



School Safety Plan & Emergency Response Procedures

Brighter Choice Charter School for Girls
BEDS CODE 010100860830

Revised and Updated
August 2024

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Introduction

Emergencies and violent incidents in our school are taken seriously and dealt with expeditiously. The School Safety Plan is responsive to the needs of our school, and the plan is specifically sensitive to the urban location of our building and the young ages of our students. The State of New York has enacted the Safe Schools Against Violence in Education (SAVE) law. Project SAVE is a comprehensive planning effort that addresses prevention, response, and recovery with respect to a variety of emergencies in each school district and its schools. The Brighter Choice Charter School for Girls (BCCS) supports the SAVE legislation and intends to facilitate the planning and implementation process using members of the school, community, law enforcement and state expertise.

General Considerations and Planning Guidelines

The BCCS School Safety Plan is developed pursuant to Commissioner's Regulation. To this end the BCCS Board of Trustees asked the principal to coordinate the plan's development using numerous stakeholders including school staff, community residents, and police agencies. The plan was presented at a parent meeting and public input was accepted. This plan is an update to one created in September, 2002. The format and terminology follow the Project SAVE Technical Assistance Chart provided by NYSED.

School Safety Team – Membership (Appendix C)

The principal of the building is designated as the primary contact. When the principal is away, the Chain of Command is followed (See Appendix B). Every adult in the school serves a duty on our overall school safety, but the team consists of those on the Chain of Command, School Safety Officers, Assistant Principal, Parent Coordinator, and select staff members. Our students are all less than 11 years old, so they are participants in our plan, but not co-authors.

Expected Behaviors during an Emergency

Action steps reflected in the School Safety Plan will guide our behavior. The initial response to the emergency will be a gathering of information by the Principal in conjunction with members of the chain of command for coordination of effort. Those NOT in the direct chain of command have a role of supervising children, in whatever the emergency. Local, County and State Police agencies as well as Fire and Emergency Medical services will be called on to supplement efforts when needed.

The principal is identified as the person-in-charge and is expected to remain at the determined command site, the school's main office at 250 Central Avenue, Albany, NY. All communication is to be coordinated through the principal's office via the school's main number of (518) 694-4100.

Plan Review and Public Comment

The updated safety plan has been approved by a School Board of Trustees subcommittee comprised of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman who recommended it for adoption at the

February 2009 Board meeting. Copies of all plans will be resubmitted to the New York State Education Department as well as to the appropriate police authorities by mid-February 2009.

Each year, the Safety Team will meet prior to September 1, to discuss the emergency response procedures. The team will and has worked with local law enforcement officials to utilize available resources and expertise to practice and plan for an emergency. As appropriate, an assessment of the time and feasibility of such responses will be made to determine strengths and weaknesses of the existing procedures.

The plan will be updated as needed. It is considered a 'living document' that will be modified based on the latest research, prudent safety steps and the needs of the school, its students and staff. The plan is designed to ensure integration and coordination with emergency planning at local, county and state level.

While it is not always possible to have immediate outside assistance during serious emergency situations affecting BCCSG, it is necessary for the school to plan for and be able to carry out immediate responses during the incipient stage of an emergency. Further, the school is to be prepared to effectively coordinate resources with the larger community in the event of a widespread emergency.

School Safety Response Plan

The prime motivation of this plan is to provide a safe environment for our students and staff. Since a crisis is by nature unpredictable, this plan is designed as a blend of common sense, best judgment and swift (achievable) action steps to protect students and staff. It will be reviewed and modified as appropriate. Although the plan considers specific emergency situations (such as bomb threats, intruder on campus, hazardous material spill, or fire) others are entirely possible. It is intended that the action steps found within can be quickly and logically pressed into service in other situations or conditions.

Instead of numeric codes for problems in a specific classroom, teachers have telephones to call the main office if such a problem were to occur. These calls would take place if a student or teacher lost control of his/her capacities.

The school floor plans will be provided to local authorities in emergency and copies are kept on file in the school and made available by the school's operations/finance manager. See Appendix D.

