

Friday, November 8, 2024



Reunification After a School Incident: Strategies for safe and effective reconnection



Ara Bagdasarian
Founder, ZeroNow



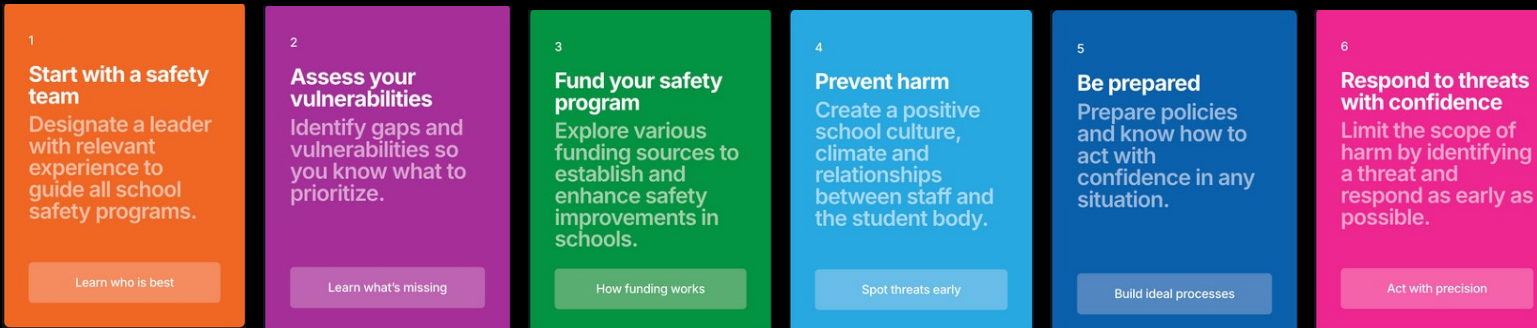
Rick Francis
Chief, Department of School Safety at Seminole
County Sheriff's Office, FL



The path to safer
schools.

Reunification





7

Recovery, reunify, resolve

The conclusion of an incident results in the reunification of families in a safe and strategic location.

Connect with community





Together,
we will make
schools safer
for good.

Chief Rick Francis

Seminole County Sheriff's Office



School Safety



Introduction





School Safety

Look at school safety from a different lens

- Law Enforcement (law enforcement executive administration , professional development, school safety & security, watch commander, specialized services, domestic security, investigations~(general assignment & major crimes, and patrol)
- Executive Finance Management
- Tactical (SWAT, sniper, team leader)
- Emergency Management (High-Risk Incident Commander, EM Executive Team)
- Military Flight & Combat Medic
- Education / Professor
- K-12 School Administration
- School Safety Consultant





School Safety

Following the conclusion of this session, participants will have a working knowledge and understanding of:

- Large Scale K-12 Family Reunification
- Planning
- Various integral functions
- Best practices/lessons learned
- Recovery
- Technology



School Safety

We are responsible for the most vulnerable





School Safety

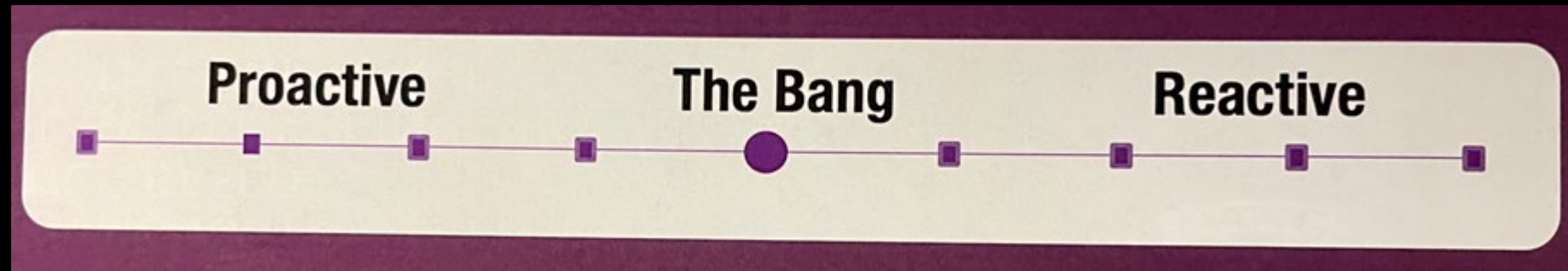
Far too many schools/districts are just checking the box when it comes to school safety & security and/or having the wrong individuals involved.





School Safety

Left of Bang





School Safety

Your body can't go where your mind hasn't





School Safety

The Not-So-Perfect Day

Simultaneous attacks in your school district (for example, three elementary schools hit simultaneously with heavy losses)

- Complex incidents
- Catastrophic drain on resources
- Financial impacts
- Psychological and health issues
- Lasting long-term side effects

* The standard you should plan for

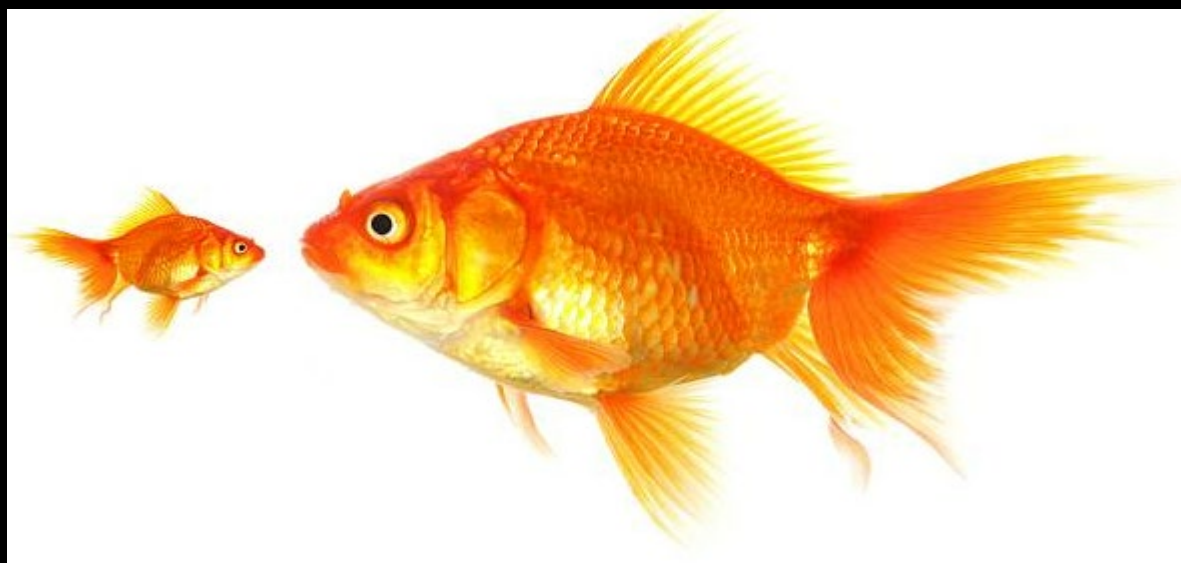






School Safety

Small scale reunification
vs
Large scale reunification





School Safety

*Recovery starts when the crisis begins. Reunification is the **FIRST** step*



School Safety

Most school district reunification plans

- Almost non-existent
- Move students to another school
- Do not use technology
- Lack of real-time accountability
- Rely on administrators at each school to be SME
- Not tested
- It does not address developmental challenged individuals
- Most law enforcement agencies can't properly address it





School Safety

Reunification is the safe, orderly reunion of parents/guardians with their children because the school has been evacuated or closed.



School Safety

Priorities:

- ❖ Student and staff safety and wellbeing
- ❖ Student and staff location and condition
- ❖ Successfully starting the recovery process

Objectives:

- ❖ Every student, staff member, and visitor is accounted for
- ❖ Every student in the school's custody is successfully reunited with their parent or guardian

