

Considerations for Special Populations in Crisis Response

Brandi P. Vos, Ed.S., NCSP School Psychologist
Crisis Response Specialist, Colorado Office of School Safety

COLORADO
Department of Public Safety

Brandi Vos, Ed.S., NCSP
Crisis Response Specialist, Colorado Office of School Safety

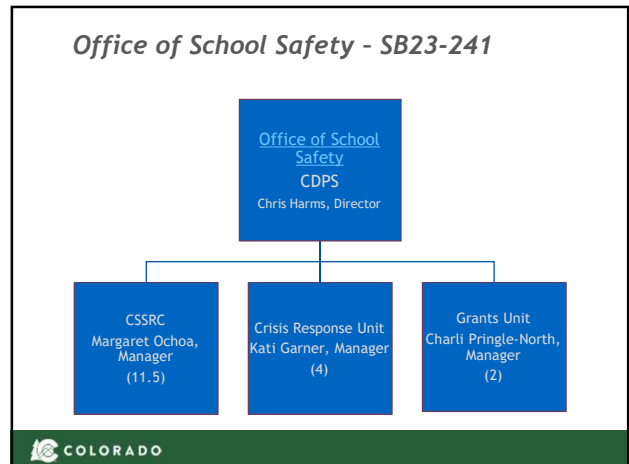
(720) 822-2885
brandi.vos@state.co.us

COLORADO

Objectives

1. Intro to the new Crisis Unit
2. PREPaRE model overview
3. Recognize the importance of individualized response considerations
4. Identify some complicating factors for specific disability areas and how this might affect crisis preparedness, intervention, and long-term care
5. Share resources that are available for further consideration and training, as well as action planning

COLORADO



How Can We Support


1. Planning and Prevention:
 - Crisis Response Planning
 - Trainings
1. After an Incident:
 - Crisis Response (Mental Health and ICS)
 - Critical Incident Stress Debriefing
 - Postvention including prevention training
1. Ongoing Consultation
 - review of documents
 - case by case

COLORADO

Language Disclaimer

COLORADO


PREPaRE Model Overview



The PREPaRE Model


The Importance of Being PREPaRED

1. Crisis intervention expectations.
1. Multidisciplinary team membership.
1. Unique needs of students.
1. Unique aspects of schools.




Five Mission Areas of Preparedness

1. **Prevention:** Avoid, prevent, or stop crises
2. **Protection:** Safeguard against crises
3. **Mitigation:** Lessen impact, reduce damage
4. **Response:** Reduce traumatic stress, stabilize, assist
5. **Recovery:** Return to pre-crisis function, restore




The PREPaRE Model

P	Prevent and prepare for crises
R	Reaffirm physical health & welfare, and perceptions of safety & security
E	Evaluate psychological trauma risk
P a R	Provide crisis interventions and Respond to mental health needs
E	Examine the effectiveness of crisis preparedness



Account for Special Needs: Make it an Annex

- Non-English speakers
- Students with developmental disabilities
- Deaf and Hard of Hearing
- Medical/medication needs
- Physical needs
- Others?

Make an Individualized Emergency Plan if needed

[Handout 8](#)

[Especially Safe](#)

Fire Drill



It's a fire drill. The alarm is on.

Stop your work and line up at the door. Walk downstairs.


Go outside and wait with your class.

