Local School District

COVID 19 Tabletop Exercise

Situation Manual

This Situation Manual (SitMan) provides exercise participants with all the necessary tools for their roles in the exercise. Some exercise material is intended for the exclusive use of exercise planners, facilitators, and evaluators, but players may view other materials that are necessary to their performance. All exercise participants may view the SitMan.

# Exercise Overview

| **Exercise Name** | COVID-19 Local School District Tabletop Exercise |
| --- | --- |
| **Scope** | This exercise is a self-administered tabletop exercise. |
| **PHEP/HPP/Core Capabilities** | * Community Preparedness * Planning * Public Information and Warning * Physical Protective Measures * Environmental Response/Health and Safety |
| **Objectives** | * Participants will discuss existing plans and identify planning gaps as they relate to managing a positive COVID-19 case within the school district. *Aligns to Planning* * Participants will identify strategies for managing communications that build confidence while properly informing and protecting the students, employees, and their families. *Aligns to Public Information and Warning* * Participants will discuss mitigation and protection measures that can be put into place to protect students and employees supporting the continuity of learning. *Aligns to Physical Protective Measures* * Participants will identify and discuss plans and procedures that protect the health and safety of students and employees and can be implemented while supporting continuity of learning. *Aligns to Environmental Response/Health and Safety* |
| **Threat or Hazard** | COVID 19 |
| **Scenario** | COVID-19 is a rapidly spreading respiratory disease in humans caused by a novel (new) coronavirus that was first detected in China and which has now been detected in numerous locations internationally, including in the United States. The virus has been named “SARS-CoV-2” and the disease it causes has been named “coronavirus disease 2019” (abbreviated “COVID-19”). |
| **Sponsor** | Virginia Departments of Health, Education and Emergency Management |
| **Participating Organizations** | The target of this self-administrated Tabletop Exercise are all Local School Districts in the Commonwealth |
| **Point of Contact** | ***INSERT POC INFORMATION*** |

# General Information

## Exercise Objectives

The following exercise objectives in Table 1 describe the expected outcomes for the exercise.

Table 1. Exercise Objectives

| **Exercise Objectives** |
| --- |
| * Participants will discuss existing plans and identify planning gaps as they relate to managing a positive COVID-19 case within the school district. *Aligns to Planning* |
| * Participants will identify strategies for managing communications that build confidence while properly informing and protecting the students, employees, and their families. *Aligns to Public Information and Warning* |
| * Participants will discuss mitigation and protection measures that can be put into place to protect students and employees supporting the continuity of learning. *Aligns to Physical Protective Measures* |
| * Participants will identify and discuss plans and procedures that protect the health and safety of students and employees and can be implemented while supporting continuity of learning. *Aligns to Environmental Response/Health and Safety* |

## Participant Roles and Responsibilities

The term *participant* encompasses many groups of people, not just those playing in the exercise. Groups of participants involved in the exercise, and their respective roles and responsibilities, are as follows:

* **Players:** Players are personnel who have an active role in discussing or performing their regular roles and responsibilities during the exercise. Players discuss or initiate actions in response to the simulated emergency.
* **Observers:** Observers do not directly participate in the exercise. However, they may support the development of player responses to the situation during the discussion by asking relevant questions or providing subject matter expertise.
* **Facilitators:** Facilitators provide situation updates and moderate discussions. They also provide additional information or resolve questions as required. Key Exercise Planning Team members also may assist with facilitation as subject matter experts (SMEs) during the exercise.
* **Evaluators:** Evaluators are assigned to observe and document certain objectives during the exercise. Their primary role is to document player discussions, including how and if those discussions conform to plans, polices, and procedures.

## Exercise Structure

This exercise will be a facilitated exercise. Players will participate in the following three modules:

* Module 1: COVID Positive Student
* Module 2: Community Impacts
* Module 3: Special Circumstances in the COVID Environment

Each module begins with a multimedia update that summarizes key events occurring within that time period. After the updates, participants review the situation and engage in group discussions by geographical area. After these discussions, participants will participate in a moderated plenary discussion in which a spokesperson from each group will present a synopsis of the group’s actions, based on the scenario.

