process of drafting this Model Plan and know that state and local collaboration will continue as your communities develop their school safety plans. I encourage you to use this Model Plan and incorporate the unique issues and school buildings located in your community.

School should continue to be a place to foster ideas, challenge young minds and prepare students for success in the workplace. The safety and security of these facilities should not hinder these opportunities for Rhode Islanders to succeed.

For more information please contact the Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency at 401-946-9996 or visit www.riema.ri.gov.

Sincerely,

Lincoln D. Chafee
Governor

1. Introduction

A. Background

No one can predict when an emergency will occur. To ensure the safety of students, teachers, administrators and staff, **every school should be prepared** to handle and recover from an emergency.

The Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency (RIEMA) developed *School Emergency Planning* to assist schools in emergency **planning, response and recovery**. The guidelines contained here provide a step-by-step model for individual schools to develop their own School Crisis Response Plan (SCRCP) and to evaluate plans that are already in place. Applying the information in this guide will help maximize the health, safety, and welfare of students, staff, and visitors when confronted with an emergency situation.

B. Purpose of this Guide

School Emergency Planning serves two major purposes:

- 1) RI Gen Law §16-21-24's template for creating a comprehensive SCRCP, and
- 2) As a framework for addressing a range of other issues, such as violence prevention, that require a coordinated school response.

Rhode Island schools have been relatively well prepared for emergency situations such as fires and severe weather. Schools understand the need to evacuate buildings when a fire alarm is heard. They know procedures for calling 911 to report a fire, and know to seek shelter in the event of a severe weather warning.

Unfortunately, school shootings and other forms of interpersonal violence have stunned the country and uncovered a need for preparedness for a much broader range of emergencies. National attention has shifted focus on school violence in communities across the country.

Further, although schools may have established procedures for dealing with many emergency situations, most do not have these protocols collected in a coordinated, concise manner. More so than ever before, schools are faced with ongoing challenges to be prepared for a wide range of emergency situations from medical emergencies to threats of violence, from severe weather to chemical release, and from sexual abuse to kidnapping.

e•mer•gen•cy

An unstable or crucial time or state of affairs in which a decisive change is impending, especially one with the distinct possibility of a highly undesirable outcome.

Schools and districts must provide a safe, orderly learning environment for every child and every school. *School Emergency Planning* provides protocols for a wide range of crisis response situations, so that schools and districts can quickly and adequately restore the school climate to optimal learning conditions.

A strong SCRП also offers schools a framework for addressing a range of health and safety issues that require coordinated attention from school officials to community leaders. Examples of these issues include school violence prevention and student mental health issues. In these cases, the same planning, response and recovery mechanisms can be used to effectively address these issues. Further, the relationships developed with community groups as part of emergency preparedness can enhance ongoing school health and safety programs. Thus, the considerable investment of time and resources in the planning process should be recognized as an important investment in building relationships and an infrastructure that will support school health and safety in general, not just during an emergency.

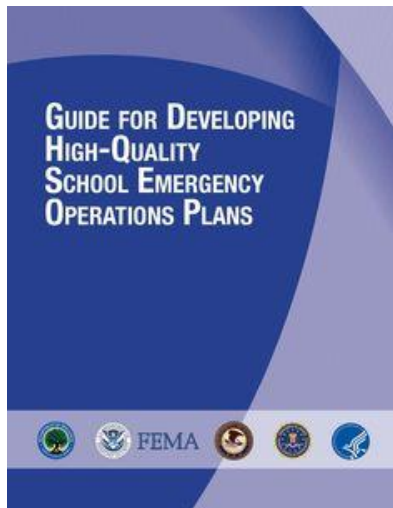
More so than ever before, schools are faced with ongoing challenges to be prepared for a wide range of emergency situations from medical emergencies to threats of violence.

C. How this Guide was Developed

To develop *School Emergency Planning*, multiple resources were consulted. Interviews were conducted with schools and municipal Emergency Management Directors in Rhode Island, and a review of key documents in school crisis response was performed.

