

EVACUATION PLANNING AND RESPONSE FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Creation of an Evacuation Plan should cover the **evacuation, transportation and medical needs** of students who will require extreme special handling in an emergency. In most cases, additional safeguards must be established regarding roles, responsibilities and procedures for students with physical, sensory, emotional and health disabilities.

1. **Review all paths of travel and potential obstacles.**
 - Know your school grounds, paths, exits and potential obstacles.
 - Determine the primary and secondary paths of exit to be used during emergencies. Individuals with mobility impairments will need a smooth, solid, level walking surface, an exit that avoids barriers such as stairs, narrow doors and elevators and guardrails that protect open sides of the path.
 - Compile and distribute evacuation route information to be used during emergency operations
 - Include alternative evacuation route information, should the primary route be inaccessible due to damage or danger.
2. **Install appropriate signage and visual alarms.**
 - Place evacuation information indicating primary and secondary exits in all offices, classrooms, multipurpose rooms, lunchrooms, hallways/corridors, lobbies, bathrooms and cafeterias. For passages and doorways that might be mistaken for an exit, place visible signs that proclaim, "NOT AN EXIT".
 - Place emergency notification devices appropriate for each student.
 - Post signage with the name and location of each area so that the students will know exactly where they are. In order to comply with ADA Accessibility Guidelines for Buildings and Facilities requirements, the signage should be: approximately 60 inches above the floor; in a location that is not obscured in normal operation such as a swinging door; and in all primary function areas
3. **Identify the students and staff with special needs and they type of assistance they will require in an emergency.**
 - Allow visitors to self-identify on a sign-in log if they have special evacuation needs.
 - Discuss evacuation issues with the staff members and caretakers of students with special needs. Include individuals, who may be temporarily disabled (i.e. a student with a broken leg).
4. **Train staff in general evacuation procedures.**
 - Review the areas of rescue, primary exits, evacuation techniques, and the locations and operation of emergency equipment.
 - Provide in-depth training to those designated to evacuate students with special needs.
 - Train the staff for proper lifting techniques when lifting a person for evacuation. Anyone can assist a student with a visual impairment.
- Check on each special needs student to assure he/she is accounted for during an evacuation.
5. **Review the plan with emergency response personal, including local police, fire and emergency medical technicians.**
 - Identify "areas of rescue" in your school for students to wait for evacuation assistance from emergency personnel.
 - Before school begins in the fall, walk around the site with first responders so that they are familiar with the primary exits and all areas of rescue. These areas must meet specifications for fire resistance and ventilation.
 - Ask the responders to conduct a special drill explaining how they will support the students and staff with special needs during an emergency.
6. **Complete all contracts and Statements of Understanding with key emergency support providers**
 - Ensure that sufficient transportation capacity exists with transportation providers, partner agencies, and suppliers to effectively meet the demand in an emergency.
 - Identify transportation contracts through the district in case of an emergency. Emergency response for special needs requires special vans and special equipment. Specify who will do what to address these transportation needs.
 - Develop a list of school-owned vehicles, staff vehicles and parent vehicles that are available and make prior arrangements for their use in the event of an emergency.
7. **Review the evacuation plan with students and staff to be familiar with the process and identify any problems.**
 - Students should be aware that evacuation by themselves may be difficult or impossible because of obstacles in their path or because electric- dependent machines may not function (i.e. elevator).
 - Special pre-planned assistance must be provided and reviewed regularly. Classrooms should have emergency activity kits with items familiar to the students.
8. **When Evacuating**
 - Carry all medication, supplies, equipment and dietary needs with student, including the 72-hour disaster kit that has been prepared ahead of time for individual student needs;
 - Ask the student how he/she would like to be assisted;
 - Use the buddy system;
 - Inform emergency personnel of intended destination and type of assistance needed. If unable to contact emergency personnel, ask others to make the notification for assistance;
 - Move to designated evacuation area. The path should be unobstructed.
 - Provide priority assistance to wheelchair users with electrical respirators. Evacuate mobility devices with the person if possible (i.e. crutches, wheel chairs, etc.)

To Evacuate Persons Using Wheelchairs:

If the person wants to be moved in his/her chair, keep the following considerations in mind:

- Turn off the wheelchair's power before lifting.
- Turn the wheelchair so it is lowered down the stairs backwards (person facing up the stairs), so the occupant cannot slip forward out of the chair and down the stairs.
- Powered wheelchairs have very heavy batteries; an evacuation chair for stairs may be needed with the powered chair to be retrieved later.
- If a seatbelt is available, use it. If the person needs to be removed from his/her wheelchair for an evacuation, ask the following:
 - » how he/she prefers to be moved from the chair;
 - » whether pain or harm will result from moving extremities;
 - » if any equipment is needed for immediate safety of life-support, e.g. backup generator for respirator.

Transporting Students

Transportation is a well-established component of emergency response plans, and requires planning and detailed focus for children with access and functional needs. Special transport is not provided for students with Section 504 eligibility.

- Maintain a transportation resources list by type and availability, including vehicle accessibility and capacity information.
- Develop procedures for the acquisition of additional accessible transportation equipment, securement devices, supplies, and resources before a disaster.
- Provide staff training, including a review of procedures for transporting persons with a variety of assistance needs, as well as the transport of service animals.
- Identify strategies for tracking individuals who are evacuated. Information should include the passenger's name, point of origin, departure time, final destination, and arrival time.
- Maintain a master list of drivers by status and availability.
- Provide drivers with an operational roster to complete and maintain, at minimum, with the following information:
 - » Name of driver AND telephone number
 - » Time departed staging area
 - » Time arrived at sheltering location
 - » Vehicle number
 - » Sheltering location
 - » Trip mileage
- Determine the appropriate transportation response for persons unable to reach a pick up/drop off location or staging area on their own. What entity will handle such needs, and what types of vehicles/equipment will be required? Check with the county school administrators regarding the transportation planning.

- Account for all students before transportation occurs and after arrival at the destination.
- Transport all passengers to the pre-designated evacuation destination by the safest route. Use alternative routes only as necessary.
- Use buses. Consider other modes of transportation only if buses are unable to get to the school quickly or are not available. Refer to the list of school-owned vehicles, staff vehicles and parent vehicles that are available.

Other Considerations for Special Needs Populations

- Store extra batteries for electric wheelchairs and hearing aids.
- Lead evacuees to a safe place with other teachers and staff.
- Remain with the special needs student after the evacuation.
- Recognize that the fine details are unique to each student.