

Transcript of Parent-Child Reunification for Afterschool Programs

Speaker 1: Hello and welcome to the program Parent-Child Reunification for Afterschool Programs. My name is Don Smith. I'm currently an emergency planning and response coordinator at the Center for Safe Schools in Camp Hill, Pennsylvania, and I'll be taking you through the program today on how to set up a basic parent child reunification program for your afterschool program.

Our objectives for this program are for the participants to be able to identify three key provisions that need to be in place for successful parent-child reunification. We're gonna talk about the five recommended areas to set up anytime you need to do parent-child reunification outside of your normal early dismissal or release processes, and we'll talk about the reasons for having very separate and distinct parent sign in and student release areas along with the other three areas. It's very important that we understand that separate areas need to occur for successful parent-child reunification.

Before we begin today, I just wanna discuss the term parents as used in this program. Parents implies not only the normal parent, mother-father relationship, but also those single parents, foster parents, legal guardians, and other caregivers that have children in your program. But for the sake of ease of speaking during this program, we're gonna use the term parents to imply all of those persons that have legal rights to that child and would be picking them up from your program in case of an emergency.

As we begin the program, it's very important to note that there are really three key provisions to a successful parent-child reunification project. First, is pre-incident accountability. Absolutely positively we need to know what students are in our program at any given time. If we do not have that pre-incident accountability, we're going to have very difficult time accounting for students when an emergency occurs. It's very important that every staff member in your program understands that they must account for the children in their areas at all times.

Secondly, practice accountability and supervision even on your smallest fire drills. It's very important that we are going to play the way we practice. And if we practice good accountability during fire drills and other emergency drills, when the real emergency occurs we will be used to that accountability and be able to perform in a very good fashion with our student accountability.

And lastly, our last provision is release students in non-traditional methods and locations is an important planning issue. You have to understand that if an emergency occurs at your facility, you might not have use of your particular area that you typically release students to their parents at. So you need to plan for releasing students from outside of the school, or maybe in a different part of the building of your program. So those are the three pre-incident provisions we wanna talk about. There's pre-incident accountability, practice your accountability and supervision during all drills, and plan to release students in non-traditional manners and locations.

While today's program does not focus on the active shooter, accountability has certainly been increased with the number of programs for active shooters that are out there. It's shown on the screen the SARC, the School Active Response Class the ALICE program, the SAFE program, and run-hide-fight are just some examples of programs that schools and afterschool programs have adopted as part of their response to an active shooter scenario. All of these programs allocate the potential of students and staff escaping the building. And with the escape option comes the need to have further accountability and planning for these scenarios.

As part of your planning and preparing for emergencies, it's important that you write into your plans student accountability, and staff accountability. How do you know how many students are there at 4:15 in the afternoon? How many of your staff members are still there at 5:30 in the afternoon? So these are all things that need to be worked into your plan of how we're keeping track of students and staff as they come and go in the afterschool program. This certainly prevents many obstacles that are not present in the normal school that runs 7:30 to 3:00 everyday because their students are coming and leaving at about the same time. Many of yours are in and out, transient, and picked up at different times of the day.

Second consideration in planning is where is a safe area to move your students to if something happens. You should consider at least two inside areas, and at least one outside area that if you evacuate your building where are you going to take your students that are safe and secure. Preferably away from the media, away from any other hazards that are occurring as a result of the emergency.

Thirdly, is site security. While most afterschool programs do not have security officers assigned to them, at some point we need to ask some staff members assigned to student security if we move those students away from our normal secured afterschool program areas.

And fourthly, part of planning and preparing is talking to your stakeholders. Talk to the local police department, talk to the local fire and EMS agencies, and ask them what your expectations will be in an emergency and what their expectations will be. As part of good planning, working with your responders is paramount to developing a plan that will actually work in an emergency.

This quote from Benjamin Franklin is very, very telling. None of you get up in the morning and say gee I'll think I'll go into my afterschool program today and screw something up. Ben Franklin says, "By failing to prepare, we're preparing to fail." And we really need to take planning and preparing as seriously in not just the afterschool program, but also in our home lives. To be prepared for sudden emergencies that may occur. And one of those that could occur in a school setting is a major event, whether it be fire, explosions, shooter, or what have you that requires to reunite your parents with their children in a timely fashion in an area that is not your normal procedural release to parents.

Your afterschool program has multiple stakeholders that are concerned about what will occur during an emergency. As indicated earlier, that includes our emergency

responders, from police, fire, and EMS. It also includes your students. Students need to be trained to a certain extent in the parent-child reunification process, particularly if a parent shows up, those children from even at a very early age need to be trained not to run to their parents, but to wait until their parents come in and sign them out. Parents need to be trained on what the expectations will be. Your normal daily release process may not be able to be followed in an emergency, and you should communicate with the parents that there will be expectations for them to arrive at a certain location, check in, and request their student. And only their student. We're not releasing students to other parents unless we have express, written consent.

Your staff are stakeholders. Make sure your staff is adequately trained and prepped in the emergency procedures. Not just parent-child reunification, but all of the procedures. And also non-staff adults. Those other adults that are in and around your facility might include folks that are working in food service, might include the school custodian, or folks that are working with your program that are not directly supervising students. Many of those non-staff adults that are near your program could help with some of that site security and other potential activities during parent-child reunification.

