A Guide to Establishing School Safety Teams

This resource should be used by schools as a guide to develop School Safety Teams (SSTs). This guide was developed with the support of school leaders and builds on promising practices that currently exist within the District and also offers advice on available resources for safety teams.

Part I: Establishing a School Safety Team

All schools should establish school safety teams, regardless of their size or grade level.

Who to Include: In smaller schools with limited staff, school safety teams may only consist of 2-3 individuals that connect and loop in support staff as appropriate. In larger schools, school safety teams may go beyond senior leadership staff and include direct service providers and department leads. Regardless of staff size, a safety team leader and a point of contact that engages and connects with agencies and community-based organizations should sit on the school safety team. Consider adding staff members to the team who are able to prioritize safety concerns as incidents occur and, in some instances, team members may serve in multiple capacities.

Below are examples of roles that could satisfy each area of responsibility of the SST.

School Safety Team Areas of Responsibility	Possible School Based Candidates to Cover These Responsibilities
School Safety Leader (Safety Lead) to convene team and monitor work	Director/Manager of Strategy and Logistics Chief Operating Officer/ Operations Lead Head of School Principal Assistant Principal
Safety POC to engage with external agencies, organizations and community stakeholders	Principal Assistant Principal Head of School Executive Director
Discipline Lead to support with behavior management	Assistant Principal Dean of Students Restorative Justice Coordinator Behavioral Technician
Socio-Emotional Learning Lead (SEL Lead) to support mental health needs and positive youth development	Social Worker Culture and Climate Leads Restorative Justice Coordinator School Counselor
Facility Lead to support building security and monitor access	Campus Security/Guards Safe Passage Ambassadors

Recommended School Safety Team Configurations Based on School Profile

School Example A

Safety Profile:
impacted by trauma exposure and family needs, mild student conflict

Safety Team Members:
Safety Lead
Safety POC

Meeting Frequency:
1x weekly, 45 minutes

School Example B

Safety Profile:
impacted by neighborhood crime and drug use, limited student conflict

Safety Team Members:
Safety Lead
Safety POC
Facilities Lead

Meeting Frequency:
Daily, 15 minutes

School Example C

Safety Profile:
impacted by community violence, mild student-based conflict

Safety Team Members:
Safety Lead
Safety POC
Discipline Lead
Social-Emotional Lead

Meeting Frequency:
3x weekly, 30 minutes

School Example D

Safety Profile:
impacted by neighborhood/crew-based conflict, trauma exposure/ juvenile justice involvement

Safety Team Members:
Safety Lead
Safety POC
Discipline Lead
Social-Emotional Lead
Facilities Lead

Meeting Frequency:
Daily, 15 minutes

Part II: Team Responsibilities

How should the team work together?

SST members need to be in communication with each other early and often. It is recommended that SSTs meet, at a minimum, weekly. In some cases, school teams may need to meet daily given additional factors like school size, staff capacity, frequency of incidents and volatility. Meeting agendas should cover routine topics like incident data, mediation outcomes, parent/family communication, incident response plans and re-entry meetings. SSTs should also try to include community-based providers like Safe Passage teams when possible. School teams should share additional context with external partnership teams and update them on changes or shifts in student needs. On Page 2 are examples of existing SST configurations within existing schools.

On what areas should the team focus?

Develop School-wide Plans and Preventative Strategies

1. Develop the school's emergency response plan and meet CORE DC requirements, including drills and other emergency preparedness protocols and practices. Plans are uploaded here, into CORE DC.
2. Develop prevention strategies, both whole school and student-specific, focusing on reducing the likelihood of an incident. These prevention strategies should enable the whole safety team to anticipate, prevent and de-escalate potential conflicts. Review the National Crime Prevention Councils toolkit here.
3. Develop a framework and system for developing and implementing student-based or incident-based safety plans. Consider these resources from the National Institute of Justice.

Support the Development of a Positive School Culture

1. Through professional development, build staff capacity around positive school-wide culture and climate that establish norms and common language. This may include support for staff looking to improve rapport with students.
2. Manage and engage regularly with all community-based partnerships that provide programming meant to support student and family wellbeing supporting the school community (e.g., Safe Passage).

Review and Respond to Incidents

1. Plan and respond to instructional interruptions due to student dissatisfaction, emotional needs, conflicts with teachers or challenges at home. This can include but is not limited to students with recent/extended absences due to safety or wellbeing challenges, school climate following the return from extended school holidays, or re-entry after recent suspension or juvenile justice involvement.
2. Review student-based conflicts with names and neighborhood or crew affiliations (if applicable). For best practices, review the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Preventions resource.
3. Provide updates on ongoing group conflicts and interpersonal relationships between students known to have conflict.
4. Debrief recent mediation sessions, or newly developed behavioral plans.

Part III: Common Situations

Schools across the District face similar concerns and challenges. The following tables are meant to support teams in determining possible solution pathways for common situations. These action steps and potential resolutions may vary but will provide an initial plan for addressing the concern.

