



STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
Department of Emergency Services  
and Public Protection

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TO: Connecticut General Assembly

FROM: James C. Rovella, Commissioner  
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**2021 Child Emergency Preparedness Report**

**Introduction:**

Under Public Act No. 11-66, now codified in Connecticut General Statutes Section 28-11, the Commissioner of Emergency Services and Public Protection is required to submit an annual report to the General Assembly on planning and activities for children and youth as part of homeland preparedness and emergency response planning for natural disasters, man-made disasters and terrorism. The report must include provisions that address (1) the distinct health needs of children for purposes of bioterrorism and other public health emergency preparedness, (2) public education and communications for families concerning public safety issues relating to disasters and terrorism, (3) training in safety and security measures and multi-hazard response plans for child care providers, school personnel and personnel in before and after school programs, family homeless shelters, summer camps, and juvenile justice system facilities, (4) coordination of school health and mental health strategies, and (5) amendments to the state civil preparedness plan and program made pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes Section 28-5(c).

The Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (DEMHS), within the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP), is responsible for a coordinated and integrated program of emergency management and homeland security. At the direction of the DESPP Commissioner, DEMHS convenes the Statewide Emergency Management and Homeland Security Advisory Council. One of the key committees of the Advisory Council is the Child Emergency Preparedness Committee (CEPC), with established governance to define its purpose, goals, and membership. The CEPC falls within ESF 5,

Emergency Management, under the National Incident Management System or NIMS, and has as its mission to make recommendations to the Advisory Council and the Deputy Commissioner of DESPP/DEMHS with regard to the development and implementation of statewide strategic planning and guidance related to children in emergencies. The CEPC's scope includes:

- Identification and facilitation of emergency preparedness planning activities in settings serving children;
- Collaboration with national, state, and local emergency management organizations to share ideas and strategies; and
- Identification of areas where members can work together to optimally address child crisis preparedness needs.

## **2021 ACTIVITIES**

### **Child Emergency Preparedness Committee (CEPC)**

The Child Emergency Preparedness Committee's members are wholly focused on the intense COVID-19 response required for schools, childcare programs, and associated child services. Despite this overwhelming need for support to these child serving organizations, CEPC members have attended virtual trainings and presentations related to child safety, mental health, and drug use. Co-Chairs provided training materials, webinar invites and additional resources to members.

### **Child Emergency Preparedness Web Resources**

State agencies serving young children provide COVID-19 response information on the following sites:

- Department of Children and Families <https://portal.ct.gov/DCF/COVID-19/HOME>
- Department of Education <https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/COVID19/COVID-19-Resources-for-Families-and-Educators>
- Department of Mental Health & Addiction Services <https://portal.ct.gov/DMHAS/Newsorthy/News-Items/DMHAS-Response-to-COVID-19>
- Department of Social Services <https://portal.ct.gov/DSS/Communications/DSS-Response-to-COVID-19>
- Office of Early Childhood: <https://www.ctoec.org/covid-19/>

### **Connecticut General Statute 19a-87g(c)**

The implementation of PA 18-172 ensures that a mechanism is in place to notify licensed childcare providers of emergencies near their locations. The Office of Early Childhood provides contact information for licensed child care programs to DEMHS for use in the state's mass notification system (Everbridge), making it possible for settings serving young children receive critical alerts to situations impacting the safety of children and child care staff. During 2019, for example, over 100 notifications from the Everbridge system included licensed child care facilities. An ongoing need related to PA 18-172 is raising awareness of the inclusion of data for licensed child care facilities in the Everbridge system.

- **Training for Child Care Providers**

The preparedness of child care providers is critical to ensuring the safety of the State’s 150,000 young children cared for in out of home settings. Training provided to the child care community is offered by CEPC in coordination with local emergency responders. A critical outcome of this effort is to ensure that a relationship is established, and planning conversation initiated between the licensed child-care community and local first responders.

