# McKinney-Vento Toolbox

*The toolbox follows the same order as the self-assessment. The tools focus on each point in the self-assessment and are designed to enhance the district's capabilities in that area.*

## I. DEVELOPING STRONG COMMUNITY COLLABORATIONS, INCLUDING DISASTER PLANNING AND MITIGATION

### A. PUBLIC, PRIVATE, AND COMMUNITY AGENCIES ARE KNOWN TO EACH OTHER, COMMUNICATING, AND ENGAGED IN INTERDISCIPLINARY DISASTER PLANNING.

> *"School districts need to be involved in the community, so there are strong connections already in place before a disaster, so the community is working together, ready and willing to help. The time of a crisis is not a good time to be asking for business cards. You need to have those relationships in place."*
>
> Local Homeless Education Liaison

School districts cannot meet the needs of families and youth experiencing homelessness alone. Homelessness is a community-wide problem, requiring a community-wide response that includes measures to address housing, health care, and employment, along with school attendance and success. Therefore, effective implementation of the McKinney-Vento Act requires a community-based approach to homelessness and education. Without the support of local agencies, local homeless education liaisons cannot identify and serve all the children and youth experiencing homelessness in the district.

Although initiating community collaborations demands an investment of time and energy, the returns on that investment can be remarkable. Collaborating with community organizations and agencies will make the school district McKinney-Vento program stronger and more successful.

## WHAT CAN COMMUNITY AGENCIES OFFER THE SCHOOL DISTRICT'S MCKINNEY-VENTO PROGRAM?

School Supplies

DENTAL CARE

*Space For After-school Activities*

*Funding*     *Translation Of Awareness Materials*

*Clothing And Shoes*     FIELD TRIPS

Help Finding And Identifying Homeless Children And Youth

*Medical Care*     School Uniforms

Social Work And Counseling Assistance

*Mental Health Care*     BOOKS

*Payment Of School Fees*

EMPLOYMENT FOR PARENTS

TUTORING AND MENTORING

Food

TRANSPORTATION FOR STUDENTS AND PARENTS

*Eyeglasses*

HOUSING FOR HOMELESS FAMILIES AND YOUTH

Similarly, community disaster planning also requires a collaborative and coordinated effort by public, private, and community agencies. Schools must be a part of that effort. Schools and relief agencies agree that the biggest barrier to getting displaced students into school and keeping them there, is a lack of communication between the agencies and the schools. Communicating early and often will help ease everyone's burden.

Through patience and persistence, local liaisons have established strong relationships with disaster relief agencies, thereby securing hundreds of thousands of dollars in grants and creating permanent housing programs to serve homeless children and families.

This section contains tools to assist in implementing strong, creative collaborations, including:

1. **Getting started: Identifying key players/stakeholders**
2. **Getting a seat at the table: Joining community forums and inter-agency taskforces**
3. **Setting a new table: Convening community forums and inter-agency taskforces**
4. **Getting prepared: Designing a comprehensive disaster plan**

### 1. GETTING STARTED: IDENTIFYING KEY PLAYERS/STAKEHOLDERS

The first step in building strong collaborations is identifying community members that can support the McKinney-Vento program's needs. Every community has agencies, organizations, and individuals with a stake in supporting the education of homeless children and youth and being prepared for disasters. In fact, every member of the community is a stakeholder. Experienced local liaisons emphasize that it is important to "think outside the box" when considering potential collaborative partners.

> *"I was in the Walgreens here in town, getting a prescription for a young man I was serving a few days after Katrina hit. The line was long, and I started talking with someone from Baton Rouge, we talked about our work and what we were doing, and he told me he was going to put someone in touch with me to help with my work. I had an e-mail waiting for me when I got back to the office, which put me in touch with ADRA, [Adventist Development and Relief Agency, an NGO relief program from the Czech Republic] and got me funding from the Czech Republic. $90,000. I have used that donation to place different counseling personnel at different sites."*
>
> Local Homeless Education Liaison

Local liaisons who are new to community collaborations may have trouble knowing where to start. It may help to assess the program's needs, determine those that are most pressing, and identify community members that may be able to help meet those needs. Alternatively, the local liaison may wish to begin with those organizations with which he/she feels most comfortable, gradually expanding those collaborative relationships to other community members.

The following chart is a first step in starting collaborations. Local liaisons may wish to begin with the listed organizations and gradually add more groups and individuals as their collaborative relationships grow. For additional groups, consult Appendix 2, which contains a chart suggesting a large variety of stakeholders that can be important in supporting the McKinney-Vento program and planning for disasters.

**Tip:** **One experienced local liaison advises:"*Never let anyone get away without talking to them about homeless kids.*" Such conversations can lead to important partnerships with everyday contacts: doctors, neighbors, coworkers, accountants, fishing buddies, Little League coaches, real estate agents, hairdressers, fellow chorus members, mechanics, friends from church, insurance agents, poker buddies, friends from book group, etc.**

| Organization | Local Contact Information | Contacted? | Follow-up |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **CIVIC ORGANIZATIONS**<br>American Legion (http://www.legion.org/?content=post_locator)<br>Boys' and Girls' Clubs<br>Boys Scouts/ Girls Scouts of America<br>Goodwill (http://www.goodwill.org/page/guest/about)<br>Junior League (http://www.ajli.org)<br>Kiwanis International (http://www.kiwanis.org/clubloc)<br>Knights of Columbus  (http://www.kofc.org/un/officers/findcouncil/index.cfm)<br>Lions Club (http://www.lionsclub.org/EN/content/resources_club.shtml)<br>Rotary International (http://www.rotary.org/support/clubs/index.html)<br>Women's Clubs<br>YMCA/YWCA (http://www.ymca.net or http://www.ywca.org) | | | |
| **FAITH-BASED COMMUNITIES AND CONGREGATIONS**<br>In many communities, these organizations provide the bulk of social services, including shelter, food, mental and physical health support, legal assistance, and other services. | | | |
| **HOMELESS COALITIONS**<br>To find local or state coalitions:<br>http://www.nationalhomeless.org/resources/state/index.html | | | |
| **SHELTERS FOR FAMILIES, YOUTH, AND SURVIVORS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**<br>Check the phone book or Internet site of your town for local contact information. | | | |
| **HUD CONTINUUM OF CARE (COC)**<br>McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act programs administered by the U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) require communities to develop a CoC system. The CoC is designed to coordinate a community-based process of identifying and addressing needs. Members include all agencies and organizations providing services to homeless people in the community. To find local contact information:<br>http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/homeless/programs/cont/coc/ | | | |