Situation Category	Scenario	SST Action Steps	Potential Resolution
Emergency Response: Immediate Action	Fear of a possible/imminent shooting as a result of student conflict (weapons may have been recovered, there may be threats or neighborhood affiliations)	1. **Safety POC** contacts 911 to notify them of the incident/threat; this may result in a search and/or criminal investigation 2. **Safety POC** notifies all SST members and other relevant staff 3. **Discipline Lead** and SEL Lead engage with students connected to the incident 4. **Discipline Lead** contacts parents of all students involved to provide updates and insights on student/family needs 5. **Safety POC** connects with the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice's (DMPSJ) program lead for violence prevention and intervention resources/supports	The Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) conducts an investigation and connects with relevant partners as needed. DMPSJ's violence prevention liaison activates neighborhood based credible messengers or violence interrupters. Families engage in mediation and problem-solving to diffuse conflict.
	Conflict has occurred inside a school and school leaders want to ensure it doesn't re-ignite or escalate in the community	1. **Safety POC** flags support needed at dismissal to MPD and Metro-Transit Police Department (MTPD) to request increased presence at local metro station or bus stop or upcoming school-related event, flags DMPSJ's violence prevention liaison 2. **Discipline Lead** responds to fight to prevent harm and stabilize students, 3. **Safety Lead** determines accountability measures	Washington Metropolitan Transit Authority (WMATA) staffs relevant metro and bus stations with additional security. DMPSJ's violence prevention liaison activates neighborhood based credible messengers or violence interrupters. Families engage in mediation and problem-solving to diffuse conflict.

Situation Category	Scenario	SST Action Steps	Potential Resolution
		4. **SEL Lead** supports reflection, prevention and mental health needs	
Safe Passage	Students' commutes present dangers and Safe Passage support is needed	1. **Whole team** creates a dismissal plan that includes staff placement, staggered arrival and dismissal or utilizing multiple entryways/exits to minimize disruptions. 2. **Safety POC** contacts relevant public safety partners, including: Safe Passage team, District Commander, MPD 1pm Line, WMATA Resources, and DDOT to complete a safety assessment to determine the need for a crossing guard, traffic control or other resources.	Based on need and assessments, school may be allocated crossing guards or temporary Safe Passage support from MPD as available.
	There are concerns about existing Safe Passage service provisions and better coordination is needed	1. **Safety POC** discusses concerns with SST members, determining areas of improvement and concerns 2. **Safety POC** convenes Safe Passage Partner meeting to improve partnership 3. **Safety POC** contacts Safe Passage Program Advisor 4. **Safety POC** contacts MPD's School Safety Division or MPD's 1pm call or the Watch Commander's request line	Community-based organizations providing Safe Passage services meet and work through challenges with school team. They create a plan for their partnership with points of contact and set times to meet as a team.
Preventative Supports	Conflict is occurring outside of schools; school leaders want to ensure it doesn't escalate during the school day or after	1. SST Team member with intel about the issue informs **Discipline, SEL and Facility Leads** about brewing conflict so they can implement de-escalation and prevention strategies.	DMPSJ's violence prevention liaison may deploy credible messengers or violence interrupters as needed. MPD may provide additional Safe Passage support as available.

Situation Category	Scenario	SST Action Steps	Potential Resolution
		2. **Safety POC** connects with DMPSJ's program lead for violence prevention and intervention resources/supports 3. **Safety POC** (if relevant) may connect with MPD regarding any ongoing investigations/follow up	
Intervention Tools/Crisis Response	A student from the school community has been shot	1. **Safety POC** sends notification(s) to whole team and submits requests for support for the victim (and, as relevant, the initiator) upon return to school. This may include a return to school plan inclusive of mental and physical health support, increased family outreach, academic support, etc. 2. **SEL Lead** may provide support to students connected to the incident 3. **Discipline Lead** makes contact to include the family in re-entry planning and identify any family or student needs 4. **Safety POC** may support MPD with inquiry/ investigation	Local officials will communicate with the school leader to provide notification of the incident. Upon request, Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) may deploy trauma support services for the students and staff. MPD may make contact as a part of their investigation.
Staff Capacity Building/Comprehensive Support	Several school staff members are struggling to build rapport and trusting relationship with students	1. **School Safety Lead** or **School Safety POC** can connect with the Office of the State Superintendent of Education's (OSSE) Restorative Justice Professional Development team 2. **School Safety Lead** or **School Safety POC** can connect with Office of Out of School Time Program's Youth Development Institute.	School receives tailored technical support and training from OSSE and OST.

Situation Category	Scenario	SST Action Steps	Potential Resolution
	The SST is struggling to strategize how to manage an ongoing to complication issue	1. **School Safety Lead** or **School Safety POC** can connect with Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education 2. **School Safety Lead** or **School Safety POC** can connect with DMPSJ's violence prevention lead.	The Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education will provide technical assistance and thought partnership. DMPSJ will support the school in identifying additional resources or support available.

As you use these resources, please reach out to Hillary Desir (hillary.desir@dc.gov, 202-427-2209) with any feedback, questions, or concerns.