

State-Level Partnerships for School Safety

READINESS AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT FOR SCHOOLS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTER

State education agencies (SEAs) and their state partners serve critical roles in helping schools and school districts create and revise high-quality school emergency operations plans (EOPs) that protect the whole school community *before, during, and after* possible emergencies. These state-level entities also help schools and school districts prevent, mitigate the effects of, protect school communities from, respond to, and recover effectively from emergency events. This work is most effectively done in collaboration with each other and through the creation of statewide systems that facilitate information-sharing, serve as a central repository, disseminate relevant information, deliver technical assistance and training, and provide responsive assistance following emergency events, among other activities.

With this spirit of cooperation and collaboration in mind, this document contains examples of state-level partnerships for providing training and technical assistance to local education agencies (LEAs) in the development and implementation of high-quality EOPs. SEAs may use this document to learn about potential entities with which they may partner, as well as considerations for establishing formal and informal partnerships. The goal of this document is to help SEAs create new relationships as well as improve and strengthen existing relationships for school safety.

Potential Entities

With the goal of developing statewide partnerships pertaining to training, technical assistance, grant cooperation, cognizance of statewide threats and hazards, and other related initiatives, there are many benefits to SEAs working with state agencies and other groups serving LEAs. Recently in one state, the SEA and the state's public safety agency were both independently conducting site assessments for LEAs. Many of the recommendations for improvement provided by the SEA and other state agency did not align with one another and produced conflicting results. This type of situation highlights the importance

of SEA partnerships with other state agencies to work together for a common and consistent purpose.

A few high-level benefits might include

- Developing or improving relationships between SEAs and other state agencies.
- Cooperating on grant opportunities to strengthen the potential proposals.
- Sharing of personnel, expertise, and other limited state resources for joint initiatives.
- Reducing conflicting missions and communication to LEAs.
- Being recognized by state agency heads (and possibly the Governor) for successful state partnerships that demonstrate fiscal savings and resource sharing.

Each state may have different state resources, and the specific names of agencies or departments may vary; however, there is an opportunity for each SEA to partner with several state agencies or other groups that serve LEAs in their state. Examples of state agencies and other organizations that may be potential partners for SEAs include

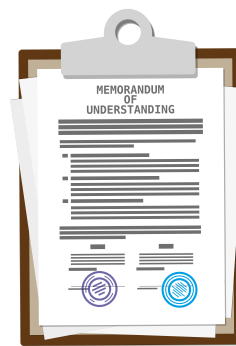
- State school safety center (if not affiliated with the SEA)
- State emergency management agency
- State public safety department
- State homeland security department
- State fusion center
- State public health agency
- State health agency
- State mental/behavioral health agency
- State human, family, or youth services agency
- State law enforcement agency
- State justice or criminal justice agencies
- Governor's office
- State attorney general's office
- State fire marshal's office
- State geological survey agency
- State victim services agency
- State emergency medical services agency
- State food distribution agency
- State institutions of higher education (2-year and 4-year)
- Regional education agencies
- Professional educator, administrator, and other school-related state associations
- Professional school resource officer (SRO), school nurse, and school psychologist state associations
- Hospital associations and state trauma commissions

Did You Know?

State agencies and other groups that serve LEAs who form partnerships for Federal grant opportunities may strengthen their proposal by demonstrating cooperation from several agencies or groups within their state.

Formal Partnerships

In some states, several state agencies in addition to the SEA may be providing school safety, security, and/or emergency management services to LEAs. If some of these services to the LEAs are duplicative in nature then it may create confusion, particularly if the services, recommendations, or training programs are not consistent with one another. For example, if the state's public safety agency is providing active shooter response training to LEAs with a different set of response options that are not congruent with other state agencies who may be providing the same active shooter response training to LEAs, this would likely create confusion for the LEAs. In this circumstance, having a formal agreement between the participating state agencies providing the active shooter response training to LEAs that outlines specific training requirements and a response protocol would create more consistency in training and reduce confusion for the participating LEAs.



State agencies and other groups often utilize memoranda of understanding (MOUs) or different types of formal agreements, such as memoranda of agreements, state laws, and contracts, to establish their partnerships. These documents should outline the specific roles and responsibilities of each participating state agency.

MOUs could be used to outline the specific school safety services to be provided by each state agency serving LEAs, or the agreement could highlight the specific responsibilities of state agencies that may be involved in a state's threat reporting tip line program. Furthermore, this type of agreement may be beneficial in certain circumstances as it may demonstrate a longer-term commitment for the parties involved in the MOU. Other examples of state partnerships where MOUs, contracts, or other formal agreements might be beneficial could include

- Outlining specific state agency roles and responsibilities for the state's school safety program.
- Partnering to sponsor school safety-related state legislation.

