



**District Wide School Safety Plan  
2018 - 2019 Building Level**

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## **Introduction**

Emergencies in schools must be treated in an efficient and effective manner. Schools are at risk of acts of violence, natural, and manmade disasters. To address these threats, the State of New York has enacted the Safe Schools Against Violence in Education (SAVE) law. Project SAVE is a comprehensive planning effort that addresses prevention, response, and recovery with respect to a variety of emergencies in schools.

Amani Public Charter School supports the SAVE legislation and will facilitate the planning process in order to be prepared, protect its students and staff and disseminate information quickly to parents and guardians.

## **Section I: GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS AND PLANNING GUIDELINES**

### **A. Purpose**

Amani Public Charter School's Safety Plan was developed pursuant to Education Law 2801-a and Commissioner's Regulation 155.17 to properly plan for and address appropriate responses to a variety of emergency situations.

### **B. Vital Educational Agency Information**

Amani Public Charter School opened its doors in 2011. Amani Public Charter School, located at 60 S. Third Ave, Mount Vernon, NY serves 355 students, 5<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grades with a staff of 55. The mission of the Amani Public Charter School ("APCS" or the "School") is to provide 100% of Mount Vernon students who attend the school from the 5<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade with the academic and critical thinking skills necessary to succeed in competitive high school programs, college and the career of their choice.

As a public, charter school, Amani is free to all residents of Mount Vernon and admits students via a public lottery and waitlist. Students are brought to school and picked up by their parents each day, walk, or take public transportation.

### **C. Identification and Designation of School Teams**

Amani Public Charter School has developed three emergency teams with their respective functions described below:

**Building Level School Safety Planning Team:** Responsible for helping to identify and assess possible risks, assist with the planning process, and assist with subsequent revisions of the School Safety Plan. The following positions comprise the School Safety Team:

- Director of Operations (Chief Emergency Officer)
- Executive Director
- Director of School Culture
- Parent Teacher Organization
- School Safety Personnel
- School Nurse

The Building Level School Safety Planning Team will assign two teams for the purpose of responding to emergencies.

- **Building Level Response Team- Emergency Response Team -**
- **Post Incident Response Team**

**D. Concept of Operations**

- a. The initial response to all emergencies at Amani Public Charter School will be by the Building Level Emergency Response Team.
- b. Upon activation of the Emergency Response Team, the Director of Operations (or Incident Commander) will be notified, and, where appropriate, local emergency officials.
- c. Efforts may be supplanted by county and state resources through existing protocols.

**E. Plan Creation, Review and Comment**

Building Level specific plans for each type of hazard/risk are created by the School Safety Team, reviewed by First Responders and Stakeholders.

The subsequent required annual review will be completed on or before July 1 of each year prior to approval by the Board of Trustees. Local officials, including police and fire responders, will be consulted for advice and assistance in revising the Safety Plan on an annual basis.

Pursuant to Commissioner’s Regulation, Section 155.17 (e) (3), a summary of this plan will be made available for public comment at least 30 days prior to its adoption. The plan is to be adopted by the Board of Trustees of Amani Public Charter School.

This building-level plan shall be confidential and shall not be subject to disclosure under Article 6 of the Public Officers Law or any other provision of law, in accordance with Education Law Section 2801-a.

Full copies of this building-level plan will be provided to both local and state police within 30 days of adoption.

**Section II: RISK REDUCTION/PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION**

**A. Purpose**

Amani believes that building a strong school culture built on high expectations and respect promotes the safe learning environment necessary for students to learn, and to prevent violent behaviors from occurring. To build this culture, Amani dedicates staff and resources towards: 1) a range of programs that promote high student involvement and individual growth as well as facilitate the development of highly-effective channels of communication between students and staff concerning potentially violent behaviors and conditions; 2) trainings and acculturation to assure that staff can identify, intervene early, and respond quickly to violent behaviors; and 3) ensuring preparedness of frontline and administrative staff in emergency situations.

