

Best Practices for K-12 Schools: Options-Based Responses for Active-Shooter Situations

*Options-Based Responses is best practices guidance for adapting
“run, hide, or fight” in a K-12 environment.*

What

The San Diego County Office of Education (SDCOE) worked with representatives from school districts and law enforcement agencies around the county to establish best practices for schools in active-shooter situations. This workgroup formed a consensus and endorsed “Options-Based Responses for Active Shooter and Other Armed Assailant Situations in Schools.” The San Diego County Police Chiefs’ & Sheriff’s Association in July endorsed the options-based approach.

SDCOE provides training for districts to implement Options-Based Responses.

Why

While schools remain among the safest places for children, K-12 security continues to be a top priority. After the 1999 Columbine attack, schools adopted a single-option strategy for active-shooter events: lockdown and wait for rescue. Since then, responses have evolved to save lives.

- Since 2008, law enforcement has encouraged an active response, advising civilians that they have three options in response to an active-shooter event.
- Options now include barricade, run, or fight. These responses were established as the national standard for school safety by federal education and law enforcement agencies, as well as national school psychologists and school resource officers groups.
- In San Diego County, now, there is a consensus AMONG SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND LAW ENFORCEMENT ON HOW TO RESPOND IN SITUATIONS LIKE THIS. Previously, there was no official stance among law enforcement.
- Options-Based Responses – the best practices guidance and the training – is the result of the workgroup’s efforts to carefully adapt “run, hide, or fight” to a K-12 school environment.

Training and Support

- The SDCOE workgroup created a two-hour staff development workshop on Options-Based Responses. The staff development workshop is supported by a six-hour training of trainers workshop for school district employees, available through SDCOE.
- An emergency action plan template for active-shooter events was developed and incorporated into SDCOE’s Comprehensive School Safety Plan template used by school districts.