Providers who receive state subsidy for child care (Care 4 Kids) are also required to have emergency preparedness training which they receive as part of a mandatory orientation session. During 2020, home-based providers received a basic template of an emergency plan to post within their child care facility. The template is available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#) for use by all family home providers from the OEC website: <https://www.ctoec.org/licensing/emergency-planning-and-response/>.

- **Collaborative Activities**

The sharing of resources and ideas across CEPC Committee members’ communities and organizations enriches and expands the impact of the group’s work.

The CEPC continues to be an active participant and collaborator in the CT Regional Northeast Terrorism & Disaster Coalition for Child & Family Resilience. Funded by a grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to leaders at Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center, the grant establishes the Terrorism and Disaster Coalition for Child and Family Resilience (TDC4), a center in the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN). The goal of the Center is to develop regional coalitions that are prepared to provide a coordinated response to a critical incident, such as terrorism or disaster.

The Committee co-chairs are members of the Governor’s “Wellness and Safety of Children in the Community and Schools” workgroup. The Committee Co-Chairs and representatives from the Departments of Education and Mental Health and Addiction Services, participated in a National Governors Association conference in 2019, which has resulted in the initiation of additional projects for the committee and workgroup to focus on.

The CEPC is also represented on other DEMHS Emergency Support Functions and Working Groups, including the Long- Term Recovery Committee, the School Safety Workgroup, the Homeland Security Workgroup and the Homeland Security Long Term Strategy Workgroup.

The CEPC membership provided guidance on the new state school safety plan annex (Annex M). The annex addresses emergency procedures for all students with disabilities. The annex was finalized and is included in the 2021-2022 School Year All Hazards Plan due to DEMHS Nov 1.

The co-chairs are currently working with CTIC and the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area Program on the “Handle with Care” program. This program promotes communication between law enforcement and schools when children have been present during a stressful event. The schools will coordinate counseling serves for the children if needed.

Stakeholders are reminded that the DEMHS website includes a section titled Child Emergency Preparedness (<https://portal.ct.gov/DEMHS/Emergency-Management/Resources-For-Officials/Child-Emergency-Preparedness--Resource-Page>).

- **Child Emergency Preparedness Committee Membership**

The CEPC is co-chaired by a DEMHS Regional Coordinator and a representative of the Office of Early Childhood, with staff support from DEMHS. The committee includes representatives from the following agencies and organizations:

- DESPP/DEMHS Regional Coordinator
- Office of Early Childhood (OEC)
- Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity
- Local Emergency Management Director/CT Emergency Management Association (CEMA)
- State Department of Education (SDE)
- Department of Public Health (DPH)
- Department of Social Services (DSS)
- Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS)
- CT Association of Boards of Education (CABE)
- Office of Policy and Management (OPM)
- DESPP/DEMHS Planning Representative
- DESPP/CT State Police (CSP)
- 211 Child Care/United Way of CT
- CT Conference of Municipalities (CCM)
- American Red Cross (ARC)
- Emergency Medical Services Children (EMSC)
- CT-Behavioral Health Regional Crisis Response Teams
- Wethersfield Police Department
- Middletown Public Schools

We have requested representation from the Department of Children and Families.

## **School Community**

- **Department of Justice Grant to Support School Training by Sandy Hook Promise**

In the fall of 2018, DEMHS applied for and received a Department of Justice grant for \$500,000 to sub-grant with Sandy Hook Promise to provide training for school students and professionals on topics ranging from recognizing the signs of at-risk behavior and suicide prevention to social inclusiveness and community connectedness.

From January 1, 2020 – October 21, 2021, SHP delivered 231 *Start With Hello* trainings to 137 schools across CT, reaching approximately 67,599 students. These trainings were transitioned to virtual-live beginning in September 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, SHP

delivered *Signs of Suicide* facilitator trainings in 2020 and 2021, reaching 128 schools and 436 adults who will implement this life-saving training to additional staff, students, and parents over the course of the STOP School Violence grant.