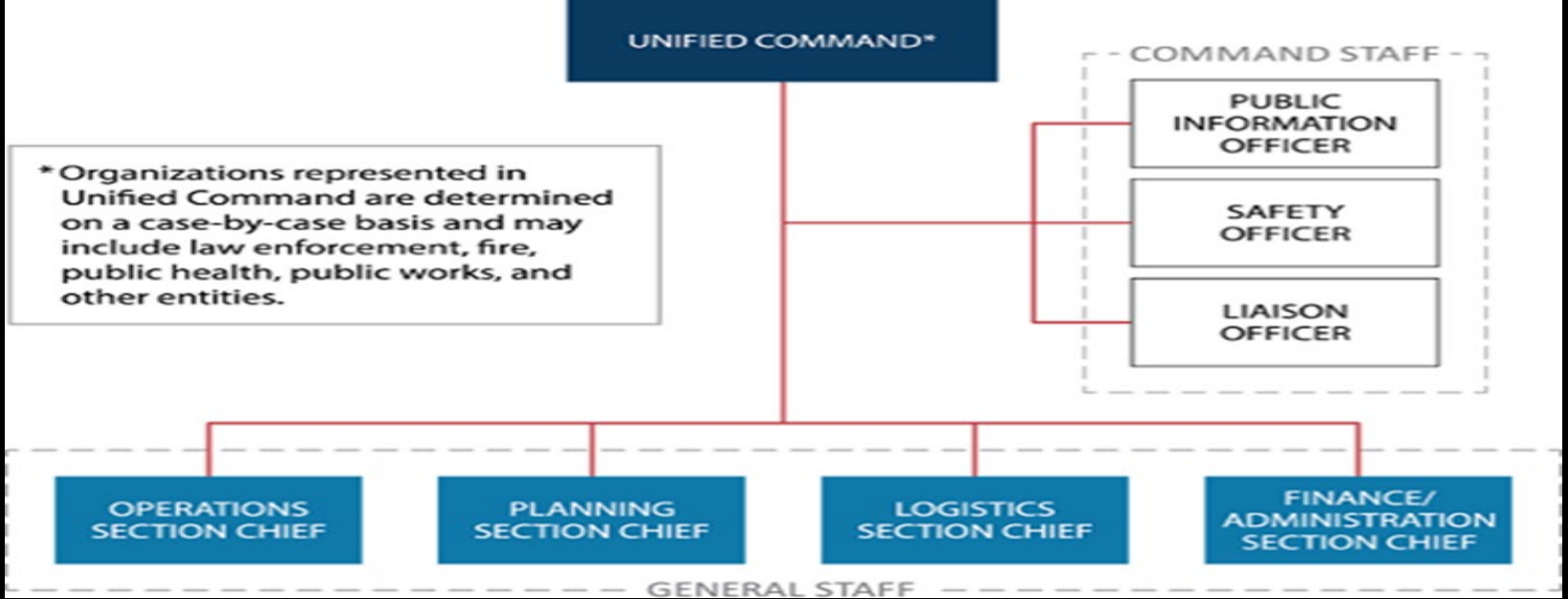




School Safety

Unified Command

Describes the authority structure during a critical incident where several agencies/organizations respond and coordinate for an effective response





School Safety

Family Reunification Center Incident Commander Needs to be a strong leader

Following critical event:

- Emergency Operations Center activated
- Determination to open FRC made
- Notifications made to prepare the site
- Transportation of students to the FRC coordinated
- Identify short and long-term goals
- Identify needed resources
- IC should hold a briefing
 - Synopsis of the incident
 - Set expectations
 - Security concerns
 - Procedures



School Safety

- School Incident Commander
- Secure Assembly Site
- Family Reunification Center (FRC)
- Family Assistance Center (FAC)
- District Reunification Team





School Safety

Reunification Site Selection- SIZE MATTERS

- Location
- Size
- Access
- Separation





School Safety

- Location Centrally located
Multiple sites for large districts
- Capacity Reunification sites must be large enough to accommodate not only the students and staff of your largest school but also their parents/guardians & media.
Sufficient parking
- Access Ability to control the perimeter (secure inner and outer)
Sufficient means of ingress/egress
Only allow parents/guardians into the site
- Separation The Quickest way for reunification to break down is the line of sight between parent and student before the time to reunify
Need enough space and rooms with enough separation to keep them apart/
take into account privacy
Multiple buildings in close proximity are ideal



School Safety

Seminole County

- ✓ Use three faith-based establishments (1 primary / 2 alternates)
- ✓ Location is not disclosed (only need to know)
- ✓ 24/7 access
- ✓ Direct means to get the District Reunification Team to the site
- ✓ Preset everything (maps, assets needed, kits, team, access, etc.)
- ✓ Once activated-send an advanced party to the site (sweep, secure, and setup)
- ✓ Start moving students to the site, then notify parents
- ✓ MOU- Memorandum of Understanding with the site owners to use the property. Should specify the scope of use, access, duration, clean-up, property loss mitigation, student privacy, etc.

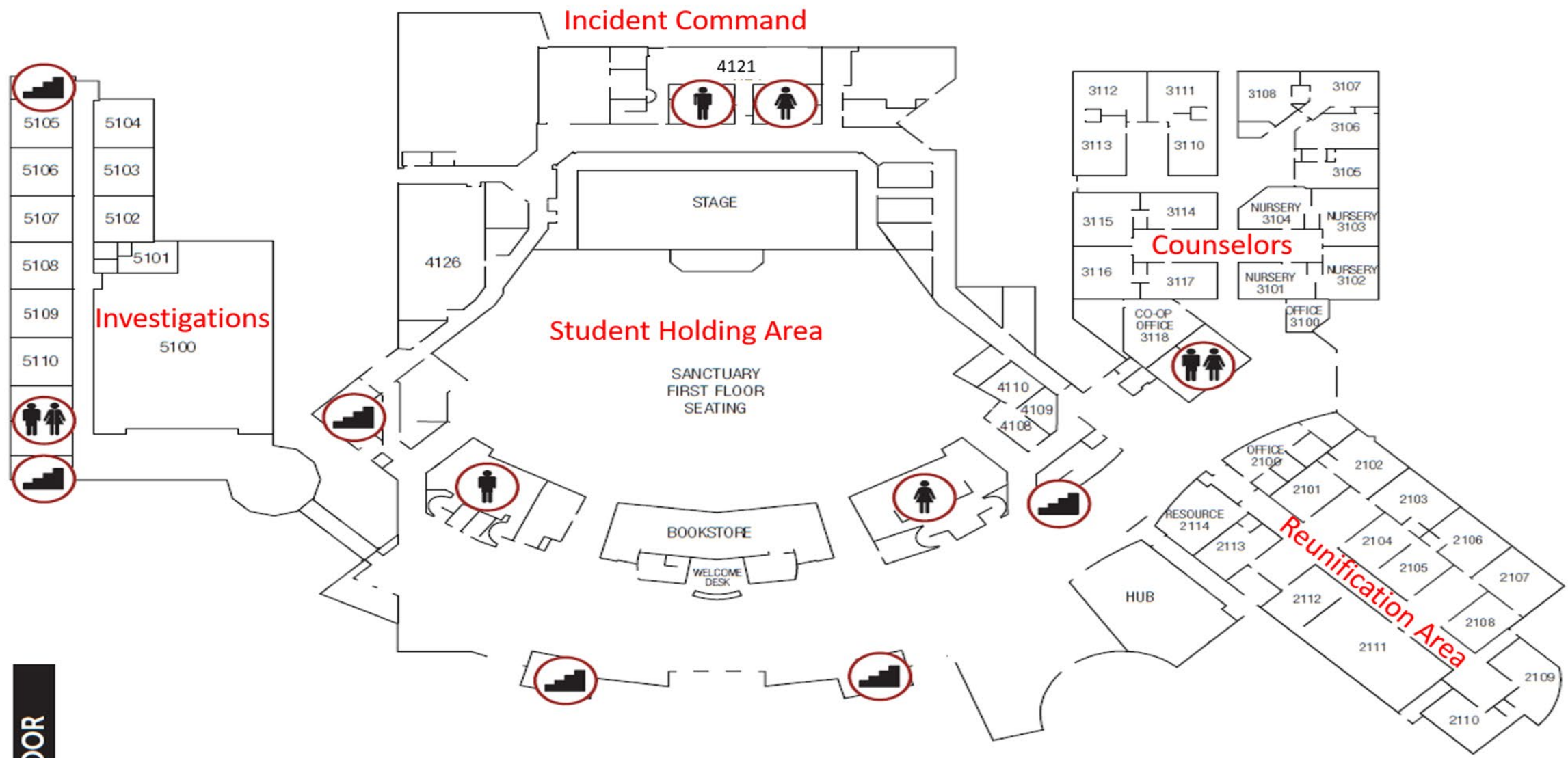
School Safety

Room considerations

- Command location
- Student holding
- Parent waiting
- Reunification room
- Interview rooms (investigations & tech)
- Counselor rooms
- Notification rooms
- Law enforcement break room (out of sight)



FIRST FLOOR

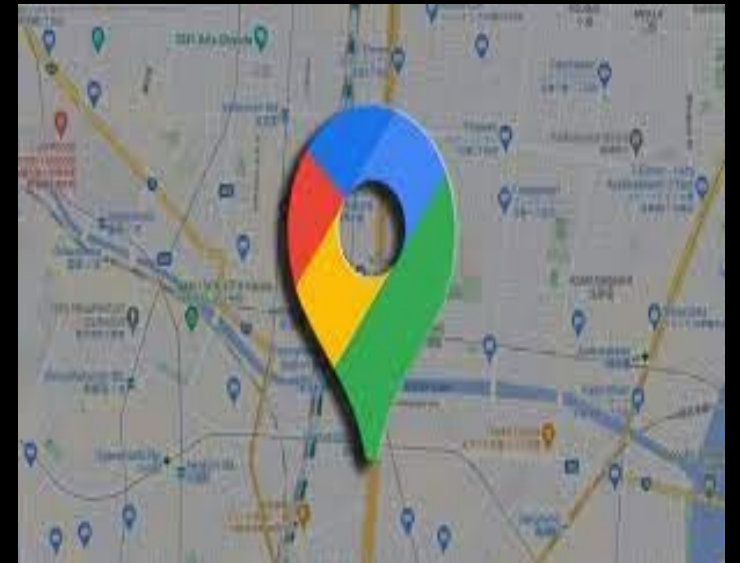




School Safety

Map Checklist

- Ingress/Egress routes (students, parents, staff)
- Incident Command Post
- Media
- Parking
- Message boards
- LEO traffic post/roadblocks
- Parent check-in
- Bus drop off
- Security inner/outer post/perimeter



Note: The site should remain confidential, secured, rendered safe with several layers of protection

