Family Reunification Protocols
Lincoln County School District

A **Family Reunification** procedure is used when it is necessary to release students directly to their parent, guardian or designated emergency contact due to an emergency situation that prevents a normal dismissal. Situations which may require a *Family Reunification* include, but are not limited to:

- Fire or Damage to a School Building,
- Natural Disaster,
- Field Trip Emergency or School Bus Accident,
- Violence in the Surrounding Community,
- A Situation involving a Threat, Weapons or Violence at School.

A well-organized *Family Reunification* process will help to reduce anxiety during a potentially stressful situation and reunite children with their families in a **structured, timely & safe** manner.

Key Components: Key components to our Family Reunification process include:
1. Choosing a **Location** early on in the crisis and deciding whether the Reunification take place on- or off-campus.
2. Timely and consistent **Communications**, with parents, school staff and students;
3. Designating and managing three distinct **Staging Areas**. A Parent Check-in Area, a Family Waiting Area, and a Student Supervision Area; and finally,
4. The safe **Release** of students to their parent, guardian or designated emergency contact.

Location: Many circumstances surrounding the emergency will impact decisions about the best location to conduct a *Family Reunification.* The school administrator, in consultation with the Superintendent's Office and the Police or Fire Incident Commander (if they are involved), will decide whether to hold the reunification on the school campus or at an off-campus location. Here are considerations for each:

On-Campus Reunification: Depending on the situation, you may be able to stage the reunification at your school. Logistically, this is the easiest solution since students are already there, secured and supervised and they won't have to be transported anywhere. You may choose an *On-Campus Reunification* if the conditions on campus are safe, if it does not interfere with a crime scene or fire/rescue operations, and if roads are open and accessible to parents and guardians, or in any other situation that seems appropriate. If an *On-Campus Reunification* is chosen, decide if you can use indoor staging areas or if it will be necessary to hold the Reunification outside. You may even use a combination of indoor and outdoor staging areas. Weather may be a factor.

Off-Campus Reunification: In cases where it is not safe to remain on campus or where parents coming to and from the school may create more of a hazard, a Family Reunification may take place Off-Campus. Logistically, this is much more challenging since students and staff will need to be moved, either by bus or on foot, to the off-campus site. Securing and supervising students while in transit requires extra planning and diligence. And it may take time for bus drivers to report in. The decision to implement an *Off-Campus Reunification* will need to be made early in the crisis, if possible, BEFORE parents begin arriving at school. Work with the Superintendent's Office to get a mass phone call sent to families, to arrange for buses and for assistance with logistics at the Reunification site.

Off-Campus Reunification sites are divided into two categories: 1) <u>Near Campus</u>: sites within walking distance, and 2) <u>Away from Campus</u>: sites which require buses to transport students. In most cases, try to avoid using neighboring schools, since parents from that school may also feel the need to rush to school to pick up their children, creating traffic jams and disruptions to the larger school community. Potential *Off-Campus Reunification* sites include neighborhood churches, theaters, community centers, etc. See page 7 for a confidential list of possible facilities near your school. We don't publicize this list because every situation is different and decisions about using these sites are made based on the circumstances of each particular emergency. Also, publicizing this information could tip off someone aiming to cause harm, providing them an additional target. School Administrators can work to develop a partnership with the off-campus facility managers near their school in advance of an emergency so that in a real incident, a simple phone call can allow for quick access and use of the facility.

Communicating with Students & Staff: Give clear instructions about the reunification plans to school staff using the intercom, e-mail, runners and possibly even by using a megaphone if you are outside or in a large auditorium. Supplying school staff with information will not only calm them, but it help them to manage students and the process more effectively. Prepare students for movement to the reunification area and explain what is being done and why. If applicable, prepare students to board buses or walk to an *Off-Campus Reunification* site. Work to keep students calm. When moving students to a reunification area, it is very important to keep everyone together and prevent students from wandering off. Do not release students to parents while moving students to the Reunification Site. Remind staff of this plan.

