



ARE YOU PREPARED FOR THE UNEXPECTED?

Joanne Rose-Johnson, Founder and President, Educational Advisors Inc.

Is Emergency Preparedness Planning a Compliance Requirement?

Not in all cases, but it should be! Benjamin Franklin once stated, "By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail." The old master also opined that an "ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." We live by that credo in the world of compliance.

In an era of heightened awareness and increased security, the question of being adequately prepared for the worst is never too far from anyone's mind. For schools, there is no room for error, and emergency precautions must be implemented to ensure the safety of students, teachers and administrators. Lack of solid planning will lead to confusion and may exacerbate an emergency situation to dangerous levels. This is all common knowledge; however the number of schools that neglect to have a viable plan in the event of an emergency is alarming.

Why Don't Schools Have EPPs?

The reason some schools do not have an Emergency Preparedness Plan (EPP) is simple: There is nothing in the books that makes it a requirement. Although they must comply with state or local health and safety policies that mandate things like illuminated exit signs and fire extinguishers (even some accrediting agencies require schools to have policies regarding a personal exposure control plan, handling of hazardous materials, lab safety rules and emergency training to include infection control policies), there are no laws or regulations that require schools to create and maintain an EPP that would train our employees to handle extraordinary situations such as: heart attack, unexpected birth, seizure, serious accident, earthquake or the one we all fear the most – a person with a gun.

The issue of emergency planning has not gone unnoticed. According to the Department of Education's Web site, "On Nov. 27, 2007, the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools convened the Expert Panel on Emergency Management in Higher Education in Washington, D.C. The purpose of the panel was to discuss current resources and tools in the field of emergency management for colleges and universities, and other materials that may be needed." The expert panel developed an action guide as one of its key products that can be found at www.ed.gov.

While state regulatory bodies and accrediting agencies do not require it as a component of the accreditation process, schools should view an EPP as a central component of a comprehensive risk-management program. We have an ethical and moral commitment to ensure the safety and general welfare of those on our campuses, but with no laws forcing

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Have a compliance question? E-mail yours to editor@beautyschools.org.



and then there's compliance

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schools to provide specific policies, procedures and strategies to maintain a safe campus, it's likely many will be left ill-equipped to manage a crisis situation. Any school seriously committed to providing a high standard of educational excellence should be serious about school safety and be willing to devote time and effort into the creation of a suitable EPP for the sake of its students.

Enjoy the benefits of knowing that you are taking action to protect your

employees, your students and your business!



Joanne is the founder and president of Educational Advisors Inc. With more than 30 years of experience, Joanne is an expert in the accreditation process and is a member of the AACSB Accreditation Committee. For more information, contact Joanne at 562-436-3900 or joanne@edadvisors.com. To learn more about Educational Advisors Inc., visit www.edadvisors.com.

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OK, I GOT THE MESSAGE. WHERE DO I START?

1. Assess. First, go to our Web site and download the checklist. It's basically a simple questionnaire that will tell you where you are in the process. You can also find numerous examples of EPPs on the Internet for all public schools, as well as most large colleges and universities. Use them as a template to build your own.

2. Create a Committee. Identify the right people in your school, and ask them to help. They must be willing to dedicate time to policy development and training. Choose representatives from every area and department. Don't limit the committee to managers. If possible, engage folks at every level. Remember, these will be the people that you might look to someday to save lives.

3. Communicate. This is something everyone should know about. One derivative benefit is that it really is great marketing. It states loud and clear that you care about employees and students!

4. Document, Document, Document. The mantra of compliance! As the committee meets and begins to shape the plan, every decision regarding policy must be documented, formally adopted, integrated into the schools operating plan, and then the training begins. The EPP should also be part of the Institutional Effectiveness Plan. Your accreditor will view this very positively.

5. Training. Wouldn't it be great if every employee knew basic first-aid, CPR and could confidently handle an emergency? Guess what? They can! After the EPP is complete, you can make this part of your school's in-service requirement. The training can be spread out over the year and can be delivered through live session and through digital format, such as webinars and videos.