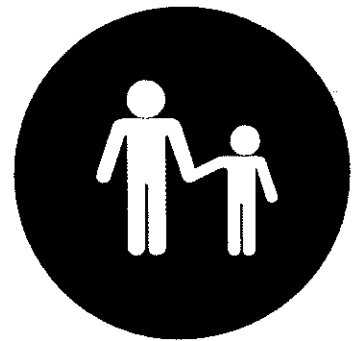


THE STANDARD REUNIFICATION METHOD

SRM

V2



REUNIFY

A Practical Method to Unite Students with Parents After an Evacuation or Crisis.
The "I Love U Guys" Foundation



THE PROCESS IN A NUTSHELL

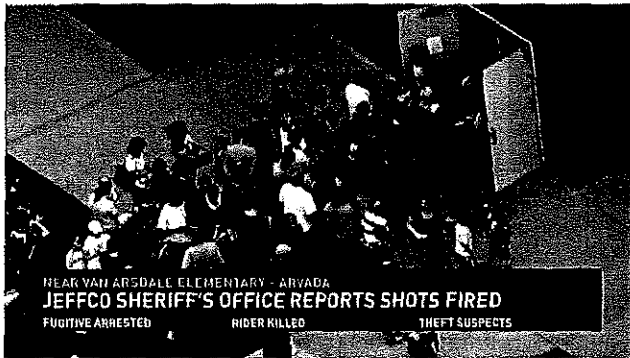
The materials in this manual provide the fundamentals for a comprehensive district plan. The beauty of the Standard Reunification Method is its simplicity.

- Establish a parent check-in location.
- Deliver the students to the student staging area, beyond the field of vision of parents/guardians.
- Once students are on site, notify parents of location.
- "Greeters" direct parents/guardians to the parent check-in location, and help them understand the process.
- Parents/guardians complete Reunification Cards.
- Procedure allows parents/guardians to self-sort during check in, streamlining the process.
- The "Reunifier" recovers student from the student staging area and delivers to the parent.
- Controlled lines of sight allow for an orderly flow, and issues can be handled with diminished drama or anxiety.
- Medical, notification, or investigative contingencies are anticipated.
- Pedestrian "flows" are created so lines don't cross.
- When it's all said and done, successful reunification is about managing the student and parent experience.

WHEN TO INITIATE A REUNIFICATION

Initiating a reunification can be a result of anything abnormal at the school or in the area: power or phone outage, weather event, hazmat incident, bomb threats, criminal activity in the area, or active violence at the school.

In some cases it may be only a partial student population reunification. For instance, criminal activity in the area might result in reunifying students who walk to and from school.



KEEP PARENTS OUTSIDE

The process works best when you can keep the parents outside of the building. If weather or circumstance dictate parents should be inside the building, give special attention to walking flows and sightlines. Caution tape is a secret "force field" when establishing the parent staging areas within a building.

WHY USE CARDS?

Many schools use electronic rosters or campus information systems. Wouldn't that be easier? The reality is a little different. First and foremost is access to data. Foundation research indicates that in any high profile incident, and even many local ones, internet and cell service become intermittent or even unresponsive. Often school WiFi is impacted as well.

THE CARD

The Reunification Card does a ton of work. Its primary function is to provide accountability, so one student per card is recommended. It also helps with the parent experience. The card is perforated and gives parents a sense of progress as they go through the process.

Reunification Information PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY
 Have photo identification out and ready to show school district personnel.

Student Name _____
 Student Grade _____ Student Cell Phone Number _____
 Name of person picking up student _____
 Signature _____
 Phone number of person picking up student _____
 Relationship to student being picked up _____
 Photo identification matches name of person picking up student? Y or N _____

Parent completes: _____
 School personnel complete upon release of student

Student Name Age _____
 Student Grade _____
 Student ID/ID# _____

THIS AVAILABLE OTHER

A LITTLE SOCIAL ENGINEERING

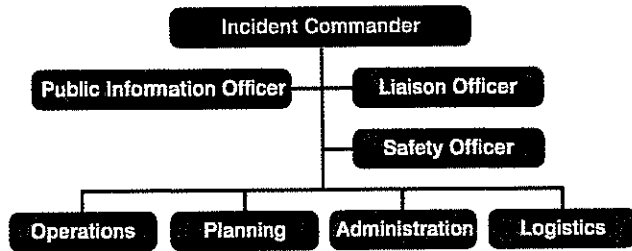
A reunification typically occurs because of a crisis or emergency. Consequently, not just students and parents are trying to function at extraordinary stress levels; staff, their families and other first responders also feel the strain. By having a defined process with signage, cards, branding, procedures and protocols, the school presents an organized, calm face to all involved. Fear or uncertainty often results from the unknown. By adopting, communicating and practicing a "known" procedure, the school removes some of that uncertainty.



