



# Empowering Marion Independent School District with Real-Time Crisis Response and Communication

## Checklists, Drill Management, FrontRow, and Grants

### Creating a Multi-Layered Safety Solution

In today's educational environment, safety remains a top priority as school districts across the nation face an increased need to prepare for potential crises. For Peggy Murphy, Director of Technology for Marion Independent School District, creating a culture of preparedness and security has been a major focus since she began her role five years ago. Witnessing the ongoing increase in school emergencies, she recognized early on the need for a reliable, accessible safety system. That search led her to CrisisGo, an application designed to keep everyone in the loop during emergencies with integrated alerts, checklists, and other critical safety tools. With federal grants and a commitment to securing a multi-layered safety solution, Peggy has championed the integration of CrisisGo and FrontRow, a seamless partnership that has empowered her school district to implement robust safety protocols effectively.



### Customer Profile

Founded in 1847, Marion Independent School District (MISD) has a longstanding commitment to providing high-quality, student-centered education to the Marion, Iowa, community. With a focus on fostering a safe, inclusive, and innovative learning environment, MISD empowers students to thrive and prepares them for success in an ever-evolving world.

**Industry:** Preschool - 12th Grade

**Region:** Marion, IA

**Total Buildings:** 6

**Total Students:** 3,100

**Customer Since:** March, 2024

## Challenges Before CrisisGo

Before adopting CrisisGo, the district faced the challenge of making safety information immediately accessible to every staff member. Traditional flip charts with procedures were cumbersome and difficult to update or access quickly. Peggy knew that in an emergency, there would be little time to reference static documents. She explains, "One of the biggest hurdles was getting everyone the information they needed at their fingertips. With CrisisGo, everyone has everything they need in one place, which has streamlined our processes and keeps us prepared."

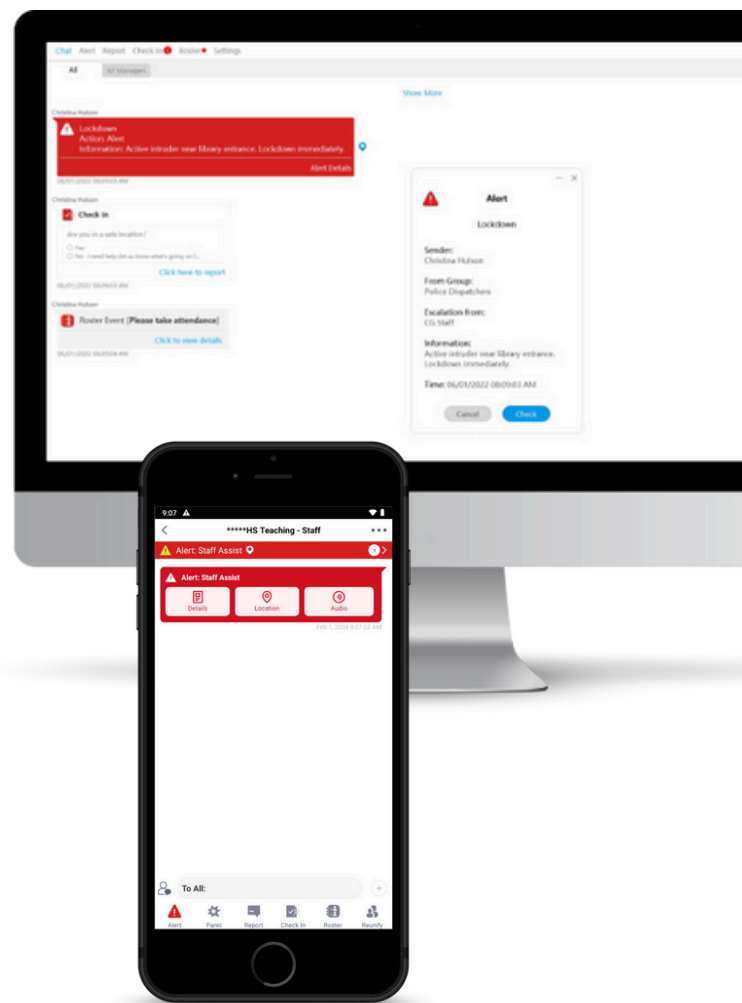
By integrating CrisisGo with the school's student information system (SIS), Peggy ensured that rosters, checklists, and vital contact information were immediately accessible through the CrisisGo app on staff members' phones or tablets. "Since we're integrated with the SIS, everybody has their rosters," she explains. "Now everyone has access to checklists and alerts that are customized for their role, which means staff can react faster and more confidently in an emergency."

