

Understanding Reunification Procedures Following a School Crisis:

A Parent Tip Sheet

In the unfortunate event of a school crisis or emergency, the reunification of students with their parents or guardians is a critical aspect of ensuring the safety and well-being of individuals in the school community. Reunification involves coordinated efforts between school personnel, law enforcement, and emergency responders. The Tennessee Department of Education is committed to providing guidance and resources to schools and families to facilitate this process effectively.

Key Steps in Reunification:

- **Preparation:** School Emergency Operation Plans include specific planning and procedures for reunification following a crisis or event. These plans are developed each school year and are reviewed throughout the year to ensure best practices for school safety.
- **Communication:** Schools or the district should provide timely and clear communication with parents or guardians during a crisis. Schools should utilize multiple communication channels, such as phone calls, text messages, email, and social media, to provide updates and instructions regarding reunification procedures.
- **Reunification Site:** During Emergency Operations Planning, schools designate possible reunification sites that are secure, accessible, and equipped to accommodate the needs of students and families. Directions for reunification should be communicated promptly.
- **Identification and Authorization:** Only individuals listed on a student's emergency contact list should be authorized to pick up the student during reunification. Parents or guardians will be required to provide identification and confirm their relationship to the student before being reunited.
- **Emotional Support:** Reunification can be a stressful and emotional experience for students and families. Schools should have trained counselors and support staff available to provide emotional support and assistance as needed during the reunification process.

Tips for Parents:

- **Stay Informed:** During a crisis, it's essential to stay informed about the situation. Follow updates from the school through various communication channels, including phone calls, text messages, email, and social media.
- **Follow Instructions:** Follow any instructions provided by the school or emergency personnel regarding reunification procedures. Be prepared to show identification and confirm your relationship to the student when reuniting.

- **Be Patient:** Reunification may take some time, as it involves verifying the identity of both students and parents. Be patient and follow the instructions of school staff and emergency responders.
- **Remain Calm:** It's natural to feel anxious or worried during a crisis, but remaining calm is crucial for your child's well-being. Reassure your child that they are safe and that you will be reunited soon.
- **Provide Updated Contact Information:** Ensure that your contact information is up to date with the school so that you can receive timely updates and instructions during a crisis.

Additional Resources:

- [I Love U Guys Foundation Standard Response Reunification Method Guidance for Parents:](#) Provides resources and guidance on school safety, including the Standard Reunification Method (SRM) for reunifying students with their parents following a crisis.
- [National Association of School Psychologists \(NASP\):](#) Offers guidance on responding to mass casualty events and supporting the psychological well-being of students and families during crisis situation
- [Post-Disaster Reunification Resource Guide](#) and [Family Reunification Resource Guide:](#) Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools Technical Assistance Center resource guide for post-disaster reunification
- [Adams 12 5 Star Schools School Emergency Reunification:](#) Provides an example of what family reunification can look like.
- [Safe and Sound Schools Reunification Resource:](#) Provides resources, tools, and advocacy to promote safer school environments and empower communities to take action on school safety.