

Parents' Roles During Emergencies

Providing a safe place for students to learn and grow is one of the most important responsibilities of any school system. Along with school officials, teachers and staff, school families play a critical role in preventing and responding to school emergencies. This information is intended to provide parents and guardians with the steps you can take before, during and after an emergency. It is the ABC's of the parent's role during emergencies.

Prevention: The Role of Parents in Keeping Schools Safe:

- Parents and community members play an important role in keeping our schools safe. You can be our eyes and ears by reporting any issues, concerns or rumors related to safety to school or law enforcement officials.
- You also can help by following and supporting all security measures when you visit one of our school buildings. This includes checking in and out at the school office.
- Contact Information - Another of the most important steps that parents can take prior to an emergency is to ensure their contact information is updated regularly in the district's PowerSchool student data system. This is the system that provides e-mail and phone numbers to the district's Parent Link rapid-contact notification system. Please regularly update emergency and contact telephone numbers, e-mail addresses and other information with your school to ensure you receive information and updates during emergency situations. 44
- It is also important to review and update information regarding who can legally pick-up your child during an emergency. Once this information is on file, you should ensure that those people are aware they have been listed as your "emergency contacts," and that they may receive messages via phone and/or e-mail during an emergency, weather early out, or other situation.
- More information about the district's Parent Link system and what contact information it uses in various situations, visit the district website at www.denison.k12.ia.us .
- If your child is on medication, be sure the school has at least a two-day supply. Create your own family emergency plan. Develop a family communication plan and have a supply kit to sustain you and your family for

two to three days. For tips on how to prepare a plan go to www.bereadyiowa.org. During an Emergency: In a school emergency, the first instinct of many parents is to pick up the telephone and start calling their child or school and/or rush to the school and get your children. But the truth is, this only complicates matters from a safety and security standpoint. Parents too close to an incident often hinder rescue attempts of the police and fire officials on the scene. Calling your child's cell phone may prevent them from hearing important, even life-saving information. Too many parents calling the school and also tie up needed phone lines and hinder efforts to communicate. Students will be able to use cell phones if they need immediate assistance and once they are safe. The best action parents can take in an emergency is to monitor their phone, e-mail and district website for regular updates and instructions. • Do not report to your child's school during emergency situations. Law enforcement officials will not allow entry to the school site during a lockdown or shelter-in-place. • Avoid calling the school or the district during the emergency. • Notification and Communication: The school district is committed to providing parents and guardians with the latest and most accurate information available. In most cases the district will send brief phone messages or e-mails via the Parent Link system in an emergency. Parents will be asked to also monitor more extensive official emergency updates at the district's website. Additional updates will also be sent via Parent Link depending upon the nature of the emergency. In today's world, it is likely that students will be texting and calling parents immediately. Be aware that information you receive from your child may not always be accurate; ensure the information you are using is official and comes directly from the Denison Community School District. School Emergency Response Protocols:

- A school crisis can take a number of forms including an environmental event, such as a chemical spill or gas leak; a weather emergency, such as a tornado warning; or an intruder in or near the school. The nature of a school crisis dictates whether school officials will put in place a lockdown, shelter-in-place, evacuation, or any combination of two of these protocols, as a means to ensure the safety and wellbeing of students and staff.
- When and Why are Students and Staff Asked to Lockdown, Shelter-in-Place or Evacuate? Lockdown: A lockdown is normally in effect when there is a threat inside the school. Students and staff are removed from harms way by having them safely located inside secure classrooms or other areas inside the school to reduce the risk of being exposed to the source of potential harm. During

lockdowns access to the building is prohibited. 45

- Shelter-in-Place: Shelter-in-place is instituted when the threat is outside the school. Students and staff are secured inside a classroom or other areas inside the school reducing the risk for exposure to inclement weather or other potential harm such as a gas release.

Evacuation: Evacuations are typically conducted to remove students and staff from harms way by having them safely vacate the school and reassemble in a more secure location.

- If the school building is evacuated, how will I be able to locate my child?

Parents will be directed to a specific location where they will be required to show proper identification. At the reunification site, school administrators, police and fire officials account for students and provide aide to those who need it immediately. Students are released only to authorized individuals. If you are a non- custodial parent, you must be listed with your child's emergency contact information as a guardian and show proper identification.

After an Emergency:

- Monitor your child's behavior and let the school know if you think counseling or help is needed. Following a school crisis, specially trained school and district crisis team members and social workers are available to provide counseling and outside referrals to students, staff members and others who may need it.

- Recovery plans: Depending on the nature and amount of damage, school maybe moved to a different location. The District will inform parents of any changes.



DENISON COMMUNITY SCHOOLS