PREPARE

PREVENT

NEA'S SCHOOL CRISIS —GUIDE—

RECOVER

RESPOND

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INTRODUCTION

PREVENT **PREPARE** **RESPOND** **RECOVER**

Addressing the Full Spectrum of School Crisis Response

Schools experience a wide variety of crises that have the potential to harm the mental and physical health, learning environment, and safety of students and educators. A school crisis is any traumatic event that seriously disrupts coping and problem-solving abilities of students and school staff. It is typically sudden, unexpected, dramatic and forceful and may even threaten survival. A crisis can cause a drastic and tragic change to the environment. This change is generally overwhelming and uncontrollable as well as unwanted and frightening. It may create a sense of helplessness, hopelessness, and vulnerability combined with a loss of safety.

School crises can be on a large scale, such as severe violence, hostage situations, and natural disasters that require an emergency response from the community. Or, they can be more individualized, such as a car accident or the unexpected death of a student.

A school crisis can also be community epidemics of students, and even staff, who have been repeatedly exposed to traumatic events and/or chronic environmental stressors. Repeated and continued exposure to such stressors has been shown to cause changes in the developing brain structure, further exacerbating a young person's challenges to success in school and life (Anda et al., 2006; Lupien, McEwen, Gunnar, & Heim, 2009). To the extent that such exposure results in post-traumatic stress disorder, permanent negative alterations to academic trajectories can occur. As the understanding of trauma and its effects on learning has evolved, the need for trauma-informed practices has grown.

Over the last several years, school systems across the country have sought to improve the safety and security of their schools. School districts have partnered with state and local organizations – including law enforcement, emergency management, fire services, and local health and mental health departments – to improve the physical infrastructure of school facilities, update emergency plans and procedures, and coordinate a response plan in case of a traumatic event.

Two realities are clear. First, human-caused crises and natural disasters will continue to occur. As these are reviewed, lessons learned and other insight can be garnered to further the actions and investments in our efforts. Second, **there is a need to focus on school safety as a means of preventing incidents. A significant part of prevention is recognizing and addressing the mental health needs of students and staff.** While we strengthen our response and recovery capabilities, we must also strengthen our capacity to identify and address mental health issues and create a positive and healthy learning and working environment for the entire school community.

The key to preventing crisis is addressing emotional issues and managing behaviors before they escalate. Once a crisis occurs, schools must be prepared to address mental health implications to reduce further distress or secondary crises. This updated school crisis response guide provides recommendations and guidance for all the phases of crisis response, with added emphasis on the psychological health and safety of students and school staff.

How This Guide Is Organized

This guide presents resources, tools, recommendations, and evidence-based practices for incorporating best practices in school mental health into school crisis plans. It is organized into four sections: Prevent, Prepare, Respond, and Recover. Prevent addresses what schools and districts can do to reduce or eliminate risk to life and property; Prepare focuses on the process of planning for the worst-case scenario; Respond is devoted to the steps to take during a crisis; and Recover deals with how to restore the learning and teaching environment after a crisis.

A model published by the U.S. Department of Education (2013) organizes these categories of activities under the broad concept of national preparedness. Informed by Presidential Policy Directive 8, it describes five missions of preparedness: prevention, protection, mitigation, response, and recovery. Although the sections of our guide do not correspond directly with the terminology used in that model, they do reflect the same concepts and activities. The major difference is that we present the second and third missions, protection and mitigation, under the heading of Prepare in Part Two of our guide, where we discuss the new model in greater detail.

You will note that throughout this document the various activities are sometimes discussed as conceptually distinct and other times as inseparable from each other. This reflects the reality that the activities are interrelated in complex ways.

PREVENT

The prevention phase aims to avoid the occurrence of incidents or lessen the harm done by unavoidable incidents. Often this phase is called prevention and mitigation. Prevention refers to actions aimed at stopping incidents from occurring, while mitigation refers to actions aimed at reducing the harm done by unavoidable incidents. For example, a monitored main entrance with all other external doors locked is a prevention strategy to keep intruders out.

PREPARE

The preparedness phase requires planning for worst-case scenarios and involves a continuous cycle of planning, practicing, and evaluating actions aimed at an effective response to an incident. Its goal is to minimize psychological and physical harm as incidents occur and to have a system in place for immediate and effective response and recovery. The preparation and prevention phases occur at the same time and are ongoing.

RESPOND

The response phase includes the steps taken to minimize harm to people and property during a particular incident. Its focus is on the short-term, direct effects of an incident and requires tight coordination and rapid action among all participants. This includes executing the emergency plans developed and practiced in the preparedness phase.

RECOVER

The recovery phase is concerned with restoring the learning and teaching environment after an incident. It is the process of mending the physical and psychological health of school community members, as well as restoring physical facilities to re-establish a positive learning environment. Its aim is to develop and implement plans to ensure school services and facilities are restored. In addition, recovery includes evaluating the incident and the response to it in order to revise and improve school safety and emergency response.