## **B. Prevention and Intervention Strategies**

Amani has both explicit and implicit strategies designed to prevent violence in its school.

### **1. Community Building**

Amani Public Charter School consciously works to foster a strong sense of community amongst students, staff and parents/guardians and to create a positive, safe learning environment. All members of the school community are expected to uphold the standards set forth by the school and included in the Family Handbook. (found at [www.amanicharter.org](http://www.amanicharter.org))

Amani is a 5th through 8th grade school which features small class sizes no larger than 26 students a class, individual focus on student achievement, and a longer school day and year. Amani's design reinforces its belief that students best achieve when we work with families over a long period time. Additionally, it allows Amani to develop deep relationships with families to help prevent and address potentially violent behaviors. With longstanding relationships with families, Amani can recommend interventions to support a student's academic, behavioral and emotional growth, as well as leverage parent relationships to promote community. With monthly community-building family events, three parent-teacher conferences annually, and the requirement that families meet with staff before and after a student suspension, Amani has ample opportunities to address individual behaviors and build Amani community.

To maintain and further build this community, students are acculturated at the beginning of the school year with Amani's expectations. School-wide, there are universal routines, communication systems, and behavioral expectations. All students, for example, know that level 0 means silence, a level that is expected and enforced in hallways and stairwells.

Further discussion of these principles and how they are expressed and exhibited are outlined in the Family Covenant, which is provided to every family at the beginning of the school year, and is required to be read and signed by the student, teacher and parent/guardian. These principles are further discussed and interwoven into classroom discussions by individual teachers.

By building a strong sense of community, Amani facilitates improved communication between students and staff. Our teachers are trained each year before the launch of the school year to immediately disseminate any pertinent information to administrators and the school counselor to intervene as necessary.

### **2. Improving Communication with Students:**

Amani’s promotion of a safe learning culture allows it to have consistent success in fostering communication with students. Amani has reinforced – through common expectations, an acculturation program, and configuration of its physical space – a culture that builds lasting relationships with its students and families.

### 3. **Prevention and Intervention Program Initiatives**

In addition to an immediate response to violent incidents, Amani has designed and implemented a host of prevention and intervention programs for its students. In addition to providing students with viable, constructive outlets and resources for growth, these programs also help promote Amani’s safe learning environment.

#### a. **Institutionalized Programs**

##### *Advisory Groups*

The purpose of advisory groups is to provide students an outlet, in a safe, confidential setting to talk about issues, concerns, and realities affecting them outside of school. In the presence of an Amani staff member and a cohort of peers, Amani’s students acquire critical skills to prepare them for the challenges of school and inputs that may create emotional situations that trigger violence – bullying and toxic relationships are two examples – through a curriculum designed by Amani staff trained in adolescent development. In addition to preparing students for the years ahead, the advisory group creates a support group of peers for students to work out issues confronting them now. It also facilitates the development of a personal, non-academic relationship with an Amani staff member, and provides Amani an opportunity to identify and address emerging adolescent issues that might necessitate a larger, school-wide intervention.

##### *Parent Teachers Association*

The Parent Teacher Association is chartered through the New York State PTA (NYSPTA). NYS PTA is prepared to assist charter schools in meeting the academic, social, physical, and emotional needs of students through the creation of new PTA units. PTAs promote active parent and family involvement and provide access to PTA programs, services, and leadership. This will be only one of many actions we will take to involve parents and community.

#### b. **Intervention Programs**

In addition to the above group-based programs, Amani utilizes targeted interventions to address the needs of individual students and students with common issues.

##### *Active Needs Assessment*

The programs implemented by Amani do not replace continued, smart monitoring by staff of potential issues. If a matter such as bullying or student aggression arises as a school wide concern, the school administration will take appropriate action including bringing in outside facilitators as needed, addressing the issue at school-wide community meetings that occur weekly, and creating

opportunities for students concerned with bullying or violence to receive assistance or mentoring from a staff member or other student in the school.

