



School Safety and Security

February 2019

Planning for those with Access and Functional Needs

School violence can have long-lasting emotional and physical impacts on children, especially those with access and functional needs. It's important to speak with children about the possibility of a violent situation and steps they should take should one occur.

Get Informed

Talk to children about the types of emergencies that could happen. Although natural disasters are more likely, man-made disasters such as school violence can occur. Discuss how you will be notified of a disaster. Children are likely familiar with a fire alarm, but identify other signals that may be a sign that something is happening.

Have a Plan

If a violent situation erupted, children with functional needs may react differently than other children. Those with access needs would need assistance to evacuate or take shelter. Taking these steps in advance can help:

- Plan for accessible transportation that you may need for evacuation. If a child uses an electronic wheelchair, have a back-up battery on hand and consider having a light-weight manual wheelchair as a backup.
- Be sure staff knows how to operate the wheelchair.
- If a student has a communication disability, make sure his or her emergency information indicates the best way to communicate. If assistive technologies are used, plan how to communicate if they aren't working.
- Keep a comforting toy or snack handy for children with sensory disabilities.
- Identify a safe room where the child and a staff member will go, if unable to evacuate. Practice going to that room in advance and make sure you can secure the door.
- For vision-impaired students, keep braille communications cards and mark emergency supplies with braille labels.
- If evacuation is necessary, identify a primary route and a back-up route and practice evacuating to a pre-determined location.
- Be sure the school has updated emergency contact and medical information.
- If a child takes medication during the school day, determine how long the student can go without the medication or have a back-up supply on hand.

Build a Kit

If you must shelter in place at school, make sure you have basic survival supplies on hand to meet the individual needs of your students. In addition to a first aid kit, consider the items they use daily including food, especially for those with special dietary needs, water, medication and medical supplies, extra hearing-aid batteries and batteries for other communication devices, pen and paper to communicate, and items to calm and entertain children.