The cards also bring anxiety down a notch. Asking a parent to complete the form is a familiar activity and will demand the parent slow down and perform a cognitive action, "Here, read the instructions on back, and we'll get things started," might be the first step in lowering parental blood pressure.

INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM

Whether it is a man-made or natural crisis, or an act of violence in the school, law enforcement, fire and medical teams will be involved in the school or district's reunification process. Learning to understand and speak a common language as well as being familiar with their procedures is imperative to a successful outcome. With that in mind, district and school safety teams must understand and use the Incident Command System.



NOT SO WEIRD ADVICE

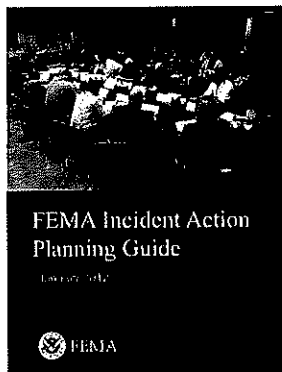
At first blush, this bit of advice may sound weird to educators: "Check out FEMA. Go to <http://training.fema.gov> and complete the online training for IS-100 SCA Introduction to Incident Management for Schools." The course takes about an hour and a half to complete and introduces some basic emergency response principles in the context of school safety.

Here's why this advice isn't as weird as it sounds. Every first responder agency that partners with schools uses "Incident Command" during a crisis. The "Incident Command System" (ICS) is a response method that determines the role of everyone responding to a crisis and defines a shared vocabulary and shared expectations of behavior.

District and school safety teams need this shared vocabulary when interacting with first responders during a crisis. Equally important is that, when meeting with first responders, having the concepts and vocabulary of Incident Command removes some of the language barriers. It also shows a commitment to success that departments and agencies will appreciate.

PRIORITY, OBJECTIVE, STRATEGY, TACTIC

A valuable FEMA resource is the *Incident Action Planning Guide*, and it's a good start in understanding how first responders manage an incident.



Source: <https://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/25028>

From a school or district perspective, it's important to understand that the incident commander has an expectation that to be useful during the event, the school or district personnel need to have some experience with incident command.

If the school or district personnel don't exhibit any knowledge of the process, their input may be marginalized.

ARTICULATE YOUR P.O.S.T.

The first step in incident management is defining the priorities, objectives, strategies and tactics that will be used during the event. While every incident will be unique, there are considerations that can be addressed in advance.

Priorities:

- Student and staff safety and well being.
- Student and staff whereabouts and condition.
- Starting the recovery process.

Objectives:

- Every student has been accounted for.
- Every staff member has been accounted for.
- Every student still in the school's control is reunited with their parent or guardian.

Strategies:

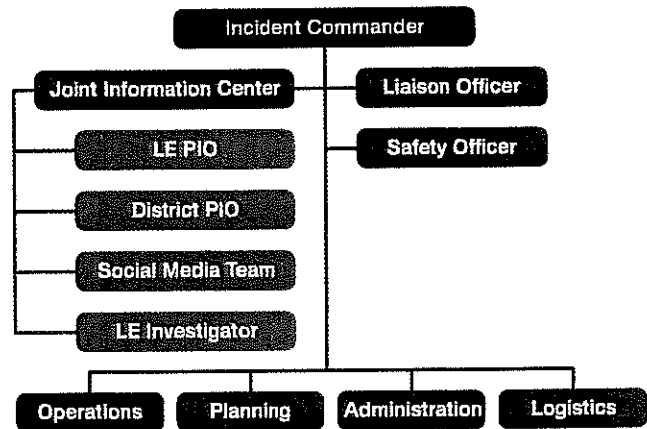
- The Standard Reunification Method

Tactics:

- Tactics will vary based on the event and the environment, but look at the typical lifecycles on page 16 for a jumpstart.

