School Safety

What Parents Need to Know

July 2019

The District has worked closely with local law enforcement and emergency management officials to develop a plan in the event of an emergency and to respond quickly to situations as they arise. All schools in the district have plans for events such as inclement weather, fire, dangerous items on campus, and other threats or hazards that may arise. The district also provides training to staff to assist them in preparing for a wide range of potential emergencies throughout the school year so that students and staff are aware of the most effective and safe emergency responses.

**Emergency Protocols**

Parents should be aware of the common terminology used in the school when responding to threats or potential threats:

* **Evacuation:** *Used to move students and staff out of the building.*
  + With a simple evacuation, students and staff leave and move to a nearby pre-designated safe location and return to the school building right after the cause of evacuation is resolved. Schools practice evacuations regularly (often monthly) during fire drills.
* **Relocation:** *Used to move students and staff to a pre-designated alternate site following evacuation when it is determined that returning to the school building will not take place within a reasonable period of time.*
  + Depending on the time of day and the circumstances, students may be released early or school activities may be changed or put on hold until they are able to return to the school building. Plans should also be in place for students and staff with limited mobility who may need assistance moving to the relocation site.
* **Shelter-in-place:** *Used during severe weather or other environmental threats* 
  + This is a precaution aimed to keep people safe while remaining indoors. In schools, shelter-in-place involves having all students, staff, and visitors take shelter when there is an incident outside the building such as severe weather or an external gas leak or chemical hazard.
* **Lockdown:** *Used when there is a perceived danger inside the building.*
  + Students are protected from an incident within the school building by remaining behind locked classroom doors. There is no movement in the building/instruction stops.
* **Lockout:** *Used to secure the building from a potential threat outside the building, such as when there is criminal activity in the neighborhood.*
  + During a lockout, access to the building is restricted, but there may be some limited movement within the building.

**Parents Play a Key Role in Emergency Response**

During an emergency, school and district officials must act quickly and follow established emergency protocols to safeguard students and staff, secure the school, and communicate accurate and timely information. Parents can assist greatly by helping with preparation before, during, and after the emergency. Here are a few critical steps you can take:

**Before**

* Give school officials accurate contact information so you can be reached in case of emergency. Keep the information current by notifying officials of any changes as soon as they occur. Multiple contact sources are helpful, including home and office telephone and fax numbers, mobile telephone numbers and paging information, email addresses, etc. Also important, in case you cannot be reached, are the up-to-date names and contact information of family members, friends, and any other adults authorized as emergency contacts for your child.
* Talk to your child about your personal emergency notification arrangements and let your child and school officials know if you anticipate being unavailable or difficult to reach for an extended period of time.
* Stay informed about potentially serious situations, such as inclement weather.
* Monitor local media when serious conditions arise at school or in the community that might result in school evacuation, early dismissal, or school closing.
* Notify school officials if you see or hear of anything that could create a danger at school. If you prefer, you may call the anonymous Speak Out Hotline at XXXXXXXX.
* Take some time to develop a family emergency plan. Information on how your family can prepare for an emergency while at home can be found at ready.gov. A Family Emergency Playbook for developing a plan in the event you and your children are separated during an emergency can be found at: <http://www.missingkids.com/ourwork/training>

**During**

* In the event of an emergency **DO NOT CALL THE SCHOOL**. The school’s highest priority is to first evaluate and respond to the emergency and ensure the immediate safety of students; and then to notify parents/guardians. The District emergency alert system will provide accurate and timely information.
* **Do Not Drive to the Campus** unless directed to do so. School campuses must be clear of cars to allow for emergency vehicles and you may block critical emergency services from reaching your child. In some instances, your child will be relocated for their safety and not be present on campus. Stay posted to the emergency alert system for information on where to pick up your child.
* Each emergency presents a unique set of variables. Those variables include nature of emergency, time of emergency, estimated duration of emergency, impact on immediate safety of students, direction given by law enforcement and emergency services agencies, and others.
* School notification system accuracy is dependent on making sure all information is up-to-date in the school district's database. Any adjustments in your contact information can be made by contacting your local school. **It is important to keep your contact information up-to-date at all times, even changes in email addresses.**
* When you receive a message from the school, please regard it as very important. The caller id will be XXX-XXX-XXXX. Don't hang up. If you pick up the voice mail at a later date, listen to the entire message. **Do not call the school or the District office**. If it is an emergency notification, it will include instructions.
* In the event of an emergency, turn to local media for additional information.

**After**

* Stay informed and monitor accurate and timely information from the district through the emergency notification system and/or XXXXXXXX. Remember, you may be receiving text messages from your child that do not accurately reflect the emergency situation.
* Be prepared to pick up your child at an off-campus reunification site.
  + **Bring Identification**- You must bring Picture ID to identify yourself for release of any student to your care. Do not attempt to remove your child or any other child from school without providing identification. You will be expected to follow emergency protocols and processes for reunification of children. These processes have been put into place for the safety and protection of your child. Please cooperate with district and school officials.
* Provide emotional support to a child in the aftermath of a crisis situation. Watch for clues that your child might want to talk, but understand that not all children will want or need to talk about these events. Some children may not express their concerns verbally. Be aware of signs that children might be in distress, e.g., changes in behavior, anxiety, sleep problems, acting out, problems at school or with academic work. If you need assistance, consider talking with your child's doctor, a mental health professional, or the school nurse, counselor, or social worker at your child's school. Additional information to support your child following a crisis is provided by the American Academy of Pediatrics: <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living/emotional-wellness/Pages/Responding-to-Childrens-Emotional-Needs-During-Times-of-Crisis.aspx>

**Talking to Your Child About Emergencies**

For some children, even participation in a drill may cause some emotional distress, especially if it reminds them of a prior crisis event or if they otherwise are feeling vulnerable or anxious. As a parent, you are in the best position to help your child cope. Any conversation with a child must be developmentally appropriate.

* **Young children** need brief simple information that should be balanced with reassurance. This includes informing children that their school and home are safe and that adults are available to protect them. Young children often gauge how threatening or serious an event is by adult reactions. Young children respond well to basic assurance by adults and simple examples of school safety, like reminding them the exterior doors are locked.
* **Upper elementary and early middle school children** may​ be more vocal in asking questions about whether they are truly safe and what is being done at their school. They may need assistance separating reality from fantasy. Parents can share the information they have about the school's safety plan and any other relevant communication to ease their child's mind.
* **Upper middle school and high school students** may have strong and varying opinions about causes of violence in school and society. Parents should stress the role that students have in maintaining safe schools by following the school's safety guidelines (e.g., not providing building access to strangers, reporting strangers on campus, reporting threats to school safety made by students or community members, etc.).

**Key Points to Remember**

* Keep your school’s emergency contact information current
* In an emergency, do not call the school
* Listen for accurate and timely information via the school emergency alert system
* Bring identification when picking up your child following an emergency
* Provide emotional support to your child following an emergency