



Episode 14: Recovery Planning and Partnerships

#REMSontheAir Podcast Intro (Recorded): [00:00:00] Welcome to the #REMSontheAir Podcast, hosted by your partners at the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Safe and Supportive Schools and its Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools Technical Assistance Center. If you're an old friend, you know us as the REMS TA Center, your national school safety center.

Join us as we chat about key topics in school and campus safety, security, and emergency management with experts and partners from the field.

Janelle Hughes: Hello and welcome back. We are so excited to host another #REMSontheAir Podcast. My name is Janelle Hughes. For those of you who may have missed the first few podcast episodes series, I am the Project Director for the REMS TA Center. Today, I'm joined by my colleague, Amanda Everett, [00:01:00] the REMS TA Center's Training Manager.

Amanda Everett: Hi, Janelle. In today's episode of #REMSontheAir, we will be discussing recovery in the context of emergency management. We'll go over how schools and institutions of higher education, or IHEs, can create comprehensive recovery plans so that if an emergency occurs, they are prepared to help their school community regain a sense of normalcy and stability.

Janelle Hughes: I'm so looking forward to diving into this conversation. Maybe let's start off by explaining recovery and its different components.

Amanda Everett: Absolutely. Schools and IHEs can consider school preparedness and emergency management through the lens of the five National Preparedness System mission areas: prevention, protection, mitigation, response, and recovery.

Each of these five mission areas play a critical role in making sure education agencies are well prepared for emergencies of [00:02:00] all types, from earthquakes to infectious disease outbreaks like COVID-19. For schools and IHEs, recovery after an emergency event is multifaceted and includes four distinct components: academic recovery; physical and structural recovery; business function recovery; and social, emotional, and behavioral recovery.

Janelle Hughes: You are spot on because recovery really is so multifaceted, and there is a lot to consider after an emergency event. Do you mind giving a brief overview of the differences between each of those four recovery components that you just named, Amanda?

Amanda Everett: Sure. Recovering from an emergency looks different for different communities and depends on the type and magnitude of the emergency experience. The first component, academics recovery, involves re-establishing the learning environment and resuming educational activities after an emergency, which is often a critical [00:03:00] step in restoring a sense of normalcy for the school community.

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The second component of recovery is physical and structural recovery. Activities that fall under this component typically include repairing any building damage that occurred as a result of the emergency. The third recovery component is business functions recovery. This involves resuming support activities that may have been impacted by the emergency, such as finance and human resource activities.

And the final component of recovery is social, emotional, and behavioral recovery. Depending on the emergency, students and staff may have experienced trauma and may need additional supports to heal and move forward.

Janelle Hughes: There is a lot of—a lot, really a lot to unpack here. It's easy to see how without a plan these recovery aspects could become so overwhelming when there is already so much to manage in the aftermath of an emergency. [00:04:00]

Amanda Everett: That's such a great point, Janelle. That's why it's so important for schools and IHEs to prepare for each of these recovery components when creating and updating their emergency operations plan or EOP. Developing an EOP is a multistep process. Understanding the components of recovery and the types of activities that make up each component can help EOP development teams gain a sense of what to include in their EOP as they move through each step of the planning process.

Janelle, could you help put all this information into a real-world context by providing our listeners with some examples of activities that will fall under each of the four recovery components?

Janelle Hughes: Sure, and I agree. That would probably be so helpful. So, let's start with academics recovery. A prime example of this is the recent school disruptions related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

To support school communities' academics recovery, [00:05:00] administrators and school staff worked quickly to transition students to remote and hybrid learning models and to distribute technology and instructional materials to families. As schools reopened, administrators and staff have had to rethink and reconfigure assessments, curricula, interventions, and extracurricular programs really to meet students and their families' needs. These are all examples of academic recovery activities.

As you recall, the second recovery component is physical and structural recovery. In the example of a natural hazard, such as a hurricane or an earthquake, schools' emergency response teams would need to conduct activities after the event, such as an assessment of building damage and a thorough cleaning of school facilities to ensure that students return to a safe and healthy environment.

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The third recovery component is business functions recovery. Examples of [00:06:00] activities that fall under this component include restoring services, such as finance and information technology, to help the school regain operational capacity.

And last, but certainly not least, that fourth component is social, emotional, and behavioral recovery. In the example of COVID-19, students and staff have experienced a range of pandemic-related traumas, from periods of social isolation to loss of loved ones due to the virus. To support students, schools have engaged in social, emotional, and behavioral recovery activities, such as conducting social-emotional assessments; expanding mental health services, including counseling; and partnering with their community-based organizations to provide wraparound services.

Amanda Everett: Those are such great examples, Janelle. You can really get a sense of how widely these activities might vary [00:07:00] depending on the context, type, and magnitude of the emergency.

Janelle Hughes: That's exactly right, Amanda. Further, each state education agency may use different approaches and techniques in collaboration with their state partners to manage recovery efforts.

We have a few examples of these approaches and how they vary across the country, and we're so excited to share these with you today.

Amanda Everett: Yes, we are excited. First, let's hear from Marilyn Lewis, a program coordinator within the Alabama Department of Education, about the system Alabama schools use to match school safety plans and collaborate with first responders to support recovery efforts.