| Organization | Local Contact Information | Contacted? | Follow-up |
|---|---|---|---|
| **SOCIAL WELFARE SERVICES AGENCIES AND ORGANIZATIONS**<br>(Food banks, employment agencies, subsidized day care providers, health and dental clinics, mental health clinics, etc.)<br><br>Check the phone book or Internet site of your town for local contact information. | | | |
| **YOUTH SHELTERS, INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAMS, DROP-IN CENTERS, AND STREET OUTREACH PROGRAMS**<br>To find local groups:<br>http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/fysb/content/youthdivision/programs/locate.htm | | | |
| **AMERICAN RED CROSS**<br>To find your local chapter: http://www.redcross.org | | | |
| **SAFE AND DRUG-FREE SCHOOLS DISTRICT COUNCIL COMMITTEE**<br><br>http://www.safeschools.info<br>http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osdfs/programs.html<br><br>Contact your school district for local information. | | | |
| **VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS ACTIVE IN DISASTER (VOAD)**<br>(Provides a venue for agencies to coordinate, collaborate, communicate, and cooperate on disaster planning, training and response.)<br><br>http://www.nvoad.org | | | |

## 2. GETTING A SEAT AT THE TABLE: JOINING COMMUNITY FORUMS AND INTERAGENCY TASKFORCES

*Perspectives, a St. Louis Park, MN, non-profit agency, approached the St. Louis Park School District and proposed a collaborative effort. The two entities applied jointly for a McKinney-Vento subgrant and then invited public, private, non-profit, and faith-based social service agencies to partner with them, including those involved in health, housing, transportation, community education, the Parks and Recreation Department, the Police Department, and the Title I Coordinator. Super Target provides financial support and General Mills supplies financial and volunteer support.[1]*

Although it can be challenging given the urgency of individual student needs, local homeless education liaisons must prioritize networking. Experienced local liaisons agree that involvement in strong collaborations is the only way for them to accomplish their statutory tasks and fully support children and families in homeless situations. Strong collaborations are also the key to gaining access to the people and activities surrounding local and state disaster planning, response, and recovery. The community agencies and task forces that manage disaster planning may not think to invite the local homeless education liaison. Yet, as states and school districts affected by hurricanes have learned, McKinney-Vento representatives must participate in this process if it is to be efficient and effective.



Establishing any relationship, be it personal or professional, is a process. After introducing themselves, the parties get to know each other, assess their mutual interests and compatibility, and decide if a relationship is desirable. If so, they must negotiate how that relationship will develop and function and then work to keep it healthy and productive over time. Community collaborations develop along these same lines.

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[1] Moore, J. (2005). *Collaborations of schools and social service agencies.* Retrieved August 9, 2006, from the National Center for Homeless Education website: http://www.serve.org/nche/downloads/collab_school_social.doc

## STEP 1: INTRODUCTIONS

- Once stakeholders are identified and prioritized, make initial contact by phone or e-mail.

- If there is already a personal connection within the organization, begin by contacting that individual. If that person cannot help with the collaboration, he or she can at least direct you to the right staff member.

- If there is no personal connection, start by calling the central office.

- Don't be discouraged if initial contacts don't bear fruit. It may take a few calls or e-mails to find the right collaborative partner — the specific staff member who can most relate to the McKinney-Vento program, has the most time to meet, has the most interest in building partnerships, and/or has the authority to collaborate.

**Tip:** **Be gutsy enough to just walk in and take a seat in pertinent groups, even if one is not offered. This may be an unfamiliar arena, but the school district has an essential contribution to make, and the local liaison has knowledge and experience to offer that other groups do not.**

- Be prepared to explain the McKinney-Vento Act's definition of homeless and the role of the local liaison, briefly and simply.

- Be prepared to explain the McKinney-Vento program, briefly and simply. Be able to report on the numbers of children and youth served by your program, the services provided, and how the program's work has translated into higher academic achievement, physical and mental health, family stability, funding for the school district, and other indicators of success. A simple PowerPoint presentation of five to ten slides with this information is an important networking tool.

- Join a local homeless coalition. Contact information is available at http://www.nationalhomeless.org/resources/state/index.html

- Pursue relationships with community decision-makers such as the mayor's office, city council, county supervisors, school board, PTA, religious leaders and interfaith organizations, civic organizations, etc. Their positions can provide access to disaster planning teams and processes and translate into broad-based support.

**Good Example:** **Virginia's PTA passed a resolution supporting the McKinney-Vento Act, which may be helpful in advocacy with other state and local PTAs: http://www. wm.edu/hope/vaptaresolution.pdf**

- Become involved with the local Continuum of Care (CoC). The CoC can be a critical source of funding and services for McKinney-Vento programs, as well as an entrée into disaster planning and response taskforces.

* The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) offers an interactive web map with contact information for all the CoCs in the country. http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/homeless/programs/cont/coc/

* Find out when local CoC network meetings are held and attend them. These meetings are usually held monthly or every other month. Participate in the CoC and other provider networks year-round and not just at funding time. Regular presence at these meetings will help the McKinney-Vento program gain credibility within the provider community and make an impact on the resources available for children, youth, and families.

* Over time, increase the level of involvement as organizations learn more about the important contributions of your McKinney-Vento program.



**STEP 2: GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER**

• Build a strong McKinney-Vento program that will be respected by community decision-makers and collaborative partners.

• Be prepared to explain the basics of the McKinney-Vento Act and implementation strategies.

**Tip:** **A basic PowerPoint presentation on the McKinney-Vento Act may prove helpful. For sample presentations, visit the NCHE website at: http://www.serve.org/nche/training.php. An online audio tutorial can be accessed at: http://www.serve.org/nche/training.php#breeze**

• Be creative and consistent with early contacts. For example: invite potential collaborators to visit your program; offer a school bus tour of shelters and motels; offer to visit collaborators' programs; show off artwork or other projects of the children who participate in the program; provide simple refreshments at early meetings.

**Share your passion and energy with collaborative partners!**

• Get to know collaborative partners. Visit their websites prior to meetings. At meetings, ask questions about their services, successes, and needs.

• Get to know the emergency response infrastructure in your community.

   * Read the local emergency response and recovery plans (available from the city or county emergency response agency, police department, fire department, and/or mayor's office).

   * Visit FEMA's website (http://www.fema.gov/), the local Red Cross office (www.redcross.org/where/where.html), and the local VOAD (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster, http://www.nvoad.org/).

   * Locate the local emergency operations or emergency response center (by searching on the web or in the phone book or checking with local government). Visit the center.

   * Appendix 3 contains a glossary of key terms and acronyms in disaster planning and response.