JOINT INFORMATION CENTER AND THE SOCIAL MEDIA TEAM

An essential role in the JIC is the Social Media Team. The team should have a couple of people monitoring social media outlets, and when directed by the lead Public Information Officer, releasing any information to social media outlets. Twitter especially seems to have the highest level of activity during an event.



If possible, Public Information Officers (PIO) from all of the responding departments or agencies and the district PIO should be physically together with the Social Media Team. If it's a criminal event, there is a growing trend for law enforcement to assign a detective or investigator to the JIC to monitor social media for evidentiary information.

It is important to recognize that if students have been transported to a separate reunification site, a second command structure will be set up there as well. It may be labeled as a division under Unified Command and will need resources from first responders, but a command structure will need to be established to manage the reunification process, separate from the initial incident.

TWO TEAMS: TRANSPORT AND REUNIFICATION

With an offsite reunification, the district reunification team will deploy to the reunification site. Other responsibilities need to be managed at the impacted school. Regardless of criminal activity, law enforcement resources will be required.

There are two teams the district must field for an offsite reunification. The team at the impacted school facilitates transport and initiates accountability processing.

The reunification team deploys to the reunification site for staging and ultimately student/parent reunification, and return transportation of teachers and staff.



IMPACTED SCHOOL: TRANSPORT TEAM

The team at the impacted school has these priorities:

- Assemble a master student roster, teacher roster and guest roster
- Identify and notify reunification site
- Provide safe transport of students and staff to reunification site
- If there are injuries, additional district personnel assign to the receiving care facilities.

LAW ENFORCEMENT SUPPORT

At the impacted site law enforcement support may be necessary. Some assignments may include:

- Traffic Control
- Crowd Control
- ID Verification
- Perimeter Control
- Security
- Liaison

In the event of criminal activity, LE will typically take the lead in Unified Command.

At the secure assembly area, law enforcement may search students and staff. One important consideration for law enforcement is, if possible, perform the search of students out of sight of the media.

TRANSPORTATION DIRECTOR

Whether the district runs its own buses or service is contracted out, the Transportation Director should be involved in all planning, drilling and training for reunification.

TRANSPORT OPERATIONAL ROLES AND DUTIES

The following outlines the roles and duties of the Transportation Team. For detailed tasks see the Job Action Sheets.

Transport Incident Commander Coordinate Priorities, Objectives, Strategies and Tactics for an accountable, easy, reunification of students with parents.

Public Information Officer Communicate with parents and press, if appropriate. Coordinate use of mass call or text messages

Social Media Team Monitor social media. Use Twitter to communicate with parents and press, if appropriate.

Safety Officer Observe site and remedy safety concerns.

Liaison Officer Communicate with Fire, Medical or Law Enforcement.

Operations Chief Establish and manage operational staff.

Planning Chief Establish and manage planning staff.

Finance/Administration Chief Establish and manage administrative staff.

Logistics Chief Establish and manage logistical staff.

Student Assembly Director Establish and manage the Student Assembly Area.

Leads For span of control, some roles may need leads.

Victim Advocates/Counselors Standby unless needed.

Kid Wranglers Teachers and Staff who arrive with students remain in the Student Assembly Area to manage students. Additional people may be assigned to this task.

Scribe Document events. A yellow pad is sufficient.

Runner Assist Incident Command if needed.

Transportation Direct transportation needs.

Communications Facilitate radio and other communication needs.

Facilities Coordinate any physical plant needs.

School Principal High priority for transport to the reunification site. Be present at Parent reunification site.

Superintendent Verify reunification site and notification.

TEACHERS: STAY WITH YOUR STUDENTS

Interviews with safety directors directly impacted by crisis reveal a common thread. Often teachers will group together in the immediate aftermath, or assume their job is done when police arrive on scene. It's important to emphasize that teachers should remain with their students and aren't done until all of the students have been reunited with their families. Certainly, exceptions are appropriate for teachers who are also parents of impacted students.

