

**BERNE-KNOX-WESTERLO CENTRAL SCHOOL
DISTRICT**

DISTRICT-WIDE SCHOOL SAFETY PLAN

2025-2026 School Year

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[Berne-Knox-Westerlo Central School District]
DISTRICT – WIDE SCHOOL SAFETY PLAN
PROJECT SAVE (Safe Schools Against Violence in Education)
Commissioner’s Regulation 155.17

Introduction

Emergencies and violent incidents in school districts are critical issues that must be addressed in an expeditious and effective manner. Districts are required to develop a district-wide school safety plan designed to prevent or minimize the effects of serious violent incidents and emergencies and to facilitate the coordination of the district with local and county resources in the event of such incidents or emergencies. The district-wide plan is responsive to the needs of all schools within the district and is consistent with the more detailed emergency response plans required at the school building level. Districts stand at risk from a wide variety of acts of violence, natural, and manmade disasters. To address these threats, the State of New York has enacted the Safe Schools Against Violence in Education (SAVE) law. Project SAVE is a comprehensive planning effort that addresses prevention, response, and recovery with respect to a variety of emergencies in each school district and its schools.

The Berne-Knox-Westerlo Central School District supports the SAVE Legislation and intends to facilitate the planning process. The Superintendent of Schools encourages and advocates on-going district-wide cooperation and support of Project SAVE.

Section I: General Considerations and Planning Guidelines

A. Purpose

The Berne-Knox-Westerlo Central School district-wide school safety plan was developed pursuant to Commissioner’s Regulation 155.17. At the direction of the Berne-Knox-Westerlo Board of Education, the Superintendent of the Berne-Knox-Westerlo Central School District appointed a district-wide school safety team and charged it with the development and maintenance of the district-wide school safety plan.

B. Identification of Chief Emergency Officer

The Berne-Knox-Westerlo Central School District designates the Superintendent of School as the district’s **chief emergency officer** whose duties shall include, but not be limited to:

- a. Coordination of the communication between school staff, law enforcement, and other first responders;
- b. Lead the efforts of the district-wide school safety team in the completion and yearly update by September 1st, of the district-wide school safety plan and the coordination of the district-wide plan with the building-level emergency response plan;
- c. Ensure staff understanding of the district-wide school safety plan;
- d. Ensure the completion and yearly update by September 1st, of building-level emergency response plans for each school building;
- e. Assist in the selection of security related technology and development of policies for the use of such technology;
- f. Coordinate appropriate safety, security, and emergency training for district and school staff, including required training in the emergency response plan yearly by September 15th; and
- g. Ensure the conduct of required evacuation and lock-down drills in all district buildings as required by Education Law section 807.

C. Identification of School Teams

The Berne-Knox-Westerlo Central School District has created a district-wide school safety team appointed by the board of education consisting of, but not limited to, representatives of the school board, teacher, administrator, and parent organizations, school safety personnel and other school personnel. The members of the team by title are as follows:

- School Board President
- Superintendent
- Teacher
- PTA President
- Director of Facilities
- School Secretary
- School Resource Officer

D. Concept of Operations

- The district-wide school safety plan is directly linked to the individual building-level emergency response plan to the school. Protocols reflected in the district-wide school safety plan guide the development and implementation of individual building-level emergency response plans.
- In the event of an emergency or violent incident, the initial response to all emergencies at an individual school is by the building-level emergency response team.
- Upon the activation of the building-level emergency response team, the Superintendent of Schools or their designee is notified and, where appropriate, local emergency officials are notified.
- Efforts may be supplemented by County and State resources through existing protocols.

