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Harrison Central School District

How CrisisGo's Controlled Release Modernized Rapid Dismissal with Confidence

For Harrison Central School District, safety has never been treated as a static plan that lives on a shelf. It is something that has to function in real time, under real pressure, with real people making fast decisions. That belief has shaped how the district approaches preparedness—and why it has invested so deeply in tools that can stand up to real-world use.

Located in Westchester County, just north of New York City, Harrison serves roughly 3,800 students across six schools. District leaders know that when an emergency occurs, the difference between confusion and calm often comes down to preparation and communication. Systems need to be familiar. Expectations need to be clear. And technology has to support people, not distract from them. That mindset is what led Harrison to CrisisGo nearly a decade ago—and why the partnership has continued to evolve ever since.

A Culture Built on Trust and Shared Responsibility

From implementation in 2018, Harrison's leadership saw CrisisGo as more than a notification tool. What stood out was the way the platform empowered staff to take action when it mattered most. The district made an intentional decision to authorize every employee to initiate a lockdown if they believed there was an immediate safety concern. It was a move rooted in trust and realism.

"In those moments, you don't always have time to find the right administrator," said Brian Ladewig, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources. "Seconds matter. If someone sees something that doesn't feel right, we want them to be able to act, which is why we gave every employee the ability to lockdown the school from their CrisisGo app."

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That philosophy became a cornerstone of Harrison's safety culture. CrisisGo gave staff a consistent way to communicate, initiate protocols, and connect with the district's safety team, all from a single platform. Over time, that foundation allowed the district to expand its use of the system—layering in roster events, accountability tools, and closer coordination with local law enforcement.

As the district's needs grew, so did its expectations.

The Challenge of Emergency Dismissal

One of the most complex scenarios Harrison plans for is an unexpected early dismissal. Long before CrisisGo entered the picture, the district made a firm decision: elementary students would never be sent home on buses during emergency releases. Without certainty that an adult would be there to meet them, the risk was simply too high.

Instead, every child must be released directly to a verified parent, guardian, or emergency contact. While the policy was clear, the process itself had always been labor-intensive. Staff relied on paper logs, visual ID checks, and handwritten signatures—methods that worked, but left room for error and added stress during already tense moments.

District leaders knew the process could be safer, more efficient, and easier on staff.

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When CrisisGo introduced its Controlled Release feature, Harrison saw an opportunity to rethink the entire experience.

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## Bringing Controlled Release Into the Real World

The district chose to introduce Controlled Release during a familiar scenario: the annual rapid release drill held just before Thanksgiving break. The drill is designed to simulate the type of early dismissal that might be required due to weather or another urgent situation, making it an ideal setting to test the workflow under realistic conditions.

Ahead of the drill, parents, guardians, and emergency contacts received clear communication and a unique QR code generated through CrisisGo. The goal was not just to test the technology, but to see how it fit into the natural rhythm of a busy dismissal.

As families arrived on campus, staff used the QR codes to quickly confirm student identification, and complete the release without slowing the process down. Each handoff was automatically documented, creating a reliable, timestamped record without requiring staff to stop and log information manually.

What had once depended on clipboards and constant cross-checking now unfolded more smoothly. Staff were able to stay focused on students and families—answering questions, offering reassurance, and keeping things moving—while the system quietly handled the documentation in the background.

"It felt calmer," Ladewig said. "There was a sense that the process was supporting us, rather than us having to manage the process."
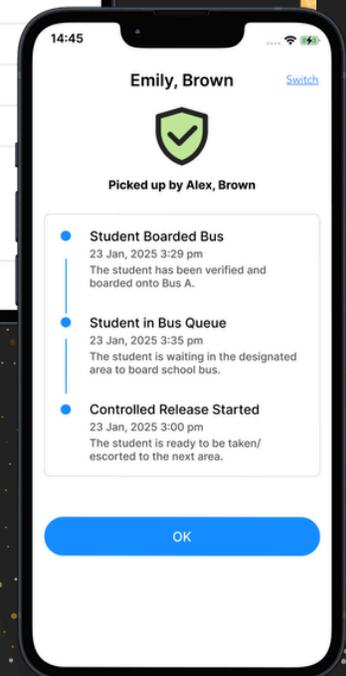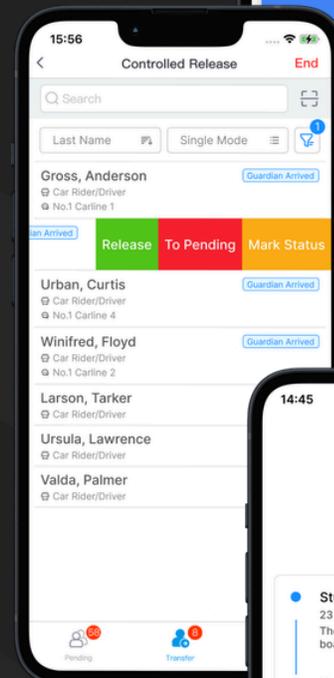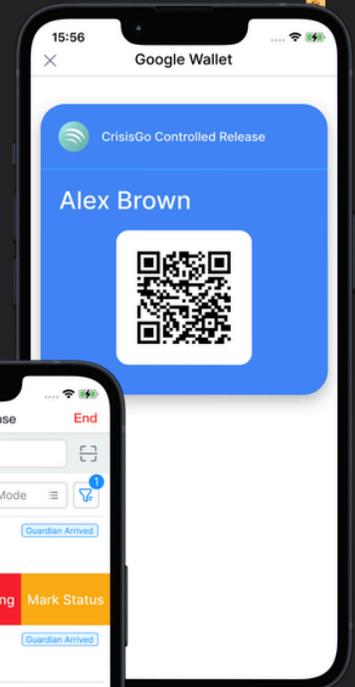
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Strengthening Systems Through Partnership