School Safety

Personnel Resources

- ✓ Incident Commander (unified)
- ✓ District reunification team
- ✓ Crisis Team
- ✓ Victim Advocates
- ✓ Domestic Security (investigators/crime analysts)
- ✓ Investigators/Detectives
- ✓ Law Enforcement
- ✓ Fire Rescue
- ✓ Site coordinator
- ✓ SWAT (over-watch)
- ✓ Citizens on Patrol / Uniform patrol
- ✓ PIO (joint information center)
- ✓ Information technology
- ✓ Digital Forensic Investigator
- ✓ School Executive



School Safety

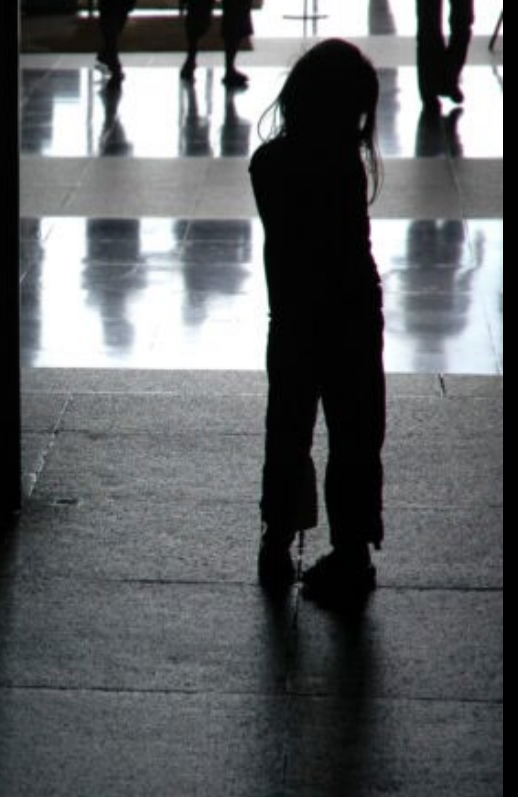
- ✓ Transportation
- ✓ Traffic control
- ✓ Message boards
- ✓ Emergency Management
- ✓ Child welfare
- ✓ Health department
- ✓ Counselors
- ✓ Medical
- ✓ Investigative contingencies
- ✓ IT support (Wi-Fi, Printers)
- ✓ K9 (detection)



School Safety

Reunification Kits

- Signage/signboard
- Traffic cones
- Check-in forms
- Lanyards with assignment cards
- Checklists for coordinators
- Caution tape
- Pens/clipboards
- Tissues
- Paper/coloring books
- Markers/colored pencils
- Movies
- Wi-Fi hotspots/tablets
- Cellular and tablet chargers
- Extension cords
- Printers/laptops with access to Skyward/Focus
- Stress balls (tip line, Mental Health and Suicide prevention)
- Colored bracelets for students/parents





School Safety

Reunification Process

Decision for Reunification Unified Command



School Safety

Reunification Team Mobilization



School Safety

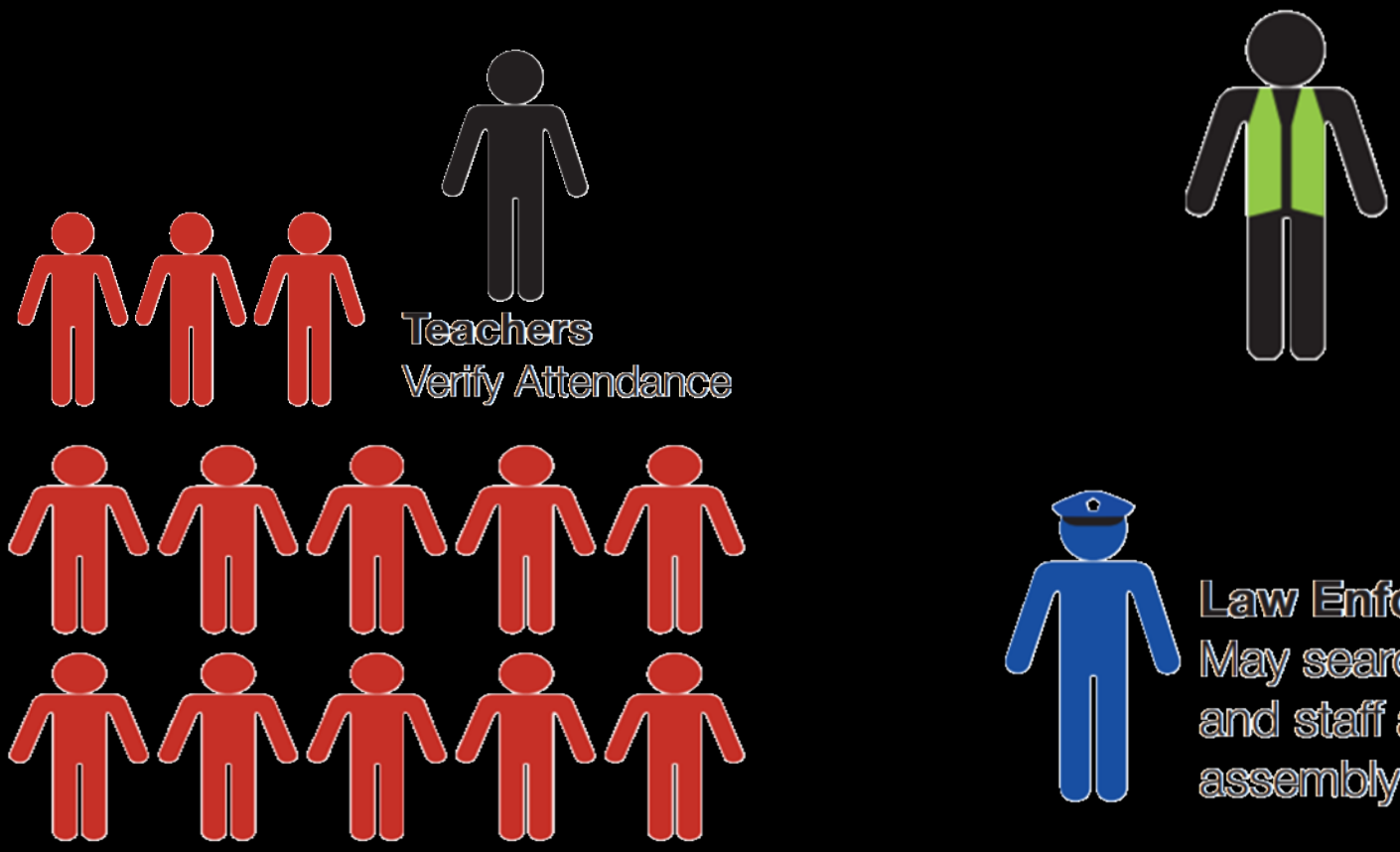
Classroom Evacuation





School Safety

Secure Assembly Site



Teachers
Verify Attendance

Law Enforcement
May search students
and staff at the
assembly area.