E. Plan review and public comment

- This plan shall be reviewed and maintained by the Berne-Knox-Westerlo CSD district-wide school safety team and reviewed on an annual basis on or before September 1st of each year. A copy of the plan is available in the Superintendent's office.
- Pursuant to Commissioner's Regulation 155.17 (e)(3), this plan was made available for public comment 30 days prior to its adoption, which was June 23, 2025. The district-wide school safety plan was then adopted by the School Board on August 11, 2025, after the one required public hearing that provided for the participation of school personnel, parents, students and any other interested parties.
- While linked to the district-wide school safety plan, the building-level emergency response plan **shall be confidential** and shall not be subject to disclosure under Article 6 of the Public Officers Law or any other provision of law, in accordance with Education Law Section 2801-a. The building-level emergency response plan shall be kept confidential and shall not be disclosed except to authorized department staff and law enforcement officers.
- Full copies of the district-wide school safety plan and any amendments are submitted to the New York State Education Department within 30 days of adoption by posting this public plan

on the district's website. The building-level emergency response plan is supplied to the Albany County Sheriff and NYS State Police within 30 days of adoption.

Section II: General Emergency Response Planning

The district-wide school safety plan provides the framework for the building-level emergency response plan. The purpose of a uniform plan is to ensure district-wide continuity for emergency responses. These general emergency responses are used to assist school employees, students, parents and emergency responders learn one system that can be used in the Berne-Knox-Westerlo Central School District.

A. Identification of sites of potential emergency, including:

- The district-wide school safety team in conjunction with local officials has identified areas outside of school property that may impact a district facility during an emergency. Factors that were considered included population, presence of hazardous materials, and potential for emergency based on national trends and proximity to district property.
- A list of areas has been identified as having the potential to impact within the district. This list has been created for reference and awareness. The list is not all-inclusive for every emergency. However, these areas have been identified as having the most probable impact on district facilities or district boundaries should they have or create an emergency. A list of potential community-based hazards or emergency situations has been noted in the building-level emergency response plan
- The district- wide school safety team has recognized that there are many factors that could cause an emergency within our school building. There are also factors that need to be considered when responding to an emergency. A list of potential internal and external hazards or emergency situations has been noted in the building-level emergency response plan.

B. The district has developed multi-hazard response guides. These guidelines are located in the building-level emergency response plan and are in ICS (Incident Command System) format. Plans for taking the following actions in response to an emergency where appropriate are, including but not limited to:

- Initial Actions
- Command Post Location (primary and secondary)
- **Shelter/Shelter in Place:** Used to shelter students/staff inside the school
 - Severe Weather
 - Bomb Threat
 - HazMat Incident
- **Hold/Hold-In Place:** Limits student/staff movement while dealing with short term emergencies
- **Evacuation:** Used to evacuate students/staff from the school
 - Before, during and after school hours, including security during evacuation and evacuation routes
 - Evacuation/Relocation Sites (internal and external)
- **Secure Lockout:** Used to secure school buildings and grounds during incidents that pose an imminent concern outside of the school

- **Lockdown:** Used to secure school buildings and grounds during incidents that pose an immediate threat of violence in or around the school.
- School Cancellation
- Early Dismissal

Emergencies include, but are not limited to:

Air Pollution	Epidemic	Medical Emergency
Anthrax/Biological	Explosion	Natural Gas Leak
Aviation Crash	Fire Alarm Activation	Radiological
Bldg. Structural Failure	Flood	Roof Leak/Failure
Bomb Threat	Heating System Failure	School Bus Accident
Civil Disturbance	Hostage Situation	Severe Weather Emergency
Crimes Against People	Intruder Situation	Threats of Violence
Earthquake	Loss of Building	Water Emergency
Elec. System Failure	Loss of Buses	Cyber Attack
Energy Supply Loss	Mass Casualty	

- C. The district has identified various district resources that may be available for use during an emergency, including the identification of personnel, equipment and shelters.
- D. Using the ICS (Incident Command System) the district has identified the school officials authorized to make decisions during an emergency. Through ICS, the procedures to coordinate the use of school district resources and manpower during emergencies are clearly defined. ICS also identifies the staff members and their backups assigned to provide assistance during emergencies.
- E. The district has policies and procedures for annual multi-hazard school safety training for staff and students, including the strategies for implementing training related to multi-hazards. In each school year all staff will undergo annual training by September 15th on the building-level emergency response plan which includes components on violence prevention and mental health. New employees hired after the start of the school year receive this training within 30 days of hire or as part of the district's existing new hire training program, whichever is sooner. The district certifies that this training is completed during the October NYSED BEDS data collection.
- The following procedures have been established to provide this training on an annual basis to include but not limited to: early dismissal/go home drill, shelter-in place, hold-in-place, evacuation/fire drills, lockout, lockdown, table top exercises and Incident Command System training.
- F. The district conducts drills and other training exercises to test components of the emergency response plan, including the use of tabletop exercises, in coordination with local, county, and state emergency responders and preparedness officials. A debriefing concludes each test to determine if changes to the plan are necessary.

