



Serving Learners, Families, and the Community

CRISIS COMMUNICATION GUIDE

2024-2025

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For additional information, questions, or feedback, contact:

Office of Student & School Safety
410-996-5490

Public Information Office
410-996-5401 ext. 43018

Overview

The CCPS Crisis Communication Plan provides information and procedures for coordinating internal communications between the system and stakeholders, and between the system and the media. While each situation is different, the main goal of this document is to provide a standard operating procedure and basic framework for communicating during a crisis.

The guiding principle in any type of situation is to communicate facts as quickly as possible while retaining accuracy and updating information regularly as more information becomes available to ensure the safety of students and staff.

We will use multiple means of communication during an event to reach as many people as possible, including our partnering agencies, such as law enforcement and the Department of Emergency Services. Our goal is to be open, accountable, and accessible to our audiences while also being mindful of legal and privacy concerns.

Whenever possible, the first groups that should be informed about a crisis are the internal audiences who are directly affected, such as students and staff. The next groups should include other schools not directly affected (as necessary), parents, Board members, and other stakeholders.

IMPORTANT COMMUNICATION BEST PRACTICES

Messages should be clear, direct, and simple:

- No more than three key points
- Use clear, direct language
- Avoid jargon
- Refute negative allegations without repeating them
- Use positive or neutral terms when possible
- Discuss what you know, not what you think
- Don't express personal opinions

Communication experts recommend the 27/9/3 principle: 27 words, nine seconds, three messages. If you don't keep it short and simple, someone else will make it short and simple for you, and you may lose your crucial message.

Important points to be made are that student safety is the top priority, the school is prepared, parents have access to information, school representatives take responsible immediate action, support students at the school, and efforts are coordinated with community agencies.

Useful phrases:

- We are still gathering information.
- All of our students and staff are accounted for and safe.
- Our emergency procedures worked exactly as we intended and practiced.
- Student safety is our top priority. We will continue to update our safety plans and security measures to protect our students and staff.

Monitoring

Disseminating messages during an event is not enough. We also need to monitor what is being reported and what is being said or asked for by target audiences. This allows us to correct misinformation or clarify and expand messages.

Post Event Evaluation

When the event is over, evaluate:

- Did all audiences receive the message promptly?
- Were the messages received and interpreted in the way we intended?
- Did the channels of communication work as we expected?
- Did we effectively monitor the situation, and could we adapt our response as needed?

USE OF COMMUNICATION TOOLS

Team members must be on the same page when working on a drill or crisis. If one person is aware of an update or needs to share important information, he or she needs the ability to inform everyone else using a standard tool.

Schools can determine an app or tool that works best for them.

PLEASE NOTE:

- The app/tool used must be included in the CERT plan.
- Schools should inform John Roush, Director of Student and School Safety, of the app/tool being used and include him as a contact.
- Staff should be trained on the use of the app/tool.

CENTRAL OFFICE RESPONSE

1. When initially notified of a situation, the Director of Student and School Safety will inform the Leadership Team and Public Information Officer and decide if activation of the command center is necessary.
2. The Director of Student and School Safety will assess the magnitude of the situation and work with the Public Information Officer to formulate a communication strategy. To determine the appropriate communication by incident, refer to the Communication Matrix on page 6.
3. Identify audiences that need information:
 - a. Those that are most affected: school administration, school staff, students (Other considerations: Transportation Office, Food & Nutrition, Itinerant staff)
 - b. Those who are not immediately affected need information about the event's safety and facts (e.g., parents, other schools, Board of Education members, etc.)
 - c. Those who are not affected by the event but still need information (e.g., community leaders/members, media)
4. Develop or identify messages to be communicated to each audience and determine who is responsible for delivering those messages.
 - a. Message Templates (pg. 8)

Communication Responsibilities

1. Spokesperson/Media Liaison: Jen Shaw
 - a. Backup #1: Dr. Joseph Buckley
 - b. Backup #2: Dr. Jenni Hammer
2. Social Media: Jen Shaw
 - a. Backup #1: Kyle Rickansrud
 - b. Backup #2: Dr. Jenni Hammer
3. Website: Derick Brown
 - a. Backup #1: Rick Ortiz
 - b. Backup #2: Kyle Rickansrud
4. Mass Notification System: Jen Shaw
 - a. Backup #1: Kyle Rickansrud
 - b. Backup #2: Rick Ortiz

COMMUNICATION MATRIX

This chart provides a basic overview of communication responsibilities in basic subgroups. Always refer to the Emergency Procedures Guide (flipchart) for more detailed procedures for managing specific emergency situations.

