

Campus Violence Readiness Checklist for Higher Education

Evaluate Your Institutional Preparedness for a Violent Critical Incident

Preparedness is not defined by policy. It's defined by performance in the first moments of a crisis. Use this checklist to assess alignment, consistency, and preparedness across your organization.

1. Governance & Leadership Alignment

- Executive leadership has formally prioritized campus violence preparedness
- Clear ownership exists for emergency response planning
- Roles and responsibilities are documented and understood
- Crisis decision-making authority is clearly defined
- Leadership messaging reinforces preparedness as an expectation of maintaining campus culture

Reflection: Is safety viewed as a box to check for compliance? Or is it an institutional responsibility?

2. Training Coverage & Consistency

- All full-time faculty and staff receive violence response training
- Adjunct, part-time, and contract staff are included
- Training is standardized across departments and satellite locations
- New hires receive training during onboarding
- Training participation is tracked and documented

Reflection: Are there groups on campus that would respond differently because they were trained differently? Is there anyone who hasn't been trained at all?

3. Training Quality & Relevance

- Training is role-specific (i.e. faculty, residence life, leadership)
- Training addresses multiple campus environments (lecture halls, dorms, events, etc.)
- Training emphasizes options-based decision-making
- Scenarios reflect a realistic higher education setting and drills are incorporated to test policies and procedures
- All training is conducted with a trauma-informed approach and includes periodic refreshers

Reflection: Would your training translate under pressure, or is it just theoretical?

4. Communication & Information Flow

- Mass notification systems are tested regularly
- Redundant communication methods are identified
- Plain-language communication protocols are established
- Faculty and staff understand how to initiate an alert
- Real-time information sharing protocols are documented

Reflection: If technology fails, does documentation stop?

5. Decentralized Decision Making

- Faculty and staff understand they may need to act before law enforcement arrives
- Expectations for immediate protective action are clear
- Individuals understand response options beyond traditional lockdown
- Scenario discussions and when/then critical thinking drills are incorporated into meetings or training

Reflection: With their current training, would your faculty and staff act or wait?

6. Environmental Awareness & Planning

- Emergency response considerations are based upon differing campus environments
- High-occupancy spaces have reviewed response options
- Residence life staff receive specialized guidance
- Event planning includes emergency preparedness considerations
- Physical spaces are evaluated for potential risks

Reflection: Does your plan look the exact same in every building, or is it environment specific?

7. Culture & Prevention

- Reporting systems are visible and accessible
- Community members know how to report concerning behavior
- Leadership reinforces “see something, say something” expectations
- Safety messaging is integrated into daily campus life
- Preparedness conversations occur beyond annual training

Reflection: Is campus safety and preparedness seasonal or cultural?

8. Sustainability & Continuous Improvement

- Training is reinforced annually or bi-annually
- After-action reviews are conducted following drills or incidents
- Lessons learned lead to measurable adjustments
- Preparedness metrics are reviewed at the leadership level
- Budget allocation supports sustained training efforts

Reflection: Is preparedness a one-time initiative or an ongoing strategy?

Final Readiness Question:

If an incident occurred tomorrow, would your campus response be coordinated and confident or improvised and uncertain?

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