Fire and Emergency Drills. The school district, at least once every school year, and where possible in cooperation with local county emergency preparedness plan officials, conducts one test of its emergency response procedures under its building-level emergency response plan, including sheltering, lock-down, or early dismissal, at a time not to occur more than 15 minutes earlier than the normal dismissal time.

Education Law §§ 807(1-a), 807 (b): Fire and Emergency Drills

The July 2016 amendments expanded fire drill requirements to also include emergency drills to prepare students to be able to respond appropriately in the event of a sudden emergency. The statute now requires twelve drills be conducted each school year, four of which must be lock-down drills, the remaining eight are required to be evacuation drills. There is still a requirement that eight of the required twelve drills must be completed in the first half of the school year. However, the date of completion has been changed from December 1 to December 31 of each school year.

The statute now explicitly requires schools to conduct lock-down drills, which are essential, because they prepare students and staff to respond to the highest level of threat with the most urgent action and the least margin for error. The goal is to have schools conduct drills where they immediately clear hallways, lock doors and take positions out of sight to practice their ability to put the building into a protective posture as quickly as possible. These emergency measures allow time for responding law enforcement to arrive on scene and neutralize the threat. If possible, law enforcement should be involved in the drills to help prepare students and staff for their interactions and release from lock-down by uniformed officers. However, law enforcement involvement is not required by the new legislative mandate. Other protective actions such as lock-out or shelter in place are emergency actions that are usually preceded by some degree of warning time and do not require the immediate response necessary for a lock-down. While the school should be well versed in their secure lock-out and shelter in place protocols, lock-down is the only type of protective action that is specifically required by the statute.

All drills required by the NYS Department of Education are satisfied annually and must follow a trauma informed approach. Drills and training must not include props, actors, simulations, or other tactics intended to mimic a school shooting, incident of violence or other emergency. School District building administrators will be required to notify parents/guardians of upcoming drills. When a drill occurs, staff and students must be informed that the event is a drill and not an actual emergency. Persons in Parental relations must be notified at least one week prior to all drills.

If the District chooses to participate in a full-scale exercise in conjunction with local and county emergency responders and preparedness officials utilizing props, actors, simulations or other tactics intended to mimic a school shooting or other act of violence, such exercise must not be conducted on a regular school day or when other activities including athletics are occurring on school grounds. In addition, such exercises cannot include students without written consent from parents or persons in parental relation

Trauma Informed Approach

A trauma-informed approach is a way of understanding and responding to people who have experienced trauma, which can affect their sense of self, others, and the world. It involves realizing the widespread impact of trauma, recognizing the signs and symptoms of trauma, and integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices. It also seeks to promote empowerment and recovery and minimize re- traumatization. A trauma-informed approach is a

culture shift that requires collaboration among different sectors of public service, such as education, health, law, and social work. (NYS DOH)