****911** should always be the first contact made in an active emergency or when there is an imminent threat.

Bomb Threat

1. School will contact the Office of Student and School Safety via a phone call.
2. The Office of Student and School Safety or Public Information Officer will contact the Leadership Team and BOE via email.
3. The school, in collaboration with the Public Information Officer, will contact the parents/guardians via the calling system (call, email, text) and social media.

Bus Accident

1. Transportation will contact the Office of Student and School Safety and the school.
2. The Office of Student and School Safety or the Public Information Officer will contact the Leadership Team and BOE via email.
3. The school will contact the parents/guardians via the calling system (call, email, text) and a follow-up letter.

Code Yellow (*Note - Communication to parents/guardians is required.)

1. School will contact the Office of Student and School Safety via a phone call.
2. The school, Office of Student and School Safety, or Public Information Officer will contact nearby schools (depending on the situation) via a phone call.
3. The Office of Student and School Safety or Public Information Officer will contact the Leadership Team and BOE via email.
4. The Office of Student and School Safety or Public Information Officer will contact the itinerant staff and Central Office (depending on the situation) via text message.
5. The school will contact the parents/guardians and staff via the calling system (call, email and text).

Death

1. *****Refer to Crisis Counseling Team Resource Manual*****

Evacuation/Relocation (General) - (See pages 10 and 11 for evacuation/relocation related to Secure Status:Lockdown (ALICE) procedures.)

1. The Office of Student and School Safety or Public Information Officer will contact the Leadership Team, BOE, itinerant staff, Central Office, and all schools via email.
2. The Public Information Officer will contact the parents/guardians via the calling system (call, email, text), and social media.

Fire/Hazardous Materials/Gas Leak - (If relocation is necessary, refer to Evacuation/Relocation.)

1. The school will contact the Office of Student and School Safety via a phone call.
2. The Office of Student and School Safety or Public Information Officer will contact the Leadership Team and BOE via email.
3. The school will contact the parents/guardians via the calling system (call, email, text) and social media.

Medical Emergency

1. The school will contact the Office of Student and School Safety via a phone call.
2. The Office of Student and School Safety or Public Information Officer will contact the Leadership Team via email.
3. The school will contact the parents/guardians if a Code Yellow is used via the calling system (call, email, text).

Radiological Emergencies

1. ***Refer to CCPS Emergency Procedures Guide or Peach Bottom Emergency Plan***

Secure Status: Lockdown (ALICE)

1. The Office of Student and School Safety or Public Information Officer will contact the itinerant staff and Central Office via text message.
2. The Office of Student and School Safety or Public Information Officer will contact nearby schools via radio and/or a phone call.
3. The Public Information Officer will contact the parents/guardians via the calling system (call, email, text).
4. The Office of Student and School Safety or Public Information Officer (per the direction of the Leadership Team) will contact all CCPS via the calling system (call, email, text).

Threats

1. The school will contact the Office of Student and School Safety and law enforcement via a phone call.
2. The Office of Student and School Safety or Public Information Officer will contact the Leadership Team and BOE via email.
3. The school will contact the parents/guardians via the calling system (call, email, text) and social media.
4. If necessary, the Public Information Officer will post information on social media.

Weapon

1. The school will contact the Office of Student and School Safety and law enforcement via a phone call.
2. The Office of Student and School Safety or Public Information Officer will contact the Leadership Team and BOE via email.
3. The school will contact the parents/guardians via the calling system (call, email, text).

EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION TEMPLATES

These templates are provided in an advisory capacity. You must first refer to the processes outlined in the Crisis Communications plan, which will provide you with a general standard operating procedure and expectations for communicating during emergencies.

BOMB THREAT

No Evacuation

This morning/afternoon, we received a bomb threat. We immediately contacted law enforcement and began our procedures for investigating this type of situation. We determined that it was safest for students to remain in the building while this occurred. We remained in a Code Yellow secure status and restricted hallway movement during this time. Both the (NAME) Police Department and the State Fire Marshal assisted us in this investigation.

Evacuation/Relocation

This is an alert, please listen to this message in its entirety. Due to a bomb threat at (SCHOOL NAME), all students and staff are being relocated to (LOCATION) as advised by law enforcement as a precautionary measure. Parents should report to (LOCATION), where they will be directed to the proper entrance and will follow sign-out procedures. Individuals authorized to pick up students should have their photo identification. Students who cannot be picked up at (LOCATION) will be transported home directly from (RELOCATION SITE) at the regular dismissal time. Should you have any additional questions, please contact (RELOCATION SITE) at (PHONE NUMBER).

