

## Frequently Asked Questions and Answers About Threats to School Safety

### 1. How is the school prepared for a threat to the safety of its students?

The Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board has taken steps to ensure your child's safety while in school. The Board has developed policies and procedures. Each school has developed a school safety plan including the steps staff and students will take in the event of an emergency and a parent communication plan. Staff members and students routinely practice safety procedures.

### 2. How can I stay informed?

The school board will broadcast emergency messages, when necessary, using a variety of media. General emergency messages, including early and late school openings and closings can be found on the school board's website. Emergency messages are also transmitted to local media, including television and radio stations. Parents are encouraged to use these media sources for updates on emergency situations.

### 3. How will my child's school handle an emergency situation?

All schools have a school safety plan. The specifics of each plan have common elements, but may differ slightly based on the building and site. In general, each school has a safe schools team; develops evacuation, shelter in place, hold and secure and lockdown procedures; maintains a portable critical response kit that contains key information and supplies; designates appropriate evacuation sites; provides training to personnel and updating of the plan; maintains checklists for dealing with specific types of incidents; and provides resources for help before, during and after an event. All school plans have been reviewed and safe schools teams have received training.

### 4. How can I see the Threats to School Safety plan for my child's school?

The Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board does not release this type of specific information, pursuant to the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. This law provides specific exclusions to the type of information that can be released. Schools use a board developed template to develop their response plans.

### 5. What is lockdown?

"Lockdown" is the term used for the resulting school safety response when a **major incident or threat of school violence within the school**, or in relation to the school has occurred (e.g. an active attacker is in the building or on school property/grounds). Interior doors are locked. Exterior doors remain locked or unlocked in accordance with normal practice.

### 6. What other responses are there to threats to school safety?

- "Hold and Secure" is the term used for the resulting school safety response when there is **an ongoing threat to safety or emergency outside and not related to the school** (e.g. a crime in progress in the area, police searching for an offender in the neighbourhood). Exterior doors are locked. Interior doors

remain locked or unlocked in accordance with normal practice.

- “Shelter in Place” is the term used for the resulting school safety response when there is an **environmental or weather related situation where it is necessary to keep all the occupants within the school to protect them from external harm** (e.g. chemical spill, tornado). Exterior door are locked. Occupants do not leave the building for the duration of the Shelter in Place status. Interior doors remain locked or unlocked in accordance with normal practice.
- “Evacuation” is the term used to describe the safety response that occurs when **all students and staff are removed from the school**. This is typically a result of a serious incident where everyone must leave the building. A fire or gas leak in the school is an example of an event requiring evacuation.

**7. What will the school board do if an emergency situation occurs while students are in school?**

The safety of students and staff members will be the primary concern in any decision. The specific actions taken by school personnel in any emergency situation, both board-wide and at individual schools, will depend on the specifics of the situation and the appropriate board procedure. Any action taken would depend on several factors, including the level of threat and the advice or directive of local, provincial and federal agencies. The board has procedures on threats to school safety and schools regularly review and practice emergency procedures with staff and students.

**8. Will I be allowed to pick up my child?**

Student and staff safety will be the primary concern during a threat to school safety. It is the board’s intent to make sure that children are safe inside their schools until such a time that the threat has been reduced. Until such time as the threat to school safety has been reassessed or resolved, parents and guardians will be unable to contact or access their children. School personnel must be focused on resolving the threat to school safety and cannot be distracted from the imminent threat. Parents/guardians will be informed and reunited with their children as soon as it is safe to do so.

**9. Does the school have a parent/child reunification plan?**

Yes. Each school has developed a plan for reuniting parents with their children after an emergency has occurred. Additionally, if public safety officials require that a school building be evacuated, students and staff members will be safely transported to a designated evacuation site. Parents will be informed of the evacuation site via the board’s emergency plan and local media.

**10. Will I be given the evacuation locations ahead of time?**

Each school has designated four evacuation sites. The nature of the emergency will determine the evacuation site selected at the time. Parents will be informed of the selected evacuation site through the local media and school and/or board websites.

**11. What if my child is riding a school bus at the time of the crisis?**

The transportation service providers will be in contact with the Board Office for instructions in the event that a crisis occurs while students are in transport. Bus drivers will transport students to the appropriate reunification site. Parents will be informed of the parent-student reunification centre location via the school board’s emergency messaging system and local media. If students were evacuated from campus, they would be bussed back to the school only after receiving approval from emergency services personnel. In

the event of an emergency, school officials suggest parents keep informed by listening to the radio, monitoring the situation on television, and accessing the Board and/or school website.

**12. Who can pick up my children?**

Children will not be released to individuals who are not authorized to do so as the student's emergency contact or who do not have written parent authorization. Parents and guardians are encouraged to update the emergency contacts as needed throughout the school year.

**13. What can I do to help?**

Please remain calm. The school personnel are doing everything they can to keep your child safe.

Please keep away from school property. This is for your safety as well as that of students and staff.

Please refrain from calling the school or contacting your children by cell phone or text messaging. A substantial increase in use of phone lines and satellite communications may result in a system crash. This would compromise the response of Emergency Services personnel who rely on these communication systems. The ability of Emergency Services to protect your child would be severely compromised. The Board will release information to the media as soon as it is available.