Section III: Responding to Threats and Acts of Violence

- A. The school refers to its **Crisis Intervention Plan** via the post-incident response team and the Multi-Hazard Emergency Response Guides located in the building-level emergency response plan. These are reviewed by the district-wide school safety team to ensure content and consistency throughout the district. These policies and procedures are for responding to implied or direct threats of violence by students, teachers, other school personnel and visitors to the school, including threats by students against themselves, which includes suicide. The following types of procedures are addressed in the plan:
- **The use of staff trained in de-escalation or other strategies to diffuse the situation. Training is offered through Parsons Center and Character Education.**
 - Inform the Superintendent or designee of implied or direct threats.
 - Determine the level of threat with the Superintendent and building-level emergency response team members.
 - Contact the appropriate law enforcement agency, if necessary.
 - Monitor the situation, adjust the district's responses as appropriate to include possible implementation of the building-level emergency response team.
 - Communication with parents/guardians. When a student implies or specifically threatens self-inflicted violence including suicide, the school's **counselors** directly contact the respective parents/guardians.
- B. The Multi-Hazard Emergency Response Guides in the building-level emergency response plan provide guidance on the district's policies and procedures for responding to direct acts of violence (i.e., Crimes Against Persons, Hostage Taking, Intruder and Kidnapping) by students, teachers, other school personnel and visitors to the school, including consideration of zero-tolerance policies for school violence. The following types of procedures are addressed in the plan:
- Inform the Superintendent/designee
 - Determine the level of threat with the superintendent/designee and the building-level emergency response team.
 - If the situation warrants, isolate the immediate area.
 - Monitor the situation; adjust the level of response as appropriate; if necessary, initiate lockdown, evacuation, sheltering and/or early dismissal procedures as needed, if needed.
 - Contact the appropriate law enforcement agency.

NOTE: The Berne-Knox-Westerlo "Code of Conduct" describes policies and procedures for responding to acts of violence by students, teachers, other school personnel and visitors to the school.

- C. Response protocols are identified in the Building-level Emergency Response Plan in the ICS format along with definitions of ICS Roles and Responsibilities. The Multi-Hazard Emergency Response Guides address specific procedures for responding to bomb threat, intruders, hostage takings and kidnapping.

- D. The following protocols for appropriate responses to emergencies are provided as examples of responses to bomb threats, hostage takings, intrusions and kidnappings:
- Identification of decision-makers.
 - Plans to safeguard students and staff.
 - Procedures to provide transportation, if necessary.
 - Procedures to notify parents.
 - Procedures to notify the media.
 - Debriefing procedures.
- E. The district has established policies and procedures to contact parents, guardians or persons in parental relation to the students in the event of a violent incident or an early dismissal. In the Berne-Knox-Westerlo Central School District, the following communication methods are taken:
- For small-scale incidents, school personnel directly call the parents/guardians of all students directly impacted by any acts of violence. All other parents/guardians receive an informational letter. The Crisis Intervention Plan and post-incident response team are activated and available. If needed, as needed, community meetings are scheduled in a timely manner for further discussion.
 - For any major incident, the district works with the media (TV, radio) to relay pertinent school related information (i.e., how and where can parents be reunited with children, etc.) It is unfortunate, but important to remember that major emergencies can quickly tie up phone lines with incoming and outgoing calls and roads can be quickly blocked by the traffic of emergency vehicles, concerned parents and community members. School personnel directly call the parents/guardians of all students directly impacted by any acts of violence. All other parents/guardians receive an informational letter. Community meetings are scheduled in a timely manner, for further discussion to include the Crisis Intervention Plan and post-incident response team.

Section IV: Communication with Others

The District-wide School Safety Plan provides the framework for the Building-level Emergency Response Plan.

- A. The Berne-Knox-Westerlo Central School District is fortunate to have substantial ties to the communities of Berne, Knox, and Westerlo, and Albany County. If there were to be an emergency within our facility, that facility would call 911 for emergency assistance. Additional communication tools to be used in an emergency situation include using the Albany County Sheriffs' Office emergency response "Panic Button" communication system to directly contact the county dispatcher. Internally the district has established an internal all call lockdown code through the internal phone system. If involvement is needed from other local government agencies, then the Superintendent or designee would act as that contact person. Additional procedures for communications can be found in the Building-level Emergency Response Plan including local emergency contacts and phone numbers, and the NYS/BOCES Communication Flow Chart. These contacts provide guidance for obtaining assistance during emergencies from emergency services organizations and local governments. The following examples are the types of arrangements that could be used by the district:
- Superintendent (IC-Incident Commander or backup IC) in an emergency would contact the county dispatch center for fire, EMS, or police by calling 911.