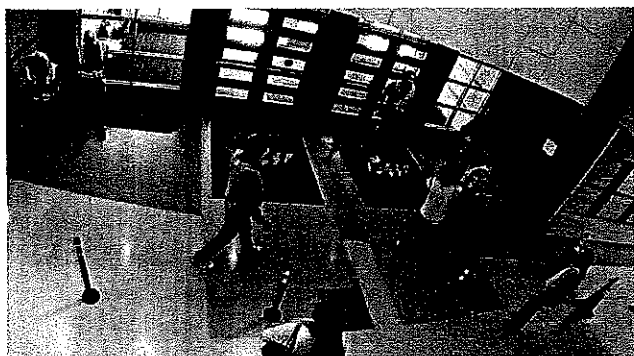
THE DISTRICT REUNIFICATION TEAM

Most often the Reunification Team is populated by district personnel. There are several reasons for this:

- Training can be more readily coordinated.
- Experienced teams are more proficient.
- School based teams may initially be unavailable.

Smaller districts may recruit from various schools' administrators in order to populate the team. Extremely small districts may recruit volunteers from the community to staff the Reunification Team. A good rule of thumb for team size is one per hundred students, plus another five members.

Once school staff are at the reunification site, there are roles that the school staff will assume. It's important to train school staff in their role during a reunification.



WHO ARE VICTIM ADVOCATES?

Many law enforcement agencies, district attorneys, and prosecutors have victim advocates on staff and a cadre of volunteers. They often deploy when there is a crisis. Very often they are trained in Psychological First Aid and can be helpful with crisis counseling, if needed, during a reunification. Recruit and train these community partners.

INCLUDING FIRST RESPONDERS

It is absolutely imperative that as the reunification plan is developed, first responders are brought into the process. Meeting with command staff, including PIOs, both law enforcement and Fire/EMS will generate two outcomes. First, they will look at your plan from their perspective. Second, they have suggestions you might not have thought of.

During a Standard Reunification Method workshop, conducted by The Foundation, a fire chief requested the training for every fire station in his city. When questioned why, he replied, "We are going to be on scene. If we're not actively engaged in fire or EMS, we can help with the reunification process."

LAW ENFORCEMENT SUPPORT

At the reunification site law enforcement support may be necessary. Some assignments may include:

- Traffic Control
- Crowd Control
- ID Verification
- Perimeter Control
- Security
- Liaison

OPERATIONAL ROLES AND DUTIES

The following outlines the roles and duties of the Reunification Team. For detailed tasks see the Job Action Sheets.

Reunification Incident Commander Coordinate Priorities, Objectives, Strategies and Tactics for an accountable, easy reunification of students with parents.

Public Information Officer Communicate with parents and press, if appropriate. Coordinate use of mass call or text messages.

Social Media Team Monitor social media. Tweet parents and press, if appropriate.

Safety Officer Observe site and remedy safety concerns.

Liaison Officer Communicate with Fire, Medical or Law Enforcement.

Operations Chief Establish and manage operational staff.

Planning Chief Establish and manage planning staff.

Finance/Administration Chief Establish and manage administrative staff.

Logistics Chief Establish and manage logistical staff.

Parent Check-in Director Establish and manage the check-in process.

Student Assembly Director Establish and manage the Student Assembly Area.

Leads For span of control, some roles may need leads.

Greeters Help coordinate the parent lines. Tell parents about the process. Help verify parents without ID.

Checkers Verify ID and possibly custody rights of parents or guardians. Direct parents to Reunification Area.

Reunifier Take bottom of Reunification Card to Assembly Area, locate student and bring to Reunification Area. Ask student, "Are you okay going home with this person?"

Flow Monitor Observe and remedy process hiccups.

Victim Advocates/Counselors Standby unless needed.

Kid Wranglers Teachers and Staff who arrive with students remain in the Student Assembly Area to manage students. Additional people may be assigned to this task.

Entertainment Director At the elementary level, deploying a projector and screen can reduce student stress. With middle and high school students, consider turning on a television and tuning to local news if appropriate.

Scribe Document events. A yellow pad is sufficient.

Runner Assist Incident Command if needed.

Transportation Directs transportation needs.

Nutrition Services Provide snacks and water.

Communications Facilitate radio and other communication needs.

Facilities Coordinate any physical plant needs.

School Principal Serve as the "Face of the school" at the Reunification Area.

SRP Lifecycle with



EXAMPLE 1: LOCKOUT

Scenario: Criminal activity in the area has resulted in the school going into Lockout. Students were brought into the building. Business as usual inside, but no one is let in or out.

