

## Crisis Management and Communication

### I. Purpose

The purpose of the Bristol Warren Regional School District (BWRSD) Crisis Management and Communication Policy is to outline the responsibilities and duties of BWRSD staff during a crisis situation. This policy provides parents/guardians and other members of the community with assurances that the BWRSD has established guidelines and procedures to respond to crisis situations in an effective and efficient manner so that schools can quickly and adequately restore the school climate to optimal learning conditions. The safety and security of students and staff of the BWRSD is of the utmost importance. District and school administrators coordinate closely with our town emergency management officials and law enforcement representatives to monitor and update this policy on a regular basis.

### II. Definitions

- *Crisis or Emergency:* A situation involving threats of harm to students, personnel, and/or facilities. Crisis situations include but are not limited to natural, technological, and human-caused incidents. A crisis may require assistance from law enforcement and/or emergency service agencies, depending on the size and scope of the incident.
- *Security Safety Measures:* Include: visitor check-in procedures, locked doors after the start of the school day, surveillance cameras, and School Resource Officer (SRO) support.
- *Levels of Impact:* Emergencies in schools are often described in terms of the level of impact to students and staff and to disruption in school operations. While it is difficult to describe all possible scenarios, the following is used as a guide; specific situations will be looked at individually.

Impact Level	Parent(s)/Guardian(s) Notification
<p><b>Low Impact:</b> Poses little or no risk to the safety of students and staff. Includes small disturbances, such as a behavioral incident or minor injury.</p>	<p>Parents/ guardians of involved students will be notified by appropriate school personnel immediately after the incident is under control and involved students are cared for and safe.</p>
<p><b>Moderate Impact:</b> Poses a moderate risk to the safety of students and staff. Includes a gas leak, water leak, power outage, or potential threat to the school made outside of school, on social media, etc.</p>	<p>Parents/ guardians will be notified by phone message, email, text, and postings on the school and district websites, as soon as safe to do so and at least one hour prior to a new dismissal time, if a change in dismissal time is warranted.</p>
<p><b>High Impact:</b> Poses a significant risk to the safety of students and staff. Includes an intruder in the school or the use of a weapon or weapons, resulting in injuries.</p>	<p>The District will notify parents/guardians, as soon as possible and to the extent authorized by the police, by phone message, email, text, and postings on the school and district websites.</p>

### III. Procedures

Depending on the potential impact of a threat or crisis situation, schools will, in collaboration with police and fire officials, determine whether it is necessary to go into Safe School Mode, Shelter in Place or Lockdown.

- Safe School Mode means that teaching and learning continue as normal as the appropriate staff members deal with the incident at hand.
- Shelter in Place means to take immediate shelter where you are and to remain there until an “all clear” notification is given. Teaching and learning may be interrupted. Students and staff are in a holding pattern until the situation is deemed safe to return to normal activities. Out of an abundance of caution, all outdoor activities are moved inside until the situation is deemed safe.
- Lockdown means that interior and exterior doors are locked, the school is closed to all visitors, and all students and staff must remain in their location until an “all clear” notification is given.

### IV. School Safety

#### A. School Safety Responsibilities

All school personnel will be on the alert for any potential hazard within or outside school buildings that may jeopardize the safety of students, employees, or the public. All school personnel are responsible for promptly reporting to the nearest school authority any condition, incident, or suspicion, which may warrant immediate action or investigation.

Principals will be responsible for establishing and communicating school safety measures and procedures in the event of potential emergencies as outlined in BWRSD Policy EBCB Evacuation and Lockdown Drills, and EBCD Emergency Closings and Early Dismissals.

#### B. School Safety Plans

In accordance with RI Gen. Laws §16-21-23, 16-21-24 all BWRSD schools shall have a School Safety Plan that is developed, evaluated, and updated on a regular basis by the school Crisis Management Team (comprised of school personnel, local law enforcement and fire officials).

The plan shall be submitted to the Superintendent annually for approval and address the following:

- (1) Policies and procedures for the safe evacuation of students, teachers, and other school personnel, as well as visitors to the school, in the event of a serious violent incident or other emergency. Shall include evacuation routes, shelter sites, and procedures for addressing medical needs, transportation, and emergency notification to parents/guardians to a student;
- (2) Designation of a School Crisis Intervention Team that includes appropriate school personnel, mental health counselors, and others, who shall provide annual training

for all school staff on the School Safety Plan and assist the school in coping with a crisis situation;

- (3) Definition and formalization of the chain of command and duties and responsibilities of staff members during a crisis;
- (4) Student dismissal procedures;
- (5) Establishment of internal and external communication systems in emergencies that include consistent, plain language and terminology;
- (6) Policies and procedures for ensuring timely access to mental health services for those students and school employees affected by a crisis situation;
- (7) Procedures for annual drills and other exercises to test components of the Emergency Response Plan.

#### **V. District Crisis Manual**

A crisis manual will be established for the district. This manual will be located in the Superintendent's office, with copies at the secretary's office of each school building. Each school will create a building specific plan to be kept in the secretary's office and send a copy to the Superintendent's office. The plans will be updated regularly as new mandates and/or other state and federal requirements necessitate.

#### **VI. Training**

Each school shall provide training to all school staff in this crisis management policy and the School Safety Plan.

#### **VII. Communication**

Each school shall ensure that parents/guardians are informed of the following components of the School Safety Plan on an annual basis, through a variety of media:

- Dismissal procedures
- Emergency school closing procedures and notification systems

### Frequently Asked Questions:

**How can I as a parent/ guardian be assured that I receive the most up-to-date information from my child's school?**

To ensure that you have the most accurate account of a crisis situation, we ask that parents/guardians keep their contact information up-to-date in Aspen, which is the District's Student Information System.

**How and when will I be notified if there is an emergency at my child's school?**

The means and immediacy of communication will depend on the scope of the event and on the potential or actual impact to the safety of the students. While it's difficult to describe all possible scenarios, the notification responses listed above for the three Levels of Impact can be used to gauge the District's level of communicate with parents/guardians.

**Should I report to the scene of the incident/emergency?**

For the safety of all students, in the case of a high-impact emergency situation in a school or at a school-sponsored activity, access to the scene will be limited and controlled by fire and/or law enforcement officials. Parents/guardians are encouraged to remain close to their sources of communication, whether phone or email, to ensure that they are receiving accurate and timely updates on the emergency from school division staff.

**Once the emergency is declared "over," will parents/guardians be able to report to their child's school?**

When BWRSD communicates to parents/guardians that the school emergency has ended, directions will be provided on how parents/guardians will reunite with their child(ren). Parents/guardians will be directed to a specific location that could be located off school grounds. It is important that parents/guardians follow these directions for the safety of all students.

*Remember, students can only be released to an adult that is documented as an emergency contact and with proper identification.*

**ADOPTED:** January 28, 2019

**CROSS REFS:**

Evacuation and Lockdown Drills, EBCB  
Emergency Closings and Early Dismissals, EBCD

**LEGAL REFS:**

RI Gen. Law §16-21-23  
RI Gen. Law §16-21-24