- Superintendent (IC or backup IC) contacts the highest-ranking local government official for notification and/or assistance.
- B. Arrangements for obtaining advice and assistance from local government officials including the county or city officials responsible for implementation of Article 2-B of the Executive Law is carried out through the protocols established in the NYS/BOCES Communication Flow Chart. The following are examples of the types of arrangements that could be used by the district during county-wide emergencies:
- **Superintendent (IC or backup IC) in an emergency contacts the Albany County Emergency Management Coordinator and/or the highest-ranking local government official for obtaining advice and assistance.**
 - **The district has identified resources for an emergency from the following agencies: Albany County Civil Defense Office, American Red Cross, Albany County Emergency Services Office, New York State Police, Albany County Sheriff, Albany County County Mental Health Office and the Capital Region Health/Safety/Risk Management Office.**
 - **If the emergency is within the school district boundaries and has the potential to impact the surrounding community, the Superintendent or designee notifies the appropriate city officials (Example: Mayor, Highway Dept., City Administrator, and/or Public Safety). Likewise, should there be an emergency within the community that has the potential to impact the school, the Superintendent should be notified immediately.**
- C. If there is a disaster within the district that has the potential to impact other educational agencies within the district boundaries, the Chief Emergency Officer activates a phone tree to inform all necessary parties. The phone tree is located in the Building-level Emergency Response Plan.
- D. Along with the phone tree, the district also maintains the following information about each educational agency located in the **confidential**, Building-level Emergency Response Plan:
- School population
 - Number of staff
 - Transportation needs
 - Business and home telephone numbers of key officials of each such educational agency

Section V: Prevention and Intervention Strategies

The District-wide School Safety Plan provides the framework for the Building-Level Emergency Response Plan.

- A. The district has developed policies and procedures related to school building security, including, where appropriate: visitor sign-in and badge procedures, employee badges, security procedures.
- B. The Berne-Knox-Westerlo Central School District has implemented procedures for the dissemination of informative materials regarding the early detection of potentially violent behaviors, including, but not limited to: the identification of family, community and environmental factors to teachers, administrators, parents and other persons in parental relation to students of the school district or board, students and other persons deemed appropriate to receive such information. The district has and continues to participate in programs such as: child abuse and

prevention workshops, programs designed to provide staff on how to identify potentially violent behaviors and other risk factors. The district additionally employs school psychologists, social workers, special education staff and a school nurse who are instrumental in assisting the district in identifying early warning signs in students, early intervention/prevention strategies and the development of violence prevention instruction for staff.

- C. Appropriate prevention and intervention strategies such as:
- Collaborative agreements with state and local law enforcement officials designed to ensure that school safety officers and other security personnel are adequately trained including being trained to de-escalate potentially violent situations
 - Non-violent conflict resolution training programs
 - Peer mediation programs and youth courts
 - Extended day and other school safety programs
- D. The district has created and supported strategies for improving communication among students and between students and staff and reporting of potentially violent incidents, such as the establishment of:
- Peer mediation;
 - Conflict resolution;
 - Creating a forum or designating a mentor for students concerned with bullying or violence, Establishing anonymous reporting mechanisms for school violence;
 - Others, based on district need.
- E. The Berne-Knox-Westerlo Central School District has descriptions of duties, hiring and screening process, and requirements for the training of hall monitors and other school safety personnel. Currently, the school does not have hall monitors but will add descriptions to this plan if needed.

Section VI: Recovery

Recovery addresses the help needed for all involved to heal and to restore the school community to “normal” operations. The District Plan supports the school building plan by deploying district resources that support the school’s building-level emergency response team and the post-incident response team.

Recovery plans include mental health/emotional recovery, academic, physical and business recovery, and can continue long after the actual emergency. The District has social worker and school psychologist resources and support systems. The District has the ability to coordinate with school, local, Albany County and State disaster mental health services. The District’s role with mental health services includes looking at the school culture and climate, providing student access to services and following threat assessment procedures.

- A. District Support for Berne-Knox-Westerlo Central School District
- The Building-level Emergency Response Plan provides resources for supporting the building-level emergency response team and post-incident response team. The district’s Incident Command System (ICS) identifies back-ups to relieve team members. This provides team members the opportunity to rotate personnel, to fill in if assigned personnel are unavailable and to debrief in a supportive environment.

