



ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

August 20, 2026

RE: 2026 Minimum Requirements for Emergency Operations Plans

Dear Superintendents, Charter Leaders, Principals, and School Safety Partners,

The Arizona Department of Education (ADE), in collaboration with the Arizona Department of Emergency and Military Affairs (AZ DEMA), is pleased to announce the release of the 2026 Minimum Requirements for Emergency Operations Plans (EOPs).

Arizona law has long required every school site to maintain an EOP that meets state minimum standards under A.R.S. 15-341(A)(31), and this requirement applies to charter schools through A.R.S. 15-183(E)(1).

The 2026 edition was developed in response to the recommendations identified in the Auditor General's Special Audit Report, with a goal to provide greater clarity, and promote statewide consistency in school safety planning, preparedness, response, and recovery efforts. ADE prioritized stakeholder engagement throughout the revision process by working closely with the Arizona Comprehensive School Safety Advisory Council and specialized working groups representing urban and rural school communities, including district and charter administrators, emergency management professionals, law enforcement, school nurses, school mental health professionals, and community partners.

The 2026 edition streamlines and clarifies minimum requirements while strengthening school preparedness through enhanced training expectations and adoption of a unified standard response protocol. To further support implementation, ADE developed the EOP Template designed to assist schools in meeting statutory requirements. This standardized approach will also support state-level review, technical assistance, accountability, and continuous improvement efforts.

Schools can expect the following:

- Clearer guidance with statutory and required elements of an EOP through improved organization and clarified expectations.
- Improved usability to help schools develop, maintain, and update compliant plans.
- Enhanced alignment with Incident Command System (ICS) principles, including clearly defined roles and responsibilities.

- Foundational training and increased training frequency to strengthen preparedness and operational readiness.
- Embedded resources, templates, definitions, and references to support implementation and reduce ambiguity.

Schools are encouraged to begin reviewing their current EOPs, evaluating existing documentation and safety team structures, and identifying areas that may require updates to align with the 2026 Requirements. **Early preparation will support a smooth transition to the ADE EOP Template by March 1, 2027, and Standard Response Protocol implementation by July 1, 2027.**

ADE and AZ DEMA will work collaboratively to develop live and recorded webinar sessions to assist school safety teams as they transition to the ADE EOP Template and implement the requirements.

We express gratitude to schools across Arizona for their continued commitment to creating safe, healthy, and resilient school communities.

For additional information, including resources and implementation support, please review the [Frequently Asked Questions](#) and contact the ADE School Safety Unit at SchoolSafetySocialWellness@azed.gov. School personnel are encouraged to sign up for the [listserv](#) to receive upcoming communications.

Sincerely,



Mike Kurtenbach
Executive Director, ADE School Safety Unit