

School Wide Crisis Management Plan Guide

School Counselor's Guide



2018





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Readiness

Before The Crisis

Best practices recommend that all school districts have a crisis management plan. Planning allows crisis management teams to develop procedures more objectively and thoroughly. Inclusion of various stakeholders from the school (building and district levels) and community is important in the development of the crisis management plan (i.e. school counselors, administrators, nurses, teachers, custodians, parent organization representatives, medical and rescue personnel, and law enforcement).

School Board Policies:

School board policies are the guiding factor for decisions that are made during an incident.

For that reason, it is important that the board of education adopts policies pertaining to every aspect of the crisis management cycle. These policies must be available to the public and included in the district's board of education policy manual and the crisis management plan, which have been approved by the board. Policies should address issues such as memorials, liability, and confidentiality. The following are some considerations of such policies that relate to the school counselors role:

- ▶ Memorials: If the situation involves a death, a course of action should be considered for memorials. What is done for one must be done for all. This policy should address temporary and permanent memorials. In considering temporary displays, such as locker decoration or banners, the policy should address the kinds of displays, how long they will be displayed, and where displays will be permitted. In considering permanent memorials the types, size, and location of memorials should be addressed. (See <https://www.nasponline.org/x38589.xml> for suggestions.)
- ▶ Liability: Liability will be a factor in determining a policy that will address the use of emergency response teams from outside the district and/or individuals who are not employees of the district.
- ▶ Confidentiality: Confidentiality/anonymity for students who report concerns as well as for students whose behavior is reported as a concern, should be addressed in the policy.

(This is not an exhaustive list. The team needs to consider local district needs and develop policies to address them)

Preparation/Readiness: The Role of the School Counselor

The role of the school counselor in the Preparation/Readiness phase is to be vigilant regarding the safety of all students and to facilitate positive school climate and culture. Concern for the safety of others is developed over time via a school culture that encourages respect for self and others. School counselors must advocate for prevention at the same time preparation/readiness plans are being made. Specific actions the school counselor might take are as follows:

- ▶ Participate as an active member of the crisis team using professional skills and knowledge.
- ▶ Implement school counseling lessons and listen to the concerns of the students and teachers regarding school safety. What do they need to feel prepared and safe?



- ▶ Help plan and conduct meaningful staff training.
- ▶ Develop small group counseling and/or lesson plans for use immediately after a crisis occurs.
- ▶ Address self-care



Response and Recovery

RESPONSE

During The Crisis

The planning that has been completed with the district's crisis management team to develop a thorough Crisis Plan will benefit all stakeholders when faced with any type of crisis. All staff members and emergency responders have a set of pre-established guidelines that include preparations, activities, and suggested resources and staffing. This will provide the confidence and security in knowing that the district is organized and well prepared and will provide the school counselor with the confidence to follow through calmly, objectively and wisely.

RECOVERY

After The Crisis

An important step in a strong crisis management plan is evaluation. Following a crisis in the school or district, the team should come together to debrief and review the process that was put into place. If the crisis is particularly traumatic for the school and/or community, the crisis management team may need to reconvene before the anniversary of the event to consider whether or not activities or preparations need to be put into place.

Being part of a crisis management team is a serious responsibility that, in those times of crisis, will include tremendous stress. It is essential to take care of each other during those times. Care must be taken to ensure that everyone is all right at the end of the crisis, and recognize the importance and contributions of each member.

Recovery: The Role of the School Counselor

- ▶ Participate on the crisis team. Help debrief the incident from a personal and professional perspective.
- ▶ Advocate for an objective review of current prevention strategies.



Crisis Management Contact Plan (adapted from MSCA Crisis Manual)

This plan may be used BEFORE a crisis occurs, DURING a crisis as guide AND AFTER as an emergency or crisis has occurred. Some items will be decided upon before a crisis and will always remain the same, while others will vary with the situation. .

