

Elliott County Schools Student/Parent Reunification Procedures

When an emergency/critical incident occurs at school, there is a plan in place to allow parents and children to be reunited efficiently and safely. The Elliott County School District Reunification Plan will be used for on-site evacuation, off-site evacuation, or in situations that will not allow the school to follow their regular routine student release.

In any of these events, an automated call will be sent to all households explaining the process for picking up your child. Children will only be released to those listed on their sign out sheet, and the person picking up the child will be required to provide proper identification.

The automated call will announce where the separate staging, check-in, and reunification areas are located.

- The staging area is the location where all students will be assembled for reunification purposes. This is where teachers/staff will follow student accounting procedures to ensure that everyone is accounted for. Assigned staff shall stay with students until they are released.
- The check-in area is the location where staff will setup for parents to initiate the pick-up process.
- The reunification area is the location where parents can wait to be reunited with their children. *This location will be away from the check-in location to prevent overcrowding

Check-in staff will greet parents/guardians and determine child/children to be released. They will use student emergency information to verify who can pick-up a child/children. The parent/guardian picking up the child/children must provide a photo ID for verification purposes, and must sign a "Child Release Form" for the child/children they pick up. They will then proceed to the Reunification Area with the "Child Release Form" and present it to the staff member identified as runner. The runner will collect the "Child Release Form" from the parent, locate the child/children in the staging area, and escort them to the reunification area. The runner will verify the release form against the affected parent/guardian's photo ID before releasing the child/children, (photo verification is not required if the staff member/runner is familiar with the parent picking up the child). The runner will sign off on and return the release form to the check-in staff as soon as possible for filing purposes.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this document is to provide for the orderly and coordinated reunification of students and families of all or any part of the population of Elliott County Schools (ECS) if an emergency situation occurs that warrants evacuating and/or closing early.

SITUATION: There are a wide variety of emergency situations that might require student/parent reunification. 1) Student/parent reunification may be needed if an ECS site is evacuated or closed as a result of a hazardous materials transportation accident, major fire, natural gas leak, localized flash flooding, school violence, bomb threat, or terrorist attack.

ASSUMPTIONS: While some emergency situations are slow to develop, others occur without warning. Hence, there may be time for deliberate student/parent reunification or a student/parent reunification may have to be conducted with minimal preparation time. In the case of short notice, there may be little time to obtain personnel and equipment from external sources to support reunification operation. Persons other than those on the student's emergency release form will try to pick up students during an emergency

CONCEPTS OF OPERATION:

GENERAL

- Student/parent reunification is the means for safe and orderly reunion of students and families in the event of an emergency evacuation or school closing. In planning for Student/parent reunification, the characteristics of the hazard and its magnitude, intensity, speed of onset, and anticipation duration are all significant factors. These will determine the number of people to be reunited, the need for reception facilities, and the extent of traffic control and security required.
- ECS must be prepared to conduct both small-scale and large-scale reunification at all times of the day both from known hazard areas and from unexpected incident locations.
- ECS will use a double-gate system. Student/Parent Reunification Team members will be located in two areas. The first area, the "holding area," will be where students can wait for their parents. The second area, will include both the "report point" and the "student release point" where adult caregivers will report and wait for their students to join them. These will be two distinctly separate areas, but they will be in close proximity to one another.
 - **STAGING AREA:** Designated classroom teachers will remain with their assigned students in the staging area. Each will have the list of the students assigned to their supervision, including the exact name of their parents/guardians. Anyone who was absent at the start of the school day or who departed prior to the incident will be noted.
 - **CHECK-IN AREA:** When a parent/guardian arrives at the Check-In Area, he/she will be asked for the name of the student(s) being picked up. The parent/guardian will then be required to show proof of their identification (driver's licenses or other government issued photo identification). When the staff member confirms the parent/guardian's identity and authority to pick up the student, the staff member will use a runner or a radio/cellular telephone to notify the Staging Area that the designated student(s) are to be escorted to the release point (**REUNIFICATION AREA**). When the

student(s) reports to the release point, the staff member will have the parent/guardian sign for the student(s) on the Student Release Form and the student(s) are released to the adult caregiver.

