CONSIDERATIONS FOR GUARDIAN / STUDENT REUNIFICATION

In the event of a crisis, schools must be prepared to reunite students with their guardians safely and securely. This resource serves only as a sample for schools as they develop their "Reunification Plans." This material does not represent a complete reunification program but may assist schools in developing a plan specific to their unique needs.

Dr. Richard Hogue

July 30, 2018

DISCLAIMER

This Information must serve only as a <u>sample</u> for schools as they develop their "Reunification Plans." This material does not represent a complete reunification program but may assist schools in developing a plan specific to their unique needs. The "<u>District/Corporation Legal Counsel</u>" must review all documents (polices, practices, information cards, lists, *etc.*). It is recommended that the governing body of the school district adopt the final version of the corporation/district's "Reunification Policy."

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the emotionally charged atmosphere of a crisis situation it essential for schools to have a well-organized structured process. Schools must understand that they are accountable for maintaining the chain of custody for every student during and after a crisis event.

The system for reunifying students with guardians must have a structure that is flexible, adaptable, and streamlined to carry out rapidly the "**documented reunification process**."

Critical goals and considerations in advance of a crisis include:

Preparation

1. Establish a process to keep the information on the "**Master Guardian Authorization**" cards or lists up-to-date.

2. Plan, develop, drill, test, and revise the comprehensive reunification plan.

3. Establish a "Mass Communication System" that is dedicated to providing emergency information only.

Crisis response

4. Develop an "**Orderly Evacuation Plan**" that provides a secure path to a secured safe "**Reunification Site**."

5. Develop a process for resolving and / or locating unaccounted for Students.

6. Manage and support the **needs of students, parents**, and **staff** at the reunification site.

7. Develop a "**Comprehensive Student-to-Guardian Reunification Plan**."

Consideration also must be given to a specific "**Transportation Plan**" to assist in mitigating emergencies that may occur while students are being transported to and from school, ECA events, field trips, co-curricular and extracurricular events, *etc.*

During both the planning process and an actual crisis event, any emergencies or incidents that occur during the reunification process must be documented on to preserve a record of what happened, the action taken and individuals involved. This information will be highly valuable in debriefing and improving the "**Reunification Process**".

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The system for reunifying students with guardians must have a structure that is flexible, adaptable, and streamlined to carry out rapidly the "**documented reunification process**." The goal is to create an orderly and documentable procedure that maintains system integrity.

CRITICAL GOALS AND CONSIDERATIONS

Preparation

1. Establish a process to keep the information on the "**Master Guardian Authorization**" cards or lists up-to-date.

2. Plan, develop, drill, test, and revise the comprehensive reunification plan.

    a. "**Debriefing Forms**" are helpful in the planning and revision processes.

3. Establish a "Mass Communication System" that is dedicated to providing emergency information only.

Crisis response

4. Develop an "**Orderly Evacuation Plan**" that provides a secure path to a secured safe "**Reunification Site**."

    a. The site must be vetted and secured prior to relocating students.

    b. The site must be stocked with "**Go Kits**" and supplies necessary to support the students, parents, staff, law enforcement, etc. that will occupy the site.

    c. "**Alternate Reunification Sites**" must be established that may be utilized if the primary is compromised ("**Copycat Attacks**," "**Copycat Bomb Threats**," etc. are events that often follow a catastrophic event). "**Copycats Event**" can be expected!

5. Develop a process for resolving and / or locating unaccounted for Students.

    a. Teachers must keep "**updated class list**" in their "**Go-Kits**" to be utilized to account for all students in the "**Reunification Groups**" at the "**Reunification Group Site**."

b. "**Up-to-date backup class lists (cards)**" may also be stored in the administration and or guidance office "**Go-Kits**."

6. Manage and support the **needs of students, parents**, and **staff** at the reunification site.

   a. Staples, basic medical supplies, etc. may be stored at the site and or transported to the reunification site in the various "**Go-Kits**"!

   b. **Staffing** of the "Reunification Site" must be sufficient to **support the various arriving populations** (students, parents/guardians, staff, etc.)

7. Develop a "**Comprehensive Student-to-Guardian Reunification Plan**."

In a crisis event, communication must be accurate, clear and prompt. Every school district must have a means to convey critical information to parents and guardians. The methods vary widely (*i.e.* commercial mass electronic notification systems, social media based systems, reverse 911/automated telephone systems, *etc.*).

Note: A typical and critical error in the utilization of these systems occurs when they are "frequently used" to communicate non-critical information (i.e. kindergarten roundup dates, homecoming events, bake sales, etc.). Frankly, if the system is abused, parents become conditioned to "disregard the message prior to reading it." They may very well assume it is "just another bake sale or just another chili supper announcement." An emergency system is just that: "An EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION SYSTEM"!

The content of the initial crisis message must strive to convey accurate and salient crisis information. The message should be as calming as possible and provide clear instruction and direction for the reunification process.

