

# Indiana Office of School Safety Tabletop Toolkit

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## School Safety Tabletop Exercises [2025]

The Indiana Department of Homeland Security's Office of School Safety has developed a Tabletop Toolkit featuring 10 discussion-based exercises. These scenarios are designed to engage school officials, administrators, educators, SROs, and staff in evaluating their responses to various safety situations. Each exercise includes a brief scenario followed by targeted questions that prompt reflection and dialogue. Tabletop exercises are flexible, often completed in just a few minutes, and serve to reinforce participants' understanding of emergency operations plans.

## TABLETOP EXERCISE OVERVIEW

<b>Step 1 PREPARE</b>	Select a relevant scenario and identify staff members to participate.
<b>Step 2 EXERCISE</b>	Allocate time for staff to discuss the scenario and respond to guiding questions.
<b>Step 3 ANALYZE</b>	Review responses to identify strengths, gaps, and potential training needs.
<b>Scope</b>	Designed for 5–10 minute discussions during school safety team or all-staff meetings.
<b>Mission Area(s)</b>	Prevention, Protection, Response, and Recovery
<b>Contact</b>	<p>For any questions, help, or more resources feel free to contact the Indiana Office of School Safety.</p> <p>Director Julie Q Smith <a href="mailto:JuliSmith@dhs.IN.gov">JuliSmith@dhs.IN.gov</a></p> <p>School Safety Specialist Ryan Stewart <a href="mailto:RyStewart@dhs.IN.gov">RyStewart@dhs.IN.gov</a></p> <p>School Safety Specialist Dr. Chad Crews <a href="mailto:ChCrews@dhs.IN.gov">ChCrews@dhs.IN.gov</a></p> <p>School Safety Specialist Deanna Thomas <a href="mailto:DeanThomas@dhs.IN.gov">DeanThomas@dhs.IN.gov</a></p>

## EXERCISE 1:

### SCENARIO

At 11:30 a.m. in the lunchroom, a teacher informs the Assistant Principal that a student privately disclosed plans for a fight involving at least five students during the transition between Blocks 4 and 5. Two fights have already occurred earlier in the day. By 12:00 p.m., three additional teachers from various teams and content areas report the same concern. The Block 4 to 5 transition is scheduled to begin in 45 minutes. The Assistant Principal consults with the Principal and the School Resource Officer, both of whom note heightened tension during the lunch periods.

### EXERCISE QUESTIONS

#### BEFORE THE EXERCISE

What are your initial thoughts/actions?	
Who is involved, affected, and responsible for responding?	

#### DURING THE EXERCISE

What other information do you need? Who else needs to know?	
Is this situation escalating or de-escalating?	
Are there any additional problems caused?	

#### AFTER THE EXERCISE

What were the strengths and weaknesses in your plan?	
Did you learn anything new that could translate to your emergency operation plan?	

## EXERCISE 2:

### SCENARIO

During the first week of school, on Thursday, the librarian observes three students sitting near an outlet, appearing to charge their Chromebooks. After noticing the students laughing and whispering, he investigates further and sees them inserting a bobby pin into a charger port. A quick online search reveals this behavior is part of a dangerous TikTok challenge that can cause sparks, electrical damage, or even fire if the pin contacts the right components. While reading about the challenge, the librarian hears students gasp and returns to find sparks and smoke coming from one of the devices.

### EXERCISE QUESTIONS

#### BEFORE THE EXERCISE

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#### DURING THE EXERCISE

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## EXERCISE 3:

### SCENARIO

Over the summer, your school corporation acquired new buses, prompting a re-evaluation and updating of all routes for greater efficiency. On the first day of school, the new routes and driver instructions were implemented. School begins at 8:45 a.m., but by 9:20 a.m., 5 of the 12 buses have not arrived at school. Upon contacting drivers, the transportation manager learned that many were still mid-route and had only picked up a third of their assigned students. All students were eventually transported by 11:15 a.m. After discussing the delays with the Transportation Department, adjustments were made with assurances that the afternoon routes would improve. However, by 4:15 p.m., calls from concerned parents began. At 4:45 p.m., 60 students from multiple buses had not yet arrived at home. By 5:30 p.m., the local sheriff's department contacted the school, reporting that parents were now calling law enforcement to locate their children.

