

U.S. Department of Education Office of Safe and Healthy Students



Developing an Emergency Communication Plan for an Institution of Higher Education

Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (REMS) Technical Assistance (TA) Center



- Discuss why colleges and universities should develop an emergency communication plan
- Discuss the purpose of an emergency communication plan
- Review the components of an emergency communication plan



- Discuss the steps in developing a plan for crisis communication
- Provide an interactive exercise
- Provide an example of an emergency communication plan
- Suggest training and support resources
- Other ideas?



Who has developed an emergency or crisis communication plan?



Comprehensive Approach to Emergency Management

All-Hazards

- Natural
- Man made
- Accidental
- Combination

Four-Phases

- Prevention-Mitigation
- Preparedness
- Response
- Recovery

U.S. Department of Education ~ Office of Safe and Healthy Students

PREPAREDNESS

RESPONSE

PREVENTION-MITIGATION

RECOVERY



Comprehensive Approach to Emergency Management (continued)

- Effective communication is essential in the Response and Recovery phases of emergency management.
- However, developing an effective communication plan is critical to the Prevention-Mitigation and Preparedness phases of emergency management.
 - Helps with decision making
 - Provides a resource inventory, allowing the user to select various routes of communication
 - Identifies gaps in communication



Purposes of an Emergency Communication Plan

- Prepare the institution to effectively manage emergency communication
- Identify possible gaps in warning, notification, response and resource requests
- Provide an inventory of all existing communication technologies and a guide in how to activate, use and deploy these devices





Purposes of an Emergency Communication Plan (continued)

- Help staff to respond in an accurate, professional and timely manner.
- Manage the distribution of critical/sensitive information to the media, students, faculty and staff and general public (How-to guide).
- Demonstrates a pro-active commitment by the campus to prepare for a crisis before it happens.
- An Emergency Communication Plan will empower your staff so they know what to do, what steps to take, and how to prioritize key functions in crisis.



9

10 TV News (WBNS-TV)

Ohio Dominican Dealing With Bed Bugs In Dorms

Wednesday, April 20, 2011 5:20 PM Updated: Wednesday, April 20, 2011 7:15 PM

COLUMBUS, Ohio — The residents of a dormitory at Ohio Dominican University were getting a crash course in bed bugs on Wednesday. In central Ohio, the bed bug problem is growing more common every day, 10TV's Glenn McEntyre reported. The residents of Lynam Hall and Siena Hall have already seen the pests. The parasitic bug has been an ongoing problem for the university this year, and in October and November the school treated separate cases in those two halls. The current outbreak is in Fitzpatrick Hall, McEntyre reported. "It's just the thought of bugs in your bed. it's not pleasant at all," said sophomore Danny Desch. He does not live in Fitzpatrick Hall, but has friends who do. "It's something we try to joke about just to make it a little bit of a lighter subject," Desch said. "Don't bring bed bugs to my room! It's just not something I really want to deal with right now." Even though the outbreaks have been **U.S. Department of Edu** isolated to just a few rooms, the university is taking the problem seriously.

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Purposes of an Emergency Communication Plan (continued)

Meet the statutory requirements under the Higher Education Act of 2008 (Clery Act) amendments:

- Requires higher education institutions to convey process for mass notification use in emergencies
- Requires emergency response policies and plans
- Requires outline of training, response personnel and how system mass notification tests will be conducted
- Follows the guidance provided in the Clery-HEOA Handbook for Campus Safety & Security



Tactical Communication vs. Crisis Communication

Tactical Communication:

- Utilization of platforms to provide internal situational awareness and operational intelligence
- Utilization of platforms to provide pertinent information with responding agencies and monitor other agency traffic
- All incident communications will be either operational in nature or supportive to the operational component

Crisis Communication:

 A holistic and comprehensive message to all elements of the campus and greater communities



Sample Emergency Communication Plan Table of Contents

- Introduction
- Purpose
- Scope
- Inventory
- Impact Analysis
- Stakeholders and Flow of Information
- Incident Notification Matrix
- Deployment of Resources and Incident Communication
- Interoperability
- Communication Management
- Crisis Communication
- Index Applicable Laws and Regulations



Coordination with local, state, county and federal statues

Many plans require an index or "crosswalk" of how the plan meets local, state, county, and federal statutes, and other standards.