Note: Sample messages should be planned, developed, and vetted ahead of time by the district/corporation legal counsel, Public Information Officers, administration, and law enforcement.

BASICS OF REUNIFICATION

A critical first step in the establishment of a "Comprehensive Reunification Process" is to gather and securely store accurate parent/guardian information. Then in the event of a crisis, the previously gathered information serves to ensure students are reunited securely with their guardian(s), and prevents unauthorized persons from taking advantage of the confusion of the crisis.

Master Guardian Authorization

Before the crisis event, it is critical for schools to take the basic steps to prepare for a catastrophic event. Developing the "**Master Guardian Authorization**" ("**MGA**") Card or List is fundamental to the preparation process.

This card or list simply provides information on the **individual that will be responsible for picking up the student** from the reunification site. It also has the **name of an additional family member, neighbor, *etc.*** that the guardian authorizes to pick up the student if they are unable to do so. (*This guide includes a sample MGA card below.*)

Schools must complete this process prior to the start of school each year, and update the list or cards each semester at a minimum. The school must communicate importance of keeping these cards or list updated on the corporation website, in student orientation programs, in student handbooks, and via special announcements throughout the school year.

To expedite the reunification process the "**Master Guardian Authorization**" information (card/list) may be stored in an electronic format. The process will be expedited if the workers at the "**Registration Desk**" can rapidly match the information from the **MGA** with the government picture ID presented at the "**Registration Desk**."

The corporation's legal counsel must review the card. The card or list may be secured in the building where the student attends, in the Transportation Department, **and in an easily retrieval backup site.**

Reunification Site

If a "reunification" of students with their guardian(s) becomes necessary, the school will be direct guardians to the "**Reunification Site**" via the school's emergency notification system, media sources, *etc.*

Reunification Director

The "**Reunification Director**" is responsible for all phases of the "**Reunification Process**." These responsibilities include but not limited to:

1. The **vetting** and **selection** of the "**Reunification Site**"

2. The management of the "**Emergency Notification System**"

3. The management of all "**Reunification Information**"
   a. Including "**information management, storage and dissemination**."

4. The management all **training programs** relating to the "**Reunification Process**"

NOTE: The "**Reunification Director**" will be charged with all responsibilities relating to the operation of the "**Reunification Site**." **The "Reunification Director" must have district/corporation-wide authority.**

Training for the "**Reunification Director**" may include but not be limited to:

1. Certification as an **Indiana School Safety Specialist**

2. Completion of the **National Incident Management System** training program.

3. Completion of the training provided by the **Indiana State Police** i.e. "**Reunification Considerations"** and the "Unarmed Response to an Active Shooter" program.

Announcement of Authority

The overall "**Incident Commander"** should delegate an individual to assume command of the Reunification Site. This person should be verbally announced to those staffing the site as having the authority to give directions, give orders, and make decisions relating to the control of the reunification process. Should it become necessary to transfer the command to another individual, another formal announcement should be made.

Registration Desk Location

It is strongly recommended that the "**Registration Desk"** be near the only entryway available to arriving parents, guardians, family members, and or neighbors. The goal is to control the pathway of individuals arriving to pick up students. **Signs and greeters may assist in directing arriving individuals from the single entryway to the appropriate location (Registration Desk).** Remember, the emotional state of these individuals will be extremely elevated. Understandably, they will want immediately to take custody of their child.

Simply, upon arrival at the "**Reunification Site,**" the guardian will be directed to the "**Registration Desk."**

Registration Desk

At the "**Registration Desk**", the guardian will present a picture government identification card to the "Registration Desk" attendants. The identification will be checked against the "**Master Guardian Authorization**" card or list, whether physical or electronically stored. Upon completion of the confirmation process, the guardian will received an "**Authorization to Release**" card from the registration desk. If electronic lists are utilized a message will be sent to the "**Reunification Group Site**" (where students are being grouped), authorizing the release of the student to the guardian that has been confirmed.

Note: Some consideration may be given to utilizing pages to retrieve students from the "Reunification Group Site." Administrators may wish to weigh the expediency of the

process against the possibility of the guardian attempt to pick up other students as they arrive at the "Reunification Group Site."

After being confirmed by verification against the "**Master Guardian Authorization**" card or list, the authorized individual will be directed or escorted (by pages) to the "**Reunification Group Site**" to pick up the student.

Authorization to Release Card

The "**Authorization to Release**" card or list simply authorizes the release of the student to the authorized and verified guardian, parent, relative, neighbor, *etc.* Upon confirmation from the "**Registration Desk**," permission will be granted for the release of the student. (*This guide includes a sample "Authorization to Release" card below.*)

Again, to expedite the process, the "**Master Guardian Authorization**" list or cards can be stored electronically and the "**Authorization to Release**" can be sent electronically to the "**Reunification Group Site**."