1) Risk Reduction/Prevention and Intervention Components

- a) Prevention and Intervention Strategies
 - i) The Dean of Students is a full-time employee who runs a discipline room for students who need a timeout. The focus of this room is to cease instruction while a student may need a break from the regular classroom because of an outburst, trouble at home or other issues making it difficult for a student to participate appropriately. The teacher provides mentoring in appropriate behavior, counseling, and discipline.
 - ii) Core Values are addressed weekly through character education, and during monthly assemblies. Core values, such as Sisterhood or Citizenship, are identified and introduced throughout the year.
 - iii) Character Education is taught to all students by teachers. Some of the concepts covered are emotional intelligence, bullying, and non-violent conflict resolution. Character Education is also taught by all adults in the building on a day-to-day basis by example.
 - iv) Students are encouraged to approach any staff member in the building whenever they have a concern, especially when it involves violence or an emergency.
 - v) DASA protocols include a Safe Box for anonymous comments and concerns.

2) Training, Drills and Exercises

- a) Annual Multi-Hazard Safety Training - In order to implement this plan effectively, faculty and staff will receive appropriate training in emergency procedures. Violence Prevention and Child Abuse.
- b) Test Components of the Emergency Response Plan - The Safety Team will conduct building wide drills annually, including fire, general evacuation and lockdown. Following the drills, there will be a debriefing session with involved staff, perhaps local law enforcement agents, and local emergency response agents to assess and where needed, improve response measures and communications. BCCSG will periodically conduct a test of the Safety Response plan for sheltering or early dismissal. Transportation and communication procedures shall be included in the test. Staff and students will receive information and instruction prior to and after the test to increase understanding and decrease anxiety.
- c) Hall Monitors/Personnel Acting in a School Security Capacity – There are no hired “security guards” at BCCSG. However, the Behavior Intervention Team is constantly policing the halls at times when the discipline room is empty. All visitors must ring a doorbell to gain entrance to the building. The school office manager controls the front door. Fingerprinting and background checks have been done for all staff upon hiring.

3) Implementation of School Security

- a) School Building Security – The building has twenty video cameras that are constantly surveying the property. All video can be replayed at any time using the Digital Video Recorder that the cameras feed. The chain of command responds when appropriate.

4) Vital Educational Agency Information – Appendix A

5) Early Detection of Potentially Violent Behaviors

- a) Annual Training – DASA, Violence Prevention, and Child Abuse will be offered to all school staff. Additional staff development may be offered based on availability as needed.

6) Identification of Community Sites with Potential for Emergencies

- a) BCCS - All hazardous material is locked in one janitorial closet.
- b) Empire State Plaza and surrounding NYS buildings
- c) Routes 90, 787, and 87
- d) Albany International Airport
- e) Crossgates Mall, Colonie Center

7) Response – Notification and Activation

- a) Law Enforcement in Violent Incident - Law enforcement officials will be notified via 911 by the principal or any member of the Safety Team when deemed appropriate.
 - i) City of Albany Police, Albany Fire Dept, & NYS Troopers
911
- b) Informing All Educational Agencies - At the initiation of the threatening event, the principal or designee activates the plan and notify the Safety Team as described. Notifications to various police, fire and emergency/safety organizations will generally be made by the finance manager.
 - i) Methods of communication within our building can include, but not limited to personal contact, intercom, telephone, 2-way radio, email, or cell phone.
 - ii) Messages regarding early dismissal, sheltering in place or evacuation of a school will be sent to the broadcast media through the principal's office. The media will be notified by internet and/or any other available means.
 - iii) Depending on the seriousness of the emergency, the Mayor or Police Chief will be contacted as soon as feasible regarding any of these actions.
 - iv) Principal or his/her designee will issue all internal and external communications, prepare news releases, and brief the media as appropriate. No employee should provide information to the media during or after an emergency unless specifically authorized to do so.
 - v) Media will be given information regarding injuries or deaths in a timely fashion and when appropriate through the Principal's Office or Brighter Choice Board of Trustees.
- c) Contacting Parents, Guardians and Persons in Parental Relations – In the event of an emergency, parents and guardians will be called by the supervising teacher. Additionally, the Operations Manager closes or delays school via www.schoolclosingsnetwork.com.
- d) Notifications – Treatment for Injury
 - i) It is the responsibility of the school nurse to notify the parent of any medical treatment or serious injury. However, in cases of multiple emergencies where the school nurse's first duty must be to provide assistance to students, the principal shall delegate the notification responsibility to another staff member or shall provide the notification.

