School Vulnerability Assessment

Key Principles for Safe Schools

What is Vulnerability Assessment?

- Ongoing process for identifying and prioritizing risks to individual schools and the school district.

- Designing a system of accountability with measurable activities and timelines to address risks.

Action Checklist

- Form a vulnerability assessment team composed of varied district, school, and community members that could help to identify hazards and who might be involved in responding to an emergency. Attend Assessment Team Training.

- Develop a timeline for Assessment Team Activities.

- Brainstorm potential hazards that could impact the school/district: biological (i.e., diseases), community, physical environment, natural, technological, terrorism, and violence hazards.

Action Checklist

- Identify other considerations that impact school vulnerability, including school populations, locations, and resources.

- Become familiar with the assessment tool to evaluate school vulnerabilities.

- Determine the school's individual risk to hazards through data review, research into past incidents, surveying community and student populations, and using the assessment tool to identify vulnerabilities as well as areas for improvement.
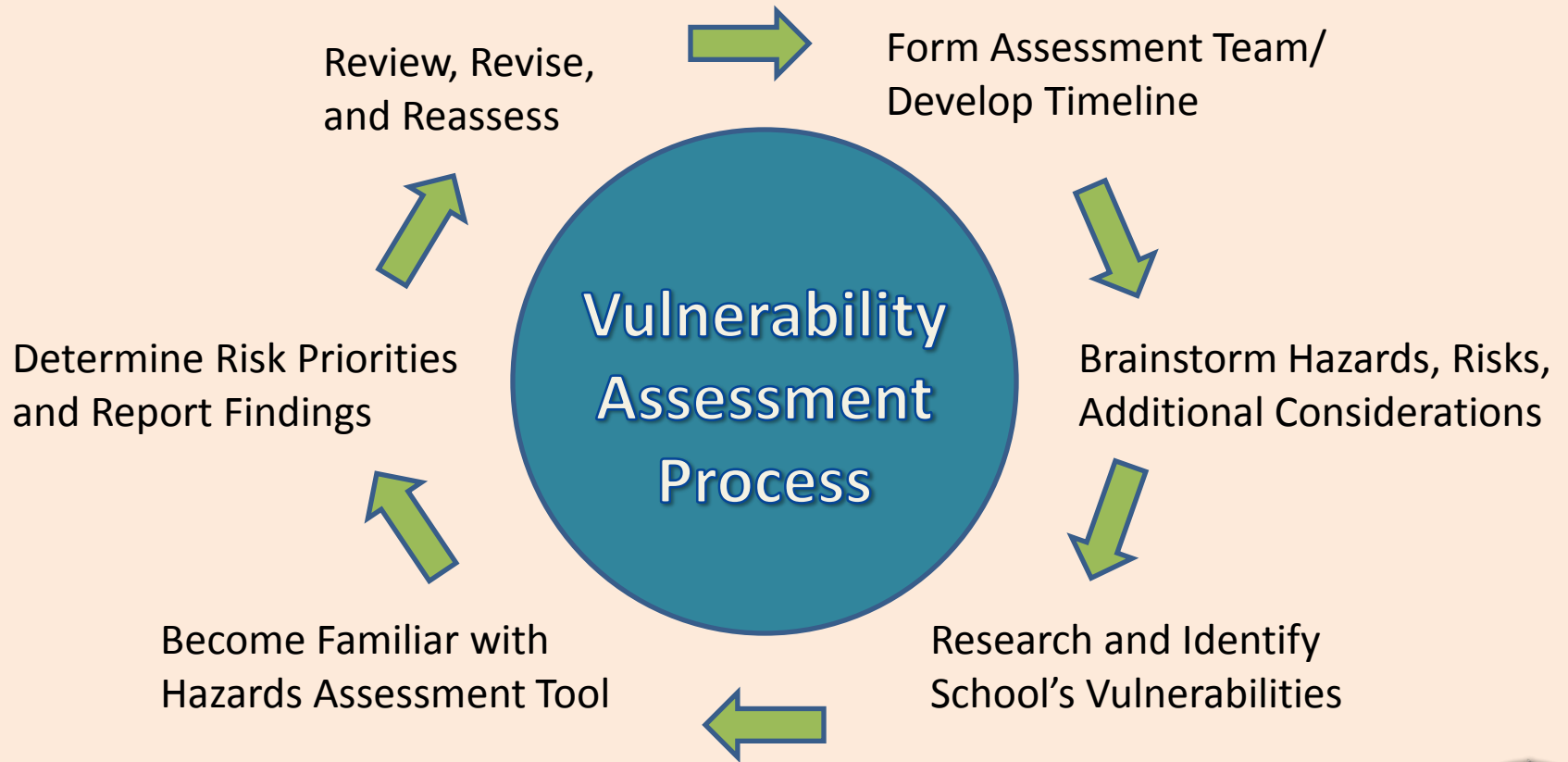
Action Checklist

- Compile information gained from the vulnerability assessment and determine risk priorities.

- Report finding of the vulnerability assessment to inform and update the Safe School/Crisis Response Plan.

- Create a prioritized action plan based on the findings of the vulnerability assessment, including a system of accountability for implementation of any recommendations.

- Review, revise and reassess the process.