Dismissal

This is an alert, please listen to this message in its entirety. Due to a bomb threat at (SCHOOL NAME), students are being dismissed from the school as advised by law enforcement as a precautionary measure. Walkers and students who drive will be dismissed immediately. Bus riders are being dismissed as buses arrive at the school. Parents who wish to sign their children out will be directed to the proper entrance and will follow sign-out procedures. Individuals authorized to pick up students should have their photo identification. Law enforcement is present at the school to assist in the dismissal.

Building Cleared for Re-entry

This is an alert, please listen to this message in its entirety. Our building has been cleared by law enforcement for re-entry following today's bomb threat. Students may not have been able to take personal belongings with them. If you would like to pick up your child's belongings this afternoon, the school will be open until (TIME). Otherwise, your child will be able to get their belongings tomorrow. Thank you for your cooperation and patience as we worked through today's situation. It was determined by law enforcement that the threat was not credible. We continue to investigate, and anyone with information concerning today's event is asked to

contact the school. School safety is an issue that we take very seriously and those found to be involved in today's incident will face both disciplinary and legal consequences.

Resolved

This is an alert, please listen to this message in its entirety. Law enforcement officers investigating the incident at (SCHOOL NAME) today were able to determine that the threat was non-credible. Situations such as this are taken very seriously by both the school system and law enforcement. Our students are to be commended for the mature manner in which they handled today's evacuation and relocation. Thank you to the (SCHOOL NAME) parents for their patience during the sign-out process at the high school, the staff of both (NAME OF AFFECTED SCHOOL AND RELOCATION SCHOOL) for their excellent work in handling today's events, and to law enforcement for their efforts in conducting the investigation.

BUS ACCIDENT

Minor Accident

This morning/afternoon, Bus ## was involved in a minor accident on (ROAD NAME), which required it to stop briefly. Neither vehicle was damaged, and the bus continued on to the school.

We spoke to students this morning and touched base with them throughout the day, as well as contacted impacted families with students on the bus.

Please feel free to contact the school should you have any further questions.

Accident with Emergency Transport

We have been notified that Bus ## has been involved in an accident and another bus is being sent to complete the route. Students with injuries are being transported and those families have been notified.

Please feel free to contact the school should you have any further questions.

CODE YELLOW

Police Activity in the Area

This morning/afternoon, we were notified of law enforcement activity in our area. As is our practice when we are informed of a situation in our community, and because the activity was near our property, our school entered into a Code Yellow status until we were advised by law enforcement that we could resume our regular activities.

The safety of our students and staff is our top priority. Even though this particular situation did not directly involve our school, it is important for us to take every precaution.

Please feel free to contact the school should you have any further questions.

Ambulance

This morning/afternoon, we had a situation that required us to call an ambulance for an individual in the building. We initiated a CODE YELLOW secure status to limit hallway traffic until emergency personnel had left the building.

Students may have seen the ambulance and emergency personnel, so I wanted to inform you of the situation.

Please feel free to contact the school should you have any further questions.

Situation Involving Law Enforcement

This morning/afternoon, we initiated a secure status as a precautionary measure to limit hallway traffic due to a meeting in the office that involved law enforcement. We kept this status for approximately ## minutes. During this time, all students were safe and secure.

Please feel free to contact the school should you have any further questions.

Suspicious Person on School Property

This morning/afternoon we received a report of a suspicious person on school property. We entered into a Code Yellow secure status and contacted law enforcement. Law enforcement continued to have a presence in the area for the remainder of the day and at dismissal. The safety of our students and staff is our top priority.

Please feel free to contact the school should you have any further questions.

DEATH

Refer to the Crisis Counseling Team Resource Manual

EVACUATION/RELOCATION (GENERAL)

This is an alert, please listen to this message in its entirety. Due to (REASON) at (SCHOOL), students and staff are being relocated to (LOCATION). Parents/guardians should report to (LOCATION), where they will be directed to the proper entrance and will follow sign-out procedures. Individuals authorized to pick up students should have their photo identification. Students who are not able to be picked up at (LOCATION) will be transported home directly from (RELOCATION SITE) at the regular dismissal time. Should you have any additional questions, please contact (RELOCATION SITE) at (PHONE NUMBER).

FIRE

Temporarily Evacuated

This is an alert, please listen to this message in its entirety. This message is to notify you that (SCHOOL NAME) was temporarily evacuated due to (a smell of smoke in the building/ a smoke alarm activation). The cause was identified as (EX., a malfunctioning light fixture), and the emergency responders allowed students and staff to re-enter the building.

