

Conducting a Secure, Safe, and Successful K-12 Family Reunification Process

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Conducting a Secure, Safe, and Successful K- 12 Family Reunification Process



U.S. Department of Education
Office of Safe and Healthy Students

Housekeeping

- To download pertinent handouts, access the Handouts Box.
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Webinar Presenters

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Agenda

Overview of Planning for Family Reunification

Moderated Discussion

Q&A Session

Introduction



Planning



Support



Security

The *School Guide* and Family Reunification

GUIDE FOR DEVELOPING HIGH-QUALITY SCHOOL EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLANS



FEMA



PLANNING PRINCIPLES

The following principles are key to developing a comprehensive school emergency operations plan (school EOP) that addresses a range of threats and hazards:

Planning must be supported by leadership. At the district and school levels, senior-level officials can help the planning process by demonstrating strong support for the planning team.

Planning uses assessment to customize plans to the building level. Effective planning is built around comprehensive, ongoing assessment of the school community. Information gathered through assessment is used to customize plans to the building level, taking into consideration the school's unique circumstances and resources.

Planning considers all threats and hazards. The planning process must take into account a wide range of possible threats and hazards that may impact the school. Comprehensive school emergency management planning considers all threats and hazards throughout the planning process, addressing safety needs before, during, and after an incident.

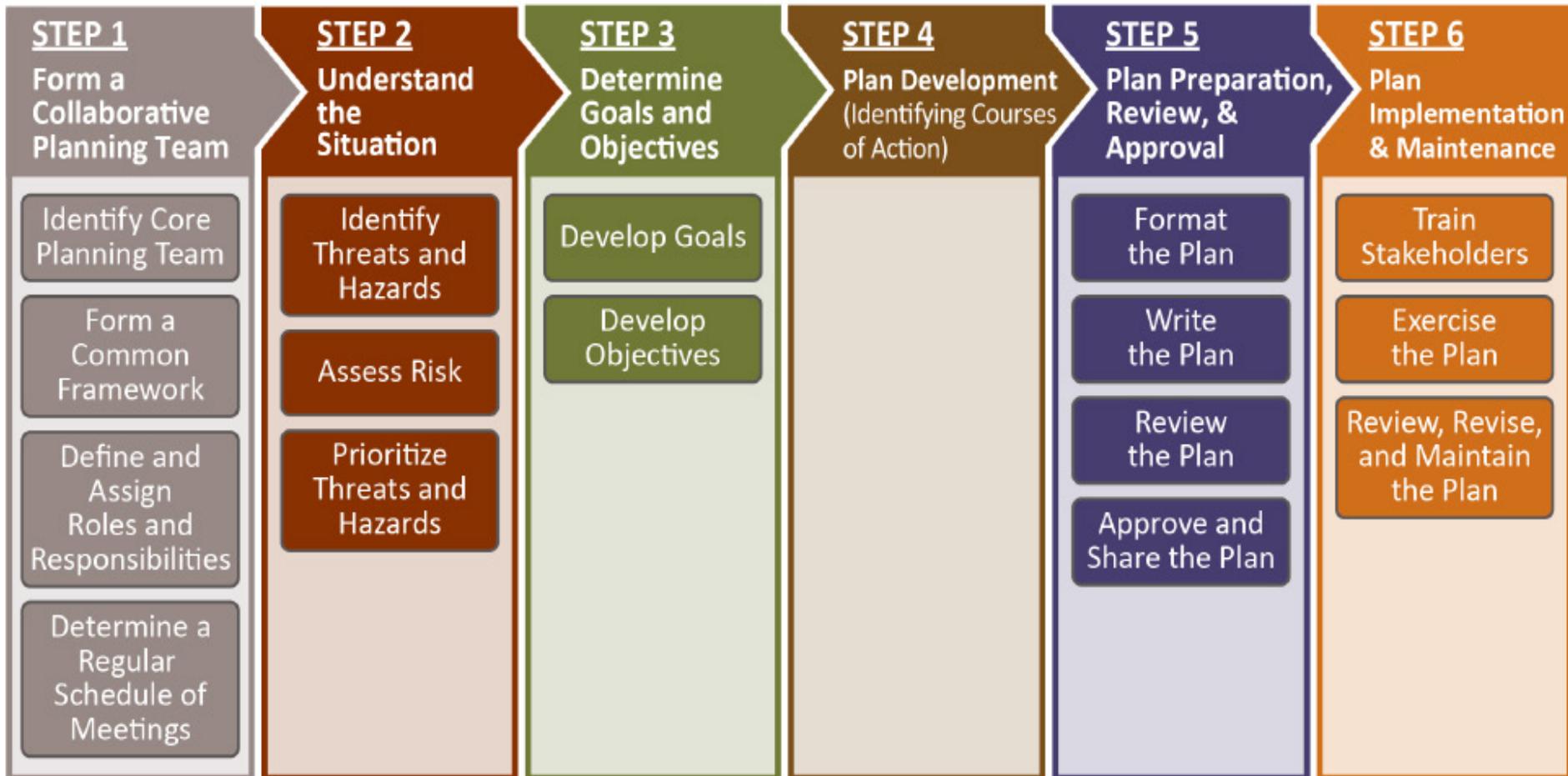
Planning provides for the access and functional needs of the whole school community. The "whole school community" includes children, individuals with disabilities and others with access and functional needs, those from religiously, racially, and ethnically diverse backgrounds, and people with limited English proficiency.

