

**Mid-Missouri  
School Counselor Association**

**CRISIS RESPONSE  
MANUAL**

Revised October, 2003

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Crisis Response information was gathered from the following resources:

Missouri School Counselor Association Crisis Manual

Columbia Public Schools= Crisis Plan

Karol Godsey; Millard Public Schools= Crisis Team

Southwest Missouri School Counselor Association Crisis Plan

St. Joseph School District Crisis Plan

Georgia School Counselors Association Crisis Management Plan

American School Counselor Association

Dr. Scott Poland; Past President of the National Association of School  
Psychologists

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## INTRODUCTION

When a young person or staff member dies, whether from an accident, suicide, or violence, the school community is left in turmoil. In today's society, educators are continually faced with situations that can cause education to come to a complete standstill. Because schools are committed to providing for the well being of their students, the counselors in Mid Missouri have joined together to form the Mid Missouri School Counselors Association Critical Incident Response Team to help each other assist schools in crisis.

### What is a Crisis?

A crisis is an event that is extraordinary. It cannot be predicted. A crisis is any event that affects the emotional stability of students and/or staff and disrupts the educational process. Crises range in scope and intensity from incidents that directly or indirectly affect a single student to ones that impact the entire community. Crises can happen before, during, or after school and on or off school campuses. The definition of a crisis varies with the unique needs, resources, and assets of a school and community. Staff and students may be severely affected by an incident in another city or state. The events of Columbine and September 11 left the entire nation feeling vulnerable.

Crises can involve natural, social, environmental and economic events. For example:

- Natural Disasters: tornado, earthquake, flood, hurricane
- Severe weather
- Fires
- Student or staff deaths: accidental or natural death, suicide, homicide
- Terrorism
- Chemical or hazardous material spills
- Bus crashes
- Bomb threats
- Medical emergencies
- School shootings
- Acts of terror or war

MMSCA Critical Incident Response  
Resource Manual

## **Statement of Purpose (adapted from the MSCA Crisis Manual):**

The leading causes of death for children are accidents, homicides and suicides. In the State of Missouri, accidents are the leading cause of death among youth, and suicide remains the third leading cause of death. In addition, many young people are now involved in violent deaths. Schools are committed to providing for the emotional well being of students. During a crisis, schools in the Mid Missouri School Counselor Association (MMSCA) District have access to the Critical Incident Response Team. This team can further the emotional well-being in schools in several ways:

1. Local staff members may be in need of personal support during a crisis.
2. The crisis team functions, as the local school needs it to, from individual counseling with students, to meeting with entire classrooms, to consulting with local staff members. The team members are flexible enough to meet the needs of the specific school within the framework of that school's crisis plan.
3. A crisis team member can serve as a consultant to an administrator or counselor, rather than having an entire team travel to the school.

It will be the goal of the crisis team to help schools return to normal relatively soon while caring for the emotional needs of the school community. The team will help schools with the initial crisis, leaving them to better care for students in the following days.

The Chinese symbol for crisis means both danger and opportunity, and it is our wish that students come through a crisis in a healthy way.

## **School District Responsibilities:**

Individual school districts should all have a Crisis Plan in place. Many schools already have a Crisis Plan in place and know how they may use the Critical Incident Response Team if needed. Of course, all situations are different, and no one can be completely prepared, but a Crisis Plan for a school building can help in time of distress.

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE BUILDING PLAN

*The guidelines below address emergency or crisis situations. Whether or not these recommendations are used in each situation will depend upon the discretion and judgment of the building team. (See Building Plan Worksheet)*

Essential components include:

1. Identification of a coordinator at the beginning of each school year to assist the principal in the selection of the building team and to fulfill the functions of the building emergency/crisis intervention plan.
2. An emergency/crisis team. Suggestions for selection include:
  - a. Identifying faculty/staff members who are interested and committed to being involved. The number of members will vary depending on the size of the building.
  - b. Selecting those who:
    1. Relate well with others
    2. Have leadership skills
    3. Can function and think under pressure
    4. Have a sense of responsibility
    5. Have a sense of humor
    6. Are familiar with the school district/building policy
    7. Are flexible and teachable
    8. Will attend in-service training
3. An evacuation shelter in close proximity to the school building with at least two alternate routes identified. A school may wish to designate two evacuation sites, if possible, in case one site is not accessible.
4. A phone tree which will enable the faculty and staff to be contacted within 15 minutes.
5. A plan for notifying parents of their child's location in the event of evacuation. This would be by radio, television, etc.
6. A strategy for dealing with the media including identifying a contact person. The district administration staff would need to be consulted.

7. A plan for a faculty meeting to be held as soon as possible after becoming knowledgeable of the event.
8. A plan for securing entrance into the building throughout the emergency. This should include identification badges for all approved incoming personnel.
9. A designated area apart from the school office, which will contain at least two additional phone jacks. Consider having personnel available after school hours to answer the phones.
10. A designated area for the crisis team to meet.
11. A room(s) to be used for small group counseling.
12. A procedure for keeping all parents informed of the school's activities in regard to the emergency. These could include a letter home, parent meeting, or other correspondence.
13. A plan for follow-up activities.
  - a. Counseling sessions for students and faculty.
  - b. An open-door policy for parents.
  - c. A list of community resources for further help.
  - d. A time for the building team and those involved to debrief and evaluate the situation as well as time to relax, regroup, and support each other.
14. An attached floor plan of the school including all portable classrooms and storage buildings.
15. A plan for at least two ways to signal persons in the building that the emergency plan is being activated, i.e. walkie-talkies, etc.
16. A procedure for introducing the parents, faculty, and students to the building plan.
17. A plan for communicating with Emergency Services (Fire, Police, Medical) if phones are not operational.

# BUILDING PLAN WORKSHEET

This is to be used as a planning device BEFORE an emergency or crisis occurs AND as a worksheet AFTER an emergency/crisis has occurred. Some items can be decided upon before an emergency or crisis and will always remain the same, while others will vary with the situation. Make a copy of this "Planning sheet (with "permanent" items already completed) and complete the other items as appropriate when responding to an emergency or crisis. Copies of the completed form can then be distributed to staff for their reference throughout the emergency or crisis.

Date \_\_\_\_\_

School \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Principal \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_

1. Coordinator \_\_\_\_\_ Extension \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_

    Alternate \_\_\_\_\_ Extension \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_

## 2. Crisis Team Members

\_\_\_\_\_ Extension \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Extension \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Extension \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Extension \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Extension \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_

## 3. Completed Phone Tree

## 4. Media Information (Phone Numbers)

Radio Stations

TV Stations

Newspaper

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Media Contact Person \_\_\_\_\_

Location of media \_\_\_\_\_



5. Location of Evacuation Shelter(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Route #1 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Route #2 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6. Building security; plan for monitoring entrances to building.