 Some examples of a crosswalk are the California Emergency Management Agency (CAL-EMA) model plan index, located at: <u>http://www.oes.ca.gov/WebPage/oeswebsite.nsf/ClientO</u> <u>ESFileLibrary/Plans%20and%20Publications/\$file/EOP-</u> <u>Crosswalk.doc</u>

 More examples are located at: <u>http://www.oes.ca.gov/WebPage/oeswebsite.nsf/0/9779</u> <u>73B5B933C5B18825746E005CEB62?OpenDocument</u>



Components of an Emergency Communication Plan

- Introduction
- Purpose
- Scope





Components of an Emergency Communication Plan (continued)

Inventory of Technologies:

- Types of things to inventory
 - Technologies and equipment
 - Landline telephone
 - Cell phone
 - E-mail availability
 - Multi-channel radio system

Impact Analysis:

- Interoperability
- Redundancies
- MOUs



| Device | Technology/ Backbone | Back Up | Redundant ? | Value | Loss of Use |
|--|--|--|----------------|-------|--|
| Example: Land-Line Telephone | AT&T, Verizon | Wireless Phones | Yes | 1 | Elevated telephone lines, damage to telephone switch, usage inundation to local switch |
| Wireless Telephone and SMS Messaging | Multiple Wireless Carriers | Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) Internet and E-mail for Messaging | No | 2 | Damage or destruction to wireless "cell" towers or usage inundation to the local "cell" |
| Internet / Email | AT&T, Verizon | Wireless Air Cards | Yes | 3 | Damage or destruction to ISP, Servers, and/or inundation and overwhelming local capability |
| Wireless Internet/Email (Air Cards and Wireless Phones) | AT&T, Verizon | None | No | 3 | Damage or destruction to ISP, Servers, and/or inundation and overwhelming local "cell." |
| Portable UHF Digital Radios | AWIN and Little Rock Trunked Radio Systems | Amateur "Ham" Radio System | No | 1 | |

Importance is rated in the following manner:

| | 1 | Highly Important – Critical to daily operations or vital to reach outside help and achieve communications interoperability with outside agencies. |
|--|---|---|
| | 2 | Very Important – Redundancy or back up capability as well as widespread use in day to day operations by the entirety of the College community. |
| | | Important – Redundancy or back up capability, but requires supporting technology (computers, laptops) neither accessible to entire College nor used by the entirety of the college community. |



Components of an Emergency Communication Plan

Stakeholders and Flow of Information:

- Students
- Faculty and staff
- Emergency responders
- Non-governmental responders (Red Cross, utility companies, etc...)
- Parents
- Alumni
- General public
- Local law enforcement
- Municipal/city government

Incident Notification Matrix

| Incident Impact | Notification Type | Campus Threat Assessment Group Notified |
|--|---|---|
| Large-scale impact on life safety, campus operations and/or draws media attention: •Large-scale disaster, natural or man-made •Campus shooter •Fire or bomb threat | Public Warning Emergency Notification Emergency Communications | Yes |
| May have a localized impact on individual life safety and on operations, but may not affect the campus in entirety •Medical emergency •Gas leak | Emergency Notification Emergency Communications | Yes |
| Localized or individual impact upon a component of campus operations and no impact on life safety •IT issue •Utility issue | Public Alert | No – Administrative only |



Types of Notification

- Public Alert Notification of campus and/or campus community regarding an issue impacting normal operations. A disaster or emergency situation does not exist.
- Public Warning Notification of campus and/or campus community of a disaster or emergency situation affecting both life safety and operations. The use of simple and plain language is also recommended when developing response protocols and implementation.
- Emergency Notification Notification of emergency responders to an incident that is not able to be handled by staff and requires specialized assistance and aid.
- Emergency Communication Communication between Threat Assessment Group and/or Emergency Operations Center personnel with emergency response agencies during an incident, including the sharing of information.



