



# Safety Through the Lens of Social and Emotional Learning

When developing Safety Plans, conducting safety training and practicing drills, it's important to keep everyone's mental health and well-being in mind, especially when young students participate.

## Tips for Implementing Safety Plans With Young People in Mind

1. Actively engage children in safety planning and (depending on their age) in developing practice drills.
  - a. Ask age-appropriate questions. For example:
    - What might help you feel safe during an emergency?
    - Would you like to partner with a buddy during an emergency?
    - Is being in the dark scary to you? Do you think having a flashlight or a stuffed toy during an emergency would make you feel safer?
  - b. Make sure safety supplies (such as flashlights and a first aid kit) are functioning and easily accessible to staff in case of an emergency.
  - c. Use age-appropriate books and resources to help prepare young children for discussions about emergency planning. Here are a few examples:
    - <https://www.sesamestreet.org/toolkits/ready>
    - <https://www.ready.gov/kids>
    - <https://www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/disaster-safety-for-children.html>
2. Progress from planning to discussion, then practice. Easing into a drill with preparation and discussion can help reduce the possibility that students will feel worried or anxious about it.
  - a. Slow and steady wins the race. Don't be in a hurry to get a full-scale drill in place. Plan carefully and take time to make sure all students understand that having a drill doesn't mean something bad is going to happen.
  - b. Be sure that all parties are included in the safety planning process. Include staff, students, volunteers and other program participants.
3. Start with drills and scenarios for emergency events that are most common, not with events that are the least common and therefore least likely to happen.
  - a. Begin with simple exercises, like fire drills and lockdowns.
  - b. Focus on the most common types of emergencies. Scenarios that involve weather or traffic events are much more common than scenarios that involve active shooters or threatening assailants.