Research findings indicated that many Rhode Island schools have a plan in effect, but want information about best practices in emergency planning to ensure that their plans are comprehensive and up to date. In addition, many schools want assistance in establishing relationships with local emergency management officials in their communities. RIEMA, working with the Rhode Island School Safety Committee (RISS), revised this guide. Content for this guide is closely coupled with the RIEMA's School Emergency Procedures Toolkit, as well as several key sources in school crisis response planning, including:

1. RISS is a steering committee of state and local experts in various fields.



2. Guide for Developing High-Quality School Emergency Operations Plans (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, Office of Safe and Healthy Students, Washington, DC. 2013)
3. Jane's Safe Schools Planning Guide for All Hazards. (© 2004 Jane's Information Group; Michael Dorn, Gregory Thomas, Marleen Wong, Sonayia Shepard)
4. School-Centered Emergency Management and Recovery Guide (© 2001, Kentucky Community Crisis Response Board – KCCRB. Developed with federal Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities Act funds.)
5. Practical Information on Crisis Planning: A Guide for Schools and Communities (May 2003. Developed by The Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools, U.S. Department of Education.)
6. School Emergency Disaster and Incident Preparedness Plan - Marin County Schools. 2012.
7. Picking Up the Pieces: Responding to School Crisis. (© 1999. By Mary Schoenfeldt, Marysville, WA.)

For certain emergencies, several agencies will be involved in the response and recovery. It is important for schools to establish relationships with potential partners before a crisis occurs.

D. Emergency Preparedness and Response in Rhode Island

In planning for and responding to emergencies, schools do not work alone. This guide is part of many ongoing efforts to protect the health and safety of our state's residents. The RIEMA is working with several partners including the Department of Health; state and local police and other emergency responders; city and town officials; and hospitals to prepare to respond to major public health emergencies. In a major emergency, emergency responders will be available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Emergency preparedness activities in Rhode Island include: Training First Responders; Mass Care; Incident Stress Management; Developing Local and State Plans; and Increasing Security.

Partners in emergency response and recovery

Some kinds of emergencies can be handled well by school and district personnel. These are "low level" emergencies that do not require assistance from outside agencies. For other emergencies, such as a bomb threat or a student death, local community emergency responders will assist schools in responding to and recovering from the incident. For large-scale emergencies that affect an entire community, such as a widespread chemical release or natural disaster, several agencies will handle response and follow-up. These could potentially include local, state and federal partners. It is important for schools to establish relationships with potential partners in emergency management and response *before* a crisis occurs. Refer to Preparedness Section for detailed protocol for reaching out to local partners and the Response Section for responding to different kinds of emergencies.

E. How to Use this Guide

The four main sections, which conform to the four phases the U.S. Department of Education Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools uses to describe planning for, responding to and recovering from emergencies, are: Mitigation/Prevention, Preparedness, Response and Recovery. Each of these topics is introduced briefly below.

- ◆ **Section I – Mitigation/Prevention** addresses what schools can do to reduce exposure to risks and hazards and lessen the potential impact of an emergency situation. Mitigation efforts can occur both before and after emergencies or disasters.
- ◆ **Section II – Preparedness** focuses on the roles and responsibilities of the school emergency response teams and the actions, exercises and supplies needed for various emergency scenarios. These activities develop readiness and response capabilities.

- ◆ **Section III – Response** presents detailed procedures for implementing appropriate actions for most types of emergencies that may be encountered in a school setting. In this phase, schools mobilize resources needed to address the emergency at hand. Emphasis is placed on minimizing the effects of the emergency or disaster.
- ◆ **Section IV – Recovery** focuses on general strategies to follow after the emergency and restoring affected areas to pre-emergency conditions in order to return to the normal learning environment as quickly as possible. Recovery activities may be both short-term and long-term; ranging from restoration of essential utilities such as water and power, to mitigation measures designed to prevent future occurrences of a specific threat.



Each section contains information that outlines the basic components of these four critical areas and the information required in the plan. All four phases of emergency management should be planned for in advance in order to be most effective. A comprehensive planning team can only enhance the planning process. The **APPENDICES** contain supplemental emergency information including agreements, checklists, forms, sample letters and other supporting documentation. The action checklists and forms may be duplicated as templates or they can be incorporated directly into existing plans. The forms should be adapted or augmented to fit the school mission, staffing, location and other unique circumstances.

F. Levels of Emergencies

Emergencies in schools are often described in terms of the following five levels:

LEVEL ONE

- One or several persons impacted
- Minimal or no impact on wider student body
- School resources adequate to meet needs of impacted persons

LEVEL TWO

- One or several persons uniquely impacted
- Limited impact of wider student body
- School based resources + School Crisis Response Team(SCRT) adequate to meet needs
- Flight team* not usually required

LEVEL THREE

- Incident widespread with varied impact on building(s)
- Multilevel Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) likely required

- Each building SCRT remains in charge of interventions with as needed support from flight team

LEVEL FOUR

- Incident widespread with varied impact on building(s)
- Multilevel CISM interventions likely required
- Internal resources may be compromised
- Local media interest
- Flight team resources needed to supplement internal team
- Local International Critical Incident Stress Foundation (ICISF) consultation considered

LEVEL FIVE

- Catastrophic incident with widespread and profound impact on entire school community (staff, students and parents)
- Significant media interest
- Comprehensive (coordinated and multifaceted) interventions implemented
- Emergency personnel assumed control of early intervention
- Long term follow up required and local ICISF consultation suggested
- Examples: severe earthquake with injuries and/or structural damage, flooding, explosions, chemical spills requiring evacuation, death of multiple staff or students (as in a bus accident), hostage situation. In a catastrophic disaster, schools must be prepared to rely on their own resources because assistance from others may be delayed. A large-scale event such as an earthquake that affects one school will also affect the surrounding community.

