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7.3.8 GT Family Reunification Protocol

Georgia Management Association’s Family Reunification Protocol

Gwinnett Technical College adopts and adheres to the Georgia Emergency Management Association’s family reunification protocol, should the need arise.

In certain school crisis incidents, it will become necessary to evacuate students and school staff away from the crisis site. During some incidents, large numbers of parents, guardians and relatives will rush to the site of the incident to check on the well-being of students and employees. These actions may result in the blockage of streets in all directions near the schools and the efforts of school officials and emergency response agencies to deal with the crisis may be severely hampered by these persons and their vehicles.

The most effective way to prevent such chaos is to redirect all of the concerned parties to a site that is removed from the school and to evacuate students and school staff to that site. This site is to be known as the Family Reunification Site. There should also be alternate or back up sites that can be used in the event that the primary site is not suitable. The location of these sites should not be publicly announced before an event occurs for security reasons; however, parents should be made aware of the existence of these sites so that when an emergency arises they can obtain the name of the site, either from the media or emergency response agencies and quickly move to that location.

Emergency Procedure for Family Reunification Site

The Family Reunification Site Protocol should be used under the following circumstances:

- a. A Shooting on school property, with injuries.
 - b. Detonation of an explosive device on school property.
 - c. Explosive device is found on school property.
 - d. A hostage situation occurs on campus.
 - e. An armed, barricaded subject on campus.
 - f. A severe weather crisis where damage to the facility has occurred.
 - g. A weapon of mass destruction or a hazardous materials incident occurs on or near the campus.
1. Whenever the facility or grounds is considered unsafe and evacuation to a remote site is required.

2. The following is the Family Reunification Site Protocol:

- The incident commander will advise the Reunification Site Coordinator that the decision to implement the protocol has been reached and to begin setting up the bus evacuation staging area. If buses are unavailable, walking routes must be established.
- The school system liaison shall advise the transportation director via phone or radio to begin routing school buses to the evacuation staging area.
- The designated persons should notify the local emergency management agency (EMA) and other designated personnel to proceed to the identified site and establish the site.
- The local EMA Director should notify the emergency/911 communications center to have law enforcement mutual aid implement its protocol for routing traffic to the site and managing traffic control functions at the site.
- The school system liaison shall request that available school system personnel proceed to the Family Reunification Site. All schools should institute the code yellow protocol if the situation involves a violent weapons incident.
- The designated persons will provide the media with detailed instructions via fax to be read to the public in order to direct concerned relatives to the Family Reunification Site.
- Upon the arrival of buses at the incident evacuation staging area, emergency response personnel shall begin loading groups of students and school staff on each bus for evacuation to the Family Reunification Site. While en route to the site, a school staff member shall prepare a list of all evacuees on the bus, which will be delivered to the Family Reunification Site Coordinator upon arrival. When possible, busses should be escorted by law enforcement.
- Upon arrival at the Family Reunification Site, designated persons shall perform the duties listed below. These duties should be coordinated with law enforcement before an incident to avoid misunderstanding of responsibilities during an incident. Law enforcement will not normally be in charge at the Family Reunification Site. The school system should designate an individual to serve as the Family Reunification Site Commander.
 - a. Establish a command post.
 - b. Organize the numerous emergency response and mental health personnel who will be responding to the site.
 - c. Check identification of all non-uniformed personnel who arrive to provide assistance.
 - d. Secure an area for arriving students and staff, away from waiting family members. Yellow emergency tape may be used to section off an area.
 - e. Set up the sign out area. All arriving family must sign in.

- f. Set up a media staging area. (This will probably require law enforcement assistance.)
- g. Keep evacuees on buses until they can be moved to the secure waiting area to meet with parents or guardians.
- h. Only release students to authorized persons using the sign out procedure.
- i. Ensure that each parent/guardian receives an information sheet regarding traumatic stress reactions. These should be provided from school mental health personnel.
- j. Instruct parents or guardians to leave the site to make room for others once they have signed out their student.
- k. Students who do not have a parent/guardian waiting to pick them up will be taken to a secure area until an authorize person arrives to pick them up.
- l. Every effort will be made to maintain an orderly reunification process. Responding law enforcement and mental health personnel should be utilized to calm those who are waiting and to explain to them that an orderly process is required for the safety of the evacuees.