Entrance Location

Who Will Monitor Entrance

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

7. Plan for notifying faculty.

\_\_\_\_\_ Faculty Meeting      Possible Times for Meeting \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Contact faculty by phone at their homes

(Activate phone tree or decide who will place calls.)

\_\_\_\_\_ Send memo to each faculty member-explaining crisis

8. Plan for notifying students that a crisis has occurred.

\_\_\_\_\_ Teachers announce crisis to their individual classes

\_\_\_\_\_ Announcement made over the intercom

9. Plan for informing parents

\_\_\_\_\_ Letter Home-Who will write the letter? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Parent-Meeting How to notify of meeting? \_\_\_\_\_

10. Arrangements for group counseling

Location/Room #	Person Responsible for Group
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

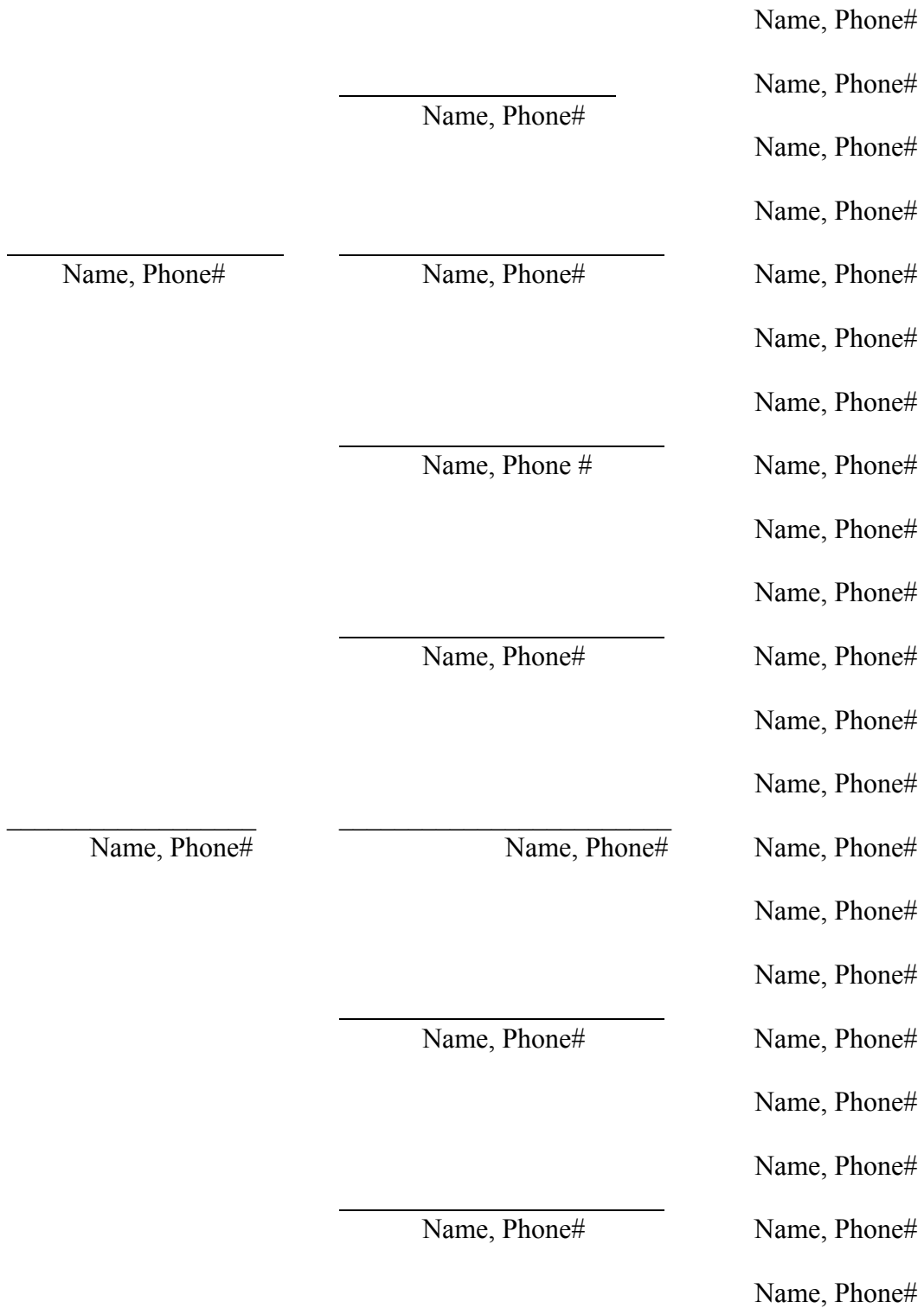
11. Follow Up Activities

\_\_\_\_\_ Crisis Team Evaluation

\_\_\_\_\_ Crisis Team Members complete Individual & Group Counseling Summary

\_\_\_\_\_ Crisis Team Members Complete Activities Summary

**SCHOOL TELEPHONE TREE**  
(Adapt according to size of faculty/staff)



## Sample Announcements

In Classroom: (Individual loss)

Johnny will not be in school today. His mother was killed in an automobile crash last night. Her car was struck by a truck on Highway 10. Johnny will be very sad for a long time. Perhaps we can discuss some ways Johnny might be feeling and how we can all help him.

In Classroom: (School-wide loss)

We have something very sad to tell you today. Johnny was driving home in the rain last night. His car swerved into an oncoming lane, was struck by a car and went off the road. Johnny died in the crash. It was sudden and he did not suffer.

(Remain silent a moment or two to allow information to be realized)

I know this is very shocking to all of us and we have planned several activities to help us through this difficult time.

## SAMPLE ANNOUNCEMENTS FOR SUICIDE

If the death has been declared a suicide:

We are sad to announce that \_\_\_\_\_ took his/her life last night. Memorial services will be made by his family. Counseling will be provided for those who wish to speak with a counselor. It is always a shock when we hear of someone taking his or her life. Let=s cancel our work today to discuss this.

If the death has not been declared suicide or if that fact has not been made public:

\_\_\_\_\_Died last night of a gunshot wound.  
He/She apparently had a gun in his/her hand when it fired.  
Counseling will be provided for those wishing to speak with someone. When an unexpected incident such as this occurs, it helps to discuss it. Regular classwork will be canceled to allow time for discussion.

## Options for Dealing With Student/Class Reactions

After announcement of crisis/emergency event has been made, allow for discussion, i.e... "How do you feel about what I just read? What other concerns/needs do you have? What have you heard others say?"

1. Points to consider in discussion:
  - a) Don't be flippant.
  - b) Don't be excitable; emotional control is an important behavior to model.
  - c) Don't preach; preaching can produce anger.
  - d) Don't minimize students' reactions.
  - e) Don't use jargon; talk in language the students understand.
  - f) Don't expect to have all the answers to students' questions and concerns.
  - g) Don't dramatize death.

