



CISA K-12 ACTIVE SHOOTER DRILLS AND PROGRAMS LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT



Purpose and Approach

In response to the September 2024 Executive Order on Combating Emerging Firearms Threats and Improving School-Based Active-Shooter Drills, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) conducted a landscape assessment of the kindergarten through grade 12 (K-12) active shooter-related drills and programs. Engagement with the K-12 school community followed the initial landscape assessment to validate findings and identify additional programs used throughout the nation. Please refer to the U.S. Department of Education’s “Considerations for Education Leaders in Preparing for Active Shooter Drills in Schools” for options K-12 communities may consider before-, during- and after- school based active-shooter drills and activities.

This landscape assessment provides a summary of active shooter drills and programs commonly used within schools and school districts across the United States. The landscape assessment does not provide any official recommendation to guide the conduct of active shooter drills or take an official position on the effectiveness or appropriateness of one program over another. Additionally, this material is provided for informational purposes only and inclusion of a program in this document does not constitute an endorsement of that program nor any indication of the program’s effectiveness. The decision to conduct active shooter drills with student populations is often determined by states and may be subject to local conditions or requirements.

DIFFERENTIATING DRILLS VERSUS ACTIVITIES AND EXERCISES

The scope for this landscape analysis is primarily focused on drills and activities that are designed to support active shooter preparedness. According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), a drill is a “coordinated, supervised activity to validate a specific function or capability in a single agency/organization.”¹ For example, drills may be used to test shelter-in-place procedures. Drills may also help build muscle memory so that in times of higher stress, a person will perform the actions they have been trained to do.² Exercises are more complex simulations used to “validate and evaluate capabilities, multiple functions and/or sub-functions, or interdependent groups of activities.”³ For the purpose of this landscape assessment, we considered the following categories that serve as a continuum along which school communities may be able to test their active shooter procedures and preparedness:

- **Basic Practices** – applies to all population segments; activities may include faculty/staff-led discussions, storyboards, coloring books, and faculty/staff-led practical application with students.
- **Intermediate to Advanced Practices** – applies primarily to middle and high school and faculty and staff populations; activities may include situational walkthroughs, tabletop activities, and pre-announced drills with students, faculty and staff.
- **Full scale exercises and simulations** – applies to faculty, staff, and local first responders and does not include students; simulates a real event as closely as possible. It is often a multi-agency, multi-jurisdictional, and multi-discipline exercise designed to evaluate the operational capability of emergency management systems in a highly stressful environment that simulates actual response conditions.

¹ <https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-04/Homeland-Security-Exercise-and-Evaluation-Program-Doctrine-2020-Revision-2-2-25.pdf>

² [Lockdown-Drills.pdf](#)

³ <https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-04/Homeland-Security-Exercise-and-Evaluation-Program-Doctrine-2020-Revision-2-2-25.pdf>

K-12 ACTIVE SHOOTER DRILLS PROGRAMS

Students in PreK-12 typically range in age from four to 19 and present unique challenges based on their understanding, processing, and risk of trauma. Options-based drills provide students and staff with a range of alternative strategies to responding to active shooter situations. The premise of option-based drills is to allow participants to make independent decisions depending on the situation such as the nature of the threat, time of day and the location of the individual.⁴

For the purposes of this landscape assessment, the population is broken into the following segments:

- PreK-5 Students
- Middle and High School Students
- Faculty and Staff
- Faculty, Staff and Students (All Segments)

The following overview, derived from stakeholder engagement and publicly available data, provides a non-exhaustive listing of K-12 active shooter-related programs that our review found are commonly used across the United States. The information does not represent an official position on the effectiveness or appropriateness of one program over another. **Additionally, this information is provided for informational purposes only and inclusion of a program in this document does not constitute an endorsement of that program.** CISA does not control or guarantee the accuracy, relevance, timeliness or completeness of information contained on a provider's website. Information includes the program description and segment applicability. In some cases, programs provide a curriculum that is progressive in nature, starting at PreK with learning activities and expanding through adult-only programs and drills.

Programs that may apply to all population segments:

- **Lockdown/Shelter-in-Place**: Drills are intended to prepare students and staff to be safe in the event of any threat, including active shooter inside school building(s). These standard drills prepare students and staff to respond in the event of a lockdown by practicing actions to stay safe and quiet in classrooms or other parts of the school. These drills often involve the following steps: (1) lock the door; (2) turn off the lights; (3) move out of sight of any interior windows; and (4) maintain silence.
- **H.E.R.O. or (Hide, Escape, Run, Obey right away)**: Developed by Safe Kids Inc. and provides a program that provides tailored activities for PreK-12 students, along with faculty and staff.
 - *PreK - 5*: Focuses on how students should respond to a teacher. The program puts the emphasis on teachers to lead in a moment of crisis while accounting for all kids in their care. It also emphasizes classroom management during a crisis to have students respond to a teacher or trusted adult instruction right away.
 - *Middle and High School*: Helps students identify the warning signs of someone in crisis while understanding survival concepts to follow during a crisis. Students learn the warning signs in their friends and peers while discovering ways to connect them to help. Students understand the importance of recognizing others who may be in crisis. Each lesson provides critical and safe conversations, with prompts to discuss what they learned at home to take their H.E.R.O. skills beyond the confines of their classroom.
 - *Faculty and Staff*: The H.E.R.O. Professional Development course can be used with the H.E.R.O. Curricula or as stand-alone training. It is designed for educators, by educators, to be trauma informed. By using adult learning methods to promote a safe learning environment, the training aims to leave teachers feel empowered rather than scared. Unlike traditional active shooter training, the H.E.R.O. Professional Development course does not include simulated violence, stress-based training, video or audio recordings of violent incidents, airsoft or foam projectiles, or physical drills.

