



Dear

Everyone deserves to be safe in school. Recent tragedies have demonstrated our schools are vulnerable and we must do more to help protect our students, teachers, and staff from harm. With this goal in mind, President Trump recently took a number of steps to enhance the safety of schools throughout the country, including forming the Federal Commission on School Safety (Commission). This letter is an important part of the Commission's work.

One critical step all States should take during this school year is to review your State's Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) and to work with your communities (local school districts, institutions of higher education, and others) to ensure the EOP is achieving its purpose. We recognize that each State and local jurisdiction has unique needs, so it is important each develop and implement high-quality plans that seamlessly integrate with one another. It is also important for these State and local EOPs to be reviewed on a yearly basis and updated as necessary. Local jurisdictions should also regularly carry out practice drills or exercises to ensure the plans work well.

Through past tragedies, we have learned that planning for an emergency is critical. When executed well, planning produces a common and shared understanding of how individuals within a school or community will work together to prevent, and, if necessary, respond to an emergency. We encourage you to ensure your State's EOP covers a wide range of potential emergencies, including shootings that may arise in the school setting. We also encourage you to audit your local educational agency EOPs on a recurring basis to ensure they are in alignment with the State EOP's objectives. In addition, as you develop new EOPs or review and update existing EOPs, we encourage you to include in the process school administrators and educators, law enforcement, and Emergency Medical Services (EMS)/Fire, as these entities must work closely with one another in an emergency.


If your State or school districts do not currently have an EOP, or if you are looking for ways to improve your plans, we have tools to assist you. Two examples are the *Guide for Developing High-Quality School Emergency Operations Plans* and the *Guide for Developing High-Quality Emergency Operations Plans for Institutions of Higher Education*. Jointly produced by the Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security,

and Justice, these guides outline how teachers, school administrators, and staff can work with the surrounding community to prepare for emergencies, implement measures to prevent an incident, respond effectively once an incident occurs, and reduce the impact of any incidents that occur. These guides and other resources are available on the Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (“REMS”) Technical Assistance Center website, <https://rems.ed.gov>.

Finally, please keep in mind that emergency operations planning is only one part of a broad spectrum of activities that States, school districts, schools, and local communities can undertake to help provide a safe and secure learning environment for our children. Creating truly safe and secure schools requires a holistic approach that includes, among other things, cultivating a culture of respect and connectedness in schools, providing adequate mental health care for our youth, physically hardening schools from threats, and establishing preventative threat assessment programs. Resources and information on these and other school safety and security activities and best practices can be found at <https://www.ed.gov/school-safety> and <https://www.dhs.gov/school-and-workplace-violence>.

We hope you find these guides and other resources helpful.

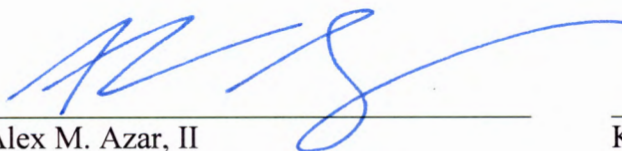
Sincerely,



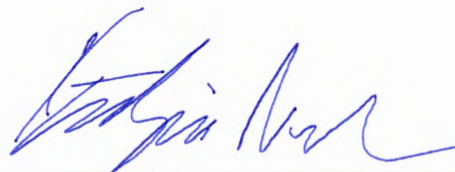
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