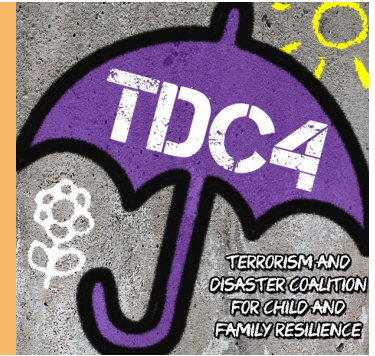


# Considerations for Young Children and Active Shooter Drills



It is important for children of all ages to be prepared if a critical incident, such as a threat or a shooting occurs. However, it is crucial that the preparation for possible negative events be done with sensitivity and that it be developmentally appropriate.

## Make Clear What is Happening

- ◆ All drills should be planned and announced in advance.
  - ◆ Advance Planning is important so that children are prepared for real emergencies.
- ◆ School personnel should also plan drills at non-traditional times to give children practice with different experiences



## Understand Developmental Needs and Levels

- ◆ 3-5 Years Old
  - ◆ Children here have a basic understanding of “danger.”
  - ◆ Look to adults for direction.
- ◆ 5-8 Years Old
  - ◆ Allow them to help during the practice drills to build resilience.
  - ◆ Make sure to give them clear instructions and direct goals.

## Praise and Validate

- ◆ Encourage students when they follow directions well.
- ◆ Praise students when they assist other students.
- ◆ Praise students when they communicate their needs.





# Considerations for Young Children and Active Shooter Drills

## Additional Considerations for Children Who May Be More Vulnerable

- ◆ Some students may be more likely to show much distress or panic during drills
  - ◆ If they have had prior traumatic experiences (such as abuse/neglect, exposure to violence, traumatic loss, exposure to a disaster)
  - ◆ If they are children with developmental delays, disabilities, or prior traumatic experiences
- ◆ For these students especially, be sure to build relationships with parents and staff to identify need.
- ◆ Make sure these students receive additional preparation and support during the drill.



## Unpredictable Responses

- ◆ Some children may become scared during the drill which is normal and expectable.
- ◆ Some children may freeze during the drill and may need special attention
- ◆ Take care not to make children feel ashamed or have other be critical of them for responding in natural.

## Ways to “Empower” Students and Support Resilience

- ◆ Preparation for the drills includes building additional skills
  - ◆ Talking about the drills in advance and what will be happening
  - ◆ Teach coping skills
  - ◆ Develop buddy systems
  - ◆ Assign developmentally appropriate tasks to students
  - ◆ Understanding the individual needs of students can help with preparation and response.