Components of an Emergency Communication Plan (continued)

- Deployment of Resources and Incident Communications
- Interoperability
 - extra radios if campus not on responders
 - cell phones
 - open radio frequency if available





Components of an Emergency Communication Plan (continued)

- Communication Management
- Crisis Communication





Developing a Crisis Communication Plan

- Step 1: Conduct a needs assessment
- Step 2: Establish a crisis communication team
- Step 3: Identify key constituencies (stakeholders)
- Step 4: Evaluate channels/mediums to use for public communications
- Step 5: Communicate plan in advance
- Step 6: Prepare fact sheets, talking points and media releases ahead of time that can be quickly altered
- Step 7: Develop assessments/methods of evaluation



Step 1: Conduct a Needs Assessment

- Planning, research, training and evaluation
- Message and audiences
- Messenger
- Methods of delivery
- Personnel
- Other resources
- Memorandum of Understanding (MOUs)





Step 2: Develop a Crisis Communication Team

- Who are the team members?
 - President or chancellor
 - Public information officer
 - Vice president or senior-level manager from the affected area(s)
 - Campus Police / Campus Security (Clery Act expertise)
 - Emergency manager or designee (HEOA expertise)
 - Legal counsel
 - Student representatives
- What are their responsibilities and roles?
 - Specific and non-overlapping
 - Reflect the types of crisis that the institution may experience
 - Leave no doubt as to who is in charge of each aspect of the plan
 - Specifically delegate authority for each aspect of the communications plan



- Designate one individual (usually the public information officer) to serve as the primary spokesperson
 - to represent the institution
 - to make official statements and answer media questions throughout the crisis
- Coordinate messages with local emergency responders at the Joint Information Center/Joint Information System to ensure messages are consistent
- Identify multiple backups to the designated spokesperson to fill role in the event that the primary spokesperson is unavailable



- Enlist support from competent individuals who can answer phones and - if required - escort media
- Identify individuals who will serve as technical experts or advisers
- Identify public information contacts for all other agencies involved in the crisis
- Identify the Joint Information Center (JIC)/Joint Information System (JIS) for the area and designate a liaison to represent the college/university
- Pre-Plan where a campus might want to locate a JIC on the campus (away from the EOC)





- Think through all of the roles that need to be filled on your team and make a list.
- Write a brief paragraph below each of your defined roles to further explain what the person in various roles will be responsible for and to whom he/she will report to under the structure of your campus organization.
 - Based on legal and other expertise requirements, who should be represented on the crisis communication team?
 - What expertise is required?
 - What legal mandates are required?



Step 3: Identify Key Constituencies (Stakeholders)

- Local and state law enforcement agencies and emergency responders/key personnel
- Students, administration, faculty and staff
- Parents of students
- Board of trustees
- General public
- Media
- Foundation board of directors
- Alumni
- Others?





Step 4: Evaluate Channels/Mediums to Use for Public Communications

- Internal Communication
- External Communication
- Prepare for the Media
- Prepare Emergency Kits for Crisis Communication Team/Key Personnel
- Prepare Fact Sheets, Talking Points and Media Releases
- Develop an Emergency Website Template with Pre-approved Messages
- Develop Plan for Use of New Media
- Establish Emergency Hotline and Develop Pre-approved Messages



- Develop pre-scripted messages
- Target messages to students, faculty and staff
- Adapt messages to the nature of the incident and the population(s) affected
- Provide a variety of media to support the message and publish a schedule as to when information will be released, ensuring at the very least daily updates in the following media:
 - E-mail messages
 - Text messages
 - Voice messages
 - Print materials
 - College website





- External messages directed towards external stakeholders, the community and the media
- Designate a media information center on campus as well as off campus (i.e., JIC/JIS)
- Have a predetermined schedule of availability for media
- Maintain and update a media contact list
- Establish an emergency information phone line

Prepare for the Media



- Identify possible locations for media center
 - Available with little-to-no notice
 - Equipped with Internet connections, telephone lines and other appropriate technology
 - As centrally located as possible (away from the EOC)
 - Media will need resources such as parking spaces for their vans and access to power sources





- Establish rules for the media
 - Obtain information in advance regarding interview topics
 - Prepare in detail for interviews and news conferences
 - Make major points in the form of statements
 - Try to maintain control of the interview
 - Set a time limit for interviews and media relations activities
 - Don't let reporters "wear you down"
 - Don't become so relaxed that you say something you wish you had not said



Prepare for the Media (continued)