Amani also implements regular professional development for staff on early detection and response to potentially violent behaviors, including topics such as bullying and mandated reporting of child abuse.

## **C. Risk Reduction**

### **1. Use of Monitors and Safety Personnel:**

Amani utilizes the services of R&R Security Services, Inc. to secure the building. All security officers are screened by R&R Security Services including a background check of all employees. They are trained according to state requirements for security personnel working in schools. Additional training is given for evacuation and emergency response particular to the school.

#### **School Security**

- Access control: verify and log the identity of all school visitors and late students; prevent entry of individuals restricted from building entry, etc. Notify main office of any intruders.
- Limit the release of students during non-dismissal hours to those with an exit pass and accompanied by an approved guardian as determined by school records and policy
- Alert faculty and staff members of visitors upon their arrival.
- Maintain integrity and cleanliness of front area post.
- Uphold and maintain all aspects of Amani's school safety plan, including but not limited to fire, shelter and intruder drills
- Reinforce student expectations at all times.
- Ensure that all school's entrances are either closed or monitored by a staff member at all times.
- Distribute hall passes as per the request of a faculty or administrative staff member

#### **Dismissal**

- Assist student pick-up by identifying incoming visitors..
- Assist with street crossing and traffic control

The R&R Security Services agent has ready access to administrative and facilities staff via walkie-talkie and land phone to alert them of any emergencies associated with our physical plant or security breaches.

Amani utilizes its administrative staff to act as monitors when conducting any tests of its emergency response plan.

### **2. Leverage of Physical Space**

The physical layout of Amani makes it conducive for an immediate response to any potentially violent or unsafe situation. Amani occupies 4 floors of a stand-alone building. Amani has administrative offices on the 4th floor with classrooms, gymnasium and cafeteria on all other floors.

**3. Early Detection of Potentially Violent Behaviors:**

Incidents and the potential for violence, aggression, bullying, and vandalism are taken with the utmost seriousness at Amani Public Charter School. Any and all incidents of violence are reported first to the Director of School Culture. Serious consequences, up to expulsion, are recommended for violent infractions. See Code of Conduct (found at [www.amanicharter.org](http://www.amanicharter.org))

When a student does not meet behavioral expectations and an infraction of the school's Code of Conduct has occurred, clear and consistent disciplinary action will ensue. Students will have an initial meeting with the Dean when a student's behavior is a disruption to the learning process. After the level of severity is determined, a meeting with the parents of the child may be necessary to develop a plan or contract between the student, parents, and school. Severe infractions will call for severe consequences.

**D. Training, Drills and Exercises**

**1. Drills and Tests of Emergency Response Plan**

Drills will be conducted according to regulation, at least 12 times per school year, with 8 prior to December 31st. Of the 12 drills, 8 must be evacuation and 4, a combination of lockdown, lockout and shelter-in-place. Amani varies its drills to ensure preparedness of its students and staff. Drills will be unannounced, take place during lunch times and assembly times of students, and passageways are blocked by staff so that staff and students are prepared to safely look for alternate exits. A log of drills is kept with the director of operations.

**2. Multi-Hazard Drills and Training** combination of L

Staff members will receive training and information on how to respond to a variety of hazards, including bomb threats, severe natural disasters and weather emergencies at the beginning of each school year.. One exercise will be completed during the first month of each school year to outline local evacuation procedures, roles, and responsibilities. Local emergency responders and preparedness officials will be consulted and invited to participate in our emergency response training.

CPR and Emergency response training will be provided annually to ensure there is the requisite number of trained staff. Members of the Emergency Response Team will be required to attend as necessary to maintain their certifications, and all staff will be encouraged to attend at no expense to them.

Students will be instructed in basic emergency response to hazards such as fire, weather, and electric emergencies. This training will be age appropriate and provided by the local authorities through their

outreach programs. Teachers will also provide instruction in the classroom with various curriculum packages provided by the Red Cross, local fire, and power authorities.