The success of this basic process depends on the accuracy of the information stored. This information may be stored in multiple sites and / or incorporated into the "**Administrative Go-Kits**".

Reunification Group Site

The "**Reunification Group Site**" must be out of the line of sight of the "***Registration Desk.***" Some districts may find it advantages to have a "**page**" retrieve the student from the "Reunification Group Site." This practice may prevent the guardian from attempting take custody of neighbors, family friends, *etc.* from the "Reunification Group Site." Time considerations and resources may make this process prohibitive.

Staffing the "Reunification Group Site"

To expedite this process, schools may elect to group students at the reunification site with their classroom teachers, guidance counselors, etc. *Understanding that this may not always be possible*, the reunification process may be facilitated if students can be grouped with staff members that are familiar with the students in their charge. This may also assist in supporting and calming the students in their charge.

Exiting the "Reunification Group Site"

An exit path to an exterior door must be established and staffed by law enforcement. **This exit will be utilized only by individuals that have completed the reunification process**. This will facilitate the segregation of the arriving populations from those that have completed the reunification process. If populations arriving mix with individuals exiting, it is likely that unauthorized information and or misinformation will be exchanged. If arriving individuals are allowed to go directly to the "**Reunification Group Site**," the integrity of the reunification process may be circumvented. Arriving guardians may attempt to pick up

students without the proper authorization. It is important that pedestrian traffic continue in a smooth and orderly manner.

Resolution Site or Parent Triage Site

A site near the "**Registration Desk"** must be established for individuals arriving without the appropriate /necessary reunification information:

Examples:

1. Not listed on the "Master Guardian Authorization Card or List."

2. No government identification.

3. In no condition to take custody of the child.

It is predictable that this will happen. The "**Resolution Site or Parent Triage Site**" must be staffed with law enforcement, SRO, school administration, health care/mental health professionals, clergy, technology staff, *etc.* **The "Resolution Site or Parent Triage Site" must also provide privacy.**

The "**Resolution Site or Parent Triage Site**" must have the resources necessary to facilitate the reunification and or resolve the student/guardian issues. These may include but not be limited to multiple phone lines, parent emergency contact information, relative contact information, legal guidelines established by the corporation legal counsel, *etc.*

Note: Individuals arriving also may not be aware that their child is not at the site, but has been transported to the hospital, or worse is part of a crime scene. That is why the "Resolution Site or Parent Triage Site" must have law enforcement, clergy, mental health professionals, administration, etc.

Additional law enforcement must be available to assist in transporting these individuals to the hospital, home and or the care of relatives.

Traffic Consideration Approaching the Reunification Site

The area around the site will rapidly become congested. Law enforcement will be needed to direct emergency vehicles, arriving parents, media, sightseers, individuals living in the area, arriving law enforcement, *etc.*

Health and Welfare Site Option

In a highly stressful situation, it is not uncommon for individuals to experience a "panic attack", "heart attack", forget to take medication, *etc.* It is advisable to have trained health care professions (school nursing, EMT, *etc.*) in a location that can provide immediate assistance with some privacy. Again, out of the line of sight of the students.

Incident Card / Debriefing Card

It is important to have an "**Incident Card**" or "**Debriefing Card**" that may serve to document the emergencies that develop at the "**Reunification Site**". This simple card will preserve a record of what happened, the action taken and individuals involved.

Again, this information may be stored and managed electronically to expedite the process. The information will be extremely valuable as the school conducts a debriefing of the "**Reunification Process**" later. (*This guide includes a sample "Incident Card / Debriefing Card" below.*)

CONCERNS FOR REUNIFICATION SITES AND BACKUP SITES FOR REUNIFICATION

Primary Site

1. Primary and secondary sites for the reunification process must be selected, vetted, and secured ahead of time by law enforcement.

2. The threat of a secondary attack or "Copycat Prank" is a very real consideration.

3. Expect that "copycat" threats will be called into the various schools within the district. With this in mind, advance efforts to secure other sites in the district is a sound practice.

4. Primary reunification sites are often located within walking distance.

   a. If this practice is followed, the site must be far enough away to prevent any concerns or issues related to the initial attack site (gunfire, explosives, *etc.*). A minimum of 500 feet distance is recommended as a general rule.

5. All sites should have a secure perimeter.

6. The site must have the capacity to house the number of students and staff evacuated.

7. Maps, site plans, *etc.* must be available to law enforcement vetting the site.

8. The facility floor plan must allow for securing and controlling all entry and exit doors.

9. The floor plan should allow for segregation of arriving populations, students awaiting reunification, reunification stations, emergency & triage areas, *etc.*

   a. A floor plan setting out all strategic location should be preprinted.

10. The site must have easy access and egress for buses transporting students, law enforcement, arriving guardians/individuals authorized to pick up students, arriving emergency vehicles, *etc.*

11. If the site is off corporation property, a **Memorandum of Understanding** must be executed with the property owner. This must be prepared by the corporation legal counsel.