Most of our school personnel and afterschool personnel do not come from a background that involves emergency services. And it's important for all of you to understand the response mentality of your emergency responders. If they pull into your school during a fire, or they pull into your afterschool program after an explosion or some other catastrophic event, they're gonna be asking the question of are all persons accounted for. If they have missing students, missing staff members, the emergency responders, police, fire and EMS will go into a risk versus benefit mode and they're gonna place life safety very high and they will risk a lot to save a life. However, if you can account for all of your students and all of your staff and it's simply the building that is endangered, that risk versus benefit mentality changes. Now the responders will be looking at whether or not it is safe to put persons in harm's way when there's not a life to be saved. Life safety will always be first, and if persons are missing, your responders will always place life safety as a high priority. But we owe it to your responders, police, fire, and EMD whether they're paid, whether they're a volunteer, to be able to give them good staff and student accountability when they arrive at the scene of an emergency.

Many of you are probably also parents, but you all work with parents on a daily basis through your after school program, and you understand the concept that parents believe and expect that every day, their child will be safe and secure no matter what the exterior events that occur affecting your program or your school location. And the other expectation is in an emergency their child will be accounted for. It is strictly unacceptable to tell a parent that their child survived the emergency but you do not know where that child is at the present time. That is why it's very important that we have pre-incident accountability for our students and staff at all time because when you have an emergency at your afterschool program, parents will arrive and parents will expect their children to be safe and secure. They will expect their child to be accounted for, and they will expect information regarding where their child is at all times.

Pre-event notification to parents is extremely important. We're gonna talk in just a little bit about what the reunification process should look like in a parent-child reunification

program. But unless you convey those processes ahead of time to your parents, they'll probably be very confused at the scene of an emergency. On the screen is an example of a tri fold brochure that one intermediate unit has put together for their parents. It is strongly suggested that each of your programs have multiple parental communications throughout the year telling parents what to expect in an emergency and particularly what the process will be to reunite them with their children after an emergency if your building is damaged or you have a catastrophic event that requires the students to be moved from outside of your program and away from a normal dismissal processes that you have in effect every day.

The reunification process is really not that difficult. It involves just three basic steps regarding the parents. When the parents arrive at your site, you should have an expectation that they will show photo ID. Now I know in some areas, the government issues photo ID is hard to come by, but plans should be made ahead of time for what will be acceptable identification of a parent to make sure we're reuniting the proper parent with the proper children. The last things we wanna have a happen in an emergency is to release a child to a non-custodial parent or some other person who does not have the lawful caregiver rights to that child. After that parent checks in, produces satisfactory ID of who they are, then your staff will go and find the child. Never release a parent or other caregiver into the crowd of children to bring their child back because inevitably what will happen is they will probably find their child, but they might also find cousins, neighbors, and others that they're gonna want to take home. And that loses control of the situation for us.

So step one, parents arrive on site. They show ID and prove that they are the lawful caregiver. Your staff goes and finds that child whether it's in a different room of your afterschool program, or whether it's outside in some area where they're safe. And then that child will be brought to the parent and released to the parent as the third step. So we're always releasing the child to the parents rather than having a parent go and find the child in the group.

Parents in that pre-event notification need to be made aware what their parental responsibilities are. Very simply put, when the parents arrive on site, you're probably gonna want them to fill out some documentation of who they are, what child they want. That could range from a single sheet form that has multiple students on it, to a tri copy form, and we'll talk about those a little bit later in the program. But parents should be made aware in advance that they will be expected to fill out some type of form, and then they will be directed to report to a location to wait for their child while we, as the afterschool program, goes and gets their child from the group. The parents need to be made aware if your program decides on that photo ID which is strongly encouraged, that they will be expected to produce a photo ID. Because the normal person that signs that child to a parent every day may not be the one that works your parent-child reunification check out area. Likewise, the parent that shows up in an emergency may not be the parent or other caregiver that typically arrives to pick the student up at the end of your day.

So it's important that you make the parents aware that they're gonna need to come in and show that ID, they're gonna maybe complete a form or two, they're gonna have to

report where directed to wait for their child to be brought to them, and then once the child is brought to them they will sign that student out. The final signing out of that student is important because if a second parent or caregiver arrives after the first one has already picked the child up, it's important that we can say to the second parent, or second caregiver that arrives this is what time your child was released. This is who we released your child to.

Parent notifications at the time of an emergency are very critical. Those notifications need to be made in a very timely, and accurate fashion. I will stress accuracy is more important than timely. We wanna make sure we get our facts straight before we put a release out to the parents through whatever means, whether that's a personal telephone call, or an automated calling system. And your program should use all available resources and methods. Those of you that are based at a school and part of a school, you probably have automated caller systems that are available. However, has the school, has your program taken steps to set up the afterschool program as an independent or grade or building for purposes of that automated call system? That's something that should be done in advance.

If your program is simply sharing space with a school, it might be possible for them to set up your afterschool program as a calling group, or school for purposes using the district's automated calling system. This is very beneficial to the district because in all likelihood, the majority of the students in your afterschool program probably go to that district anyways. And it will make life very simple for them to use the automated calling system.

Those of you at programs that are outside of the typical school settings, you may need to look at calling phone trees or you may need to look at text messaging systems that are commercially available out there to notify as many parents as rapidly as possible. Please explore the options you have and try to have as many tools in your toolkit as possible for notifying parents in a timely, and accurate ... and again I stress accurate fashion any time a school emergency occurs.