Communicating with Parents & Guardians: Work with the Superintendent's Office to assist with parent notifications. Get this in motion as soon as possible using: Mass Phone Calls, District & School Websites, Social Media Sites, and Press Releases, etc. Here is a sample message that could be sent to parents using our mass phone call system.

> *This is an important message from Newport City School. Today is Monday, February 29th. It is 2:30. The emergency situation at Newport City School is over. Please listen carefully to these student-release instructions. Parents, please go to the Newport Community Center located at 1234 Community Center Drive to pick up your child. Do not come to the school. <u>All students</u>, including those who normally ride the bus, will be taken to the Newport Community Center and released to parents and guardians there. Bring your photo identification with you to the Newport Community Center. School staff will check your ID against a list of individuals approved to sign out each student. This is for the safety of your child. Thank you for your patience as we work to reunite you with your child.*

Print out a similar statement to be kept at all office phones so that office staff can relay a consistent message. Fax or email a copy of the statement to neighboring schools and to the 911 Dispatch Center as they often receive calls from concerned parents and community members and this will allow everyone to give out the same instructions. Refer media inquiries to the Superintendent's Office. The chart on page 4 provides several different Family Reunification messages that can be used or modified as needed, based on the emergency situation you are dealing with.

Staging Areas: It is important to designate and manage three distinct Staging Areas. It is not uncommon for news of school crisis incidents to result in parents, guardians and loved ones rushing to the school or reunification site to pick up their children. In a major crisis, several adults for each student may come. Parents may become frustrated by heavy traffic, parking challenges and uncertainty about how to sign-out their students. You will need to be very organized at the reunification site in order to reduce stress and work to provide a safe structure in which to conduct the reunification.

Identify three distinct areas: 1) Parent Check-in-Area; 2) Family Waiting Area; and 3) a Student Supervision Area. Designate a different person to be in charge of each distinct area and a team to assist in each area. You will also need "Staff Runners" to retrieve students from the Student Supervision Area and bring them to the Family Waiting Area to be reunited with their families.

Logistics & Set-up: Staff working in the Family Reunification areas should bring their two-way radios and wear identifying vests and ID badges. Bring your SAFE Team Go-Kit, which contains your student emergency contact information and has your Family Reunification vests, signage and forms in the bottom section of the kit. Arrange for tables, chairs, pop-up tents, and other resources to be brought to the Family Reunification site. Consider having security, law enforcement, an administrator and a staff member who speaks Spanish at or near the Parent Check-In Area.
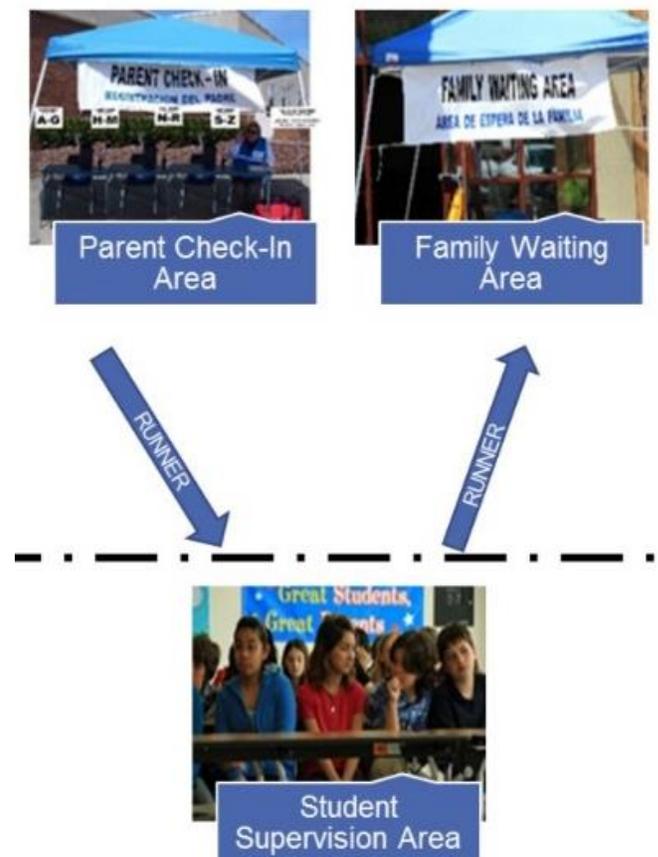
Student Supervision Area: The Student Supervision Area must be physically separate and out of view from the Parent and Family Areas. This is where you will continue to supervise, secure and care for students until they are each individually reunited with family. If indoors, you may decide to keep students in classrooms or move them to a central location like a gym, cafeteria, media center or common area. If outdoors, a fenced in area such as a ball field or grandstands may suffice. In some situations, a Student Supervision Area may even be inside buses. In any case, consider how you will meet basic needs such as toilets, warmth, water, etc.