### **3. Coordination with Emergency Responders and Preparedness Officials**

#### **a. Obtaining Emergency Assistance from Local Government**

As Incident Commander, the Director of Operations or his/her designee, will contact three entities to obtain Emergency Assistance:

- **Local Authorities:** Amani will call 911 to secure Emergency Services, as well as the local Mount Vernon Police Department for guidance.
- **New York State Education Department:** As Amani Public Charter School authorizer, NYSED can provide immediate guidance on available resources
- **New York State Police**

#### **b. Obtaining Advice and Assistance from Local Government Officials and Other Resources**

Amani does not work in a vacuum when conducting tests of its emergency response plan. Professionals related to their field of expertise perform annual inspections of the Fire Detection systems, all life safety apparatus, boiler inspection and elevator inspection. In the case of any deficiencies, these professionals contacts the Director of Operations.

Amani Public Charter School also periodically consults with R&R Security, an outside security agency to assess its safety plan and perform a security analysis of Amani's facility.

## **Section III: RESPONSE**

### **A. Assignment of Responsibilities**

In the event of an emergency or perceived emergency, the members of the Emergency Response Team and the Chief Emergency Office will determine the correct action to take and will divide responsibilities according to the nature of the emergency.

#### **1. Evacuation Procedures:**

Amani employs 5 types of evacuation procedures:

Shelter-in-Place: Used to shelter students and staff inside the building

Hold-in-Place: Used to minimize movement of students and staff while dealing with short term emergencies

Evacuation: Used to evacuate students and staff from the building

Lockout: Used to secure the building during incidents that pose an imminent concern outside the school

Lockdown: Used to secure the building during incidents that pose an imminent threat of violence in or around the school.

## **2. Accounting for all students, staff, and visitors.**

During a crisis there are staff members and alternates responsible for sweeping all areas of the building to ensure complete compliance with crisis plan regulations. Any students found during a sweep will be reunited with their class if possible. If it is not possible to reunite the student with their class, their name and location will be reported to a dean.

During all crises teachers will be responsible for accounting for all children under their care. All crisis plans are equipped with homeroom rosters for all grades. After ensuring students' safety, teachers should immediately take attendance. The names and grades of any missing students should be reported to a dean who will either locate the student or initiate a search for the student.

All staff members will be accounted for by their direct supervisors. All visitors to the building will sign-in in the main office. Visitors will be accounted for by the staff member that they are visiting.

### **B. Notification and Activation**

**1. Notification of Other Schools/Agencies:** Amani Public Charter School is considered a one school district, and as such is not required to notify any other schools. Nevertheless, in the event of an emergency, the Executive Director may contact the Mount Vernon City School District main office and local after-school programs that are used by our children in the event of a disruption to normal operations.

**2. Notification of Families:** In the event of an evacuation, violent incident, (or other emergencies) the Chief Emergency Officer a designated school official will notify families of the situation and the proper action required from them. Emergency contact information is kept electronically in our student database, in addition to hard copies kept by each classroom teacher.

**3. Available Equipment:** Equipment on hand that can be used in the event of an emergency include: telephones, cell phones, bull horns, public portable radios, and local media communications.

In the event of an emergency, the following steps will be taken:

- An incident or hazard's development will be reported to the Executive Director, his designee, or other member of the Emergency Response Team as soon as possible following its detection.

- In the event of an emergency, the Chief Emergency Officer or his designee, or other member of the Emergency Response team will notify all building occupants to take the appropriate protective action.
- Portable radios are not to be used in the event of a bomb threat.

### **C. Situational Responses**

**1. Hazard Guidelines:** This section provides specific actions to be taken in the event of various hazards.

**a. Fire:** When a smoke or fire emergency occurs the fire alarm and flashing and chirping strobes will be activated. This is the signal to exit the building. Should a fire emergency arise, the fire department will be automatically notified via our fire protection system.

