Considerations for Active Shooter Drills

KANSAS STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Kansas leads the world in the success of each student.

July 30, 2026

Kansas State Board of Education

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Kansas leads the world in the success of each student.

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- Academic preparation,
- Cognitive preparation,
- Technical skills,
- Employability skills and
- Civic engagement

to be successful in postsecondary education, in the attainment of an industry recognized certification or in the workforce, without the need for remediation.

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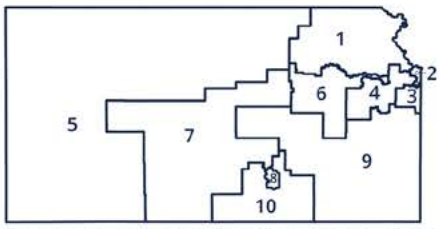


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Introduction

The following guidance was developed in accordance with HB 2534, passed by the 2026 Kansas Legislature and signed into law by Kansas Gov. Laura Kelly, regarding key considerations for active shooter drills and active shooter simulations in school environments. It does not constitute an endorsement of any specific training program or approach.

This document was developed by the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) with guidance and resources from the National Association of School Resource Officers, the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP), Safe and Sound Schools, Sandy Hook Promise, the Kansas Association of School Psychologists (KASP) and the Kansas Juvenile Officers Association (KSJOA).

While these considerations are intended for districts that choose to engage in active-threat preparedness activities, armed-assailant, active-shooter and intruder drills are not mandatory. This document should not be interpreted as requiring schools to conduct these specific drills; rather, it provides best-practice considerations to support safe, developmentally appropriate, and trauma-informed decision-making when such drills are considered or implemented. School districts should use current research and nationally recognized best practices to help keep students physically and psychologically safe.

Active Shooter Drill

Definition of an Active Shooter Drill

This emergency preparedness exercise is designed to inform and instruct students, teachers, school personnel and other staff members on how to respond if an armed intruder is on campus or an armed assailant is in the immediate vicinity of the school.

Age-Specific Requirements

For students in **kindergarten through grade 5,** instruction for this drill is provided through tabletop exercises and identification of appropriate locations where students can go during an emergency. Tabletop exercises help students better understand their individual and group roles and responsibilities. These exercises may include age-appropriate written or video scenarios and problem-solving activities related to an armed intruder on school property or an armed assailant in the immediate vicinity of the school.

For students in grades 6 through 12, instruction for this drill is provided through tabletop exercises and identification of appropriate locations where students can go during an emergency and, when appropriate, the practice of active shooter drills.

Active Shooter Drills Do Not Include: Practicing for other types of emergencies, such as medical emergencies, fire drills, bomb threats or gas leaks.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR ACTIVE SHOOTER DRILLS

Active Shooter Simulations

Definition of an Active Shooter Simulation

An active shooter simulation is an emergency exercise, including full-scale or functional exercises, designed to inform and instruct teachers, school personnel and other staff members on how to respond to an armed intruder on campus or an armed assailant in the immediate vicinity of the school. These simulations go beyond an active shooter drill.

Active shooter simulations are not active shooter drills. An active shooter simulation includes activities or elements that mimic a real-life shooting, including, but not limited to, the simulation of a law enforcement tactical response. Active shooter simulations do not include active shooter drills.

Activities and elements of an active shooter simulation may include high-intensity, hyperrealistic or sensory elements involving students, such as simulated gunfire, screams, fake blood, masked intruders, aggressive role-play, surprise scenarios or tactics designed to create fear or confusion.

Guidelines

Active shooter simulations are subject to the following guidelines:

- Students in **grades K-8 shall not participate** in active shooter simulations.
- Students in **grades 9-12 shall not be required to participate** in active shooter simulations.
- This does not prohibit law enforcement agencies and adult school personnel from conducting or participating in tactical training exercises on school property if:
    1. The exercises do not occur during regular school hours or at any time when students are present or expected to be present;
    2. **No students participate in the exercises**; and
    3. The local board of education or governing body of the school has provided prior written authorization for the use of school property for the exercises.
- For any adult-only activity involving sensory elements, participants should receive advance written information about the purpose, procedures, props or stimuli, expected actions, opt-out provisions and available mental health supports. Physical contact, projectiles or props that simulate injury or physical harm should not be used.
- Parents or guardians should be notified in advance of an active shooter drill or active shooter simulation, when possible. If advance notice is not possible, parents or guardians must receive notice within 24 hours after the conclusion of the drill or simulation.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR ACTIVE SHOOTER DRILLS

District Policies and Protocols

Each school district local board of education shall adopt policies and protocols that take into account each of the following but not limited to:

1. Developmentally Appropriate, Trauma-Informed Design

Policies and protocols should address:

- The primary goal of the drill, such as staff training or student instruction.
- The age, cognitive, physical and developmental characteristics of students.
- The use of age-appropriate safety vocabulary and instructional methods.

2. Accessibility and Accommodations

Policies and protocols should address:

- Accommodations for students with mobility restrictions, sensory needs, developmental or physical disabilities, mental health needs, and auditory or visual impairments.
- Students who may require unique instructions or accommodations during drills or actual emergencies.
- School building and campus layouts and how they may affect implementation for identified students and staff.

3. Parent and Guardian Notification

Policies and protocols should ensure that:

- Parents or guardians shall be notified at least 24 hours before an active shooter drill.
- If advance notice cannot be provided, notice shall be given within 24 hours after the conclusion of the drill.