School Safety

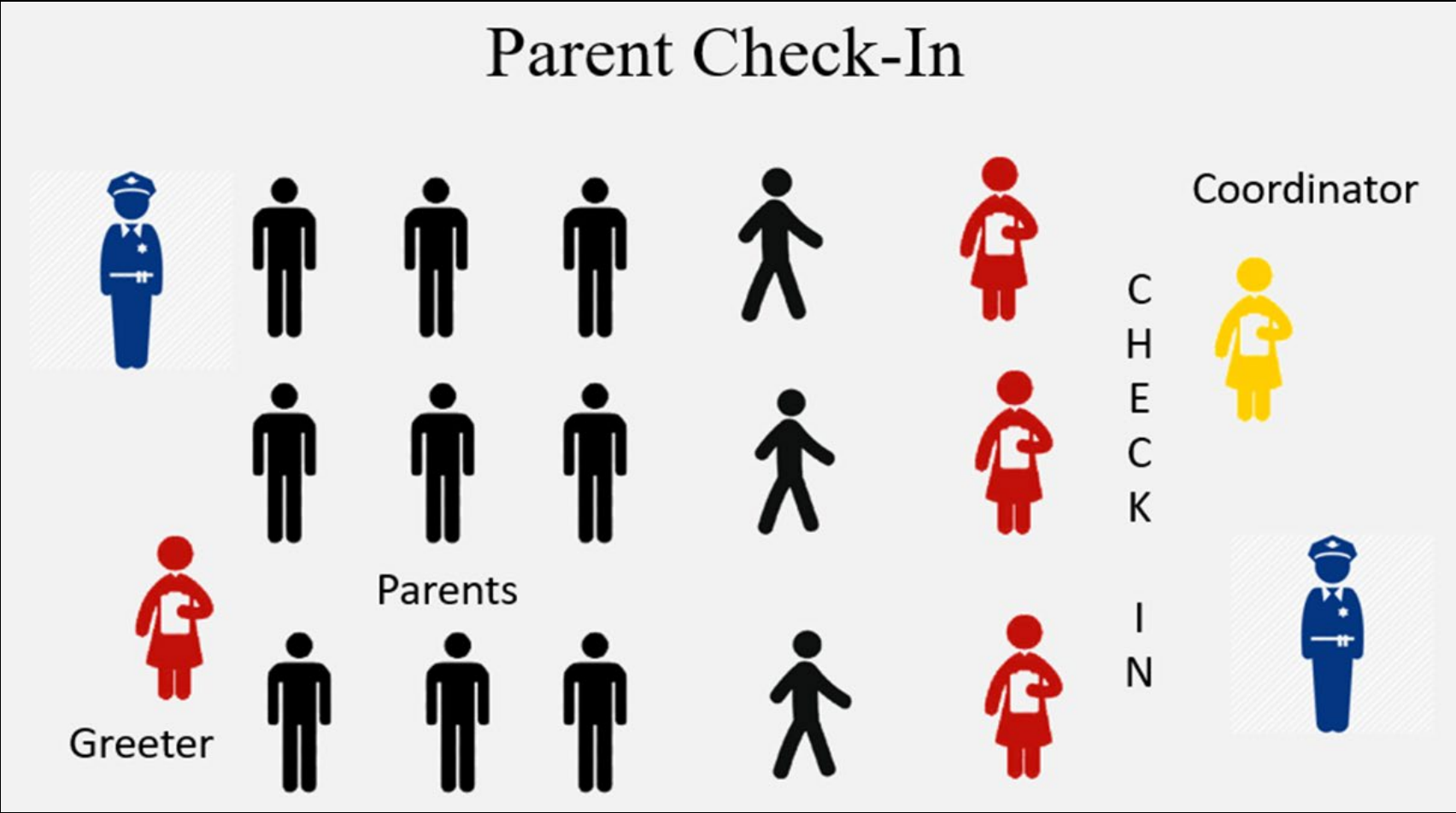
Student & Staff Transportation



nt
nts

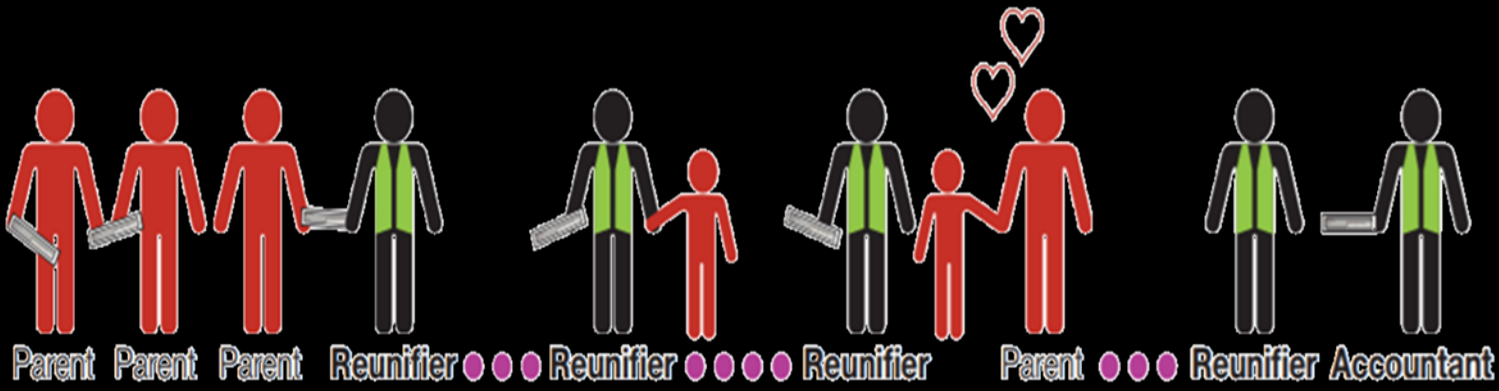


School Safety





School Safety

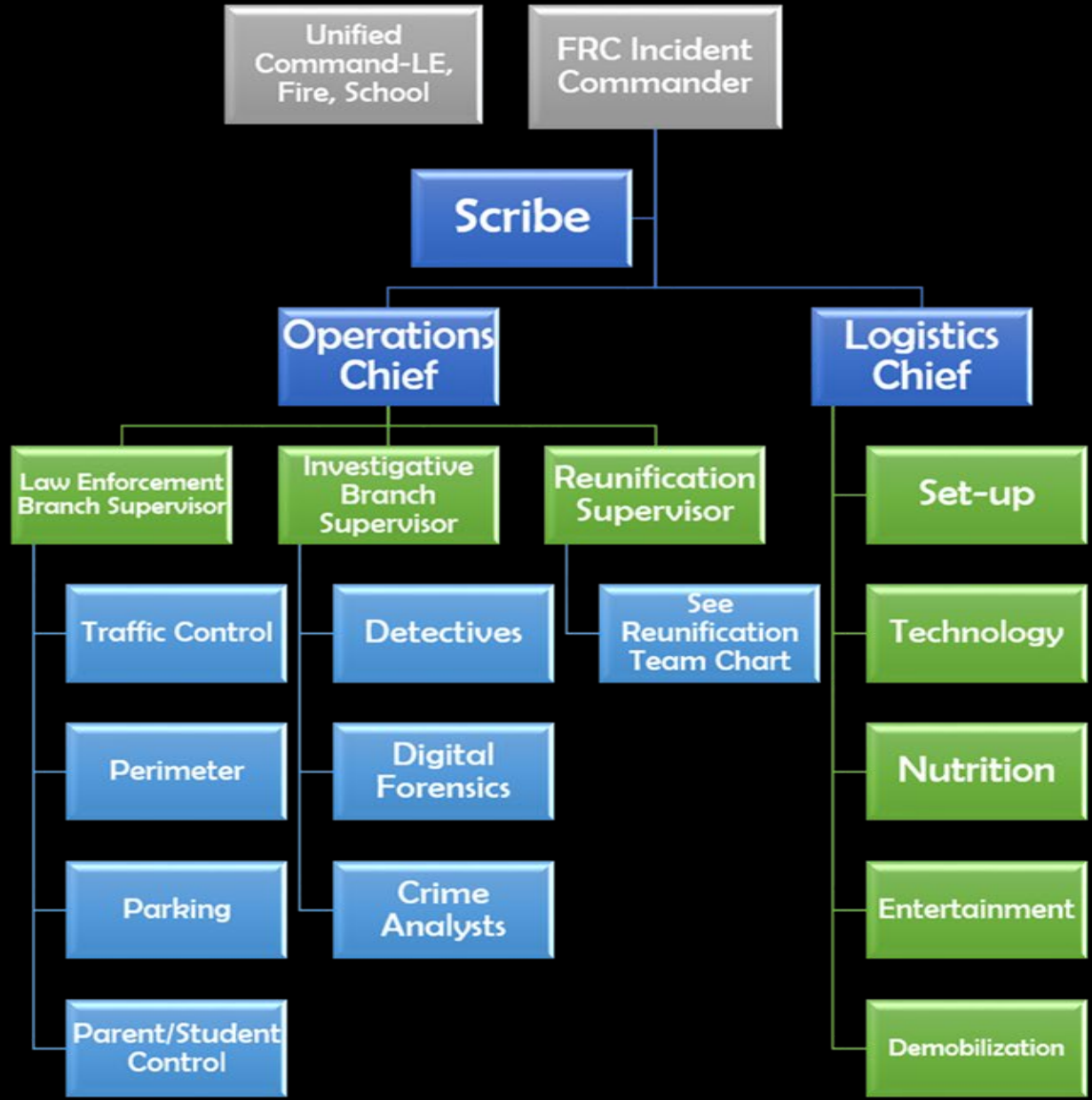




School Safety

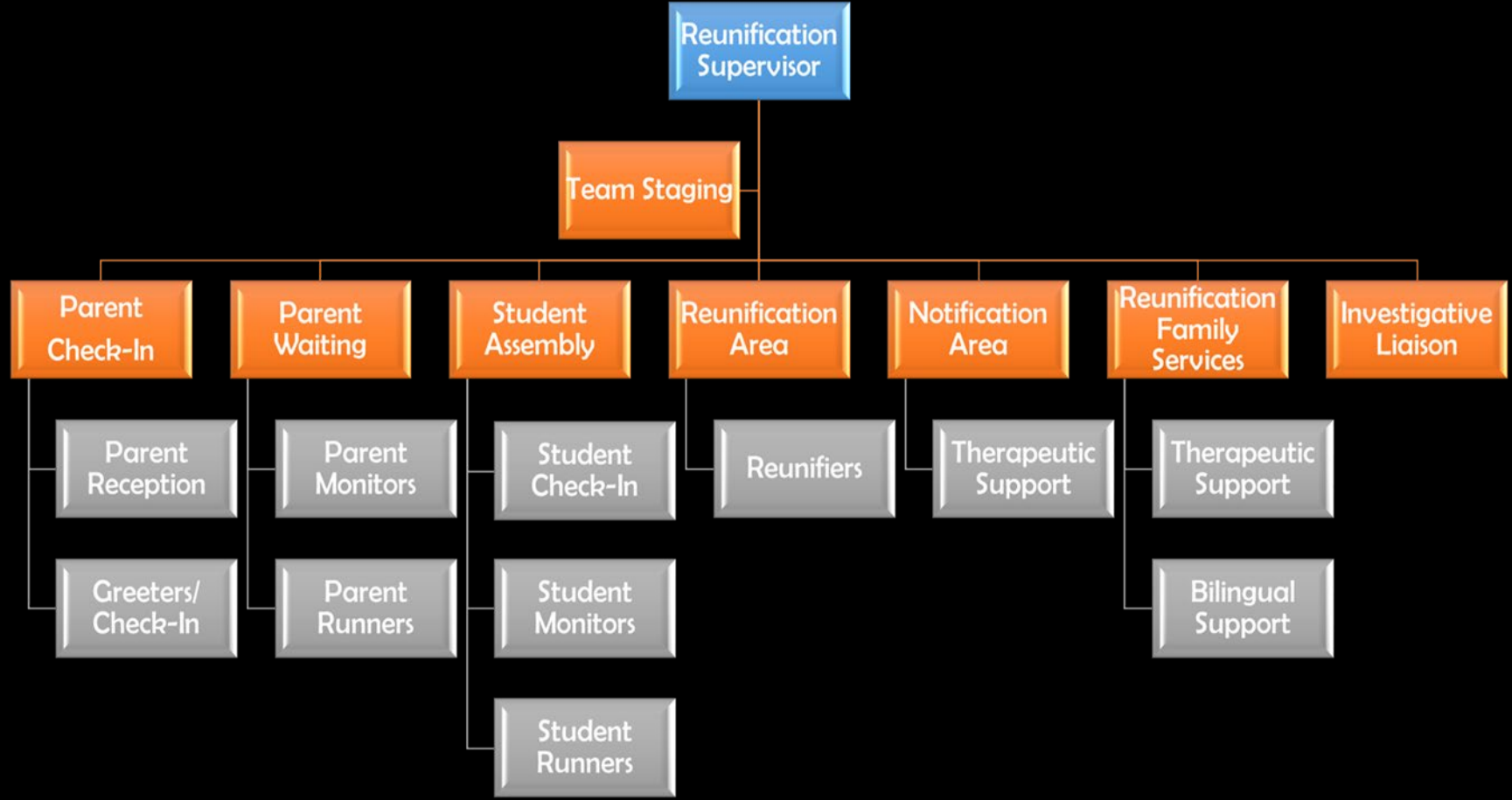
Family Reunification Center Incident Commander