Marilyn Lewis (Recorded): With that being said, we, again, we have in Alabama a—one system that—it's the same system for all school systems, and it is electronic. And it has capacity for our [00:08:00] school personnel to enter a safety plan and then connect that safety plan to their first responders, as well as, in emergency cases, give access to their camera system to anyone who is coming to support those efforts. And that's just something that's afforded to all schools at no cost to those schools.

Janelle Hughes: It's so great to know that there are modern solutions for coordination efforts to support school recovery and that they're offered at no cost to Alabama schools.

Amanda Everett: Yes, I agree. Collaborating with community partners is critical to successfully managing recovery efforts, and planning for these collaboration efforts in advance of an emergency is paramount.

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On the topic of collaboration. Up next, we have a clip from Jeff Hodges, a program specialist with the Georgia Department of Education, discussing how the [00:09:00] Georgia Department of Education coordinated recovery efforts with the Department of Agriculture in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

Jeff Hodges (Recorded): I know after Hurricane Katrina, there was—some of the pipelines shut down, and there was some—well, a lot of our school systems ran out of gas, ran out of fuel for the—for the buses. And so, we worked together with the Department of Agriculture to make sure that our schools had first priority to receive fuel for their buses.

Janelle Hughes: You can really get a sense of how important it is to curate and strengthen these state-level relationships across departments before emergency events happen so that everyone is ready to work together in a coordinated way when an emergency event occurs.

Amanda Everett: Absolutely. In fact, the REMS TA Center recently released a webinar on this topic, titled *Building State-Level Relationships to Support Education Agencies With Disaster [00:10:00] Response and Recovery Planning*. We'll put the link to that webinar in the episode notes.

Moving on, while state-level relationships are important to all emergency management efforts, and particularly recovery efforts, there are other local partnerships that are just as important. Let's listen to this clip from Kami Moore, a program coordinator on the School Health, Safety, and Alternative Education team within Alaska's Department of Education and Early Development. She shares the importance of school-family partnerships in the context of recovery.

Kami Moore (Recorded): Yeah, I mean, I think it depends on—one I think it depends on the community. I think that in our small rural communities, like, the school is an extension of the family in the community. Like, it's so embedded. And so, thinking through, you know, what are—what are the ways that our districts are engaging families from the beginning? Because if you're not connected to [00:11:00] families and then you're trying to do recovery efforts with these families, and you don't have any—like, you're coming in at the worst possible time, right? Like, you're coming in when emotions are high and when people are in crisis. If you don't have that existing relationship, that's going to be a much, much more challenging situation.

Janelle Hughes: I am so glad that she is helping us bring families into this conversation because emergencies don't happen in a vacuum. Typically, the whole school community is impacted. And again, we're hearing it reinforced here how critical it is to form strong relationships with a variety of partners on an ongoing basis, so the school officials can lean on these partnerships when an emergency occurs.

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Another aspect of recovery planning that is important for schools and institutions of higher education to consider is how recovery planning efforts will be integrated into all aspects of preparedness beyond just that [00:12:00] recovery annex. Let's hear from Jake Wolf, a staff services manager within the Emergency Services team of the California Department of Education on California's approach to recovery.

Jake Wolf (Recorded): And so here in the state of California, they've chosen to kind of go a different route than the standard natural disaster recovery framework. They follow, of course, you have to follow everything to get reimbursed, but as far as having the RSFs and everything else, they're—I believe that they're moving away from that. You know, it's going to be probably more like recovery is just baked into everything. And there's units that concentrate on the recovery process, but as far as like having it be completely separate? No, it's going to be all congealed together. We already have somebody in the state operations that—we have a recovery representative from recovery in the SOC gaining situational awareness, communicating with recovery, letting them know about the impacts. So, we lean forward [00:13:00] heavy on that in California.

Amanda Everett: That's so interesting. I want to emphasize this point about how the state is moving toward a model where recovery is baked into everything. That is a fantastic way to think about recovery efforts from a holistic lens, as opposed to the idea that recovery activities are distinct from other preparedness and emergency management activities.

Janelle Hughes: Exactly, Amanda. I think there's a lot to learn from that approach of California and Alaska, as well as the other partners that we've heard from today in Georgia.

Amanda Everett: Yes, I mentioned our webinar earlier, but I also wanted to note that the REMS TA Center has created multiple resources on the topic of recovery for people to check out after this episode. Download and read our fact sheet on recovery for schools and school districts to learn more about integrating recovery planning into EOP development, the four [00:14:00] recovery components, as well as key resources to support recovery planning efforts. Our topic-specific Web page on recovery also houses nearly 100 resources in both English and Spanish on multiple aspects related to recovery and recovery planning.

Janelle Hughes: As always, thank you so much for tuning in today. Remember to follow us on social media and to bookmark the #REMSontheAir hashtag to get information on the Twitter chats we'll be hosting following many of the events that we host, including our webinars.

You can tweet us using the #REMSontheAir hashtag also if you are addressing similar topics. If you have any questions related to our discussion today or just want to learn more, send us your questions by email or give us a call at 1-855-781-7367 to pose questions that we can possibly feature in this podcast.

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Amanda Everett: And don't forget that you can also email us [00:15:00] any time at info@remstacenter.org to join our mailing list, where you'll get up-to-date information on webinars, Web chats, and other virtual opportunities to learn and share.