As Parents Arrive: As parents begin to arrive, calmly give them a **Family Reunification Card**. This card gives some details on what to expect of the process and provides a mechanism for school staff to match up students with the appropriate parent, guardian or designated emergency contact. Ask Parents to: Complete Section 1 of the form; Go to the Parent Check-In Area and get in line according to their child's last name; Turn in the form and be prepared to show picture ID. If they don't have ID, direct them to the "No ID" line. Reassure parents. Thank them for their patience as the school works to safely reunite them with their student.

Parent Check-in Area: At the Parent Check-in Area, staff will fill out Section 2 of the Family Reunification Card once it is handed to them. Follow the checklist on the card: Using the Student Emergency Contact List, verify that the person requesting the student is on the list; check their ID against the list; and circle their name on the list. Once verified, ask them to proceed to the Family Waiting Area which is where they will be reunited with their student. Give the form to a "Staff Runner" who will retrieve the student and complete Section 3.

For family members who do not have the appropriate identification, work with your staff who know your families to help identify them and get them through the process. However, do not release a student to anyone who is not authorized on the student's paperwork, even if the child claims to know the person. If they become argumentative or uncooperative, notify the nearest supervisor and/or law enforcement official.

Family Waiting Area: The Family Waiting Area is where families will wait for their children to be retrieved by the "Staff Runners." This is also where they will be reunited with their children. This process will take some time and parents may become stressed and impatient. Consider setting up an information table at the Family Waiting Area. Provide staff who can remain calm, understanding and professional to answer questions and reassure parents. You may want to use staff who already know the families and have a good rapport with them. Include staff who speak Spanish if needed.

Staff Runners: The Staff Runner will: 1) Receive a verified Reunification Card from the Parent Check-in Area Staff; 2) Take the Reunification Card to the Student Supervision Area to retrieve the student named on the card and remind the teacher to mark the student "released" on their student roster; and 3) Take the student with them to the Family Waiting Area to complete the Reunification Card and reunite the student with their family.

Release & Reunification: At the *Family Waiting Area*, the Staff Runner will call out the name of the adult listed in Section 1 on this form who is approved to pick up the student. Verify Photo ID again, if necessary. Complete Section 3 of the Card. Have the Parent/Guardian sign for the student and indicate where they are going next. The Staff Runner signs and notes the time of release. The Reunification Cards are retained by the school and stored alphabetically by the last name of the student. Now the Student can be released to their parent or guardian.

Every Situation is Different: This is a cumbersome process. It takes time, patience and diligence to implement a process like this in order to safely reunite each student with their parent, guardian or designated emergency contact. Do you have to use it every time? Absolutely not. Every emergency situation is different. This Family Reunification guide simply provides a structure that can be used or modified to fit the circumstances you find yourself in. In a smaller scale situation, such as a bus accident or field trip emergency, you may determine it is reasonable to use a simple sign-out sheet for the handling the documentation piece. In the most severe of circumstances, such as a school shooting situation – which we all hope will never happen here, the protocol described in this training would be very appropriate to fully implement.

Summary: While school emergency situations requiring Family Reunifications are rare, they do occur with enough frequency that it is necessary to have a well-defined process and the supplies ready in order to implement it. Understanding these concepts, knowing your role, and remaining calm during a real emergency situation will help students and parents through a potentially chaotic and stressful time as we work to bring families back together safely.