Law enforcement has indicated that a normal release of the students can occur, but the situation outside isn't resolved.

Considerations: With criminal activity in area of the school, it's decided that students who walk home should have their parents pick them up.

Reunification Incident Command: Because there was no criminal or safety issue in the school, Reunification Incident Command would be led by the school safety team. Coordination with Law Enforcement Incident Command of the criminal activity would be needed.

Public Information Officer: Because the school was not directly involved in criminal activity, the school or district would lead public information within the school community. District PIO would inform LE PIO of the media messaging.

Notifications: Depending on the situation, parents and media may be notified that the school has been placed in Lockout. Additional notification will be made to parents who would need to pick up their students.

Police Role in Reunification: With criminal activity in the area, but not directly near the school, officers may be asked to assist with reunification. Some duties might include assisting with parent identification (for the parents without ID), traffic control, or simply uniformed presence. Patrol resources may also be relocated near the school.

LOCKOUT LIFECYCLE

- School is placed in Lockout.
- Parents are notified.
- Business goes as usual within the school.
- Law enforcement presence around the school is increased
- The Standard Reunification Method is utilized for the students that walk home at the end of school day.



EXAMPLE 2: LOCKDOWN

Scenario: At the middle school, an armed intruder is seen in the building. Students and staff immediately lock classroom doors, turn out the lights, and remain out of sight. Law enforcement arrives on scene.

Considerations: Because it is still an active law enforcement response and investigation, the decision is made to transport the students to a nearby community center for reunification.

Unified Command: Because it is an active crime scene, law enforcement would lead Unified Command at the middle school site.

Reunification Incident Command: At the reunification site, a command structure is established to manage the reunification.

Joint Information Center: Because it is an active crime scene, the law enforcement PIO would be the primary press representative. The school or district PIO would be in the JIC, communicating with the PIO at the reunification site.

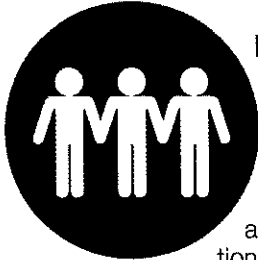
Notifications: Parents and media are notified that the school has been placed in Lockdown. Additional notifications are made to parents on the location of the reunification site once students are in route or at the site.

Police Role in Reunification: While the school has become an active crime scene, some officers will be assigned to the reunification site. Depending on the site, police may decide to sweep the area prior to students arriving. In addition to the duties outlined in the Lockout example, detectives may be on scene for witness interviews and statements.

LOCKDOWN LIFECYCLE

- School is placed in Lockdown.
- Multiple law enforcement agencies arrive on scene.
- Students and staff are evacuated classroom by classroom to the Secure Assembly Area. In this case, the gym is secured by law enforcement.
- Parents begin to arrive outside of the police perimeter.
- The media arrive on scene.
- Internet, WiFi, and cell services become intermittent or unresponsive.
- Police secure the reunification site.
- District mobilizes Reunification Team.
- Buses are deployed and students are transported to the reunification site.
- Parents are notified of location.
- The Standard Reunification Method is utilized.

Reunification



EXAMPLE 3: EVACUATE

Scenario: An unknown cause has resulted in thick smoke in the middle school. Students successfully evacuate to the football field.

Considerations: Because it is still an active fire response and investigation, the decision is made to transport the students to a nearby high school for reunification.

Unified Command: Because it is an active fire event, the fire department would lead Unified Command at the middle school site.

Reunification Incident Command: At the reunification site, a command structure is established to manage the reunification.

Joint Information Center: Because it is an active fire event, the fire department PIO would be the primary press representative. The school or district PIO would be in the JIC, communicating with the PIO at the reunification site.

Notifications: Parents and media are notified that the school has been evacuated. Additional notifications are made to parents on the location of the reunification site once students are in route or at the site.

Police Role in Reunification: While the school is an active fire scene, the school requests assistance from law enforcement. Officers are assigned to the reunification site.

EVACUATE LIFECYCLE

- Parents begin to arrive outside of the perimeter.
- The media arrive on scene.
- Internet, WiFi, and cell services are intermittent or unresponsive.
- Police secure the reunification site.
- District mobilizes Reunification Team.
- Buses are deployed and students are transported to the reunification site.
- Parents are notified of site location.
- The Standard Reunification Method is utilized.