• Find out if other school district staff members are involved in emergency or disaster-related committees or task forces in the community. The superintendent, safety department, or other personnel may already be involved, and the local liaison can collaborate with those staff members.
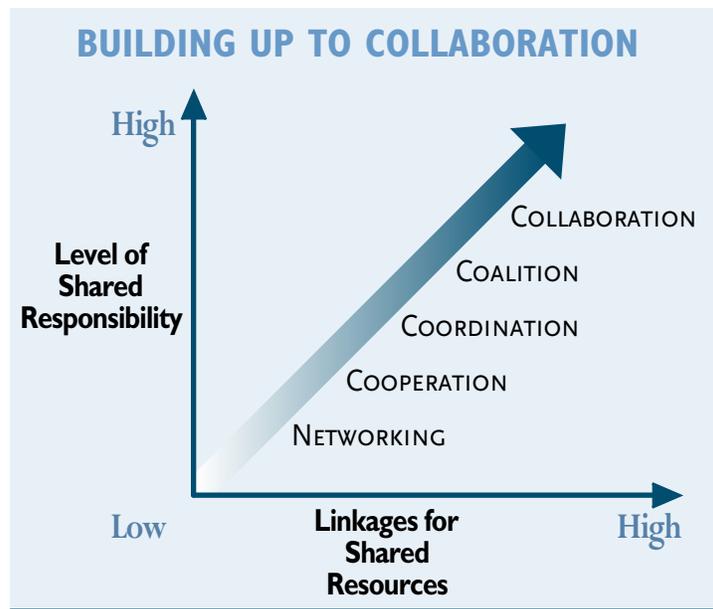
## STEP 3: ASSESSING MUTUAL INTERESTS AND COMPATIBILITY

• Analyze what partners can offer the school district and students in light of the specific unmet needs of children, youth, and families.

• Think strategically about how the McKinney-Vento program fits into the overall school district and broader community.

   * What specific expertise, information, and resources can the McKinney-Vento program offer?

   * How can the program's data collection activities translate into additional funding for the school district and/or community?

   * How do the McKinney-Vento program's needs and goals complement the needs and goals of potential partners?

   * How do the academic, mental and physical health, and other support services the program provides help support academic achievement, prevent violent confrontations, and prevent youth and family homelessness?

      \* How can the program support the community's disaster planning, response, and recovery efforts?

• Be prepared to explain clearly and objectively how the McKinney-Vento program can enhance the work of collaborative partners.

• Communicate openly and honestly about needs and ideas for mutually beneficial collaborations.

### STEP 4: DECIDING IF A RELATIONSHIP IS DESIRABLE

• When reaching out to other departments and agencies, it is important to consider the level of relationship that may be needed to realize goals. Consider working on lower-level relationships to assess the collaborations and to build trust before attempting more complex collaborations.

**BUILDING UP TO COLLABORATION**

High

Level of
Shared
Responsibility

COLLABORATION

COALITION

COORDINATION

COOPERATION

NETWORKING

Low     **Linkages for
Shared
Resources**     High

• Given the time demands on local liaisons, community collaborations must be prioritized based on needs. If it is not possible to pursue a particular relationship at the moment, leave the collaborators with a positive impression of your program and the door open for future collaboration.

**STEP 5: NEGOTIATING HOW THE RELATIONSHIP WILL WORK AND
KEEPING IT HEALTHY AND PRODUCTIVE OVER TIME**

- Maintain open and honest communication with all partners.

- Set a pattern of frequent and clear communication with collaborative partners.

**Tip:** **Consider informal lunches, tours of members' programs, or outdoor meetings in nice weather to complement more formal meetings and/or conference calls.**

- Together with collaborative partners, conduct a community needs assessment and identify common priorities based on needs. It is important to start from a common understanding of needs, goals, and priorities.

- Base relationships on these common needs, goals, and priorities. Having goals that will benefit all parties in the long run is a key to successful, lasting collaborations.

- Take the time to write a mission statement and goals for the collaboration. These should be clear, concise, and with objective and specific expectations. A written action plan with clear objectives will help the group stay focused, productive, and aware of its successes.

**Tip:** **Concentrating on the core vision instead of structures or processes helps maintain focus on what partners intend to accomplish instead of getting sidetracked by how to do it. This invites creative thinking and problem solving. It also helps the collaborative withstand changes in membership, organizational structure, etc.**

- Work toward meeting initial, short-term goals so participants can see fairly immediate results of their collaborative efforts.

- Include a status report on the action plan in each meeting.

- Update and adjust the action plan and goals based on group evaluation and input as needs and priorities change.

- Have all partners evaluate their resources to determine efficient ways to share and leverage resources.

- Discuss the privacy laws and concerns that affect partner agencies, and develop procedures to share information, such as parent release forms.

- Don't be afraid. Encourage passionate leaders, creativity, and appropriate risk-taking.

- Work to maintain trust and respect within the group.

- Be patient. Gaining access and building productive collaborations can take time. It

may take years to gain meaningful access to disaster planning, response, and recovery committees. But every relationship built, every program success, and every joint initiative developed is another key step in the process.

**Good Example:** **A simple conversation between the Broward County (FL) local homeless education liaison and the director of the local children's museum spawned ArtREACH (Reconnecting and Educating Homeless Adolescents through Creativity and Hope). A collaboration among the museum, the school board of Broward County, and the Salvation Army, ArtREACH is a daily after-school program that provides homework assistance, an arts-based curriculum, and recreation. The program also offers weekly counseling. Once a month the students visit the museum itself for more hands-on arts activities. ArtREACH has received a great deal of attention – even being featured in a *Time Magazine* article, which spawned generous local matching support.**

For an in-depth guide to building successful collaborations, download NCHE's publication, *Collaborations Between Schools and Social Service Agencies* at
http://www.serve.org/nche/downloads/collab_school_social.pdf

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:**

*A Place at the Table: Homeless Veterans and Local Homeless Assistance Planning Networks*. US HUD, February 2002. Detailed guide to the Continuum of Care process with an emphasis on strategies for getting a seat at the table and becoming meaningfully involved in local homeless assistance planning.
http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/about/hudvet/pdf/vetscocfinal.pdf

*Disaster Relief Agencies* and *Schools* and *School as a Safety Net*. NCHE, March 2006. These two handbooks are designed to assist schools in collaborating with disaster relief agencies.
http://www.serve.org/nche/downloads/dis_hb/relief_agencies.pdf
http://www.serve.org/nche/downloads/dis_hb/school_safety_net.pdf

*Communicating About Collaborative Relationships*. Iowa Association of School Boards. Tip sheet to help school board members and other educators build and maintain successful collaborative relationships in the community.
http://www.ia-sb.org/communityrelations/collaborativerelationships.asp