The district realizes that some emergencies may overwhelm an individual school's ability to manage an extreme crisis. If/when the school is faced with an emergency such as threats of violence or actual violent incidents, the district-wide school safety team assists as follows:

- Acting as a sounding board regarding the implied or direct threats and/or violent acts.
- Assisting in determining the level of threat and appropriate response.
- Monitoring the situation and adjusting the district's response as appropriate.
- Assisting with parent/guardian, faculty/staff, and media communication.
- Assisting with coordinating building and grounds security in conjunction with local and State Police.
- Assisting with offering a backup post-incident response team (i.e., another school district's team and/or an outside group) as needed, if needed.
- Offering debriefing sessions as needed working in conjunction with local, [insert county name here] County and/or State emergency responders.

B. Disaster Mental Health Services

If/when a building-level emergency response team or post-incident response team is faced with an emergency that may overwhelm the school's ability to manage an extreme crisis, the district-wide school safety team assists as follows:

- Activating the district-wide post-incident response team. The district has a school social worker, two school psychologists, and a school nurse who have local connections to:
 - Neighboring school districts
 - Albany County Department of Mental Health
- Offering district support and looking for continued feedback from those directly impacted during the incident, with projected plans to assist if needed during heightened stressful times such as a re-occurrence of a similar event and anniversaries of the original event.
- Assisting with parent/guardian, student, and faculty/staff debriefing and/or post-incident crisis intervention. The debriefing is also used in part to evaluate the district's plan for possible revisions. If needed, assisting in contacting additional outside mental health resources such as the National Organization for Victim Assistance (1-800-try-nova; www.try-nova.org).
- Assisting the schools with written statements going out to faculty/staff, parents/guardians, press releases and media requests through the district's Public Information Officer.

The district supports the recovery phase and reevaluates current multi-hazard and violence prevention practices and school safety activities.

APPENDIX A: The following is a listing of all school buildings covered by the district-wide school safety plan:

BUILDING	ADDRESS	CONTACT TITLE	PHONE
District Office	1738 Helderberg Trail Berne, NY 12059	Business Manager	518.872.5115
BKW Elementary	1738 Helderberg Trail	Superintendent	518.872.1293

Berne, NY 12059

BKW Secondary

1738 Helderberg Trail Principal
Berne, NY 12059

518.872.1482

APPENDIX B: Identification of Potential Hazardous Sites

- **COMMUNITY BASED LIST:** A list of areas have been identified as having the potential to impact within the district. This list was created for reference and awareness. It is not all-inclusive for every emergency. However, these areas have been identified as having the most probable impact on district facilities or district boundaries should they have or create an emergency. A list of potential community-based hazards or emergency situations has been noted in the building-level emergency response plan.
- **SCHOOL BASED LIST:** The district team has recognized that there are many factors that could cause an emergency within our school building. There are also factors that need to be considered when responding to an emergency. A list of potential internal and external hazards or emergency situations has been noted in the building-level emergency response plan.

Berne-Knox-Westerlo Pandemic Closing Plan for Instruction

In the event of emergency closing of school beyond emergency days built into the calendar, which may prompt short or long-term school closures, our district has developed a hybrid/blended learning model and schedule that can continue as is in a fully remote environment.

Instruction will not only focus on “core” subject areas to the exclusion of elective courses. Consideration has been given to prioritizing hands-on and lab-based activities while students are onsite in school buildings. All instruction will continue to be aligned to the New York State Learning Standards.

As noted previously, student schedules will remain the same whether instruction is in person or remote so that students do not encounter conflicts wherein synchronous lessons for different subjects are offered simultaneously.

Remote learning opportunities for secondary students will include a greater emphasis on synchronous instruction, with teachers finding ways to provide live instruction and lessons to students. While recording of live lessons is still essential for students unable to attend at a scheduled time, teachers will ensure that their students are directly engaged with them and their class peers in experiential learning on a regular basis.

To ensure high-quality remote learning experiences, we will standardize the use of a single online learning platform, to the extent possible, and develop a common, coordinated set of guidelines for teachers to follow when using the platform with students.

Grading practices will follow a standards-based framework designed to provide direct feedback regarding students’ mastery of course content. We will use a five-scale grading rubric based on levels of competency/mastery, which can then be aligned to numeric bands (for GPA purposes).

