WS1 Handout 15:
Essential Elements of a Release and Reunification Plan

Off-Site Reunification Location

1. The incident commander advises operations chief to implement off-site evacuation and reunification procedures.
2. The incident commander or operations chief notifies teachers to activate off-site reunification procedures.
3. The logistics personnel begin setting up bus staging area and routing buses to staging area.
4. Local law enforcement and other needed personnel should proceed to site to help with traffic and crowd control.
5. The public information officer will provide needed details and instructions to the media and the webmaster, to be conveyed to parents and the community.
6. While en route to the off-site reunification area, a school staff member needs to prepare a list of all evacuees on the bus. The list will be delivered to the supervisor (i.e., the student–parent reunion coordinator) upon arrival.
7. Crisis team members will facilitate the unloading of students and school staff and direct them to the student assembly area.
8. School staff will supervise students at the site.
9. The operations chief will designate an individual to be the commander-in-charge for the site.
10. School staff follow the identified dismissal procedures.
11. The student–parent reunion coordinator will need to obtain up-to-date student emergency information that details special needs, medical, or custody issues from the Administrator/Crisis Response team go-kit.

On-Site Reunification Location

1. Incident commander makes the decision to use alternative dismissal procedures and to activate the reunification crisis plan. The operations chief is notified to activate procedures.
2. All teachers and students are notified of the reunification plan procedures to be followed.
3. The public information officer or incident commander provides needed details and instructions to the media and webmaster, to be conveyed to parents.
4. Parents are notified of the need to come and pick up their child (reverse 911, local media outlets, website, and e-mail).
5. Local law enforcement and other needed personnel will proceed to the site to help with traffic and crowd control.
6. Staff are activated to help with parent verification and procedures. Obtain the up-to-date student emergency information that details special needs, medical, or custody issues from the Administrator/Crisis Response team go-kit.
7. Authorized adults and parents are required to check in at the check-in area. They must print and sign their names, in addition to the time, on a sign-out sheet (a printed name is needed, as signatures sometimes cannot be read). Two different methods of check-out can be used:
   a. Parents must check in at a central location, show ID, sign their child out, and wait for the child to be called down to the reunion area to be released.
      i. Pro. Parents are not provided access to the building.
      ii. Con. Keeping up with demand is difficult if large numbers of parents are arriving at once. Parents get frustrated with waiting for their child to be called down to the parent waiting area.
      iii. Strategy. Staff can offer caregiver training while parents are waiting for their child to be called down to meet them. This gives parents information about what happened, strategies for working with their child when they get home, and time for staff to get the student ready to meet their parent.
b. Parents must check in at a central location and show ID that is matched to a student emergency release card; they are then permitted access to a classroom and allowed to sign their child out with teacher.
   i. **Pro.** Staff are better able to keep up with demand and it accelerates the dismissal process.
   ii. **Con.** Parents have access to the building, and a parent that is emotional may trigger reactions in other students and parents. Also, parents may not leave readily and may congregate within the school, causing other potential difficulties.

### Specific On-Site Duties to Facilitate the Reunification Process

The command staff work together to conduct the following activities:

1. Establish an Incident Command post.
2. Organize the response if multiple agencies are involved.
3. Check identification of all personnel and staff who arrive to provide assistance.
4. Secure the areas for student and staff away from where parents will be arriving.
5. Set up the student release sign-out area.
6. If needed, set up a media staging area.
7. Have mental health and medical staff available for medically and emotionally fragile students.
8. Release students only to authorized individuals who show ID and are listed on the student’s emergency release card (ensure there are not custody disputes). Have an administrator ready to handle any unauthorized adult who tries to pick-up a student. Have multiple tables ready to accommodate large numbers of parents signing in and out.
9. Provide handouts to parents on traumatic stress reactions and resources.
10. Provide supervision for students whose parents or an authorized person do not come and pick them up.
11. Make every effort to maintain order and ease fears and anxiety. Be prepared for emotional parents who may feel a need to circumvent the process to get to their child faster.
12. Have additional staff and security to help with crowd control and to maintain order. Consider traffic flow patterns. Do not have parents entering and exiting through the same doors, as this creates a traffic jam.