

Emergency Information Guide for Families

Brought to you by the Department of Safety



At Denver Public Schools, the safety of our students and staff is our top priority. The DPS Department of Safety works directly with the Denver Police Department to ensure coordinated approaches to school safety. Our nearly 200 schools are located all across the city and, due to our urban setting, we often enact precautionary safety measures to keep our school communities safe.

Engaging the community in our efforts and goals involves ensuring families can help their children and district employees in the event of an emergency.

What is DPS doing to help our schools prepare for an emergency?

- Annually training school-based emergency response teams on emergency procedures.
- Assisting schools in completing their building-emergency plans.
- Partnering with Denver Police Department and Denver Fire Department in planning efforts.

What can families do to help?

- Talk to your children about school emergency response procedures so they will know what to expect in the event of an emergency or crisis. This information can be found with the front office staff of each school.
- Ensure your child's emergency contact information is up-to-date with your individual school and in Parent Portal at myportal.dpsk12.org. Students will not be released from school to unauthorized individuals, and we will not be able to reach you in an emergency if your information is incorrect or outdated.
- If your child takes medication, make sure the school has a minimum of a three-day supply.

What are schools doing to prepare for an emergency?

Schools are required to prepare for an emergency or crisis by taking the following actions:

- Submit an emergency plan to the Director of Emergency Management with the Department of Safety within the first two weeks of school.
- Obtain an annual certification of school-based emergency response teams. All emergency team members are required to take an online class, led by the Department of Safety, to cover emergency procedures.
- Conduct all-school emergency drills observed by the Department of Safety to ensure all students and staff are responding in a safe and timely manner. Fire drills are completed monthly during the school year. Lockdown, lockout and shelter-in-place drills are conducted within the first 30 days of each semester.
- Attend face-to-face emergency response team trainings as well as all-staff trainings led by the Department of Safety.

What you need to know about school emergencies:



Lockout

What is a school lockout?

A **lockout** takes place when there is a safety concern that is not an immediate threat to a school. For example, the police may be pursuing a vehicle in the neighborhood around a school, and the DPS Department of Safety determines that the school should enact a lockout as a precautionary measure. In lockouts, students and staff should remain inside the school building, and school activities may continue as normal with students and staff moving securely within the school. A lockout means no one comes in or goes out of the building, and students and staff are unlikely to notice a difference unless the lockout occurs near a transition time.



Lockdown

What is a school lockdown?

A **lockdown** takes place when there is a safety concern regarding a potential threat to a school. For example, the police may be pursuing a suspect on foot and the suspect is on school property. A lockdown will also be enacted if there is a perceived threat within the school. In a lockdown, school business and classroom activities should cease, and everyone should be down, quiet and out of sight. Students remain quiet in their classrooms until the lockdown is lifted.

Note: In both a lockout and lockdown, the Department of Safety coordinates with emergency responders to determine the appropriate time to release a school.



Shelter

What is shelter-in-place?

Shelter-in-place is when students and staff take shelter in a safe space in the school; that could be a classroom or a hallway. This occurs when there is a hazard, such as a tornado or a severe weather warning, and it has been determined by the Department of Safety, with the assistance of outside agencies, that evacuation or early dismissal could place students in danger.



Evacuate

What is an evacuation?

An **evacuation** is when students are sent outside of the school building to prevent harm or injury due to a hazardous situation inside of the school, such as a fire.

What is a reunification site?

A **reunification site** is the location of students after they are moved off school property. This is necessary to prevent harm or injury due to a hazardous situation inside or outside the school.

How will I know when lockouts and lockdowns are going on at my child's school?

Our goal is to be sensitive to the needs of families and to communicate accurate and timely information without interfering with ongoing emergency responses or jeopardizing the integrity of investigations. In addition, it's important to balance the need to communicate with the risk of creating additional anxiety or concerns for our students, staff and families.

In the case of a lockout, protocol is that the school leader decides the level of communication necessary for their school community. If the lockout occurs near a dismissal time, arrival time or otherwise impacts families, we encourage the school leader to send a communication to families. The type(s) of communication should be determined by the school leader based upon the preferences of families in the school.

For lockdowns, DPS Communications coordinates parent notifications in collaboration with the school leader. Since a lockdown results in significant disruption to the normal school environment, it is important that families are notified. In most cases, DPS uses an automated phone dialer and email system to notify families of the lockdown. It is important that your child's emergency contact information is up-to-date with your school and in Parent Portal.

What should I do if a lockdown/lockout is occurring at my child's school?

If you are notified of a school lockdown/lockout at your child's school, do not come to the school. Stay where you are able to be notified with additional information of your child's situation. Students will not be released until the incident has ended or the scene is safe for release. Although this does not happen often, be prepared to retrieve your child at a reunification site if students have been removed from a school.

By keeping your contact information up-to-date in the Parent Portal at myportal.dpsk12.org, you will receive an automated email message and automated phone call when there are emergencies at your child's school. Be sure to choose to receive emergency notifications within your Parent Portal account.

Dos and Don'ts in an emergency or crisis:

- **DO** check the DPS website at www.dpsk12.org for updated information. Also, check DPS Twitter @DPSNewsNow and Facebook @DenverPublicSchools as they are typically the first line of communication used during crisis situations.
- **DO** call the DPS Family Constituency Hotline at 720-423-3054.
- **DO** listen for information regarding reunification with your child if students are removed from a school. Remember to bring valid government identification with you to the reunification site. Please note that reunification does not happen often.
- **DON'T** come to your child's school unless notified to do so. This could create traffic congestion and hamper efforts of emergency personnel.
- **DON'T** call your child or your child's school. Excessive phone calls could jam the phone system and interfere with emergency communications.

The Department of Safety protects Denver Public Schools' students, staff, stakeholders and physical assets. Led by Chief Michael Eaton, the department has more than 100 team members including investigators, armed patrol officers, dispatchers, emergency preparedness professionals, safety technicians and campus safety officers. The department operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