- The parent/guardian must be notified that their child(ren) have been injured or for some other reason are not available for release to them, the staff member at the Reunification Area will not indicate the status of the child but will ask the parent to report to a nearby room (Notification Area) for further processing.
- NOTIFICATION AREA: A Recovery Team Member (e.g. counselors, site administrators, minister, etc.) will be responsible for notifying parents that their child is not available for pick-up for any of the following reason: injured, arrested, witness, etc. The Recovery Team Member will:
 - provide available information regarding the child(ren) in a sensitive way.
 - will assure the parent/guardian that everything possible is being done to safeguard their child or their child's remains.
 - will inform the parent/guardian where they are to await further information about how they will be reunited with their child(ren) or the remains of their child(ren).
 - will assist the parent/guardian with their trauma.
 - will make available to the parent/guardian means for communicating with other family members and supporters.
 - will shelter the parent/guardian from media representatives.
- At the end of the day, teachers will call all those parent/guardians who have not yet picked up their child(ren).

STUDENT/PARENT REUNIFICATION DECISIONS

- The IC shall assess the need for evacuation, plan evacuations, or school closures that may require activating the student/parent reunification process. Student/Parent Reunification planning should resolve the following questions:
 - How will parents and guardians be advised of what to do?
 - What do evacuees need to take with them?
 - What travel routes should be used by parents and guardians?
 - What transportation support is needed?
 - What traffic control is needed?
 - Does the anticipated duration of the evacuation make it necessary to activate shelter and care facilities?
- Reunifications that must be conducted because of incidents that occur without warning may have to be planned quickly and carried out with only those resources that can be mobilized rapidly.

TRAFFIC CONTROL

- Traffic will be controlled by a School Resource Officer (SRO), local law enforcement, or a trained school staff member.

- If at all possible, two-way traffic will be maintained on all routes to allow continued access for emergency vehicles.
- Where time permits, traffic control devices, such as signs and barricades, can be provided through County Emergency Management or by ECS Maintenance/Facilities & Operation Department, upon request.
- Reunification Notification. Reunification notification should be disseminated through all available warning systems.
- Emergency Public Information
 - Warning messages disseminated through warning systems alert the public to a threat and provide basic instructions. They are necessarily short and to the point. The public will often require amplifying information on what to do during the reunification process.
 - The Public Information Officer (PIO) will insure that such information is provided to the media on a timely basis for further dissemination to the public. Provisions must be made to disseminate information to individuals with special needs, including the blind, hearing impaired and non-English speaking.
 - Amplifying instructions for reunification may include information on the location of holding area, and specific traffic routes.
 - When the incident that generated the need for reunification is resolved, parents and guardians must be advised when schools will reopen.

ACCESS CONTROL & SECURITY

- During reunification, the security of the STAGING AREA is extremely important.
- Staff and students shall be removed from any and all danger. The Student/Parent Reunification Team, SRO or local law enforcement should establish access control points to limit entry into STAGING AREA.

ACTIVITIES BY PHASES OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

- Mitigation/Prevention
 - Where possible, undertake mitigation for known hazards that have in the past led to situations requiring reunification.
 - Seek improvement to preplanned holding areas if needed
 - Enhance warning system to increase warning times and reduce the need for hasty evacuations.
- Preparedness
 - To the extent possible, identify staff, students or parents with special needs who would require assistance in during the reunification process and maintain contact information for those individuals.
 - Identify primary and alternate reunification areas, taking into account capacities of Staging Area.
 - Include reunification in the scenario of periodic emergency drills and exercises.

- Conduct public information programs to increase staff, student and parent awareness of possible reasons for reunification, and a preplanned reunification procedures.
- Recovery
 - Initiate return of staff and students, when it is safe to do so.
 - Coordinate temporary supervision for those whose parents or guardians cannot be contacted.
 - Provide traffic control for return.
 - Carry out appropriate public information activities.

DIRECTION AND CONTROL

- General. The Superintendent or designee has the general responsibility for recommending evacuation or school closure, when that is the most suitable means of protecting the staff and students from a hazard.
- Evacuation Area Definition. The hazard situation which gave rise to the need for reunification should be continually monitored in case changing circumstances, such as an increase in rainfall or wind shift, change the potential impact area and, thus, the area that is being used for reunification.
- Continuity of Operations. The lines of succession for the Superintendent are outlined in the ECS Emergency Response Plan. Lines of succession for each school site and agency head shall be according to the standard operating procedures established by each department or school as outlined in their respective school site ERP.

