

BULLETIN NO. 8

Family Reunification



Purpose: *The Family Reunification Protocol is used to ensure a safe and systematic means of accounting for students and reuniting parents/guardians with their children from a secure site following a school evacuation. This protocol is implemented whenever a crisis makes it unsafe or impractical to reunite students with their parents/guardians at the school.*

Principal

- Advise the district crisis team of the decision to implement the reunification protocol.
- Select the appropriate reunification site (from the list of pre-planned sites).

For security reasons, the location of the selected site(s) should not be revealed to the public before a crisis occurs.

- Notify the contact person at the site to verify it is available and provide approximate timetable for student arrival.
- Determine how the reunification process and site will be announced to the public
- Implement perimeter control procedures.
- Coordinate student transportation to the reunification site with the transportation director and establish a staging area at the school for bus loading.
- Designate a Reunification Site Commander.
- Request the district office to send personnel to help staff the Family Reunification Center.

Reunification Site Director

- Establish a command post.
- Coordinate the set up of the site into functional areas (see diagram below) and assign supervisors for each area.
- Meet and stage incoming staff, volunteers and public safety personnel.
- Assign staff to calm waiting parents/guardians and explain that an orderly process is required for the safety of the students.
- Check identification of all non-uniformed personnel who arrive to assist.
- Secure a holding area for arriving students and staff away from waiting family members.
- Set up an information area for parents/guardians to sign-in and to check identification.
- Set up a student release checkout area where students will be escorted to meet their parent/guardian.
- Set up a counseling area and direct staff to escort parents/guardians of any injured, missing or deceased student to the area for staff to provide notification in private.
- Set up a media staging area and notify the school media liaison of the location.
- Only release students to authorized persons after checking proof of identity and signing a student release form. Verify with the custodial parent before releasing student to anyone else and request driver's license information if necessary.
- Ensure availability of information sheets for parents to help them identify signs of psychological stress and school and community counseling resources.
- Instruct parents/guardians to leave the site to make room for others once they have signed out their student.

Teachers

- Provide a list of students to the reunification site staff upon arrival. Note any missing students.
- Ensure special needs students and staff are assisted; request help if needed.
- Follow the instructions of the Family Reunification Center staff when you arrive. Assist in staffing the site as requested.

Continued on Page 2

BULLETIN NO. 8

Family Reunification (Page 2)



Reunification Center Functional Areas

Student Area

Purpose: Provide a secure staging area for students waiting to be reunited with parents/guardians.

- Maintain an updated list of students/staff in the area,
- Set up a triage, if necessary.
- Send students to checkout area when summoned.

Information Area

Purpose: Serve as the primary source of information for parents, staff members, public safety personnel, and the media.

- Receive the passenger lists from arriving buses/vehicles and pass to the Checkout Area.
- Receive incoming staff, volunteers and public safety personnel and communicate assignments.
- Debrief staff on any updates to the crisis.
- Maintain a list of all personnel at the reunification center.
- Maintain a list of the injured or deceased and inform personnel in the checkout and counseling areas.

Note: A Media Area may be established adjacent to the Information Area, but only public information should be provided.

Checkout Area

Purpose: Reunification and discharge point for parents/guardians and their children. Adequate staffing should be available to provide timely check out of large numbers of students.

- Parents/guardians should be directed to this area upon arrival.
- Adults must show proper identification to staff.
- Non-parents must have pre-authorization from a parent before leaving with a child.

Counseling Area

Purpose: Provide immediate counseling and crisis intervention services to those in need.

- Staffed with trained counseling and mental health professionals.
- Provide private areas for grief counseling.
- Provide any required notifications of death and serious injury (trained personnel only).

Picture Reunification Center Diagram

Area Supervisor

A supervisor is assigned for each functional area that is responsible to:

- Supervise all activities within the area.
- Provide instructions to staff within the area.
- Brief the reunification site director as requested.
- Maintain a list of all staff within the area.

The Iowa School Safety Coalition was formed in December 2012. Participating organizations include Iowa Homeland Security & Emergency Management, Iowa State Fire Marshal, Iowa Division of Intelligence and Fusion Center, Iowa Department of Education, Iowa Emergency Management Association, Des Moines Police Department, Iowa State Education Association, Iowa Association of School Boards, School Administrators of Iowa, American Institute of Architects – Iowa Chapter, EMC Insurance Companies.