## A Vision for Comprehensive School Safety

As Peggy took on the responsibility of overseeing technology, she prioritized safety as a cornerstone of her initiatives. Her motivation was driven by the alarming rise in school emergencies across the country. She recalls attending conferences like ISTE and FETC, where she first learned about CrisisGo, and was immediately drawn to its potential. This vision led her to set up a demo with CrisisGo and explore funding options to bring this system to her district.

Funding remained a significant hurdle, but Peggy was determined. Through research, she discovered the federal COPS grant and saw it as the perfect opportunity to cover the costs of implementing CrisisGo. "Funding is always an issue for public schools," Peggy explained, "and we've been fortunate enough to receive a COPS grant. This is how we've been able to implement and pay for three years of CrisisGo."

She notes that the grant gave them "the huge benefit of being able to get started and implement something with this much power and strength behind it."



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**Peggy Murphy**

**Technology Director**

**Marion Independent School District**

## Integrating FrontRow with CrisisGo

Peggy's district took its safety measures a step further by incorporating FrontRow, an integrated communication system by Boxlight. FrontRow enables teachers to activate alerts through wearable microphones, which can trigger a crisis alert to the office and sync with CrisisGo. "Right now we're using the app. We do have panic buttons coming, though," Peggy explained, noting that FrontRow adds another layer to their safety plans.

This two-way communication setup is particularly beneficial in critical situations, as it ensures teachers can alert administrators immediately with a simple button press on their wearable devices. Peggy also noted that FrontRow's wearable devices have been strategically assigned based on specific roles. For example, PE teachers and staff who may not have the wearable microphones are provided with a separate wearable panic button, further enabling them to alert administrators if necessary. "We're going to have certain people on the staff who will have the wearable panic button," she said. "We're planning to distribute these to teachers who don't have the wearable mic."



**FrontRow Action! Mics**  
by Boxlite

Peggy emphasized that the combination of CrisisGo and FrontRow supports a dynamic, responsive safety system in each school, highlighting that integrating CrisisGo with existing systems maximizes the effectiveness of both platforms. "That's the perfect example of how CrisisGo and FrontRow integrate," added CrisisGo representative, Don Gemeinhardt, "making it easier to implement upgrades without replacing legacy systems."

## Leveraging Grant Funding

Peggy's experience underscores the importance of grant funding in making advanced school safety systems a reality. She and her team applied for and received a COPS grant, which provides 75% of the necessary funds, requiring only a 25% match from the district. This approach made it much easier to secure school board approval. "It's hard for any school board to turn down funding that supports the safety of our students and staff," Peggy notes.

The federal grant process can seem daunting, especially to smaller districts that may lack grant-writing experience. Peggy, however, encourages other districts to embrace this opportunity: "Don't be afraid to try, and give yourself time to get all the accounts and paperwork set up. Once you're in the system, it's easier than it looks." As a technology director with a teaching background, Peggy didn't have prior experience with federal grants, but with support from her CrisisGo representatives, she successfully navigated the application process and found it to be well worth the effort.

