Division of Building Safety
1090 E. Watertower Street
Meridian, ID 83642
Phone: (208) 332-7155
Fax: (208) 855-2164
Email: SchoolSafety@dbs.idaho.gov

An Active Shooter Response Protocol for K12 Schools and Educators

Move, Secure, Defend

Right to the Point:

If an active shooter protocol is to be used in K-12 schools, it must be tailored to fit the realities of K-12 school operations. The **Move-Secure-Defend** model more accurately articulates the expectations of adults who stand in the place of the parents with large groups of minor children.

Introduction:

Active shooter incidents in public and private venues from theaters and malls to offices and schools have spawned a wide variety of response protocols. The lessons learned from these varied settings has and should guide the development of response protocols appropriate to the venue and environment.

K12 schools are a unique environment, a few adults entrusted with a moral, ethical and legal imperative to protect many children of varying ages and abilities. Limited staffing at many schools engenders a low level of proactive surveillance, as well as few, if any, offensive response capabilities. Neither do schools possess the resources or ability to actively monitor and tactically communicate during these historically quick, rapidly changing and chaotically unpredictable events. In short, during an active shooter incident, school offices simply cannot dependably communicate rapidly, accurately or completely.

Ironically, while schools are institutions of education, training time to prepare for acts of violence are limited, necessitating that training be accurate, effective and memorable. If an active shooter protocol is to be used in K-12 schools, it must be tailored to fit the realities of K-12 school operations.

Previously established active shooter protocols, such as Run-Hide-Fight, is well suited to public venues populated largely by adults and/or a small number of children in the care of a responsible adult. The assumptions that make Run-Hide-Fight effective in public venues do not neatly transfer to the K-12 school environment.

C.L. "Butch" Otter
Governor

Chris Jensen
Administrator

Brian C. Armes
Manager

Building a Safer Idaho Through More Secure Student Environments

After interviewing school professionals, experts, and reviewing data, we believe the optioned based Move-Secure-Defend protocol more accurately articulates the expectations of adults, who stand in the place of the parents, with large groups of minor children.

Analysis:

In analyzing the K-12 focused **Move-Secure-Defend** program with the existing Run-Hide-Fight adult focused program we found the following:

Move- Reflects the actual expectations for a school staff; To **Move away from danger, to a place of safety**. The implicit implication of run is that speed is the utmost consideration. Move implies that safe, purposeful movement is paramount. By their chosen vocation and the ethical consideration of Loco Parentis, it is unlikely that a teacher would simply "run" with no thought to the care of his or her students. Equally unrealistic is the idea that an entire class of young children or a class of older students, including children with sensory, cognitive and physical disabilities are able to make the tactical decisions required to safely move long distances across a campus in an unknown threat environment. Teachers will not run without their class; many classes cannot run at all. For adults with a Duty-to-Care for minor children expectations are much higher than for an individual in a public venue. Staff in direct contact with the threat should be trained to break contact and move toward safety. Staff near the threat should evaluate their surroundings and move with purpose toward a known safe area. For staff already in a securable space: move to the door and secure the space. Given this, "run" is an unrealistic expectation for school staffs. Therefore, move from danger to safety more accurately reflects the reality for K-12 schools.

Secure- The expected behavior is not that a teacher will hide her 26 students but rather that actions will be taken to prevent physical contact between the threat and the class. Hiding confuses the idea of concealment with the reality of effective cover and physical barriers. Teachers need to be trained to **secure the space quickly and completely** with the emphasis not on hiding, but on preventing entry.

Defend- While aggressive action is required if an individual is unable to move away from danger or in the unlikely event that a secured space is breached, fighting inaccurately captures the expectation for staff. Unless specifically tasked to searching out a threat, making contact and aggressively engaging, fight is the wrong word. In school vernacular fighting is aggressive, offensive and uncontrolled. However, teachers will defend their students and themselves aggressively. Affirmative permission for teachers to defend their students and themselves is explicit in the protocol.

Options based – The Move-Secure-Defend protocol is an options-based approach. The lack of realistic command and control in a school incident requires that decision-making authority be extended to school staff. School staff need to understand that they are entrusted to act in the safest manner for themselves and their students as well as be guided through the decision-making process presented by the Move, Secure, Defend options.

Accordingly, staff should be instructed that securing space would generally be the safest option. However, as specific conditions dictate, a staff member is allowed to evacuate themselves and

their students. This should be considered as the last option and implemented only at the point that secure space is in imminent danger.

