

Emergency Preparedness Policy

Overview

During an emergency, the physical safety of students and staff is our top priority. To provide an effective response to any school crisis, emergency plans are in place for Maria Montessori Academy, and we work in conjunction with local agencies to plan for, respond to, and communicate during, emergency events.

State of Emergency

Should a state of emergency be called by a level of government, the school will refer to the **Business Continuity Plan** to maintain or resume operations. Should there be specific guidelines in relation to health and welfare during the state of emergency, these will take precedence. All public health guidelines will be reviewed, and practices documented and adjusted according to expectations outlined by the governing body.

Earthquake

In the event of an earthquake, students will be instructed to “drop and cover”. “Drop and cover” follows this process: drop to the ground, take cover by getting under a sturdy desk or table, and hold onto it until the shaking stops. Evacuation will proceed as outlined in the **School Emergency Preparedness Guide**. Earthquake drills are practiced a minimum of three times per year at each grade level.

Fire

In the event of a fire at school, the fire alarm will be sounded by the person discovering the fire. Students will be evacuated from the building using the nearest safe exit and will assemble at a predetermined location where attendance will be taken, and the names of missing students and their possible location reported to the Principal, Vice Principal, or delegate. Fire drills are practiced on a regular basis.

Hold & Secure

A “hold & secure” should be used when it is desirable to secure the school due to an ongoing situation outside the school and not related to the school (e.g., a robbery occurs near a school, a cougar has been sighted in the neighbourhood, etc.). In this situation, the school continues to function normally, with the exterior doors being locked until such time as the situation near the school is resolved.

Lockdown

A “lockdown” is only to be used when there is a major incident or threat of school violence within the school, or in relation to the school. The school will follow the established lockdown procedures. Parents should wait for information from the Principal, Vice Principal, or delegate, before picking up their children. Lockdown drills are practiced at the school at least twice per year.

Critical Incident

Any of the preceding events may also constitute a “critical incident” – an event that causes psychological or emotional trauma. While the physical safety of staff and students is our top priority, all staff must also be on the alert for, and respond promptly to, any such psychological or emotional trauma by following the **Critical Incident Response Guidelines and Procedures**.

Violence Threat Risk Assessment

Fair Notice: From time to time it may be necessary to complete a Violence Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA) in response to threatening behavior toward students or staff. To ensure the safety of students, staff, parents and others, threats must be taken seriously, investigated, and responded to. The VTRA will allow the school to plan the interventions necessary to prevent traumatic events in schools.

Drills

Drills will be completed annually, with the following frequency:

- Six fire drills per year
- Three earthquake drills per year
- 2 lockdown drills per year

All procedures for drills can be found in the Staff Handbook.