Not everyone will be comfortable leading a discussion; if help is needed, contact your building coordinator.

At the beginning of each class, teachers should allow a few minutes for students to talk about their reactions to the situation. Teachers should try to resume the normal class schedule as soon as possible.

2. How to respond to feelings students might experience:

Example: Teachers are encouraged to discourage glorification of the event. If a student says, "I'd never have the guts to do that," the teacher should respond with some statement such as, "Living takes courage, and you and I have the courage to make it through each day."

Take every complaint and feeling the person expresses seriously. Do not dismiss or discount the person's concerns; however, reassure the person that all perspectives need to be considered.

3. Look for signs of emotional reactions over several days that may need attention and then refer to counselors or designated crisis center:

- Crying

- Major change in student's behavior

- Withdrawal from normal class participation

- Change in student's work/study habits

- Excessive daydreaming

- Increased absences

- Aggression (when not present before)

- Increased distractibility

- Passivity in class

- Defiance, especially if this was not a problem before

- Lingering sadness (sadness for several days is to be expected, but IMPROVEMENT should be seen within one week to ten days)

4. Send students in distress to a designated room for assistance.

## DISCUSSION SUGGESTIONS

The following may be used as ways to encourage a discussion if the students are hesitant to speak, or items to anticipate in the course of discussion.

1. It's hard to say what we feel; but it's important to do so.
2. Is it OK to feel \_\_\_\_\_, since I didn't even know them?
3. What do I tell outsiders when they ask me, "How can you stand to go to that school?"
4. Is it OK for me to cry?
5. Why are things back to normal?
6. Is it OK for me to be happy—"I don't have strong feelings, didn't know the victims, was absent... "

### DO'S

1. Do listen to the students and wait after you've asked a question to give them adequate time to respond.
2. Do allow students the opportunity to express any and all thought regarding the incident without judging or evaluating their comments.
3. Do be aware of your voice tone, keeping it low, even, and warm.
4. Do help the students see that everyone shares similar feelings (i.e., "We're, not you're, all stunned that something like this could happen here " or "A lot of us, not you, are feeling angry." )
5. Do expect tears, anger, resentment, fear, inappropriate laughter (often due to tension and discomfort), and stoicism (apparent non-reaction).
6. Do expect some students to become phobic and have sudden overwhelming concerns that may seem illogical to you but are very real to them.
7. Do encourage students to sit in a circle, or to make a more intimate grouping in which to have this discussion.



8. Do stress the confidential nature of the feelings and thoughts expressed in the discussion.

9. Do use your own thoughts and ideas as a means to encourage discussion, not as a means for alleviating your own feelings.

10. Do expect that other feelings of loss may emerge.

11. Do give accurate information about the incident. If you don't know an answer, say so. When possible, squelch any rumors that may exist by either giving the facts, or researching what the " facts " are and reporting back.

### DON'T

1. Don't give " should, ought, or must " statements (i.e., " You shouldn't feel like that. ", " We mustn't dwell on this. ")

2. Don't use clichés (i.e., " Be strong. " " It could have been worse. ")

3. Don't ask questions without being ready to listen.

4. Don't try to make them feel better; let them know that it's okay to feel what they're feeling.

5. Don't isolate anyone - each will need to feel a part of the group.

6. Don't expect the students to " get over" grief/recovery process within a certain time.

7. Don't assume a person is not grieving/reacting just because they don't look or act like it. Let them know you are available at any time (i.e., six weeks or three months from now), IF YOU REALLY ARE.

8. Don't let students interrupt each other, allow each person to finish his or her own statement.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR VISITS TO CLASSROOMS

1. Briefly explain why you are there. " If you are wondering why there are some strange-faced adults in the building this morning, it ' s because we are all counselors who care and were invited here by your counselor (principal) because of the death of \_\_\_\_ . We care about what you are going through and know it is tough. Because we were not as close to the person as you are, we are not suffering the way you and the teachers are – we just want to help out in any way possible. " Emphasize that the team or individual team members are not there to take the place of local counselors, administrators or clergy, but that you are there to assist and help in any way that you can.
2. Let all students know that whatever they are feeling is okay.
3. Help them realize that different people will express feelings in different ways and that is okay.
4. Help them believe that the intense sadness or hurt will not last forever.
5. Encourage expression of present feelings, but accept the silence.
6. Inform them of smaller groups that are available where they can meet and share.
7. Help them eventually talk about some of their experiences with the dead student – fun time, etc.
8. Compliment them for being supportive of each other and really helping each other.
9. If possible and it seems appropriate, walk around the campus with one or two students. Physical activity helps some students.
10. Allow students to write things about the student who died.
11. Encourage students to sit close together. Sitting in a circle is a good way to draw people close together. This will develop intimacy and make members of the group feel together and equal.
12. Let students talk to one another.
13. Ask students to think of at least three words that would describe the deceased and go around the circle and share these words. Don ' t force participation, most will want to share.
14. If there is a community wide crisis let students tell what has happened at their homes and how they felt.

## GUIDELINES FOR UNDERSTANDING AND RESPONDING TO A CRISIS

### 1. Possible emotions which may be observed in students or adults following a tragedy:

Numbness, shock, denial: After a sudden death, you don't want to believe it has happened; you had no preparation for its occurrence.

Confusion: Why did this happen? I don't understand the circumstances. How did this happen to someone I know?

Fear: *Could* something like this happen again? *Will* something like this happen again?

Grief: Sadness, crying, a deep sense of personal loss.

Anxiety: A difficulty in explaining or understanding the tragedy; things are not the same at school or in my class.

Depression: Emptiness, unhappiness.

Guilt: An irrational feeling of responsibility for the event. What could I have done to prevent it?

Anger: Why did someone do a violent, senseless thing? Why did others let it happen? Anger can be directed toward a specific person or persons or be a more general feeling of anger.

### 2. Changes in behavior, which may be seen following a crisis: Most, if not all of these changes, will be temporary. Children are resilient and do bounce back.

Lack of concentration: Inability to focus on schoolwork, household chores, or other leisure activities.

Lack of interest in usual activities: Their minds are preoccupied with other thoughts and feelings and what would usually be very enjoyable may not have much appeal.

Greater dependency: A need to feel protected may result in their wanting to do more with you or not have you away from them for long periods of time; some kids may not want to be alone.

Problems with sleeping and eating: Difficulty going to sleep, occasional bad dreams or a decreased or increased appetite are common physical reactions to a stressful event.

Overly quiet or overly talkative or a combination: Adults may need to talk about a tragic incident over and over again, asking questions that may be unanswerable but needing to ask them anyway. This repetition is often a healthy way of working through the grief process; on the other hand, a student may not want to talk about it much with you, preferring to discuss it with friends, classmates, parents—those who may have been closer to the tragedy; or the student may not want to talk with anyone about it.

