

# **SCHOOL SAFETY AND BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLANNING- LESSONS LEARNED**

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# **EMERGENCY AND CRISIS PREPAREDNESS AN INTRODUCTION**

- Emergency Preparedness/Crisis Response is an essential function of an All School All Hazards Approach to school safety.
  - What it is?
    - Looks at the physical school, school grounds, the community, the surroundings, the students, the staff and employees, resources available, the connections with emergency services, communication systems available etc....
    - Identification of the possible incidents that may occur within the school, community, or in areas that may impact the school itself. Recognizes unique challenges present in the school, community, student and staff population
    - Utilizes an assessment of the school operations from a school safety and readiness perspective and updates plans accordingly
    - Requires collaboration between the school, key service providers, and emergency services. Plan development and practice requires collaboration. No silos of information allowed

# **EMERGENCY AND CRISIS PREPAREDNESS A KEY THOUGHT**

- What is it (continued)
  - Recognizes that safety is priority 1 always.
    - **STUDENTS WILL NOT LEARN IF THEY DO NOT FEEL SAFE. CURRICULUM IS IMPORTANT BUT IT IS SECONDARY TO THE PRIMARY NEED OF STUDENTS AND EVERYONE TO FEEL SAFE AND SECURE IN THEIR ENVIRONMENT.**
  - Recognizes that relationships matter
  - Providing and having services available to staff and students is vital
  - Seeks to break the Code of Silence

# EMERGENCY AND CRISIS PREPAREDNESS

- What it is not!
  - It is not a one size fits all proposition. Each plan document and procedure needs to be developed based on the school operation etc..... **It is not a canned plan that you simply purchase and put on the shelf saying that you have a safety plan**
  - It is not a static plan- The plan and process and procedures evolve over time as technology and practices develop for the better.
    - Examples
      - Lockdown vs Secure Evacuation
      - Joint communications with emergency services vs no shared communication capability
  - It does not operate on the premise that “It Can’t Happen Here”
  - It is not simply a Response Plan

# **WHO MIGHT BE INVOLVED IN SAFETY PLANNING?**

## **School Related Persons**

- Administrators
- Building and Grounds
- Nursing Services
- Pupil Services and Mental Health
- Technology and Network Operations
- Teachers
- Support Staff
- Athletic Directors
- Transport Supervisors
- Students and Parents
- Board Members
- Business Office

## **Outside Agencies**

- Police
- Fire
- Rescue
- Sheriffs Department
- Human Services
- Public Health
- Outside Mental Health Services

## **REQUIRED COMPONENTS OF SAFETY PLANNING AND RESPONSE**

1. Prevention
2. Protection
3. Hazard Identification and Mitigation
4. Response
5. Recovery “Business Continuity”

## **OUR PRIMARY FOCUS**

- **Pandemic Planning and its Connection to Business Continuity/Continuity of Operations**
- **Business Continuity and Continuity of Operations**
- **Lessons Learned and Points of Emphasis Moving Forward**

## **BUSINESS CONTINUITY AND CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS PLANNING**

- A vital part to the plan that is most often forgotten about
- Answers the question “How do we continue to operate during this crisis if our facility is not available?”
- The pandemic has placed a primary focus on this. What are you doing to insure that you are able to provide instruction and services to students? Virtual, hybrid, or other? What are you doing to provide services to students in your schools that have IEP’s or other legally mandated services? How are you communicating with your staff and families on expectations or other plans during this time? How are or will you communicate with families about safety procedures and cleaning plans being used in the facility? Etc.....
- How are you accounting for funds being expended over and above what is usually required? Who is charged with this vital task?
- Include a Resource Section to the COOP Plan- Listing of needed resources and where to get them at a moments notice. Becomes really important when time is of the essence!



## **LOOKING AHEAD**

- Continuity of Operations and School Safety Planning is an ongoing process. Plans need to be continually evaluated and updated. Lessons learned in any crisis situation or action forms the basis for moving forward.
- How do you know that the COOP plans in place will actually work? Test, Practice, Simulation?????
- If you were not prepared for the pandemic it is not too late to start planning for the next one. Take the lessons learned during this pandemic and apply them to further prepare for what might come next even if it is 5 years down the line.
- Begin working on writing or updating the Continuity of Operations/Business Continuity Plan now!

# **PANDEMICS AND BUSINESS CONTINUITY**

- As we look at school safety today many of us have had to alter our view, we no longer look at school safety as simply as:
  - Emergency Response to shooting, armed intruders, tornados, fire, gas leaks, missing children etc.....
- Today we look at it as all encompassing which must include the idea of Pandemics and Pandemic Planning as part of Comprehensive Safety and Business Continuity
  - How many schools had operational pandemic plans in place prior to Covid 19 and the forced closures?
  - How many schools were actually prepared to provide services to students?
  - After Covid subsides whenever that is how many schools will continue to have a pandemic plan in place as part of their school safety plan?
  - Integration of the pandemic plan with business continuity is now a critical piece to school safety operations

# **BUSINESS CONTINUITY CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS (COOP)**

- **Background**

- An essential part of a comprehensive safety plan
- Forces the school and employees to identify Essential Functions (< 1 week) necessary for the continuance of operations during a crisis or emergency when a facility is unavailable for its intended purpose- Likely for an extended period of time.
- Forces the school to take a critical inventory of what is truly important in a prioritized manner and make plans for adjusting to changes caused by the loss of a facility etc....
- Creates a developed plan for meeting time sensitive deadlines for the resumption of services and activities.
- Creates a multi-disciplinary team responsible for COOP integration and application of the plan for continued operation