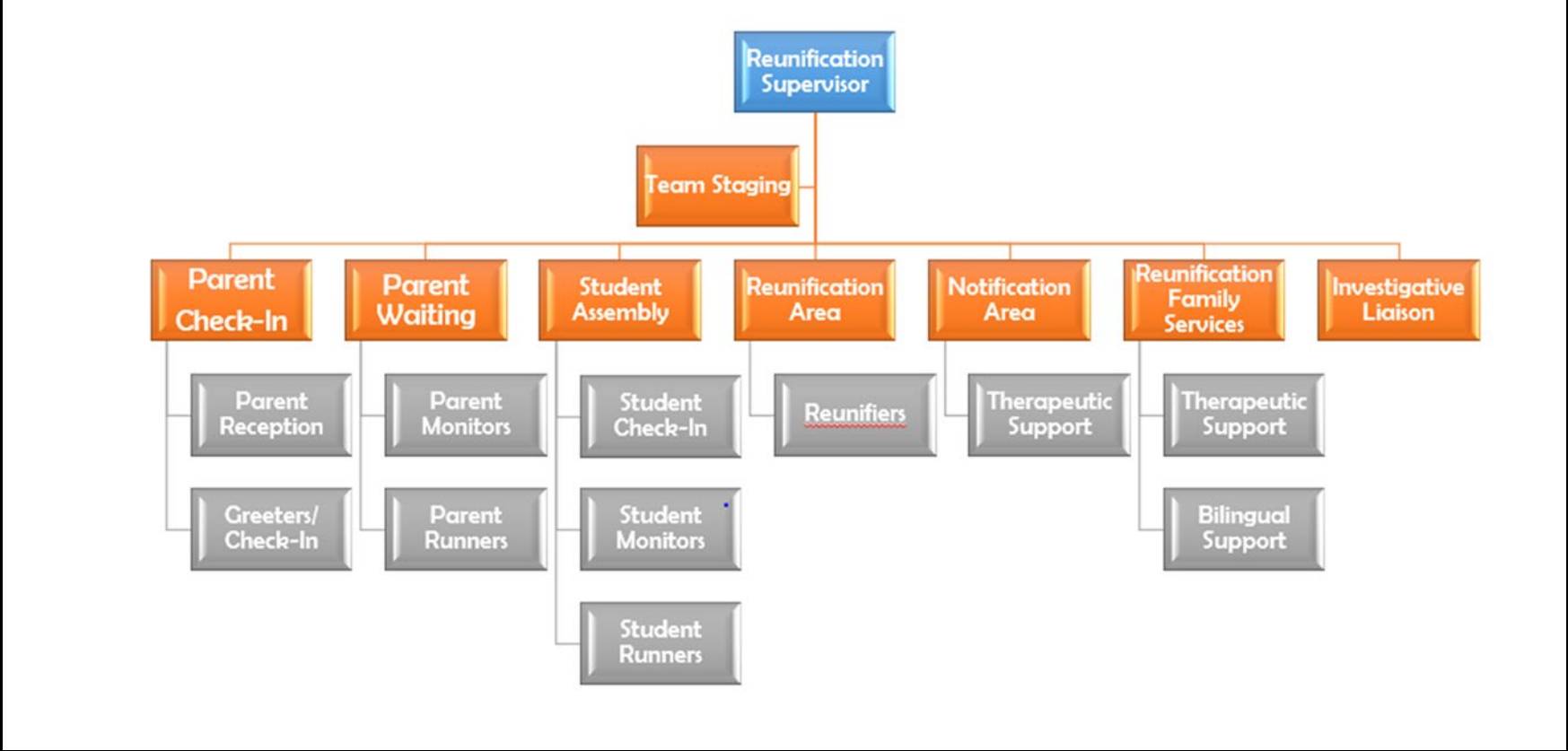
School Safety





School Safety

Parent Check In



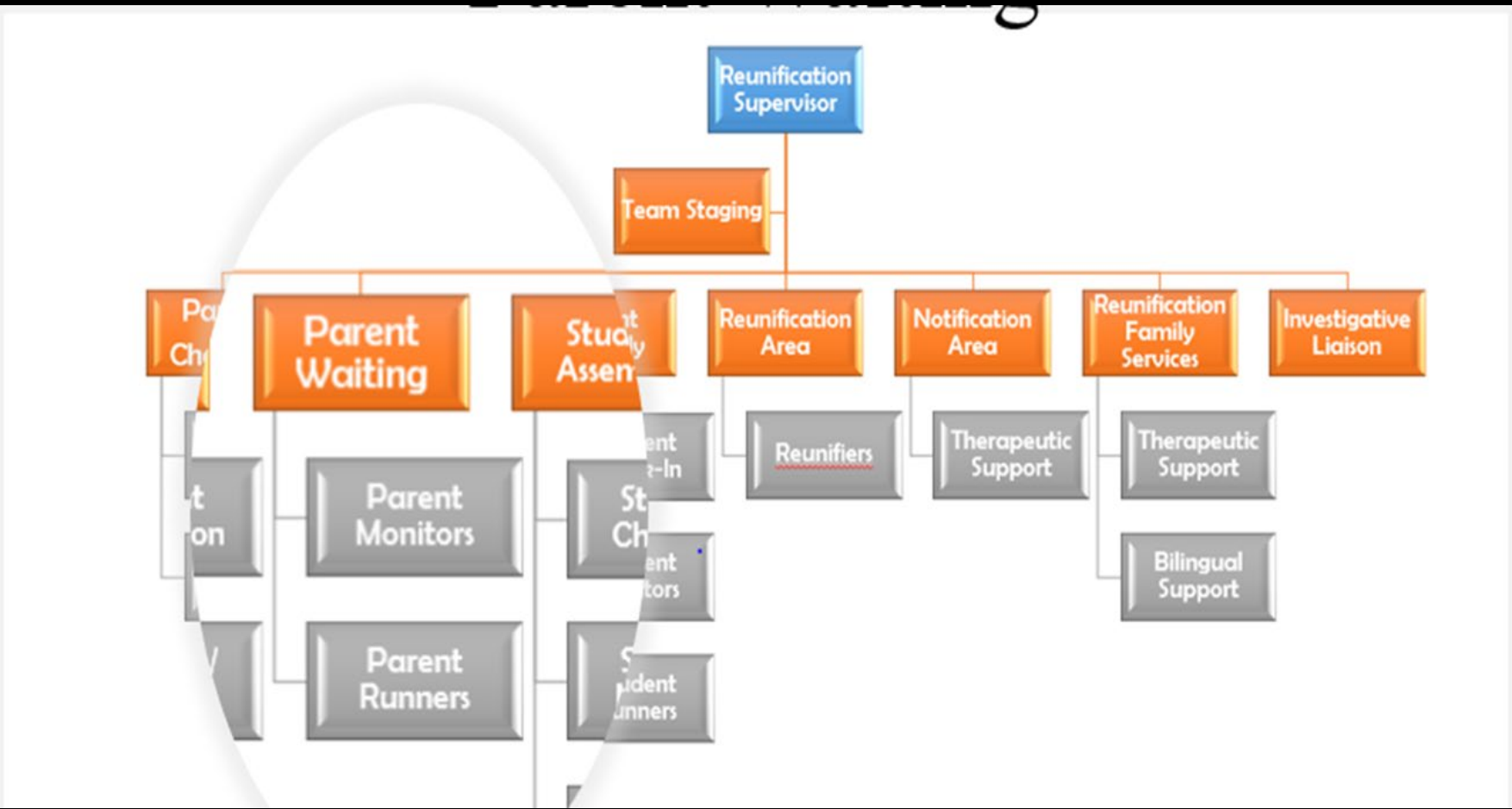
School Safety





School Safety

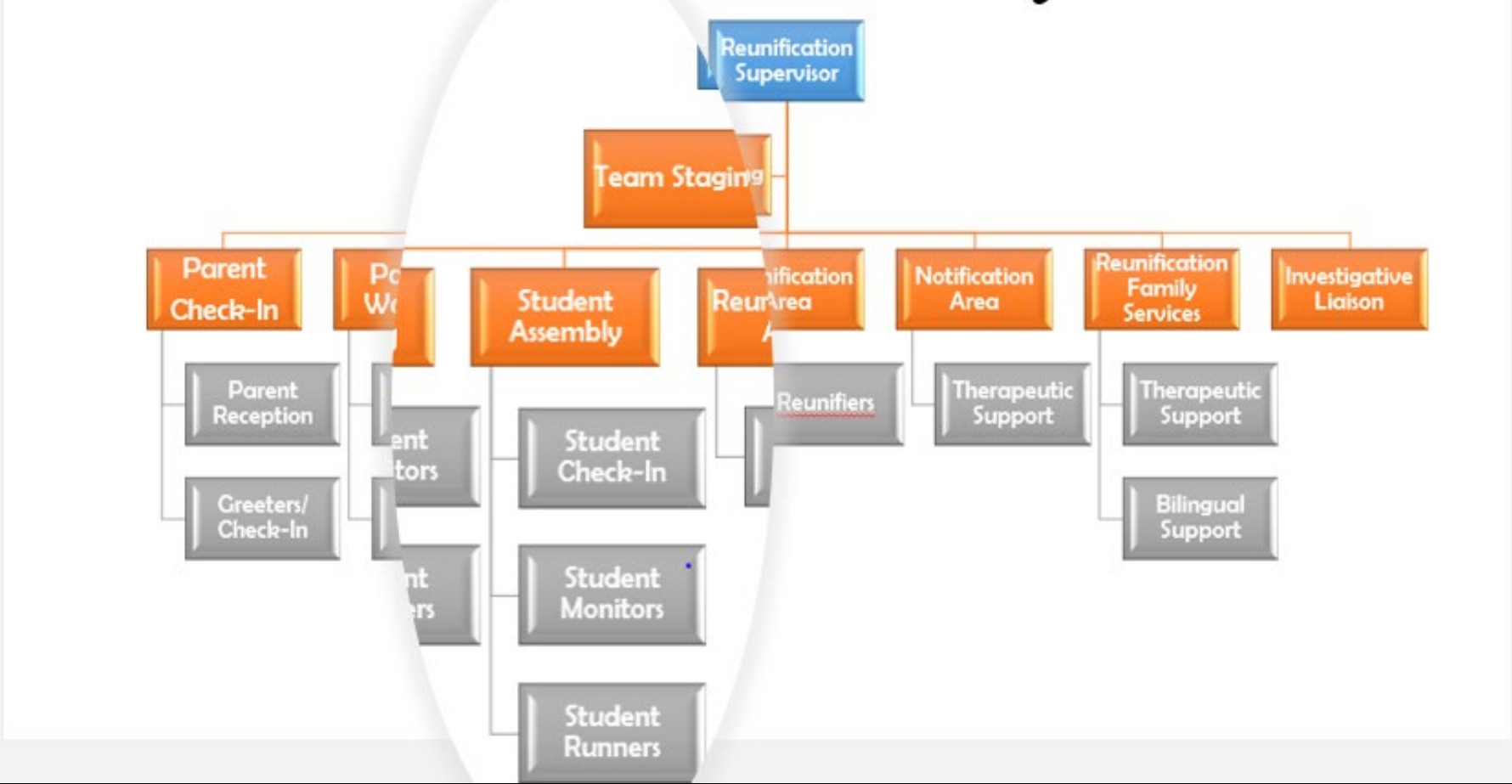
Parent waiting





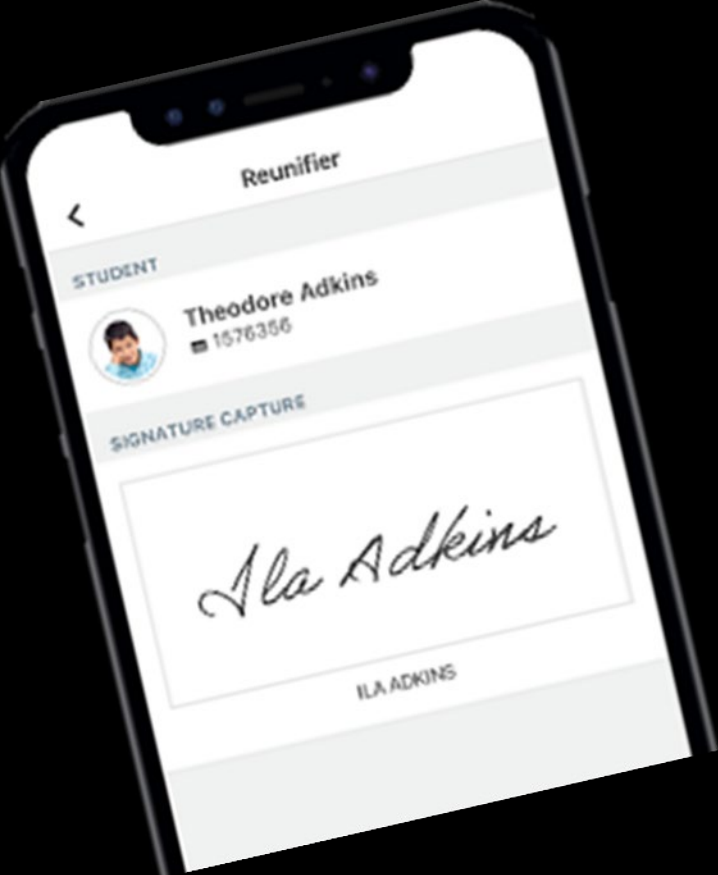
School Safety

Student Assembly



School Safety

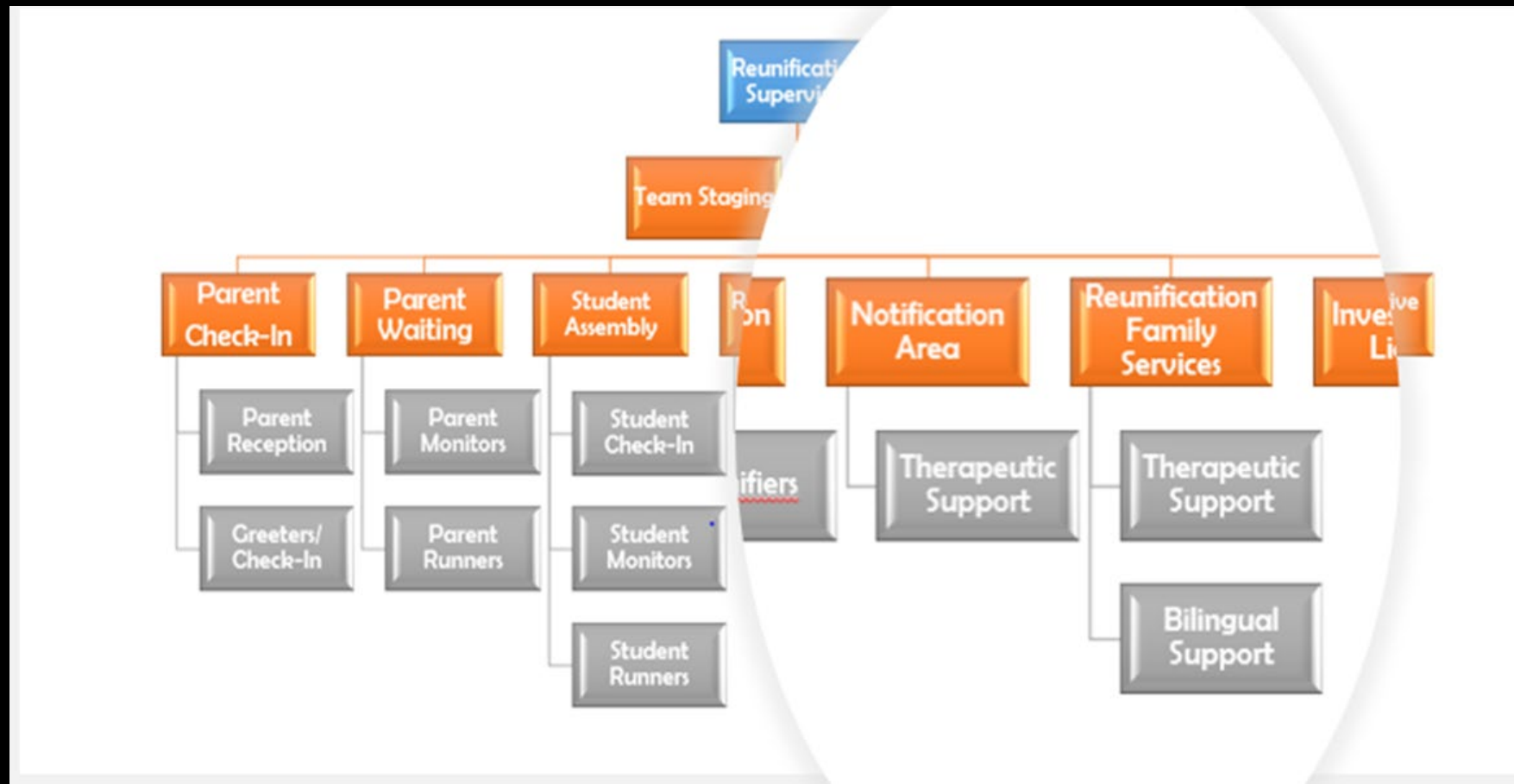
Reunification Area





School Safety

Family Services



School Safety

Team Staging



Investigative Liaison

School Safety

Notification Area

- Reserved for injury and death notifications
- Should be isolated from the Parent Waiting Area and have a private exit
- Collaborative conversations before an incident between law enforcement and school district mental health
- Notifications are made with a LE Detective, Victim Advocate, and Department of Health





