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**OPERATION TINY GUARDIANS: LOCAL HEALTHCARE, EDUCATION, LAW ENFORCEMENT,
AND OTHERS PARTNER FOR SAFETY TRAINING EXERCISE**

Wenatchee, WA: On Friday, November 15th, Confluence Health, Wenatchee School District, Wenatchee Valley Fire Department, Washington State Patrol, Chelan-Douglas Health District, Link Transit, RiverCom, Lifeline, Life Flight, and Airlift NW will partner for a safety training exercise to better coordinate efforts to protect the community.

For the exercise, a simulated school bus crash incident involving fictional pediatric and adult injuries will be addressed by first responders near Columbia Elementary School in Wenatchee. Volunteers will play the role of patients who have been assigned simulated injuries; the fictional patients will have their condition and status indicated on cards, and some will also have simulated injuries depicted with makeup applied by moulage artists to help add to the realism of the exercise. After first responders triage and initially treat those at the scene, the volunteers acting as patients will be transferred as needed to Confluence Health facilities to allow medical staff to practice treating and managing an influx of wounded pediatric patients.

Confluence Health will also activate their Hospital Incident Command System (HICS) along with the Disaster Medical Coordination Center (DMCC) at this time to practice coordinating care and transferring of the fictional patients to appropriate points of care outside of the area as would be needed in a real incident. Additionally, because this event includes fictional minor patients, Confluence Health will also activate its Emergency Response Team alongside the Chelan-Douglas Health District Reserve Medical Corps to practice managing a pediatric safe zone to care for unaccompanied minors and assist in the reunification process with their parents or authorized adult.

“Full-scale exercises like this offer important opportunities for local law enforcement, first responders, educators, and medical staff to come together and use their emergency plans in something resembling a real incident,” remarked Jean-Michael Dapena-Torres, emergency preparedness coordinator for Confluence Health and exercise director for the event. “By doing this, we can learn about areas that are working as intended and those where we need to make improvements. In addition, this importantly allows us to all come together as a multi-organization team to ensure we can best protect and serve our community.”

Due to the nature of the exercise, the public may see increased first responder and law enforcement presence near Columbia Elementary School and other areas in the Wenatchee Valley during the event on November 15th, along with simulated patients in makeup near a school bus involved in the fictional crash.

“It’s important that everyone understands this is just a simulation to help us to improve. We want to be sure that our exercise doesn’t alarm anyone in the area, but, at the same time, the more realism we can bring to the event, the better we can prepare and address areas of needed improvement,” continued Dapena-Torres.

In addition to the important opportunity to allow law enforcement, first responders, and healthcare professionals to implement their emergency procedures in a simulation, the upcoming exercise also provides a chance for local educators to vet their own protocols and to better coordinate with other agencies and organizations on ensuring safety for the youngest residents and the educators that work with them.

“The safety of our students and faculty is our top priority, and this training exercise is an essential step in ensuring that we are prepared for any emergency,” commented Dr. Kory Kalahar, superintendent for the Wenatchee School District, which is partnering for the exercise and providing both the school bus and facility that will be used as the fictional accident scene. “We are grateful for the collaboration with our first responders and the unique opportunity to use Columbia Elementary for this important exercise.”

About Confluence Health

Confluence Health serves the largest geographic region of any healthcare system in Washington State, covering over 12,000 square miles of Okanogan, Grant, Douglas, and Chelan counties. Confluence Health is one of only two locally-lead healthcare systems in the state with the purpose of maintaining availability and access to high-quality, cost-effective healthcare services for North Central Washington. The Confluence Health Board of Directors provides governance for Confluence Health and includes nine community board members and six physician board members.

For More Information

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