



DISTRICT-WIDE SAFETY PLAN 2026 - 2027

INTRODUCTION

Dream Charter School's District-wide School Safety Plan was developed pursuant to Commissioner's Regulation 155.17 and Education Law Section 2801-a, and was designed to prevent or minimize the effects of serious violent incidents and emergencies and to help prepare the Dream Charter School community to respond to all types of emergencies or crises calmly, safely and quickly. This plan provides clear actions individuals can take if, and when, they respond to an emergency, crisis, or hazard. It is responsive to the needs of all schools within the district and is consistent with the more detailed Emergency Response Plans created at the school building level.

To address the wide variety of risks schools face (acts of violence, natural disasters, and technological disasters), the State of New York has enacted the Safe Schools Against Violence in Education (SAVE) law. This component of Project SAVE addresses risk reduction, response, and recovery with respect to a variety of emergencies that may occur within the school district and its schools.

Our number one priority in planning for an emergency is to keep our scholars and staff safe from harm, and to prevent violence or unsafe conditions. We must be vigilant in preventing their exposure to hazards or dangerous situations whenever possible. We ask that all staff familiarize themselves with this plan before an emergency arises, so that we will be able to respond to crises efficiently and safely. Everyone in our community plays an important role in crisis prevention and response. By modeling a safe and efficient response to adversity, we can help support our scholars and broader school community's return to normalcy in the wake of an emergency.

DISTRICT-WIDE SCHOOL SAFETY TEAM

The Board of Trustees has appointed a District-wide School Safety Team, which is responsible for developing this plan and for reviewing it at least annually and updating it as necessary. The Team includes, but is not limited to, representatives of:

- Teachers
- Administrators
- Parents and guardians
- School safety and security personnel
- Other school personnel, including monitors and transportation staff

DISTRICT CHIEF EMERGENCY OFFICER

The Chief Operating Officer is designated as the District Chief Emergency Officer. The Chief Emergency Officer is responsible for:

- Coordinating communication between school staff and law enforcement agencies
- Leading the efforts of the District-wide School Safety Team in the completion and yearly update of this plan, and the coordination of this plan with the Building-level Emergency Response Plans
- Ensuring staff understanding of this plan
- Ensuring that Building-level Emergency Response Plans are completed, reviewed, updated, adopted, and filed on time, and are consistent with this plan
- Ensuring that annual staff training and required drills and exercises are conducted

- Assisting in the selection of security devices and procedures, including consideration of a panic alarm system

CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

This District-wide School Safety Plan is directly linked to the individual Building-level Emergency Response Plans for each school location. Protocols reflected in this plan will be used to guide the development and implementation of the individual Building-level Emergency Response Plans. Each Building-level plan defines its chain of command in a manner consistent with the Incident Command System (ICS) and designates an Emergency Response Team and a Post-Incident Response Team.

In the event of an emergency or violent incident, the initial response to all emergencies at an individual school will be by the Building Response Team. Dream Charter Schools consists of the following facilities in New York City:

- Dream Charter School East Harlem
- Dream Charter School Mott Haven
- Dream Charter School Highbridge

Upon activation of the Building Response Team, the Chief Operating Officer or their designee will be notified and, where appropriate, local emergency officials will also be notified by calling 911.

While linked to the District-wide Safety Plan, the Building-level Emergency Response Plans shall be confidential and shall not be subject to disclosure under Article 6 of the Public Officers Law or any other provision of law, in accordance with Education Law Section 2801-a.

RISK MITIGATION

Emergency Drills and Exercises

Dream has established policies and procedures for annual multi-hazard school safety training in which scholars and staff must participate, including strategies for implementing training related to multi-hazards. Each year, all buildings will:

- Review the building emergency response procedures with staff and scholars. Reviews will be age-appropriate and trauma-informed, and will promote preparedness without creating unnecessary fear.
- Conduct eight (8) evacuation drills and four (4) lockdown drills each school year, which include practicing Shelter-in-Place, Hold-in-Place, and Lockdown protocols. At least eight (8) of these twelve drills will be completed by December 31.
- Conduct four (4) of the required drills using fire escapes, where provided, or identified secondary means of egress.
- Conduct drills at different times of the school day, and instruct scholars in the procedure to follow if an emergency occurs during lunch or an assembly.
- Conduct at least one early dismissal drill each school year, no more than 15 minutes before the normal dismissal time. Parents and guardians will be notified at least one week before the drill, and the drill will test the usefulness of the communication and transportation systems during an emergency.

