

# ***Place of Worship Safety and Security Guide***

## ***Baldwin County Sheriff's Office***

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### **Introduction:**

Due to recent events revolving around acts of violence and mass shootings at various houses of worship across the United States, the Baldwin County Sheriff's Office has developed this guide. The items presented are for discussion and consideration only.

### **Purpose:**

The purpose of this guide is to provide direction for places of worship regarding reasonable measures of safety to confront the broad spectrum of threats and emergencies they may face during hours of worship. It discusses actions that may be taken before during and after an incident in order to reduce the impact on people property and loss of life.

This publication should not be relied upon as legal advice, and designated as a guide only. You should consult with your own legal advisor and liability insurance companies prior to implementing a particular plan.

For more information concerning this publication you may contact the Baldwin County Sheriff's Office at the appropriate contact information.

### **Prevention:**

Places of worship, planning and oversight committee.

#### **#1. Who:**

Pastoral staff, elders, deacons, key congregational members (in regards to law enforcement personnel, EMS, fire, military, lawyers, counselors, doctors)

#### **#2. Goal:**

To provide a forum for developing, implementing, and continually refining a planning process to address the safety needs of your place of worship before, during, and after a critical incident.

#### **#3. Objectives:**

- A. complete a security risk assessment to include the facility, policy, procedures, business practices, and operations.
- B. Adopt a security plan
- C. Assemble a security team and appoint security team leader to implement the plan.
- D. Coordinate training and education for the congregation

### **Security risk assessment of your place of worship:**

#### **#1. Who:**

Sheriff, local law enforcement, fire and rescue, and private consultants.

#### **#2. Goal:**

To assess the existing risk threats and vulnerabilities of your place of worship to include the following:

- A. Facility
- B. Staff and volunteers
- C. Congregation demographics
- D. Childcare protection protocol
- E. Surrounding community threats
- F. Communications internal and external
- G. Policy & procedures
- H. Handling of money during worship services

**Place of worship security plan:**

**#1. Who:**

Place of worship security team and collaboration with government entities and have responsibility in the plan including first responder such as Sheriff, police, fire, and EMS.

**#2. Goal:**

To adopt a basic plan of operation before, during, and after, a critical incident in a place of worship, during a time of worship.

**#3. Framework:**

- A. Basic facility security measures should include facility blueprints, cameras and alarms, locked and unlocked doors and windows, exterior lighting.
- B. Established role of the security team before, during, and after a critical incident, including duties such as communications, preparation drills, role of leaders, perimeter and parking lot monitoring, placement of security team members and facility during times of worship, childcare protocol, duties during a critical incident to include 911 call, coordinate evacuation of lockdown procedures to confront the threat, managing safety zones, point of contact with first responders, assisting first responders.
- C. Establish an evacuation procedure
- D. Establish a lockdown protocol
- E. Adopt a crisis intervention stress management strategy
- F. Analyze congregation demographics to include number of children, senior citizens, persons with disabilities, people with criminal background such as sex offenders
- G. Implementing a firearms policy which specifies who, if anyone, can or cannot carry a firearm in a place of worship. These options include the following:
  - Allow all concealed carry permit persons to carry concealed handguns on the premise if not otherwise in violation of the law
  - Restrict the concealed carry of handgun is only designated personnel who are lawfully able to possess a firearm on the premise
  - Prohibit all persons from carrying firearms, open carry or concealed carry
  - Allow any person who lawfully possesses firearms to carry openly on the premises.

Refer to Alabama criminal code 13A-11-50: 13A-11-52 regarding concealed carry and open carry laws applicable to the state of Alabama.

### **Training and education strategy:**

- #1. Identify the audience:
  - A. Staff and volunteers
  - B. Congregation
  - C. Community
  - D. Collaborative partners
  
- #2. Determine delivery method
  - A. Presenters
  - B. Presentation style
  - C. Materials handouts

During the incident, security team leader activates a security plan

- #1. Designated person calls 911
- #2. Lockdown or evacuate sanctuary depending on the threat
- #3. Lockdown or evacuate childcare area depending on the threat
- #4. Set up- manage safety zones