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## EXERCISE 4:

### SCENARIO

During rivalry week, excitement builds across the school and community ahead of Friday night's football game, held at the opposing team's field. As the parking lot fills with spectators, a fight breaks out among a group of parents approximately 20 minutes before kickoff. While the School Resource Officer intervenes, a cooler containing beer is discovered nearby. Staff from your school recognize one of the individuals involved as the father of your school's quarterback. They also observe students from both schools gathered around the makeshift tailgate, potentially consuming alcohol from the cooler.

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#### BEFORE THE EXERCISE

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## EXERCISE 5:

### SCENARIO

On a freezing February morning before school begins, staff arriving on campus hear screeching brakes followed by a loud crash. Immediately afterward, the building lights flicker and shut off. Several teachers investigate and discover a car has collided with a telephone pole after sliding on black ice. A bloodied passenger, appearing to be a student, exits the vehicle in distress, crying out about the unresponsive driver slumped over the steering wheel. The crash has caused a traffic jam involving multiple school buses, with students witnessing the incident unfold.

### EXERCISE QUESTIONS

#### BEFORE THE EXERCISE

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#### DURING THE EXERCISE

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## EXERCISE 6:

### SCENARIO

At 5:15 p.m., the school secretary receives a call from a distressed mother reporting that her first-grade son with autism and fifth-grade daughter have not arrived home, despite their bus stop being the last on the route and drop-off expected 20 minutes earlier. The fifth grader typically escorts her sibling, so a parent is not required to be present. The family is new to the area, and school records indicate an ongoing custody issue. With the principal already gone for the day, the secretary contacts the transportation manager to locate the bus. However, drivers are prohibited from using cell phones while driving unless there is an emergency. The transportation manager confirms they will continue efforts to reach the driver.

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## EXERCISE 7:

### SCENARIO

During the final period of the school day, a student began exhibiting signs of hallucination, claiming the school mascot was dancing and singing in the classroom. The teacher, noticing the student was sweating profusely, had another student escort her to the nurse's office. Upon arrival, the student became unresponsive, and 911 was immediately called. Later that evening, school officials were informed that the student had overdosed on Benadryl and passed away. Staff research revealed that excessive Benadryl use is part of a dangerous social media challenge. The following day, staff interviewed several of the students' friends, who confirmed she began taking the medication at home and continued throughout the school day. All students interviewed were aware of the challenge, and some admitted they had considered participating.

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## EXERCISE 8:

### SCENARIO

At 4:00 p.m. on Tuesday, a bus driver transporting 17 students witnesses a physical altercation between two students who have had ongoing issues since the start of the school year. While waiting in a left-turn lane at a busy intersection, the driver is distracted by the fight and rear-ends another vehicle. Both vehicles pull onto the shoulder of a two-lane road. By 4:25 p.m., the fight has stopped, but the driver of the other vehicle exits and begins shouting obscenities and banging on the bus door, upsetting several younger students. By 4:45 p.m., the last student—scheduled to be dropped off by 4:15—remains on the bus. Parents, having communicated with their children via cell phones, begin arriving at the scene and demand their children be released. The growing number of vehicles creates a traffic jam, hindering access for first responders and school personnel.

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## EXERCISE 9:

### SCENARIO

During passing period, students on the second floor begin reporting an unpleasant odor near the restrooms. As teachers investigate, they note a strong smell in the air that causes eye irritation. Moments later, a student in the hallway experiences a severe asthma attack, prompting an immediate medical response.

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## EXERCISE 10:

### SCENARIO

On a pleasant fall day in September, the Science teacher holds his 3rd period class outdoors. During 4th period, the English teacher notices that a student who attended the earlier science class is now absent. Upon contacting the Science teacher, she learns the student was present at the start of class but rushed inside at the bell, and a secondary head count was not taken. The English teacher alerts the front office for assistance in locating the student. After 20 minutes, the student remains missing. Exterior school cameras are available to review footage from just before the 3rd period bell to help determine the student's whereabouts.

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Is this situation escalating or de-escalating?	
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