- Forming a statewide school safety training program for LEAs (e.g., school safety liaison).
- Developing a statewide school security certification program (e.g., SRO or school security officer).
- Collaborating to pursue grant funding partnerships to benefit LEAs.
- Defining statewide tip line roles and responsibilities.
- Establishing a statewide disaster response network (LEA resource sharing) and/or specialized incident management teams to assist LEAs when a major disaster strikes (e.g., tornado, hurricane/typhoon, wildfire, mass casualty event).
- Forming comprehensive projects that may require contracts and specialized training (e.g., [STOP THE BLEED®](#) program implementation and training for all K-12 schools).



Informal Partnerships

State partnerships are not limited to formal agreements. Informal, active, working relationships are beneficial as well. For example, the SEA may wish to partner with the state’s SRO professional organization or one of the state’s educational associations to host a statewide school safety conference for LEAs. The SEA and the other participating groups can likely meet and coordinate the roles and responsibilities of each organization for the conference without signing an official agreement. An arrangement of this type is more of an active working relationship as opposed to a formalized agreement.

Also, informal agreements may provide more flexibility for the SEA and partnering organizations if one of the participating agencies’ priorities shift, funding ends, or staffing shortages occur during the collaborative project. For example, the state emergency management agency may be assisting the SEA with a regional training project. However, when a natural disaster impacts the state, emergency management personnel supporting the training may be deployed to the disaster area. The goal of the informal agreement would be to see the project or collaborative effort to its successful completion; however, external factors may impact participating partners differently, making the informal agreement the right choice.

Training opportunities for SEAs to partner with various state stakeholders and other groups may be one of the most beneficial and highly requested ways to assist LEAs. In one state, the SEA and the state police partnered on regional school safety training sessions for school bus drivers during the summer months. The state police had an existing safety mandate and good relationships with the LEA transportation contacts based on their required, annual safety checks of buses. This relationship allowed the SEA to partner with the state police to bring additional training topics to several thousand bus drivers on emergency response, conflict de-escalation, STOP THE BLEED®, and other relevant safety and emergency preparedness content.

Additional training collaborations and other potential non-training-related partnerships for SEAs, state agencies, and other groups that serve LEAs might include

- Hosting a statewide school safety conference with several state agencies and professional associations (e.g., SRO, school board, principal, superintendent, teacher, school nurse, school psychologist, school counselor, school social worker).
- Coordinating several training sessions with the regional education agencies on improving school EOPs (e.g., each LEA brings its EOP for review and consultation).

- Conducting focused training topic collaborations for a 1-day session (e.g., basic school behavioral threat assessment and management training for LEA teams).
- Developing online or video-based emergency preparedness training content for school staff who may not otherwise receive regular training (e.g., cafeteria staff, custodial staff, bus drivers, administrative/district personnel).
- Conducting state university, college, and technical college collaborations with SEAs (e.g., incorporating emergency preparedness training for new teachers as a part of their teacher preparatory coursework).
- Developing a statewide community of practice or listserv to provide LEAs the opportunity to share school safety best practices, training and grant opportunities, and other resources.
- Establishing a state agency school safety and security working group.
- Partnering with the state hospital/trauma association or state public health agency to assist with equipment distribution and training from possible grants (e.g., first aid kits, [personal protective equipment](#), automated external defibrillators, STOP THE BLEED® kits).

Conclusion

Whether you elect to have a formal or informal partnership with another state agency or other group serving LEAs in your state, your SEA will likely save time, resources, and money as a result of a partnership. In a time of competing resources, the

state agencies and groups who can demonstrate efficiencies and cost-saving measures may not only be recognized by their agency and state leaders for their achievements, but they will better serve their LEAs from a more informed, consistent, and coordinated approach. The often heard, short-sighted references like “well, we have never worked together with that agency before and have always done it this way” should remain in the past.

Resources


Further Reading – REMS TA Center

- [State Emergency Management Resources](#), Web Page
- [Enhancing Collaboration With Key Community Partners to Support Emergency Planning](#), Web Page
- [LEA School-Based Emergency Management Contact List Planning Document](#), Publication

Training Opportunities – REMS TA Center

- [Building State-Level Relationships to Support Education Agencies With Disaster Response and Recovery Planning](#), Webinar
- [REMSontheAir Series #1: A Look at State School Safety Models](#), Podcast
- [REMSontheAir Series #6: Managing Recovery Through Planning and Partnerships](#), Podcast
- [Developing and Enhancing Memoranda of Understanding \(MOUs\) With Your Community Partners](#), Specialized Training Package Module



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