*Building Meaningful Partnerships*. Iowa Association of School Boards. Brief to help schools begin to build partnerships with the business community.
http://www.ia-sb.org/communityrelations/partnerships.asp

*Homeless Education Awareness Folder*. NCHE. Sturdy, laminated folder that can be customized to inform potential partners about the issues central to the education of children and youth experiencing homelessness. To order:
http://www.serve.org/nche/online_order.php#hard_copy

*Collaboration Action Plan* (Appendix FJ of Local Homeless Education Liaison Toolkit. NCHE. A chart to aid districts and states in designing, prioritizing, and building collaborative relationships.
http://www.serve.org/nche/downloads/toolkit/app_f.pdf

*Local Homeless Education Liaison Toolkit*. NCHE. Chapter 5 of the toolkit offers strategies for beginning and nurturing productive collaborations.
http://www.serve.org/nche/downloads/toolkit/chapters.pdf

## 3. SETTING A NEW TABLE: CONVENING COMMUNITY FORUMS AND INTERAGENCY TASKFORCES

*As Glendale, CA, Local Homeless Education Liaison Carol Reynolds began implementing the McKinney-Vento Act, she realized she needed a greater understanding of how other agencies operated and what issues they had with the school district. As a result, the school district hosted a meeting of local homeless service agencies and the Children and Homeless Collaborative was born. The collaborative includes Project ACHIEVE, the Glendale YMCA and YWCA, the Salvation Army, the City of Glendale, the Glendale Police Department, the Glendale Council PTA and individual PTA units, and departments within the school district that support homeless students.*[1]

In many communities, local homeless coalitions, disaster planning committees, and interagency taskforces are already in place and functioning well. The local homeless education liaison's mission is to work with these pre-existing groups to engage in cooperative disaster planning and to maximize services for youth and families in homeless situations. To the greatest extent possible, local liaisons should work with pre-existing groups before attempting to establish a new forum.

If an interdisciplinary disaster committee or homelessness taskforce does not exist in the local community, or if consistent efforts to join them have not been successful, the school district may want to convene its own taskforce. Local liaisons may also want to convene other collaborative taskforces or committees to confront issues of family homelessness, young children, unaccompanied youth, school mobility, domestic violence, and/or other topics.



[1] Moore, J. (2005). *Collaborations of schools and social service agencies*. Retrieved August 21, 2006, from the National Center for Homeless Education website: http://www.serve.org/nche/downloads?collab_school_social.doc

**Tip:** **Convening a taskforce may seem overwhelming, particularly in the context of other local liaison responsibilities. It requires an investment of time and effort. However, although the local liaison may not feel that convening an interagency taskforce is a natural role, in practice schools often serve as the most logical and appropriate center for community-based collaborations. "Many communities are now focusing on schools as the basis for collaborations simply because that is where the children are."** [2]

Local liaisons should not attempt to convene interdisciplinary groups alone. They may lack the visibility or clout to bring the necessary stakeholders to the table, and they may be able to maximize their impact by having more powerful allies take the helm. Superintendents, established community agencies, or local government officials may lend weight to the effort and pull in additional allies, such as the press and business.

Convening a taskforce requires identifying the stakeholders and employing best practices for meaningful collaborative relationships. The strategies and resources outlined in Sections I.A.1 and I.A.2 above can assist in those tasks. Additionally, convening a taskforce will require the basic steps of inviting people to participate and conducting meetings.



[2] Moore, p.6.

## Tips for a Taskforce Invitation

**An invitation to participate in a collaborative taskforce should:**

- Be addressed to a specific individual, rather than the organization

- Come from two or three organizations or individuals with the ability and authority to convene groups from different sectors

- Be signed or somehow endorsed by a community leader

- Recognize the contributions, experience, and knowledge of invitees

- Describe the basics of the McKinney-Vento program, highlighting services that may be unknown to the broader community that most closely align with the goals of invitees (for example, mental health services, physical health services, support for parents and young children, resources for unaccompanied youth, etc.)

- Emphasize that the children and families who participate in the McKinney-Vento program could receive added benefits if the program worked more collaboratively

- Convey the hope that through collaborations, community partners could leverage their resources and meet common goals

- Convey an openness to a group process of assessing needs, organizing priorities, and establishing goals

- Invite participants to an initial, introductory meeting at a convenient and comfortable location and at a convenient time

- Consider rotating future meeting sites among participants' programs, so agencies can get to know each others' programs; if possible, offer refreshments

- Express goodwill, humility, awareness, experience, and openness

A sample invitation letter is available in Appendix 4.

A sample agenda for an initial meeting should be clear and positive and should not be too ambitious.

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**AGENDA ITEMS FOR AN INITIAL COLLABORATIVE TASKFORCE MEETING**
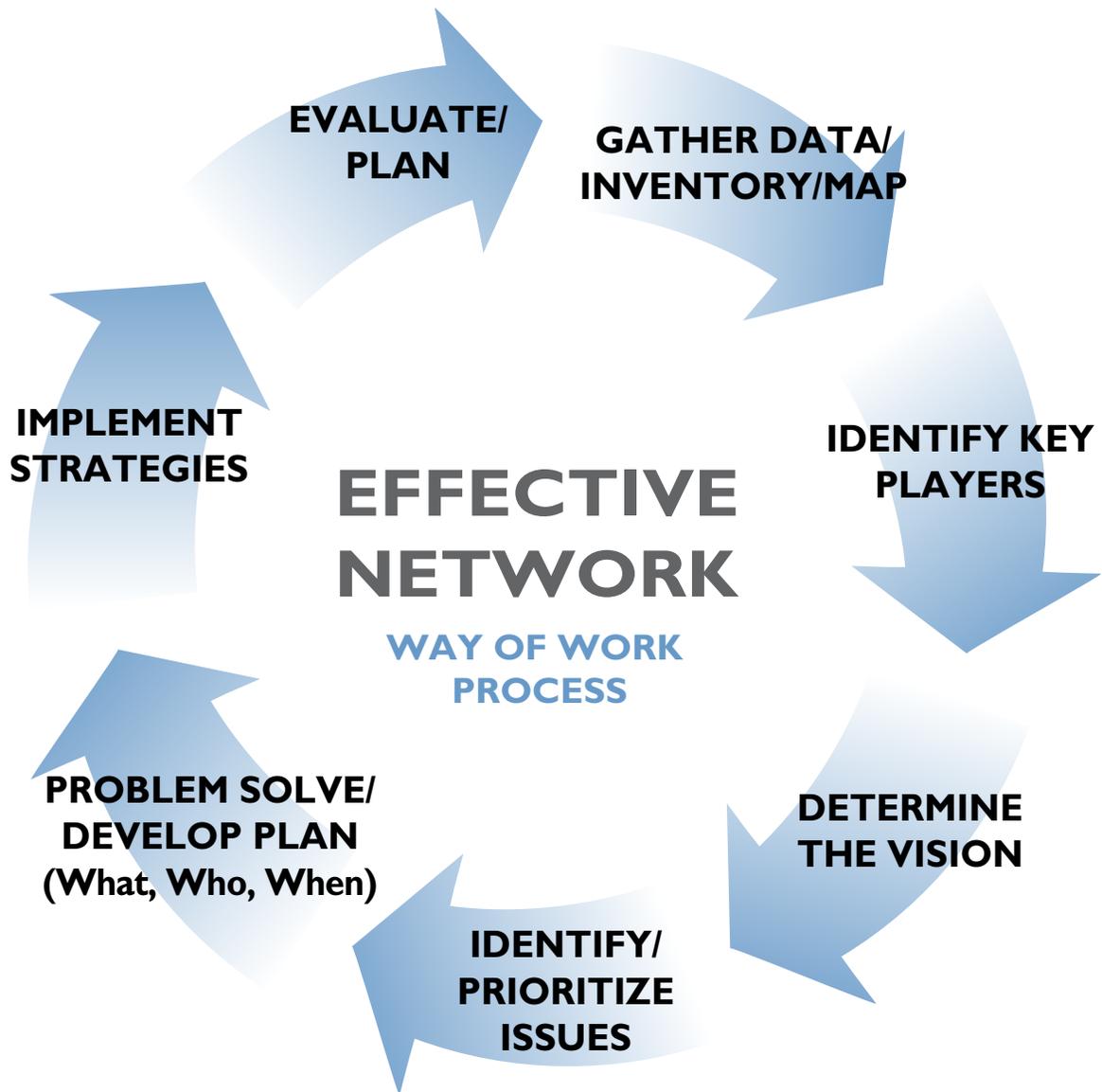
1. Warm welcome and optimistic vision of the tangible benefits of collaboration