3. To help a child through this difficult time, adults can:

Listen: Don't interrupt, he/she needs to be heard.

Accept feelings: They are valid feelings for this student, even though your feelings may not be similar ones.

Empathize: Let the child know that you recognize his/her sadness, confusion, anger, or whatever feelings he/she has about the tragedy.

Reassure: The student is not responsible for what happened.

Accept: The student may not want to talk about the trauma right away. Let him/her know you are willing to listen whenever he/she wants or needs to talk about it.

Be tolerant of temporary changes.

Maintain as much of a sense of routine as possible.

Provide additional activities if the students seem to have excess energy.

Don't hesitate to ask for help.: This help can be sought from other parents, the school staff, or an outside professional.

Adapted from Robert L. Lewis, Ph.D.  
Clinical Psychologist, Clayton, MO

## Sample Letter/Announcement to Parents

School or District Letterhead

Date

Dear Parents,

As you may or may not have heard, our district/school has experienced a crisis/tragedy/event that has affected us deeply. Let me briefly review the facts of the situation.

(Describe incident briefly and give known facts)

Students and staff will react in different ways to these types of events. We therefore should expect, try to understand, and accept a variety of emotions and behaviors. The most important things we should do is to be supportive and to encourage discussion about the event, the feelings it gives rise to, and some ways that we can respond to it.

We have implemented a plan for responding to this situation and helping our students and their families. This plan has evolved from our district's experiences with crises and the input from mental health professionals from within and outside of the district. Our staff has been/will be briefed on our plans and guidelines for discussing the incident and reactions to it. Our school's staff and other district personnel will be available to the students who need special attention and support and we can obtain outside help or consultation if it is needed. We will try to maintain as normal a routine and structure as the situation allows, however, and encourage you to do the same. If you feel that your child(ren) or family needs assistance or anything else, please contact us and we will do everything we can to help.

If you have any questions or needs, please contact us by calling the school office (give PREFERRED phone number). We will try to keep you informed of the situation as it progresses, any specific actions that we will take or recommend (i.e., parent/community meetings, memorial funds, funeral arrangements), and any other information that we feel you should have or that will be of help to you and your child(ren). (GIVE DETAILS/INFORMATION THAT ARE AVAILABLE OR THAT PARENTS SHOULD HAVE AT THIS TIME.)

We know that you will join us in our concern, support and sympathy for those involved in and affected by this incident. We also greatly appreciate your cooperation and assistance.

Sincerely,

(Principal and Staff)

NOTE: Additional letters to parents (and others that may have been involved) may be needed/appropriate. These could cover such things as an up-date on the situation and the students'/staffs' status, further offers of assistance, information on dealing with children in crisis, details about meetings/memorials/funerals, thank you's for help and support, etc.

## **Suggestions for Parent/Community Meetings**

The following are some general suggestions and guidelines for meetings that a school or the district may hold for parents or the community following a crisis.

- Hold the meeting at a time that is convenient for the parents and in a location where they can feel relaxed and at ease.
- If the media wishes to attend, allow them to do so. Make sure, however, that they do not become a distraction or inhibit the sharing of information, ideas, and feelings. Have written background information available for them, especially if sensitive issues are involved.
- If appropriate, begin the meeting with an expression of sympathy for the students and their families that were negatively impacted by the crisis.
- If needed, briefly review the details of the incident/crisis, the reactions of the students and staff, the district's/school's response, the current status of students and staff, and any other information that they might not yet have.
- Acknowledge and thank those, especially from outside the district, who helped during the crisis.
- It may be beneficial to have some of the "crisis" personnel or other "experts" attend the meeting to provide general information, answer questions, and facilitate the discussion of feelings, needs, complaints, etc. They can make prepared comments and/or act as resources. This will also give them an opportunity for feedback on the crisis intervention efforts.
- Stress that the purpose of the meeting is NOT to debate or agonize over the "what's and why's" of the incident/crisis. Instead, emphasize that everyone is there to provide information, express feelings, help the participants better understand and respond to their children's reactions and emotions, help reduce the negative impact on the families affected, suggest resources for further assistance, decide upon possible actions to be taken, and discuss ways of preventing such incidents in the future and of lessening their impact/trauma when they do occur.

- If the group is large, it may be necessary to break into small(er) discussion groups, with the "resource" persons and administrators acting as leaders/facilitators. The groups can address anything that they feel a need to discuss, but some suggested topics are:
  - What are your major concerns at this time or for the future?
  - What problems are you or your children experiencing?
  - What are your (parents and children) major needs at this time and/or for the future?
  - What do you feel the district/school/staff did right?
  - What do you feel the district/school/staff did wrong?
  - What recommendations or advice do you have for the district, school, and/or staff?
  
- This information can be recorded if desired and processed by the group as a whole or by the discussion leaders afterward.
  
- Thank people for attending and participating. Urge them to communicate any further needs, problems, concerns, etc. to the school administration.

## **Suggestions for Parents When Responding to a Crisis**

If your child is involved in or affected by a tragedy or other type of crisis, there are some general guidelines or suggestions that may help you to better understand and respond to the situation. You know your child best; however, be alert to his individual needs, behaviors, feelings and perceptions.

1. A crisis is generally viewed as a temporary state of emotional upset or disorganization. It's characterized by a person's inability to cope with a particular event or situation using his/her customary coping strategies and problem solving skills. The impact on an individual depends on the event or situation and on how that person perceives it in relation to his/her life. Crises may offer the opportunity for significant learning and growth if resolved and integrated into a person's life and functioning, as well as for negative consequences.
2. Make yourself available and accessible to your child if and when he/she wants to talk. Be flexible and responsive to his/her needs.
3. Try to maintain as much of a routine and sense of "normalcy" as you can, but be tolerant of temporary changes, upset, and needs. Do not be too demanding or structured.
4. Communicate/demonstrate your concern, care, support, understanding, and acceptance. Do not be judgmental or use words like "should" or "must" with respect to their feelings and behaviors.
5. By expressing yourself openly and honestly and displaying your confidence (i.e., that things will improve and that life will go on) and coping ability, you can serve as an important role model for your child and increase the likelihood that he/she will adopt similar behaviors and attitudes.
6. Listen to your child when he/she wants to talk and try to communicate that you understand and accept what he/she has to say. If he/she does not want to talk, do not force discussion, but let him/her know that you are willing to listen whenever the need or desire does arise. Do not assume that your child is not reacting or will not react simply because you do not observe an initial reaction.
7. Do not try to "rescue" your child or force him/her to feel better. Be patient and allow him/her to recover at his/her own pace and in his/her own way.
8. Do not try to protect or isolate your child from "threatening" topics or issues, especially those that he/she is trying or needing to deal with in order to work through and learn from the crisis.