How to Use This Guide

The goal of this guide is to help schools, school districts, and state and local affiliate organizations improve and enhance their comprehensive crisis plans. It seeks to help schools and school districts move beyond the basic requirements (either by state or district mandate) toward implementing comprehensive prevention and recovery programs to enhance preparedness for any kind of disaster. Many states and school districts have enacted legislation or policies that require schools to have such plans in place and to review them annually. In some jurisdictions, plans are still under development or are being implemented in phases, and are ideally revised as needed and when lessons are learned. Crisis preparedness is an ongoing process.

We hope this guide will be shared and used to enhance safety and prevention efforts. It promotes school-wide programs and services that encourage positive and healthy school climates, as well as community partnerships that enhance the effectiveness of mental health and social services delivery. We believe that states and local entities should consider mental health in whatever plans their state or districts require. This not only enhances the school and community climate, but facilitates response and recovery.

Also in the guide, you will find templates to address staff member roles and responsibilities and planning tools to assist the school crisis team in addressing the needs of our most vulnerable students. Schools and districts can make use of the various crisis resources for leaders, parents, caregivers, and educators and determine how to best address their school's and community's needs during each crisis phase.

PART ONE: PREVENT

A Positive School Climate: Building the Foundation for Safe and Supportive Schools

School climate is the foundation on which schools build their instructional program and their school emergency management system. At the core of safe and supportive schools are relationships of respect and connection between adults and students. A positive school climate increases the chances of students succeeding academically and decreases the chances of them suffering harm from threats or hazards.

The NEA has developed research and policy recommendations to highlight the importance of school climate and to promote best practices around the common goals of bullying prevention and enhancing school connectedness. www.nea.org/assets/docs/15584_Bully_Free_Research_Brief-4pg.pdf

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION'S SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE SCHOOLS MODEL

ASPECTS OF SCHOOL CLIMATE

ENGAGEMENT	SAFETY	ENVIRONMENT
RELATIONSHIPS	EMOTIONAL SAFETY	PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT
RESPECT FOR DIVERSITY	PHYSICAL SAFETY	ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT
SCHOOL PARTICIPATION	SUBSTANCE USE	WELLNESS
		DISCIPLINARY ENVIRONMENT
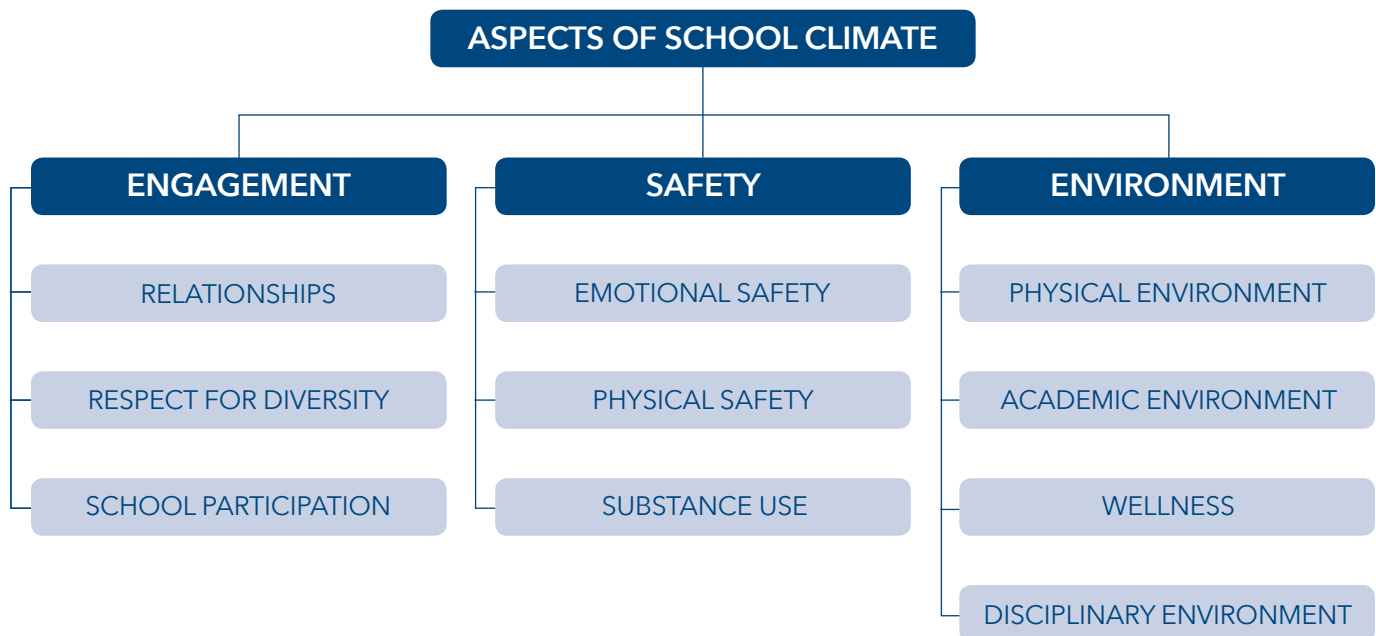
School Climate and Emergencies