Relocation

This is an alert, please listen to this message in its entirety. Due to a fire at (SCHOOL), students and staff are relocated to (LOCATION). Parents/guardians should report to (LOCATION), where they will be directed to the proper entrance and will follow sign-out procedures. Individuals authorized to pick up students should have their photo identification. Students who are not able to be picked up at (LOCATION) will be transported home directly from (RELOCATION SITE) at the regular dismissal time.

Should you have any additional questions, please contact (RELOCATION SITE) at (PHONE NUMBER).

HAZARDOUS MATERIALS/GAS LEAK

****Refer to FIRE and modify language**

RADIOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES

****Refer to the CCPS Emergency Procedures Guide or the Peach Bottom Emergency Plan**

SECURE STATUS: LOCKDOWN (ALICE)

At the Report of an Event—

This is an alert, please listen to this message in its entirety. We have received reports of an active threat at (SCHOOL NAME). Law enforcement is responding to the school, and the campus has been blocked from outside access. Parents should report to (LOCATION), where they will be directed to the proper entrance. Reunification procedures will proceed once students are evacuated to that location.

SUICIDE ATTEMPT/THREAT

****Refer to Crisis Counseling Team Manual**

THREATS

Online Rumors/Threats- Follow-Up

I wanted to take this opportunity to update you regarding last night's social media rumors and their effect on the school day. As I stated in my call this morning, we have been working with the (NAME) Police Department since late yesterday evening, when they were made aware of the post. They worked diligently to thoroughly investigate and resolve this situation. As a precaution, we did have an additional law enforcement presence at the school today.

Fortunately, law enforcement has determined that this was a non-credible threat. However, situations of this nature are taken very seriously by both the school system and law enforcement. This situation serves as a reminder that such information should always be reported immediately to school officials or law enforcement. In this case, the open lines of communication that exist between students, parents, school administrators, and law enforcement allowed us to swiftly and thoroughly investigate this particular matter with the (LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY).

Thank you for your support as we work to provide a safe, secure learning environment for our students. As I said in this morning's call, safety is our top priority.

Please feel free to contact the school should you have any further questions.

Weapon Photo on Social Media Posted By Student

This morning/afternoon, it was brought to our attention that [insert brief description of threat]. We immediately notified law enforcement to assist us in our investigation of this matter. Although the original post did not mention school or school violence, law enforcement is continuing to investigate the matter. As we mentioned in our communication yesterday, any information shared with us because it causes concern is thoroughly investigated. Sharing this information is essential, and we appreciate those who brought this information to our attention. We will continue to have a law enforcement presence at our school.

Please feel free to contact the school should you have any further questions.

Verbal Threat/Comments - Parent Letter

I wanted to take this opportunity to make you aware of an issue that we addressed this afternoon when it was reported to the school administration that [enter brief description of threat or comment]. We immediately investigated this in conjunction with law enforcement and addressed the situation.

Situations of this nature are taken very seriously by both the school system and law enforcement. This situation serves as a reminder that such information should always be reported immediately to school officials or law enforcement. In this case, the open lines of communication between students, parents, school administrators, and law enforcement allowed us to investigate this matter swiftly and thoroughly.

Thank you for your support as we work to provide a safe, secure learning environment for our students.

Please feel free to contact the school should you have any further questions.

WEAPONS

Gun

During school today, a student reported that [add brief description and adjust as needed]. Administration contacted law enforcement to respond and will continue to work with them regarding this ongoing investigation.

The safety of our students and staff is our top priority. Please continue to reinforce with your child that they should immediately tell an adult if they become aware of any situation that could pose a safety issue.

Our staff and the school district are committed to keeping our campus safe. There are no additional safety issues related to this incident. We will continue to diligently enforce our rules and work with law enforcement to keep our campus a safe place to learn.

Knife

This morning/afternoon, the school administration was notified that a student was in possession of a knife. The school immediately addressed the situation, and the student will face appropriate disciplinary consequences. Law enforcement was notified and assisted in the investigation of the incident.

Please continue to reinforce with your child that they should immediately tell an adult if they become aware of any situation that could pose a safety issue.

Contact the school should you have any further questions.

Look-Alike Weapon

This morning/afternoon, a student brought a (IDENTIFY ITEM, e.g., CAP GUN, KNIFE) (INTO SCHOOL/ONTO BUS). The situation was addressed immediately, and the student will face appropriate disciplinary consequences.

This situation reminds us that look-alike weapons of any kind should never be brought into school. Please take time this evening to share this information with your child and reinforce that information such as this should always be reported immediately to school officials or law enforcement.

Safety is our top priority. Thank you for your support as we work to provide a safe, secure learning environment for our students.

Please feel free to contact the school should you have any further questions.