12. The site must have sufficient restroom facilities.

13. It is important to remember you may need to support numerous individuals at the site.

    a. Store staples (water, snacks, prepared emergency kits, *etc.*) ahead of time.

    b. If storing staples is an issue, you may elect to establish Go-Kits specifically developed for this purpose.

Secondary Site

1. You should apply all considerations above to the secondary site.

Communication or Media Stationing

1. A specific site must be establish for the media.

2. This site must be located away from the crisis site and the reunification site.

3. The PIO or Communication Director will need to direct the media to the site.

4. The PIO or Communication Director may need to prepare statements ahead.

    a. A suggestion to remember: All communication must be factual, prompt, calming and contemplated.

5. A schedule of media interaction meetings should be established.

6. The dedicated emergency communication systems is a valuable resource in providing salient information to parents and guardians.

7. A backup to the PIO or Media Director should be established.

STAFFING THE PROCESS

The positions below are samples of typical staffing needs and recommendations:

1. "Primary Reunification Director" with "Backup Directors."

    a. Administrators with District-wide Responsibility / Authority

2. PIO

    a. Corporation PIO; and / or

    b. Law Enforcement PIO

3. Staff for the "Registration Desk"

    a. Administration

    b. Law Enforcement

   c. Counselors

   d. Health Care Professionals

   e. Technology Staff

   f. Clergy, *etc.*

4. Staff for the "Resolution Desk"

   a. Law Enforcement

   b. Administrators

   c. Health Care Professionals

   d. Clergy, *etc.*

5. Staff for the "Pages"

   a. Teachers

   b. Counselors

   c. Health Care Professionals

   d. Support Staff

   e. Law Enforcement

   f. Clergy, *etc.*

6. Health, Welfare and Triage Sites

   a. EMT

   b. School Nursing Staff

   c. Clergy

   d. Administration

   e. Law Enforcement, *etc.*

7. Resolution Site

   a. School Counselors

   b. Crisis Counselors

   c. Nursing Staff

   d. Law Enforcement

   e. Clergy, *etc.*

8. Central Office Contact Individuals

   a. Central Office Staff

   b. Transportation Staff

   c. Food Services Staff, *etc.*

9. General Law Enforcement (Traffic and General Policing Duties)

   a. School Resource Officers

   b. Local, County and State Law Enforcement, *etc.*

10. First Responders (Assist in the Health, Triage, *etc.* Site)

   a. EMT

   b. Fire & Law Enforcement

   c. County EOC Staff, *etc.*

11. General Staff

   a. Sufficient school personnel to assist in staffing all "**Stations/Sites**" of the "**Reunification Site or Location**"

     i. Administrators

     ii. Law Enforcement

     iii. Teachers

     iv. Counselors

     v. Nursing Staff

vi. County EOC

vii. EMT

viii. First Responders

ix. Transportation Staff, *etc.*

12. Food Services Personnel

   a. Director of Food Services

   b. Food Preparation Specialists, *etc.*

13. General Administrative Staff

   a. Central Office

   b. Building Level

   c. Transportation

   d. Food Services

   e. Technology Staff, *etc.*

14. Examples of School Community & Local Government Specialty Staff

   a. Transportation Director (Oversee Transportation of Students)

   b. School Nursing Coordinator, Medical Personnel, *etc.* (Health, Welfare, Resolution Sites)

   c. Special Needs Specialist

   d. ESL Teachers (Assist all Reunification Sites)

   e. Individuals skilled in (ASL) American Sign Language.

   f. Food Services Directors (Assist in Providing Support)

   g. County EOC Director (Support for the Reunification Director)

   h. Government Representative (Provide Resources for Reunification Site)

      i. Mayor's Office

      ii. Town Council, *etc.*

   i. Clergy (Multi-Denominational) (Health, Welfare, Resolution, Triage, *etc.* Sites)

   j. Counselors (Health, Welfare, Triage, *etc.* Sites)

   k. Greeters and Pages

      i. Educators

      ii. Law enforcement

      iii. Support staff, *etc.*

Additional Considerations in Staffing the Reunification Group Site
Staffing for the "Reunification Group Site"
Again, the school may consider grouping the students who are waiting a guardian's arrival with staff that work with the students on a daily basis. This will support and calm students and also assist in identifying the students instead of having to call out names.

Teachers Supervising Students at the Reunification Group Site
All teachers are critical to the reunification process. Elementary teachers are especially so. Typically, they are familiar with their students and possess a strong bond with them.

Middle/Junior High School Teachers/Staff

Just as in the elementary level, teachers and counselors play a critical role in staffing the "**Reunification Process.**" Middle and Junior Teachers will lend support to students. It will be important to match teachers with the students with which they are familiar.