8) Situational Responses - Identification of Potential Emergencies

- a) Natural Disasters - Analysis of common weather patterns that the highest likelihood of a natural disaster would be from a sudden winter storm. Severe thunderstorms with high winds have also been known to sometimes cause significant damage in our area. There is little perceived likelihood of damage from earthquake, hurricanes and flooding to the school although such events in the surrounding community could impact the school as a 'safe harbor' for the community.
- b) Man-made Disasters - BCCSG has identified building-specific man-made disasters. Possible man-made disasters could include, but are not limited to plane crashes, toxic releases from highway accidents and chemical/hazardous material spills.
- c) School Disasters - Acts of violence, terrorism, fire, explosion, water line breaks, or toxic substance release could occur in our school. Therefore, procedures for handling these types of emergencies are included in the plan.

9) Identification of Responses to Emergencies

- a) Emergency School Closing - School is closed or delayed in opening only when the weather or other emergency makes it impossible or unsafe to hold school. If it is necessary to close or delay schools, parents, students and staff will be notified in the early morning on area radio and television stations. (The Operations Manager closes school via www.schoolclosingsnetwork.com)
- b) Early Dismissal - Due to the fact that drivers are not readily available during the day, early bus dismissal is an option only in the most unusual circumstances. The parent coordinator and Operations Manager, in consultation with the Supervisor of Transportation of Albany City Schools, will determine if dismissal of schools is an option. The fact that our school cannot transport students home early is a function of our charter school relying on transportation from the surrounding school district and not owning its own buses. We can close school early but it would require that parents retrieve their children or the bus company be available to transport.
 - (a) Early dismissal should be used only if it is likely that all students will reach their homes safely. If a community-wide disaster is impending, it may be preferable to evacuate the students to a safe location where parents can pick them up. These locations could include a neighboring school, local churches, or SUNY Albany's downtown campus.
- c) Evacuation - It is appropriate to evacuate a school building in the event of fire, explosion, some toxic chemical releases, earthquakes, some violent acts, or when ordered by law enforcement officers because of dangerous activity in the area.
 - i) The signal to evacuate the buildings shall be the regular intercom announcement tone followed by the Principal or designee declaring "Code Purple". "Code Purple" means that the same evacuation procedures as a fire drill be followed. Additional verbal instructions may also be given.
 - ii) If an evacuation is ordered, all groups will evacuate the building as quickly as possible after all evacuation routes have been secured. Normal fire evacuation routes shall be used unless teachers are instructed otherwise.

- iii) Teachers will be required to bring their class lists with them and take attendance of their students at the designated assembly at least 75 feet away from the building. They will immediately notify the principal of any missing students.
 - iv) No one is to re-enter the building until an appropriate authority gives an all clear.
- d) Evacuating to Another Site - Depending on the scope of the emergency and the projections of likely safe areas, designated gathering points for evacuated students and staff will be used. The principals will receive information as to the appropriate evacuation location and the (secured) route to get there.
- e) Shelter in Place - Certain emergencies in the community may make it advisable for students and staff to remain in school beyond the end of the normal school day.
 - i) Students will normally remain in their classrooms, but groups may be taken to such places as the gymnasium and/or cafeteria. In the case of high winds and tornadoes, these areas must not be used, and students should be prepared to move into the hallways.
 - ii) In case of such emergency, the principal shall give directions over the public address system.
 - iii) Teachers moving students from their classrooms must take their class lists, go-bags, and accompany their children to the designated area. Staff will stay with the students until formally relieved of their duties by their supervisor.
- f) Shelter (Community) - When the building may need to be used as a community disaster shelter site, or when students from another school are evacuated to that site, the principal or designee will staff the Command Post to coordinate activities and assist in communication.
 - i) The team will tour the portion of the building to be used prior to occupancy to assess condition and inventory equipment present. The manager of the cafeteria will be called in to supervise the use of the kitchen facilities. In the manager's absence, the staff most familiar with the kitchen will be assigned this duty. Members of the maintenance or custodial staff familiar with the building will be assigned to assist in assuring appropriate maintenance of the facility.

