

# GARDEN GROVE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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August 10, 20011

Honorable Thomas J. Borris  
Presiding Judge, Orange County Superior Court  
700 Civic Center Drive West  
Santa Ana, CA 92701

Dear Judge Borris:

In accordance with California Penal Code Sections 933 and 933.05, responses are required from all Orange County public school districts to Findings F1 through F7 and Recommendations R1 through R5 of the Orange County Grand Jury report titled "*Orange County Public Schools: Are They Prepared for Emergencies?*" Detailed below are the responses from the Garden Grove Unified School District.

## **Findings and Responses**

**Finding F1:** *With respect to reported constraints on emergency planning and preparation, over half of the schools and almost three quarters of districts identified limited time or funds.*

### **Response:**

Based on the data in the report, the district agrees with the finding. The district and its schools identified "limited time" as the single biggest constraint impacting emergency-planning needs.

**Finding F2:** *Six (of 17) schools districts have managed to apply for and receive relatively large grants from governmental agencies to greatly enhance the emergency planning efforts.*

### **Response:**

Based on the data in the report, the district agrees with the finding. As noted in the district's response to the Grand Jury survey, "The Garden Grove Unified School District

was an award recipient of the Readiness Emergency Management for Schools (REMS) 2008 program grant funds from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools, for the award performance period of June 1, 2008, through December 1, 2009. The grant enabled the school district to strengthen crisis and emergency response plans in our schools and community to better ensure the safety of our schools and students. Funds were also used to coordinate with local emergency responders, purchase emergency supplies and equipment, and provide enhanced training in emergency response procedures.”

**Finding F3:** *Some schools anticipate responding to only a few emergency situations (e.g., earthquake and fire), while others have developed plans to respond to over a dozen different threatening situations.*

**Response:**

Based on the data in the report, the district agrees with the finding. The district can only provide comment on the contents of its emergency planning and response document, the *GGUSD Emergency/Disaster Preparedness and Operation Plan*.

The binder containing the *Plan* is organized in two volumes. Volume 1 governs district-level emergency organization, preparedness, and response activities. Volume 2 is the site-level emergency planning and response model plan for use by all schools in the district. Volume 2 details responses to 16 specific emergency situations.

**Finding F4:** *School districts develop plans with respect to a number of different but overlapping regulations and standards, including those required by the county, state, and federal government.*

**Response:**

Based on the data in the report, the district agrees with the finding. A myriad of laws and regulations govern school and school district emergency preparedness and response. These statutes are identified in the *GGUSD Emergency/Disaster Preparedness and Operation Plan*.

**Finding F5:** *Some schools reported they have not adequately anticipated the needs of students taking prescriptions medications, or with specialized medical needs, in the event of some emergencies, such as an extended lockdown.*

**Response:**

Based on the data in the report, the district agrees with the finding. The needs of medically fragile students as well as those requiring prescription medications are addressed in the *GGUSD Emergency/Disaster Preparedness and Operation Plan*. Principals are required to maintain a list of students and staff with medical conditions or who need prescription medications (i.e. diabetes, epilepsy, asthma) or require specialized

## Garden Grove Unified School District

medical treatments in the event of an extended stay at the school. Such needs are also delineated through employee Incident Command System (ISC) emergency assignments for the site First Aid-Medical and Student Care teams.

**Finding F6:** *School districts are in communications with a variety of local and county departments, agencies, and systems to help prepare them for and respond to disasters or emergencies; not all districts have the same resources.*

### **Response:**

Based on the data in the report, the district agrees with the finding. As noted in the district's response to the Grand Jury survey, the district coordinates emergency planning and response with agencies at several other levels. Note that the district's boundaries include most of Garden Grove and parts of six surrounding cities – Anaheim, Cypress, Fountain Valley, Santa Ana, Stanton, and Westminster.

The other major agencies include: Garden Grove Police and Fire departments, Santa Ana Police and Fire departments, Westminster Police Department, Orange County Fire Authority, Orange County Sheriff's Department, Fountain Valley Police and Fire departments, Orange County Department of Education, U.S. Department of Education, and Orange County Emergency Management Organization (OCEMO). The GGUSD is part of the OCEMO schools' subcommittee, which meets regularly at the Orange County Department of Education.