122 Schools have registered SAVE Clubs with more than 2,852 students participating. The SAVE clubs continue the “Stop Violence” messaging with the students themselves spreading the message.

- **State School Security Infrastructure Enhancement Grants**

DEMHS continues to administer the school security infrastructure competitive grant program, in consultation with the Department of Education, reimbursing municipalities for enhanced school security at over 1000 schools across the state, utilizing over \$63 million in funding. An additional \$10 million was approved by the December 2020 meeting of the State Bond Commission. The first round provided funding to public schools; the second round and each round thereafter expanded eligibility to include private schools. This year, Round 5 is being implemented, which includes additional funding to provide a multi-media school safety program, so that schools can communicate directly with law enforcement in an emergency.

- **School Security and Safety Planning Program**

DEMHS maintains the state’s school security planning and preparedness program. As part of that program, DEMHS convenes a school security working group to draft all-hazard school security and safety plan standards in accordance with Public Act 13-3, now codified in Connecticut General Statutes Section 10-222m and 10-222n. The working group includes DEMHS, CT State Police, CT Commission on Fire Prevention and Control, the State Fire Marshal, representatives from state agencies such as the Department of Education, the Department of Public Health, and the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, as well as local representatives such as a school superintendent, fire chief, police chief, fire marshal, public health, and the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities. In addition to all-hazards standards, the group also developed Plan Templates for use by schools or school districts. Each year, the group meets to review the standards and templates and address any emerging issues.

In 2019, a new Standard was added due to the passage of P.A. 19-184. This act requires an "emergency communication plan" be developed for every student identified as deaf, hard of hearing or both blind or visually impaired and deaf, that includes procedures for alerting such student of an emergency situation and ensuring that the specific needs of the student are met during the emergency situation. The State School Safety Program lead, who also serves as the DEMHS Region 3 coordinator, has been working with school districts on how to draft policies and procedures and identify equipment necessary to comply with law.

DEMHS also convened a School Security Assessment Working Group, under the leadership of the State Emergency Management Director, and which includes the CT Intelligence Center

(CTIC) Critical Infrastructure Unit, the DEMHS Regional Coordinators, the State Emergency Management Director, and the CT Interlocal Risk Management Agency (CIRMA), in order to work towards a standardized school security assessment tool and training program.

- **Emergency Planning for Schools Workshops**

Since 2005, DEMHS has offered Emergency Planning for Schools Workshops statewide to support schools in creating and refining their emergency plans. The workshops include Incident Command System (ICS) training, in order to educate school officials regarding the National Incident Management System (NIMS), which is the standard emergency management system used in Connecticut and across the country. This training makes it easier for school officials to participate effectively in the management of an emergency that affects their communities. In 2014, the DEMHS school emergency planning workshops integrated the school emergency planning standards outlined in Public Act 13-3. The formal name of this FEMA-based class is G-364, Multi-Hazard Emergency Planning for Schools Course.

In 2015, DEMHS, in partnership with the State Department of Education, received a grant (GSEM) from the federal Department of Education to continue school emergency planning and preparedness activities, with an emphasis on providing training and technical assistance to school districts across the state, with an additional emphasis on rural school districts.

- **Multi-Hazard Emergency Planning for Schools:**

- **Course Description:** This 1.5-day course provides schools with the knowledge, skills, and tools needed to refine or develop an all-hazards school emergency operations plan (EOP) and to identify how to train and exercise the school EOP. This course follows the guidance set forth in the FEMA Comprehensive Preparedness Guide, CPG 101, for developing emergency operations plan and explains how to engage the whole community—including parents/guardians and outside agencies such as law enforcement, fire, and emergency management—in school preparedness and planning. The Connecticut All-Hazards School Plan requirements, Standards and Template will be reviewed and discussed.
- **Course Purpose:** The purpose of the Multi-Hazard Emergency Planning for Schools course is to enable schools to review the school EOP to determine areas for improvement, make changes and updates, and identify how to train and exercise.
- **Course Goal:** The goal of the course is to provide schools with the knowledge, skills, and tools needed to review, enhance, and sustain an all-hazards school EOP. Through this course, participants will be able to build partnerships and develop positive working relationships among first responders and school staff.