As a team, collect email addresses, mobile phone numbers, and any other pertinent contact information to your district from the following personnel:

- Principal
- Emergency Coordinator
- Alternate Emergency Coordinator
- All District School Counselors
- Crisis Management Team Members
- School Resource Officers
- Local Police Department

CRISIS PLAN FOR _____ SCHOOL Phone _____

PRINCIPAL _____ Phone: (School) _____ (Home)

EMERGENCY COORDINATOR _____ Phone (School) _____ (Home)

ALTERNATE COORDINATOR _____ Phone (School) _____ (Home)

CRISIS CONTACT INFORMATION

_____ School:	Phone #:	e-mail	Website:
_____ Principal Name	Phone #:	e-mail	Cell Phone
Home:	Phone #:	e-mail	Cell Phone
_____ Emergency Coordinator Name:	Phone #:	e-mail	Cell Phone
Home:	Phone #:	e-mail	Cell Phone
_____ Alternate Coordinator: Name	Phone #:	e-mail	Cell Phone
Home:	Phone #:	e-mail	Cell Phone:
_____ School Counselor(s)—list information for each SC			
Counselor 1 Name	Phone #:	e-mail	Cell Phone
Home:	Phone #:	e-mail	Cell Phone
Counselor 2 Name	Phone #:	e-mail	Cell Phone
Home:	Phone #:	e-mail	Cell Phone
Counselor 3 Name	Phone #:	e-mail	Cell Phone
Home:	Phone #:	e-mail	Cell Phone
_____ Crisis Team Members (list information for each team member)			
Team Member 1 Name	Phone #:	e-mail	Cell Phone
Home:	Phone #:	e-mail	Cell Phone
Team Member 2 Name	Phone #:	e-mail	Cell Phone
Home:	Phone #:	e-mail	Cell Phone



Team Member 3 Name	Phone #:	e-mail	Cell Phone
Home:	Phone #:	e-mail	Cell Phone

UTILIZE YOUR SCHOOL NOTIFICATION SYSTEM PER SCHOOL BOARD POLICY (texts, automated calling, etc.)

MEDIA INFORMATION

For your district, determine what your role is regarding the media.

_____ District Media Liaison Name Phone #: _____ e-mail _____ Cell Phone _____
 _____ Information Meeting for Media: Date/Time: _____ Location _____
 _____ Local Media: (List contact information for each media outlet):

FACILITIES SAFETY AND SECURITY

_____ Include the location of Evacuation Shelter(s) (Consider students/faculty/staff with limited mobility as well as those who may have limited vision, hearing, or speech.)

On-Site Location	Off-Site Location, Address, Phone Number
Route # 1	Route # 1
Route # 2	Route # 2

BUILDING SECURITY

_____ Collaborate with administrator to designate people to monitor entrances to building and hallways.

Entrances:
 Entrance Location: _____ Entrance Location: _____
 Monitor: _____ Monitor _____

Hallways:
 Hall Location: _____ Hall Location: _____
 Monitor: _____ Monitor _____

COMMUNICATION

_____ Principal and/or Crisis Coordinator

_____ Plan for notifying faculty.

1. Notifies faculty liaison of incident and time/ place for faculty meeting

Date/Time _____

Location: _____

(Faculty Liaison activates school information system)

2. Prepares/Sends memo to each faculty member regarding the facts of the incident during school day:

Person designated to notify faculty _____ Phone # e-mail Cell Phone

Outside of School Day:

Person designated to notify faculty _____ Phone # : e-mail Cell Phone

_____ Plan for notifying students (Teachers will be informed prior to students whenever possible)



Teachers tell students in their classes about the Crisis/Critical Incident (script and student responsibilities provided).

Script written/provided by: _____

Announcement made over the intercom by: _____ when: _____

_____ Plan for informing parents—Communication includes consideration of those who are not fluent in the English language (both non-English speakers and English speakers who are non-readers)

Letter Home written by: _____

Parent Meeting
Date/Time/Location _____

Notification of parent meeting by: _____

_____ Arrangements for group counseling

Location/Room # Person Responsible for Group :



Helping Students in Crisis

(adapted from ASCA)

- Keep routines as normal as possible. Kids gain security from the predictability of routine, including attending school.
- Limit exposure to television and the news.
- Be honest with kids and share with them as much information as they are developmentally able to handle per school policy and rules of confidentiality.
- Listen to kids' fears and concerns.
- Reassure kids that the world is a good place to be, but that there are people who make poor choices.
- Parents and adults need to address self-care.
- Rebuild and reaffirm attachments and relationships.