School Safety



Investigation

- A criminal incident in nature requiring a reunification will also result in a criminal investigation
- Will be run by law enforcement- Investigative Branch
- Reunification team- The Investigative Liaison will be the district team member that will work with the law enforcement investigative group
- Assist in providing school-based info on students
- Responsible for the movement of students between student holding and interview rooms



School Safety

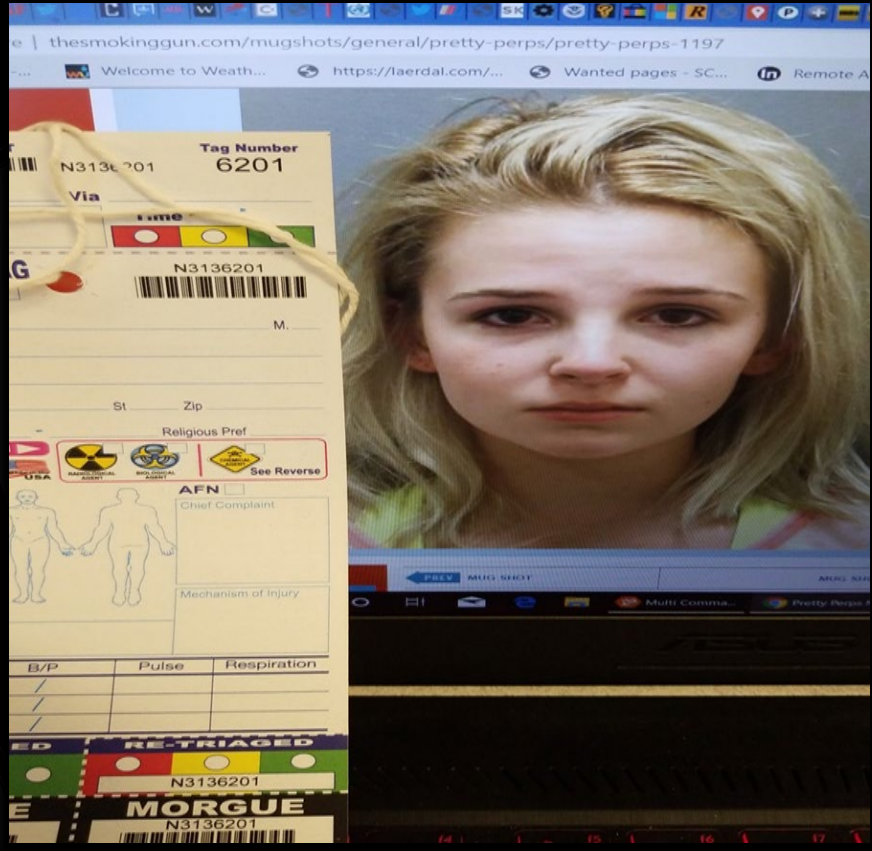
Investigation

- ✓ Can't treat it like an ordinary homicide
- ✓ The quick ID of victims
- ✓ Protect the integrity of the investigation and prosecution
- ✓ Access to student information
- ✓ Don't allow unnecessary access to the crime scene
- ✓ **Hand off from investigator to mental health**
- ✓ Students transported to the hospital



School Safety

Hospital Transports



A screenshot of the twiage EMS software interface. It displays three case cards for 'Sanford Demo Hospital'. The first card shows a 'STROKE ALERT' for a 45-year-old male with a face droop. The second card shows a 'CLOSED BY EMS' case for a 7-year-old female. The third card shows a 'CLOSED BY EMS' case for a 10-year-old male. The interface includes filters, a map, and a timeline section.



Primary Guardian:
 Michael Smith Sr.
 321-555-5555

Alert Info:

Note:

Second Phone:
 School Email:
 Student Access Login: 123456789

Third Phone:
 Home Email: MSmith1234@yahool.com
 Student Access Password:

Student Id: 123456789
 Internal Id:
 Status:

Birthday: 12/23/2006
 Age: 13
 Locker:
 Other Name:

Language: English
 Gender: Male
 Local Race:
 Federal Race: 123456789

Family 1

Guardian Name	Background Check	Relation	Phone	Email
Michael Smith Sr.	Y	Father	321-555-5555	MSmith1234@yahool.com

Sibling Name	Status	Grade	Entity
John Smith	Active	4	ABC Elementary

Emergency Contacts

Contact Name	Background Check	Relation	Phone	Email
Michael Smith Sr.	Y	Father	321-555-5555	MSmith1234@yahool.com
Sally Smith	Y	Mother	321-555-5555	SSmith1234@yahool.com

An American flag is shown on the left side of the slide, partially visible, with the stars and stripes clearly visible. The flag is set against a dark background.

School Safety

✓ Student Reunification

- Allows teachers to take attendance and register a student's status by instantly accessing active rosters by period
- Update student attendance and location information and sync to the database
- Allows teachers the ability to check students into campus safe zones
- Provides real-time attendance, location, and staff dashboards to district personnel

✓ Parent Reunification

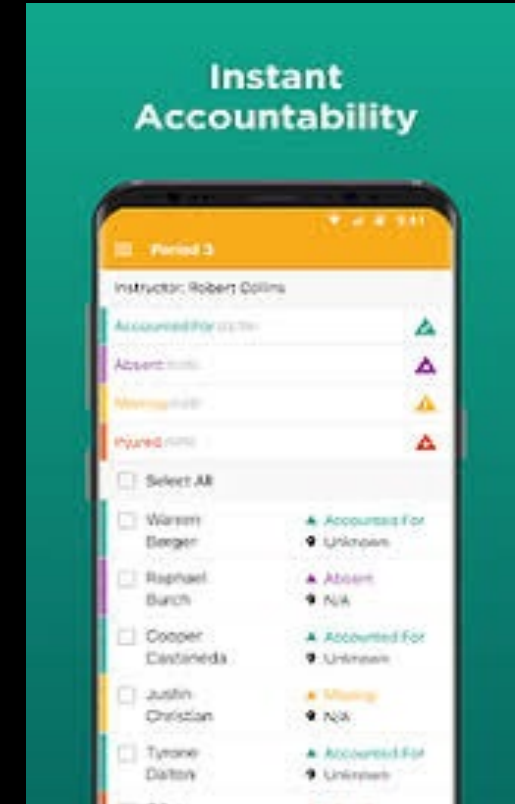
- Integrates with and maintains your school's SIS student emergency data
- Identifies the parents of evacuated students
- Reports on the entire student-parent reunification process

School Safety


Reunification

Seminole County Public Schools utilizes a digital emergency management reunification system.

It combines accepted best practices with mobile technology to provide emergency managers with a comprehensive solution.




School Safety



ACCOUNT FOR STAFF

9:41

< Back



Robert Collins
ID: 858756

VIEW ROSTER

STATUS
Accounted For 03:48pm by Robert Collins ▲

LOCATION
Unknown ?

MOBILE
279-282-0660 🗨️ 📞

OFFICE
279-282-0660 📞

ACCOUNT FOR STUDENTS

9:41

< Back

Instructor: Robert Collins

Unknown (25/25) ⚠️

Select All

- Theodore Adkins ▲ Unknown 📍 Unknown
- Tate Albert ▲ Unknown 📍 Unknown
- William Allen ▲ Unknown 📍 Unknown
- Ivan Allen ▲ Unknown 📍 Unknown
- Michael Anthony ▲ Unknown 📍 Unknown
- Jin Anthony ▲ Unknown 📍 Unknown

22 Selected ⚠️ 📍

ACCOUNT FOR CONTRACTORS & VOLUNTEERS

9:41

< Students/Staff/Others ☰

🔍 Search by First, Last or Full Name

- STUDENTS** **STAFF** **OTHERS**
- David Mitchell ➤
- Elizabeth Smith ➤
- John Mcdade ➤
- Michael Miller ➤