Communication is extremely important particularly with parents. I just wanna discuss the communication processes that are in place a little bit. And we're gonna develop communications processes into three categories. Your pre-incident communications. Very important to have pre-incident communications with your responders regarding procedures that will happen> Very important to have pre-incident communication processes in place with your parents, whether it's newsletters, whether it's notes being sent home, whether it's text messages, whether it's emails, communicate processes with your parents of what will occur in an emergency.

Then we have the incident communications processes. How are we communicating with responders during an emergency? Most likely that's gonna be face to face. The fire officer or the police officer that's commanding the event will be on scene talking with your program manager, or the other person in charge of your program that particular day. And also during the incident we have communications with parents, letting them know what's happening, where to go, what to do. It's important that we have these processes in place ahead of time. We don't wanna take a lot of time trying to figure out what we're gonna say during an emergency. The use of boiler plate or template

statement can be very beneficial to you having some statements ready to go regarding your parents.

And lastly, is post-incident communications. We wanna follow up on how the emergency handled and how it resolved with your emergency responders. So we always wanna touch base with those a day or two after the emergency, ask those questions of what we could have done better, what could we do in the future to make things easier. But most importantly is the post-incident communication with parents and children to convey the fact that the school is safe, the afterschool program location is safe from physical harm, or safe from additional harm. And making sure that we communicate processes for re-entry to our parents, to our children in our programs that when we will resume school at that location, when we will resume afterschool activities, they're all very important processes. And make sure you talk to your parents about the channels you intend to use for parent-child notifications. It's good to have a calling system. It's good to have a phone tree, but more importantly is the fact that we need to make our parents aware that those are the processes we will use and make sure when they change a cell phone number, when they change a work number that they're notifying you of that information.

It's extremely important for us to have good contact information at all times because during the heat of emergency, a parent's not gonna remember they forgot to give you the wrong phone number, they're only gonna know that you didn't get ahold of them, and you get ahold of their neighbor. So again, the more we can do ahead of time to make sure we have designated channels to contact parents with, and make sure our parents are updating their contact information which is very important for the afterschool program.

One of the goals of the administrator of your program and you as a staff member in the afterschool program is to have parent-child reunification occur as quickly as possible once we're ready to do so. That will give us two major benefits if we can reunite parents and children quickly. One is to reduce stress. It reduces the stress on the child who's been a potentially traumatic event, and it certainly reduces stress on the parents who is worried about their child during one of these events. And the more we can do to reunite parents and children quickly, we're gonna be able to reduce that parent and child's stress significantly once they're reunited.

Secondly, a benefit for administrators particularly is that the more children we release to parents in a quick fashion, it reduces the number of our staff members that we need to supervise those children. So if I have an afterschool program of 40 children, and I can quickly reunite 15 of those children with their parents, it gives me less of a student load and the ability to sue some of those adult staff members in other functions that may be necessary during, or immediately after an emergency.

Some of the benefits of a quick parent notification and parent-child reunification that also are present is if we communicate information to the parents, it will reduce the number of information requests received in your afterschool program office, or possibly on your personal cellphone. The more information we get out, the quicker we get it out, the less likely parents are to call the program. Not that they won't call. Many parents still wanna have that personal contact after receiving an automated phone call or text message, but

it reduces the amount of incoming requests and therefore that allows you as the program administrator, or you as the afterschool program staff member to concentrate on the emergency situation and care for your children, rather than to be handling parent phone calls or even media phone calls as it might be.

If you do not communicate quickly and efficiently with accurate information to your parents, we're possessed then with the alternative which is parents will tend to assume a worst case scenario. Many parents tend to assume worst case scenarios very early on anyways, but failure to communicate timely, and accurate information to parents, failure to get that information out there, parents tend to assume worst case scenarios. And quite possibly, they will try to take matters into their own hands. Certainly, they're gonna show up at your facility one way or another, but if we can direct them to proper parking areas, to proper parent staging areas, it's certainly a benefit to our program. The last thing we wanna have is dozens or scores of parents coming into an afterschool program with no information, highly charged emotionally, wanting to grab and go with their children.

Those of your afterschool programs that are based at school or part of school districts understand the concept of incident command because this is being promulgated out to school districts since 2005. Those of you in afterschool programs that are not associated with public school districts or other governmental agencies are really not required by law to sue the incident command system, but it is strongly recommended you look at that. The federal government and state agencies have been training in this process for 10 years now, and we understand that somebody needs to be in charge of every incident. That would be the incident commander at the incident command post. Underneath there are operations. There's tasks that need to be carried out to handle the emergency. One of the most important tasks we have is schools or afterschool programs or any other program dealing with children is child accounting, knowing where our children are at all times. And underneath child accounting are the three primary areas that we will set up in an emergency situation. Attendance control which is simply our student holding area where we're making sure we've accounted for our students. A parent sign-in location, and then a student release area, where our staff members take a student to be finally released to their parent.

Those are three of the five areas. We'll cover the other two areas in just a little bit. But if you're currently not using the incident command system in your afterschool program, I would strongly recommend you speak with your local responders regarding that process and possibly sit down and take through the federal government ... they have two online independent study programs. One is IS-700 and one is IS-800. Those are two programs for you as an afterschool administrator or staff member to understand how emergency services work in an emergency.

