



NATIONAL CENTER
FOR SCHOOL CRISIS
AND BEREAVEMENT

Exercises, drills and other preventive interventions



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Early intervention and prevention initiatives

- Children's stories, coloring books and parent guidance often quickly developed in immediate aftermath and widely disseminated without evidence base – and without attempt to collect evidence to guide future use
- Materials are developed and promoted for prevention efforts without evaluation for efficacy

Exercises and drills (e.g., active shooter drills in schools)

- Occurring in almost all schools
- Lack evidence of efficacy – researchers have begun to question efficacy of some popular training approaches
- We must be cautious about potential unintended consequences
- Growing evidence of a significant potential of psychological risks and other unintended consequences, especially when children are deceived or high-intensity drills

Some children report they want this training

- Some students feel empowered by exercises
- They may underestimate how others with different personalities, coping studies, personal histories of prior trauma or anxiety/stress, and other individual vulnerabilities may respond
- May feel comforted because it provides illusion of control – prevention efforts are only effective if they actually decrease risk of harm
- Such efforts could result in increased guilt if individual is not able to respond in idealized fashion in real event

Additional considerations

- Unique needs of young children; children who suffered traumatic events/losses or pre-existing anxiety; those with physical, intellectual and NDD rarely considered in exercise planning
- We need research identifying children most likely to experience negative impacts and successful accommodations to mitigate additional burden on vulnerable children
- Must also consider needs of adults

Summary recommendations

- Research is needed to evaluate the goals, efficacy, and potential unintended consequences of crisis preparedness activities involving children
- Strategies likely to cause significant distress or unintended consequences (e.g., high-intensity live exercises) should be evaluated carefully before implemented, especially in absence of evidence of efficacy