EXAMPLE 4: SHELTER

Scenario: A nearby wildland fire has resulted in mandatory neighborhood evacuations. The Red Cross is requesting the high school as a designated shelter.

Considerations: Due to the community value of the high school as a Red Cross shelter, the decision is made to accept the request. With area residents arriving, and bus routes affected, the decision is made to transport students to a school outside of the impacted area.

Unified Command: Because it is an active fire event, the fire department would lead Unified Command, but shelter is only one aspect. The Red Cross would establish their command structure division at the shelter high school.

Reunification Incident Command: At the reunification site, a command structure is established to manage the reunification.

Joint Information Center: Because it is a large scale event, managed by Unified Command, the most experienced PIO would be the primary press representative. The school or district PIO would be in the JIC, communicating with the PIO at the reunification site.

Notifications: Parents and media are notified that the school has been evacuated. Additional notifications are made to parents on the location of the reunification site once students are in route or at the site.

Police Role in Reunification: The school which is the reunification site requests assistance from law enforcement. Officers are assigned to the reunification site.

SHELTER LIFECYCLE

- Parents begin to arrive outside of the perimeter.
- The media arrive on scene.
- Internet, WiFi, and cell services are intermittent or unresponsive.
- Police secure the reunification site.
- District mobilizes Reunification Team.
- Buses are deployed and students are transported to the reunification site.
- Parents are notified of site location.
- The Standard Reunification Method is utilized.

SRM The Process

STEP 1 GREETINGS

As parents arrive at the reunification site, Greeters explain the process and distribute Reunification Cards.

Reunification Information
Have photo identification out and ready to show school district personnel.

Student Name _____ Student Birth _____ Student Cell Phone Number _____
 Name of person picking up student _____
 Address _____
 Phone number of person picking up student _____
 (Indicate by X whether being picked up by parent)

Parent Information
Full Name (Print Name) _____ (Do not print maiden name unless of student)
 Student ID Number _____
 Student ID Photo _____

STEP 2 PARENTS FILL OUT CARD

Parents complete the information requested on the card, and begin to self-sort into lines.

Reunification Information
Have photo identification out and ready to show school district personnel.

Student Name Sue Jo Smith Student Birth 8 th Student Cell Phone Number 720-554
 Name of person picking up student John Smith
 Address 900 N. Main St.
 Phone number of person picking up student 720-554-7123
 (Indicate by X whether being picked up by parent Parent)

Parent Information
Full Name (Print Name) Sue Jo Smith (Do not print maiden name unless of student)
 Student ID Number 12345678
 Student ID Photo 12345678

