

04 · TEMPLATES

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Family & Public Communication Templates

Pre-send checklist plus initial and follow-up statement templates. Fill the bracketed fields. Nothing else.

Douglas ESD Communications can help

You do not have to write these alone. Helping districts communicate in a crisis is part of what Douglas ESD provides to every district, at no cost. Reach out to Douglas ESD Communications as early as you can, even before anything is final, and they can help you draft, review, or send. The templates below are ready if you need to move right now. Bringing them in adds a second set of eyes to help you navigate multiple stakeholders and say the right thing at a hard moment, so you can stay focused where it matters most.

Before you communicate: required checklist

Complete every item before sending any message to staff, families, or the public.

- ☐ Are the facts confirmed? Not assumptions or rumors?
- ☐ Is the tone calm, factual, and non-reactive?
- ☐ Does this protect student and staff privacy?
- ☐ Does this avoid speculation, blame, or premature conclusions?
- ☐ Is this aligned with district guidance and legal counsel if needed?
- ☐ Has this been reviewed by a second set of eyes before sending?
- ☐ Would this message still feel appropriate and accurate in 24 hours?
- ☐ Is the distribution list correct, with no unintended recipients?

Initial public or family statement

Use this for the first message sent to families via your district's messaging platform or system, website, the school Facebook page (do not post to Facebook unless it is urgent, such as a lockdown where news must be shared quickly), or email, or as a holding statement if media ask. Fill bracketed fields only.

We are aware of an incident that occurred at [School Name] [today / on (date)].

Our priority is the safety and well-being of our students and staff. We are working closely with appropriate partners and support teams to respond thoughtfully and provide care where it is needed.

At this time, we ask for your patience as we gather accurate information. We will share updates as they are available and appropriate to share.

Thank you for your continued support and understanding.

Follow-up update

Use this 12 to 48 hours after the initial message, once more information is confirmed.

We want to provide an update to our school community regarding the situation at [School Name].

We have [brief factual summary, one to two sentences]. Our Flight Team, Douglas ESD's trained crisis-response team, and our support staff [have been / are currently] on site to provide care and assistance to students and staff who may need it.

We are committed to maintaining a safe and supportive environment for everyone in our community. If you have concerns about your student, please contact [name / office / phone].

We appreciate your patience and support.

For a fuller version with a Flight Team explanation and resources, see the family communication addendum.

Tone guidance

DO	DO NOT
Acknowledge the situation factually.	Share unconfirmed details or rumors.
Express care for students and staff.	Speculate about causes or assign blame.
Direct families to official channels.	Post on personal social media accounts.
Coordinate messaging with the district.	Send duplicate or contradictory messages.
Use plain, calm language.	Use dramatic or emotionally charged language.
Update when facts are confirmed.	Promise timelines you cannot keep.

REMINDER

Whenever you can, bring public messages to Douglas ESD Communications before they go out. They are here to help you get it right and to move fast with you, not to slow you down.