Stranded Student Protocol

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When a Student Is Not Picked Up from School or After-School Activities

For Office Staff, Coaches, Educators, & Site Supervisors

Purpose

To advocate for the **safety, dignity, and well-being** of any student who is not picked up from a school event or activity—while **avoiding harm, escalation, or unnecessary law enforcement involvement**, particularly for students from immigrant, undocumented, or marginalized families.

Guiding Principles

- **Assume positive intent**: Caregivers may be working, facing emergencies, or have transportation challenges.
- **Protect privacy and dignity**: Never ask about immigration status. Never speculate about legal circumstances.
- **Avoid escalation**: Law enforcement should only be contacted as a last resort when a student's safety is at risk.
- **Center the student**: Provide emotional support and a sense of safety throughout the process.

✅ Step-by-Step Protocol

1. Stay With the Student

- Keep the student in a supervised, calm, and safe space (e.g., office, library).
- Offer snacks, water, and reassurance. Let them know they are safe.

2. Attempt to Reach Caregivers

- Call all emergency contacts listed on the student's file.
- Try to call/text and check for alternate numbers or transportation plans noted by the family.
- If the student has a phone, let them try calling a trusted adult.

3. Contact Internal Support

- Notify a designated administrator or staff lead (principal, family liaison, or site coordinator).
- If appropriate, contact the school counselor or social worker for support.
- If the student has a caseworker or support agency, contact them if listed.

4. Document Without Judgement

- Log:
    - Time the student was left without a ride
    - Attempts made to contact family
    - Any communication or support provided
- Avoid documenting speculation (e.g., “family may be undocumented” is **not appropriate**).

5. Avoid Law Enforcement Unless Safety Is at Risk

- **DO NOT call the police or ICE** for transportation or family issues.
- Only involve law enforcement if the student is:
    - In immediate danger or abandoned
    - Threatening self-harm or experiencing a medical emergency

6. Plan for Safe Transportation or Overnight Care

- If caregivers cannot be reached within 90 minutes:
    - Contact district crisis response team or designated child welfare liaison.
    - Involve trusted staff or authorized adults **only with prior family permission or district protocol**.
    - If the student is in crisis or under 12, consult CPS or appropriate youth services carefully and with trauma-informed discretion.

Special Notes for Vulnerable Populations

- Do **not** ask a student or sibling about immigration status or family legal concerns.
- Recognize the risk of retraumatization for students experiencing fear of separation, deportation, or housing insecurity.
- Ensure that no student is shamed or penalized for being stranded.

Sample Language to Use with the Student:

> “It looks like your ride is taking longer than expected. You’re not in trouble at all. We’re going to stay right here until we figure things out together. You are safe.”

High Desert
Education Service District