## Exercise Guidelines

* This exercise will be held in an open, low-stress, no-fault environment. Varying viewpoints, even disagreements, are expected.
* Respond to the scenario using your knowledge of current plans and capabilities (i.e., you may use only existing assets) and insights derived from your planning and training.
* Decisions are not precedent setting and may not reflect your organization’s final position on a given issue. This exercise is an opportunity to discuss and present multiple options and possible solutions.
* Issue identification is not as valuable as suggestions and recommended actions that could improve prevention, protection, mitigation, response, and recovery efforts. Problem-solving efforts should be the focus.

## Exercise Assumptions and Artificialities

In any exercise, assumptions and artificialities may be necessary to complete play in the time allotted and/or account for logistical limitations. Exercise participants should accept that assumptions and artificialities are inherent in any exercise, and should not allow these considerations to negatively impact their participation. During this exercise, the following apply:

* The exercise is conducted in a no-fault learning environment wherein capabilities, plans, systems, and processes will be evaluated.
* The exercise scenario is plausible, and events occur as they are presented.
* All players receive information at the same time.
* Preparedness efforts across School Districts may differ.
* COVID-19 will still remain a Public Health concern until a vaccine is developed.

## Exercise Evaluation and Improvement Planning

Since this is a self-administered TTX, evaluation should occur through the use of evaluators selected from the District/School staff to document the discussion that take place during exercise play. Additionally, at the conclusion of exercise play all participants should participate in an exercise “hotwash” or debrief to discuss the outcomes of the exercise related to the objectives and to develop an Improvement Plan with corrective actions, timelines and responsibility for correction to update plans, policies and procedures for COVID 19. Corrective Actions should be developed, implemented and tracked using the Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-Bound (SMART) methodology. Appendix A contains a format for IHE’s to use as a guide for their Corrective Action and Improvement Plan.

## Exercise Facilitation

Facilitators set expectations for the exercise by addressing participants, introducing and presenting the various modules, leading discussion, and coordinating issues between groups. The facilitator focuses the group’s discussions on specific areas and questions, elicits resolutions to issues, and prepares notes on the group’s discussions.

A facilitator should be comfortable talking in front of large groups of people, and should be comfortable managing and guiding a group. Facilitators typically come from the Exercise Planning Team, participating agencies, and neighboring jurisdictions. Facilitator training addressing responsibilities, preparation, exercise specific objectives and scenario can occur the day before or the day of the exercise.

Each participant will be provided with a Situation Manual (SitMan), which includes a Participant Notes Sheet and Participant Feedback Form. At the beginning of the discussion period, introduce yourself and have the participants introduce themselves.

**Tips for Facilitation**

* Adequate preparation is the best safeguard against serious problems. Do not assume that because you have facilitated before, preparation is unnecessary.
* Understand what the group expects of you, and let them know what you expect of them.
* Be flexible. Have alternative ideas on how to achieve exercise goals.
* There are no wrong answers. Always respond in a positive manner, such as, “That’s an interesting perspective. Would anyone like to comment on it?”
* Do not be too serious when you confront a problem. A little humor can make the situation much easier to handle. Try to anticipate problems you might have.
* Make sure the group understands that you all share responsibility for the success or failure of the session.
* Be honest at all times. If you do not know an answer, say so, then try to find it.
* If available, review the applicable plans, policies, and procedures to ensure a basic understanding of the system and potential issues that may arise.
* Review and understand the exercise objectives; these are your guidelines for facilitating the group and keeping it on track.
* Develop a personal strategy for facilitating the group. Use information provided and prior experience to prepare supplemental questions to guide the flow of discussion and augment the specific questions in this handbook.