Preparation ahead of time has been stressed several times already in this webinar. But I wanna talk specifically about some preparation you can do to obtain materials, create stockpiles, check that inventory of materials, and then update your student rosters regularly. It's very important as we look through this process that we have materials available to be able to do parent-child reunification. Stockpile those materials in a Tupperware container, or some other container that they're not gonna be used for day-

to-day, week-to-week, or monthly activities. Check those inventories at least twice a year. I strongly suggest parent-child reunification supplies be put into a Rubber Maid container, that you can put a small security seal, or water tie, similar to what we use on fire extinguishers. And the lastly, we talked about updating student rosters. Every week at a minimum, you should be printing out or putting onto a flash drive for use in emergencies your current student rosters, so that when you have an emergency in March, you're not dependent upon a September roster.

Some of the items that you wanna stockpile very specifically are forms. If you're gonna use the multiple student release form that is included in the 21st century toolkit for afterschool programs, it's a very nice form to have available, but you're gonna probably need more than one form in your go back or go bucket. So I would print several of those forms. Maybe your school or school district if you're associated with one of them uses a specific afterschool or student release form that you wanna use in your afterschool program. Whatever forms you're gonna wanna use, put into and stockpile those in that parent-child reunification kit. Very beneficial particularly if you have an outside evacuation. Or some clipboards. When parents arrive, they're gonna be expected to fill out some basic information, we want a surface they can write on. Some clipboards are recommended. I really recommend the clipboards that do not have the protruding clip. The ones that are very low profile so they will not cut through bags and take up more space.

Pens, pencils, are always in short supply during an emergency. Throw a dozen or two dozen pens or pencils into that kit. One of the things you need to remember with pens though is if you're putting pens into your kit, once a year, you should rotate your pen supply so the ink does not dry up. So every July or August, before your program starts, check the inventory in your parent-child reunification kit, take a dozen or two pens that you have in that kit out, put those back into the regular inventory, and use some of your new inventory of pens, pencils into that kit.

Also beneficial in a parent-child reunification kit are signs. Larger signs typically 11 by 17 or larger that indicate where the parents should check in, where the students are gonna be released from, maybe it's an A through L, M through Z sign that you post above tables. The larger the sign, the better. Many of the school districts I work with have actually purchase banners that say parent check-in so that they're directing the parents in very large print to the area they want them to go to. Many others simply use poster size laminated cards that will say where the parent sign-in for.

So it's important that we have those things available pre-stocked ready to go because when the fire alarm is going off, when the smoke is present, or when the other emergency occurs is not the time to try to figure out what type of clerical supplies you're gonna need outside to reunite parents and children successfully.

We talked earlier about the Incident Command System but I just wanna touch briefly upon command and control issues at a afterschool program emergency. It's important that you immediately implement and utilize the Incident Command System or whatever command structure you're currently using. Your police, fire, and EMS officials are very familiar with the Incident Command System, and again, I would reiterate earlier it's

important for you to understand those systems through taking that FEMA IS-700, or IS-800 course to understand how our responders will react. It's also very important that whoever's in charge of the afterschool program, when the emergency occurs, be available to meet with the command officer from the fire department, police department, or EMS agency. They will establish a command post and probably you're gonna need to have your lead teacher or your program manager available to answer questions for the responders at that command post. Also very beneficial particularly for fire emergencies is to have the custodian or a facilities person for your afterschool program meet with that fire department. And I know for many of you, you don't hire that custodian, or have that person directly under your control so it may be a little bit more difficult. But the program manager or the person in charge of the program, and the facilities or custodial personnel are two people that we wanna have available to meet with our fire, police, and EMS responders when they arrive on scene.

It's important when parents begin to arrive on scene or other caregivers that we direct them where we want them to go. Absent any direction, parents will go to where they're familiar with which might be your office area, which is no longer available, or to a door where they typically pick their child up and that may not be where the children are anymore. So it's important that we do whatever we can through the use of signs and banners, maybe it's orange cones, maybe it's from ropes being stretched by responders. Or maybe it's simply some extra personnel if we have any to direct parents where they need to go. Because if we don't give parents direction of where to go, they'll tend to gravitate to areas they're familiar with. We are as humans creatures of habit, and if we set up cones, signs, and banners the majority of our parents will in fact follow that direction.

So you've probably heard the webinar that I presented back in March that's been archived regarding preparing for emergencies in your afterschool programs. And I alluded to the fact that parent-child reunification follows a concept of fast food. We're in a society where everybody expects to be served immediately. And probably no industry typifies that better than the fast food industry where with a drive-in experience, from time of arrival through time of departure, the goal is 90 seconds. That's the expectation of parents and unless we have a refined parent-child reunification system in place, it's gonna take a lot longer than that. But if we have 800 children, at 90 seconds per child, that's a very long period of time. We're gonna have parents waiting a long time if they come at the end of the line. So we wanna do what we can to speed up the process.

And I have before you on the slide, a picture of McDonald's lobby, and a Wendy's lobby. One of the big contrasts between those two is when we go into a McDonald's we sort of have the choice of what register we go to, and we'll have various criteria that personally we size up regarding which line we're gonna try to get into the fastest service. But at Wendy's the process is different. At Wendy's you're all in a single line. You got to a single counter, a single register. You order your food. Once your food is ordered, you slide down the line, and you come to the end of the line, and there's a food pick up area. That is what parent-child reunification should look like. Parents should come in, and there may be different lines for different grade levels. There may be different lines for different age levels. But the bottom line is parents will come in and get in the proper area, they will request their child, much as the fast food worker goes back to the cooking

area or the serving area, picks up the proper order, they then bring that food out to the customer.

