



November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022

Dear Parents,

As we continue through this school year, we would like to take this opportunity to speak with you about school safety and what we are doing to continue to improve our safety procedures throughout the county. First and foremost, you should know that the safety of our children is something that we are passionate about and have placed at the top of our list as public safety providers.

In 2018, we established the Manistee County School Safety Committee. This committee puts law enforcement and school administrators together each month to discuss safety issues, potential improvements, truancy processes, as well as many other topics. One of the first tasks we accomplished as a committee was to establish uniform emergency response plans for each school in our community. Uniformity throughout the county allows for a more streamlined response to potential safety concerns at our schools and allows for a uniform law enforcement response as well.

One of our recent accomplishments as a committee was hosting a threat assessment training within our county. This provided training to our law enforcement, school staff, and staff from Centra-Wellness Network on evaluating threats immediately when they are received. This is a collaborative approach which brings all our stakeholders together to determine the legitimacy of a school threat.

As parents, it is important that you understand the terminology we use when it comes to the schools your student attends. Below you will find the definitions of the term "Lockdown" and the term "Secure Mode". Please read these definitions carefully.

**LOCKDOWN** – A lockdown may be initiated for several reasons. Typically, lockdowns are initiated in instances where there is violence in the building, or the potential threat of violence inside the school building. In certain cases, the school may be put in lockdown due to a threat at a neighboring school until the threat can be adequately investigated.

During a lockdown, classrooms doors are locked, lights are turned off, and students are gathered inside the classroom out of view from the hallways. Teachers and staff have received training to begin to barricade classroom doors if they believe violence is occurring inside the building. These drills are exercised at least three times during the school year and our schools have become well versed in their responsibilities during a lockdown.

It is important to remember that the very worst thing you can do if your student's school goes into lockdown is to respond to the school. Every time there is a lockdown, we see several parents who arrive at the school and demand entry. This causes valuable law enforcement resources to be expended on parents responding to the school rather than conducting the investigation into the potential threat. If your child's school goes into lockdown and needs to be picked up, the school will notify parents of the reunification location as soon as possible.





**SECURE MODE** – Secure Mode may be activated if there is a safety concern at another school or in the area of the school. For instance, if an officer makes a traffic stop near a school and the suspect runs, the school may be put into secure mode. Another instance may be if there was a security concern at a neighboring school, secure mode may be initiated to increase the security of the school.

During Secure Mode, access to the school building is restricted. Students will not be allowed outside the building (recess, etc.). Although Secure Mode allows for increased physical security, it allows for “business as usual” inside the classrooms.

As with Lockdowns, if the school goes into Secure Mode, please do not respond to the school campus. The school will notify you as soon as possible regarding the reasoning for going into Secure Mode.

School safety is something that your local law enforcement partners as well as the staff and administration of your schools take very seriously. We are constantly looking to improve our response to potential threats and violence. If you have questions or concerns about potential safety and security issues within your child’s school building, please reach out to the agency who has jurisdiction over that building. The Manistee City Police Department is responsible for safety and security issues with the Manistee Area Public Schools and Casman Academy. For Kaleva Norman Dickson, Onekama, or Bear Lake, please contact the Manistee County Sheriff’s Office.

If you have questions regarding school safety and how law enforcement has been working with our schools to improve our response, we encourage you to reach out to us.

Thank you,

A blue ink signature of Sheriff Brian Gutowski, written over a horizontal line.

**Sheriff Brian Gutowski**  
**Manistee County Sheriff’s Office**

A black ink signature of Chief Josh Glass, written over a horizontal line.

**Chief Josh Glass**  
**Manistee City Police Department**

A black ink signature of Director Robert Medacco, written over a horizontal line.

**Director Robert Medacco**  
**LRBOI Department of Public Safety**