Planning considers all settings and all times. School EOPs must account for incidents that may occur during and outside the school day as well as on and off campus (e.g., sporting events, field trips).

Creating and revising a model emergency operations plan is done by following a collaborative process. This guide provides a process, plan format, and content guidance that are flexible enough for use by all school emergency planning teams. If a planning team also uses templates, it must first evaluate their usefulness to ensure the tools do not undermine the collaborative initiative and collectively shared plan. There are some jurisdictions that provide templates to schools, and these will reflect state and local mandates, as applicable.

Creating and revising a model emergency operations plan is done by following a collaborative process.

Connection to the Six-Step Planning Process



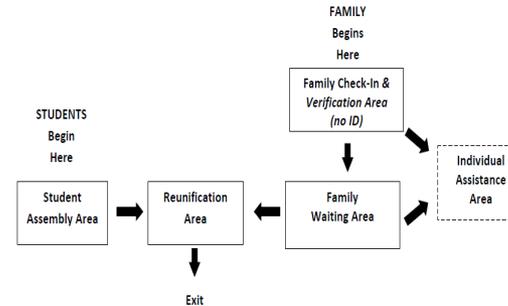
Development of a Family Reunification Annex

Stoneybrook Middle School Emergency Operations Plan

2015-03-25
Stoneybrook Middle School

This school EOP was prepared using the EOP ASSIST software
For more information, visit <http://rems.ed.gov/EOPASS>

organizations that will regularly use the building for activities out of regular school hours during the school year. This review will include discussion of different emergency scenarios and corresponding adjustments that could be made to the four designated areas:



- **On-Campus (Interior) Reunification areas:**

- Student Assembly Area—Gym;
- Family Check-In Gate—Teacher's Dining Room;
- Family Waiting Area—Cafeteria;
- Reunification Area—Main Administrative Office; and
- Individual Assistance Area—Guidance Office.

- **On-Campus (Exterior) Reunification areas:**

- Student Assembly Area—Fenced softball field;
- Family Check-In Gate—Concession stand;
- Family Waiting Area—Football field;
- Reunification Area—Tennis courts; and
- Individual Assistance Area—Maintenance building.

- **Off-Campus (Interior) Reunification areas:**

In the event that the reunification process cannot take place on campus and community buildings have not been impacted by the event, the District Superintendent will activate agreements with Cypress Forest Grocery Mart and Cypress Forest Furniture.

