



RESPONDING TO THREATS FROM INTRUDERS

A situation involving a potentially violent intruder at an early childhood service or school may be the most significant emergency that such a facility may ever encounter. These emergencies develop with unpredictability and speed and may be carefully planned or completely random.

Fortunately these types of situations are rare in Australia. Where they have occurred overseas they are usually over within several minutes. What has also been learned from international experience is that these events don't follow a predictable pattern so it is not possible to establish a single set of response procedures.

In early childhood services or schools, the responsible person/primary nominee (responsible person) or the school principal must carefully assess and seek police support in relation to:

- threats made either directly or indirectly against facilities or individual children, students and staff;
- students, staff or any adults acting suspiciously; or
- custodial disputes that threaten to escalate.

The procedures outlined below are indicative only and are provided as a guide to assist staff in early childhood services and schools to develop mitigation and response strategies to address the risks associated with potential armed intruder events on site or near their facility. Staff will need to exercise their judgment to determine the most appropriate course of action as an emergency unfolds. In most instances this will involve evacuation or a combination of locking down and sheltering-in-place.

An immediate response to any rapidly evolving situation is critical and all staff need to be fully aware of the procedures detailed in their facility's Emergency Management Plan (EMP) and clearly understand their role in such an event.

Possible Responses

The decision to instigate **EVACUATION** or **LOCKDOWN AND SHELTER-IN-PLACE** (when an evacuation is not feasible) for early childhood services or schools is a decision to be taken by the responsible person or principal, or a suitable staff member in the absence of the responsible person or principal.

Where time permits the decision regarding your response should be made in consultation with police.

The response action you take will need to balance the risks as to whether children, students and staff are afforded better protection by remaining where they are or by evacuating quickly and safely to another site.

The preservation of life must take precedence.

When an intruder(s) approaches the facility

- Assess the situation:
 - Is the intruder inside the facility or on the property?
 - Has the intruder been identified?
 - Do they have a weapon?

- Is the intruder acting alone?

- **Call 000.** Provide essential details of the situation, i.e. name of intruder (if known), location, weapons, numbers of persons involved, injuries/casualties and actions taken by the facility.
- Implement your EMP and determine the best course of action.

When an intruder(s) has entered the facility

- DO NOT approach the intruder(s).
- DO NOT argue with, threaten or stare at the intruder(s).
- DO NOT attempt to disarm or otherwise apprehend the intruder(s).
- Assume the intruder(s) is armed, even if a weapon cannot be seen.
- If the intruder(s) is carrying a firearm, it should be regarded as being loaded.
- Answer any question when asked by the intruder(s).
- Avoid any sudden movement that could panic the intruder(s).
- If children, students or other staff are present, try to shift the intruder(s) attention away from them.

When the intruder(s) has left the premises

- Identify a centralised location (onsite or offsite) for police and/or ambulance to meet. If able to assist police in entering the facility; provide officers with critical information.
- Secure all exterior doors to prevent re-entry.
- If a firearm is known to exist, do not touch it.
- Supervise the location of any firearms, and allow only the police to take possession of the weapon.
- Keep area secure. Do not allow anyone to pick up items that may belong to the intruder(s).

Early childhood services must notify their relevant DET region office within 24 hours of a serious incident. For more information, see attached for regional contacts [QARD Regional contacts](#).

Government schools must call Security Services Unit **(03) 9589 6266** when practicable and provide details of situation (provided time is available, and **only after 000 has been called**).

Evacuation to off-site location

In the event that evacuation is deemed the most appropriate and safest response, or has been directed by emergency services, the following should be considered:

- Know where you are and the location of all evacuation routes (these should be documented in your EMP).
- EVACUATE the area immediately.
- Do not take personal items, such as bags with you, however your mobile phone should be retained.
- Close all doors behind you. Do not lock doors.
- Keep your hands elevated with open palms visible if you encounter responding police.
- Do not carry anything in your hands that could be mistaken for weapons.
- Staff should help those with disabilities by escorting them to the nearest exit.
- Account for all children and students and encourage them to remain calm.

Initiate lockdown and shelter-in-place

- If gunfire is heard inside or near the facility, implement LOCKDOWN AND SHELTER-IN-PLACE immediately. Do not wait a prolonged period of time for an announcement.
- Take immediate action to prevent casualties. If it is safe, clear passage, toilets and open areas. Direct children and students and seek shelter in a room where doors can be locked or barricaded securely.
- Where possible shelter in place in a room with external windows or an external door. Tell children to stay low, below window height.
- Turn mobile phones to silent.
- If there are windows in the door, cover these if possible.
- Turn off all lights and remain silent.
- Huddle together in the farthest corner on the same wall as the door so as to minimise your exposure to the intruder(s).
- If safe to do so, allocate staff to be posted at locked doors to allow identified students, staff and visitors to enter the buildings if locked out.

When safe to do so and once incident is contained

Advice and support:

- Ascertain if all children, students, staff and visitors are accounted for.
- Attend to the post-incident needs of children, students and staff.
- Providing it is safe to do so, ensure that the injured receive medical attention from nominated first aid officer(s).
- Designate staff member(s) to accompany any victim(s) requiring ambulance transport to hospital.
- Note any items and surfaces touched by the intruder.
- Immediately after the incident, the responsible person/principal should:
 - secure the immediate vicinity (for example, lock the office/room in which the incident occurred);
 - do not allow anyone to approach the area in which the intruder(s) was located;
 - notify police, if not already advised;
 - ensure children and students who are not in the immediate vicinity are kept away from the area
 - Government schools must advise the Security Services Unit and the region (regional Manager, Operations and Emergency Management) once the incident is over.
- Implement a re-unification process for children and students with parents/guardians to ensure all are accounted for as instructed by police.
- Ensure a sign out process is in place for children and students when collected by parents/guardians.
- Minimise impact on child, student and staff health and well-being by engaging appropriate support from trained professionals.
- Provide liaison for family members of any injured children, students or staff.
- Prepare messaging and a letter to go to families.

Early childhood services must contact the parents of the children being cared for at their service as soon as possible.

Government schools prepare letters to families in conjunction with the region and the Media Unit 9637 2871, all media queries should be referred to DET Media Unit.

The following days and in the longer term

- Develop a psychosocial recovery plan for children, students, staff and families with trained clinicians to address long term effects of the incident.
- Provide information updates, if appropriate, to staff, children, students and their families during the following days.
- Ensure that professional support is made available for staff.
- Report to police any further threats or concerns about safety.
- Under guidance, work towards a return to normality as quickly as possible keeping in mind the needs of all involved.
- If fatalities have occurred memorial activities should be considered carefully and should only be undertaken after consultation with the families of the victims.

Early childhood services can contact the approved provider/person with management or control to organise professional support for children and staff.

Government schools prepare these in conjunction with the region and the Media Unit 9637 2871, all media queries should be referred to DET Media Unit.

Evaluation:

This policy was last updated on 14/06/2020 and is scheduled for review in June 2021.