Don Gemeinhardt, who assists schools with the grant process, highlights how CrisisGo supports districts through each stage—from identifying the right grant to managing the ongoing reporting requirements. “Many schools hesitate because grants are unfamiliar territory, but it’s less complicated than it appears. CrisisGo offers grant assistance, ensuring that districts can manage the reporting and accountability requirements of federal funding,” Gemeinhardt shares. For districts interested in this process, Peggy’s experience is an inspiring model of how a willingness to pursue grant funding can significantly enhance school safety measures.

## Implementing and Customizing CrisisGo

The CrisisGo implementation process was steady and collaborative, with Peggy acknowledging the extensive support her team received. CrisisGo staff held weekly meetings with Peggy to ensure her timelines were met and that she received help whenever she encountered roadblocks. She recalls, “CrisisGo has been very supportive and understanding that my role isn’t solely to implement CrisisGo. They’ve been very patient with me over the summer as I’ve had time to build out the program and work with them.”

Peggy’s favorite feature of CrisisGo is its checklists, a tool that allows teachers and staff to follow step-by-step protocols without the need to memorize complex procedures. “In a situation where everyone’s anxiety is through the roof and it’s very hard to think straight,” she says, “this will provide them with something that they can look at and work through and not have to worry about thinking what their next step is.” With preset alerts for specific scenarios and severe weather, staff can quickly select the appropriate response and refer to checklists to navigate the situation.

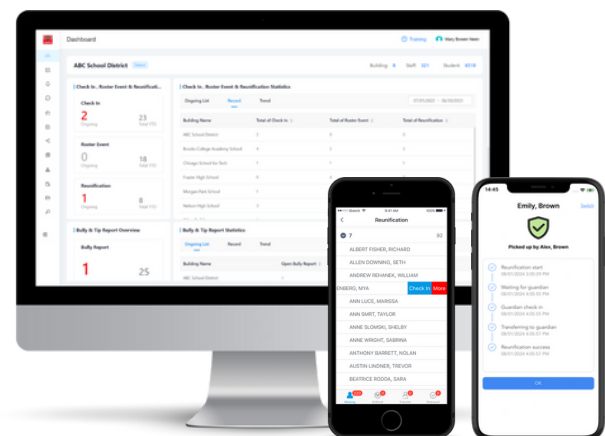
## Changing the Culture of Safety and Building Community Trust

Since adopting CrisisGo, Peggy has observed a noticeable improvement in her district’s safety culture. Not only are staff members more aware of safety procedures, but there is also an increased sense of confidence among parents and the broader community. “Our school improvement advisory meetings look very different now,” she says. “Year one, when they asked about safety, looks a lot different than now in year four when we talk about what we have in place for school safety.” By integrating a reunification site and regularly holding drills, the district has made safety a visible priority.

Peggy’s district has also organized walkthroughs at the designated reunification site to familiarize staff with procedures, reinforcing community trust and preparedness. “Now we’re able to show the community all these different steps that we have prepared and have been very planful about them. So I think that overall safety culture has improved greatly.”

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**Peggy Murphy**



## Conclusion:

Peggy's experience with CrisisGo and FrontRow demonstrates the value of integrating advanced technology into school safety procedures. With accessible federal grant funding, districts of any size can significantly improve their safety infrastructure. By following Peggy's example, schools can apply for grants to finance critical technology like CrisisGo and FrontRow, building a safer environment for students and staff alike.

Peggy encourages other districts to take advantage of these resources: "If you have the chance to apply for a grant, do it. There's no reason not to try. The tools we now have because of it—like CrisisGo and FrontRow—are invaluable."

For districts nationwide, the path to school safety has never been more accessible. Through CrisisGo's grant assistance, schools can apply for federal funding, enabling them to initiate projects that were previously out of reach. With CrisisGo, FrontRow, and supportive grant initiatives, schools can focus on what matters most: a secure, prepared learning environment for every student and staff member.

## Additional Resources

COPS Grants: <https://cops.usdoj.gov/grants>

Bluum: <https://www.bluum.com/>