2. Introductions: Opportunity for participants to introduce themselves and the programs they represent and to express their initial hopes and goals, both personal and organizational, for participation.

3. Goal setting: Participants should agree on one attainable, short-term goal for their collaboration, such as participating together in a pre-scheduled community event, conducting a needs assessment, considering a group response to a pending public policy issue, developing a protocol or standard consent form for sharing information, etc. This goal may be generated by the discussion in #2.

4. Next steps: Set the date, time, and location for the next meeting or delegate that responsibility to a participant.

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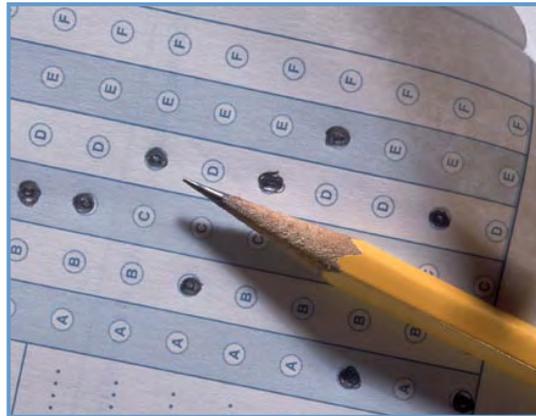


A recorder should take good notes and circulate them promptly to all participants.

Subsequent meetings should work toward reaching the initial, short-term goal so that participants can see immediate results from their collaborative efforts. The group should work together to conduct a needs assessment and establish further goals and priorities based upon those needs. Eventually, goals should be incorporated into a written action plan with measurable objectives. Each meeting should include a status report on the action plan. The action plan may warrant subcommittees or targeted taskforces. A written plan with clear objectives will help the group stay focused, productive, and aware of its successes.

The following graphic illustrates the circular nature of the functioning of effective task-forces. The process involves continually revisiting the action plan as the group implements activities, collects data, and discusses progress.[1]

**EVALUATE/ PLAN**

**GATHER DATA/ INVENTORY/MAP**

**IMPLEMENT STRATEGIES**

# EFFECTIVE NETWORK

## WAY OF WORK PROCESS

**IDENTIFY KEY PLAYERS**

**PROBLEM SOLVE/ DEVELOP PLAN (What, Who, When)**

**DETERMINE THE VISION**

**IDENTIFY/ PRIORITIZE ISSUES**

[1] Florida Department of Education. (n.d) *Way of work manual: Shared service network.* (p. I-II). Retrieved August 3, 2006 from http://ssn.usf.edu/documents/wayworkmanual/waywork.pdf

When convening a taskforce specifically related to disaster planning, consider the following additional suggestions from the Pennsylvania Center for Safe Schools and Communities:

*Form an interagency advisory group that meets on a regular basis. This group should include all government agencies in your municipality and county that serve students and their families (i.e., Children and Youth Services; Community Mental Health/Mental Retardation/ Drug and Alcohol Treatment programs; law enforcement, fire, and emergency agencies; juvenile justice and probation offices; the local and/or county Health Department,. etc.) as well as community leaders and businesses (e.g., NAACP, religious leaders, the mayor, the telephone company, etc.). These local partners are essential for the success of your crisis prevention and response efforts.*

*The interagency council should review policies and procedures at least annually. Check the link between policies and procedures. Are they current? Are they complete? Have they worked? Do procedures match the policies? Do they follow the most recent legal mandates?*

*Don't be alarmed if your policies and procedures fall short! Few districts have had the opportunity to prepare for all potential events. Here are some ideas for deciding what are the most likely crisis situations in your district:*

*• Review last year's data.*

*• Ask outside agencies for their assessment of priorities.*

*• Consider your 'public(s).' What is important to them? For example, the local merchants may be upset about truant students loitering in town, while parents of young children may be concerned about the threat of kidnapping or a bus accident. Parents of teens may be anxious to prevent alcohol and other drug use. The juvenile court staff may want to address serious habitual offenders who transfer into your district.* [3]

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[3] Kerr, M. M. (1997, September). *Developing good crisis plans.* Harrisburg, PA: Pennsylvania Center for Safe Schools and Communities.

## 4. GETTING PREPARED: DESIGNING A COMPREHENSIVE DISASTER PLAN

*"Our school district sits on this panel, and when there is an emergency that impacts our school district as well as the community, then we have district employees who report to the emergency operations center, and they're part of this group that is in on the decision making."*

School District Administrator

Every school district should have a district crisis plan that contains each phase, and individual schools should have corresponding plans. Once the school district has gained a place on disaster planning committees or has independently convened such a committee, the task of planning for disaster begins. The U.S. Department of Education has developed a four-phase approach to disaster planning for schools, which includes mitigation, preparation, response, and recovery. Each of the phases below were taken from the Department's brochure.[4]



**CRISIS MANAGEMENT**
**A continuous process in which all phases of the plan are being reviewed and revised.**

Mitigation

Preparedness

Response

Recovery

[4] U.S. Department of Education. (2004). *Practical information on crisis planning: A guide for schools and communities.* Retrieved August 3, 2006, from http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/crisisplanning.pdf

## CRISIS MANAGEMENT
## MITIGATION AND PREVENTION

The goal of mitigation is to decrease the need for response as opposed to simply increasing response capability.