- Prepare a media kit
 - Suggested contents:
 - College/university fact sheet or fact book
 - Map(s) of campus
 - List of key contacts/key personnel
- Media training for key personnel
 - Print, radio and television
 - Theory and practical (hands-on) interviews



Prepare Emergency Kits for Crisis Communication Team/Key Personnel

- Crisis communication team contact/role list
- Potential media center list
- Complete contact list(s)
- Printed pre-written templates and action scenarios
- CD or USB drive with information in electronic format
- Physical response necessities such as notepads, pens, maps, media credentials, letterhead, two-way radios, weather gear, laptop, mobile phone, GPS, generator



Prepare Fact Sheets, Talking Points and Media Releases

Prepare these ahead of time so they can be altered quickly in the event of an emergency







Media releases should include some standard items:

- Provide the name of organization issuing the release
- Point of Contact (Name, phone number)
- Should be numbered consecutively as they are issued
- Should also include a date and time
- Should be approved by appropriate authority before being released
- Should tell the students/public to "stay tuned" for further information and list the appropriate radio and/or TV stations to monitor at the end of each media release



Develop an Emergency Website Template with Pre-approved Messages

Template:

- <Institution> received a serious threat of a potentially violent incident on campus.
- At approximately <time, date>, the <jurisdiction> Police Department received a <nature of threat>.
- In order to ensure the safety of all students, faculty, staff and campus visitors, all locations of <institution> will be closed <day> and all classes have been canceled.
- The <campus police> is working with other area law enforcement agencies in an ongoing investigation. No further developments related to the investigation have been announced as of < time, date>.
- All campuses <will/will not> open <date>. To ensure the continued safety of all students, employees and visitors, heightened security measures are in effect.



Develop Plan for Use of New Media

You

- Social networking and microblogging
 - Facebook
 - Twitter
- Video sharing
 - YouTube
- Discussion groups
 - Google and Yahoo groups
- Really Simple Syndication (RSS) feeds
- Others?



Social Media



- Prepare to monitor social media (Twitter, Facebook, etc.) to counter misinformation, rumors or other noise that may negatively impact your campus.
- Take a lead role in social media. Good information will be parroted and re-transmitted.
- Bad information can be immediately discounted, and deescalate rumors or other misinformation.
- If you don't take lead in representing your organization somebody else will.
- Don't ignore social media it may come back to bite you.



Establish Emergency Hotline and Develop Pre-approved Messages

Template:

- Due to <severe weather>, all <institution> will be closed on <day of week>, <date or dates>. Day and evening classes have been canceled.
- Please check <website> and stay tuned to area television and radio stations for further information.



Meet with Key Constituencies on a Regular Basis

- Involve faculty and staff senates
- Involve student government association
- Involve administrative team
- Involve community at large





Step 6: Prepare Team to Carry Out the Plan

Provide Training and Conduct Exercises (test plan)

- Participate in National Incident Management System (NIMS) training
 - Crisis Communication Team
- Conduct exercises at least quarterly
 - Invite media to exercises
 - Establish relationship and familiarity
 - Participate in off-site exercises





Why develop policies and protocol for emergency communication?

- To establish clear lines of communication and authority for release of information
- To designate responsibility for collecting the information
- Designate responsibility for disseminating the information



- 1. Provide for the well-being and recovery of the communication team
- 2. Conduct public education
- 3. Monitor messages and events (media, public, partner, stakeholders)
- 4. Debrief response team (early)
 - Provide appropriate updates regarding public information activities
 - Anticipate additional communication needs



Recovery (continued)

- 5. Review data on messages, delivery and effects
 - Letters from community
 - News articles
 - Letters to editors, etc.
- 6. Compile and analyze comprehensive set of data
- 7. Develop results/lessons learned and report measures of success
- 8. Establish a new state of readiness and implement plan changes



Interactive Exercise



In this activity, you will:

- 1. Verify the situation
- 2. Assemble the crisis communication team
- 3. Assess the situation
- 4. Establish media center
- 5. Communicate with key audiences
- 6. Monitor, maintain and make adjustments for the remaining time of crisis



The Scenario

A student has reported to a student life staff member that they are feeling sick after eating in the Student Union Cafeteria last night. They tell her that their symptoms include:

- Low–Grade Fever
- Nausea & Vomiting
- Abdominal Cramping
- Watery Diarrhea
- General Weakness



- The student has been sent to the health center.
- The student is slightly dehydrated.
- The student lived on campus.
- Other calls are coming in with reports of students with nausea and vomiting after eating in common areas, dining halls, and doing homework in the study halls.
- What are the suspected cause(s) of the illness?