- **Target Audience:** The target audience for this course is school and emergency management personnel who are interested in comprehensive emergency planning for grades K-12. Examples of potential participants include:
  - **School personnel:** School superintendents, principals, school nurses, risk managers, cafeteria staff, bus drivers, and others involved in school planning.
  - **Emergency management personnel:** Emergency manager and representatives of law enforcement, fire, public health, and other response agencies.
  
- **Recommended Prerequisite:** IS-100.SCA Introduction to the Incident Command System, for Schools.

Since its implementation, over 400 individuals have participated in the two-day workshops. Attendees included:

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|---------------------------------|----------------------------|
| • school administrators         | • school board members     |
| • principals                    | • emergency managers       |
| • facility managers (custodial) | • police officers          |
| • special educators             | • school resource officers |
| • nurses                        | • firefighters             |
| • mental health staff           |                            |

DEMHS also provided 100+ hours of assistance to 12 schools/districts consisting of but not limited to, assistance with safety plans, security and safety assessments and tabletop exercises.

In 2020, the DEMHS trainers and school safety program personnel completed 2 school security and safety assessments with 1 school district. Because of the COVID pandemic, other related work was paused during 2021 as school systems and state and local agencies responded to other COVID-related health and safety issues.

- **Student Tools for Emergency Planning (STEP)**

DEMHS is continuing to work in collaboration with FEMA on the Student Tools for Emergency Planning (STEP) program. Since the program began in 2009, the program has been delivered to approximately 25,000 schools students across the state. This year, it is estimated that over 2,500 students received STEP training kits statewide. In addition, DEMHS provided a STEP train-the-trainer program to 140 participants in May of 2016.

The STEP program is a curriculum for fourth- and fifth-grade students to teach them how to prepare for emergencies and disasters, and to train them to become leaders in family preparedness. The STEP program can help children and families be better prepared and more resilient should a disaster occur in their area.

In 2014, FEMA assembled a working group of subject matter experts in youth disaster preparedness to review and update the STEP program. The revised STEP curriculum and materials are based on years of promising practices and lessons learned in youth disaster preparedness education. The updated STEP instructor guide, *FEMA P-1039* was published in October 2015. [http://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/1446646244445-e4c7811152d75912ab1bda6fb01d121b/FEMA\\_STEP\\_Curriculum\\_October2015\\_508\\_v2.pdf](http://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/1446646244445-e4c7811152d75912ab1bda6fb01d121b/FEMA_STEP_Curriculum_October2015_508_v2.pdf)

**STEP Overview**

Grade Level: Grades 4–5

**Teaching Objectives**

- Provide general knowledge about disasters common to your area and strategies for how students can protect themselves and their families.
- Teach students how to create a family emergency communication plan.
- Teach students how to assemble disaster supply kits with their families.

**Learning Outcomes**

- Students are more knowledgeable, capable, and prepared in the event of a disaster.
- Students are positive influencers in helping their families be better prepared.

**Materials and Resources**

- Participating schools receive ready-to-teach lesson materials, including instructor guides, STEP It Up with the Disaster Dodgers video series, student handouts, classroom activities, homework assignments, and graduation certificates. The STEP program also includes suggestions for how to involve family members and the larger community in STEP.

**Alignment with National Content Standards**

- The STEP Base Lesson, Hazard Units, and supplemental materials align with national content standards for several subject areas.

In 2021, the STEP program reached 649 children in schools in 3 DEMHS Regions:

Region	Town	Number of Kits
Region 3	Avon	266
Region 4	Chaplin	30
Region 2	Shelton	380