

JOFFE EMERGENCY SERVICES

Student and Family

Reunification

Welcome

About me

- Dr. Matthew Colpitts and I am a Safety Consultant with Joffe Emergency Services.
- Extensive background as a school leader and campus safety expert.

Goals

- By the end of this module, participants will be able to...
 - 1) identify the primary considerations in planning for reunification.
 - 2) articulate the need for pre-incident reunification planning.
 - 3) develop an outline of a new (or improved) reunification plan for their school.

Welcome

This module is actually the third in a trilogy.

- The first module you may have completed is the Incident Command Orientation module, where you learned what are the best practices to set up an ICS at your school and what roles and responsibilities your staff should have during an incident.
- Next, you may have completed the module of how to construct a Tabletop, where you learned how to lead a practice run of an incident as it develops.
- If you have not completed these modules, and feel that it would benefit you prior to starting this learning of Student and Family Reunification, please complete the Incident Command Orientation module and the How to Create and Run a Tabletop module before moving on with this course.

Definitions

Definitions

- 1) Reunification
- 2) EOP - Emergency Operations Plan
- 3) ICS - Incident Command System
- 4) FEMA - Federal Emergency Management Administration
- 5) REMS - Readiness and Emergency Management in School

Reunification is the process of ensuring that children return to the care of their parent(s) and legal guardians as quickly and safely as possible after an emergency.

(Based on <https://www.cdc.gov/childrenindisasters/reunification.html>)

Why Plan for Reunification?

Why formalize it?

Isn't it the same as dismissal?

High Stress and Anxiety Incidents

Maintain a safe environment and help reduce anxiety

A predetermined, practiced reunification method ensures the reunification process will not further complicate what is probably a chaotic, anxiety-filled scene.

In fact, putting an orderly reunification plan into action will help defuse the emotions building up.

Scary Scenario to Avoid

Following a fire that left the school building damaged, Tahir rushes to the school to pick up his son.

When he gets to the school, he sees all of the children loosely assembled on the basketball courts.

Tahir finds his son easily. Trying to be helpful, he also takes takes his neighbor Shazeb's daughter.

When Shazeb arrives, she is unable to find her daughter in the chaos that is the basketball courts.

Staff are unsure if Shazeb's daughter is still on the courts.

Shazeb is understandably upset. It takes several hours and a police search to figure out what happened.

Reunification Rarely/Never Occurs on its Own

Part of other emergencies

Incident Command System (ICS) for your school is activated. If not, do it now.

Disaster Timeline

- 1) We will almost always need other ICS teams
 - a) Search and Rescue
 - b) First Aid
 - c) Community Care
 - i) May need extended sheltering



Reunification Team

The reunification team seeks to:

- 1) Create an orderly process for reuniting parents with children
- 2) Keep track of where students are and with whom they left

THIS WILL BE HARD

In this course, we are focusing on the administrative and tactical response components of reunification but we must also incorporate mental and emotional health (community care) into this work.

How to Do It

Only happens when Incident Commander activates the process and reunification team

When Incident Command activates Reunification, personnel will be selected to oversee the process. Once that happens, the Reunification supervisor will gather their team.

Together, they will start:

- 1) Begin setting up the Parent Check-in area and Final Check-out station.
- 2) Obtain necessary equipment and release forms.
- 3) Mark tables with signs so parents know where to check in, if possible.
- 4) Have Student Emergency Pickup Lists and Release Forms ready to go.

Basic Procedure

Once the process starts, the following basic procedure should be followed:

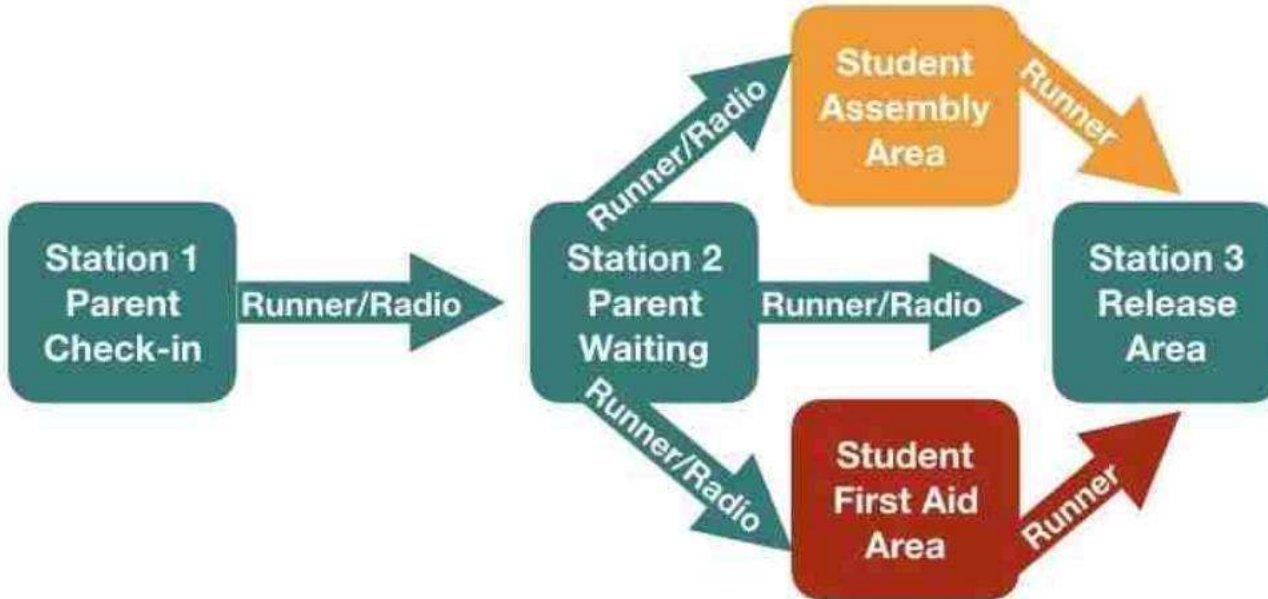
- 1) An adult checks in with the Reunification Staff and gives the name of the student(s) to be picked up.
- 2) Staff member asks for an **adult's identification to check against the student(s) Emergency Card of individuals authorized to pick up. (DO THIS EVEN IF YOU KNOW THEM)**
- 3) The staff member instructs the parent/guardian to standby while waiting.
- 4) When student(s) arrive at the reunification point, staff connect student(s) with parent/guardian.
 - a) *Note: If a parent refuses to wait in line, don't argue. Note the time with appropriate comments on the student release form to have as much information taken down as possible.*

Basic Procedure, Cont'd

If a student is not in the assembly area or is missing:

- 1) Communicate with the First Aid Team to determine if the student is in the Medical Treatment area.
- 2) Determine if a student is able to be moved for reunification, if not: the parent/guardian should be escorted to the Medical Treatment Area.
- 3) Determine if a student has been taken off campus by emergency medical personnel. If so, the parent/guardian should be given the information about where the student was transferred.
- 4) If the student is “missing” - Communicate with Incident Command immediately
 - a) The parent/guardian should be notified of the missing student’s status and updated regularly.

Flow of the Process



If the student is located in the First Aid Area, a runner will escort the adult to meet the student there before being released.

Student Assembly Area



Student Assembly Area

- Students are assembled here to await reunification
- Out of the line of sight from adults
- Runners await radio requests from Station 1
- Escort students to Station 3 for release

Station 1



- Adults arrive and check-in with Staff
- Greeters ask what child is being picked up and radio to Student Assembly Area
- Adult is escorted to Station 2, the Parent Waiting Area

Station 2



- Staff checks Adult's ID and confirms he or she is an authorized pickup person
- Reunification Forms are completed here
- Adult is directed or escorted to Station 3 to meet with their child

Station 3

Station 3

- Students are physically reunited with their parent or guardian
- Team members in this station are encouraged to quickly reunite students with their parent or guardian and leave the school grounds, clearing the area as swiftly as possible.

Levels/Types

Types

- At primary site
- At secondary evacuation location
- Improvised Site

Levels

- Normal dismissal, just early
- Rapid Dismissal
- Parents or Guardians must come to take kids
- ONLY legal parents and guardians

Permissions

- Self Dismissal
- High School Kids
- Car Pools
- Restricted by School

Adults?

Students are the focus of this work but...

Remember, adults need to be accounted for as well!

- 1) Employees
- 2) Faculty
- 3) Staff
- 4) Guests

Do you have a system that is usable in an emergency that can account for these folks?