## **Suggestions for Communicating with the Media**

The Assistant Superintendent for School Communications or whomever is in charge of this in the district, should work directly with building administrators on press coverage when outside media is likely to be involved. All media questions and statements may be deferred to that office. However, information of a written nature should only be released after consultation with the appropriate administrator.

### BEFORE A CRISIS OCCURS

Prepare a preliminary plan for communicating with the media prior to a crisis situation. This plan should be short and simple. It should have activities, roles and responsibilities clearly defined. For example, it should be decided in advance:

- Who is to be called
- Who should make the contacts
- Who is to communicate with the media
- Any prohibitions about talking with the media
- Where the media is to be located within or outside the building
- Who is responsible for building security with respect to the media (they should not be allowed to disrupt the crisis intervention efforts)

### AT THE TIME OF A CRISIS

Briefly state the known facts of the situation, but do not give names of victims or persons responsible. Do not go into depth or say more than is needed. Do not speculate about motives or feelings. If civil authorities are involved, refer to them questions that require their expertise. Review what is being done to respond to the situation. Identify the support being provided to the students, their families and staff. Emphasize that the primary goal is to help the students through the crisis situation. Let the media know that the school will try to maintain or quickly return to its normal routine and schedule. Try to emphasize the positive aspects of the situation, such as the response of staff and students and how well people are coping. Respect the confidentiality of those involved in the crisis by not releasing details or names. Try to portray people in as positive a manner as possible.

### AFTER A CRISIS OCCURS

Announce any meetings for parents or the community that will be scheduled. Include any other information, such as memorials or special activities that is important for the public to know. Publicly thank any district employees, students, parents, or outside persons who played an important role in responding to the crisis and who deserve recognition. This may be most appropriate after the crisis has been resolved. The information can be part of a press release that provides an up-date on the situation. Press releases will need to be cleared by the school communications office.

NOTE: These suggestions also apply to non-media inquiries.

## INDIVIDUAL COUNSELING CONTACTS

Team Member \_\_\_\_\_

Date	Time	Name	Problem	Impressions/Intervention

## GROUP COUNSELING SUMMARY

Team Member(s) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_

Purpose of group \_\_\_\_\_

Intervention strategies utilized \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Brief summary \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Students Present:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

## CRISIS TEAM EVALUATION

School \_\_\_\_\_

Date of follow-up \_\_\_\_\_

Respondents \_\_\_\_\_ Position \_\_\_\_\_

Nature of emergency/crisis \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this evaluation of the recent services provided for your school by the Crisis Management Team.

1. Was the service delivery of the crisis team timely?

Very \_\_\_\_\_ Somewhat \_\_\_\_\_ Not at all \_\_\_\_\_ NA \_\_\_\_\_

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

2. Did the services of the crisis team meet your school's individual needs?

Very \_\_\_\_\_ Somewhat \_\_\_\_\_ Not at all \_\_\_\_\_ NA \_\_\_\_\_

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

3. Did faculty consultation meet your faculty's individual needs?

Very \_\_\_\_\_ Somewhat \_\_\_\_\_ Not at all \_\_\_\_\_ NA \_\_\_\_\_

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

4. Was the in-service to the faculty effective?

Very \_\_\_\_\_ Somewhat \_\_\_\_\_ Not at all \_\_\_\_\_ NA \_\_\_\_\_

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

5. Was individual counseling provided to students a valuable aspect of the crisis team's service?

Very \_\_\_\_\_ Somewhat \_\_\_\_\_ Not at all \_\_\_\_\_ NA \_\_\_\_\_

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

6. Was group counseling provided to students a valuable aspect of the crisis team's service?

Very \_\_\_\_\_ Somewhat \_\_\_\_\_ Not at all \_\_\_\_\_ NA \_\_\_\_\_

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

**ACTIVITIES SUMMARY**  
*(To Be Completed By Team During Closure)*

School \_\_\_\_\_ Date form Completed \_\_\_\_\_

Principal \_\_\_\_\_

Nature of Crisis \_\_\_\_\_

Dates on Site \_\_\_\_\_

Team Members on Site: \_\_\_\_\_, on-site Coordinator

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

School personnel involved in direct service to students:

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Position \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Position \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Position \_\_\_\_\_

Type of services provided by Team:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Team Contacts

Number of students assisted individually or in small groups \_\_\_\_\_

\*Total student contacts \_\_\_\_\_

Number of staff assisted \_\_\_\_\_

\*Total staff contacts \_\_\_\_\_

Number of families assisted \_\_\_\_\_

\*Total family contacts \_\_\_\_\_

Team recommendations \_\_\_\_\_

*\*Includes multiple sessions with the same individuals. One copy to be left in school and one copy for team files.*

**ANNUAL EMERGENCY/CRISIS PLAN EVALUATION CHECKLIST**

Complete the following checklist annually.

\_\_\_\_\_ School.

1. Our school updated the building emergency/crisis plan \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_.  
(month) (day) (year)
2. Crisis team members were trained \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_.  
(month) (day) (year)
3. The entire school staff was informed \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_.  
(month) (day) (year)
4. We had the following emergency drill practice dates:

Fire Drills: 10 per year (two within the first two weeks of school)

List dates:

Severe Weather Drills: 4 per year (minimum-review in the fall and spring)

List dates:

Earthquake Drills: 2 per year (minimum)

List dates:

Comments or concerns to address next year:

Principal's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Turn in completed evaluation by June 1 to Building Safety and Security  
Coordinators

## **DISASTER PROCEDURES**

1. Fire
2. Tornado
3. Earthquake
4. Intruder - In-Building/Emergency - Lock down
5. Evacuation plan
6. Lightening Safety
7. Bomb Threat

Please post evacuation plans for emergency conditions in each classroom and discuss with students.

**DISASTER PROCEEDURES**  
**INSTRUCTIONS FOR FACULTY**

1. Appoint two or more monitors in each class to help any physically challenged students out of the classroom during evacuations and/or drills.
2. Post evacuation exit instructions near your classroom door stating exit route, stairway to be used, the outside exit door, and assigned rendezvous site to be used by students in your classroom. Read these instructions to your classes.
3. Be sure you take your attendance/roll sheets with you and special health concerns list if available. Take roll when your students have reached their assigned area. Wait with your students for further instructions and possible movement to an Evacuation center.
4. Report any missing student immediately to a member of the administration.  
**BE SURE TO KEEP YOUR CLASS TOGETHER.**
5. Students should exit the classroom and building in single file. Stay calm. Allow no talking or running. See that no students stop at a locker for personal belongings or return to the building.
6. If your exit route is blocked, give instructions to leave by an alternate exit route.
7. Secondary teachers who have conference period or supervision during a drill should report to the administrative office to lend assistance as needed. Elementary teachers report back to your classroom.



