Darien
Public Schools

PARENT/GUARDIAN DISTRICT EMERGENCY INFORMATION

2026-2027

Darien Public Schools is committed to providing a safe environment for students, staff and visitors. In the event of an emergency, it is important for parents/guardians to be familiar with the way the District prevents and manages emergencies. This guide outlines key information and terms that are helpful to know in the event of an emergency situation.

How does the District respond to a wide range of emergencies?

Schools are required to engage in comprehensive emergency planning, training and drills to prepare for and manage emergencies in their buildings. Emergencies could include facility failures such as a gas leak, accidents, medical emergencies, severe weather or an intruder in the school. The following protocols may be used individually or in conjunction with one another to respond to a wide range of critical incidents.

LOCKDOWN

In response to an **imminent threat in or around a school**, Lockdown is used to quickly ensure all school staff, students and visitors are secured in rooms away from immediate danger. Entry or exit from the school is restricted until the building has been deemed safe by emergency responders.

REUNIFICATION

School reunification is a structured, pre-planned protocol for the safe and orderly release of students to their parents or guardians after an incident or emergency. The reunification process aims to minimize anxiety and confusion by establishing clear procedures, roles for staff and designated locations for student release.

SECURE SCHOOL

In response to safety concerns about suspicious activity outside the school, or due to interior safety concerns, Secure School is used to quickly ensure all school staff, students and visitors are safe while usual classroom activities continue. Entry or exit from the school is restricted until the building has been deemed safe. Activities continue as normal inside the building.

EVACUATION

Evacuation takes place if it is determined that it is **safer outside than inside the building** (fire, explosion, intruder, hazardous material spill) and staff, students and visitors can safely reach the evacuation location without danger. Staff/students will relocate to a pre-identified safe location, and parents will be notified if pickup is required.

SHELTER-IN-PLACE

A Shelter-in-Place may occur during a non-threatening event such as a medical emergency or maintenance issue or when it is necessary to remain inside the building due to exterior hazards such as extreme weather or other type of hazard. Students are kept in a safe space inside the school building until the situation has been resolved.

In the unlikely event we must either **evacuate students to an offsite location, or it is necessary for students to be reunited directly with their parent/guardian at their school**, the District will provide information via phone, email and/or text regarding their child's specific location. Students will only be released to a parent/guardian or other adults listed as emergency contacts in Aspen. Photo identification will be required. Please be aware that reunification can be time-consuming, and we appreciate your patience.

When and why would the District issue an emergency protocol?

In the event of an emergency situation, please be assured that the District has an emergency management plan in place and that District, schools and first responders will act accordingly. For more information on our District's commitment to safety & security, please visit: Darien Public Schools Safety & Security

The District will provide ongoing information regarding the event, including specific instructions for parents/students to reunite, if necessary. Parents/guardians are encouraged to monitor phones and email regularly. A designated phone line you can call for a recorded message with updated information will be available, if warranted. Updates may also be posted on the District website: www.darienps.org

What are the daily security measures parents should be aware of?

- Standard operating safety procedures require all exterior doors to be locked at all times.
- All visitors to our schools must enter through the main entrance of each school and provide a government issued photo ID, which will be scanned into a Visitor Management System.
- All visitors are required to wear a school visitor pass, which will bear their photo.
- Staff are required to wear their District issued photo ID while on campus.
- High School students are required to carry and be able to produce their District issued photo ID while on campus.
- Our District uses the ALERTUS emergency notification system and we have direct communication with the Darien Police Department.
- Based on the needs of our students each of our schools creates an individualized safety plan for students whose behavioral needs (e.g. elopement, etc.) may require careful planning and response.
- Our District encourages the use of the Anonymous Alerts incident reporting system.
- If law enforcement officials (local, state or federal) unexpectedly arrive at one of our schools, the officials will be asked to wait outside the school. The Superintendent and/or the Director of Security will go to the school to assist. Without a valid judicial warrant, or consent from school officials, or an emergency, law enforcement (including ICE agents) are not permitted to enter non-public areas inside a school building or be on school grounds.
- Due to our District's commitment to safety & security, we have specially vetted and trained Darien Police Department School Resource Officers at our high school and middle school. In addition, we have Armed School Security Officers who are specially trained, vetted and retired law enforcement officers at each of our five elementary schools.
- Our District wants all students, parents and staff to feel comfortable reporting suspicious behavior. If you overhear something that is a threat or potential threat to our schools, notice strange behaviors, or see a concerning post on social media, please say something. Identifying, reporting, and addressing safety concerns immediately enhances safety. To report an imminent threat, call 911, or for routine matters contact the Darien Police Department at 203-662-5300.

What to do After an Emergency

- It is important to remain calm as children are greatly influenced by their family's sense of well-being.
- Provide reassurance that your child is safe.
- Families need to be compassionate listeners when their children speak of the crisis. Listen to and acknowledge your child’s concerns.
- Please seek help from the school, District or other mental health professionals if you/your child have any concerns.

Do’s and Don'ts for a School Emergency

DO make sure your child's emergency contact information is up-to-date and accurate in advance so that we can get in touch with you in an emergency. If your child requires medication, please be sure it is supplied to the school nurse.

DO NOT go to the school campus during an emergency. Doing so can greatly interfere with the efforts of emergency responders to manage the incident.

DO NOT call the individual schools. In a crisis situation, school phones are needed to communicate the situation and lines must remain open. Please also refrain from calling or texting your child. Staff and students are discouraged from using cell phone communication for safety reasons.

DO review with your child ahead of time any alternative arrangements you have made in case an emergency prevents you from being home or picking up your child.

DO NOT listen to rumors. If your child contacts you during an emergency, they may only know a piece of the larger picture. Please refrain from disseminating any information, especially on social media, that has not been verified by school or public safety officials.

DO NOT respond to a child’s request to leave school. Tell your child to remain calm and to follow instructions from their teachers.

Darien Public Schools take emergency preparedness very seriously. The District uses the latest technology to keep students, staff and visitors safe. Our District has armed school security officers, Darien PD School Resource Officers, and campus monitors. We work closely with the Darien Police Department, fire department and EMS so that our schools are ready to respond in the event of an emergency. Each school conducts several drills (fire, lockdown, shelter-in-place) throughout the school year to help students and staff become familiar with emergency procedures. The District's Emergency Response Plan and building level plans are reviewed and updated annually. If you have further questions, please contact the District’s Director of Security & Safety, John Shaughnessy at jshaughnessy@darienps.org