Emergency Operations Plan

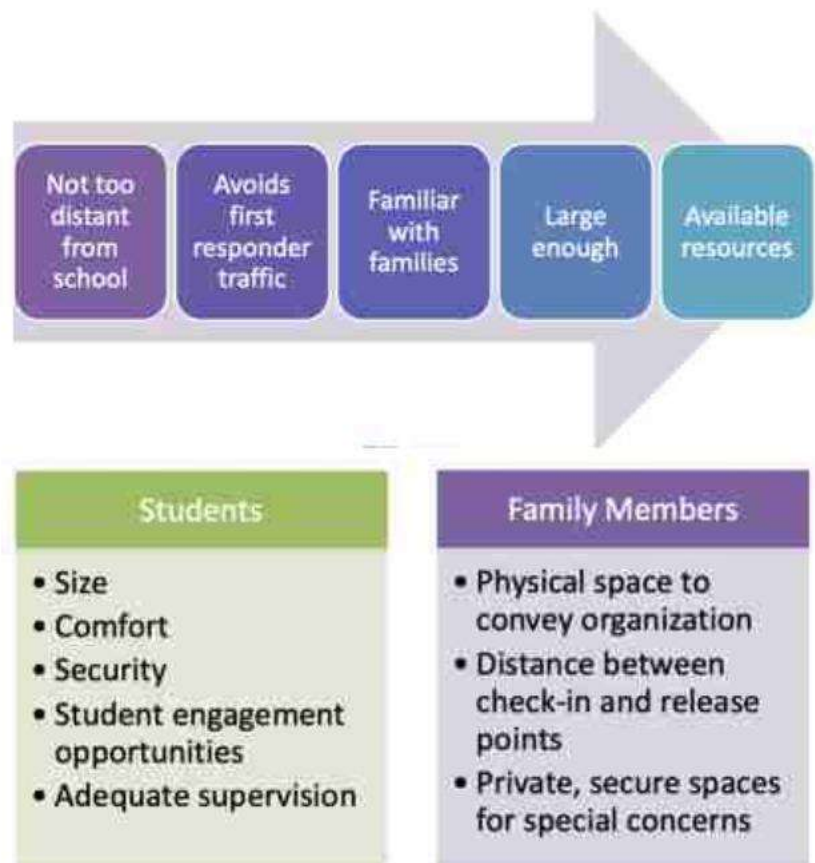
Reunification & EOP

Reunification must be a part of your school emergency operations plan.

Either in the core part or in an annex.

Location

Location Selection is Critical



Emergency Operations Plan

Planning Considerations

Informing families

- Ahead of time
- At time of incident
- Ongoing

How to verify
custody/permission

Communication at
Reunification Site

Managing the Media

No leaving on own

Addressing barriers

Your Community Needs

Special considerations for your
school and population

- Medical
- Disabilities
- Functional Needs

Challenges

High Stress and Anxiety

- NOT A TIMED EVENT
- USE ICS

Keep parents away from students

- Make sure parents know about the process ahead of time
 - Practice, practice, practice
 - Be firm, calm, and consistent

Non-custodial parent tried to pick up child

- Do not let them unless you have explicit permission from custodial parent
- Follow any policies you have in place for dismissal
- Contact custodial parent and police if necessary
 - Contact principal/incident command for advice

Challenges

Maybe, not everyone will make it

- 1) Sent to the hospital
- 2) Stuck on site
- 3) Missing
- 4) Entrapped
- 5) Dead

*****When reunification is not possible because a child is missing, injured, or killed, how and when this information is provided to families is critical.*****

Before an emergency, the planning team must determine how, when, and by whom loved ones will be informed if their loved one is missing or has been injured or killed.

While law enforcement and medical examiner procedures must be followed, families should receive accurate information as soon as possible. **Having trained personnel immediately available to talk to loved ones about death and injury can ensure that families receive accurate and timely information in a compassionate manner.**

Supplies, Communication, & Relationships

What is needed for a reunification site?

- 1) What is the number one thing?
 - a) Rosters and information...
- 2) Attendance Process and Rosters
 - a) Electronic
 - b) Paper
 - i) Alpha (all school)
 - ii) By homeroom/advisory
 - iii) Per Period - Teacher class rosters (optional)
 - c) Update once per term (or just after your major enrollment periods)
- 3) Other Emergency Supplies

Communication

- 1) Emergency Notification Systems
 - a) Phones
 - b) Radios
 - c) Runners

Mutual Aid and Relationships

- 1) Agreements
 - a) Mosque
 - b) Neighbors
 - c) Police
 - d) Other Islamic Organizations
 - e) Joffe

Conclusion

Once this video concludes, you will be provided the module handout offering a checklist of the actions that should be taken during the reunification process. Feel free to use this handout as you complete the post-module survey as well.

This module acts as the conclusion in a trilogy of modules:

- Incident Command Orientation
- How to Create and Run a Tabletop
- Student and Family Reunification.

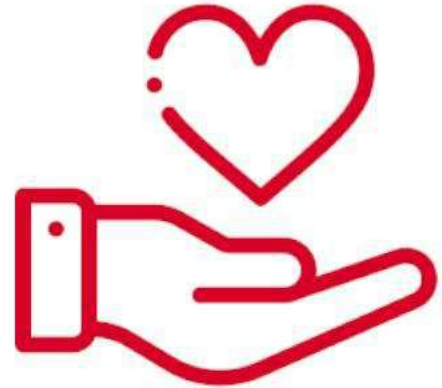
If you have not completed any of the previous modules, I encourage you to do so as they are great resources and offer preparedness and peace of mind for a school.

We are here to help

Joffe Emergency services also offers schools safety assessments and consultative services to coach, guide, train, and support your school through every stage of an emergency.

If you would like to schedule a call, please visit our website at joffeemergencyservices.com.

Thank you for participating in this Joffe Academy module with Joffe Emergency Services.



Resources

- https://www.ready.gov/sites/default/files/2019-06/post_disaster_reunification_of_children.pdf
- https://rems.ed.gov/docs/Post-Disaster_Reunification_Fact_Sheet_for_compliance_508C.pdf
- <https://www.cdc.gov/childrenindisasters/reunification.html>
- Joffe Resource - **[Student Attendance & Reunification Strike Team Checklist](#)**