Running the drill at scale provided valuable insight, and Harrison worked closely with the CrisisGo team to review how the system performed under real-world conditions. Together, they examined data, confirmed system safeguards, and ensured the platform was fully prepared to support future use at high volume. For Harrison, this type of collaboration is essential. "We don't just want something that works in theory," Ladewig explained. "We want to know how it performs when it's being used the way it actually would be in a real situation."

That approach reflects the broader relationship between the district and CrisisGo—one defined by transparency, responsiveness, and a shared commitment to continuous improvement.

A Better Experience for Staff and Families

Feedback from the drill was telling. Teachers, many of whom had managed emergency dismissals using paper-based systems for years, described the Controlled Release process as intuitive and noticeably easier to manage. The clarity of the workflow reduced cognitive load at a moment when attention is often divided.

> *"That level of partnership is exactly what we've come to expect from CrisisGo."*
>
> Brian Ladewig
> Assistant Supoerintendent for Human Resources
>
> Harrison Central School District

Parents also responded positively. Knowing there was a precise digital record of when their child was released—and to whom—added a layer of reassurance that hadn't existed before.

District leaders noted that Controlled Release felt more flexible and usable than traditional reunification models, which often rely on rigid role assignments and complex handoffs that can be difficult to manage under pressure.

"In an emergency, you need to stay nimble," Ladewig said. "This gave us structure without slowing us down."

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Part of a Larger Safety Ecosystem

Controlled Release is just one piece of Harrison's broader safety strategy. CrisisGo is integrated into daily operations across the district. Student information systems feed emergency contacts directly into the platform. QR codes help track high school students who leave and return to campus during the day. Local police officers receive alerts and access dynamic floor plans through CrisisGo Connect, creating shared situational awareness when it matters most.

For Brian Seligman, Director of Technology, the integration is often what surprises new staff the most.

"When we train new teachers or administrators, they're genuinely floored," he said. "They realize very quickly that this isn't just another app. It's how we communicate and account for people during critical moments."

Confidence Built Through Practice

Harrison's approach to safety emphasizes repetition and familiarity. Drills are not treated as compliance exercises, but as opportunities to build confidence and reinforce expectations.

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CrisisGo has become a focal point for that work. Staff know how to use it. Parents recognize the notifications. Law enforcement partners understand how information flows during an incident.

Over time, that familiarity changes behavior.
"It's not about knowing every possible scenario," Ladewig said. "It's about knowing what to do in the first few moments—and knowing you're supported when you take action."

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Looking Ahead

As Harrison continues to refine its safety practices, district leaders see even more potential in tools like Controlled Release. Ideas around expanded QR-based accountability, digital student identification, and deeper system integrations continue to surface, driven by real-world use and thoughtful collaboration.

For now, the Thanksgiving drill served its purpose. It reinforced preparation, strengthened partnerships, and demonstrated what's possible when technology is built to support people—not the other way around.

> *"The best safety tools are the ones that work quietly in the background, CrisisGo has become that for us."*
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CrisisGo has been leading the K-12 industry since 2013, setting the standard for school safety. Our comprehensive emergency and safety management platform empowers schools with real-time alerting, incident management, visitor management, threat and behavioral intervention features, and reunification solutions. CrisisGo also offers comprehensive training to equip staff and teachers with handling emergencies. CrisisGo consistently innovates to enhance K-12 security, partnering with educators and administrators to create safe and nurturing learning environments and redefining school safety for a brighter future in education.

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