

Anderson County School District 1
Parent/Guardian Emergency Preparedness Guide
2022-2023
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Introduction:

The safety and security of our students and staff are top priorities for Anderson County School District 1. This guide explains some of the procedures that have been planned and practiced to prepare us in the unlikely event of an emergency at your child's school.

District and school administrators work closely with the Anderson County Department of Emergency Management, Anderson County Sheriff's Office, Williamston Police Department, Anderson County Fire Departments, Williamston Fire Department, Anderson County EMS and the Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) to ensure our schools and district emergency management plans reflect appropriate practices and that all schools work to mitigate, prepare for, respond to and recover from all hazards. Key personnel are trained in Incident Command procedures and are ready to work in partnership with emergency responders should a critical incident occur in our school district.

Our comprehensive emergency plan addresses a multitude of potential incidents, not because we expect them to occur, but because we want to be prepared in case they do. For security reasons, specific details are not made available to the public; however, parents and students have a vital role and it is important that you know what to do in an emergency. Please review the information in this guide to make sure you and your child understand the emergency procedures.

What is an Emergency?

An emergency is any unexpected incident that could put your child's safety at risk. It could be anything from a disruption in utilities to an act of terrorism and could affect one child, one school, or the entire school district. School officials, and sometimes emergency responders, will evaluate the seriousness of each situation and determine the best course of action to respond quickly, safely and appropriately. Advanced planning and preparation can minimize the risks in any emergency situation.

This guide offers guidelines for preparedness, what parents should do, and what the district/school will do in the event of an emergency. Communication procedures and student release procedures are also outlined.

What Should Parents Do in the Event of an Emergency?

The most helpful parental responses to a school emergency are to remain calm and wait for accurate information and instructions to be sent to the number(s) listed as your child's emergency contact. It is imperative to keep all of your contact information up-to-date. We understand it is a natural instinct for parents to want to rush to their child. It is important for you to understand that, during such an event, individual schools and emergency responders have made preparations to deal with these incidents. Your cooperation in an emergency is essential to the safe and swift resolution of the incident.

Please do not call the school. It is essential to keep phone lines open so school officials can make outgoing emergency calls. If your child(ren) becomes ill or injured, you will be notified as soon as possible (priority notifications will be given to parents/guardians of students who have been injured or become ill).

Please do not immediately go to the school. As we have learned from recent school emergencies across the country, one of the greatest challenges is how to manage a large number of parents and concerned citizens rushing to the scene to "help". By doing so, parents can inadvertently create traffic jams that may block emergency responders from getting to the scene or from leaving to transport injured students or staff to emergency medical facilities.

We kindly ask parents/guardians to:

- Remain calm, follow procedures/instructions, and cooperate with school and public safety officials.
- Remain close to the phone listed as your child's emergency contact number.
- Turn on or tune in to local television or radio stations designated to carry Anderson 1's emergency information.

Obtain current information about the incident from

- District website - <https://www.anderson1.org/>
- Facebook – <https://www.facebook.com/andersondistrictone/>

Please understand that emergency pickup procedures are different than routine pickup procedures. In the event you are notified to pick up your child at school or at a designated family reunification site, bring a photo identification card. If you must send someone else to pick up your child, please be sure it is someone who is listed on school records as an individual authorized to do so and make sure they are in possession of a photo ID. Your child will not be released to anyone who is unauthorized or who cannot provide appropriate identification.

Follow emergency procedures. If you are asked to pick up your child, you will be asked to follow the checkout procedure established for emergencies. The family reunification system was developed to ensure the safety and accountability of students and it is vital that it be followed.

Remain in designated areas at the family reunification site. Local law enforcement, as well as emergency responders from other agencies, will be present to support the family reunification efforts.

Please be patient. It is essential that family reunification procedures be carried out in an orderly manner so we can protect and account for all of our students. This process may take up to several hours.

How will Parents be Notified if an Incident Occurs at School?