• Connect with community emergency responders to identify local hazards.
• Review the last safety audit to examine school buildings and grounds.
• Determine who is responsible for overseeing violence prevention strategies in your school.
• Encourage staff to provide input and feedback during the crisis planning process.
• Review incident data.
• Determine major problems in your school with regard to student crime and violence.
• Assess how the school addresses these problems.
• Conduct an assessment to determine how these problems—as well as others—may impact your vulnerability to certain crises.

## PREPAREDNESS

Good planning will facilitate a rapid, coordinated, effective response when a crisis occurs.

• Determine what crisis plans exist in the district, school, and community.
• Identify all stakeholders involved in crisis planning.
• Develop procedures for communicating with staff, students, families, and the media.
• Establish procedures to account for students during a crisis.
• Gather information about the school facility, such as maps and the location of utility shutoffs.
• Identify the necessary equipment that needs to be assembled to assist staff in a crisis.

## RESPONSE

A crisis is the time to follow the crisis plan and make use of your preparations.

• Determine if a crisis is occurring.
• Identify the type of crisis that is occurring and determine the appropriate response.
• Activate the incident management system.
• Ascertain whether an evacuation, reverse evacuation, lockdown, or shelter-in-place needs to be implemented.
• Maintain communication among all relevant staff at officially designated locations.
• Establish what information needs to be communicated to staff, students, families, and the community.
• Monitor how emergency first aid is being administered to the injured.
• Decide if more equipment and supplies are needed.

## RECOVERY

During recovery, return to learning and restore the infrastructure as quickly as possible.

• Strive to return to learning as quickly as possible.
• Restore the physical plant, as well as the school community.
• Monitor how staff are assessing students for the emotional impact of the crisis.
• Identify what follow up interventions are available to students, staff, and first responders.
• Conduct debriefings with staff and first responders.
• Assess curricular activities that address the crisis.
• Allocate appropriate time for recovery.
• Plan how anniversaries of events will be commemorated.
• Capture 'lessons learned' and incorporate them into revisions and trainings.

To assist schools in implementing all four phases of disaster planning, the U.S. Department of Education has developed an extensive website dedicated to emergency planning. The site is http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/emergencyplan/index.html. Among other resources, it includes the *Practical Information on Crisis Planning* brochure at http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/crisisplanning.html and *Practical Information on Crisis Planning: A Guide for Schools and Communities* at http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/emergencyplan/crisisplanning.pdf

The following additional tools will help school districts implement mitigation, preparation, response, and recovery strategies. First, there are two tools to complement the U.S. Department of Education's vision and help ensure that the school district's crisis plan contains all the necessary elements. Second, there are links to several sample emergency response plans. Finally, there is a list of reprintable tools, templates, and checklists to guide and facilitate the planning process.

### NECESSARY ELEMENTS OF A GOOD CRISIS PLAN

*"If it happens tomorrow, will we do a better job than we did last time? We need to have a plan in place! An evacuation plan, a response plan, and a recovery plan. And it needs to be a city plan, in conjunction with the school districts."*

Local Homeless Education Liaison

**The following information summarized from the Pennsylvania Center for Safe Schools and Communities provides critical elements for a good crisis plan:**

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**WHAT'S IN A GOOD CRISIS PLAN?**

A comprehensive crisis plan includes six elements:

* PREVENTION GUIDELINES
* EARLY INTERVENTION GUIDELINES
* CRISIS INTERVENTION GUIDELINES (what to do if prevention fails)
* POSTVENTION OR ONGOING MANAGEMENT
* DEBRIEFING AND EVALUATION PROCEDURES
* IMPROVING THE PLANS

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**\*PREVENTION GUIDELINES** tell us how to prevent a problem. For example, crisis plans are only one part of a comprehensive school safety promotion plan (which should also include students' interpersonal skills development, staff training, school safety policies and procedures, etc.). Identifying school visitors when they first enter a building is another example of routine crisis prevention.

**\*EARLY INTERVENTION GUIDELINES** should tell people how to know if a problem is about to happen and what to do about it. For example, in the event of a telephoned bomb threat, does the school secretary know to record specific information about the threat and identifying information about the caller? Do students know what to do if there is a fire alarm?

**\*CRISIS INTERVENTION GUIDELINES** tell us how to get help, specific steps to take and those to avoid.

**\*POSTVENTION GUIDELINES** tell us how to support staff, students, and families in the hours, days, and weeks following a tragedy.

**\*DEBRIEFING AND EVALUATION PROCEDURES** remind us to examine the crisis and the crisis responses. All responders should meet to review the team's response and their personal reactions. This provides an opportunity for "Critical Incident Stress Debriefing," or CISD. CISD has proven helpful in reducing long-term maladaptive reactions to high stress events.

**\*IMPROVING THE PLAN** refers to the process whereby we take a look at how we responded and make plans to improve our efforts. This ensures that we learn from our experiences, mistakes, and successes.[5]

See also: Emergency Plan Checklist, from the Arizona Department of Education's Safety Planner, Appendix D. A checklist to ensure that the school district's emergency plan contains all necessary elements. Pages D-3 – D-7.
http://www.ade.az.gov/schooleffectiveness/health/schoolsafety/safetyplans/jobaids.pdf

## SAMPLE EMERGENCY PLANS

Colonial Intermediate Unit 20, Easton, PA, Crisis Plan.
http://www.ciu20.org/departments/auxiliaryservices/resources/cm_chap6.pdf

Escambia County School District 2005-2006 Hurricane Plan
http://www.escambia.k12.fl.us/eert/Comprehensive%20HURRICANE%20PLAN%202005-2006.pdf

Nettleton Public Schools, Nettleton, AR, Crisis Plan.
http://nettleton.crsc.k12.ar.us/crisis.htm

Oregon School Boards Association Sample Policy.
http://www.osba.org/hotopics/crismgmt/policies.htm

Pennsylvania Department of Education Sample School Emergency Operations Plan.
http://www.pdenewsroom.state.pa.us/newsroom/lib/newsroom/SampleSchoolPlan-BasicPlan211.pdf

Virginia Department of Education Sample Policy
http://www.doe.virginia.gov/VDOE/Instruction/model.html