**Finding F7:** *Few schools have plans or emergency preparation information available in languages other than English.*

### **Response:**

Based on the data in the report, the district agrees with the finding. As noted in the Grand Jury's report, the wholesale translation of comprehensive disaster plans "would be of doubtful utility." Printed information on school emergency planning, particularly state-mandated Earthquake Safety Procedures, are annually provided to all district parents in four languages. For the 2011-12 school year, this information is printed in the district Parent-Student Handbook, which is prepared in English, Spanish, Vietnamese, and Korean. Electronic versions of the Handbook are posted in downloadable format in the Parent Resources section of the district website. To support the district's emergency planning and response efforts, the district also invested in the TeleParent communications system which is capable of quickly delivering automated telephone parental notifications for routine and emergency messages in the four languages.

## **Recommendations and Responses**

**Recommendation R1:** *Those districts which have yet to identify grant opportunities, especially from governmental agencies, investigate the availability of potential resources. Forming inter-district collaboratives, learning from districts in the county that have been*

*successful, pooling resources, and asking for consultation from the Orange County Superintendent of Schools/OCDE may help in these efforts.*

**Response:**

As noted in this document (Finding F2) and in the district's survey response (Question No. 9) to the Grand Jury, this recommendation has been implemented by the district. It should be noted that some school districts might be reluctant to pursue such grants because of heavy administrative/reporting requirements imposed on district and school employees, a burden which may outweigh the benefits of the additional funding.

**Recommendation R2:** *Districts review their plans, and the plans specific to each of their campuses, with respect to emergencies or possible disaster situations they have not anticipated.*

**Response:**

This recommendation has been implemented by the district. The *GGUSD Emergency/Disaster Preparedness and Operation Plan* is reviewed and updated at the district and site levels annually, at a minimum, to adjust for staffing changes and to reflect any beneficial changes to emergency protocols. The *Plan* is a document subject to constant improvement.

**Recommendation R3:** *Districts review their level of compliance with various existing codes, regulations, and liability insurance issues that pertain to emergency preparedness in schools.*

**Response:**

This recommendation has been implemented by the district. Volume I, Section 1, of the *GGUSD Emergency/Disaster Preparedness and Operation Plan* summarizes the laws, codes, and regulations governing emergency preparedness in California public schools. The *Plan* was developed to ensure compliance with all relevant statutes and insurance regulations, as well as district inspection requirements for hazard mitigation.

**Recommendation R4:** *Districts review their plans, and the plans specific to each of their campuses, to ascertain whether the special medical and/or prescription medication needs of all students are adequately anticipated, especially during an extended disaster situation.*

**Response:**

This recommendation has been implemented by the district. As noted in the district's response to Finding F5, "The needs of medically fragile students as well as those requiring prescription medications are addressed in the *GGUSD Emergency/Disaster Preparedness and Operation Plan*. Principals are required to maintain a list of students and staff with medical conditions or who need prescription medications (i.e. diabetes, epilepsy, asthma) or require specialized medical treatments in the event of an extended stay at the school. Such needs are also delineated through employee Incident Command System (ISC) emergency assignments for the site First Aid-Medical and Student Care teams."

**Recommendation R5:** *Districts survey their campuses with respect to the needs of non- or limited-English-speaking parents and guardians, and develop outlines or summaries of critical emergency planning information.*

**Response:**

This recommendation has been implemented by the district. As described in the district's response to Finding F7, "Printed information on school emergency planning, particularly state-mandated Earthquake Safety Procedures, are annually provided to all district parents in four languages. For the 2011-12 school year, this information is printed in the district Parent-Student Handbook, which is prepared in English, Spanish, Vietnamese, and Korean. Electronic versions of the Handbook format are posted in PDF format in the Parent Resource sections of the district website."

Along with contents in the Parent-Student Handbook, emergency planning/response and student/staff safety are topics of meetings at School Site Councils (multi-language), parent-outreach workshops (multi-language), and school safety committees.

Thank you for this opportunity to respond to the Grand Jury's report.

Sincerely,



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Sue McCann, Ed.D.  
Assistant Superintendent, Business Services

c: Orange County Grand Jury