Our first priority is to ensure all students are safe, accounted for, and under adult supervision. As soon as it is possible to do so, school administrators and District Office staff, under the direction of the Superintendent (or designee), will communicate information to parents and the community. The school district has a variety of media outlets available to parents which will be updated, as needed, with the most complete and accurate information available.

District Emergency Information Links:

- Blackboard/Bright Arrow System – A recorded or text message will be sent to contact numbers in our system.
- Anderson County Schools Website – <https://www.anderson1.org/>
- Social Media via Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/andersondistrictone/>
- Superintendent's Office (District Office) (864) 847-7344

In the event of a significant emergency, parents are encouraged to tune in to one of the following local stations to follow the event as it unfolds:

- WYFF 4 – NBC
- WSPA 7 – CBS
- Fox Carolina 21- Fox

What Will Schools Do in the Event of an Emergency?

What we do in an emergency depends on the situation and the specifics of the incident. We will make every attempt to ensure that instruction continues, even when it becomes

necessary to lock down the school. Depending on the severity of the threat or emergency, additional measures may be taken, including sheltering-in-place, evacuating students from the building or even altering the dismissal time.

If emergency responders are called to the scene, we will work with them in a unified command to determine which plan should be implemented. School emergency plans vary from school to school, based on school size, building layout and other relevant factors, and are initiated depending on the events unfolding at the time of the incident. While every school has common pre-established plans of action, evacuation sites, and family reunification plans, these plans must remain confidential for the safety of our students and staff. These plans **MUST** be flexible as conditions change. Parents will be informed of their next steps as soon as we have done everything we can to ensure the safety of all students and when it becomes possible to provide accurate and helpful information.

Protective Actions:

Each school has an emergency preparedness plan involving a number of possible actions. The response varies, depending on the conditions and the situation, and is determined by a crisis management team trained to make such decisions. It is important for parents to understand that if a critical incident occurs, students will be released to a parent or authorized person **only** when danger has passed.

Schools may use the following protective actions:

- A Hard Lockdown is used to protect building occupants from potential dangers in the building. Specific lockdown procedures are developed by school officials and local law enforcement officials. During a hard lockdown, all interior and exterior doors are locked. Students are instructed to be quiet and remain in a part of the classroom where their visibility through exterior and interior windows is blocked or minimized. Doors are not to be opened for anyone and our staff members only priority during this time is student safety. No one is permitted to enter or exit the building until school officials and/or law enforcement officials have determined it is safe to do so and staff, students and visitors are accounted for in the building. The length of the period of lockdown is based on the situation at hand, and could be a few minutes or even hours. It is possible that a lockdown might involve detaining students beyond the regular school day. It is never our intention to hold students unnecessarily, and we will not do so except to ensure their safety. Conditions will return to normal as soon as it is safe to do so.

- In a Soft Lockdown, all classroom interior doors and exterior building doors and windows are closed and locked. Visitors are asked to state who they are and the nature of their

business when they are buzzed into a building. Parents may still come to the school to check students out for appointments but should expect a delay in the sign out process. This is a precautionary action and can also be described as a heightened alert. In the event of imminent and present danger, the school would be on hard lockdown. Students remain in classrooms

and are escorted by a staff member if they need to move through the building.

Schools may go into soft lockdown for a number of reasons including but not limited to:

- Investigation of a threat or possible threat
 - Drug Dog Sweep
 - External threat in the community not associated with the school
 - Maintenance issues
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- Shelter-in-Place – This protective action is considered when an event takes place around the school and officials determine the safest course of action is to keep students and staff inside the building until the external event is handled. Some examples could be a weather situation, hazardous materials release, or a situation unfolding in the community where students should not be released. Students who are outside are moved inside. If a shelter-in-place protective action enactive that may extend beyond the school day, parents will be notified.
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- Evacuation – If it is unsafe for students and staff to remain inside the building, the school will be evacuated. Students and staff may remain on school grounds until the building is safe to re-enter or be relocated to a safe location off school property. In the event of an off-campus evacuation, a reunification site will be established and the location will be announced to parents/guardians. Once the site is made public, we ask parents and guardians to go to the announced site. Please be sure to bring a photo ID. Simultaneously, school administrators will work closely with emergency officials and our transportation professionals to move students to the reunification site. From there, the students will either be transported home or wait for family members to pick them up from the reunification site. In either event, we will make sure parents are notified. Emergency responders will instruct students and staff members, who were evacuated from a site where they left a personal automobile, as to when they may return to their car.
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- Emergency School Closing – This procedure will take place when school administrators determine students are safer at home than at school. This most often occurs due to loss of utilities or a weather emergency. Parents will be notified that school(s) will be closing. Students who normally ride the bus will be transported home as usual and parents will be notified.
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- Off-Site Family Reunification – Students are moved off-site when school officials

determine students and staff should not re-enter the building until it is rendered safe. Several off-site locations have been determined in advance, but are not shared publicly until an incident unfolds. Emergency responders and school officials choose the best reunification site at the time of the incident, depending on the circumstances of the emergency. Parents will be notified of the family reunification site as soon as it is tactically appropriate to do so. Our main priorities in an off-site evacuation are student safety and accountability. We want to ensure that students are released to authorized individuals and our sign-out procedure will be in place.

In the event of an off-site school evacuation, parents will be provided information as to where the reunification site is located. Parents or authorized adults will be required to show photo identification in order to pick up a child. The process may take some time because we want to make sure reunification is made with authorized individuals only.

What Should Parents Do to Prepare for an Emergency?

Parents have an invaluable role in preparing their children for emergencies. Listed below are some of the ways you can help them understand everyone's role if an emergency occurs at school. Teachers and school officials are trained to handle emergency situations. Reassure your child(ren), you will be contacted by the school and you will be reunited with them as soon as it is safe to do so.

Be sure emergency contact information is current and correct. Contact the school secretary immediately whenever your address, or work, home or cell number changes.

Keep the school nurse informed of any medical conditions or physical limitations your child may have or medications your child may be taking. Identify who is authorized to pick up your child if you are not able to respond. Make sure their contact information is current and correct.

Please understand that your child will only be released to parents and persons identified on the emergency contact list. Discuss this information with your child. Make sure your child knows the name, address and phone numbers of parents or guardians. If there is only one parent or guardian, your child should have contact information for a second responsible adult on file with your school.

Talk with your child about the importance of remaining calm and following instructions in the event of an emergency. If an emergency occurs while students are at school, administrators/teachers/school staff will provide them with appropriate instructions and information. Let your child know that students could be moved to another location until they can be picked up. Explain the term "Evacuation" in order to ease anxiety and fear if/when an

evacuation takes place.

Explain that cell phones may be used to briefly communicate his/her status to you, such as “I am safe”. Emergency responders will depend on cell phones for communication. If students and parents are trying to contact each other, cell circuits may become overloaded, interfering with the ability of emergency responders to communicate vital information.

Whenever you are on school grounds, remain alert to activity in and around the school. Report any suspicious activity to school administration or law enforcement so they can investigate. Establish a family preparedness plan including a communications plan. This will enable you to communicate with all family members during an emergency. In case of an emergency in which your child can not go home, make sure there is another place he or she can go and be safe while waiting for a family member to pick them up.

Recovery After a Crisis:

School leaders understand that a traumatic event in a school or in the community can have an emotional impact on students and staff. Anderson School District 1 has a trained Crisis Intervention Team of counselors and psychologists who can respond to the school during and after a critical incident to provide assistance. The Anderson School District 1 Crisis Intervention Team will be available to assist those affected to help cope with the aftermath of the incident.

For Additional Information:

For additional information regarding your child’s school emergency plan, contact your child’s school administrator.

An excellent website on emergency readiness is www.ready.gov

To keep current on all items of importance in your school system, visit the Anderson County Schools website often at <https://www.anderson1.org/>