INCIDENT COMMANDER DASHBOARD

9:41

< Dashboards ☰

STATUS LOCATION USERS

FILTER BY: All ▼

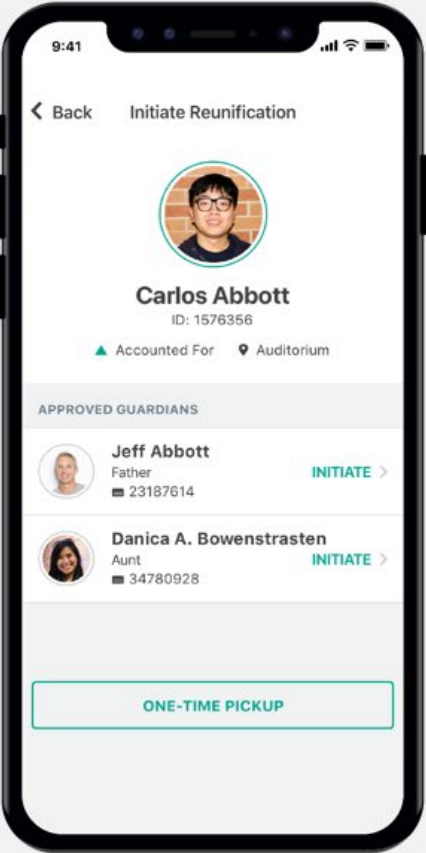
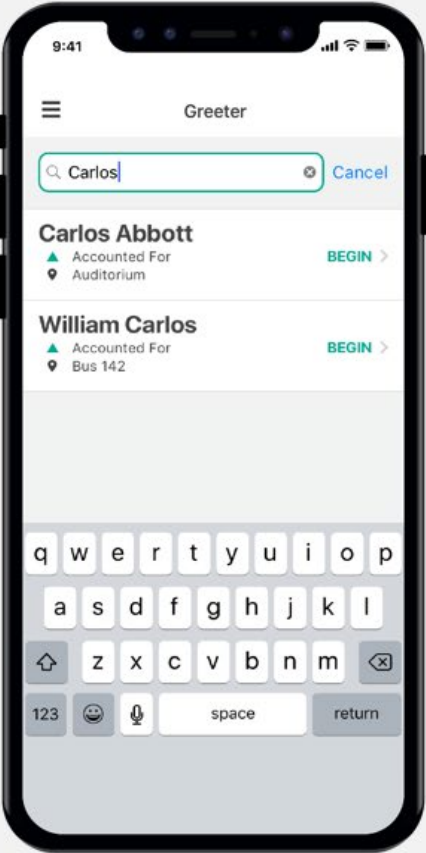
- Unknown (4/50) 8% ⚠️
- Absent (1/50) 2% ⚠️
- Accounted For (40/50) 80% ▲
- Injured (4/50) 8% ⚠️
- Missing (1/50) 2% ⚠️
- Released (0/50) 0% ▲
- Reunified (0/50) 0% ▲

🗨️

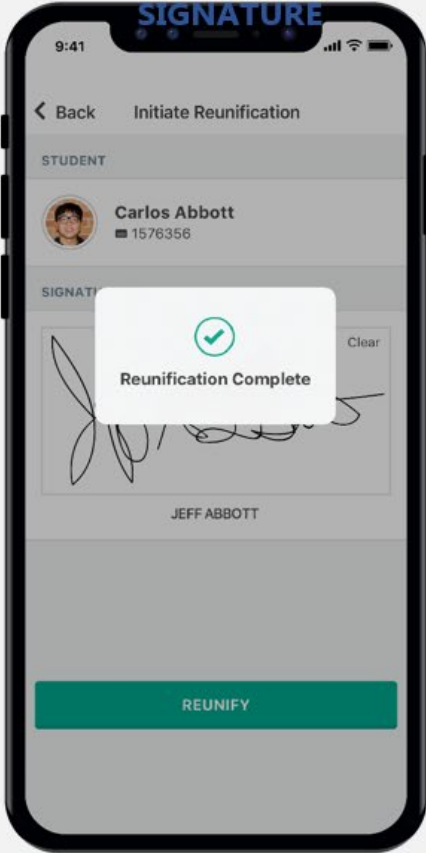
School Safety



CONFIRM ID MATCHES GUARDIAN LIST



CAPTURE APPROVED GUARDIANS SIGNATURE



School Safety



**ALWAYS
HAVE A
BACK UP**





School Safety



Reunification Information (PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY)

Have photo identification out and ready to show school district personnel.

Student Name: _____

Student Grade: _____ **Student Cell Phone #:** _____

Name of person picking up student: _____

Phone number of person picking student up: _____

Relationship to student being picked up: _____

Parent Completes:
Print Student Name Again _____
Student Grade _____
Student Birthday _____

School Personnel completes upon release of student

Time: _____ Initials _____ Other _____

School Safety

Developmentally challenged and/or special needs students

- Special needs students may not be able to participate in a traditional reunification process without causing additional stress or medical intervention
- Develop a plan to reunify on campus or close to campus and communicate directly with those parents
- Have a map or detailed information on the location of these student classrooms
- Develop specific emergency drills, go-bags, and procedures



School Safety

Other Considerations

- Law Enforcement parents
- Developmentally challenged
- Special needs
- Self-evacuation
- Students over 18
- Plan for personal items left behind



School Safety

Continued

- Real-time information sharing
- Language barriers
- Student pictures
- Citizen Information Line
- Family Liaison Officer/Deputy



School Safety

Continued

- The influx of national media
- Special interest groups
- Prior engagements with the suspect (e.g., prior threats)
- The incident scene and makeshift memorials
- Mental health follow-up (school staff & students)
- The recovery process
- Scene security (long term)
- Donations (e.g., National Compassion Fund)



School Safety

Full-Scale Exercise



The image shows a close-up, slightly angled view of the American flag, focusing on the blue field with white stars and the red and white stripes. The flag is set against a dark background.

School Safety

Lesson Learned FSE

- You must test your procedures
- Some things sound great on paper but do not work out in the real world
- Test digital and back-up method
- Great opportunity to induce stress in a controlled environment
- Emergency Management is a good resource for planning
- When you think you have enough runners, double the number
- Avoid narrow and congested areas
- Re-educate the role and responsibilities of the counselors
- IC should have a briefing with staff before parents/students start arriving
- Have resources at the reunification site capable of responding to non-English and sign-language parents/guardians
- Slow down the parent check-in process (having too many checkers/greeters and not enough student runners to support the volume)



School Safety

- Poorly run practice drills, resulting in lower confidence afterward (start small)
- The Incident Commander responsible for the reunification must be a true and strong leader
- Consider agreements to provide food and drinks
- Provide parents waiting for reunification with regular briefings
- Have control of the parent waiting area (not everyone is going to follow the script)
- Have a plan for students who fled the school (e.g., high school)
- *Student face sheets are incredibly effective and efficient*
- Plan for Murphy

School Safety

Best Practices

- Parent/Guardian notification is a priority
- Proper outer perimeter at impacted school (think big – e.g., 3-mile radius)
- Constant communication with all stakeholders (engaged PIO)
- Change of role of the Principal as the school's IC
- Utilize sites other than another school
- Primary, secondary, and optimally tertiary assignments for each role
- District team
- Drills and training
- Parent letter that sets expectations
- Account for special needs students
- Different plans for medical fragile & developmental students





School Safety



School Safety

Lessons Learned- Parkland

1. No clear direction or leadership by law enforcement/school district
2. Excessively delayed family reunification
3. No empathy
4. Impacted parents separated from their support group
5. No information or follow-up was provided to the parents after death notification
6. No family liaison
7. No information was provided to families as they waited
8. Impacted families asked over and over again for personal items (e.g., pic)
9. Families not protected (media, etc.)
10. No formal reunification process
11. Social media issues
12. Investigation treated as a normal homicide



School Safety





School Safety

- Limited to no direction after students and faculty evacuated.
- Not all victims of the incident received medical and mental health screenings following the incident.
- At least 91 children were evacuated from the school and hid in the back chapel of the funeral home (which was an active crime scene) with funeral home staff, teachers, and some parents.
- At the scene, some families and loved ones on the perimeter seeking information and questioning the law enforcement delay were treated with physical and verbal aggression, were shown no compassion or empathy, and received limited information.
- Those without a formal role in the response at Robb Elementary, such as community members, school personnel, and certain responder personnel, were unnecessarily exposed to the deceased victims' bodies or the crime scene.



School Safety

- The establishment of a Reunification Center was delayed and chaotic. Families and next of kin received conflicting instructions.
- Family members had unreasonable challenges accessing the hospital and their injured loved ones.
- The death notification process was disorganized, chaotic, and, at times, not conducted in a trauma-informed manner.
- An FBI notification team that was trained and experienced in trauma and death notifications was excluded from performing this task by staff.
- Conflicting social media posts regarding the reunification site

School Safety

- Due to the nature of the deaths, the young age, and the number of victims, funeral arrangements took longer than they normally would.
- Media and other onlookers attempted to access the funerals and services for some of the victims.
- Items left at informal memorials in Uvalde have been moved, removed, or cleared out without proper discussion and planning with the victims and family members.





School Safety

Active Threat Recovery

Recovery is a continuous process over short and long-term incremental phases.

Organizations and their staff will progress through the recovery phase at a different rate, requiring varying degrees of assistance.

Considerations

- Ensuring Life Safety after the Immediate Rescue
- Coordinate Medical Assistance
- Set Up Crisis Communications Media Response
- Provide Immediate Crisis Support
- Assist the Family Reunification Process
- Long-Term Recovery – Restoration

School Safety

- Reopening the Facility and Resuming Operations
- Anniversaries and Memorials
- Reopening the Facility and Resuming Operations
- Post-Incident Scams and Fraud
- Civil and Criminal Judicial Processes





Large Scale Incident- Champlain Towers Collapse (takeaways)

PIO

- Hold family and media briefings separately (don't co-mingle, families first)
- Ensure strict measures are established to ensure the media doesn't infiltrate the family briefing (recommend having the PIO present who is familiar with local media staff present in the room to help ID potential conflicts)
- Have a video connection option for family briefings (via a secured means).

Reunification

- Separate survivors and family reunification efforts
- If providing tours of the site, separate survivors from individuals who are trying to reunite.

School Safety



School Safety



*ANY
QUESTIONS*

...





School Safety

Contact

Chief Rick Francis

rfrancis@seminolesheriff.org

407.402.3599



Safety Solutions

How can we help?



School Safety Summit Roster

Thank you.