We're gonna do the same thing. Parent arrives at the parent check-in area. They're gonna request their child. We're gonna verify their ID. We're gonna then and send somebody to the student holding area. Pick their child up, and then bring their child back to them at the student release area. I want you to remember the Wendy's philosophy of parent-child reunification is one parents orders up their child. We go and get the child. And then the child is released to the parent.

Now we mentioned earlier Wendy's and McDonald's philosophy. I have before you the Burger King symbol with a red cross through it. Why do we not espouse the Burger King philosophy? Well Burger King has a very nice philosophy that says you have it your way. You can have those customized sandwiches the way you want them. That's not the process in parent-child reunification. And it's important for us to make sure parents know ahead of time that we will be following a process to release their child. It is not just come, grab your child, grab the neighbors, grab the cousins, and go. Parents need to understand it's a controlled process of releasing students to the proper parent or caregiver at the time of the emergency or shortly thereafter.

No emergency is ever a textbook emergency. After almost 40 years of emergency service training and response in emergency situation, none of those scenes, none of those scenarios I ever arrived at in emergency services matched any of the textbooks I saw. However, we can use the textbook to help control our scene> And we're gonna talk in just another slide about the five areas involved in parent-child reunification. It's important that we look at these areas, we designate them ahead of time when possible, we make sure we understand the purpose of each area, and by and large the single most important thing we can add to that is training in advance. The more we train and drill, and we'll talk about that in a little bit, the more we can train our personnel, drill and talk about scenarios ahead of time, the better prepared we will be when the actual emergency occurs. No emergency will be textbook. But textbooks certainly help managed the chaos in a real emergency.

We mentioned earlier the three areas that are typically involved in parent-child reunification. And we specifically discussed the analogy with the Wendy's fast food. There's a student holding area. That's where the students are kept safe and secure away from media, away from the actual hazards of the emergency. It's the first area created in parent-child reunification. Secondly, is the parent check-in area, or the ordering counter for the children. Parents are expected to arrive, get in their proper areas whether it be through alphabet, grade level, or age level, and check-in indicating that they want their particular child. And third are then is the student release area. We used the analogy of that's the area where the Wendy's customer service people give the food to the customer.

Those are ideally the only three areas we would want to use or have in an emergency. Unfortunately, we understand that emergencies are traumatic events, and many times persons are injured or occasionally killed in emergencies. So it's important for us to look at the fourth and fifth areas to have them available for staffing in an emergency. The

fourth area is a mental health respite area. This is where we're gonna take the children that are emotionally distraught and very, very upset with the situation. Unfortunately, in smaller children situations, this could be a whole group of people, and we may end up having a mental health respite area instead of a student holding area. But ideally, we wanna take the children that are emotionally upset and crying away from the rest of the crowd before they also begin to cry and get upset.

Fifthly is a parent waiting area. This is an area we don't like to think about but we have to confront the realities that we may need a parent waiting area. This is where a parent arrives to pick up their child. They sign in. They present the information your program requests from the. We go to find the child and the child is missing. That child could be missing because they've been injured or killed in the event. Did not come out. They could be on their way to a hospital. Or they could simply not be following directions and have run off somewhere. This is a concern particularly in the flight or run portion of active shooter scenarios where those children may have departed campus. We're gonna need to pull those parents away from the normal parent pickup area. Get 'em specific information regarding their children.

And again, I'll go back to the fast food analogy of coming through the drive-through. If you have a special order, and your food's not ready, they don't hold the drive-through up. They move you to a separate holding area to wait for your food. Now it's important we do that without parents also ... if we can't find their child readily, we move them to a parent waiting area. We give them the attention they deserve. We work with them. We console them. That serves two benefits. Number one, it helps us understand those parents and their concerns, and we can deal with them. But it also moves the parents away from the other parents so that we're not tainting the other parents. The last thing I want is a parent standing in the parent waiting area saying they can find my child. I'll bet they can't find yours. And stir up the emotions of those other parents whose children we will be able to readily reunite with them.

So again, the five areas to consider are your student holding area, a parent check-in area, a student release area, and unfortunately, the fourth and fifth areas we need to confront to have available is a mental health respite area, and a parent waiting area if we can't find their children.

In the reunification process, we've talked about the five areas that need to be set up so we need to talk about where those areas will potentially be as we plan. We also need to communicate processes. Processes are communicated to our staff members, they're communicated to our responders, they're communicated to our parents. These are not procedures. We can't say that absolutely if a problem happens in this afterschool program, we're gonna release students from the church across the street. The emergency may be big enough the church across the street is not a viable location. So we're gonna communicate the process of telling parents to report where they're at at the time of the emergency.

Also involved in a reunification process is security and barriers. Police are an absolute necessity when we have a large scale parent-child reunification process because some parents just won't be compliant. As you sit there listening to me talk, I'm sure you can

identify those two or three parents that just think the rules are not meant for them. So it's very important that we get police in our parent-child reunification area as soon as we can or some other type of security presence in those areas. We need to make sure parents understand is that we may need to wait to set the process up. We need to have sufficient personnel available to start reuniting parents and children. And if you have hostile parents that are readily presenting themselves quickly in an emergency, you may wanna wait for that police presence before you start releasing children.