## **BUSINESS CONTINUITY CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS (COOP)**

- It is a plan that is developed that is unique to each school or district!
  - Wisconsin School for the Deaf (WSD)
  - Wisconsin School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (WSBVI)
  - Specialized Schools- Lakeland School (Walworth County CDEB)
  - Elementary and Middle Schools
  - High Schools

# **BUSINESS CONTINUITY CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS (COOP)**

- It involves employees through discussion during the planning phase.
  - Very important to include staff in the discussion in the planning and document development. Helps in the identification of Units within the school that may need a separate plan section
    - Staff have unique knowledge of their tasks and responsibilities that align with things that are ongoing in the school.
      - Examples of staff
        - Facility Personnel- Maintenance and Plant Operations
        - Facility Personnel- Cleaning and Sanitation Staff
        - Kitchen Staff
        - General Teaching Staff- Core Instruction
        - Specialized Teaching Staff- Science, Tech Ed., Phy. Ed., Agri-science, Band, Choir
        - Pupil Services Staff, Medical Staff, and Special Education
        - Business Operations- Payroll, Human Resources, Communications,
        - Network Operations and Technical Support

## **CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS (COOP) PLAN REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT**

- Meet with staff in the identified area to discuss the identification of Essential Functions- That is, what are time sensitive tasks, duties, responsibilities, and services that must be accomplished on a time sensitive basis. Usually up to but not longer than 1 week. Utilities should be included as well! (In the teaching areas many things will overlap- may choose to meet with a rep of the specific unit) This is not a top down activity but should be a collaborative effort. The team planner can assist the staff in the identification during any meeting necessary and provide clarification.
  - Remember- Not every task done by staff is an essential function
  - Ideally should have been done beforehand but..... If it wasn't done before, then do it now and get it into a plan document- Include Pandemic

## **COOP AND THE PANDEMIC**

- Clearly met the threshold of a COOP related activity because of closure
- Clearly continues to meet the threshold of an ongoing COOP activity even if you are back in school!
  - Changes in cleaning, sanitation, lunch practices
  - Mitigation elements undertaken to provide safety
  - Staffing
  - Changes in Instruction- Virtual to Face to Face and Vice Versa
- If not back in school COOP is very much in place
  - Business Services
  - Instruction- Virtual
  - Mental Health and Pupil Services
  - Special Education and Mandated IEP Services

# **BUILDING SAFETY PLANS FOR WSD AND WSBVI**

- **Background**
  - State Governmental COOP Plan for DPI- Review, Complete, and Update
  - State Schools Plan- WSD, WSBVI- Build Comprehensive Safety Plans
- **My experience**
  - October to December- Madison
  - State Schools
    - January to March 13
    - March 13 through Summer
    - September 1 to now



## **BUILDING SAFETY PLANS FOR WSD AND WSBVI- COOP**

- Positive Challenges
  - Communication-
    - Don't take things for granted- Seek to Understand
    - Think ahead to how you are going to set up communications and through what pathway
    - Working with interpreters
    - Interagency Operational Planning
    - Getting everyone on board
    - Including key players in training and discussion
      - Pupil Services, Crisis Intervention, Nursing Services

## **BUILDING SAFETY PLANS FOR WSD AND WSBVI- COOP**

- Training Employees
  - Using Zoom for Training Employees
  - Follow up training for questions
  - Hopefully doing a walkthrough before kids return to school
    - Practicing elements of the Standard Response Protocol (SRP)
      - Evacuation, Lockdown, Lockout, Shelter in Place, and Hold
    - Practicing a Family Reunification
  - Mental Health and Pupil Services Trainings- Vital Component
    - Suicide Identification and Intervention
    - Threat Intervention and Trauma Informed Schools Training
    - Identification of Students in Need or Crisis

## **KEY TAKEAWAYS AND POINTS OF EMPHASIS**

- General Takeaways- Things to consider moving forward
  - How are we meeting the needs of the student population using a virtual only instruction model? How do we know?
  - How are the school and teachers meeting the needs of students in special populations through virtual instruction or other model being used
  - How will we identify areas of learning concern, weakness, and being behind instructionally and bring the child up to the level necessary for success
  - If we are in a virtual environment what options do students and families have to access pupil and mental health services? Is it known?

## **KEY TAKEAWAYS AND POINTS OF EMPHASIS**

- Does the school have an anonymous tip line or other reporting vehicle in place for getting information on students of concern?
- When students return to school or if they are already there, what mental health or counseling services are available to students? What about staff?!!!!!!
  - If we contract for services with an outside agency do we have an MOU in place? Is the therapeutic message provided to those in need consistent between providers?
  - Do we have arrangements with other school districts or schools to assist us if we get in a bind for services
- How will we deal with students/teachers/staff who are impacted by a family member being diagnosed with Covid? How will we provide support to that student/teacher/staff member from a mental health, learning, and nursing services perspective? How about other students and teachers who through contact tracing are forced to isolate?

## **KEY TAKEAWAYS AND POINTS OF EMPHASIS**

- How long are we prepared to provide mental health services to those impacted by the pandemic?
- In the big picture of the pandemic:
  - What have we learned about ourselves and our readiness
  - What can we and must we do better
- Do I have a system or personnel in place for the maintenance of records for funds expended at the school that are related to the pandemic?

## **CLOSING THOUGHTS**

- Every employee plays a vital role in providing a safe and secure environment
- The pandemic has required us to re-evaluate our priorities, tasks, responsibilities and clarify what is truly important
- Mental Health and Specialized Services is an Essential Service and Function
- We're all in this together
- Contact Information
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