- Conduct additional drills as required for summer school programs (at least two, one of them in the first week) and for any program that houses scholars overnight.
- For after-school programs, events, or performances in a school building that include persons who do not regularly attend classes there, ensure the person in charge notifies attendees of the procedures to follow in an emergency.
- Conduct tabletop exercises at least annually, in coordination with local and county emergency responders and preparedness officials, to test components of the Building-level Emergency Response Plans.

The District-wide School Safety Team and the Chief Emergency Officer will review the results of drills and exercises each year and update this plan as needed.

Annual Safety Training

- All staff will receive annual training on the Building-level Emergency Response Plan by September 15 of each school year. The training will include violence prevention and components on mental health. The District will certify completion to the Commissioner of Education as required.
- Staff hired after the start of the school year will receive training within 30 days of hire, or as part of new-hire training, whichever is sooner.
- Scholars will receive age-appropriate instruction on emergency procedures through the drills and reviews described above.

School Security

All visitors to any school site must sign in with the school's Security Team upon arrival. A visitor is considered anyone who is not a regular staff member or scholar. Visitors must wear a Visitor's Badge identifying them and are not permitted to wander throughout the facilities unaccompanied by a staff member. If a staff member notices suspicious, threatening, or otherwise inappropriate behavior, the behavior should be reported to the Security Team immediately. All schools are equipped with security surveillance systems.

Additional policies and procedures relating to building security:

- **Security personnel.** Dream uses a contracted security vendor. The areas of responsibility of school personnel, security personnel, and law enforcement in responding to scholar misconduct that violates the Code of Conduct are defined in the Student and Family Handbook. School discipline remains the responsibility of school administration.
- **Written agreement.** Where Dream employs, contracts with, or otherwise retains law enforcement or public or private security personnel, a written contract or memorandum of understanding defines the relationship between Dream, school personnel, scholars, visitors, and those personnel, is consistent with the Code of Conduct, and delegates the role of school discipline to school administration.
- **Security devices.** Dream uses the following security devices and procedures: visitor management, access control, cameras, etc.

Prevention and Intervention Strategies

Dream uses the following strategies to improve communication between scholars and staff and to prevent violence:

- An anonymous reporting mechanism for school violence and safety concerns
- Nonviolent conflict resolution training for scholars and staff

- Restorative practices
- A Code of Conduct and implementation of the Dignity for All Students Act (DASA), including the designated DASA Coordinator at each school

Educational Agency Information

Dream has three facilities in New York City:

- Dream Charter School East Harlem
- Dream Charter School Mott Haven
- Dream Charter School Highbridge

Each Building Emergency Response Plan will contain vital information such as the business and personal telephone numbers of key officials, number of staff, school population, and floor plans, maps, and other schematics of the building, grounds, and surrounding roads. These plans also include relocation and reunification locations in the event of an emergency, evacuation routes, shelter sites, procedures for addressing medical needs and transportation, and response protocols for various emergency situations.

Early Detection of Potentially Violent Behaviors

Dream disseminates informative materials about the early detection of potentially violent behaviors, including the identification of family, community, and environmental factors, to teachers, administrators, school personnel, parents and guardians, scholars, and others as appropriate. This is done through:

- Professional development provided by the School Leadership Team of the Dream Charter School network
- Family-facing materials, such as handbook sections and newsletters describe

Teachers will familiarize themselves with all available information and records about the regular education and/or special education program placement of each scholar in their class. Any concerns about the behavior of a scholar should be communicated to the Principal. The Principal will then communicate with the Managing Director of Student Services and other staff members on an as-needed basis.

Hazard Identification

Every building within the Dream Charter School network is inspected annually for potential hazards within the building and on school grounds. The Building Emergency Plan includes the identification of any hazardous roadways and intersections near the school building. There are currently no storage facilities for hazardous chemicals adjacent to any Dream school that have been identified by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.

RESPONSE

Notification

The policies and procedures for notifying appropriate law enforcement agencies in the event of a violent incident are included in the Building-level Emergency Response Plan. Each plan outlines when school staff should contact emergency services and who is responsible for initiating the contact.