School climate describes a range of campus conditions, including safety, relationships and engagement, and the environment, that may influence student learning and well-being. Positive school climates that promote student learning and well-being often feature:

- Safe environments free of violence, bullying, harassment, and substance use
- Appropriate facilities and physical surroundings
- Supportive academic settings
- Clear and fair disciplinary policies
- Respectful, trusting, and caring relationships throughout the school community
- Available social, emotional, and behavioral supports

Positive school climates are inclusive of and responsive to students of all backgrounds, regardless of race, color, national origin, language, disability, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity.

Research shows that creating positive school climates can help districts, schools, and educators meet key goals, including: boosting student achievement and closing achievement gaps; increasing high school graduation rates; decreasing educator turnover and increasing educator satisfaction; and turning around low-performing schools. Positive school climates also enhance safety in the school and community by increasing communication among students, families, and faculty. At the same time, schools reduce various forms of harm to students that can stem from negative school climates, including violence, bullying, and even suicide (National Education Association, 2013).

A positive school climate that provides students with ready access to emotional and behavioral supports can positively impact the capacity of students and staff to prevent, respond to, and recover from emergencies (REMS TA Center, n.d.).

A Positive School Climate Impacts All Phases of the Emergency Management Cycle

PREVENT: A positive school climate can help prevent emergencies because it can reduce the incidences of behaviors that contribute to crisis (e.g., violence, bullying, harassment, substance abuse). Further, schools with a positive school climate engage students in developing strong relationships with staff and peers, increasing the likelihood that students will quickly report potential threats to trusted adults within the school (Eliot, Cornell, Gregory, & Fan, 2010).

PREPARE: A school with a predictable and orderly environment is better able to run efficient, organized drills. When students routinely practice orderly and respectful behavior in hallways, they naturally move in an orderly fashion during drills. Preparation also includes availability of and training of staff in threat assessment and suicide prevention.

RESPOND: Schools with positive school climates teach students the social and emotional competencies that enable them to develop persistence, tolerance of frustration, and ability to manage their emotions during an emergency. The educators, specialized instructional support personnel (school nurses, school counselors, school psychologists, and social workers) and other staff adequately trained in child and adolescent development maximize a positive school climate by responding appropriately to a variety of student behaviors so they are able to de-escalate aggressive behavior before it becomes a threat to school safety.

RECOVER: A positive school climate can help in the recovery from an emergency because it represents a commitment, even prior to an emergency, to providing emotional and mental health services and supports to all members of the community. Schools with such a climate show that they recognize the importance of social and emotional health and promote an understanding that individual needs will vary in a post-emergency situation.

BULLYING PREVENTION

School Climate and Bullying Prevention

www.nea.org/home/56880.htm

www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/
resources/school-safety-and-crisis/a-framework-for-
safe-and-successful-schools

Student Bullying, The Brain and Bonding

www.nea.org/home/60834.htm

PBIS (positive behavioral interventions and supports)

www.nea.org/assets/docs/PB41A-Positive_
Behavioral_Interventions-Final.pdf

There are many models for building and maintaining a positive school climate. According to the National School Climate Center, models for positive school climate include the following components:

[Citation: National School Climate Center, School Climate Brief, Number 3, August 2012
www.schoolclimate.org

1. A sharp focus on cultivating trusting, respectful, and caring relationships among students, staff, parents, and guardians. School staff members regularly engage in two-way communications with students, parents, and guardians. The goal is a "connected community."

2. An orderly and predictable environment that also encourages critical and creative thought.

3. Social curriculum to teach social and emotional skills, including healthy relationships (such as teen dating and violence), conflict resolution, and bullying prevention, as well as self-management and responsible decision-making. For example, schools can ensure that cafeteria, hallway, and playground monitors are present to quickly intervene in the expected and occasional skirmish and teach conflict resolution and reinforce appropriate behaviors at recess. (See additional information on SEL below).

4. Proactive, preventative and positive discipline policies that are **consistently and fairly applied** with a focus on teaching appropriate behavior rather than punishment.