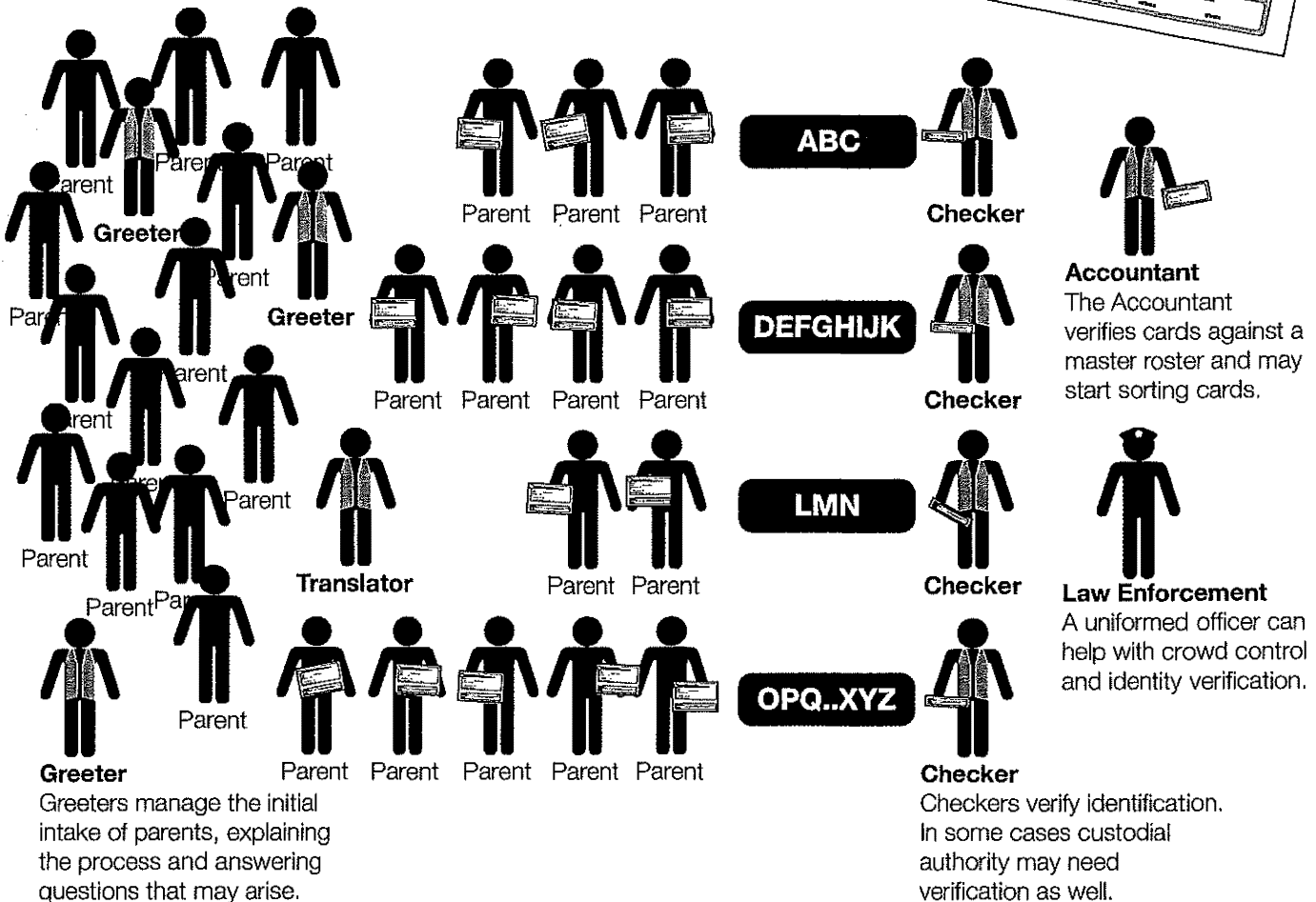
STEP 3 CHECKERS VERIFY ID

Parent custody is verified. The card is torn on the perforation and the bottom is returned to the parent. The top is given to the Accountant.

Reunification Information
Have photo identification out and ready to show school district personnel.

Student Name Sue Jo Smith Student Birth 8 th Student Cell Phone Number 720-554
 Name of person picking up student John Smith
 Address 900 N. Main St.
 Phone number of person picking up student 720-554-7123
 (Indicate by X whether being picked up by parent Parent)

Parent Information
Full Name (Print Name) Sue Jo Smith (Do not print maiden name unless of student)
 Student ID Number 12345678
 Student ID Photo 12345678



in 6 Easy Steps

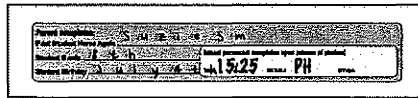
STEP 4 REUNIFICATION AREA

At the Reunification Area, parents give the bottom of the card to a Reunifier. The Reunifier goes to the Assembly area to get the student.



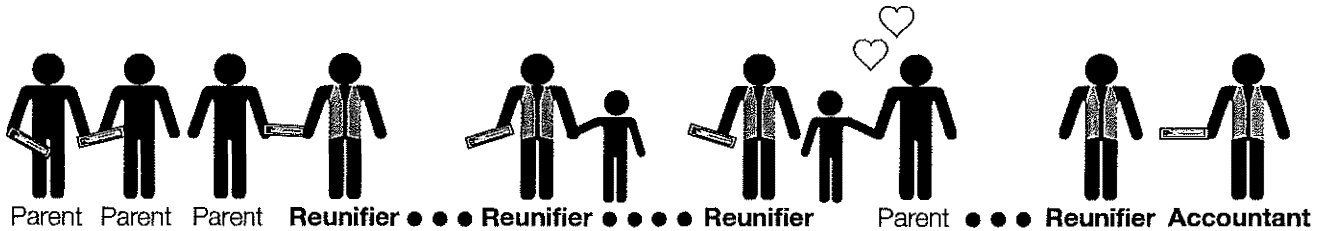
STEP 5 STUDENT REUNIFICATION

The Reunifier returns the student to their parents asking the student if they feel comfortable leaving with that adult. They then note the time and initial the bottom of the card.



