

EMERGENCY RESPONSE PROTOCOL

Hostage Situation

Depending on Assistance Needed, Call:	
Police, Fire, and EMS Emergency	911
Security	
EST Manager	
Other	

Situation Description

Hostage situations are among the most serious and complex incidents which impact public school systems. Usually, hostage perpetrators are either mentally ill, political or religious extremists, or fleeing criminals seeking a hiding place. Typically, the hostage taker is agitated and unpredictable. Consequently, he/she should be considered extremely dangerous.

All school and office personnel must be prepared to carry out plans in the event of a hostage situation in the school or community. In the event of this incident occurring, the following actions should be taken to maintain the safety of all students and staff.

Procedures

Immediate response—

- Call 911.
- Contact security.
- Implement School Emergency Response Plan.
- Initiate Lockdown procedures.
- Call EST Manager.
- Follow police direction.
- Goal is to de-escalate situation.
- Try not to allow additional hostages to be taken.
- Compartmentalize (contain) situation to one area if possible; try not to allow situation to go mobile. Utilizing active listening skills is crucial to de-escalating hostage situations.

What to do—outside of the stage area—

- If a hostage situation develops, call MPD (911) and security. When talking with police, be sure that the dispatcher understands clearly that there is a hostage situation in progress that (if applicable) involves school children.
- Immediately cordon off the area where the hostage situation is located. Attempt to evacuate everyone (except the hostages) from the immediate area. Do not attempt to

evacuate everyone if it would create an even more dangerous situation or enhance the chance of injury. For example, if a hostage is being held in a classroom and the hostage taker threatens anyone who comes near him or her; do not attempt to evacuate other classrooms (if occupied) in the immediate vicinity of where the hostage situation is located. Classroom doors should be locked from the inside, and the occupants should remain there and be as quiet as possible.

- Make no attempt to establish contact with the hostage taker. If, however, he/she makes demands, listen carefully and do not attempt to solicit additional information. Advise the hostage taker that you will pass on the demands to the superintendent. This is a stall tactic: accordingly, you must be calm and convincing.
- Take no further action. Await the arrival of the police and their Hostage Negotiation Team. Upon arrival, the police will evaluate the situation and give further direction regarding any evacuation attempts. Be prepared to give the police officers as much information on the hostage situation as you can (i.e., description of hostage taker; whether he/she displayed a weapon and if so what type; demands made (if any); number of people being held hostage and their approximate age, etc). Also, provide a floor plan of the building when the police arrive. Usually, the Emergency Fire Evacuation Plan will suffice.
- After notifying the police, advise the Executive Support Team.

What to do—if you become a hostage—

- Above all else try to maintain your composure. The object is to survive; therefore, do exactly as you are told. If you become emotional, it may cause the hostage taker to become angry and even more irrational.
- Look for and mentally plan an escape route. No attempts should be made to escape, however, unless the situation seriously deteriorates or you receive such instructions from the police.
- If more than one adult is taken hostage, one person should try to serve as spokesperson for the group. Obviously, this can't be discussed among the hostages. The rule of thumb to follow is that the oldest person present or the person with the most composure should respond to questions from the hostage taker.
- If children are included as hostages, make every effort to keep them calm. Exercise firm authority.
- Take no further action. Wait to be rescued or released.

Followup response—

- Follow Metropolitan Police instructions.
- Notify the Crisis Team as needed.
- Complete the After Action Report on the Web-Based Application (DC Emergency and Safety Alliance Web site) and submit to the Interagency Team.