Step 1: Verify the Situation

How are you going to verify the information?





Step 2: Identify Key Stakeholders

Who are your key stakeholders/audiences?

- Victims
- Victim families
- Emergency responders
- Law enforcement
- Campus at large
- The media
- General public
- Public health
- Hospitals
- Faculty and staff





Who are other key partners in validating the crisis?

- Victims obtain a recent history of their activities
- Check in with Residential Aides (RA)
- Campus health services (on and off-campus)
- Facilities staff (clean-up and sanitation requests)
- Social Media posts (Twitter/Facebook)
- Rumors floating around illness
- Check with local ER/Hospital/Health Department
- Check with Local Utilities for spikes in water usage from excess flushing



- Implement a campus-wide hand washing protocol.
- Place alcohol-based hand sanitizers (≥62% ethanol) may be helpful as an adjunct method of hand hygiene, but should not replace washing with soap and water.
- Clean and disinfect all common (congregating) areas (dining tables, bathrooms, kitchens, study areas, etc.)
- If you are sick, stay home.
- Review the Continuity of Operations Plan for academic continuity.



- Within 6 hours, approximately 20 percent of one student resident hall reported students are now exhibiting symptoms of gastro-intestinal discomfort.
- The students, faculty, staff, parents, and community are concerned and want information.
- The local press is seeking information via email, telephone, and personal visits to campus.
- **1.** What are your priorities in managing this crisis?
- 2. What do you suspect the illness is?
- **3.** Are there any mandated actions you must take?





Mandated actions

- Page 98, Chapter 6 of HEOA Handbook:
 - Norovirus is considered under Clery and HEOA to be, upon confirmation, to be a "significant emergency" or "dangerous situation" involving an immediate threat to the health and safety of students or employees on campus.
- You must warn your campus community under the "Emergency Notification and Timely Warnings" element of Clery/HEOA.
- IHEs should develop a policy and procedure.



Who at the school should be responsible for communicating with the public?

What information does each stakeholder group need to know?

- What will be the main objectives of your communications?
- What are your challenges?





Would you set up a media staging area? If so, where?

- How will you communicate the message and the facts?
- How will you control the message?
- How will you control the flow of information?
- What could the communications center do to help you with your job?
- Is there a JIC/JIS established for the community?



Step 6: Communicate with Key Audiences/Stakeholders

- Who are your key audiences?
- What are your key messages at various stages of the emergency?
- Identify available mediums and determine which ones to use to communicate the message.
- How will you communicate the message and the facts?
- How will you activate crisis website, social media and crisis hotline?
- What type of guidance will you provide to the public?
- How will you control the message?
- How will you control the flow of information?



Step 7: Monitor, Maintain and Make Adjustments for the Life of the Crisis

 How will you monitor, maintain and make adjustments for the remaining life of the crisis?





Tips for Public Information Officers and Other Spokespersons



News Releases and Prepared Statements to Key Constituencies

- Prepared statement(s) on hand
- Initial news release who, what, when and where of the situation
- As the crisis progresses, develop prepared statements to be made by the spokesperson
- Collateral materials can be helpful (brochures, maps, etc.)





- Remain approachable and confident
- Answer only the questions asked and answer them as succinctly and clearly as possible
- Remember that you do not always have to know everything
- Avoid allowing one individual to dominate the questions by moving on
- Remain long enough to give individuals an opportunity to talk with you
- Make arrangements to distribute information to the group, if requested and/or appropriate

Dos and Don'ts



Do's

- Do use specifics/facts
- Do use contrasts and comparisons
- Do be confident and cool
- Do be a good listener
- Do be correct/accurate
- Do be anecdotal (reporters often look for anecdotal leads)

Don'ts

- If you don't have the answer or can't answer, do admit it and move on to another topic
- Don't accept "what if" or "laundry list" questions
- Don't go "off the record"
- Don't think you have to answer every question – avoid using "no comment"
- Don't speak for someone else





When drafting a plan

- Write it.
- Have a committee review it.
- Revise it.
- Practice/exercise it.