In the event of an emergency, staff and parents/guardians will be contacted using one or more of the following methods:

- Phone call
- Text message
- Email

Parents, guardians, or persons in parental relation to a scholar will be contacted:

- **In the event of an implied or direct threat of violence by the scholar against themselves, including suicide.** The Principal or designated mental health staff member will contact the family immediately.
- **In the event of a violent incident involving the scholar.** The Principal or designee will contact the family by phone as soon as it is safe to do so.
- **In the event of an early dismissal.** The school will notify families by phone, with reunification locations and instructions as applicable.

Communication with Families and Community

Dream will communicate proactively with families about the measures taken every day to maintain safe learning environments, the importance of emergency preparedness, and its ongoing work with public safety partners. This communication will occur at the beginning of every school year.

Emergency Arrangements

During an emergency, the following arrangements apply:

- **Emergency responder access.** Emergency responders will be given access to locked buildings and grounds by the Facilities team or Security team.
- **Obtaining outside assistance.** The Chief Emergency Officer or Building Response Team will obtain assistance from emergency services organizations and local government agencies by calling 911.
- **Local government advice.** The Chief Emergency Officer will obtain advice and assistance from city and county officials responsible for implementing Article 2-B of the Executive Law.
- **District resources.** Resources available for use in an emergency include supplies, facilities, communications equipment, staff. The Chief Emergency Officer is the official authorized to make decisions on coordinating district resources and personnel, with assistance from staff members as assigned.
- **Informing all schools.** The Chief Emergency Officer or designee will notify all Dream schools of a disaster or emergency affecting any site by phone and email.

Situational Responses

The District has developed multi-hazard response plans, which are included in the Building-level Emergency Response Plan. The emergencies addressed in the plans include, but are not limited to:

- Threats of a violent intruder and intrusions
- Acts of violence by scholars, teachers, other school personnel, or visitors
- Implied or direct threats of violence by scholars, teachers, other school personnel, or visitors, including threats by scholars against themselves, including suicide

- Hostage-taking and kidnapping
- Explosives and bomb threats
- Natural and weather-related emergencies
- Missing scholars
- Evacuation, sheltering, and lockdown situations

The Building-level Emergency Response Plan includes policies and procedures for responding to implied or direct threats of violence by scholars, teachers, other school personnel, and visitors to the school. The following types of procedures could be used by the District:

- Use of staff trained in de-escalation techniques
- Inform Building Principal(s) of the implied or direct threat
- Determine the level of threat with the Managing Director of Operations or their designee
- Where a scholar has threatened self-harm or suicide, follow the school's crisis response protocol and contact the family as described above
- If necessary, initiate lockdown procedures and contact the appropriate law enforcement agency
- Monitor the situation and deploy the Emergency Response Team if necessary

Dream will consider zero-tolerance policies for school violence as part of its annual review of this plan and its Code of Conduct.

Communicable Disease Response

In the event of a declared state disaster emergency involving a communicable disease, Dream will follow protocols substantially consistent with Section 27-c of the Labor Law. These protocols identify the types of positions considered essential in a state-ordered reduction of in-person workforce, and the telecommuting protocols for non-essential positions.

RECOVERY

Building-level Emergency Response Plans provide resources for guiding the Post-Incident Response within each building. Each building has a Post-Incident Response Team, including appropriate school personnel, medical personnel, mental health counselors, and others who can assist the school community in coping with the aftermath of a violent incident or emergency. The Building Response Team is required to debrief incidents afterward in a controlled environment to evaluate the effectiveness of the response protocols.

When necessary, School Leadership Teams, with the assistance of school Social Workers, Mental Health Providers, Deans of Culture, etc., will coordinate mental health resources post-disaster through the school, the community, and the Dream Charter Schools network, in coordination with the statewide plan for disaster mental health services.

PLAN REVIEW, ADOPTION, AND FILING

- **Annual review.** The District-wide School Safety Team reviews this plan at least annually and updates it as necessary.
- **Public participation.** Before adoption, the plan is made available for public comment for at least 30 days, and at least one public hearing is held that provides for participation by school personnel, scholars, and the public.

- **Building-level plans.** The Building-level Emergency Response Plans are reviewed and adopted by September 1 each year, remain confidential, and are filed with the New York State Police and local law enforcement within 30 days of adoption, and no later than October 1.