It's important as you plan for parent-child reunification, you understand that this is a fairly labor intensive process. You're gonna need some folks to work as your check-in clerks, or the person ordering up the child. This could be one or two people depending upon the number of students in your program. Or they're gonna need some runners or ability to communicate with the student holding area. If you have radios, certainly a radio could be a process where you call for that student to be sent forward. We're gonna then need to have at the opposite end of the counter, the person releasing the student to the parent. And again, there's some paperwork involved in both check-in and release. It's important that we make sure that we are understanding that the persons in these positions need to be trained on minimum level. Many times this can be done ... is what we call just in time training, which means just prior to setting up the student-parent reunification area, we teach them or give instruction on what forms to be used and how they work.

The other two areas they probably take a little bit more pre-planning and consideration of who you're gonna use are mental health workers. Who are we putting in the mental health respite area? During a school day typically assign guidance counselors and psychologists. Many of your afterschool programs do not have that trained staff available. So who do you have that is a good staff member with good rapport with students able to calm them down? That might be who we look at as putting initially in the mental health respite area until we can get community resources in to assist us.

The parent support team, they go to the parent waiting area. That generally is an administrative level person. Somebody with some authority to work with the parents. It might just be a trusted staff member in the afterschool program 'cause you don't have a lot of administrators readily available quickly. But we wanna keep a staff member from the afterschool program with the parents at all times so they do not feel neglected. So we can provide them proper information updates as available and keep routinely checking back to see if their child has been identified as being at a location. Quite often, parents show up, wanna pick a child up, the child's not in the student holding area, and we find out that student has simply maybe been at the restroom or went to the nurse for a minor problem. So it's important that we keep checking those areas.

We're gonna talk a little bit deeper about these staff roles through the next couple of slides which illustrate graphically the parent-child reunification process. Parent-child reunification graphically, appears very close to what we see on this chart. Now keep in mind is that we mentioned earlier, no textbook case ever plays itself out completely in an emergency the way the textbook illustrates. So certainly you're gonna have difficulty taking this graphic and overlaying it on your school. But very simply put, the first area we create is a student safe area or a student holding area. A place away from the

emergency, away from the media and press, that we can keep our students. That may be inside a building. It may be outside a building. But we're gonna create that safe area.

The second area we create is that parent check-in or that ordering counter. Parents will check in at that location. There should be signage in place in your go kits or go buckets to make parents very aware where they go. And then they will check-in and request their child or children be released to them.

This next graphic illustrates the three areas that will be primarily used in the parent-child reunification. The parent check-in, a runner goes to find that student, or we made a radio call for that student. The student is sent to the parent pick up area, and then signed for by the parent. In an ideal situation, these are the only three areas we would need. It would be very similar to the Wendy's ordering. We pull up to window one, we order our food, we go to window two, we pick up our food. That is very simply put the way parent-child reunification should work under most conditions.

I mentioned earlier that we need to consider the fact that some children will not be readily found after an emergency, particularly one that involves injury or death. In that case, we need to have a staging area of a parent holding area established. That area should have an afterschool official in that area, or at least a senior staff member. Contact information should be immediately obtained from those parents verifying cell phone numbers and other information because if the parent chooses to leave the area and we then find the child, we need to be able to contact that parent and have them return to the parent pick up area. We should try to minimize media contact. Although we can prohibit the media from being on our particular property we cannot prohibit the media from being around the scene of an emergency. But the more we do to have the parents that have missing children protected from the media, the better it will be for those parents not being badgered by the media. It's also good for our program that we can control to a certain extent, what information those parents who are probably very disgruntled with your program at this point for not being able to find their child, say to the media.

So this is very similar to what the airline should do in an emergency. They typically run a very large hotel close to the crash site. They try to take care of the relatives of the persons that are on that flight until further information can be provided. The last item on this list is regular checks. Although that student was missing initially, they may have been in a restroom. They may have just snuck over to another group to talk to another student. There's a host of reasons why a student may not have been found that does not deal with injury or death. So we should be making regular checks back to those areas. And on a next slide, we'll show you the graphic that illustrates that process.

This graphic illustrates the process to be followed if you cannot find a student readily. And I go back to the analogy of fast food. You pull up to the first counter, you order a specialty sandwich. That sandwich is not ready when you think it should be ready, and they ask you to step off to the side. If you're inside, they ask you to pull your car forward to another area. That's what we do with parents who we cannot readily find their children immediately to take to them, then we're gonna have a staff member report that back through. We're gonna talk to the parent. We're gonna ask that parent to come to a parent waiting area. But very important is the red double arrow at the bottom right of the

graphic. You must regularly recheck to find that student. Quite often, you'll find those students have simply not been where they were supposed to be, whether it be a restroom, whether it be in a first aid station, whether it be getting a drink, or just sneaking away to talk to someone else. So regular rechecks to the student holding area are very important.

Also we wanna make sure out fifth area we talked about is that mental health respite area. If in fact, students have gone to a mental health respite area and we did not locate them initially in the student holding area, we're gonna wanna check the mental health respite area, we're gonna wanna check first aid areas to see if those children are present that we can release them to their parents.