OSHS & REMS TA Center

Family Reunification Resources

READINESS AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT FOR SCHOOLS

REMS

 TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTER

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 Office of Safe and Healthy Students

info@remsta

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Reun

Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (REMS) Technical Assistance (TA) Center

Sample Family Reunification Annex

Cypress Forest High School

Sample Family Reunification Annex

Reunifying children with their parents or guardians (hereafter referred to as "families") after an emergency event is a top priority. Family reunification is an often highly stressful incident (e.g., school bus accident, etc.) that can have a large enough impact on the well-being of children and their families that it requires coordinated efforts across local, state, and federal agencies. The following are the before, during, and after phases of the family reunification process.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

- Community of Practice
- Resources
- Tool Box
- Virtual Trainings
- EOP Interactive Tools
- Trainings By Request
- Request TA

Goal: Equip the school community with the resources and information needed to effectively manage an emergency event.

Objective 1: Review reunification plans, and other stakeholders.

- Identify all roles and responsibilities.
- Facilitate communication among all stakeholders.
- Reduce confusion and uncertainty.

Objective 2: Collect student emergency contact information.

Courses of Action:

- Identify Reunification Locations:**

At least two weeks before the emergency event, the Assistant Principal, the locations may be on campus, divided into four distinct areas: (1) Family Reunification Area, (2) Family Assistance Area, (3) Family Reunification Area, and (4) Family Assistance Area. The Family Assistance Area will also be used for emotional health staff meetings, etc.

Signs are pre-made, for use before school opening, the day after the emergency event, and any community partner.

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CREATING, PRACTICING AND IMPLEMENTING PLANS FOR FAMILY REUNIFICATION BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER AN EMERGENCY

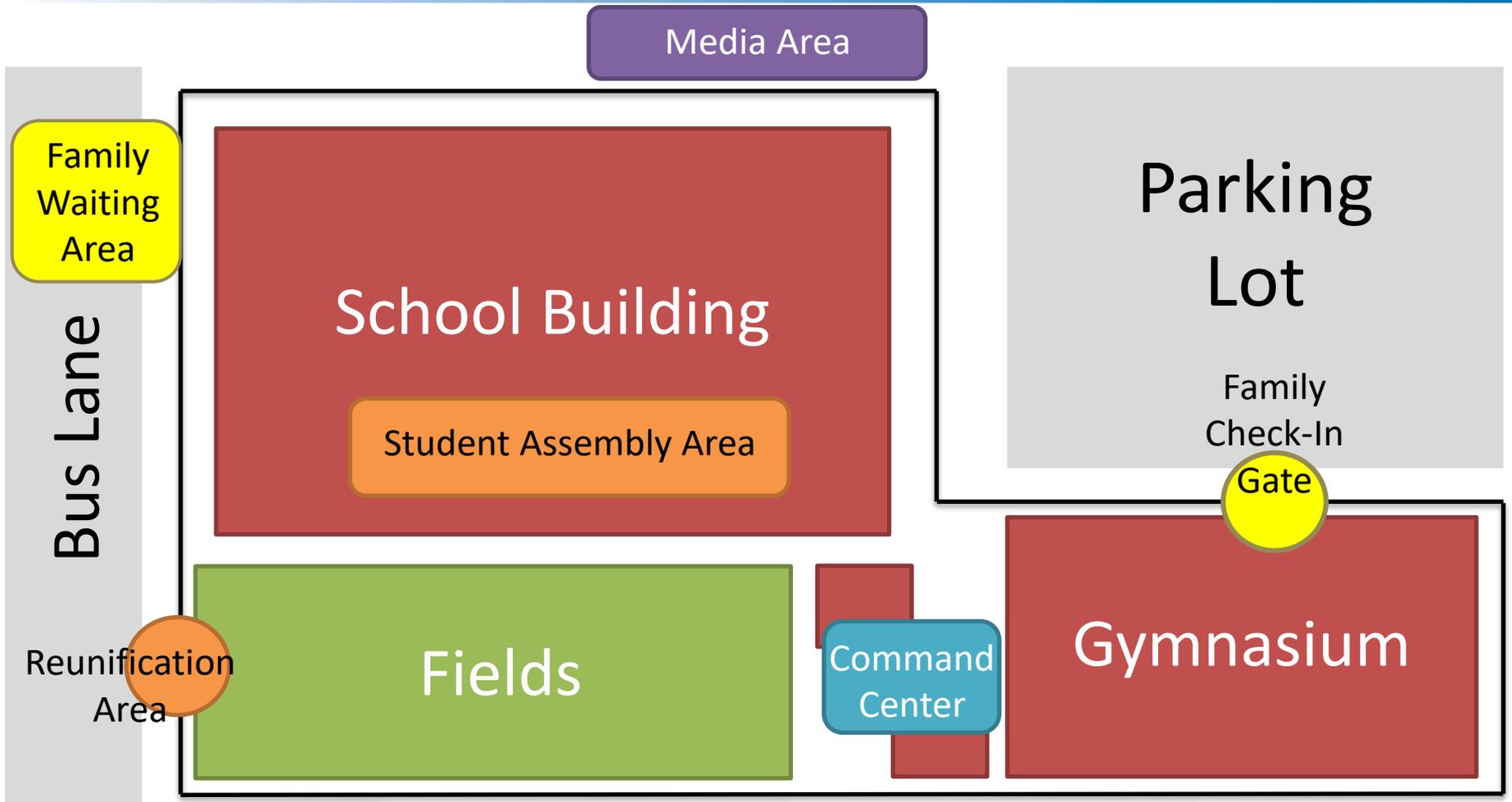
[Topic-Specific Resources to Support Your Emergency Management Planning](#) || [Emergency Management Functions](#) || [Family Reunification](#)