# Module 1: COVID Positive Student

## Scenario

It is Thursday, September 17, 2020. School has been in session for several weeks operating under the board-approved modified weekly schedule. Approximately 95% of teachers, staff, and bus drivers are consistently wearing face masks and/or face shields when in contact with students each day. The increased cleaning and social distancing procedures are in place. On this afternoon, the Local Health Director contacts school leadership to notify the school that one of their students has tested positive for COVID-19. This student is a/an symptomatic/asymptomatic student who rides the bus to and from school and attends school in the morning/beginning of the week as part of their modified schedule, and attended school on Monday and Tuesday.

## Questions

Based on the information provided, participate in the discussion concerning the issues raised in Module 1.

1. What are the initial concerns for the school’s employees upon learning that a student has tested positive for COVID-19?
2. What are the initial concerns for the students upon learning that a student has tested positive for COVID-19?
3. What are the initial concerns for the school district as a whole upon learning that a student has tested positive for COVID-10?
4. Who needs to be notified internally? Externally? How will you make these notifications and when?
5. How would the school go about contact tracing? What information would they need to have available for contact tracing efforts?
6. How will this news affect classes for the remainder of the week?
7. Will classes be affected in the following week? Why or why not?
8. How will the school district be affected as a result of any changes at the individual school?
9. What resources do you currently have to manage this incident if it becomes an outbreak (i.e. additional PPE, online learning,
10. What resources do you need?
11. What immediate actions can you take that will build the most confidence in the school and in the surrounding district?
12. Are there any reputational concerns for the school at this time?
13. What practices, policies, or procedures will need to be reviewed, and with whom?

# Module 2: Community Impacts

## Scenario

The date is Friday, September 18, 2020. The local media has contacted the school board and the school’s principal asking questions about potential exposures in the community. They want to know if the children are safe and what role the school is playing in protecting the students and their families. Parents are asking for details about the student, stating that they cannot keep their children safe if they don’t know who this student is, where they live, and what classes they’ve taken. Some teachers have expressed concern about returning to work. There are rumors that some employees are planning to request 2-3 weeks off of work until they feel it’s safe to return, and others who want to request “hazard pay” now that there has been a positive case. A small group of community members have taken to social media to complain that the school district has purposefully put their children’s lives in danger and are demanding the school shut down for the remainder of 2020.

## Questions

Based on the information provided, participate in the discussion concerning the issues raised in Module 2.

1. Who will be responsible for managing public messaging and working with the media?
2. How can teachers help amplify consistent messaging from the school?
3. Who will be responsible for implementing health monitoring of employees and students, if deemed necessary? How will this be communicated?
4. What subject matter experts are available to provide guidance to leadership? How are those subject matters incorporated into the continuity process?
5. How will you manage parents, student, and public fears?
6. How will you manage employee fears?
7. What are the top three issues that concern leadership?
8. What are the gaps in addressing those issues?
9. What is the most important element required to continue essential operations?

# Module 3: Special Circumstances in the COVID Environment

## Scenario

Regulations for School Safety Drills will remain a requirement for the 2020-2021 school year. Therefore, this module of the exercise pertains to the discussion of meeting those School Safety Drills in the COVID environment. ***Appendix E contains necessary Code References for School Safety Drills.***

## Questions

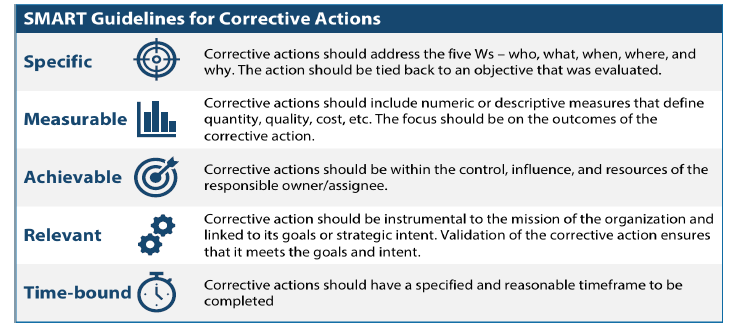
1. What pre-pandemic responsibilities does the school district have that are ongoing, or that cannot be cancelled due to COVID-19?
2. What partners need to be included in planning processes for pandemics?
3. What policies and procedures need to be amended to account for COVID protocols?
   1. Fire Drills?
   2. Tornado Drills?
   3. Lockdown Drills?
   4. School Bus Emergency Drills?
4. How will trauma support and counseling methods be affected and are there expected changes in these areas for students and staff?