	Sample Family Reunification Messages
	This is a good format to follow. Modify the messaging as needed based on the situation. And don't forget to translate into Spanish if your population requires that – see pages 9-10.
Greeting	This is an important message from (name of school). It is (date & time).
Situation (options)	• The emergency situation at (name of school) has been resolved. • The lockdown at (name of school) is over. • Due to a (fire, threat of violence, damaged roof, etc.) at (name of school), students will be released early today (at time). • Due to violence in the surrounding community, we will have a controlled release of students today.
Instructions	Please listen carefully to these student-release instructions.
OFF-Campus Reunification	Please come to (name of off-campus site) located at (address) to pick up your child. All students, including those who normally ride the bus, will be taken to (name of off-campus site) and released to parents there.
ON-Campus Reunification (options)	• Please come to (name of school) to pick up your child. All students, including those who normally ride the bus will be released to parents there. • If your student normally rides the bus, they will still be riding the bus, however buses will be (# of minutes) late or more. Please make arrangements for a late bus arrival. These students will not be released at the school. • If you normally pick up your student at school or if he or she usually walks home, please come to (name of school) to pick up your child. All non-bus riders will only be released to a parent, guardian or other authorized emergency contact at (name of school).
Identification	Bring your photo identification with you to (name of reunification site). School staff will check your ID against a list of individuals approved to sign out each student. This is for the safety of your child.
Reassure & Closing	Thank you for your patience as we work to reunite you with your child.

FAMILY REUNIFICATION / REUNIFICACIÓN FAMILIAR
Lincoln County School District / Distrito Escolar del Condado de Lincoln

Parent/Guardian: Please complete section 1 of this form. Then go to the *Parent Check-In* area, get in line according to your student's last name and turn in this form. You will need to show your photo ID twice: when you check in and when you are reunited with your student. Thank you for your patience as we work to safely reunite you with your student.

Padres/Guardianes: Por favor complete esa seccion1 de esta forma. Y vaya ala área de registraciones de padres, únase a la línea de acuerdo al apellido de su alumno y entregue esta forma. Usted tiene que mostrar su identificación dos veces: cuando usted se presenta y cuando usted se reúne con su alumno/estudiante. Gracias por su paciencia mientras trabajamos con seguridad para reunir a usted y a su estudiante.

PARENTS – COMPLETE SECTION 1   PADRES – COMPLETA LA SECCIÓN 1

	PARENT/GUARDIAN SECTION/ SECCIÓN DE PADRES
1	**Please Print/por favor escriba**
	Name of Student: Nombre del Estudiante: ———————————— Grade: Grado : ——— Teacher Name: Nombre del maestro: ————————
	Name of Person Requesting Student: Nombre de la persona solicitando al estudiante: ————————————————
	Relationship to Student: Relación con el estudiante: ————————————————

STAFF – COMPLETE SECTIONS 2 & 3

	PARENT CHECK-IN AREA
2 **PARENT CHECK-IN** **REGISTRACION DEL PADRE**	☐ **Is the person requesting the student on the *Emergency Contact List*?** ☐YES ☐NO *Staff Initials* ____ ☐ **On your *Emergency Contact List* paperwork, circle the name of the person picking up the student.** ☐ **Did you verify Photo ID?** ☐YES ☐NO **Was identity verified through another means? (describe)** _____ ☐ **Kindly direct the person requesting the student to the *Family Waiting Area (Area de Espera la Familia).* This is where the reunification will take place.** ☐ **Staff is to give this form to a "Staff Runner" to retrieve the student.**

	FAMILY WAITING AREA/REUNIFICATION
3 **FAMILY WAITING AREA** **AREA DE ESPERA DE LA FAMILIA**	☐ **Get the student from the *Student Supervision Area*. Remind the teacher to mark them "released" on their student accountability checklist.** ☐ **At the *Family Waiting Area*, call out the name of the adult listed in Section 1 on this form who is approved to pick up the student.** ☐ **Verify Photo ID again. Have them sign below and indicate where they are going next.**
	Signature of person releasing student to: Firma de la persona liberando al estudiante: ————————————————
	Next destination: Próximo destino: ————————————————
	Staff Signature: _____ Time of Release: _____

LCSD Family Reunification Form & Checklist   (School retains form & stores alphabetically by last name.)   Updated 2-23-16

LCSD FAMILY REUNIFICATION PLAN 4-7-16 PUBLIC VERSION   5

REUNIFICATION SIGN-OUT RECORDS – ACCOUNT FOR EVERYONE

Depending on the emergency situation, this form may be used instead of the individual Family Reunification Cards to account for each student being reunified with parents, guardians, or designated emergency contacts.