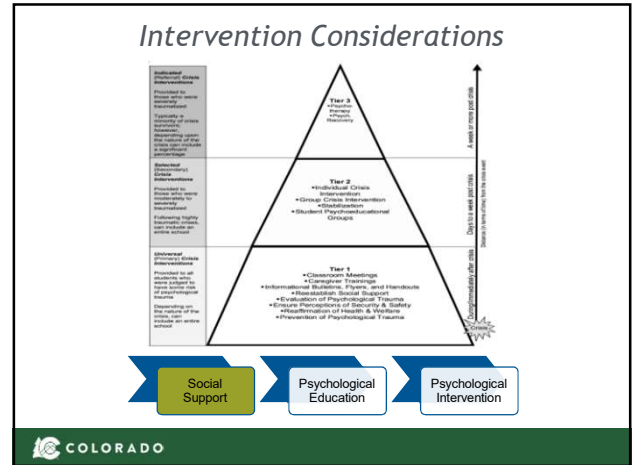
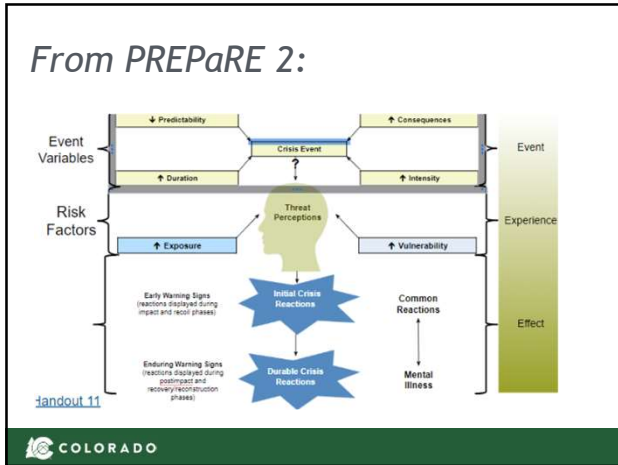
No talking. Be quiet. Listen to the teacher.



Functional Annexes

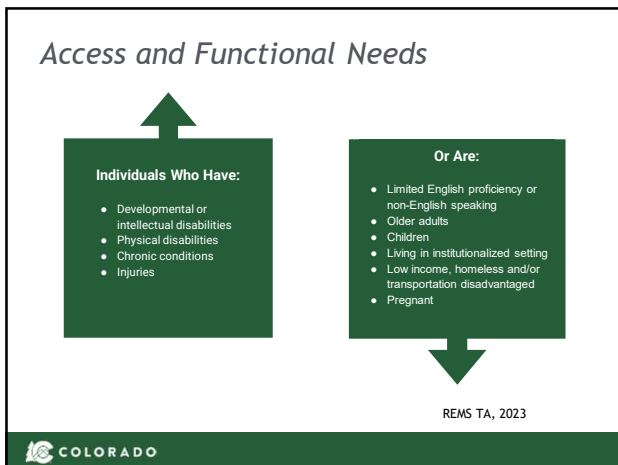
Prevention/Protection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Security 	Mitigation/Response <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accounting for All Persons • Communications and Warning • Evacuation • Shelter-in-Place • Lockdown • Reunification • Public Health, Medical & Mental Health 	Recovery <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recovery • Continuity of Operations
---	--	--





- ### Relevant Laws
- Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (amended 2008)
 - Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1975 (amended 1997)
 - Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (revised 1978)
 - Executive Order (EO) 13347 (July 2004)
- COLORADO

- ### Range and Types of Disabilities and Functional Needs
- Types of Disabilities and Access and Functional Needs:**
- Sensory
 - Physical
 - Cognitive/Developmental
 - Speech/Language
 - Social/Emotional/Behavioral
- Range of Disabilities and Access and Functional Needs :**
- Mild to severe
 - Apparent or not obvious
 - Short or long term
 - Singular or multiple
- COLORADO



Numbers

7,500,000
Students with disabilities

97.5%
With disabilities in general education setting

*Staff & visitors with disabilities must also be considered

Safe & Sound Schools, 2022

COLORADO

Crisis Reactions: The Personal Consequences of Crisis Exposure

- Normal response to abnormal situation
- “Normal” and how does this look different for a variety of neurodivergent populations

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
 Deaf-Blindness
 Developmental Delay
 Deaf and Hard of Hearing
 Infant/Toddler with a Disability
 Intellectual Disability
 Multiple Disabilities
 Orthopedic Impairment
 Other Health Impaired
 Serious Emotional Disability
 Specific Learning Disability
 Speech or Language Impairment
 Traumatic Brain Injury
 Visual Impairment, including Blindness

CDE, 2019



Overall Considerations



Marin County Emergency Plan for Students with Special Needs (Annex)

B. Planning Needs and Assumptions

For individuals with special needs, physical environments become a great deal more hostile and difficult to deal with during and after an emergency. The ability to get to accessible exits and personal items may be reduced. Communication may be impeded at a time when clear and rapid communication is crucial to safety and survival.