10) Types of Potential Emergencies

- a) Aircraft Crash
- b) Air Raid/Emergency Procedures
- c) Armed Person, Hostage or Terrorist Activities
- d) Bomb Threats
- e) Bus Accident
- f) Chemical Accident
- g) Civil Disobedience; Student Disorder
- h) Explosion/Fire
- i) Flash Flood
- j) Flood
- k) Food Poisoning or Other Mass Illnesses
- l) Hazardous Material Spill Off School Premises
- m) Injury at Athletic Event
- n) Radiological Emergency
- o) Receipt of Suspicious Letter/Package
- p) Bio-terrorist threat
- q) Tornado, Severe Windstorm, Thunderstorm
- r) Utility Failure
- s) Winter Snow/Ice Storm

11) Responses to Intruder or Other Building Emergency Situation

- a) Main office will be made aware of an emergency or stranger in the building or on campus. The administrator in charge will investigate the situation and determine the extent of the threat.
- b) If deemed appropriate, the administrator in charge will signal staff, through the use of the intercom system to lockdown (Code Red x3) the building.
- c) Halls and bathrooms are to be cleared of students.
- d) Students in the cafeteria, gym, auditorium, and other non-classroom areas or outside should remain where they are, with the adult(s) in charge.
- e) Classroom staff should
 - i) Lock and close their doors with classroom keys
 - ii) Keep students away from windows and doors
 - iii) Maintain absolute silence
- f) Cafeteria staff will usher scholars into kitchen and follow steps in 11(e).
- g) The school office contact is responsible to call the authorities for assistance via 911.

12) Responses to Acts of Violence: Implied or Direct Threats- e.g. Bomb Threats, Threats of Violence

- a) The receiver of the threat should attempt to get all information possible from the caller/suspect.
- b) Receiver of the threat notifies the principal of the building or designee who in turn notifies the chain of command. In the absence of the principal, the chain of command will be utilized. The principal will remain in the office to receive further directions. The principal's office will be designated as the Command Center.
- c) The principal or school safety officer will have building room maps, locker assignments, spare room keys and all other security materials. The principal or finance manager will initiate (with available staff) a visual search of the hallways of the building for any unusual object. Nothing should be touched. If something out-of-the-norm is found, the staff member will directly report it to the principal. Once a hallway is secured, the principal will be notified by those doing the search.
- d) According to police authorities urgent evacuation is NOT normally needed.
- e) Evacuation sites can include gymnasiums, auditoriums, another building, city streets, athletic fields or buses. An external evacuation site and routes to it must be secured before anyone is to move to the area. This mirrors our fire drill procedure of street evacuation. We do not have the luxury of bus garages or fields, as we are an urban location.
- f) If and once the evacuation is authorized the custodian and principal will lock all doors to the threatened building. No public access will be allowed.
- g) Once all sites have been secured, the principal will be notified when to begin the evacuation of the building.
 - i) Either the fire alarm will sound or, through the intercom, the principal or designee will announce the evacuation "Code Purple" three times.
 - ii) Staff should take attendance information and leave the door closed, yet unlocked. Students should take with them only those possessions that they brought to class.
 - iii) No student is allowed to leave to go to a locker.
 - iv) Staff should move students to the evacuation site and remain there for further instructions, as they would in a fire drill.
 - v) Chain of command staff will assist police in a room-by-room search. The principal should remain in the main office to receive information.
 - vi) Public communication about a bomb threat will come from the principal (or designee) as soon as possible after the conclusion of the incident.
 - (1) A letter will be sent home (and mailed later) with the students to explain the event.
 - (2) The staff will receive an email of this letter and, if appropriate, information gained during the threat. Some information may not be divulged due the needs of the law enforcement agencies and their pending investigation.
 - (3) Any information sought by the media will be directed to and given out through the principal (or designee).

- vii) The State Education Department will be notified of the bomb threat.

13) Hazardous Chemical/Substance Spill

- a) The principal (or other designee) notifies the chain of command of the situation.
- b) If warranted, the decision to evacuate the building will be done so by sounding the fire alarm or calling “Code Purple”. Both actions have the same effect. Before an evacuation is conducted, all routes out of the building must be determined to be safe and away from the spill area.
- c) The local Fire Department and New York State DEC will be immediately notified if deemed a problem beyond the reach and expertise of Safety Team.