### **FBI active shooter protocol plan:**

- #1. Run
  - A. Follow instructions of the team
  - B. Use escape routes identified by the security teams
  - C. Leave personal belongings behind
  - D. Proceed to safe zones identified by security plan and is directed by the security team
  - E. Take others with if possible but do not stay behind if others will not go
- #2 Hide
  - A. Lock or barricade doors
  - B. Close and lock windows, close blinds
  - C. Turn off all lights
  - D. Silence electronic devices
  - E. Remain silent
  - F. Remain in place until given all clear by security team or first responders
- #3 Fight  
(confronting the shooter as a last resort) try to disrupt or incapacitate the shooter by using aggressive force and items around the area such as fire extinguishers are chairs
- #4. Safe Zones  
Designated security team members must manage and control safe zones until first responders arrive

### **Interaction with first responders**

Law enforcement's first priority must be to locate and stop the person or persons posing a threat and they will not stop to help the injured. Law enforcement officers may not be able to distinguish the good guys from the bad.

Congregants and staff including the security team members should be trained to do the following when first responders arrive.

- A. Follow all commands such as getting down on the ground, dropping all objects, including cell phones from their hands, and putting their hands in the air.
- B. Clearly identify yourself verbally.
- C. Once identified and cleared, the security team should meet with first responders and provide as much information as possible to include location of safety zones, last known location of the threat, facility access points and childcare location and accessibility.

## **Aftermath**

### **Place of worship security team:**

1. Brief first responders upon arrival.
2. Continue to manage safe zones and assist first responders as directed.
3. Identify a place of worship spokesperson to address the media and public along with first responder's media spokesperson.
4. Coordinate all activities with first responders.

### **First responders**

1. Assume command of the critical incident
2. Treat and transport injured individuals from crime scene to safe zones and medical facilities
3. Initiate the investigation
4. Interview witnesses
5. Preserve the crime scene
6. Coordinate continuing activities with the security team
7. Appoint a designee to communicate with media. Include a place of worship media spokesperson
8. Debrief the place of worship security team after the threat is over.

### **Reunification Plan**

1. Identify a safe location separate from distractions include media, general public and family members trying to reunite with loved ones.
2. Provide family members with timely, accurate and relevant information.
3. Be prepared to speak with family members about what to expect when reunited with their love ones.
4. Ensure effective communication with those who have language barriers or other accommodations such as hearing-impaired.

### **Crisis Intervention Stress Management (CISM)**

1. Security plan should include a CISM strategy. What is CISM? CISM is a comprehensive interrogative multicomponent crisis intervention system. CISM is considered comprehensive because it consists of multiple crisis intervention components. CISM interventions range from pre-crisis phase through the acute-crisis phase, to the post-crisis phase. CISM is also considered comprehensive and it consistent of counseling which may be provided to individuals through small groups, large groups, families, organizations, and even community.

The seven core components of CISM are defined below:

1. Pre-crisis preparation: this includes stress management education and crisis training.
  2. Disaster education with staff congregation and community.
  3. Defusing. This is a structured small group discussion provided within hours of crisis for the purpose of assessment
  4. Critical incident stress debriefing (CISD) refers to the Mitchell Model, a seven-phase structured group discussion usually provided 1 to 10 days post crisis and designed to medicate acute symptoms, assess the need for follow-up, and if possible, provide a sense of post-crisis psychological closure.
  5. One on One counseling or psychological support after the incident
  6. Family crisis counseling
  7. Follow-up referral for assessment and treatment if necessary
2. Security Team Leader designee should activate the CISM strategy immediately.

### **Continuity Of Operations Plan (COOP)**

1. Is your place of worship still accessible after the critical incident.
2. Consider a temporary relocation of your place of worship if necessary.
3. Analyze the impact of the critical incident on place of worship leaders, Staff and Congregation to assess their ability to continue in their duties.

### **Planning and oversight committee review of the critical incident:**

1. Review all reports filed by place of worship security team and first responders
2. Adjust security plan based upon reports and lessons learned
3. Update security plan and conduct training
4. Provide copies of new security plan to all first responders within the community, Sheriff, police, fire and EMS.

### **References:**

North Carolina Sheriffs Association  
National Sheriffs Association  
Baldwin County Sheriff's Office, Alabama

"A primer on critical incident stress management (CISM)" by George S, Everly, Jr., PhD,  
The International Critical Incident Stress Foundation.  
2010

<http://www.alea.gov/Home/wfContent.aspx?PLH1=plhCitizens-ActiveShooter>

The link above is to ALEA's website which features the RUN, HIDE, FIGHT video.