Secondary School

Continuing the same practice of matching students with familiar teachers, this practice is important at the secondary level as well. Homeroom Teachers and or Counselors are often helpful in staffing the "**Reunification Group Sites**".

Grouping students with familiar counselors and or teachers is a valuable tool even at the high school level. These students will be highly emotional and support of a familiar adult is critical.

BASIC PLANNING

Additional Considerations

1. Establish a Reunification Planning Team.

2. Plan, train and practice your reunification plan.

3. Identify Primary and Secondary Reunification Sites.

4. Develop a process to vet and secure the sites.

5. Off-campus sites must have a "**Memorandum of Understanding.**"

6. Conduct tabletop exercises.

7. Include all emergency management personnel in the planning and drilling process.

8. Hold planning exercises in the reunification sites (Primary & Secondary).

9. Utilize "**Debriefing Forms**" to learn from actual incidents and drills.

    a. Modify the Reunification Plan based on the results of the "Debriefing Forms."

10. Include teachers, administration, transportation, law enforcement, County EOC, SRO, First Responders, Health Care Professionals, *etc.* in planning drills.

11. Select an "**Emergency Communication System**" dedicated to school safety issues.

12. Restrict utilization of your "**Emergency Communication System**" to emergency messages only.

13. Traffic is always an issue in the reunification process. Discuss emergency route utilization with your county EOC and law enforcement.

Remember to Prepare Ahead of Time:

Develop Materials

1. Make frequent announcements regarding the "**Reunification Process**".

2. Develop the various "**Go-Kits**" that are designed for the unique population they are to support.

    a. Make sure that health care, EMT, *etc.* staff review the contents of kits developed to support the health care needs of everyone at the "**Reunification Site**."

    b. All too often, the "**Go-Kit**" is general in nature and does not match the needs of the group or the responsibilities of the individual the kit must support.

    c. Examples of Types of Go-Kits: Administrator Kits, Classroom Teacher Kits, Kits to Support Students with Special Needs, Maintenance Kits, Nurse Kits, Transportation Director Kits, Bus Driver Kits, SRO Kits, *etc.*

3. Print all materials ahead of time (Signs, extra cards, name tags, alphabetical reunification group site signs, *etc.*)

4. Make copies of "**Reunification Materials**", distribute the material to the secured sites, and store securely in the "**Go-Kits**".

5. "**Name Tags**" (Designating Responsibility)

6. Batteries, supplies for signs (ink pens, stapler, paper, *etc.*)

7. Vests

8. Extra radios

Assign and Train on Individual Responsibilities
Examples: (Remember to Assign Backups for Each Site Responsibilities)

1. Reunification Coordinator

2. Registration Desk Workers

3. Health and Welfare Site

4. Reunification Group Sites

5. Guardian Triage Site

6. Exit Site

7. Greeters and or Pages

8. PIO

9. Reunification Coordinator

10. Facilitators or Greeter

11. Law Enforcement Officers

12. ESL and Special Needs Staff

13. Transportation

14. Train "**Pages**" if you utilize them to escort parents.

15. Train staff on the utilization of the "**Go-Kits**" for the "**Reunification Sites**" that match the population you intend to support.

Expedited Process

Large schools may wish to **expedite the reunification process by utilizing electronically stored**, **retrieved and managed information.** The administration must balance the expediency of the reunification process against the need to maintain system integrity.

Even in this method, the student/guardian information must be updated and accurately stored in a secured database.

TRANSPORTATION

Managing and Reunification in a Transportation Crisis

A common omission is to overlook the fact that a high percentage of students are transported every day. In addition, extracurricular activities are conducted nearly every afternoon and evening. We know that school buses are vulnerable. Transportation related crisis events will happen. A specific "**Transportation Plan**" must be developed to assist in mitigating emergencies that may occur while students are being transported to and from school, ECA events, field trips, co-curricular and extracurricular events, *etc.*

A common mistake, in developing a "**Comprehensive Reunification Plan**" is to fail to include crisis events that may occur away from school.

A "**Comprehensive Reunification and Parent Notification Plan**" must also address crisis events that may occur on Extracurricular Events, Co-curricular Events, Field Trips as well as Accidents and or Assaults on the Bus.

Your **legal counsel can be a critical resource** in the development of the paperwork necessary to facilitate the process of communicating with parents/guardians, obtaining authorizing for medical treatment, reunifying students with parents/guardians, *etc.*

Starting Points Suggestions for Planning:

1. Involve Corporation Legal Counsel

2. Develop a Plan with Legal Counsel, Transportation Director, Central Staff, SRO, Local Law Enforcement, County EOC Staff, Nursing Staff, Special Needs Staff, Support Staff, *etc.*

3. Utilize "**Master Guardian Authorization**" card or list to update guardians that can be contacted in an emergency situations.

    a. Remember to have guardians include backup or alternate individuals that are authorized to take custody of students

        i. Corporation Legal counsel should develop the legal form for this process.