14) Fire

- a) The school has fire drill procedures posted in every room, and drills are tested and practiced 8 times annually. Fire drills are standard evacuations that will also resemble “Code Purple”, known as external evacuation. In almost all instances, fire alarms will sound, as a recognized symbol necessitating evacuation.
- b) All staff members are involved in assisting children out of building and to designated stations on surrounding Albany streets. Emergency response staff helps secure the building and leave last. The goal of the school is to evacuate in less than 2 ½ minutes.

15) Acts of Violence - Zero Tolerance Policy for School Violence

- a) Principal or designee will be alerted immediately to react to the following situations. Chain of Command will be followed.
 - i) Students shall receive a minimum of a three day suspension for any violent behavior and will participate in a meeting with their parent and the principal to outline appropriate behavior.
 - ii) Disciplinary actions will be followed in accordance with the articles of the Brighter Choice Charter Schools Parent Handbook and related provisions found under the Education Law, Regulations of the Commissioner of Education and local laws.
 - iii) Visitors participating in any violent acts on school grounds will have the appropriate authorities called to respond (police, Children and Family Services). All visitors are bound by the Board of Education policies as outlined in the School Code of Conduct. Law enforcement agencies will be notified and criminal charges applied when necessary. Law enforcement regulations will determine the consequences of the incident.
 - iv) Child Abuse reporting procedures will be followed for all acts of violence committed against students learned to have occurred in or outside of school.

16) Response Protocols

- a) Chain of Command will be used in response to all emergencies.
- b) Incident Commander will ultimately make decisions based on input from team.
- c) Incident Commander will determine how best to disseminate information using a variety of means including the school website, telephone, mail, local media, and <http://www.schoolclosingsnetwork.com>. Refer to specific emergency plans.

17) Arrangements for Obtaining Emergency Assistance from Local Government

- a) Incident Commander will determine what outside agencies to contact given the situation. In emergency situations, 911 will be called and police and/or fire departments will dispatch.
- b) Any adult in the building can call 911 in the event that a person needs immediate medical attention and their condition may be life threatening.

18) Procedures for Obtaining Advice and Assistance from Local Government Officials

- a) The members of the chain of command will meet with city offices to review plans and seek assistance with appropriate procedures. A list shall be maintained of all copyholders of the plan. The plan shall be evaluated and modified as needed after each use. The plan shall be re-published to all those in need whenever appropriate.
- b) Incident Commander calls 911.
- c) Incident Commander provides 911 with location, type of emergency, that it is a school and children are involved, etc...
- d) Local Agencies respond and take lead.
- e) Post-incident response may include the following:
 - i) Red Cross
 - ii) United Way
 - iii) Mental Health professionals
 - iv) Neighboring district psychologists and social work personnel

19) School Resources Available for Use in an Emergency

- a) On a daily basis, there are eight buses to transport students. They are present in the morning at opening and at dismissal. They are a fleet of leased buses from a vendor and not the property of the school. Therefore, they are not at the school's disposal during the day. Any evacuation needs to be on foot at designated evacuation spots.
- b) All rooms in building are equipped with a computer and telephone. Limited medical supplies are available in the nurse's office. The main office has a fax machine.
- c) Depending on need, and the scope of the emergency, additional help may be sought from neighboring schools: Brighter Choice Charter School for Girls, Henry Johnson charter School, Albany City Schools.
- d) Depending on need and the scope of the emergency, additional help may be sought from the following sources:
 - i) Albany Fire Department
 - ii) Emergency Medical Services
 - iii) Albany Police Department
 - iv) Albany County Sheriff's Department
 - v) New York State Police

20) Procedures to Coordinate the Use of School Resources and Manpower During and Emergency

- a) Upon receiving notice of an emergency in which the health and safety of students or staff is at risk, the principal or designee will implement emergency response procedures. This person is responsible for contacting the appropriate staff and coordinating the general response. Individual members of the Safety Team are responsible to contact various other including community emergency service agencies.
- b) Members of the Safety Team shall report to or maintain verbal contact with the Command Center. The Command Center is located in the principal's office or other suitable location if that office is unavailable. In the case of an emergency that involves the use of fire or police resources, the team will yield command to the appropriate emergency authority, and shall work cooperatively with the on-site commander to ensure optimal response.
- c) Evening and Weekend Emergencies - In the case of an emergency when an event is being held at the school, the responsible staff person shall immediately notify the contact the principal to determine the need to initiate the Emergency Response process.