Topic-Specific Resources

- Emergency Management Functions
- Hazards and Threats

Emergency management planning is very important because many incidents, whether caused by hazards or threats, are unpredictable. When unpredictable incidents occur, they may prevent a normal school dismissal, thereby making it difficult for families to reunite with students. A Family

Family Reunification Location



Planning Considerations

How to:



Inform families about the process

Verify an adult can take custody of a student

Facilitate communication in reunification site

Ensure privacy from the media

Planning Considerations Continued

How to:

- 1 Reduce confusion during the process
- 2 Update families frequently during the process
- 3 Ensure students don't leave on their own
- 4 Address language barriers

Agenda

Overview of Planning for Family Reunification

Moderated Discussion

Q&A Session

Choosing a Site and Creating Reunification Areas

Planning: Site Considerations

Not too
distant
from
school

Avoids
first
responder
traffic

Familiar
with
families

Large
enough

Available
resources

Support: Site Considerations

Students

- Size
- Comfort
- Security
- Student engagement opportunities
- Adequate supervision

Family Members

- Physical space to convey organization
- Distance between check-in and release points
- Private, secure spaces for special concerns

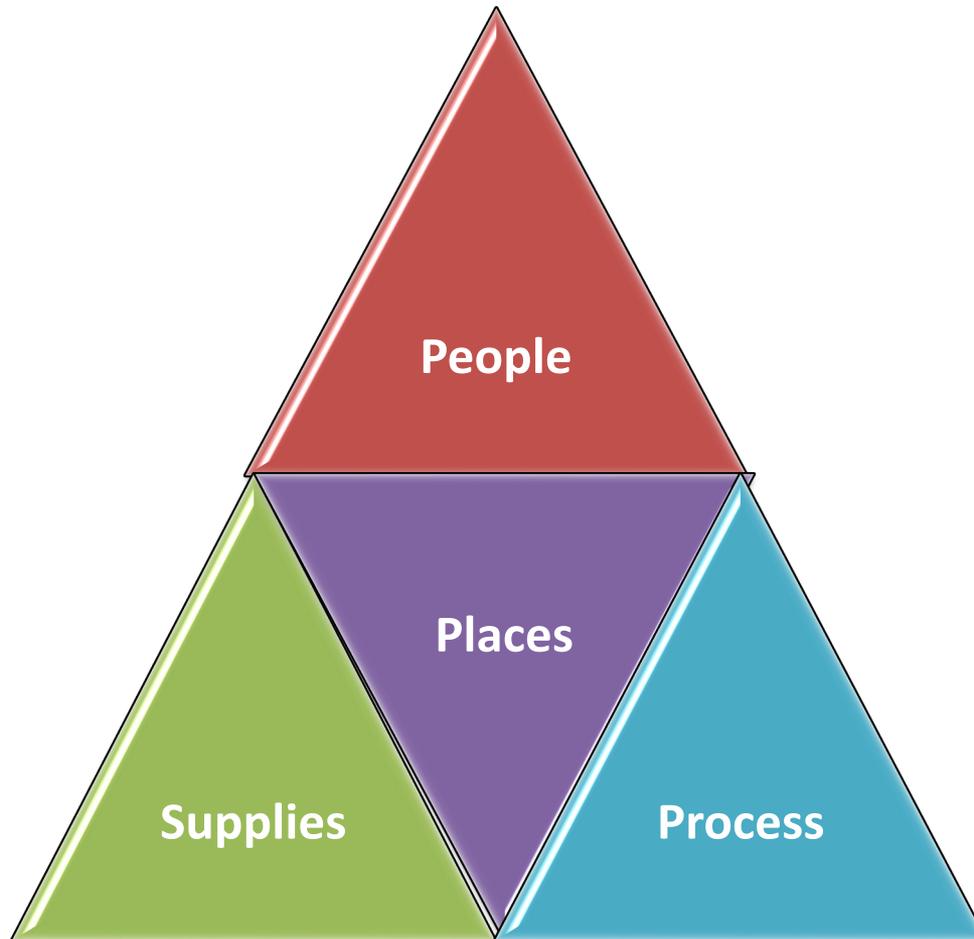
Security: Site Considerations

- Primary vs. secondary reunification sites
- Proximity to resources
 - Transportation
 - Location
 - Coordination