To comply with statutes involving students with special needs, individuals responsible for evacuation and emergency operation plans, notification protocols, shelter identification, emergency medical care and other emergency response and recovery programs must:

- have sound working knowledge of the accessibility and nondiscrimination requirements applicable under federal disability rights laws;
- know the special needs demographics of the students attending classes on site;
- involve students and with different types of disabilities and staff and teachers in identifying the communication and transportation needs, accommodations, support systems, equipment, services, and supplies that they will need during an emergency;
- consider emergency accommodations for those with temporary disabilities;
- identify existing resources within the school and local community that meet the special needs of these students;
- develop new community partners and resources, as needed;
- inform parents about the efforts to keep their child safe at school;
- identify medical needs and make an appropriate plan;
- determine transportation needs, special vans and buses for students;
- identify any necessary tools such as personal response plans, evacuation equipment or visual aids;
- include local responders and establish a relationship with individual students with disabilities and their teachers.

Burke, M.J., 2020

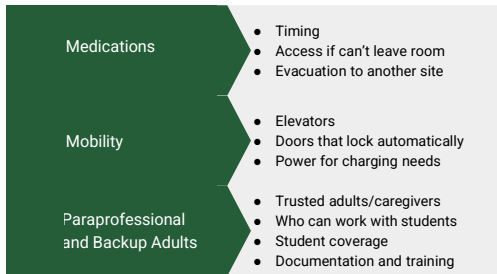


Trauma

- ACEs study
- Effects of trauma
 - Preparation
 - Intervention
 - Post-Vention
- How does it affect your work



Medical / Physical Needs



Cognitive Needs

- Communication
 - concrete and direct
 - repetition
 - fact based
- Information
 - multi-modal presentation
 - student led questions
 - protective factors
- Brain Based
 - Consider processing speed
 - frontal lobe shut down in crisis



Social Needs

- Social Supports
 - Trusted friends
 - Trusted adults to help calm, stabilize as part of social supports
 - Contact with parents, outside caregivers
- Cell phone



Emotional Needs

- Stabilization before intervention
- Tendency towards hypervigilance
- Variety of emotional reactions
- Recovery is the norm
- Potential complicating factors



Behavioral Needs

- Normal vs. abnormal
- Stabilization
- Pre-exi



Specific Disability Categories

Support Professionals

Often know more than anyone else about these students

Train Them & Include in Planning Processes

- Beyond CPI
- Trauma Informed Practices
- Engage-Calm-Distract
- Psychological First Aid
- PREPaRE
- ICS



Deaf/Hard of Hearing and/or Visually Impaired

- Center based or inclusion model
- Interpreter availability and awareness/training in crisis response
- Family awareness of needs
- Complicating factors unique to these students
 - Mental health needs
 - Support needs
 - Visual or auditory presentation modes
 - How to communicate what is most important

Physical Disability

- Short-term vs. long-term/permanent
- Consider multiple settings
- Evacuation annex
- Support people



Intellectual Disability

- Perception of crisis event
 - Protective factor?
 - Other impacts?
- How to help
 - Keep things concrete and direct
 - Emphasize they are safe
 - Give the same information each time
 - Visual paired with auditory
 - Behavior & emotions as clues when words are difficult



Autism

- Preparation/Planning
 - Advanced warning & time to transition
 - Practice
 - Trusted caregivers
 - Headphones/fidgets part of kit
 - Evacuation site
- Communication
 - Do not force to look in the eye
 - Multi-Modal
 - Social stories
- Sensory Needs
 - Sensitivity to alarms, sounds, crowds, etc.
 - Sometimes less reaction to pain
 - Space for behavioral acting out for safety



Serious Emotional Disability

- Complex cases
 - Trauma history
 - Behaviors and safety
 - Processing of crisis events and future impact
- Common reactions
 - May shut down, appear non-compliant
 - Easily overwhelmed
 - Need directions repeated often
 - Consider tone and monitoring of own emotional process (hypervigilance and picking up on emotions of others)
 - Sensory overload
 - Have safe items or people available



Resource Examples

OSS Resources

[Colorado Office of School Safety: Students w/ Special Needs](#)

[Marin County Annex for Special Needs](#)

REMS TA Resources

[Integrating Neurodivergent K-12 Students and Staff Into School Emergency Management Planning](#) (Fact Sheet)

[Integrating K-12 Students with Disabilities into School Emergency Management Planning](#) (Fact Sheet)

[Access & Functional Needs Resources](#)



NASP PREPaRE

[NASP PREPaRE WS2 Handout 8](#)



Individualized Plans

Work with the individual student, their family, and their team (IEP, 504, etc.) to determine.