Additional crisis resources available at: <https://www.schoolcounselor.org/school-counselors/professional-development/learn-more/helping-kids-during-crisis>



Tips for Teachers

(adapted from the [2018 NEA Crisis Manual](#))

- **Listen and connect to students.**
- **Help students be empathetic.**
- **Refer to your school mental health professionals.**
- **Reassure students that they are in a safe.**
- **Monitor behavior.** Know the signs of children at-risk and get help for those who need it.
- **Maintain consistency and predictability.** Routines are comforting to students during times of crisis.
- **Understand cultural differences.** The National Association of School Psychologists has information about cultural issues and trauma online: <https://www.schoolcounselor.org/school-counselors/professional-development/learn-more/helping-kids-during-crisis>
- **Take care of your own needs.**

Sample Back-to-School Talking Points for Educators

How you discuss the tragedy will depend on the age of the students. At any age, it's important to give students a chance to express their feelings and concerns. It's also critical to re-establish routines that make students feel secure and able to learn.

In the classroom:

- Greet students warmly and welcome them back.
- Use a prepared statement to provide accurate, factual information about what happened and actions taken.
- Correct misperceptions and address rumors.
- Tell students how the school is protecting their safety.
- Answer questions honestly and empathetically without getting too explicit.
- Be sensitive to different cultures and how they react to trauma.
- Tell students how to access counseling support and encourage them to go to adults for help.
- Encourage students to write down or draw their thoughts, feelings and concerns, making sure that the activities are age-appropriate.
- Create safe channels for providing information in confidence or anonymously.

Important points to make:

- We are all sad about what happened at our school.
- Some of us may feel angry, afraid or guilty. All of these are normal responses to a tragedy. We won't all feel the same emotions, and that's normal and OK.
- This isn't your fault.
- Each student is important to me.
- We need to support each other in this difficult time.
- If you see someone who needs help, get the student to a responsible adult or tell an adult immediately.

Avoid:

- Cleaning out a student's locker or desk and/or removing the student's artwork or photos too soon. Follow district policy.



Tips for Parents

(adapted from the [2018 NEA Crisis Manual](#))

- **Be available to listen.** Let your child talk without passing judgment. Let your child know their feelings are normal.
- **Stay physically close.** Your child may need extra hugs and reassurances of love as they recover from trauma.
- **Honor your child privacy.** Let your child take time to figure things out and express their feelings. Don't force them to talk.
- **Assure your child they are safe.** Tell them about the safety steps being taken, and ask about their safety concerns.
- **Spend extra time together.** Plan family activities that everyone enjoys and let your child know you are there for them.
- **Establish positive routines** and go back to former routines as soon as possible.
- **Limit or avoid TV viewing of the tragedy.** Seeing the event replayed may re-traumatize your child.
- **Give your child a sense of control over their lives.** For example, let him or her decide what to wear or what to have for dinner.
- **Keep your child healthy.** Make sure your child are getting rest and good nutrition.
- **Communicate with the teacher.** Parents and teachers should work together to make sure your child are recovering from the trauma.
- **Take advantage of mental health resources.** Don't be afraid to ask for professional help for your child and yourself.

Respond to specific symptoms:

- **Guilt:** Explain what is controllable and encourage your child to talk positively about themselves.
- **Helplessness:** Ask your child to write or speak about feelings and record pleasant thoughts.
- **Apathy or depression:** Plan enjoyable activities; talk about the future.
- **Agitation:** Teach relaxation techniques. Encourage physical exercise.
- **Loss of appetite:** Don't force eating. Prepare favorite meals.
- **Sleep difficulties:** Keep a regular bedtime and engage in relaxing activities in the evening.
- **Fear:** Be available, supportive and reassuring.
- **Aggressive behavior:** Use a firm approach to let your child know that the behavior is unacceptable. Explain that the feelings of anger are normal and encourage your child to express emotions in appropriate ways.

Activities for Children

- Encourage your child to draw pictures that express their feelings.
- Write a story about the event and end on a positive note.
- Use art and music to relieve stress.
- Play dress-up and pretend to be adults.
- Use puppets to create a skit.
- Read stories together.