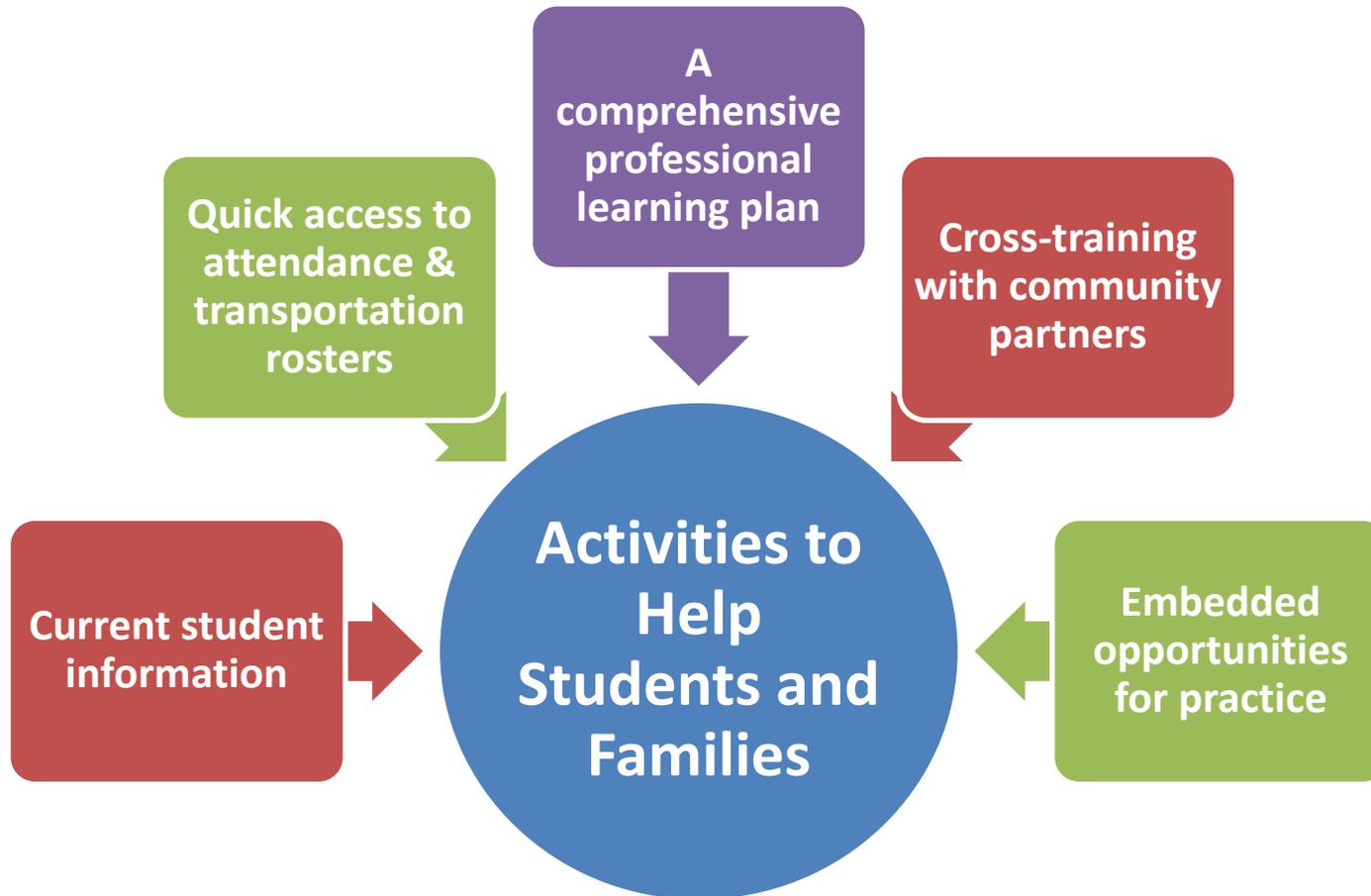


Facilitating a Smooth Family Reunification

Planning: A Smooth Process



Support: A Smooth Process



Security: A Smooth Process

ESTABLISH RELATIONSHIPS WITH SCHOOL COMMUNITIES:

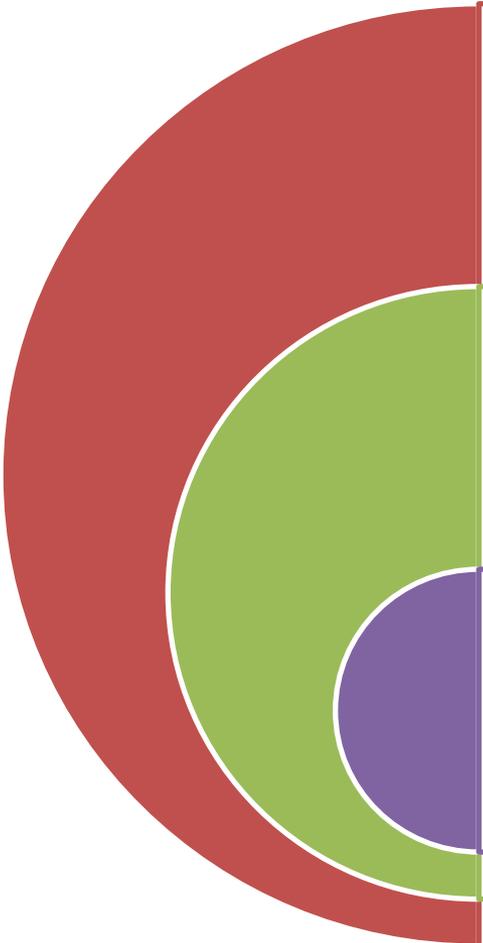
- Ensure familiarity of law enforcement/ security
- Understand reunification is not a timed event

USE THE INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM:

- Establish Public Information Officer position
- Provide separation from the media

Communication

Planning: Communication



Inform parents/guardians about the school's readiness and EOP

Provide training for parents/guardians on their role in an emergency

Highlight information on lockdown, off-site relocation, and reunification

Support: Communication



Communication conveys:

- A plan is in place, focused on safety
- As much information will be shared as possible
- Specific instructions