The On-Going Process

Review, Revise, and Reassess

Form Assessment Team/ Develop Timeline

Vulnerability Assessment Process

Determine Risk Priorities and Report Findings

Brainstorm Hazards, Risks, Additional Considerations

Become Familiar with Hazards Assessment Tool

Research and Identify School's Vulnerabilities

Vulnerability Assessment Process

- Assessing risk: Identifying the hazards that could potentially affect a school or that make a school more susceptible to hazards, and how likely it is that each hazard could occur.

- Assessing vulnerabilities: Determining the characteristics of the school that are susceptible to hazards, such as grounds, structure, procedures, equipment, systems, surroundings, etc.

- Assessing consequence: Measuring the range of loss or damage that could occur from the impact of an incident. Disruption of the social and physical learning environment, psychological

Vulnerability Assessment Teams

- Identify individuals who are knowledgeable about the school, district, and surrounding community.
- Identify individuals knowledgeable about school hazards and emergency management.
- Form team from a variety of these individuals.
- Make team aware of the goals of the vulnerability assessment and develop a plan for the team.
- Develop a timeline for consistent team meetings and follow-up assessments.

Types of Hazards

- Biological

- Community (i.e., railroads, pipelines, highways, industrial plants, potentially dangerous gathering sites, bus or auto accidents, community venues that attract large groups, etc.)

- Climate and Culture (drug use and trafficking, crime, sexual misconduct, hostile environment, dangerous individuals, bullying)

Types of Hazards

- Natural (weather, fire, earthquake, wild animals, extreme temperature, floods)
- Physical Environment (structural, maintenance, grounds hazards)
- Technological (cyberbullying, internet predators, securing files and systems from cyber attacks, electrical fires, power outages, inappropriate use of computers)
- Terrorism (explosions, kidnapping/hostage taking, biological threat, chemical threat, nuclear blast, radiological threats from a "dirty bomb.")

Types of Hazards

- Crime and Violence (weapons in schools, fights, active shooters, gangs, intruders)

Risk Index Worksheet

- Use the Risk Index Worksheet to determine which hazards and vulnerabilities would have the greatest consequences for the school.

- From the Risk Index Worksheet, determine which hazards should be higher or lower in priority for future action, and what future action is needed.

- Verify that there is an emergency plan for all hazards identified as "high" or "medium."

- Notify the district office if a hazard is identified that is not addressed in the district Emergency Procedure Quick Reference Guide.

Assessing Vulnerabilities

- Survey school and community populations
- Conduct a walkthrough of school grounds and facilities
- Review past incident data (incidents, discipline)
- Work with local emergency management personnel to assess greater community risks
- Review existing school emergency plans, drill reports
- Review SREF reports

Surveying/Interviewing for Input

- Solicit input from individuals who may not be on the assessment team, but have insight into specific vulnerabilities: SROs, teachers, facilities personnel, counselors, school nurses or health aides, students, parents, community members, transportation personnel, local officials, emergency management personnel, etc.

- Use information from employee, parent and student surveys such as the School Climate Surveys or a questionnaire developed for the purpose of assessing safety on campus.

The Assessment Tool

- The assessment tool includes review of :

  - Control of access and egress to buildings
  - Pedestrian, bus and auto traffic patterns
  - Identification of "all persons" in the building
  - Safe interior and exterior facilities
  - Safe landscaping
  - Visibility
  - Identification of an established incident command system with key roles and responsibilities identified, roles filled, and key participants regularly practiced
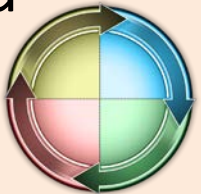
The Assessment Tool

– Identification of evacuation routes and predetermined evacuation locations as well as alternate locations

– Identification of shelter-in-place locations and tornado-safe zones

– Communication systems: inter-school, intra-school, home-school emergency notification, first-responder, alarms surveillance equipment

The Assessment Tool

- – Inventory of emergency supplies and go-kits
- – School crisis response teams
- – Staff and student knowledge of emergency procedures, including a review of training and drills
- – Supervision of students and grounds
- – Accessibility and security for areas containing hazardous material storage
- – MOUs supporting transportation, off-site evacuation, emergency supplies, facilities' recovery, first response protocols, emotional and psychological recovery

Also Consider

- Special populations within the school and their needs

- Visitors

- Students, staff and visitors with disabilities

- Substitutes and itinerant personnel

Reporting and Establishing Priorities

- Identify vulnerabilities which pose the greatest risk to the school.

- Complete a report of the assessment.

- Provide recommendations to use the assessment results, to make corrections, and to inform and update safe school/crisis response plans.

The Report

- Describe the process used: Record members of the team and their positions/areas of expertise. List sources of data reviewed (Safe Schools/Crisis Response Plan, Safety and Security Best Practices Report, climate survey or other survey data, code of conduct and school discipline data, observation of supervision practices and procedures, physical plant walk-through, interviews, SREF reports, student handbook, insurance and worker's comp claims)

The Report

- Commendations: Areas of strength
- Areas of Concern and Considerations for Addressing the Concerns (items revealed as needing attention when using the Assessment Tool)
- Make a written plan including persons responsible and a timeline for completion for addressing identified vulnerabilities.
- Include a copy of the Assessment Tool
- Include a copy of the Risk Index Worksheet

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U.S. Department of Education

Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools

A Guide to School Vulnerability Assessments:

Key Principles for Safe Schools

Washington, D.C.

2008

The full report is available online at www.ed.gov/emergencyplan .