The Concept of Death and Handling Grief at School

(adapted from the [2018 NEA Crisis Manual](#))

The Concept of Death at Various Ages

The following is a composite of information from such sources as the National Association of School Psychologists and The Dougy Center for Grieving Children & Families:

Ages three to five:

- Preschoolers believe inanimate objects can move and people are always alive. They worry about the comfort of a dead person.
- Magical thinking gives children a sense of power. They believe they can make someone live or die by wishing it so.
- Children at this age think death is temporary and reversible. They may feel that their thoughts or actions caused the death. They may be anxious that others might leave them.

Ages six to eight:

- Children this age have fears about the fate of the corpse.
- Children are fascinated by what happens to corpses and may be afraid of being trapped in a coffin.

Ages nine to 12:

- Children let go of magical thinking. They understand death is normal and irreversible.
- Children understand the causes of death and are more likely concerned about the physical consequences — e.g., what happens to the body.
- They may think death won't happen until they are very old.

Adolescence:

- They understand that death is final and irreversible and will happen to everyone.
- They are capable of abstract reasoning and are concerned about theological beliefs of life after death.
- Adolescents live for the moment and may deny the possibility that death can happen to them. They may take risks and deny personal danger.
- They may focus on the glory of death and idolize a peer who dies.

Stages of Grief

There are 10 stages of grief that people may go through after a loss — shock; expression of emotion; depression and loneliness; physical symptoms of distress; panic; guilt; anger and resentment; resistance; hope; and affirmation of reality. To progress through the stages, a person has to work through these tasks:

- Accept the reality of the loss.
- Experience the pain of grief.
- Adjust to an environment in which the deceased is missing.
- Withdraw emotional energy and reinvest in new relationships.

How Schools Can Help Students Deal with Death and Grief

- Give students honest, clear, age-appropriate information about death.
- Encourage students to express their feelings and show empathy.
- Help students who may be anxious about how to act and what to say to a student who suffered a loss. Explain that it is appropriate to express sorrow for the loss.
- Provide comfort and reassure students.



- Permit students to participate in memorials, funerals and other ceremonies. Prepare them by explaining what might happen.
- Maintain consistency and predictability of the school routine.
- Communicate with parents about student's behavior and emotions related to grief.
- Encourage projects such as writings, drawings and scrapbooks.
- Help students create and send sympathy cards.
- Provide access to individual and group counseling.



General Actions Based on Role

(Adapted from Kirksville Crisis Plan)

Administrator	Counselor	In-Class/Teacher	Staff
Meet with crisis management team/counselors	Contact outside agencies, other district counselors, and mental health partners	Attend staff meeting	Attend staff meeting
Conduct faculty meeting	Follow the deceased schedule to monitor peer reactions and answer questions (may extend to school related extracurricular)	Utilize script, address it with class and/or request counselor to come to class	Remove student's name from mailing list
Gather contents from locker/cubby and follow school policy regarding memorials	Arrange for extra crisis counseling rooms for staff and students	Provide the school counselor with a list of "high risk" students.	Provide the school counselor with a list of "high risk" students.
Offer condolences to family	Identify teachers that require extra support or who are not comfortable addressing his/her first hour class	Attend a brief after school meeting to debrief and plan for following day	Office staff will review procedures for handling requests or calls from parents
Determine how the family wants the information disclosed	Remove student's schedule	Remember to utilize counselors if struggling to cope with the loss	students that wish to leave must be released to a parent/guardian
Create a letter for parents, take student off mailing list prior to sending letter	Maintain a list of "high risk" students and those absent that are directly impacted		
Designate a staff member to contact funeral home and make arrangements that could include parent permission slips and transportation	Assist administrator in organizing staff in visitation and funeral arrangements		
Meet with building staff after school to follow up from day	Be aware of spontaneous memorializations		
Meet with crisis team after school to prep for following day			



Resources and Samples

Resource	Link
Sample Letter to Parents	http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/NEA%20School%20Crisis%20Guide%202018.pdf (page 77)
MSCA Crisis Counseling	http://moschoolcounselor.org/files/2014/07/MSCA_Crisis_Manual_2012.pdf (page 34)
ASCA Crisis Resources	https://www.schoolcounselor.org/school-counselors/professional-development/learn-more/helping-kids-during-crisis
Social/Emotional Curriculum Strand 3: SE 3: Applying Personal Safety Skills and Coping Strategies	https://dese.mo.gov/sites/default/files/cnsl-curr-se3-index_01_18.pdf