4. Conduct Tabletops with all Stakeholders

5. A complete list of all occupants on the bus for all events and trips must be kept.

    a. Daily Trips, ECA events, Field Trips, *etc.*

    b. Bracelets may be useful in identifying students

6. Individuals in charge of the bus trips need to have **emergency access to information regarding** the unique needs of the individuals on the bus.

    a. The school nurse should have a Master List of all student medical issues.

    b. The school nurse develops an Individual Health Plan (IHP) for those students needing daily medical care, or those with medical orders for treatments or emergency procedures (epinephrine for life-threatening allergy).

    c. The school nurse should have parent permission to share information in IHP with pertinent school staff.

    d. The school nurse should create a list for each teacher regarding health needs in the classroom that the school nurse has parent permission to share.

e. Legal Counsel can assist in developing the critical special needs and health information that can be sealed and available only in an emergency situation.

f. District legal counsel may develop a protocol for transportation that includes notifying the school nurse of the building in which the student attends and it would be up to the school nurse to determine what information needs to be shared with EMS.

g. **Work with your legal counsel to develop a method and practice of keeping personally protected information secure**.

   i. Especially for "Special Needs" and students that have unique emotional and health related issues.

7. Have "Emergency Medical Kits" and "Go-Kits" in a transportable form that will support the individuals on all trips.

8. Include the Transportation Director, Support Staff, Drivers, *etc.* in the planning and drilling revision processes.

9. Use "Debriefing Forms" for evaluating your plan.

OPTIONAL:

The School Corporation as a Reunification Partner for the School Community:

School corporations may want to meet with the county Emergency Operations Staff to develop a plan for the school corporation to assist in the reunification of displaced school community members.

With exception the local school corporation, few if any community entities have the ability to transport, house and or provide basic support to large numbers of community members in a catastrophic event (Severe Weather for example).

This process may be described better as a community relocation and catastrophic care plan. The school's participation in this disaster planning process is entirely up the individual school corporation.

APPENDIX I – EXAMPLE CARDS

Following are examples of the information cards discussed above. Keep in mind that these serve as examples only. Each school corporation must develop information cards appropriate to their unique situations. Corporation / District legal counsel must review all documents before use.

Master Guardian Authorization Card (Sample)

Student's Name			Grade	Homeroom
Last	First	Middle	Level/Teachers	Teacher/RM
Guardian		Relationship to Student	Contact Info (Phone, email, Text)	
Alternate Person(s) Authorized by Guardian			Guardian Authorization Date	
Family Physician	Phone	Guardian Place of Employment	Contact Info	

Special Medical & Emotional Needs of the Student:

Guardian Signature	Date	Family Physician Signature	Date

For School Official Use Only

Authorization to Release Card (Sample)

Reunification Group:

Student Name(s)

Last	First	Middle

Guardian Name/Individual Authorized to take Custody

_____   _____

                                                     Date

Type of Government ID: _____

_____   _____

Staff Member In Charge of Reunification Group   **Date**

For School Official Use Only

Incident Card / Debriefing Card (Sample)

```
Briefly Describe the Event:




Action Taken:




Individuals Providing Assistance:




Individuals Assisted:




_____          _____
Person Completing Card                     Date
```

For School Official Use Only

APPENDIX II – DEFINITIONS

Following are definitions for a selection of specialized terms used in this document:

American Sign Language (ASL)

American Sign Language (ASL) is the primary language of the Deaf community.

Authorization to Release Cards (ARC) / Lists

An **Authorization to Release card** is issued at the "**Registration Desk**" once the guardian's identity has been confirmed. The arriving adult must produce a government picture ID to confirm that they are the individual authorized on the "**Master Guardian Authorization (MGA) Card**" to take custody of a student. This is a simple process of matching the government picture identification to the designated individual on the "**MGA Card**." This may be a relative, neighbor, etc. but the individual must be on the **MGA Card** or list.

Communication or Media Staging Site

The **Communication or Media Staging Site** segregates the media from the guardian/student reunification process. This promotes privacy for guardians and students. The **Communication or Media Staging Site** must be located away from the **"Reunification Site"**.

District or Corporation Legal Counsel

The **District or Corporation Legal Counsel** typically is the attorney that represents the School District or Corporation.

Emergency Communication System

Emergency Communication Systems are utilized to communicate to large groups in a very short period of time. These systems come in a variety of configurations. To be effective in an emergency situation, these systems must be dedicated to emergency communications only.

Emergency Medical Service (EMS)

Emergency Medical Service (EMS) encompasses a number of types of healthcare providers including emergency medical technicians, paramedics, registered nurses, nurse practitioners, and occasionally physicians.

Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT)

Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT) provide critical care and life saving assistance to individuals with serious medical emergency. Emergency Medical Technicians typically operate out of the first responders' facilities.