**EMERGENCY PROCEDURE  
TEACHER CHECKLIST**

**1. INTRUDER-IN-BUILDING EMERGENCY/LOCKDOWN**

\_\_\_\_\_ The warning signal will be \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_ Students move quickly to the inside wall of the classroom by the hallway (**away from the door**) and as close to the wall as possible.

\_\_\_\_\_ Lock door(s), grab the EMERGENCY BAG & turn off classroom lights.  
**\*\*OPEN BLINDS, unless otherwise announced\*\***

\_\_\_\_\_ Instruct students to remain absolutely quiet and listen to instructions.

\_\_\_\_\_ Teachers must take roll to make sure all students are secure. Office will notify teacher as soon as possible, if they have a student who is in the office, media center, nurse's office, etc.

\_\_\_\_\_ Remain in LOCKDOWN position until the designated all clear signal is given.

\_\_\_\_\_ If on open school grounds, get down and wait for the emergency to pass.

**2. BOMB THREAT**

\_\_\_\_\_ Warning signal will be \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_ Upon hearing the warning signal, check classroom for unexplained and unusual objects.

\_\_\_\_\_ Search techniques:

#1: Scan room from floor to hip height.

#2: Scan room from hip to top of head.

#3: Scan room from top of head to ceiling.

\_\_\_\_\_ Notify appropriate supervisor if any suspicious items are found. **DO NOT TOUCH** items.

\_\_\_\_\_ Administration will inform teachers if any classrooms are to be evacuated.

\_\_\_\_\_ IF teacher is notified that classroom be evacuated, follow predetermined evacuation route. Take EMERGENCY BAG & student roster with you.

### **EVACUATION PLAN**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Verbal announcement will be made if building must be evacuated.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Take EMERGENCY BAG & student roster.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Evacuation routes will be the same as the fire evacuation route.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Use common sense in using alternative routes if necessary.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Students exit the building in quiet lines and proceed to \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### **3. FIRE EMERGENCY PROCEDURE**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Warning signal \_\_\_\_\_ will sound.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Line up at the classroom door in single file. Assist special needs students as required.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher will take EMERGENCY BAG & student roster.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher follows students out of room and CLOSES door.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Class follows designated fire escape route and exits building.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Take class roll. Report any missing students to school administrator.
- \_\_\_\_\_ An all-clear signal will be given when emergency has passed.

### **4. TORNADO/SEVERE WEATHER ALERT**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Warning signal \_\_\_\_\_ will sound.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Teachers will instruct students to leave materials and move to their predetermined area. Assist special needs students as required.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher will take EMERGENCY BAG & student roster.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Leave doors OPEN and lights OUT.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Instruct students to line up along a designated wall in a sitting position and face away from glass. Do not allow students to sit under anything hanging from walls that could fall on them.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Take roll.
- \_\_\_\_\_ If possible, shut any hallway doors between your class and glass windows to prevent glass from flying towards students.
- \_\_\_\_\_ An all-clear signal will be given when emergency has passed.

## **FIRE EMERGENCY**

1. Warning signal \_\_\_\_\_ will sound.
2. Line up at the classroom door in single file. Assist special needs students as required.
3. Each teacher will take appropriate student rosters and the EMERGENCY BAG with them.
4. The teacher will leave last to be sure no students remain and secure the door in the closed position.
5. Walk to the right side of the hallway to your designated team area.
6. No talking.
7. Students should stand quietly while roll is taken by the teacher.
8. Custodians will be responsible for closing all outside doors. Custodians should report directly to the principal.
9. Office personnel should be sure that the guidance, health and administrative offices are clear and meet in front of the building with the current attendance counts.
10. Handicapped students should exit with the class they are in at the time. It may be necessary to assign responsible students to aid these individuals.
11. Students will exit to \_\_\_\_\_. Students are to stand clear of all fire protection vehicles and personnel.
12. Use common sense in using alternative routes based on obstructions.
13. Remember: It is beneficial to stay lower to the ground in a smoke-filled room or hall.
14. Send a responsible student to report any missing students to Fire &/or Police personnel at the scene.
15. An all-clear signal will be given.

\*After a drill, please report any comments or suggestions to the office in writing. We want to be sure that students, faculty and staff are safe.

**FIRE EVACUATION MAP**  
(Place Fire Evacuation Map here)

## **TORNADO / SEVERE WEATHER ALERT**

1. Warning signal \_\_\_\_\_ will sound.
2. Upon hearing warning signal, teachers will instruct students to leave materials and move to their predetermined area. Take appropriate student rosters and EMERGENCY BAG.
3. Leave doors **OPEN** and lights **OUT**.
4. No talking!
5. Instruct students to line up along a designated wall in a sitting position and face away from glass. Be aware of things hanging from walls that might fall and avoid putting students under them.
6. Take roll.
7. Remember: When severe weather hits, there may be no time for directions.
8. Use common sense: if an interior room is vacant and you can move a class inside, please do so.
9. These weather watches and warnings can last for awhile so be prepared with a book or activity in the EMERGENCY BAG.
10. Handicapped students should be assisted by available specialist or responsible students to a safe area.
11. If there are hallway doors between you and glass windows, close the doors to stop broken glass. Keep students at a safe distance from the doors in case the doors blow open.
12. An all-clear signal will be given.

**\*\*After a drill, please report any comments or suggestions to the office in writing. We want to be sure that students, faculty and staff are safe.**

**TORNADO / SEVERE WEATHER STUDENT LOCATIONS**

(Place Tornado/Severe Weather Plan here)

## EARTHQUAKE

1. There will be no warning in a real earthquake. The warning signal for a drill will be \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Get under a table or desk. Protect yourself from falling debris or flying glass. Turn away from windows.
3. Stay under shelter until you receive instructions from teachers. (at least 60 seconds)
4. No talking, listen to instructions.
5. The evacuation command will be through the intercom or megaphone. The evacuation routes will be the same as the fire evacuation route. Use common sense in using alternative routes based on obstructions.
6. Teachers inform students that we will proceed as a normal fire drill to the designated outdoor team location. There may be aftershocks, so be prepared!
7. Report student injuries to staff present &/or to Fire &/or Police personnel. Do not try to move students unless there is danger.
8. Remember: fires and other problems may occur as a result of the earthquake.
9. Drop and cover is the best earthquake safety response: indoors or out.
10. Do not re-enter the building.

\*Be prepared ahead of time. Role play what to do and what could happen. Keep heavy objects secure and lower to the ground. Identify other hazards with students.

\*After a drill, please report any comments or suggestions to the office in writing. We want to be sure that students, faculty and staff are safe.