TIME OF RELEASE	NAME OF STUDENT (Print)	RELEASING TO: (Print Name)	VERIFIED ID? (circle one)	VERIFIED ON EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST?	RELEASED TO: (Signature)	NEXT DESTINATION	RELEASED BY: (staff name)
			YES NO	YES NO			
			YES NO	YES NO			
			YES NO	YES NO			
			YES NO	YES NO			
			YES NO	YES NO			
			YES NO	YES NO			
			YES NO	YES NO			
			YES NO	YES NO			
			YES NO	YES NO			
			YES NO	YES NO			
			YES NO	YES NO			
			YES NO	YES NO			
			YES NO	YES NO			
			YES NO	YES NO			
			YES NO	YES NO			
			YES NO	YES NO			
			YES NO	YES NO			
			YES NO	YES NO			
			YES NO	YES NO			
			YES NO	YES NO			
			YES NO	YES NO			
			YES NO	YES NO			

FAMILY REUNIFICATION – POSSIBLE OFF-CAMPUS SITES

These are possible Off-Campus Reunification Sites near and away from our campuses. School Administrators will need to work to develop partnerships with the off-campus facility managers near their school in advance of an emergency so that in a real incident, a simple phone call may allow for quick access and use of the facility.

SENSITIVE INFORMATION – DO NOT RELEASE

We don't publicize these possible Off-Campus Reunification Sites in advance because every situation is different and decisions will be made based on the circumstances of the particular emergency the school is facing. Also, publicizing these in advance could tip off someone aiming to cause harm to students & staff, affording them an additional site at which to plan violence.

NORTH AREA SCHOOLS	NEAR CAMPUS (Walking Distance)	AWAY FROM CAMPUS (Busing Distance)
WEST AREA SCHOOLS	NEAR CAMPUS (Walking Distance)	AWAY FROM CAMPUS (Busing Distance)
EAST AREA SCHOOLS	NEAR CAMPUS (Walking Distance)	AWAY FROM CAMPUS (Busing Distance)
SOUTH AREA SCHOOLS	NEAR CAMPUS (Walking Distance)	AWAY FROM CAMPUS (Busing Distance)
Updated 3-15-16		

SAFE TEAM GO-KIT & REUNIFICATION SUPPLIES

Each school has a SAFE Team Go-Kit which is usually stored in the office area. A SAFE Team member is assigned to exit with the Go-Kit each time there is an evacuation. Family Reunification supplies are kept in the bottom section of the kit.

School Office Staff should print out an updated Student Emergency Contact List at the beginning of the school year and at the semester change. This should kept in the SAFE Team Go-Kit. Update non-custodial issues as they occur.

SAFE TEAM SUPPLIES

- 5-8 Orange SAFE Team Reflective Vests
- First Aid Kit
- Mega Phone & 8 "C" Batteries
- Yellow Caution Tape (bilingual)
- 8 Rain Ponchos and 8 sets Masks, gloves, goggles
- AM/FM Radio/Flashlight Combo & 4 "AA" Batteries
- Facial Tissues
- Whistle
- Metal Utility Knife
- 100 Sticky Name Tags
- Misc. Pens, Sharpies, Pencils, Clipboard, Notepad

PLANS, FORMS, DOCUMENTATION

- Emergency Plan
- School Floorplans
- SAFE Team Roles & Responsibilities List
- Binder with Student Emergency Contact Rosters
- Family Reunification Instructions
- Family Reunification Cards (300- 700 depending on enrollment #s)