***Flight Team description**

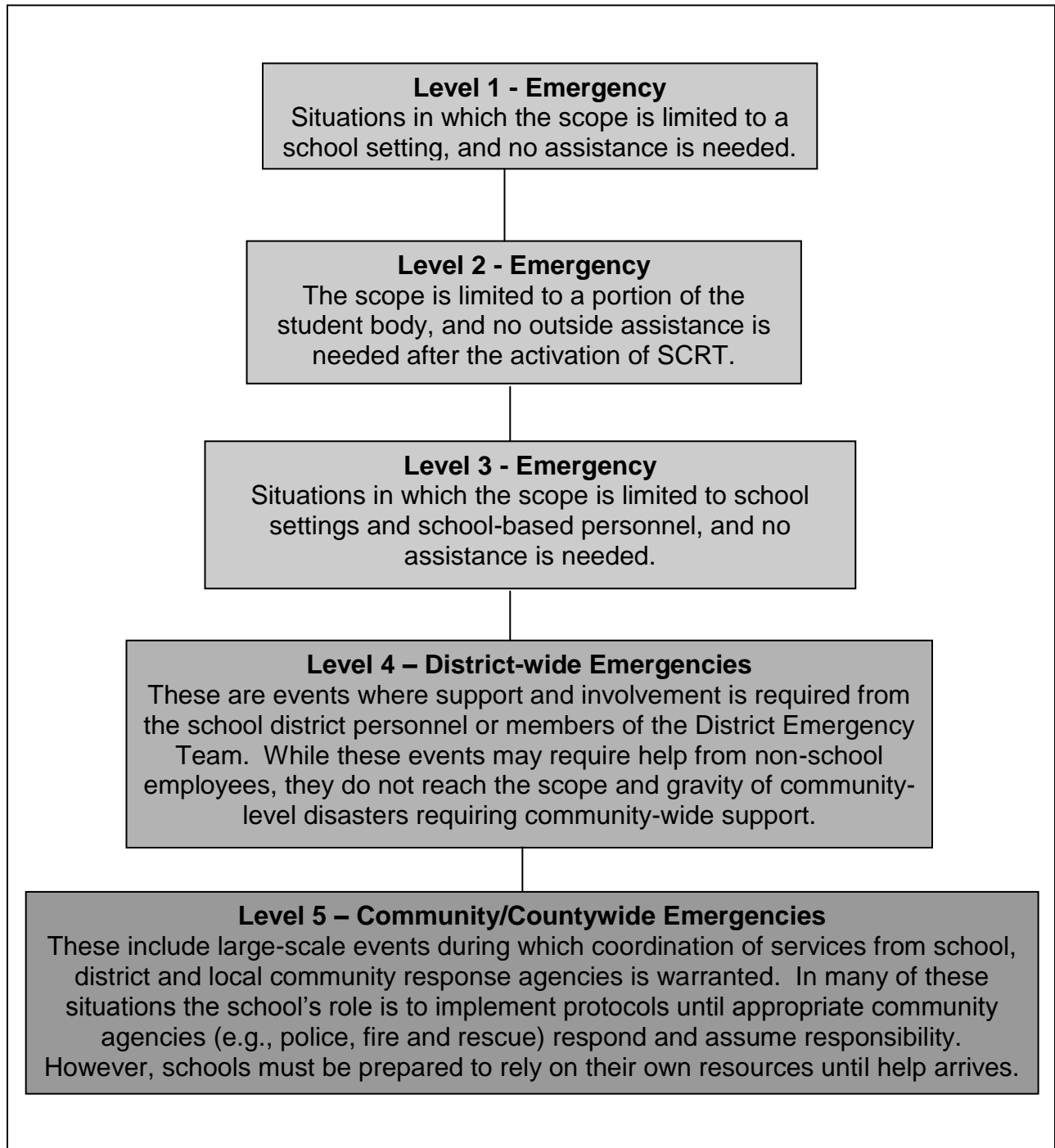
*The SCR Flight team is a multi-discipline group of members drawn from each building based SCRT. It is assembled based on the need presented by the critical event.