21) Protective Action Options

- a) In the event of an emergency, the principal and members of the Safety Team will be gathered for problem identification and information sharing. The principal will determine the next steps of the plan to be implemented and will act in the perceived best interest to protect students and staff.
- b) In order to ensure timely response, the principal or designee may declare a school emergency, implementing the response procedures set forth by this document. As soon as feasible, the Emergency Command Center (principal's office) will be placed in service, and the Chain of Command will report to this site or contact it through phone or two-way radio. The principal or designee will remain in charge of all school activities until the conclusion of the emergency or until civil emergency authorities possibly take command of the situation.
 - i) Take control once notified of the emergency.
 - ii) Make decisions regarding the appropriate emergency response.
 - iii) Order evacuation as needed.
 - iv) Notify appropriate agencies for assistance.
 - v) Turn over control to appropriate outside agencies as required by law.
 - vi) Perform testing of the Emergency Response Procedures on an annual basis.
 - vii) Meet with local government and emergency service officials to develop procedures for advice and assistance to situations that exceed the expertise and/or resources of the school.

22) Recovery

- a) After any emergency which has resulted in the serious injury, death or emotional trauma of a student or staff member, the entire staff will be used to help with post trauma counseling. Planning and establishing the debriefing sessions will be the responsibility of the Principal and members of his/her immediate staff. Needed and appropriate alterations in the safety plans will be implemented based upon the debriefing sessions.
- b) For critical situations that require the utilization of community mental health resources, the chain of command will be responsible for contacting the appropriate county mental health agency for assistance, guidance and trained personnel, as needed.

23) Post Emergency Report and Assessment

- a) The Principal will meet to assess the emergency responses and the effectiveness of the plan. The plan shall be modified as necessary based on the evaluation. The Principal and the members of the chain of command will complete all necessary reports to local and state officials.

Appendix A: Fact Sheet

Brighter Choice Charter School for Girls

Name of School: Brighter Choice Charter School for Girls

Address of School: 250 Central Avenue
Albany, New York 12206

Telephone: 518 694-4100

Fax: 518 694-4123

Contact: Kristina Ford, Principal
kford@brighterchoice.org
Cell phone # (518) 410-0656

First Designee: Meaghan Balling, Assistant Principal
mballing@brighterchoice.org
Cell phone # (518) 469-7187

2020-21 Population: 323 Total Students

Total Classrooms: 14

Number of Staff: 37

Transportation Needs: Supplied by Durham School Services and First Student. Five full size buses needed in the event of a full school evacuation.

Law Enforcement Agencies:

- Albany Police Department – 911
- Albany County Sheriff's Department – 911
- NY State Police - 911

Fire and Rescue Agency:

- Albany Fire Department – 911

Special needs for students or staff when evacuating the building

- NONE

Appendix B: Chain of Command

Brighter Choice Charter School for Girls

Staff Member	Title	Designee	Telephone
Kristina Ford	Principal	Meaghan Balling	(518) 694-4100 ext. 4106
Meaghan Balling	Assistant Principal	Lukasz Licygiewicz	(518) 694-4100 ext.4109
Lukasz Licygiewicz	Director of Operations	Melissa Lewis	(518) 694-4100 ext. 4102
Melissa Lewis	Instructional Coach		(518) 694-4100 ext. 4102

Note: It is the responsibility of each member of the chain of command to ensure their designee is familiar with this plan and capable of performing effectively in a crisis.

Appendix C: School Safety Team
Brighter Choice Charter School for Girls

Staff Member	Title	Telephone
Kristina Ford	Principal	(518) 694-4100 ext. 4106
Meaghan Balling	Assistant Principal	(518) 694-4100 ext.4109
Lukasz Licygiewicz	Operations Manager	(518) 694-4100 ext. 8201
Lauren Javarone	School Counselor	(518) 694-4100 ext. 4104
Nyishia Frazier	Parent Coordinator	(518) 694-4100 ext. 4103
Lauren Mills	Dean of Students	(518) 694-4100 ext. 4139
Jovette Young	Office Manager	(518) 694-4100 ext. 4100
Nurse Azimi	Nurse	(518) 694-4100 ext. 4107