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PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NJCDD LEADS STATEWIDE EFFORT TO IMPROVE SCHOOL SAFETY FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

(TRENTON) – The New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities (NJCDD) released a comprehensive report, *School Safety Issues Affecting Students with Disabilities: A Call to Action*. The report includes tangible school safety solutions for students with disabilities.

“While most schools have comprehensive plans and carry out drills for emergency situations, few have an effective comprehensive plan to address the complex, individualized needs of students with disabilities,” said Mercedes Witowsky, executive director, NJCDD.

NJCDD led statewide efforts to establish a forum to discuss issues, challenges, and best practices related to the needs of students with disabilities. More than 70 stakeholders from the public and private sectors participated in a summit. Major stakeholders from New Jersey’s special education and emergency response communities explored issues and generated solutions to improve school safety for students with disabilities.

“When I was in school my evacuation plan was to wheel myself into the ladies’ bathroom, go into the handicapped stall—the only place big enough for my power wheelchair, and turn around with my back to the door,” said Kevin Nuñez, vice chair, NJCDD. “I was told that if a shooter came in, the bullets would have to go through the metal door and my wheelchair before they hit me. I was told to wait there, alone, in the dark. That was the plan.”

“The absence of school-wide evacuation planning for students with disabilities and special healthcare needs is a gross oversight.” said Peg Kinsell, policy director, SPAN Parent Advocacy Network. “Our report includes recommendations that should help ensure the safety of students with disabilities in New Jersey. Run, hide, fight is not close to sufficient planning when considering students with disabilities or special healthcare needs.”

The complete report is available [here](#)

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