

Training

Training provides staff with Run, Hide and Fight (last resort) options to save lives in an active shooter or active threat situation. These options are necessary because factors like classroom design, the time of day, and the location of the attack all greatly impact whether a traditional lockdown is an effective response. While the lockdown strategy is essentially the Hide option, We also want to incorporate situational awareness (being alert), the ability to assess each situation, the option to evade, the last resort of resist and the need to tell – providing school staff and students with a much more sustainable response strategy, compared to the traditional “lockdown only” approach.

Prior to implementing drills, it is imperative that all staff and students receive Options Based Active Threat Response training. At a minimum, staff should complete on-line training, but it is recommended they also participate in a live training session led by a qualified instructor. Teachers should also review this guide to help them introduce students to basic Run/Hide/Fight concepts before implementing drills.

Terminology

Rather than “active shooter” or “active assailant,” PCS utilizes “active threat.” Regardless of terminology, the overarching goal of PCS is to empower staff and students, as age appropriate, with strategies that can help them survive an encounter with someone intent on causing serious bodily injury or death.

Using the recommendation from the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP), PCS employees should refer to our Active Threat Drills as Safety Drills when communicating with elementary aged students.

Active Threat or Safety Drills

In elementary school settings they are referred to as **Safety Drills** to students.

In middle and high school settings they are referred to as **Active Threat Drills** to students.

Drills are used to practice response, but ***realism*** is never a goal of an Active Threat drill.

We have 4 unique drill types:

HIDE: Also can be called **lockdown**. Practices utilizing classrooms to protect students and staff from an active threat.

RUN: Practices exiting the school to evade a threat.

OPTIONS BASED: Has staff and students (as age-appropriate) determine whether to hide/lockdown or run.

CLOSED CAMPUS: Practices securing the school from potential danger outside the school.

Do Not Train or Drill the FIGHT Option

PCS recommends the fight option be addressed only with adults via discussion or instructor-led seminar, or through eLearning.

Students should not be trained in or have to discuss the fight option in elementary school.

Simulated Attacks and Props

The use of simulated attacks and/or props ***is highly discouraged*** in drills. Again, realism is never the goal of an Active Threat drill.

Student Accountability and Control

At no time during any drill should teachers lose control of their students. However, it is important to note that during an actual active shooter attack, survivability is more important than accountability. Under direct contact, when there are no barriers between the attacker and the students, telling students to run - and thereby lose control - is the best option. Incorporating a discussion with your students into drills about safe places to go prepares students in case they ever get separated from their teacher in an emergency.

Mental Health Considerations

Students, especially younger ones, model their actions and behavior on adults. Staff should use the drills as an opportunity to project a calm and controlled demeanor. This will **increase student confidence** and help them to respond more effectively.

District and school mental health professionals should be involved in all aspects of drill planning, implementation and review. Realism is not a goal of these drills and the maxim "First, do no harm" should be considered throughout all stages of drill preparation.

Before Drills: Staff should understand they are empowered to halt a drill if they believe it is creating trauma for a student, staff member or themselves.

During Drills: Staff should monitor reactions. Whether the concern is physical (e.g. labored breathing) or emotional (e.g. crying), it needs to take precedence over the drill.

After Drills: Physical or emotional reactions can be delayed. Consider communicating with parents that the drill took place at school today.

Persons with Special needs

It is critical to consider the unique needs of students and staff with disabilities **before an emergency** and before implementing a drill. Considerations should include:

- Cognitive disabilities that can impede understanding.
- Disabilities that might limit the ability to follow instructions, such as a sight impairment.
- Disabilities that limit mobility.
- Sensory disabilities that can heighten distress, such as with autism.

These considerations should be integrated into all aspects of emergency preparedness to include the physical security characteristics of the school and of each classroom. Request assistance before the drill if you are uncertain how to best implement it for a person with special needs.