Contingency planning is important we understand that although we're writing this plan, and we're expecting all parents to pick up all children in a timely fashion, that may not occur particularly if large scale or regional emergencies such as tornadoes or floods, which may very well prohibit the parent from readily coming to your facility. Now hopefully we'll have some communications with that parent of why they're delayed but not always depending on the scope and magnitude of the emergency. So some things to consider.

Transportation. You have a satellite afterschool program that's only staffed till 5 o'clock, but you have another program that is staffed till 7 o'clock in the evening. We may come 5 o'clock, make a decision to transport those children that have not been picked up to the main facility where staff is available till 7 o'clock. Or we may actually make arrangements to transport those children home if the parent is unable to come to the school during the emergency. So look at the potential need for transportation outside of your normal scope.

Secondly is shelter. Depending on the situation, tornado, flood, major regional emergency, those children and staff members may actually be stuck at your facility. So consider the fact, do we have food? Do we have water? Do we have some contingency to be able to feed and provide nourishment to our staff members and students if they're stuck at our facility overnight.

Provisions. If they're stuck there, are there blankets? Are there cots? Is there a red cross shelter close by? Now you need to understand is even if red cross sets up a shelter, we may not take students and drop them off at a shelter. Unaccompanied minors are typically not accepted at Red Cross shelters, just being dropped off by school or afterschool program officials. The officials from that program probably need to stay with them and care for them in that mass care shelter. So it's usually always better to have provisions made to have overnight shelter and housing at your facility in case parents cannot pick up children due to a regional emergency.

On the next three slide, we're gonna talk a little bit about the mental health respite area and mental health concerns. Keeping in mind that when a traumatic event happens, we can have students and staff members affected. And it's very important we have procedures in place to be able to provide follow up care to both our students and our staff members. Student follow up is typically provided by local school district, or local

mental health agencies that have the ability to provide juvenile mental health follow up. However, with our staff, this may involved referral to employee assistance plan if in fact your program has an EAP. Depending upon the severity of the trauma and the mental health concerns experienced by the staff member, this could actually be a worker's compensation injury.

I can go back to 1989, there was a very large scale emergency, fairly local to my residence, and there are still people that are off on worker's compensation from that 1989 emergency. Now, in fact the majority of them have probably out on disability retirement since then, but had went through the process of worker's compensation and disability. So it's extremely important we provide good care to our students and staff as quickly after emergency as possible. Talk to your local responders. Talk to your local school districts, and see what services are available in your particular country. Almost every country has available certain mental health procedures for emergencies. Many of those are accessed through your country emergency management agency which is a phone number that you should have in your crisis plan or emergency operations plan.

This is the graphic of parent-child reunification where a mental health respite area has been set up. And again, the process is fairly standard. The parent comes, requests their child, a runner or radio call is made to the student holding area, but the student is not immediately found. So if we know we have a mental health respite area of two, or three, or more children before the runner returns back and says we cannot find your child, the mental health respite area should be checked for that child. As the parent is reunited with that child out of the mental health respite area, it is very important that we let the parent know that the child has already experienced signs of being traumatized. And one of the things we talked about potentially having in your parent-child reunification kit are signs and symptoms of stress. If you have some of those forms available, as parents are picking children up, you can give that to them because even if the child did not experience an emotional problem during the emergency on site, as they get home and reprocess the events of the day, they may show signs of stress. And providing parents with the indicators of stress form that is usually readily available on multiple websites is a good thing to be able to do for that parent and child.

This is a graphic of the parent-child reunification where a staff member needs the mental health respite area. And again, we need to take care of our staff members as well as our children in our programs. If the staff member is experiencing signs of stress and not being able to function in a normal fashion, we may need to send that staff member home with another staff member or a family member. It's extremely important that a person that is highly emotionally distraught not be given permission to drive home themselves. We really need to vet out whether or not that person is capable of driving home. Keep in mind that stress is a normal reaction to abnormal events for people and it'll be quite common for our students and our staff members to experience stress, and the signs of trauma after a major emergency or crisis on our campus.

I had mentioned at the beginning of the program that run-hide-fight, ALICE, SARC, SAFE, and some of these other programs that schools are using, and many of those afterschool programs have adopted does present a concern or an additional area that we need to address because of the escape option. If escape is being utilized in your

programs as a potential option during an intruder, some things you may wanna consider. First off is a call-in number. If a staff member evacuates your facility and takes with them 8 or 10 children, and they go to a safe area, what is a number for them to call back to. It may be a program administrator's cell phone number, it may be an office number, it may be a home office number, depending upon your agency. But think about who a staff member will call to report they're safe and what children they have with them being safe because we're probably not gonna bring them back into the school situation where it is more dangerous.

Secondly, field collection of students and staff. Many districts that are using the escape option have plans to send buses and vans out into the neighborhoods around the school to collect students and staff. Most of your afterschool programs are very small and you don't have that ability, but you might be able to talk to host agencies or local school districts about having the ability to put a van or a bus out to collect students and staff. Again, if the students are staying with staff, the caller number is probably the better option for the afterschool programs.

Keep in mind accountability is a huge factor. We mentioned this earlier. It is not acceptable to tell a parent, your child escaped the emergency but we don't know where they are. Parents expect that every time they arrive, we will know the whereabouts of their particular children. And it's important that accountability be practiced on a daily basis, accountability and supervision be practiced on all drills and exercises, so that when we do have an emergency and if it does involve escape, our staff members and our students are thinking about the accountability at the time of that emergency.