Links to emergency plans and planning toolkits from across the country.
http://www.edfacilities.org/rl/statelocal_emergency.cfm

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[5] Kerr, M. M. (1997, September). *Developing good crisis plans.* Harrisburg, PA: Pennsylvania Center for Safe Schools and Communities.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The Escambia Educational Recovery Team, a non-profit extension of the School District of Escambia County Florida, is dedicated to the preservation and recovery of educational processes disrupted by disasters. Their website contains a great deal of information to assist school districts in disaster planning, response, and recovery.
http://www.escambia.k12.fl.us/eert/

The National Organization for Victim Assistance offers a 40-hour Basic Crisis Response Team Training Institute. http://www.trynova.org/crt/

Scott Poland, Nationally Association of School Psychologists, Chair, National Emergency Assistance Team. *School Crisis Planning: Questions Answered*. Checklists and basic information for school-level crisis planning. http://www.nasponline.org/NEAT/neat_planning.html

Rebecca Fleischauer, *Crisis Communication Guide & Toolkit. Chapter 4: Hands-On Assistance — Tools for Educators*. National Education Association (January 2000).
http://www.nea.org/crisis/images/crisisguide-b4.pdf

Sample forms for Disaster Planning, from the Arizona Department of Education.
http://www.ade.az.gov/schooleffectiveness/health//schoolsafety/safetyplans/response.asp (Under "Guidelines, Checklists, and Sample Forms" near the bottom of the page)

*Crisis Management Workbook* from the Office of Security and Risk Management Services of Fairfax County Public Schools, VA. A toolkit for crisis management and crisis readiness. http://www.fcps.edu/fts/safety-security/planning/cmw.pdf

*Risk Index Worksheet* from the Arizona Department of Education's Safety Planner. A tool to categorize the risk priority of various types of disaster, to guide planning activities and priorities.
http://www.ade.az.gov/schooleffectiveness/health/schoolsafety/safetyplans/RiskIndexWorksheet.pdf

*Incident Response Job Descriptions* from the Arizona Department of Education. Detailed charts for essential roles and jobs in disaster response, their responsibilities, and tools for organization, at page C-6.
http://www.ade.az.gov/schooleffectiveness/health/schoolsafety/safetyplans/job.pdf

*Organization and Responsibilities* checklist from the Pennsylvania Department of Education Sample School Emergency Operations Plan. A list of school district personnel and their roles during a crisis.
http://www.pdenewsroom.state.pa.us/newsroom/lib/newsroom/SampleSchoolPlan-Checklists1.pdf

*Emergency "Go Kits"* from the Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools. Helpful hints for creating emergency supply kits for administrators and classroom teachers.
http://www.ercm.org/views/documents/HH_GoKits.pdf

# Self Assessment I. A

## I. Developing Strong Community Collaborations, Including Disaster Planning and Mitigation.

The following targeted self-assessment is designed to evaluate the district's implementation of the tools and strategies contained in this chapter. It includes several of the most important indicators of success in developing strong community collaborations through interagency communication and interdisciplinary disaster planning.

Individual(s) Conducting Assessment: _____

Date of Assessment: _____

Date of Review: _____

Rank the following in order of their effectiveness within your McKinney-Vento Program:

| **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| No evidence | In existence but not effective | Moderately successful | Successful but needs improvement | Strength of the program |

### A. Public, private, and community agencies are known to each other, communicating, and engaging in interdisciplinary disaster planning.

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Key stakeholders in the community are identified. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Local liaison is involved in active collaborations with key stakeholders. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| The school district participates regularly in interagency councils/coalitions that provide a wide variety of services for children, youth, and families such as housing and health care. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| The school district participates regularly in boards or with organizations related to family services and disaster relief (e.g., United Way, American Red Cross, Salvation Army, VOAD, faith-based organizations, housing organizations, etc.). | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Collaborations yield tangible results for homeless children, youth, and families. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Local liaison understands how the local disaster response infrastructure works and has relationships with key players in that infrastructure. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| The school district and local liaisons are actively involved in disaster planning task forces and committees. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| The school district has a comprehensive, interdisciplinary disaster plan that is coordinated with community disaster response agencies and local government. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| **TOTAL** | | | | | |

**How did you score?**

**30-40 Points**  This is a strength of the program.
**20-29 Points**  The program is moderately sucessful in this area.
**<20 Points**   This area is weak. Needs program improvement.

## B. PUBLIC, PRIVATE, AND COMMUNITY SERVICES ARE COORDINATED, INTEGRATED, AND DELIVERED COLLABORATIVELY.

Families and youth in homeless situations, and particularly those displaced by disasters, are forced to navigate many systems and agencies to find housing, food, clothing, employment, health care, and other services. Collaborations that coordinate and integrate service delivery can streamline the process and help families and youth receive the support and services they need. Agencies can work together to meet logistical challenges, provide comprehensive services, and ease the practical burdens on families and youth.

> *"There is a Children's Service Center diagonally across the street from Red Cross. It is designed to be only an administrative facility, but they were wonderful to give up both personnel and facilities to allow their offices to be converted into essentially a childcare area, while their family members were in line or receiving case management services and financial assistance."*
>
> Relief Agency Staff Member

> *"We gave them resources in the community that could help them as well as helping parents. If they needed jobs we'd direct them to places for employment opportunities as well."*
>
> School Counselor

> *"We also had several lawyers volunteer to conduct classes for the parents on the paperwork involved with hurricanes, insurance, FEMA, services and benefits, etc. That was really a good thing to do, because lowering the stress level for the parents lowered the stress level for the kids."*
>
> Local Homeless Education Liaison

Such collaborations will be assisted greatly if service providers share information, develop memoranda of understanding, and establish reliable and flexible communications systems.

## I. SHARING INFORMATION

Service providers cannot integrate service delivery if they do not share information.

> *"Children could benefit from data-sharing agreements among organizations."*[1]

Different providers will be bound by different privacy laws and regulations, such as the Privacy Act, the Health Information Privacy and Accountability Act (HIPAA), and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Each of these laws and regulations requires different procedures and forms for releasing information. FEMA, school districts, and mental health providers are subject to some of the most rigorous privacy protections.

Communication is the key to sharing information among different service providers.

- First, different agencies must be convinced that sharing information is beneficial to them and their clients and that information will be used appropriately.

- Then, providers must talk to each other about the privacy regulations that apply to them and develop systems to protect confidential information while sharing the information that is necessary to streamline service delivery.

- One strategy is to develop joint release-of-information forms by combining the required elements of the different agencies. Using these forms upon intake should help clients receive all available and needed services as quickly as possible.