**EARTHQUAKE EVACUATION MAP**  
(Place Earthquake Evacuation Map here)



## INTRUDER - IN-BUILDING/EMERGENCY - LOCKDOWN

1. The warning signal will be \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Students move quickly to the inside wall of the classroom by the hallway (away from door), and as close to the wall as possible, to give the appearance that the room is empty.
3. Teacher quickly locks door(s), turns off classroom lights, and **OPENS BLINDS** (this allows emergency personnel to see into the classroom).
4. Students remain absolutely quiet and listen to teachers' instructions.
5. Teachers must take roll to make sure all students are secure. Office will notify teacher as soon as possible, if they have a student who is in the office, media center, nurse's office, etc.
6. Teachers and students remain in LOCKDOWN position until contacted by a staff member, indicating that the danger is past.
7. If on open school grounds get down and wait for the emergency to pass. If on playground, get down and wait for teachers' directions.

## EVACUATION PLAN

1. In the event that the building must be evacuated for reasons other than earthquake or fire, a verbal announcement will be made.
2. The evacuation routes will be the same as the fire evacuation route. Use common sense in using alternative routes if necessary.
3. Teacher will take EMERGENCY BAG and student roster.
4. Students should exit the building in quiet lines.
5. Students will proceed to \_\_\_\_\_ . Students will wait at this location for further instructions.

## LIGHTING SAFETY

1. When a thunderstorm threatens, quickly enter a school building, large building, home, or inside an all-metal (not convertible) vehicle.
2. Avoid using the telephone, except for emergencies.
3. If outside, with no time to reach a safe building or an automobile, follow these rules:
  - a. Do not stand underneath a natural lightning rod such as an isolated tree in an open area. If caught among numerous trees, seek shelter in a low area under a thick growth of small trees.
  - b. Avoid projecting yourself above the surrounding landscape. In low areas, go to a low place such as a ravine or valley.
  - c. Move away from open water.
  - d. Move away from bicycles, motorcycles, scooters, wire fences, metal pipes, and other metallic paths which could carry lighting to you.
  - e. If you're hopelessly isolated in a level field and you feel your hair stand on end -indicating lighting is about to strike—drop to your knees and bend forward putting your hands on your knees. **Do not lie flat on the ground.**

## FIRST AID

Many people apparently “killed” by lighting can be revived if quick action is taken. The apparently dead should be treated first; those unconscious but breathing will probably recover spontaneously.

First aid should be rendered to those not breathing within four to six minutes or less to prevent irrevocable damage to the brain. Mouth-to-mouth resuscitation should be administered once every five seconds to adults and once every three seconds to infants and small children.

If the victim is not breathing and has no pulse, cardiopulmonary resuscitation is necessary. This is a combination of mouth-to-mouth resuscitation and external cardiac compression.

## **BOMB THREAT**

1. Document threat (time and date; exact words of caller; background noises; Description of voice; sex, age if apparent, tone and dialect). Use ATF Bomb Threat Checklist.
2. Notify police, school security, and district administration **immediately**.
3. Search building and school grounds. Automatic dismissal or fire drill procedures are not standard practice for all bomb threats.
  - Organize designated search teams to search interior and exterior of school building and grounds. P.E. teachers, shop teachers, Counselors, Home School Communicator, custodians, Food Service Manager, etc.
  - Schools with intercom use a code to instruct teachers to check classroom for unexplained and unusual objects.
  - Schools without intercom distribute cards to each classroom instructing teachers to search classroom for unexplained and unusual objects.

### **Search Techniques:**

- #1. Items in room up to hip height.
  - #2. Hip to top of head.
  - #3. Top of head to ceiling.
4. Notify appropriate supervisor when a final check of building and grounds is completed.

### **Comment on Bomb Threats**

All threats do not require evacuation. Many Fire Departments and Police Departments **do not** recommend evacuation as standard procedure. The decision to evacuate is a judgment call on the basis of EVIDENCE, EXPERIENCE, and INFORMATION:

**EVIDENCE:**

- Signs of illegal entry into building, room, etc.
- Report of missing chemicals
- Unexplained and/or unusual object located.

**EXPERIENCE:**

- Other threats have been hoaxes
- Tests, assembly, large group in building, VIP present or scheduled for that day, etc.
- Caller was obviously a youngster; giggling in the background
- Unexplained student unrest, etc.

**INFORMATION:**

- Based on all available information, the threat is or is not credible.

**BOMB FOUND**

1. Call police at 911.
2. Notify school security and district administration **immediately**.
3. Isolate the area.
4. Evacuate building. Start evacuation with the rooms nearest the device. Instruct teacher to take attendance sheets or role books with them.
5. Do not re-enter building until advised to do so by police.

## RESPONDING TO STUDENTS ABOUT THE DEATH

1. Tell the truth. Allow students to talk about the death and to express their feelings. Do not hide death from students. Do not avoid the subject in the classroom or be afraid to mention the dead person.
2. Be sensitive. Allow tears or other expressions of grief. Teachers should handle children's expressions of grief or loss as they are comfortable. If a student seems distraught or needs to talk further, the teacher should refer the student to someone else (counselor or the crisis team).
3. Be human. It's all right for adults to express their emotions or grief in front of children.
4. Listen responsively. Be attuned to nonverbal communication. Let students know that people show grief in different ways.
5. Accept feelings. Reassure students that all their feelings are accepted (e.g., angry, sad, scared, confused).
6. Allow grief. Respect the legitimate sadness of the griever. Avoid well-meaning reassurance (e.g., that they have other loved ones or friends still living).
7. Be factual. Refrain from over dramatizing or over emotionalizing the fact that someone has died.
8. Respond to feelings. Do not force students to share your emotions.
9. Be supportive. Reassure younger students that it is not their fault a person died. It is also all right if they did not like the person or had not always treated the person in the best manner. Emphasize that their behavior had nothing to do with the person's death.
10. Maintain classroom routine. This structure will help students focus. Avoid introducing new concepts or materials until the immediate crisis has passed. Keep it simple.
11. Allow memories. Remember students may have a need to review the relationship and memories of the deceased. It has been estimated that the grieving process may take up to two years.
12. Respect beliefs. Keep in mind that religious perspectives are personal and individual. Varying beliefs should be respected when students discuss.
13. Be watchful. Pay special attention to students who have experienced multiple losses. Students who have previously experienced death, divorce, illness, separation or geographic relocation are very vulnerable during any crisis.
14. Encourage parent/child communication. Advise parents to explain what will be

happening at a funeral or if students will be attending.

## YOUNG PEOPLE AND GRIEF

The grieving process is a normal, natural, and healing result of loss; and pain is to be expected. Young people of all ages exhibit grief and reactions to grief. Guilt, anxiety, anger, fears and sadness may be universal, and the expressions of these emotions may vary from day to day. Helping a young person and yourself through this difficult time may often feel overwhelming; however, knowledge of common reactions to loss may help you recognize behavior for what it is—grieving.