Emergency Operations Centers (EOC)

Emergency Operations Centers (EOC) are typically county organizations that provide assistance in catastrophic events.

English as a Second Language (ESL)

English as a Second Language (ESL) is the use of English by speakers with different native languages. ESL sensitivity is a critical component in any safety program. Signs, announcements, "**Authorization to Release Cards**," "**Debriefing Forms**," "**Emergency Communication Systems**," all represent examples of critical emergency information that must be conveyed with "Limited English Speaking" individuals in mind.

Extracurricular Events / Activities (ECA)

Extracurricular Events / Activities may include: Athletics, Chess Club, Speech Club, Thespians, etc. These activities may be extracurricular or co-curricular programs.

Go-Kits

Go-Kits are prepared and packaged resources in transportable form ready to support the unique needs of the individuals and roles in the reunification process.. **Go-Kits** should be developed with one purpose in mind. The kits must be developed to support a specific population. The general components are often water, snacks, first aid supplies, class lists, communications devices, flashlight, batteries, etc. However, to be truly effective, it is best to obtain information on the

population the kit must support and then assemble the components that support the unique needs of the individuals in the group. Help is available from Emergency Technicians, Healthcare Professionals, School Nurses, Special Needs Teachers, etc.

Greeters / Pages

Greeters / Pages serve to control access to students by either escorting authorized individuals to the Reunification Group Site to pick up their student(s), or else the **greeter / page** retrieve students from the Reunification Group Site and bring the student(s) to the authorized individual. **Greeters / Pages** play a critical role in the "Reunification Process". These individuals need to be trained to work with individuals that often are extremely stressed and often not totally rational. These individuals must understand the emotional state of everyone caught in one of these catastrophic events. Greeters and Pages must show compassion, empathy while directing guardians to the appropriate destination.

Health and Welfare Site

The **Health and Welfare Site** is a site that maybe established within the "**Reunification Site**." The primary focus of this site is to provide resources to assist students, parents, staff with a medical and emotional health issues. Typically, this sight is separate from the "**Resolution Site or Parent Triage Site." It must be located in an area that provides privacy.**

Incident Card / Debriefing Card

The **Incident Card / Debriefing Card** is a tool to assist in documenting the circumstances of events that occur during the "**Reunification Process**." These cards also may be used to collect feedback from individuals involved in drills conducted to test the "**Reunification Process**."

Incident / Debriefing Cards typically require the respondents to react to or describe the following:

1. Describe the circumstances of the event.

2. Describe the action you took.

3. Described what worked.

4. Describe what you would do in a similar situation in the future.

5. Provide suggestions on what you have learned from the situation.

The information on these cards may serve as a valuable tool to assist us in learning from our past experiences.

Incident Command System (ICS)

The **Incident Command System** (**ICS**) is a consistent approach to the coordination, control and command of emergency response resources. This system focuses on the coordination of various agencies to manage a crisis event.

Individualized Health Plan (IHP)

An **Individualized Health Plan (IHP)** is a student-specific plan of care prepared by the school nurse or health professional, detailing the unique medical requirements for students needing daily medical care, or having medical orders for treatments or emergency procedures (*i.e.* epinephrine for life-threatening allergy). An **Individualized Health Plan (IHP)** is critical in providing the appropriate care for individuals with unique health care needs. The **IHP** contains critical information that must be reviewed when preparing the "**Go-Kits**."

Master Guardian Authorization Card / List (MGA)

The **Master Guardian Authorization Card / List** provides individually identifiable information about each student. The legal guardian for that student also is designated on the MGA. On the card or list the guardian must provide permission, authorization, and or consent for additional or alternate family members, neighbors, etc. to pick-up their child in an emergency situation.

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

A **Memorandum of Understand**ing **(MOU)** describes a mutual or multilateral agreement between two or more entities. MOUs are extremely helpful in setting the conditions, boundaries and responsibilities between two or more parties. An **MOU** may be established between a school and a law enforcement agency or between a school corporation and the owner of a secondary reunification site.

National Incident Management System (NIMS)

National Incident Management System (NIMS) is a comprehensive strategy based upon the Incident Command System (ICS) that may be utilized to manage a catastrophic event. This system is a methodology designed to manage various functional disciplines related to emergency management. NIMS management principles may be utilized to manage a full spectrum of potential incidents, hazards, catastrophic events, etc. Resources may be found on the FEMA website.

Public Information Officer (PIO) / Media Director

The "**Public Information Officer (PIO) / Media Director**" is responsible for all communications to members of school community and media. It is advisable to move the **Communication or Media Staging Site** area away from the "**Reunification Site**." The **PIO** may elect to schedule news conferences and or prepare prewritten documents to assist in developing press releases and to facilitate clear and concise answers. The goals of the **PIO** are to communicate clear and salient information while assisting in calming all members of the school community.