**b. Medical Emergencies:**

*Asthma:* Where possible, our school nurse will administer the students' prescribed medication. Should a child not carry appropriate medication, either the child's parent, guardian, or emergency contact will be notified, OR should time be of the essence, an ambulance called to assist the child. In all cases, we will err on the side of caution and call emergency services to care for a child who needs assistance.

*Cardiovascular Failure:* As per state law, we are required to have on site and at all events an Automatic External Defibrillator. We will have designated and trained staff members capable of using this equipment should the need arise, with one in attendance at any school function where children are present. A current list of staff certified in CPR and AED is available in the School Crisis Plan and a copy of their certifications is available in the main office.

The AED should only be used on children older than 1 year of age AND when the child or adult displays ALL of the signs of cardiac arrest. Only the current charging pads should be used according to American Heart Association guidelines. AEDs are located in the main office, the nurse's office, and in the PE office. The AED will only be placed on the victim after the following symptoms are confirmed:

- Victim is unconscious.
- Victim is not breathing.
- Victim has no pulse and/or shows no signs of circulation such as normal breathing, coughing, or movement.

In any medical emergency, Amani will call emergency services as soon as practicable.

**c. Natural/Weather Related:** In situations where the school is made aware of an imminent or possible severe weather related or natural emergency, an early dismissal will be called. Wherever possible, the school will remain open until all children are picked up. If the school appears to be unsafe, we will relocate to our evacuation site.

Parents and guardians will be contacted immediately and notified whether to pick their children up at the school or our evacuation site.

In sudden emergencies, such as severe sudden storms, students will remain in the building until parents and guardians are able to pick them up.

**d. School Bus Accident:** In the case of a school bus accident during a class trip, all families of students will be contacted and updated on the situation. They will be informed of the nature of the accident, and whether there were any injuries. If so, parents/guardians will be directed to the hospital where students have been brought for treatment.

**e. Gas Leak/Hazardous Material:** In the event of a gas leak in the building, emergency services will be called, and all students will be evacuated to our evacuation site to await pickup.

## 2. Criminal Activity

**Threats of Violence:** All threats are taken seriously at Amani. Threats of violence, intruders, kidnappings, bomb threats, fire, and civil disturbance to cover a few are part of the safety planning process at Amani.

## Section IV: RECOVERY

The school's Post-Incident Response Team has enacted the following protocols post-incident recovery:

### A. Short-Term

1. **Mental Health Counseling Resources for students and staff:** Amani Public Charter School will work with its Director of School Culture to coordinate counseling services for students. In the event that the school's needs outstrip the counseling services available in-house, Amani will seek additional services from trusted partners.
2. **Building Security:** Amani Public Charter School will work with R&R Security Services, Inc., its current security service provider, to support our short-term building security needs.
3. **Facility Restoration:** Amani Public Charter School will work with community service officers from the Mount Vernon Police Department and with officials from the New York State Education Department to support our short-term facility restoration needs.
4. **Post-Incident Response Reflection and Critique:** Amani Public Charter School will work with its Response Teams, its Board of Trustees, and the Parent Teacher Association to reflect and critique our incident response.

### B. Long-Term

1. **Mental Health Counseling Resources for students and staff:** Amani Public Charter School will contract with trusted service providers to address any long-term counseling needs.
2. **Building Security:** Amani Public Charter School will work with R&R Security Services, Inc., its current security service provider, to support our short-term building security needs.

3. **Mitigation:** Amani Public Charter School will implement suggestions discussed and approved by our Board of Trustees and Parent Teacher Association upon reflection and critique of our incident response.

**V. School Cancellation or Changes – Snow or other Emergency**

Amani follows the lead of the Mount Vernon City School District in making decisions about school cancellations or other school opening or closing changes. Specifically, if other Mount Vernon public schools are cancelled for weather or any other emergency, we will cancel school. This information is generally broadcast on News12, published on the News12 website or the Mount Vernon City Schools website.