

September 2023

Critical Response Procedures - Information for Parents and Guardians

Providing a Catholic-infused Education is one of the many vital roles that Elk Island Catholic Schools (EICS) plays in our communities; another is keeping students safe. As we know, the unexpected can happen at any moment.

Student safety is an integral part of our operations, as creating a safe and caring environment is a vital prerequisite to learning. Should an emergency occur, our priority will be the safety and security of our students and staff.

EICS has a comprehensive Critical Response Plan that outlines steps schools will take to handle a wide range of emergency situations that may affect our school communities. This Critical Response Plan is tailor-made to suit the distinctive needs and resources of each of our schools, while seamlessly integrating with local emergency responders.

All EICS schools have an on-site critical response team composed of school staff. Throughout the year, EICS schools conduct training and practice emergency drills and procedures. These exercises not only prepare our students and staff to respond promptly and appropriately but also serve to alleviate anxiety among our students in the event of a real emergency.

Our EICS central critical response team is available to offer support to schools when emergencies arise. While the precise actions taken during an emergency will naturally depend on the nature of the incident, our primary goal is safeguarding the welfare of our students and staff.

EICS works with local and provincial emergency responders to ensure our plans are coordinated with the appropriate agencies. Our critical response plans do not replace the authority of first responders, as they are specially trained to handle emergencies and extenuating circumstances.

In the event of an emergency, our school staff will work in full cooperation with these agencies and follow their advice – and EICS calls upon the parents and guardians of our students to do the same.

There may be a strong desire to call the school or your child's cell phone for an immediate update. Please refrain from doing so in the event of an emergency. The school phone lines and personnel need to be available to address the situation, and calling your child's cell phone could draw their attention away from the situation at hand. Likewise, do not arrive at the school during an emergency as your presence can complicate emergency responses.

Rest assured that we will communicate with parents as soon as possible and will also provide additional information regarding when and where your child can be picked up.

We encourage you to review key phrases and protocols that your child will learn at school during emergency response practice drills. In the event of an emergency, we will communicate with you as expeditiously as possible. However, our priority will be the safety and security of students and staff.

Thank you for your support and assistance.



Paul Corrigan
Superintendent

Keeping Safe

When a school has an emergency situation, there are several courses of action that may be taken, depending upon the specific details of the situation. A school may choose to take any or all of the following actions:

Shelter in Place

Shelter in Place is used during an environmental emergency, such as a severe storm, or chemical spill. During a Shelter in Place, students and staff relocate to safe zones for shelter or to control movement inside the building to help avoid an injury or hazard. This may include having students or staff who are outdoors come back into the school. Each school's critical response plan identifies the safest location for building occupants. Students will not be released or dismissed until the situation has been resolved.

Hold and Secure External / Internal

An External Hold and Secure occurs in response to security threats outside the school. All exterior doors to the school are locked and no one is permitted in or out of the building. Activities inside the school may continue as normal. Only law enforcement officers are granted entry to the school until the Hold and Secure has been resolved. Classes that are away from the building (e.g. field trips) are told not to return to the school the hold and secure is resolved.

An internal hold and secure is used for an **internal short term emergency** such as a medical overdose or a traumatic situation. In this case, students, staff, and visitors will remain in place until the short term medical emergency is resolved. Once resolved, the school will resume normal operations.

Lockdown

Lockdowns occur in response to acts or threats of violence that directly impact the school. This includes such activities in the general vicinity of the school. During a Lockdown all external and internal doors are locked, and no one is permitted in or out of any area. It is important for all students and staff to respond very quickly when a Lockdown is issued. Only law enforcement officers are granted entry until the Lockdown is cleared.

Evacuation

An Evacuation requires all students and staff to relocate away from the school building. This may mean going outside and away from the building until it is safe to re-enter, or in other cases students and staff may be required to go to an off-site location. Parents and guardians will be informed of the alternate location.

Dismissal

Under some circumstances, students may be Dismissed to their homes and families as expeditiously as possible. Should this be the case, every attempt will be made to alert each student's emergency contact. Young students will not be left unsupervised.