STEP 6 ACCOUNTABILITY

The Reunifier delivers the bottom of the card to the Student Assembly Accountant. The Accountant may start sorting the cards.



Principal

It may be beneficial to have the school principal in the area where students and parents are reunified.

WHAT IF? THE STUDENT ISN'T THERE

If the student isn't in the Assembly Area, the Reunifier hands the card to a Victim Advocate/Crisis Counselor.



SEPARATE PARENT FROM THE LINE

The Victim Advocate/Crisis Counselor then separates the parent from the other parents in line and takes them to a private location.



Law Enforcement

A uniformed officer can help with crowd control and keep the peace.





STANDARD™ REUNIFICATION METHOD

STUDENT/PARENT REUNIFICATION

Circumstances may occur at the school that require parents to pick up their students in a formalized, controlled release. This process is called a Reunification and may be necessary due to weather, a power outage, hazmat or if a crisis occurs at the school. The Standard Reunification Method is a protocol that makes this process more predictable and less chaotic for all involved.

Because a reunification is not a typical end of school day event, a reunification may occur at a different location than the school a student attends. If this location is another school, then those students may be subject to a controlled release as well.

NOTIFICATION

Parents may be notified in a number of ways. The school or district may use its broadcast phone or text message system. In some cases, students may be asked to send a text message to their parents. A reunification text message from a student may look something like this: *"The school has closed, please pick me up at 3:25 at the main entrance. Bring your ID."*

PARENT/GUARDIAN EXPECTATIONS

If a parent or guardian is notified that a reunification is needed, there are some expectations that parents or guardians should be aware of. First, bring identification. That will streamline things during reunification. Second, be patient. Reunification is a process that protects both the safety of the student and provides for an accountable change of custody from the school to a recognized custodial parent or guardian.

WHAT IF A PARENT CAN'T PICK-UP THEIR STUDENT?

When a parent can't immediately go to the reunification site, students will only be released to individuals previously identified as a student's emergency contact. Otherwise, the school will hold students until parents can pick up their student.

WHAT IF THE STUDENT DROVE TO SCHOOL?

There may be instances where a student may not be allowed to remove a vehicle from the parking lot. In this case, parents are advised to recover the student. In some circumstances, high school students may be released on their own.

		Reunification Information PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY Have photo identification out and ready to show school district personnel.	
Student Name		Student Cell Phone Number	
Student Grade		Name of person picking up student	
Signature		Phone number of person picking up student	
Relationship to student being picked up		Photo identification matches name of person picking up student? Y or N	
Parent completes:			
Print Student Name Again		School personnel completes upon release of student	
Student Grade		TIME	
Student Birthday		INITIALS	
		OTHER	

HOW IT WORKS

For students, the school asks that students be orderly and quiet while waiting. Students may be asked to text a message to their parents or guardians. Students are also asked not to send other text messages either in or out of the school or reunification area. Keeping the cellular network usage at a minimum may be important during a reunification.

REUNIFICATION CARDS

For parents, there are a couple of steps. If a parent is driving to the school, greater awareness of traffic and emergency vehicles is advised. Parents should park where indicated and not abandon vehicles. Parents are asked to go to the Reunification "Check In" area and form lines based on the first letter of their student's last name. While in line, parents are asked to fill out a reunification card. This card is perforated and will be separated during the process. Some of the same information is repeated on both the top and separated bottom of the card. Parents are asked to complete all parts of the card.

In the case of multiple students being reunified, a separate card for each student needs to be completed.

BRING ID TO CHECK IN

During check in, identification and custody rights are confirmed. The card is separated and the bottom half given back to the parent.

From the "Check in" area parents are directed to the "Reunification" area. There, a runner will take the bottom half of the card and take it to the Student Assembly Area to recover the student or students.

Parents should be aware that in some cases, they may be invited into the building for further information.

INTERVIEWS AND COUNSELING

In some cases, parents may be advised that a law enforcement investigation is underway and may be advised that interviews are necessary. In extreme cases, parents may be pulled aside for emergency or medical information.