The reason to have a flight team is that when additional assistance is needed at one building, gathering assistance is pre-determined and written into the district wide plan.

When the Flight Team is activated the individual SCRT is always in charge.

The building principal never gives up authority.

FIGURE 1 – Levels of School Emergencies



G. PLAN DEVELOPMENT, IMPLEMENTATION AND UPDATES

The School Emergency Management Plan will be:

- **DEVELOPED** by a team of school administrators and staff, working with first responders in the local jurisdiction;
- **INITIATED** by the principal or designee when conditions exist which warrant its execution;
- **IMPLEMENTED** by all staff, which will remain at school in the capacity of “Emergency Support Personnel” and perform those duties as assigned until released by the principal;
- **REVIEWED** at least annually.

Emergency and disaster functions are identified and pre-assigned before the beginning of the school year. The Emergency teams and contact information will be updated at least annually. New personnel will be assigned to vacant command staff positions. Procedures will be revised as needed. All emergency preparedness training and drills will be documented, and updates to the plan will be recorded.

The elements of emergency planning, preparedness and management are:

- ◆ **Leadership:** Leadership ensures that emergency preparedness will be a priority and that adequate resources will be allocated to create and implement district and school-based plans. At the district level leadership should come directly from the superintendent, at the school level, from the principal.
- ◆ **Incident Command System (ICS):** The ICS is a standardized organizational structure that is the basis of the National Incident Management System (NIMS), designed to handle: Management, Operations, Logistics, Planning, and Administration & Finance. The ICS allows for appropriate utilization of facilities, equipment, personnel, procedures, and communications. The Incident Commander is the highest-ranking official in charge of the emergency response operations.
- ◆ **School Emergency Management Plan:** A modified version of this model plan should be tailored and fine-tuned to meet the unique needs and resources of each individual school. The site-based plan includes team assignments, emergency numbers, protocols, and the four phases of emergency management: Mitigation/Prevention, Preparedness, Response and Recovery.
- ◆ **School Emergency Teams:** Site-based teams of individuals with specific duties to perform in order to prepare for and respond to emergencies. The School Emergency Teams develop the plan to meet individual school needs and implement the plan in the event of an emergency.

- ◆ **Communication:** Plans should have established lines of internal communication (within the school) and external communication (with the district office and community). Plans should include provisions for after-hours communication (telephone tree), and alternate means if telephone lines are disabled.
- ◆ **Emergency Management Protocols:** Emergency Management Protocols are the step-by-step procedures for schools to implement in the event of an emergency.
- ◆ **School Emergency Actions:** These are a set of clear directives that may be implemented across a number of emergency situations. These actions include Drop/Cover and Hold, Evacuation, Lockdown, Shelter in Place, Stand-by and All Clear, in addition to several specialized actions such as Offsite or Reverse Evacuation and Student Release.
- ◆ **Staff Responsibilities:** School personnel have a moral and legal responsibility to all students in their care. Just as school staff members will rely on first responders, public agencies and others to open blocked roads, repair utilities, perform rescue work, etc., those members of the community will rely on schools to provide care for their children in an emergency.
- ◆ **Public employees** can be designated as “Emergency Support Personnel”, *RI Gen Laws § 30-15-12-b*, and activities may be assigned to them by their superiors or by law. The following are possible ways: 1) when a local emergency has been proclaimed, 2) when a state emergency has been proclaimed, or 3) when a federal disaster declaration has been made.
 - a) Public school employees may be pressed into service as Emergency Support Personnel and may be asked to do jobs other than their usual duties for periods of time exceeding their normal working hours. Teachers and staff members may be required to remain at school and serve as Emergency Support Personnel until they are released by the principal or superintendent.
 - b) Their overtime compensation, however, is paid by the school. These circumstances apply only when a local or state emergency has been declared.

Ideally, the school plan should include a rough prioritization of which teacher and staff members might be released first (such as those with small children at home). Staff members who live a long distance from school should be encouraged to make special preparations for remaining at school a longer time, such as arranging with a neighbor to check on their home and keeping extra supplies at school.

- ◆ **Training:** Incident Command training is important on at least three levels:
 - a) General awareness training for all staff;
 - b) First Aid, CPR and Emergency Response Training (ERT) for all staff;
 - c) Team training to address specific emergency response or recovery activities, such as Student Release, Search and Rescue, Shelter Management.

