

# **Conecuh County Schools Safety Plan 2023-2024**

The Conecuh County School System incorporates the Crisis Planning model from the U. S. Department of Education, Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools.

Crisis management is a continuous process in which all phases of the plan are being reviewed and revised. *Good plans are never finished.*

The various stages are:

Mitigation/Prevention - designed to assess and address the safety and integrity of the school facilities and culture and climate to ensure a safe and healthy learning environment.

Preparedness – school officials identify and involve key stakeholders such as first responders and community partners and work to develop policies and protocols that mitigate and prevent threats identified in safety and security assessments and inspections.

Response – schools’ officials and community partner’s work together to activate the emergency management plan and effectively contain and resolve an emergency.

Recovery – schools work closely with community partners, government officials and other stakeholders to assist students and staff in the healing process and to help restore the learning environment.

Student and employee safety is the first concern of Conecuh County Schools. In the event of a crisis, natural disaster, or inclement weather situation, we want all parents and stakeholders to be assured that our top priority is the safety and security of all who are on our campuses.

## **HOW WE PREPARE**

Conecuh County Schools annually updates our emergency response procedures. These procedures provide our faculty, staff, and administrators specific instructions to respond to various events, including severe weather, natural disasters, or other crises that might occur in and around our schools. These procedures are used in annual safety and security training for all employees. In addition, we frequently conduct emergency response drills to practice and improve the effectiveness of our response to various situations.

Members of local law enforcement agencies regularly train in our schools and maintain access that enables them to respond without delay in any situation. We meet annually with city and county officials and other agencies that assist our school system in emergencies.

The school system maintains an active crisis response team which includes administrators,

licensed professional counselors, law enforcement, fire and medical emergency responders, city leaders and other individuals who are always ready to respond. Activation of the crisis response team occurs whenever a school needs additional support.

## **HOW YOU CAN PREPARE**

During any crisis, natural disaster, or severe weather situation, we will provide information to parents and stakeholders as quickly as possible after the situation is contained. Conecuh County Schools has implemented School Status, a mass notification service that enables us to contact parents and guardians by telephone. To ensure you receive these important messages, promptly notify your child's school of any updates or changes to your family's contact information. School Status may also be used by school groups and athletic teams to send out important information.

The following are terms and descriptions that we use with our students and staff during emergencies:

### **1. Shelter In Place**

This phrase might be used, for example, during severe weather or a hazardous material incident. A tornado warning requires students to take shelter in an inner hallway or room and stay there until the threat has passed. These areas have been reviewed and approved by the Conecuh County Emergency Management Agency. During a shelter-in-place emergency, doors are closed to the public and school operations (such as student checkout) are suspended until the threat has passed.

### **2. Secured Perimeter**

This term is used when we are notified of a potential threat in the vicinity of the school. If a secured perimeter is needed, normal classroom activities will continue with restricted entry and limited, supervised movement within buildings. Parents and guardians are asked to stay away from campus during a secured perimeter to avoid entering a potential threat area. Entries and exits are monitored during this type of situation; students will not be released to leave the building until we receive an all-clear by the appropriate agency.

### **3. Lockdown**

A lockdown takes place if a threat or possible threat is identified inside the school or on the campus. Instruction and all student movement has ceased. All exterior and interior doors are locked and students are secured in their classrooms. No one (except appropriate emergency response personnel) will be allowed to enter or leave the building/campus to avoid hindering emergency response teams arriving at the school. In the event of a lockdown, parents should monitor local radio and school websites for information about any possible evacuation of the building and parent reunification.

#### **4. Parent Reunification**

When students have been evacuated from a school or when an emergency has occurred that affects the location of dismissal, a parent reunification area will be established. At this location, parents will be updated concerning the situation and the plans for reunification with their child(ren). As with any other school day, a student may only be released to an adult who is listed as an emergency contact on school records, so be sure to keep that list updated. Anyone attempting to pick up a student must show proper photo identification. In cases where students will be released from the school, students who have obtained a parking permit will be able to sign themselves out at the time of the release.

Inclement Weather and School Closings

Emergency Closing Procedures

#### **NOTIFICATION PROCEDURES:**

In the event of inclement weather, you should assume that school will open as usual but begin monitoring the news outlets and our website.

Advance Notice: Only when the evidence of severe weather predictions is clear, such as ice or snow, will we make announcements of school closings or delays a day in advance.

In the event that the Superintendent determines that closing schools is the appropriate course of action, the Public Relations Supervisor will immediately begin alerting parents and the public using the following methods.

#### **SUMMARY OF NOTIFICATION METHODS**

In the event of a delayed start, cancellation, or early dismissal we will also issue phone notifications to the families of enrolled students via School Status. Due to high call volumes in our area during such events these calls may take a longer or shorter time to process. Therefore, families should not rely solely on receiving a call, but should also monitor the media and check our website for information.