Helpful Tips



Each time you rewrite your emergency communication plan, make it *less complex* and more *fail proof*.

- Make sure it is easy to read and to understand
- Does not have to be lengthy
- Make sure all possibilities have been considered



Common Pitfalls/Mistakes

- Failure to plan
- Failure to prepare for the media
- Failure to realize the impact of social media
- Failure to tell the truth (and nothing but the truth)





- Importance of developing an emergency communication plan
- Main purposes of an emergency communication plan
- Components of an emergency communication plan
- Steps in developing a crisis communication plan
- Tips for public information officers and other media spokespersons
- Training and support resources





- Crisis in Organizations: Managing and Communicating in the Heat of Crisis by Laurence Barton
- You'd Better Have a Hose if You Want to Put Out the Fire: The Complete Guide to Crisis and Risk Communications by Rene A. Henry
- Jane's Crisis Communication Handbook by Louie Fernandez and Martin Merzer
- The Handbook of Crisis Communication by Timothy Coombs and Sherry Holladay
- Handbook for Campus Safety and Security Reporting U.S. Department of Education (February 2011)



Support Resources

- Local emergency management agency
- Local public safety agencies
- Local emergency planning committee
- State and local Homeland Security agencies
- College/university communication office
- American Red Cross Disaster Public Affairs Team
- Local Public Relations Society of America chapter
- Local International Association of Business Communicators chapter
- Local utility companies public affairs offices



Training Resources

Federal Emergency Management Agency's Exercise Development and Design Courses Online Training

- IS-100.HE Introduction to the Incident Command System for Higher Education
- IS-200 (ICS 200) ICS for Single Resource and Initial Action Incidents
- IS-700.a National Incident Management System (NIMS), An Introduction
- IS-702.a National Incident Management System (NIMS), Public Information Systems
- IS-704 NIMS Communications and Information Management
- IS-800.b National Response Framework, An Introduction
- IS-242 Effective Communication
- G402 Incident Command System (ICS) Overview for Executives/Senior Officials



- FEMA offers Public Information Officer (PIO) training courses at no cost. These courses include:
 - Basic Public Information Officers
 - Public Information Training (E388, Advanced Public Information Officers and G290)
- Information for both courses is available online at <u>http://www.training/fema/gov/EMIWeb?EMICourses/EMI</u> <u>Course.asp</u>



- Establishing and Developing Strategic Partnerships with Media Representatives (REMS TA Center Helpful Hints) <u>http://rems.ed.gov/views/documents/HH_Vol2Issue8.pdf</u>
- Risk Communication Planning Guide (University of Minnesota)
 <u>http://www.ific.org/riskcommunication/trainingmodules/upload</u>
 <u>/M4%20T1%20Risk%20Comm%20Planning%20Guide%201</u>
 <u>%2020%2007.doc</u>.
- Communicating in a Emergency: Risk Communication Guidelines for Public Officials (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration)

http://www.riskcommunication.samhsa.gov/RiskComm.pdf.



- Emergency Response Public Information Toolkit for Local Public Health Agencies (State of Missouri, Department of Health, and Senior Services) http://www.dhss.mo.gov/LPHA_Toolkit/Chap2/index.html
- News release templates and media checklists (U.S. Department of Energy, Emergency Management Issues Special Interest Group)

http://orise.orau.gov/emi/epi/template_checklist.htm

 CDC Crisis and Risk Communications (CERC) training program <u>http://www.bt.cdc.gov/CERC/</u>



Handbook for Campus Crime & Safety Reporting (Feb. 2011)

http://www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/campus.html

Campus Crime & Safety Reporting Technical Assistance

- Help Desk #: 1-800-435-5985
- Help Desk email: <u>Campussecurityhelp@westat.com</u>



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For More Information Contact:

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- The center supports schools and school districts in developing and implementing comprehensive emergency management plans by providing technical assistance via trainings, publications and individualized responses to requests.
- For additional information about school emergency management topics, visit the REMS TA Center at http://rems.ed.gov or call 1-866-540-REMS (7367). For information about the REMS grant program, contact Tara Hill (tara.hill@ed.gov).
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