With all emergency preparedness facets, drill and exercises are one of the most important components we have in being prepared for an emergency. Using drills and exercises helps improve our proficiency. We probably don't fill forms out. We probably don't do some of these processes more than once in a career for a real emergency. So we're not really prepared unless we improve our proficiency through drills and exercises. Drills and exercises will also reveal gaps or weaknesses in our plan. You really don't know if it works until you try it, and I would strongly suggest that as you develop your parent-child reunification plans, you develop forms you use, take two or three times out of the school year and use those forms to dismiss your children even on a normal day. Get parents familiar with the forms. Get parents familiar with the processes involved in parent-child reunification.

The parent pick-up process needs to be a controlled and coordinated process. We talked about not using the McDonald's, not using the Burger King philosophies, but using the Wendy's fast food philosophy which is a order point, a delivery point. And it's very important that our parents understand ahead of time, that all of our staff understand that this should not be grab and go. Try to talk to your students on an age appropriate level that if their parents come for them, make sure their parent is signing them out every day through the normal processes. Then if an emergency occurs, when the emergency occurs at your facility, parents will be used to making sure they sign out and report to somebody that they are taking their child. We're gonna talk about in the next couple of slides some methods and manners of controlling that process a little bit better.

This is an example of a multiple page, this is a three part NCR form, that many school districts are using for their parent-child reunification processes. I will tell you right now that for the average afterschool program, this form is probably too expensive and too cumbersome to use in your program. We're gonna show you in just a few slides, and included in the 21st century toolkit for afterschool programs is a multiple student log sheet that will probably work very well for your program. But some schools, some afterschool programs have taken this three part form and modified it onto a single page for use during parent-child reunification.

So therefore, I am providing it as an example of a form that could be modified for use in an afterschool program, but more than likely the single sheet multiple student release form will show you in just a few slides will probably be sufficient for most afterschool programs. However, if your afterschool program is associated with a school district and they are using some other form, I would strongly suggest that the district sponsored afterschool programs use the form that's being used during the day so there are not two forms out there. What would happen with this particular form is as the parents arrive at the student or at the parent request area, station one, they would fill out parts one and two of this form.

Regardless of what form you use once your form is completed, whether it's that multi part form, whether it's a single sheet form, or whether it's the multiple student release form we're gonna show you in a little bit, the person goes, the runner goes, or the radio call is made to have that student picked up and brought back to the parent release area.

Once the runner goes to the student holding area, if that student is found, then the student status is checked that they're sent with the runner. If that student is in first aid or mental health respite area, and that is known in the student holding area, we check that. And it could be possible that the student is missing or the student could be absent. Certainly in larger settings, it would not be unusual for a parent to believe their child is at a program and for whatever reason, whether it be through illness or some other afterschool activity, maybe another parent or caregiver has taken that child somewhere else, so as a parent shows up, we should always be checking our absentee list to tell parents that that student was never present that day rather than imply that that student is missing. So all of these statuses, regardless of whether you're using this form, or using the multiple student release area, we need to consider all of these options for explaining to the parent where their child is.

This graphic simply illustrates that once a student is found, the runner then escorts the student to the release area. This is pretty much self explanatory and is a repeat of what we've covered earlier, but for emphasis during this process, we've included this line.

Once a student is taken to the parent pick-up area to be released by the parent. If you're using the multiple part form, sections 4 and 5 would be completed. That's a recheck of the driver's ID to make sure the person is approved on your list, and also then has the requester sign for the student and indicating where they're going to, what time and date they've received the student. Again, this is ... if you're using this type of form, but we've included this form because some afterschool programs may choose not to use the multiple student log that we're gonna show you in just a little bit, and may wanna develop

your own form. So we've included these sections of this multiple part form for your review.

This slide illustrates Appendix G of the 21st Century afterschool emergency planning guide and template. This is a multiple student log sheet, and for most afterschool programs that do not have hundreds of children, this form will probably be very adequate for your ability to release students and children to their parents in a timely manner. This form should be copied and available in your parent-child reunification kit, should be in administrative go kits, and should be in teacher emergency folders also. These can be set up so that a teacher can release students directly from a classroom or area, or it can be set up where parents are receiving the information as they check in and then going down the line. This is not quite as beneficial from moving from ordering counter to receipt counter if they're a great distance away.

But this form can be utilized in many of the afterschool programs and I'm sure that it is very self explanatory where we're simply asking for the student's name and grade, or section, or age to be put in there. The printed name of the adult that is asking for the student. Their telephone number. There's a check mark there for you to verify their identification. Many times folks will put in either a driver's license number or some other identifying number from the identification. There's verification that you've checked the emergency contact form that this person is approved to take the child, and is not a non-custodial parent or some other person that is not to have contact with the child. There is space there for you to make notes, and finally there's a space there of who is the person from your program to sign their initials or name if they actually released the student to the parent.

I wanna thank you for taking the time today to sit through this webinar regarding parent-child reunification for afterschool programs. Need you to understand that the Center for Safe Schools has provided this information for the 21st century program, and we are remaining willing to answer questions or comments you may have regarding the program either through the telephone number or email provided. I hope you've found this program beneficial, and worthy of the time you've spent on it, and we certainly hope that this adds to your toolkit for your ability to reunite parents and children successfully after an emergency. If in fact you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact me at the telephone number or email provided. Thank you very much for your attention today.