Media Outlets – TV, Radio, Newspaper, Conecuh County Website, Facebook

School Status phone call

The following media outlets will be notified first:

TV Stations

WSFA 12 Montgomery

WKRG 5 Mobile

WEAR 3 Pensacola

Radio Stations

WPPG 101.1 FM

We will make every effort to post closing/delay/early dismissal information on the homepage of our website as soon as possible. (Refresh your browser frequently to obtain any newly posted information. In addition, if you use a search engine such as Google to locate the Conecuh County Schools' homepage – [www.conecuh.k12.al.us](http://www.conecuh.k12.al.us) – be sure to include "Alabama" in your search.)

Please do not call the schools, the Transportation Department, or the Central Office.

Most schools and departments have limited phone lines. If schools are in session and the weather is getting bad, it is important that we be able to keep them open for emergencies. If it is still very early in the morning, it is unlikely that there are staff members manning the telephones

#### **DECISION-MAKING PROCESS AND PROCEDURES:**

The decision to close or delay school opening is a very important one and is made only after thorough consideration. The following information is provided to help parents understand how the Conecuh County School System determines whether or not to hold school on bad weather days. Please keep in mind that the school district covers many square miles and weather conditions may vary across the system. We realize that there is no perfect decision for everyone. We hope that this explanation helps you understand our process.

The County's procedure for closing schools is as follows:

We closely monitor weather reports from NOAA as well as the major television and radio stations.

We are in contact with local police and the Conecuh County sheriff's department as needed.

We are in contact with neighboring school districts.

We are in contact with Conecuh County EMA.

This input is provided to the Superintendent and her leadership team to make a decision to close or not and then begin to inform employees, students, parents and the various media outlets.

The Superintendent and staff members advising considers several factors:

Road safety of students and staff and ability of school buses to travel safely

Whether utility services are affected such as electric power and gas.

Some young students may not have adult supervision during the day if school is closed.

Other students may not have a warm place to stay during the day.

It is sometimes necessary to monitor weather predictions up to a few hours before school is scheduled to begin. If the information to make a decision is not reliable during the school day then the following procedures are used: If/when the Superintendent makes the decision to close schools, all notification procedures are put into place between 5:30 and 6:00 a.m.

Administrative personnel begin driving roads and major arteries at approximately 3:00 a.m. to determine the degree of iciness and road safety.

At approximately 4:30 a.m., the Transportation Director will contact the Superintendent and his leadership team to discuss the conditions throughout the district, with special emphasis on areas traveled by school buses.

At this time, the Superintendent will determine if more data is needed before the decision is made whether or not to open school.

Other conditions such as heating capabilities may influence the decision.

If schools must be closed, the school day must be made up later in the year on one of the dates designated as an "inclement weather" day.

## **DELAYED OPENINGS**

While delayed openings are rare, the above procedures will be followed but with a designation of being a "Delayed Opening" with the time delay noted.

Considerations for Delaying School Openings:

Visibility during pre-dawn hours. The delay helps avoid the limited visibility during pre-dawn hours which is when buses normally start their routes. This limited visibility can impair a bus driver's ability to see ice patches.

Identifying and locating icy road conditions. The delay allows county crews to locate and apply sand to icy patches.

Assessing traffic conditions. The delay can mean that traffic conditions are more relaxed and allow for safer travel.

## **EARLY/DELAYED DISMISSALS**

Early/Delayed dismissals system-wide and by individual schools can occur because of impending fast approaching weather such as ice, snow, severe thunderstorms, tornado warnings or by some type of facility failure such as a water main break or power failure. Utilizing all the resources mentioned above such a determination may be made by the Superintendent. Every effort will be made to notify parents utilizing the media listed above. In addition, schools will use their list to serve email systems to alert parents. Students will remain under school system supervision until safely transported or picked up by a parent or guardian.

## **\*MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS**

Conecuh County Schools provided an Annual Youth Mental Health First Aid Training for all employees during the school year. Employees will be provided training during a scheduled professional development session. Conecuh County Schools also employed a Mental Health Services Coordinator to assist the district with increasing mental health awareness and incorporate mental health initiatives district-wide. Conecuh County Schools have four School Social Workers (two of which split between two schools) to help build awareness and skills by providing social-emotional support, crisis intervention, and counseling routinely.

## **SUMMARY**

Remember to keep your contact information updated with your child's school, and talk with your children about the importance of all safety drills at school. By preparing now, we can all work together to ensure that our students are protected for learning without limits.

In addition to this document we also use our Student Code of Conduct Many items of Safety and security are addressed in our Conecuh County Schools "Student Code of Conduct "