- ◆ **Practice:** Practicing the plan consists of drills, tabletop and functional exercises, orientation for staff, etc. It is generally recommended that schools start with basic orientation and tabletop exercises prior to engaging in full-scale simulations or drills.
- ◆ **Personal Emergency Plans:** Staff members should develop personal and family emergency response plans. Each family should anticipate that a staff member may be required to remain at school following a catastrophic event. Knowing that the family is prepared and can handle the situation will enable school staff to do their job more effectively

Your school's crisis response plan is a living document. To keep it fully functional, you must conduct regular drills to practice the plan, regular training to keep staff informed of their roles in an emergency, an annual review of the plan to make sure it is up to date, and obtain approval of the plan from official sources.

Although schools may have established procedures for dealing with many emergency situations, most do not have these protocols collected in a coordinated, concise manner.

The guide is also being distributed in digital format to facilitate customization by each school, while the overall school district or central office will maintain a hard copy. Schools may find it useful to fill out and print certain sections of this guide. Some schools may want to laminate certain forms and keep them in classrooms or other areas of the school. Also, school administrators may decide to distribute specific sections of the document to staff and faculty while maintaining copies of the full guide in a central location or with key planning team members.

For schools that have already developed and documented their crisis response plans, this guide may be useful as a reference to best practices in school emergency response, and to identify any areas in the school's plan that need further attention or development.

Please cross check with current legislative requirements to ensure that your plan is compliant under RI Gen Laws § 16-21-23, and 16-21-24.

For schools that have not fully developed or documented their crisis response plans, it is recommended that your school, under RI Gen. Laws §16-21-23, 16-21-24, utilize the SCRT to address each component of this guide. Consider scheduling regular meetings with the working group to make systematic progress in each area. See Preparedness Section (A) for recommendations on developing a SCRT.

To make the most of limited time and resources, consult with school district personnel and local emergency management officials about resources or plans that may already be available for development and incorporation of your school's Crisis Response Plan.

The First Step

The first step in school crisis response planning is to establish a SCRT to review any existing emergency plans, or to develop a new plan using this guide as a model. Using the checklists, sample forms and protocols provided in this guide, the SCRT can create an emergency plan that includes a designated chain of command, specific roles for team members, and school specific procedures to implement in the event of an emergency.

New “best practices” for handling emergency situations become available on an ongoing basis, and new emergency situations emerge over time. Therefore, this guide and your plan should always be a “**working / living document**,” and after initial completion, should be updated and practiced at a minimum on an annual basis.

H. AUTHORITIES AND REFERENCES

Authorities

The following state laws are authorizations and mandates upon which this emergency preparedness guide are based:

- ◆ RI Gen Laws § 16-21-4
Fire, Evacuation and Lockdown drills required
- ◆ RI Gen Laws § 16-21-5
Uniform fire code or drill tactics - Reports
- ◆ RI Gen Laws § 16-21-23
School safety teams, school crisis response teams, and school safety assessments
- ◆ RI Gen Laws § 16-21-24
Requirements of school safety plans, school emergency response plans, and school crisis response plans
- ◆ RI Gen Laws § 16-21-25
Review of school safety plans – exemption from open meetings and public records requirements
- ◆ RI Gen Laws § 16-21-33
Safe schools act
- ◆ RI Gen Laws § 16-21-34
Statewide bullying policy implemented
- ◆ RI Gen Laws § 23-28.12-15
Fire alarm systems
- ◆ RI Gen Laws § 23-28.12-36
Fire alarm systems – Fire drills – Penalties
- ◆ RI Gen Laws § 30-15-12
Local emergency management
- ◆ RI Gen Laws § 30-15-13
Local disaster emergencies

References

The following are referenced documents and plans upon which this this emergency planning guide was developed:

- ◆ Emergency Operations Plan, State of Rhode Island, Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency (RIEMA), as amended. 2012.
- ◆ Guide for Developing High-Quality School Emergency Operations Plans (2013, U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, Office of Safe and Healthy Students, Washington, DC.)
 - For further details on FERPA & HIPPA, consult this guide
- ◆ Jane's Safe Schools Planning Guide for All Hazards. (© 2004 Jane's Information Group; Michael Dorn, Gregory Thomas, Marleen Wong, Sonayia Shepard)
- ◆ School-Centered Emergency Management and Recovery Guide (© 2001, Kentucky Community Crisis Response Board – KCCRB. Developed with federal Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities Act funds.)
- ◆ Practical Information on Crisis Planning: A Guide for Schools and Communities (May 2003. Developed by The Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools, U.S. Department of Education.)
- ◆ School Emergency Disaster and Incident Preparedness Plan - Marin County Schools. 2012
- ◆ Picking Up the Pieces: Responding to School Crisis. (© 1999. By Mary Schoenfeldt, Marysville, WA.)