

# GFSS Emergency Guide for Parents

Updated September 23, 2025

Schools are one of the safest places to be in any community. In the case of an emergency, our first priority is the safety of our students and staff.

A school emergency could require the involvement of numerous agencies. The GFSS plan does not replace the authority of law enforcement, fire or EMS. Our staff members work in full co-operation with these agencies.

This guide defines the protocols in hopes of answering parent questions. I hope you find this guide helpful and informative.

## When an Emergency Occurs

- **Do not come to school unless requested.** Although your natural instincts in an emergency may be to go to the school to safeguard your child, please understand that doing so could impede the response to the situation. Going to the school may interfere with emergency crew's and school personnel's efforts to deal with the emergency. Extra vehicles and people at the site make the task more difficult. If you arrive at the school in the middle of an emergency, please respect the protocol in progress.
- **Do not call the school** during an emergency. Phone systems need to remain available for handling the actual emergency.
- **Do not call your child's cell phone** Calling your child's cell phone during an emergency may be putting them at higher risk by disclosing their location or drawing attention to them during a lock-down.

## Keeping Informed During an Emergency

GFSS will inform parents about what is happening through an alert banner on our website ([gfss.sd51.bc.ca](http://gfss.sd51.bc.ca)) and/or targeted email to families. We may add information to social media.

To receive notifications, please ensure your contact information is up-to-date. Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact the school.

## How You Can Help

- Trust the process. We work closely with first responders to maximize safety.
- Speak with your child about these procedures.
- Update your contact information.
- Refrain from spreading unverified information on social media during an emergency.

## Keeping Safe at School

When a school is faced with an emergency, the Incident Commander (usually the principal) will assess the situation and implement the appropriate emergency protocol. The emergency protocols are listed below.

<b>Hold and Secure</b>	Hold and Secure is used when there is a threat or potential threat of violence to students and/or staff <b>OUTSIDE</b> the school. During a Hold and Secure, all entrance doors to the school are locked, with no one permitted in or out of the building. Movement is permitted inside the school, and inside activities can continue. No one, other than law enforcement, is permitted access to the building until the Hold and Secure has been cleared.
<b>Lock-Down</b>	Lock-Down is used when there is a threat or potential threat of violence to students and/or staff <b>INSIDE</b> the school and may interfere with the safety and security of students and staff and the normal operations of school. During a Lock-Down, all doors within the school are locked. Students and staff must respond very quickly to a Lock-Down directive and to get to a safe location before doors are locked. No one is permitted in or out of any area once it has been locked. Only law enforcement is permitted access to the building during a Lock-Down. No one is allowed in or out of a locked room, under any circumstance, until the Incident Commander issues the "All-Clear".
<b>Shelter-in-Place</b>	Shelter-in-Place is used when there is <b>NO THREAT OF VIOLENCE</b> but directing and controlling movement inside the school is prudent and an evacuation. A Shelter-in-Place may be called for any of the following reasons: an environmental emergency, community chemical spill, severe weather, person requiring first aid or medical attention. During a Shelter-in-Place, students and staff retreat to classrooms/safe zones to seek shelter or simply clear the hallways, allowing for both privacy of a person requiring attention and unrestricted access for emergency responders. This protocol may or may not include having students or staff who are outdoors, come back into the school. Doors are not locked during this protocol. Students will not be released or dismissed until the situation has been resolved.
<b>Evacuation</b>	Evacuation is used when there is possible danger <b>INSIDE</b> the school, (no threat of violence) and it is safer to be outside the school than inside (e.g., fire, gas leak). This may mean only going outside and away from the building until it is safe to re-enter the school; in other cases, students and staff may need to go to an evacuation center. Parents will be informed of the alternative location through the school's website, email, and/or social media.
<b>Dismissal</b>	If necessary, a Controlled Student Release Procedure will be used to release students to an authorized emergency contact.