FAMILY REUNIFICATION SIGNS & VESTS

- 3 Vinyl Signs:
  - PARENT CHECK-IN REGISTRACIÓN DEL PADRE
  - FAMILY WAITING AREA ÁREA DE ESPERA DE LA FAMILIA
  - INFORMATION   INFORMACIÓN
- 5 Laminated Signs: A-G, H-M, N-R, S-Z & No ID (legal size)
- Supplies to Hang Signs: Duct Tape, Push-pins, Sign Clips, Zip Ties, Rope, Bungee Cords, & Scissors
- 10 Vests
- Placards for Vests:4 Parent Check-In, 2 Security, 2 Information, 2 Family Waiting Area, 4 Runners

Updated 3-15-16

Sample Family Reunification Messages

Here are the English and Spanish translations of potential Family Reunification messages that can be use and/or modified for mass phone calls, press releases, social media sites, etc.

	ENGLISH	**SPANISH**
Greeting **Saludo**	This is an important message from (name of school). It is (date & time).	Este es un mensaje importante del (Nombre de la escuela). Es (Jueves, 07 de mayo). Son las (5:45pm.)
Situation **Situacion** **{opciones}** (options)	• The emergency situation at (name of school) has been resolved. • The lockdown at (name of school) is over. • Due to a (fire, threat of violence, damaged roof, etc.) at (name of school), students will be released early today (at time). • Due to violence in the surrounding community, we will have a controlled release of students today.	• La situación de emergencia {Nombre de la escuela} Ha sido resuelta. El bloqueo de la {Nombre de la escuela} Ha sido resuelto. • Debido a {Incendio, Amenaza, Daños en el techo} en {nombre de la escuela} Los alumnos estarán yendo a casa temprano hoy día. • Debido a la violencia en los alrededores de la comunidad hoy día, tendremos controlado la salida de los alumnos.
Instructions **Instrucciones**	Please listen carefully to these student-release instructions.	Por favor, escuche atentamente estas instrucciones de liberación del estudiante:
OFF-Campus Reunification **Reunion Fuera del campus**	Please go to (name of off-campus site) located at (address) to pick up your child. All students, including those who normally ride the bus, will be taken to (name of off-campus site) and released to parents there.	• Por favor vaya (a esta dirección) localizada en para recoger su hijo/ja • TODOS los estudiantes, incluyendo aquellos que normalmente viajan en el autobús, _____ se entregarán a los padres y guardianes en el:
ON-Campus Reunion en el campus Reunification (options)	• Please go to (name of school) to pick up your child. • All students, including those who normally ride the bus will be released to parents there. • If your student normally rides the bus, they will still be riding the bus, however buses will be (# of minutes) late or more. Please make arrangements for a late bus arrival. These students will not be released at the school. • If you normally pick up your student at school or if he or she usually walks home, please come to (name of school) to pick up your child. All non-bus riders will only be released to a parent, guardian or other authorized emergency contact at (name of school).	• Por favor vaya (nombre de la escuela) para recoger su hijo/ja • TODOS los estudiantes, incluyendo aquellos que normalmente viajan en el autobús, se entregarán a los padres y guardianes ahí. • Si su hijo normalmente toma el autobús, siempre se irán en el autobús, sin embargo los autobuses estarán de 30-45 minutos tarde o más. Por favor haga arreglos para la llegada del autobús tarde. Estos estudiantes no serán entregados en la escuela. • Si normalmente recoge a su estudiante en la escuela o si él o ella usualmente camina a casa, por favor venga {nombre de la escuela} a recoger a su hijo/ja. Todos los que no toman el autobús solo serán entregados a sus padres o guardianes autorizados o aquellos que están en contacto de emergencia {nombre de la escuela.}
Identification **Identificacion**	Bring your photo identification with you to (name of reunification site). School staff will check your ID against a list of individuals approved to sign out each student. This is for the safety of your child.	Traer una identificación con foto cuando venga a recoger a su hijo(a), porque el personal de la escuela revisará la identificación para compararla con la lista de personas con permiso para recoger a cada estudiante. Eso es por la seguridad de su hijo(a).
Reassure & Closing	Thank you for your patience as we work to reunite you with your child.	Gracias por su cooperación y paciencia ya que estamos trabajando para que usted se reúna con su hijo/ja.