⁴ <https://www.safeandsoundschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Armed-Assailant-Drills-in-Schools.pdf>

- **Staying Safe:** Student Safety Preparedness Curriculum, developed by Safe and Sound Schools and the Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training (ALERT) Center at Texas State University. PreK-12 safety education curriculum is delivered through professional development for school staff. The program combines Safe and Sound’s developmentally appropriate safety resources and key content from ALERT’s Civilian Response to Active Shooter Events (CRASE) training, providing a guide, staff training, a Parent Education and Outreach Toolkit, Teacher’s Toolkit of educational activities, printable materials and supplemental resources. Specific language and learning activities (to be delivered by trained school staff) are offered according to the following levels:
 - *PreK - 5:* The ‘Stay Safe Actions’ of ‘Get Out,’ ‘Keep Out’ and ‘Hide Out,’ are offered to support a toolbelt of safety options for students to use to ‘stay safe’ at school, at home and in the community. Learning activities are provided to match a variety of levels of safety readiness specific to PreK-5th grade.
 - *Intermediate/Middle and High School:* Schools have the option to graduate student actions, expanding the toolbelt to ‘Avoid,’ ‘Deny’ and ‘Disrupt,’ a modified version of ALERT’s CRASE responses. Learning activities are provided to match a variety of levels of safety readiness specific to the respective grade bands of middle and high school.
 - *Faculty and Staff:* As part of staff training, adults are taught a modified version of ALERT’s CRASE terminology, ‘Avoid,’ ‘Deny’ and ‘Disrupt’ (with ‘Disrupt’ replacing ALERT’s ‘Defend’).
- **Standard Response Protocol (SRP):** From the “I Love U Guys Foundation” includes PreK-12 guidance, an instructor guide and a PreK-2 curriculum toolkit. SRP is based on the response to any given situation and not on individual scenarios. Like the Incident Command System (ICS), SRP demands a specific vocabulary but allows for great flexibility. The premise is simple and focused on five specific actions that can be performed during an incident.
- **ALICE (Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, Evacuate):** Program designed to provide schools with a multi-option approach to active shooter response.
 - *PreK - 5:* Provides an age-appropriate training that includes a children’s coloring book that has worksheets and illustrations for children to visualize safety activities.
 - *Middle and High School:* Provides an options-based approach designed to give students and teachers many options to consider during an active shooter situation.
 - *Faculty and Staff:* Program provides “train the trainer” options. Training does not focus on “fighting” but rather how to counter a threat with use of distractions that could possibly confuse a shooter.

Programs that may apply to middle and high school students, and faculty and staff:

- **Avoid Deny Defend (ADD):** Program centers on situational awareness during an active shooting event. ADD is an options-based approach that instructs students and staffs to use resources around them to help barricade or add layers between them and the threat actor.
- **Run Hide Fight (RHF):** An options-based protocol used in active shooter situations, where individuals are advised to first try to evacuate by running away from the danger. If escape is not possible, individuals are advised to hide in a secure location, and only as a last resort, fight back against the attacker to disrupt their actions, prioritizing escape, concealment and then physical confrontation if necessary. RHF training method is offered by a range of public and private sectors, some of which are referenced in the links below:
 - <https://www.fbi.gov/video-repository/run-hide-fight-020824.mp4/view>
 - <https://community.fema.gov/ProtectiveActions/s/article/Active-Shooter-Run-Hide-Fight>
 - https://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/active_shooter_booklet.pdf

Programs that may apply to faculty and staff, and first responder communities:

- **[A.L.I.V.E. Active Shooter Survival Training](#)**: Program that builds on RHF methods. “A” in A.L.I.V.E. stands for assess. This involves not only evaluating the scene quickly once an active shooter incident starts, but also always being actively aware of surroundings – even before trouble begins. The “L” stands for leave, which is like the FBI’s urge to run if an individual can. “I” stands for impede, which involves putting some type of barrier between the individual and the shooter, such as by hiding behind cover. “V” stands for violence, another word for fighting if the individual needs. The fifth letter is “E,” which stands for expose. In the course, the program outlines how to safely expose an individual’s location to law enforcement once they have arrived.
- **[Civilian Response to Active Shooter Events \(CRASE\)](#)**: Developed by ALERRT at Texas State University and designed and built on the ADD strategy developed by ALERRT in 2004, CRASE provides strategies and guidance for surviving an active shooter event. Topics covered include the history and prevalence of active shooter events, civilian response options, medical issues and considerations for conducting drills. Participants in CRASE’s four-hour Train-the-Trainer course receive a manual and PowerPoint presentation suitable for use in their own presentations.
- **[CISA Active Shooter Preparedness](#)**: CISA aims to enhance incident preparedness through a "whole community" approach by providing a variety of no-cost products, tools, training and resources to help prepare for and respond to an active shooter incident.

CISA offers a comprehensive set of courses, materials and workshops to better prepare individuals to deal with an active shooter situation, focusing on behaviors that represent pre-incident indicators and characteristics of active shooters, potential attack methods, how to develop emergency action plans, and actions that may be taken during an incident.

- **[CISA Active Shooter Exercises](#)**: CISA develops and conducts preparedness exercises for a variety of resilience disciplines, including active shooter. Exercises provide participants with key insights about their organization’s preparedness, as well as information for developing incident response plans as well as codifying roles and responsibilities during crisis. CISA works with partners to design and conduct exercises that range from small-scale, discussion-based exercises to large-scale, operations-based exercises.
- **[FEMA, Be Prepared for an Active Shooter](#)**: This collection of resources includes research, key messages and protective actions (including drills).

For more information or to seek additional help, contact us at SchoolSafety@mail.cisa.dhs.gov.