Keeping Students and Staff Members Secure at School

One of the Department of Defense Education Activity's primary goals is to keep ensure a safe and secure environment that is conducive to learning and student achievement. We continually work with local military and civilian health, safety, and emergency personnel leaders to ensure coordinated responses to potential threats. We also drill for emergency situations and then review and revise plans as needed.

In DoDEA Schools and military communities, two elements play lead roles during critical incidents.

Crisis Management

Leading the immediate and long-term response to the incident itself is the base or garrison commander and emergency operations center. The specific organization and procedures will vary at different bases and garrisons, but the local military command, military/civilian/host-nation law enforcement and DoDEA safety/security personnel all work together during crises on military bases. DoDEA's security and emergency action plans are integrated with command and installation plans, so all who are responsible for school safety are aware of their roles and responsibilities.

Crisis Communications

Ensuring students, employees, parents, the media, and the community have accurate and timely information during a crisis is a shared responsibility between installation and school partners. Depending on the situation, you may be notified by school officials or the installation command. Generally, information about more urgent situations that require involvement of law enforcement or incident response teams will come from the installation command. It's important, in the event of an emergency, to be aware how your school or local command will communicate. Alert notification systems, social media accounts and websites are all tools used to
disseminate information during an emergency. It's vitally important that parents ensure family contact information is kept current.

**School Security and Support Response**

**Bus Safety**

School transportation officers will be in contact with the school and installation officials for instructions in the event that a crisis occurs while students are in transport. Installation access points will provide instruction to bus drivers to prevent transporting students into an active crisis scene. Parents will be informed of the parent-student reunification location based upon local operating procedures.

**Field Trips**

If the situation warrants, all field trips will be canceled. Cancellations could also include travel to academies, community programs, and other events. There may be circumstances that could require the cancellation of field trips to certain areas. If a field trip is under way and must be recalled, buses would be directed to return to the school, installation or a designated safe area. Any such decision will be announced based upon local operating procedures. Parents are reminded that DoDEA retains the right to cancel any field trip for safety reasons and is not responsible for any financial obligations parents may have.

**Student Release**

Parents are allowed to pick up their children unless school officials have declared a lockout, lockdown or shelter response, or there is some other reason why facility access is restricted. During any emergency, school personnel will maintain as safe and normal environment for children within the school as is possible. School is not automatically canceled in emergency situations. School may be the safest place for children.

Children will not be released to individuals who are not authorized on the student's emergency care card or who do not have written parent authorization.

The Emergency Care Form is completed by parents and guardians at the start of each school year. Parents and guardians are encouraged to access the SIS (Student Information System) to update emergency information online. Updated paper forms can also be found at your school.

Friends and neighbors may sign a child or children out with written permission from a parent or parents. Both parents have to give permission in writing for the sign-out and pickup. Schools prefer to have written permission on the day that a child's pickup will change, but schools will also keep written permission on file. School offices will keep the permission notes--usually they will attach them to the Emergency Care Card(s) of those involved. Schools will also ask for identification when the child is released to the one(s) mentioned in the permission note. We recommend communicating with the teacher as well, perhaps with a copy of the signed written note.
Health Concerns

Parents or guardians should make sure that the school has an appropriate amount of medication on hand in the event of a short-term emergency. Talk with your school nurse for more information.

Cell Phone Use

In the event of an emergency, students will be allowed to use their phones to communicate with parents with the permission of the school principal. In an emergency, cell phone circuits may become overloaded, interfering with local or military emergency response personnel's ability to communicate. Students' use of cell phones during an emergency will be appropriately limited.

Parents are asked not to call the school in emergency situations, so phone lines can remain accessible for handling the specific situation. Parents will be kept informed based upon local operating procedures.

Who to Contact with Questions

If you have questions about your child or about your school's security and support responses, please contact your principal. Please know that your child's safety, well-being, and security are our number one priority. All DoDEA schools have written and practiced plans in place for all emergencies, to include active shooter incidents. A certain degree of security already exists at our schools because they are on military installations. That security should never be taken for granted and that is why we continuously review and improve our policies and procedures.

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