Communication strategies match resources and needs of population



Using community resources and partners, when appropriate

Security: Communication

Provide advanced announcements via Public Information Officer (PIO)

Provide school radio to law enforcement

Establish separate channels for each aspect of reunification

Promote control with immediate on-scene uniformed law enforcement/security

Challenges and Opportunities

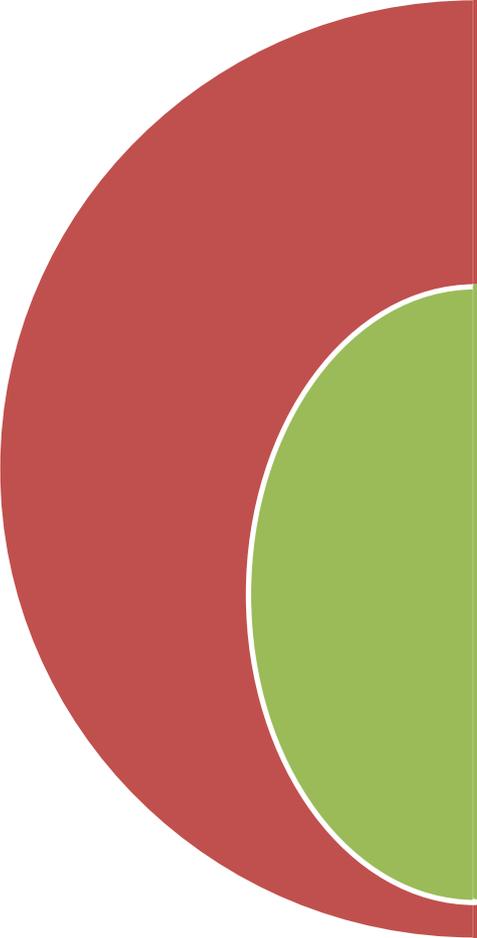
Planning: Challenges and Opportunities

Involvement of school district/school & community partners in planning

Time needed for planning & exercises

Need to incorporate students with disabilities & limited English proficiency in planning & exercises

Support: Challenges and Opportunities



Maintaining a sense of calm, confidence, and safety

Students: Building skills

Families: Building confidence

Staff: Building capacity

All: Ensuring all stakeholders have input or are represented in planning

Security: Challenges and Opportunities

Every interaction is an opportunity to build relationships and trust

Strict adherence to check-in and verification process can eliminate custody or potential abduction incidents

Tabletop exercises & site visits before an incident establishes confidence & clarity of experts

Success in Reunification

Agenda

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Moderated Discussion

Q&A Session

Pose Your Questions

To ask a question, use the Q&A Box on your screen.

You can also email us at info@remstacenter.org.



Thank you

Jim Lee

Dr. Gina Kahn

Stephen Dieu



READINESS AND EMERGENCY
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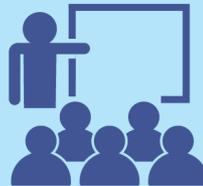
Enhance Emergency Operations Plans



