



October 26th, 2026

Dear Parents,

As we start 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 to discuss safety issues, potential improvements, truancy processes, as well as many other topics.

The Manistee County School Safety Committee continues to be very active. Improving, updating, and refining our processes continues to be the focus of the group as we move forward. One of the newer improvements has been the installation of blue lights outside of most school buildings. These blue lights indicate that the school is in lockdown. If you arrive at the school and the blue lights outside are active, please do not drop students off or approach the building. Leave the area immediately and wait for the lockdown to be cleared.

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.

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 come to school property. 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. Often times, a lockdown is lifted after the threat is cleared and students return to their normal schedule. If an incident occurs that requires your student to leave the school, the district will notify parents of the reunification site and pickup instructions as soon as practicable.

SECURE MODE – Secure Mode may be activated if there is a safety concern at another school or around 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 come to the school campus. The school will notify you as soon as possible regarding the reason 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 at the Manistee Middle/High School, Manistee Elementary, and Casman Academy. For the Manistee Early Childhood Center, 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 handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "B. Gutowski", written over a horizontal line.

Sheriff Brian Gutowski

Manistee County Sheriff's Office

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "J. Glass", written over a horizontal line.

Chief Josh Glass

Manistee City Police Department

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "R. Medacco", written over a horizontal line.

Director Robert Medacco

LRBOI Department of Public Safety

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "T. House", written over a horizontal line.

Lieutenant Travis House

Michigan State Police Cadillac Post