4. Student Nonparticipation

Policies and protocols should ensure that:

- Students who opt out of participation shall not be subject to punitive or negative treatment.
- School districts should establish an opt-out process for parents or guardians who wish to excuse their student from participation in an active shooter drill. Individual schools may implement district-approved forms and procedures

5. Pre-Drill Announcements

Prior to commencing a drill, an announcement should clearly inform students and staff that:

- The exercise is a drill; and
- There is no immediate danger.

The announcement should make clear that the school is conducting a practice exercise.

6. Drill Implementation

During the drill, schools shall:

- Conduct activities in a calm and instructional manner.
- Focus on skill-building and preparedness.
- Refrain from practices designed to evoke fear, panic, or emotional distress.

7. Post-Drill Debriefing

Schools should provide debriefing time before regular classroom activities resume.

Debriefing may include:

- Providing opportunities for questions, reassurance, feedback and follow-up support.
- Conducting a structured review of:
  - What worked well;
  - Areas needing improvement;
  - Student or staff distress;
  - Revisions to emergency operations plans, communication procedures, accommodations or future training.
- Providing staff opportunities to ask questions and provide feedback.
- Using social stories or other developmentally appropriate transition techniques when needed before resuming regular instruction.

8. Alternative Safety Education

For students who do not participate in active shooter drills, districts should provide alternative safety education.

Alternative approaches may include:

- Written materials;
- Videos; or
- Oral presentations that are developmentally appropriate and trauma-informed.

9. Additional Considerations

Additional considerations the Kansas State Department of Education determines appropriate to minimize harm to students while maintaining preparedness:

STAFF TRAINING

Districts should consider:

- Conducting all-staff active shooter training at least once every three years and aligning training with district emergency response plans.
- Including active shooter training in new employee onboarding.
- Defining adult roles and responsibilities before, during and after a drill or emergency.
- Training adults to provide calm, developmentally appropriate guidance to students.
- Recognizing that the actions of adults during emergencies directly affect the physical and psychological safety of students.

DRILL DESIGN

Districts should consider:

- Using non-sensory lockdown drills as the foundation of an options-based active assailant training program.
- Prohibiting the use of simulation techniques with students.
- Ensuring drills are appropriate for participants' ages, developmental levels and physical abilities.

ADULT-ONLY SENSORY ACTIVITIES

If sensory elements are used with adult participants:

- Participants should receive complete information regarding the methods used.
- Written consent should be obtained in advance.
- Mental health support should be available before, during and after the activity.
- Activities should not involve physical contact with participants.
- Participation should be voluntary, and participants may opt out at any time without penalty.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Schools should conduct a community needs assessment to identify and address preparedness gaps.

The assessment should examine:

- School climate;
- Previous school or community trauma;
- Current safety plans;
- Threat assessment processes;
- Building vulnerabilities;
- Access and functional needs;
- Staff training needs;
- Visitor and substitute procedures;
- Reunification plans;
- Communication systems; and
- Alignment with board policy and state law.

The assessment should be reviewed by a multidisciplinary safety leadership team, which may include administrators, law enforcement officers or school resource officers, mental health professionals, school nurses, educators, operations staff, communications staff, parents and, when appropriate, students.

10. School-Specific Planning

Drills should be tailored to the unique context, environment and needs of each school.

11. Safety Priorities

All drills must prioritize both physical and psychological safety while supporting meaningful knowledge and skill development.

12. Purpose of Drills

The primary objective of drills is to empower participants, prepare staff and professionals to fulfill emergency response responsibilities and ultimately protect lives.

Resources

The following resources are currently used by some Kansas school districts to support active shooter preparedness, safety planning, training and emergency response efforts. Inclusion in this list does not constitute endorsement by the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE). This list is provided for informational purposes only and is not exhaustive.

Best Practice Guidance for School Safety and Lockdown Drills

National Association of School Psychologists (NASP), National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO), and Safe and Sound Schools

This guidance provides research-based recommendations for conducting school safety drills in a manner that is developmentally appropriate, trauma-informed and focused on student and staff well-being

Available at: https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-safety-and-crisis/systems-level-prevention/best-practice-guidance-for-school-safety-and-lockdown-drills

Run. Hide. Fight.

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

This resource provides guidance on responding to an active shooter incident, including strategies for evacuation, sheltering and defensive actions when confronted with immediate danger.

Available at: https://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/active_shooter_booklet.pdf

Standard Response Protocol (SRP)

The "I Love U Guys" Foundation

The Standard Response Protocol provides a common language and framework for school emergency response actions, including lockdown, secure, evacuate, shelter and hold protocols.

Available at: https://iloveuguys.org/The-Standard-Response-Protocol.html

ALICE

Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, Evacuate (ALICE)

ALICE Training provides options-based active shooter response training and resources for schools and organizations.

Available at: https://www.alicetraining.com/

ALERRT

Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training (Texas State University)

ALERRT develops active shooter response training and educational resources for law enforcement and partner organizations.

Available at: https://alerrt.org/

Additional Resources

Districts are encouraged to consult current guidance from:

- Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE)
- National Association of School Psychologists (NASP)
- National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO)
- Safe and Sound Schools
- Sandy Hook Promise
- Kansas Association of School Psychologists (KASP)
- Kansas Juvenile Officers Association (KSJOA)

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