



## Communication with Families About Safety

Planning for communications with families about emergencies is an important part of safety preparedness. Certain types of communications about safety need to happen before an emergency takes place. First, families need to know in advance about the procedure for (1) quickly determining a student's safety, (2) learning the details of the emergency, and (3) finding out about next steps. Second, families should understand exactly how program staff will provide information to them during an emergency. Third, families should know about the program's recovery plan and how they can participate in recovery.

### Tips

1. Develop relationships with families so that they'll feel comfortable speaking with you about any concerns they may have about potential safety issues, safety preparedness procedures and training events, and recovery following an emergency situation.
2. Prepare a message about post-emergency recovery so that it can be quickly customized and distributed after an emergency event.
3. Discuss emergency response procedures during Family Nights to prepare families for possible student reactions and responses to various emergencies.
4. When an emergency occurs:
  - a. Tell families exactly what is known to have happened. Don't embellish or speculate.
  - b. Implement the plan to manage phone calls and the arrival of family members. (Be sure the student sign-out sheet includes details about which family members students can and cannot be released to in the event of an emergency.)
  - c. Schedule and attend an open question-and-answer meeting for families as soon after the incident as possible.

See the following pages for sample letters your program can modify and use to inform families about safety practices, alternative locations in the event of an evacuation, and evacuation notification.