# Appendix A: Corrective Action & improvement Planning

Improvement Planning is a process by which the areas for improvement from the exercise are turned into concrete, measurable corrective actions that strengthen capabilities. In this way, Improvement Planning activities can help shape a jurisdiction’s/organization’s preparedness priorities and support continuous improvement.

For each exercise objective (listed on page 2), ask the following questions:

1. What worked well in our exercise discussions?
2. What areas for improvement did we reveal through our exercise discussions?
3. What corrective actions can we develop to improve our plans, policies and procedures based on our discussions? Specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) corrective actions are actionable steps intended to resolve capability gaps and shortcomings identified in the exercise.



During development of corrective actions, the organization’s Point of Contact (POC) assumes the responsibility for the identified issues. Lastly, the organization’s POC determines an initial list of appropriate corrective actions to resolve the identified issues.

# Appendix B: Corrective Action Plan

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Area For Improvement** | **SMART Corrective Action** | **Responsible Party** | **Start Date** | **Completion Date** |
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# Appendix C: Acronyms

| Acronym | Term |
| --- | --- |
| AAR | After Action Report |
| CDC | Centers for Disease Control and Prevention |
| COVID-19 | Coronavirus disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus |
| DCLS | Division of Consolidated Laboratory Services |
| DHS | U.S. Department of Homeland Security |
| ED | Emergency Department |
| EEG | Exercise Evaluation Guide |
| HAN | Health Alert Network |
| HHS-BARDA | Health and Human Services Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority |
| HSEEP | Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program |
| ICS | Incident Command System |
| IMT | Incident Management Team |
| IHE | Institute of Higher Education |
| LPAI | Low Pathogenic Avian Influenza |
| MOU | Memorandum of Understanding |
| POD | Point of Dispensing |
| RIDT | Rapid Influenza Diagnostic Test |
| RT-PCR | Reverse Transcriptase Polymerase Chain Reaction |
| SARS | Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome |
| SitMan | Situation Manual |
| SitRep | Situational Report |
| SME | Subject-Matter Expert |
| TTX | Tabletop Exercise |
| US | United States of America |
| USDA | United States Department of Agriculture |
| VDH | Virginia Department of Health |
| WHO | World Health Organization |

# Appendix D: Sample Exercise Schedule

| Time | Activity |
| --- | --- |
| 10 minutes | Welcome, Introductions, Overview and Objectives |
| 60 minutes | Module 1:   * Scenario Vignette Presentation * Group Discussion |
| 60 minutes | Module 2:   * Scenario Vignette Presentation * Group Discussion |
| 60 minutes | Module 3:   * Scenario Vignette Presentation * Group Discussion |
| 30 minutes | Hotwash (Debrief) & Corrective Action Planning |
| 10 Minutes | Closing Remarks/Adjourn |

\*Note: All times are estimates. Each School District is encouraged to set a time of sufficient length to accomplish the exercise objectives based on their own specific needs and adjust times for the exercise modules accordingly.

# Appendix E: School Safety Drill Code References

22.1-137. Fire drills.

In every public school there shall be a fire drill at least twice during the first 20 school days of each school session, in order that pupils may be thoroughly practiced in such drills. Every public school shall hold at least two additional fire drills during the remainder of the school session.

§ 22.1-137.1. Tornado drills.

In every public school there shall be at least one tornado drill every school year, in order that students may be thoroughly practiced in such drills.