Individual Safety Plan (ISP) Safe & Sound Schools

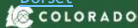
Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP)

[PEEP Form](#)

[River Hill Federation PEEP](#)

[City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council](#)

[Dorset](#)



SCHOOL SAFETY CHECKLIST

- Does the plan accommodate the student's physical needs? How will the student get down the stairs or out of the building safely?
- Does the student have medication they need to take? Is the medication they need always with them or in all of their classrooms?
- Has an aide or staff member been assigned to help the student evacuate safely?
- Is the student's aide aware of the plan? Has the plan been practiced with the aide or any other educators the student works with?
- Does the student understand the plan? If comprehension is an issue, what can be done to help prepare the student?
- Are the student's sensory needs accounted for? What is in place to prevent sensory overload during an emergency?
- Can the student communicate verbally? If not, what measures will be taken to make sure they can communicate effectively?
- Does the student need emotional or behavioral supports to cope during a crisis? How can educators ensure they have the tools they need on hand during an emergency?

MIGHTY

Cassidy, E., 2018



Especially Safe:

An Inclusive Approach to Safety Preparedness in Educational Settings



Other Resources

[Article](#) from The Mighty on needing to plan for students with disabilities in active shooter drills

[Individual Plan](#) article from The Mighty

[Teacher's Guide](#) to Supporting Students with Disabilities During a School Crisis



References

Access and Functional Needs | Webinars | Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools Technical Assistance Center. (2023). Ed.gov. <https://rems.ed.gov/webinarDetail?id=28>

Brock, S. E., Nickerson, A. B., Reeves, M. A., Conolly, C. N., Jimerson, S. R., Pesce, R. C., Lazzaro, B. R., & National Association Of School Psychologists. (2016). *School crisis prevention and intervention : the PREPaRE model*. National Association Of School Psychologists.

Burke, M. (2010). *EMERGENCY PLAN FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS FOR MARIN COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT Model Annex to Marin Schools Emergency Management Plan*. https://cdpsdocs.state.co.us/safeschools/Resources/EMER_PLAN_SPECIAL_NEEDS_MARIN_CO.PDF

Cassidy, E. (2018, March 14). *How to Create an Emergency Preparedness Plan for Your Child With Disabilities*. The Mighty. <https://themighty.com/topic/disability/emergency-preparedness-plans-students-disabilities/>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2021, April 6). *CDC-Kaiser ACE study*. www.cdc.gov

<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/aces/about.html>

Clarke, L. S., Embury, D. C., Jones, R. E., & Yssel, N. (2014). Supporting Students With Disabilities During School Crises. *TEACHING Exceptional Children*, 46(6), 169–178. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0040059914534616>

Disability Categories | CDE. (2019). State.co.us. <https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/sd-main>

Especially Safe - Safe and Sound Schools. (2024, April 18). Safe and Sound Schools. <https://safeandsoundschools.org/programs/especially-safe/>

Executive Order 13347 | US Department of Transportation. (2015). Transportation.gov. <https://www.transportation.gov/civil-rights/civil-rights-library/executive-order-13347>

REMS TA Center Website. (2023). Ed.gov. <https://rems.ed.gov/AboutUs>

Safe and Sound Schools. (2022, February 15). *Especially Safe®: An Inclusive Approach to Safety Preparedness in Educational Settings*. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FJSEH-pjEQU>

SRP ♥ The "I Love U Guys" Foundation. (n.d.). loveguys.org. <https://loveguys.org/The-Standard-Response-Protocol.html>

Students with Special Needs | School Safety Resource Center. (2016). Colorado.gov. <https://oss.colorado.gov/students-with-special-needs>

U.S. Department of Education. (2017). *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*. IDEA; U.S. Department of Education. <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/>

U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division. (2024). *ADA.gov*. <https://www.ada.gov/>

U.S. Department of Labor. (1973). *Section 504, Rehabilitation Act of 1973*. www.dol.gov. <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/oasam/centers-offices/civil-rights-center/statutes/section-504-rehabilitation-act-of-1973>

Questions? Comments?



Contact Info:

*Brandi Vos, Ed.S., NCSP
Crisis Response Specialist, Colorado Office of
School Safety*

*(720) 822-2885
brandi.vos@state.co.us*