### Possible Grief Reactions:

- < Anger
- < Aggression/acting out: starting fights, outbursts of temper, drop in grades, change of peer affiliation.
- < Explosive emotions: gentle tears, wrenching sobs, extremes in behavior.
- < Physiological changes: fatigue, trouble sleeping, lack of appetite, headaches, stomach pains.
- < Idealization of the deceased.
- < Sadness/emptiness/withdrawal: overwhelmed by feelings of loss when realizes person is not coming back; feels extremely vulnerable.
- < Guilt/self-blame: “If only...” “Why didn’t I...” feels responsible for the loss; seeks self-punishment.
- < Disorganization: restless, unable to concentrate, uncontrollable tears, difficulty focusing.
- < Relief: natural feeling after long illness; can be difficult to admit; may think they are the only one who feels so guilty.
- < Lack of feelings: protection from pain; can be a form of numbness; may be difficult to admit and may generate guilt.

### How To Help A Young Person Experiencing Grief:

- < Use the terms “died/dead/death: rather than phrases like “passed away,” or “taken from us.” Give honest explanation for the person’s death, avoiding clichés or easy answers. Straightforward, gentle use of the words helps a person confront the reality of the death.



- < Explain and accept that everyone has different reactions to death at different times. The reaction might not hit until the funeral or weeks later.
- < Reassure the young person that his/her grief feelings are normal. There is no “right” way to react to a loss. Give permission to cry. Let them know it’s OK not to cry if the young person does not typically react in that way.
- < Permit or encourage the young person to talk about the person who has died. Both at the moment of loss, but especially after the funeral, this is a vital part of the healing process. Often we want to protect the first step of acceptance and of healing.
- < Do not attempt to minimize the loss or take the pain away. Phrases like “Don’t worry, it will be OK,” “He/She had a good life,” or “He/She is out of pain” are not helpful. Grief is painful. There must be pain before there can be acceptance and healing. It is very difficult to do, but most helpful to acknowledge the person’s pain and permit them to live with it without trying to take it away or make it “better.”
- < Encourage the young person to talk about their feelings. Encourage communication first in family, but also be aware of other support people such as clergy, trusted adult friends, trusted peers.
- < LISTEN. Listen with your heart. Listening to the feelings of the young person is most important. Listen through the silences. Your just being there, showing you care by your listening is more important than knowing what to say or even saying anything at all.
- < Help the young person decide about attending the funeral. The funeral can be a way to say goodbye, but abide by the young person’s wish and express understanding if he/she chooses not to go.

A Grieving Person’s Needs:

- < To cry.
- < To be held.
- < To talk.
- < To be listened to.
- < To feel caring around them, to be with people they care about.
- < To understand how others may react.
- < To have all questions answered truthfully.

## TIPS FOR STUDENTS IN CRISIS

1. Remember that everyone reacts to pain and stress in different ways. Don't expect everyone to act or feel the same. Also, don't expect the pain to last the same amount of time for everyone.
2. In the case of death, remember that friends and family will need your care and concern long after the funeral is over.
3. Don't be afraid to ask for help if you aren't sure if you can cope.
4. Take care of yourself. Eat well, get plenty of sleep, and exercise.
5. Try some of these ideas to help you handle stress and grief:
  1. Talk to someone.
  2. Cry
  3. Write a letter.
  4. Ride a bike.
  5. Keep a journal.
  6. Clean your room.
  7. Dance
  8. Help someone else.
  9. Listen to music.
  10. Run.
  11. Rearrange your room.
  12. Read a book.
  13. Create something.
  14. Go for a walk.
  15. Draw of pain.
  16. Plant something.
  17. Dig in the dirt.
  18. Yell at/in your pillow.
  19. Set some goals.
  20. Get a neck rub.

## HANDLING CRISIS SITUATIONS

### Tips for Teachers

1. Be honest. Before class find all the information you can and, according to the age group, share facts with students.
2. Give as much information as the students need to know. Cognitive and emotional development will determine how much and in what manner to share.
3. Allow time for students to express feelings, thoughts, and to ask questions. The amount of time will vary with the situation, age group, and individual group concerns.
4. Look for signs of trouble in individual students and have a referral process in mind. It might be in small groups or individual counseling, but be sure concerned students get attention.
5. Allow time for a break or recess after discussing and sharing. In cases of a continuing crisis, remember to allow time for breaks.
6. Listen to your students' feelings.
7. Remember that everyone experiences and reacts to grief and crisis in a different way. There is no one-way to act.
8. In case of death, discuss ways to express sympathy with the class. This is often a first time experience for young people, and ways to express sympathy and the funeral process can be confusing. Death and crisis are a part of living, and this can be a valuable learning experience.
9. In case of the death of a classmate or teacher, the desk can be left empty to help students acknowledge the death. Sometimes, students are more angry if they are not given time to grieve.
10. Keep students informed. If it is an ongoing situation, let your class know any relevant information as soon as you receive it, even if it means interrupting the class occasionally.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES AFTER A LOSS

- Writing a eulogy.
- Designing a yearbook page commemorating the deceased (if appropriate).
- Honoring the deceased by collecting memorabilia for the trophy cabinet (if appropriate).
- Writing stories about the victim or the incident.
- Drawing pictures of the incident.
- Debating controversial issues.
- Investigating laws governing similar incidents.
- Creating a sculpture.
- Creating a class banner in memoriam (if appropriate).
- Building a fitness course, a sign for the school, or a bulletin board in memory.
- Discussing ways to cope with traumatic situations.
- Discussing the stages of grief.
- Conducting a mock trial if laws were broken.
- Starting a new school activity such as a SADD unit if a child was killed by a drunk driver.
- Encouraging students to keep a journal of events and of their reactions, especially in an ongoing situation.
- Placing a collection box in the class for notes to the family.
- Urging students to write the things they wish they could have said to the deceased.
- Practicing and composing a song in memory of the deceased.
- Discussing alternatives for coping with depression, if suicide is involved.
- Analyzing why people take drugs and suggesting ways to help abusers, if substance abuse related.
- Writing a reaction paper.
- Writing a "where I was when it happened" report.
- Discussing historical precedents about issues related to crisis.
- Reading to the class (bibliography in the appendix).
- Encouraging mutual support.
- Discussing and preparing children for the funeral (what to expect, people's reactions, what to do, what to say).
- Directing energy to creative pursuits, physical exercise, or verbal expression when anger arises.
- Creating a class story relevant to the issue.

## YOUR THOUGHTS

Choose one or two of the following statements. Complete the statements by sharing your thoughts about what happened. You may write or draw.

I remember when...I feel...I wish...When we...Happy times I remember...My thoughts today are...You are/were... Sometimes I wanted...I wish I had told you...My memories are...I need...I want...

---