2001, c. [841](http://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?011+ful+CHAP0841).

 22.1-137.2. Lock-down drills.

A. In every public school there shall be a lock-down drill at least twice during the first 20 school days of each school session, in order that students and teachers may be thoroughly practiced in such drills. Every public school shall hold at least one additional lock-down drill after the first 60 days of the school session. Every public school shall provide the parents of enrolled students with at least 24 hours' notice before the school conducts any lock-down drill, provided, however, that nothing in this section shall be construed to require such notice to include the exact date and time of the lock-down drill.

B. Pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students shall be exempt from mandatory participation in lock-down drills during the first 60 days of the school session. Local school boards shall develop policies to implement such exemption. Notwithstanding the foregoing provisions of this subsection, each pre-kindergarten and kindergarten student shall participate in each lock-down drill after the first 60 days of each school session.

§ 22.1-137.3. School safety procedures; emergency situations; annual training.

In addition to complying with the requirements for drills set forth in §§ [22.1-137](https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/22.1-137/), [22.1-137.1](https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/22.1-137.1/), and [22.1-137.2](https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/22.1-137.2/), each school board shall develop training on safety procedures in the event of an emergency situation on school property. Such training shall be delivered to each student and employee in each school at least once each school year.

8VAC20-131-260. School Facilities and Safety

Part VI  
School Facilities and Safety

B. Each school shall maintain records of regular safety, health, and fire inspections that have been conducted and certified by local health and fire departments. The frequency of such inspections shall be determined by the local school board in consultation with the local health and fire departments. In addition, the school administration shall:

1. Equip all exit doors with panic hardware as required by the Virginia Statewide Building Code ([13VAC5-63](https://law.lis.virginia.gov/admincode/title13/agency5/chapter63/));

2. Conduct a fire drill at least twice during the first 20 days of school and conduct at least two additional fire drills during the remainder of the school term. Evacuation routes for students shall be posted in each room; and

3. Conduct a lock-down drill at least twice during the first 20 days of school and conduct at least two additional lock-down drills during the remainder of the school term.

22.1-184. School bus emergency drills.

At every public school having public school buses there shall be held, at least once during the first ninety calendar days of each school session and oftener if necessary, a drill in leaving school buses under emergency circumstances.

8VAC20-70-110. Pupil Transportation Safety Instruction.

Pupil transportation instruction shall be included in the school curriculum, including demonstration and practices of safety procedures.

1. At the Pre-K-1 grade levels, initial safety training shall occur during the first week of school with additional training on a periodic basis during the year.

2. Emergency exit drills shall be practiced by all pupil riders at least twice a year, the first occurring during the first 30 instructional days and the second in the second semester and shall include the school bus driver. Summer session evacuation drills should be performed as needed.

3. A copy of bus rider safety rules shall be sent to parents at the beginning of the school year. The information shall include a request that parents or their designee accompany their young children to and from the bus stop.

Department of Education Fire Dill from guide

*Code of Virginia*

* *§ 22.1-137. Fire Drills.*

*In every public school there shall be a fire drill at least twice during the first 20 school days of each school session, in order that pupils may be thoroughly practiced in such drills. Every public school shall hold at least two additional fire drills during the remainder of the school session.*

* Section 8VAC20-131-260 of the Board of Education’s *Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia (Standards of Accreditation)* requires that “every public school conduct a fire drill at least twice during first 20 days of school and conduct at least two additional fire drills during the remainder of the school term; ...”

The *Virginia Statewide Fire Prevention Code* (*SFPC*) (Sections 403.5.1, 404.2.1, 404.2.2, 405.1, and 405.2) requires that a school conduct:

* A fire drill within the first 10 days of school and
* At least one fire drill per month.

NOTE: A school conducting (1) fire drill in the first 10 school days, a second fire drill at anytime within the first 20 school days, and one fire drill every month thereafter will meet all requirements.