[1] U.S. Government Accounting Office. (2006, May). *Lessons learned for protecting and educating children after the Gulf Coast hurricanes.* Retrieved August 21, 2006, from http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d06680r.pdf

## 2. DEVELOPING MEMORANDA OF UNDERSTANDING

Memoranda of understanding are important tools for streamlining the provision of services. A signed memorandum of understanding among public and/or private service providers can make it possible for them to share information and provide holistic services in an accessible and efficient manner. For example, many school districts have memoranda of understanding with child welfare providers, which define the cooperation and cost-sharing guidelines among schools, child welfare agencies, family courts, and foster parents.

A memorandum among participants in a disaster planning taskforce is important to help ensure that response plans are followed during an actual crisis. This memorandum should spell out who does what during a crisis and describe expectations for each agency. It should clearly identify all critical roles and assign specific people to each task. This document should be updated and reviewed every year.

**Good Examples:** Sample Memorandum of Understanding from the North Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Center for the Prevention of School Violence.
http://www.ncdjjdp.org/cpsv/Acrobatfiles/cirk_mou.pdf

Sample Memorandum of Understanding from the Kentucky Center for School Safety.
http://www.kysafeschools.org/pdfs&docs/clearpdf/issuesbriefs/moa.pdf

## 3. ESTABLISHING ROBUST COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS

*"I would have a source of communication, at least walkie-talkies or some type of communicator device, that I could communicate with my team of administrators."*

School District Administrator

Interruptions in communication systems during a disaster can make effective response within an agency extremely challenging. Coordination and collaboration among agencies may be nearly impossible unless robust, flexible communication strategies are developed prior to a disaster.

It may be helpful to envision methods of communication in terms of layers, based on the infrastructure needed for the method to function. The top layer, which represents the most technologically-sophisticated methods of communication, is generally the first to collapse in a disaster. Loss of electricity and damage of phone lines and cell phone towers are common occurrences in disasters. In fact, it is important to plan for the probability that in a disaster, almost every form of communication normally used by the school district and the community may be nonfunctional. Therefore, school districts must develop flexible, creative strategies for communication during and after disasters.

| LAYER | |
|---|---|
| 1 | E-MAIL, WEBSITES |
| 2 | CELL PHONES |
| 3 | LANDLINES |
| 4 | PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT SYSTEMS ON TV OR RADIO |
| 5 | LOCAL PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT SYSTEMS WITHIN A SCHOOL OR TOWN CENTER |
| 6 | WALKIE-TALKIES |
| 7 | PHYSICALLY GOING TO A SITE TO SPEAK WITH SOMEONE |
| 8 | AIR HORNS AND WHISTLES |

Satellite cell phones may be the most flexible and reliable form of communication in a disaster. To the extent possible, school districts may wish to purchase or find a donor to provide satellite cell phones for key personnel.

The following tips from the U.S. Department of Education can help school districts plan for good communication during emergencies.

# PLANNING FOR COMMUNICATION DURING A CRISIS

Clear lines of communication are crucial to a successful response to a crisis. During the planning process, it will be important to establish effective lines of communication among and within the state, district, school, and community groups. When creating a crisis plan, there are several communication needs that should be addressed.

COMMUNICATION IS ESSENTIAL BEFORE CRISES OCCUR:

- Use common terminology across a district.

- Identify several modes of communication for both internal and external communication. Keep in mind that in times of crisis, computers, intercoms, telephones, and even cell phones may not work or may be dangerous to use. Plan for several methods of communication in a crisis.

- Make sure that schools have adequate supplies of communication gear and that the appropriate individuals have access to it.

- Verify that school communication devices are compatible with emergency responder devices. A cell phone or two-way radio is of no use if it cannot be used with the emergency responder's phone or radio. Also, check to see that the school's communication devices do not interfere with the emergency responder's equipment.

- Create communication plans to notify families that a crisis has occurred at their child's school. These pathways should include several modes of communication, including notices sent home and phone trees, so the pathways can be tailored to fit the needs of a particular crisis.

- Establish communication pathways with the community. This may be in the form of a phone or e-mail tree, a community liaison, or media briefings. It is crucial to keep the community informed before, during, and after a crisis.

- Designate a Public Information Officer to deal with families, the community and the media. The designation of one individual will help all parties stay informed with identical information.

GOOD COMMUNICATION DURING A CRISIS IS ALSO CRUCIAL. BELOW ARE SOME KEY POINTS TO KEEP IN MIND:

- Inform staff who are managing the students. Regardless of the amount of training staff members have received, there is going to be chaos and fear. Communication mitigates those reactions and helps regain a sense of calm and control.

- Notify families of action being taken. Understand that parents are going to want immediate access to their children. Safely begin reunification procedures as soon as possible. Keep families informed as much as possible, especially in the case of delayed reunification.

Communication often stops after a crisis subsides. However, during the recovery phase, keeping staff and community informed remains critical. [2]

[2] U.S. Department of Education. (2003, May). *Practical information on crisis planning: A guide for schools and communities.* (Pgs 47-49). Retrieved August 21, 2006, from: http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/emergencyplan/crisisplanning.pdf

# Self Assessment I. B

## I. Developing Strong Community Collaborations, Including Disaster Planning and Mitigation.

The following targeted self-assessment is designed to evaluate the district's implementation of the tools and strategies contained in this chapter. It includes several of the most important indicators of success in developing strong community collaborations through coordinating and integrating service delivery.

Individual(s) Conducting Assessment: _____

Date of Assessment: _____

Date of Review: _____

Rank the following in order of their effectiveness within your McKinney-Vento Program:

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| No evidence | In existence but not effective | Moderately successful | Successful but needs improvement | Strength of the program |

## B. Public, private, and community services are coordinated, integrated, and delivered collaboratively.

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Program eligibility and/or case management forms include parent signatures indicating permission to share information with other programs. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| The school district has current memoranda of understanding with relevant community agencies, including social services, child welfare, youth-serving agencies, and disaster response agencies. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| The school district has flexible, reliable systems for communication within the district in time of crisis. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| The school district has flexible, reliable systems for communication with communitiy agencies, including disaster relief agencies, in time of crisis. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| The school district regularly disseminates information about school-based programs and resources to community-based organizations and parents. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| The school district has facility-use policies in place that encourage delivery of services to children, youth, and families in the area of the community where they live. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| There is a single point of intake (either at a school or community-based locations) where families receive information, complete paperwork, and participate in family-focused plans for the delivery of services. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| **TOTAL** | | | | | |

**How did you score?**

**30–40 Points**  This is a strength of the program.
**20–29 Points**  The program is moderately sucessful in this area.
**<20 Points**  This area is weak. Needs program improvement.