Registration Desk

The **Registration Desk** is typically the initial step in "**Reunification Process**." Parents/Guardians typically present a government picture identification and it is compared to the Master Guardian Authorization Card or List. Upon confirmation, the individual is given the "Authorization to Release" by card, list, electronic means, etc. The guardian is then directed or escorted to the "Reunification Group" securing their child.

Resolution Site or Parent Triage Site

The "**Resolution Site or Parent Triage Site**" functions as a location for parents\guardians to obtain assistance if their child is not at the "**Reunification Site**." This could be the result of several factors:

1. During a catastrophic event, students may exit the building and seek initial shelter in an alternative location. Simply, the child has not yet arrived at the "Reunification Site." The primary function of the "Resolution Site or Parent Triage Site" is to assist in the reunification of the guardian and student.

2. **Note: Parents may arrive at the reunification site without the knowledge that their child may have been injured. In order to deal with this issue, this site must have individuals with a variety of skill sets from fields such as health care, law enforcement, counseling, administration, clergy, etc.**

Reunification Group Site

The **Reunification Group Site** is the location where the students are gathered while they await reunification with their respective guardians. A consideration may be to group students with teachers, guidance counselors, etc. that are familiar with the students. This will have a calming impact and facilitate the reunification process.

Reunification Group Site Location Considerations

1. Primary reunification sites are often located within walking distance; however, the site must be far enough away to prevent any concerns or issues related to the initial attack site (gunfire, explosives, etc.).

2. A site should have a secure perimeter.

3. The site must have the capacity to house the number of students and staff evacuated.

4. The floor plan of the facility must allow for securing and controlling all entry and exit doors.

5. The floor plan should allow for segregation of arriving populations, students awaiting reunification, reunification stations, emergency & triage areas, etc.

   a. The "**Registration Desk"** should be near the only entryway available to arriving parents, guardians, family members, and or neighbors.

   b. The "**Reunification Group Site**" must be out of the line of sight of the "***Registration De*sk."**

   c. The "**Resolution Site or Parent Triage Site**" must provide privacy and have the resources necessary to facilitate the reunification and or resolve the student/guardian issues.

6. The floor plan should allow a private location for trained health care professions (school nursing, EMT, etc.) to provide immediate assistance.

7. The site must have manageable access and egress routes for buses transporting students, law enforcement, arriving guardians/individuals authorized to pick up students, arriving emergency vehicles, etc.

8. The site must have adequate parking for buses transporting students, law enforcement, arriving guardians/individuals authorized to pick up students, arriving emergency vehicles, etc.

9. The site may include but not be limited to multiple phone lines, parent emergency contact information, relative contact information, legal guidelines established by the corporation legal counsel, etc.

10. The site must have sufficient restroom facilities.

11. The site may need to support numerous individuals for an extended period of time and should have the ability to store staples (water, sustenance, prepared emergency kits, etc.) ahead of time.

12. If the site is off corporation property, a "**Memorandum of Understand**" must be developed.

Secondary Site

A **Secondary Site** serves as contingency **Reunification Group Site** in the event that the **Primary Site** becomes unusable in a specific catastrophic event. Selection of the **Secondary Site** must be done with the same concerns and the "primary site" listed above.

School Resource Officer (SRO)

A **School Resource Officer (SRO)** is a sworn law enforcement officers responsible for safety and crime prevention in schools. SROs are typically employed by a local police or sheriff's agency and work closely with administrators in an effort to create a safer environment for both students and staff. The **SRO** position must be established and supported by a "**Memorandum of Understanding"** between the school corporation and the local law enforcement agency. Typically, a local law enforcement agency enters into an agreement that assigns the **SRO** to the local school district.

Tabletop Exercises

Tabletop Exercises are discussion-based sessions where team members meet in an informal, classroom setting to discuss their roles during an emergency and their responses to a particular emergency situation. A facilitator guides participants through a discussion of one or more scenarios. **Tabletop Exercises** play a critical role in planning and vetting a comprehensive "**Reunification Plan**". These exercises provide an opportunity to vet and revise the "**Reunification Plan**" in a noncritical setting. The exercise typically has a scenario requiring the assembled "**Reunification Team**" to apply the corporation "**Reunification Plan**" to various issues that may arise during a reunification event. The failure to hold drills to vet the "Reunification Process" is one of the most common shortcomings in "**Comprehensive School Safety Plans**".

Transportation Department

The **Transportation Department** includes but is not limited to bus drivers, Transportation Directors and maintenance staff dedicated to the general mechanical maintenance of all transportation vehicles. Transportation professionals often are omitted from reunification planning but they are one of the most critical component of an appropriate plan and should be included in all phases of planning and implement of the "**Reunification Process**."

Remember: Transportation should plan a critical role in the **Emergency Operations Plan** of the school community. The school transportation system may be the only resource in the community that can transport large groups of individuals in a catastrophic event.