Access Relevant Federal Guidance



**Use EOP-Enhancing
Interactive Tools**



**Request an On-Site Training
in Key EOP-Related Topics**



**Learn Anytime via Virtual Trainings
on all Topics in Emergency Management**



PREVENT



PROTECT



MITIGATE

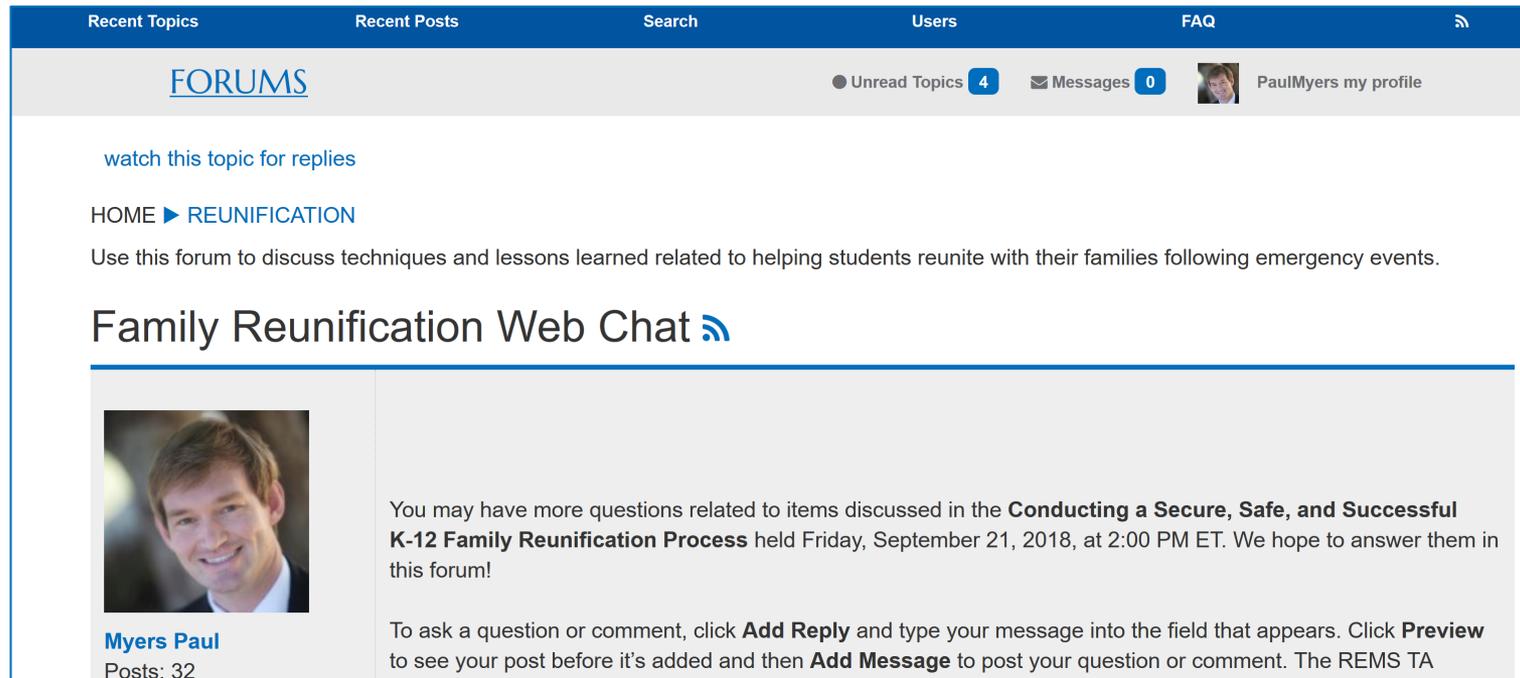


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RECOVER

Join the Web Chat NOW!



The screenshot shows a forum interface with a blue header. The header contains navigation links: Recent Topics, Recent Posts, Search, Users, and FAQ. On the right side of the header, there are notification icons for Unread Topics (4) and Messages (0), along with a user profile picture and the name PaulMyers my profile. Below the header, the word FORUMS is displayed in a large, blue, serif font. Underneath, there is a link to watch the topic for replies and a breadcrumb trail: HOME > REUNIFICATION. A descriptive paragraph follows: Use this forum to discuss techniques and lessons learned related to helping students reunite with their families following emergency events. The main title of the forum is Family Reunification Web Chat, accompanied by a speech bubble icon. Below the title, there is a profile picture of a man, Myers Paul, with 32 posts. The main content area contains a message: You may have more questions related to items discussed in the **Conducting a Secure, Safe, and Successful K-12 Family Reunification Process** held Friday, September 21, 2018, at 2:00 PM ET. We hope to answer them in this forum! Below this message, there is a paragraph of instructions: To ask a question or comment, click **Add Reply** and type your message into the field that appears. Click **Preview** to see your post before it's added and then **Add Message** to post your question or comment. The REMS TA

[K-12 Public Forums](#) > [Reunification Forum](#) > [Family Reunification Web Chat](#)