

ISLAND SECURITY POLICY INSTITUTE

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POLICY BRIEF

Safe Schools in Isolated Communities

K-12 School Safety Policy for Hawaii and Pacific Island Schools Where Backup Is Far Away

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **Federal K-12 school safety requirements were developed assuming reasonably rapid law enforcement backup. Island schools in rural Hawaii and Pacific territories face response times of 20-60 minutes — making standard protocols inadequate from the moment an incident begins.**
- **The ALICE training protocol assumes 5-7 minute law enforcement response times. For schools with 45-minute response times, the protocol requires fundamental redesign — not marginal adjustment.**
- **Pacific Island territory school systems face additional resource constraints compounding the response time problem.**

A principal at a rural Molokai school: "Our plan says call 911 and secure the campus. What they don't tell you is that our nearest police officer is forty-five minutes away on a good day. We have 340 children in this building and we have to keep them safe for forty-five minutes with whatever we have."¹

The STOP School Violence Act and Clery Act requirements for postsecondary institutions were developed with reference to school safety conditions that include reasonably rapid law enforcement response.² Island schools in rural Hawaii and Pacific territories face structural conditions these requirements do not account for.

Policy Recommendations

1. Develop Hawaii and Pacific Island-specific K-12 active threat response protocols calibrated to actual documented law enforcement response times rather than continental benchmark assumptions.
2. Fund School Resource Officer programs for rural Hawaii and Pacific Island territory schools with compensation packages accounting for cost-of-living and geographic challenges.
3. Establish island school emergency communications infrastructure programs ensuring every Hawaii and Pacific territory school has reliable multi-channel emergency communication capability.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

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