Notification- While notification is not identified as part of a specific lockdown protocol, establishing a distinct triggering notification is essential for effective implementation. All school personnel should have both the authority and means to institute a "lockdown" under the notification protocol, thereby shortening time between detection and implementation.

Historical Overview:

One of the earliest and best-known protocols is **Run, Hide, Fight**, a product of the Houston Police Department and the Department of Homeland Security. Unfortunately, this protocol is designed for an office environment. The invocative of Run-Hide-Fight is concise, memorable, trainable and simple for an individual to recall under stress, but makes several untenable assumptions for the K12 environment. The prime incorrect assumption is that if others will not accompany you, you should leave them behind.

Even the words run, hide, and fight infer individual rather than group action.

There has been other criticisms about Run-Hide-Fight to include; the model encourages linear thinking, a victim/non-aggressive mindset, trains students (children) to fight the suspect, etc.

Again, Run-Hide-Fight is well suited to public venues populated largely by adults and/or a small number of children in the care of a responsible adult. However, the assumptions that make Run-Hide-Fight effective in public venues do not neatly transfer to the K-12 school environment.

Another well-known Active Shooter program is **A.L.I.C.E**., which stands for Alert (Call 911), Lockdown (Shelter in Place), Inform (Constant, Real Time Updates), Counter (Counter the Attack), and Evacuate (Get Out).

One issue discussed is the idea of **Inform (Constant, Real Time Updates)** which assumes someone in the school will be able to visually monitor the threat while simultaneously "informing" or communicating the information to everyone in the building.

The second and more controversial issues arose over the **Counter (Counter the Attack)** component of A.L.I.C.E., which advocates training children to try to "distract" and "confuse" armed suspects by throwing items and attacking the heavily armed gunman. Numerous educators, law enforcement officers, parents and school safety specialists do not support this approach in the PreK-12 school setting.

Variants of options-based response protocol are increasingly common, with different terminology and often-unexamined baseline assumptions. For a response protocol to be effective it must first conform to the reality of the environment, clearly communicate intended actions in a method that is memorable even in highly stressful situations. **Move-Secure-Defend** fulfills these requirements in a K-12 school environment.

- **Move –** Move away from danger to a place of safety.
- **Secure** - Actions taken to prevent physical contact between the threat and the class.
- **Defend** - Defend students and themselves aggressively.
- **Options based** - Decision-making authority is extended to school staff.

Having regularly trained adults (administrators, teachers, substitutes, kitchen staff, after school personnel, etc.) capable of making fast solid judgment decisions to protect children and themselves is crucial to successful outcomes. **Move – Secure – Defend…!**

Note: *Although this white paper specifically addresses Active Shooter Response, we should note the primary key to school safety is establishing a written and practiced preventative posture, to include an in-school threat assessment process. Engaging in your environment and with students, staff, parents, etc. will help you identify anomalies/problems and intervene in situations at their lowest level.*

Remembering to be watchful for and report unusual situations that could pose a safety/security threat in your schools (See, Tell, Now).

> *SEE — When you are in and around a school simply be aware of your surroundings. You may notice something that does not seem right, looks odd, or is out of the ordinary.*
>
> *TELL— Tell someone at school or call the police, but tell someone. We want to know what is happening and your observations are important.*
>
> *NOW— Do it NOW! Do not wait, do not hesitate. If something looks out of place to you, it likely is. Where the safety of children is concerned, it is better to be safe than sorry.*

When you SEE something, TELL someone, NOW!

Sources:

- A.L.I.C.E. Active Shooter Response Training- - https://www.alicetraining.com.

- IS-907: Active Shooter: What You Can Do – training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-907.

- Lieutenant Colonel (Ret.) Mike Wood is an NRA Law Enforcement Division-certified Firearms Instructor and the author of "Newhall Shooting: A Tactical Analysis."

- Making Prevention a Reality: Identifying, Assessing, and Managing the Threat of Targeted Attacks, U.S. Department of Justice – Federal Bureau of Investigation - Behavioral Analysis Unit—National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime.

- Move, Secure, Defend – Threat Response Protocol – Idaho Office of School Safety and Security.

- National School Safety and Security Services, ALICE & Run-Hide-Fight Training: Teaching Students to Attack Gunmen

- See, Tell, Now – State of Idaho Governor's Office, in conjunction with the Idaho Office of School Safety and Security.