5. A system to identify, refer, and support any student who is struggling academically, behaviorally, or socially in school. For example, in middle and high schools, efforts are made so students, staff, and parents are aware of the signs of suicide and know how to refer someone to get help. Staff should be given some means of addressing any signs of troubled behavior or a student **at risk of harming themselves or others.** All schools should have a clearly articulated referral protocol, which they follow whenever a student is thought to be a potential danger to self or others. In particular, there should be a person (typically a school-employed mental health professional) to whom all reports of students at risk are brought. The mental health professional is the person who conducts a risk assessment. Students must be informed about ways to report concerning behavior(s), and to seek help for themselves or others within their school settings. Communication about ways to direct this type of reporting is critical. Confidential reporting systems must be established, and it is important that students are empowered to seek help for themselves or a friend (instead of being seen as a snitch).

6. The above principles are practiced throughout the building during the entire school day.

7. Appropriate facilities and physical surroundings are aligned with the above practices.

A Comprehensive Approach to Safe Schools

School safety and a positive school climate cannot be found in a single curriculum or program. They are best achieved by comprehensive and collaborative efforts that require the dedication and commitment of all school staff and appropriate community members. Schools require consistent and effective approaches to prevent violence and promote learning, sufficient time to implement these approaches, and ongoing evaluation.

Rather than viewing school safety as a targeted outcome of a designated stand-alone program or piece of equipment, a comprehensive model seeks to integrate all services for students and families by framing behavioral, mental health, and social services within the context of school culture and learning. Integrated services lead to more sustainable and comprehensive school improvement, reduce duplicative efforts, and require leadership by the principal and a commitment from the entire staff.

A good school crisis plan will foster and protect both physical safety, such as a secure building, and psychological safety of a safe and supportive environment. This comprehensive approach is outlined in the joint paper, Framework for Safe and Successful Schools (Cowan, Vaillancourt, Rossen, & Pollitt, 2013). The framework that the authors describe highlights the unique role of the school principal and the complementary roles of school mental health and safety personnel (school social workers, school counselors, school psychologists and school resources officers). The following steps, when implemented as a comprehensive and integrated strategy for improving student health and safety, will help schools promote a positive school climate.

Framework for Safe and Successful Schools

NASP Framework

www.nasponline.org/Documents/Research%20and%20Policy/Advocacy%20Resources/Framework_for_Safe_and_Successful_School_Environments.pdf

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Conduct a Comprehensive Needs Assessment

School communities are complex systems with multiple stakeholders and interconnecting environmental factors that influence student health and safety. A comprehensive needs assessment of the school climate, therefore, should evaluate school engagement, school safety, and the school environment to provide schools with the data support they needed to pursue a comprehensive approach for improvement. **State and federal laws outline the requirement for schools to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment as part of the overall planning and decision-making process.**

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) emphasizes that schools should improve school climate, safety, and access to high quality comprehensive learning supports. ESSA requires states to articulate how they will assist local education agencies' efforts to address bullying, harassment, and discipline. ESSA requires that states annually report school climate, bullying, and harassment data that, at a minimum, are contained in the Civil Rights Data Collection.

Under Titles I and IV of ESSA, federal funds may be used on programs or services to improve student mental health and behavioral health, school climate or school safety. This includes implementing trauma-informed practices and mental health first aid. Funding streams can be used to implement positive behavioral interventions and supports or other activities to address skills such as social emotional learning, conflict resolution, effective problem solving, and appropriate relationship building. How much funding will be allotted to these activities, either by Congress or state and local decision-making bodies, remains a variable factor.

A comprehensive picture of school health and safety can be created by using needs assessments that include perceptions from students and, where appropriate, from parents and staff to help schools identify key issues in need of attention. By monitoring indicators such as the frequency and severity of student risk behaviors, as well as perceptions of safety,

schools may identify threats to school safety and then use this information to implement an appropriate intervention or program.

Implement Multitier Systems of Supports

The most effective way to implement integrated services that support school safety and student learning is through a school-wide multitier system of supports (MTSS). MTSS encompasses (a) prevention and wellness promotion; (b) universal screening for academic, behavioral, and emotional barriers to learning; (c) implementation of evidence-based interventions that increase in intensity as needed; (d) monitoring of ongoing student progress in response to implemented interventions; and (e) engagement in systematic data-based decision making about services needed for students based on specific outcomes.

In a growing number of schools across the country, response to intervention and positive behavior interventions and supports constitute the primary methods for implementing an MTSS framework. Ideally, though, MTSS is implemented more holistically to integrate efforts targeting academic, behavioral, social, emotional, physical, and mental health concerns. This framework is more effective with coordination of school-employed and community-based service providers to ensure integration and coordination of services among the school, home, and community. Congress acknowledged the importance of MTSS by including it in ESSA (the Every Student Succeeds Act).

Effective MTSS requires:

- Adequate access to **school-employed** specialized instructional support personnel (e.g., school counselors, school psychologists, school social workers, and school nurses) and coordinated community-based services

- Collaboration and integration of services, including integration of mental health, behavioral, and academic supports, as well integration of school-based and community services

- Adequate staff time for planning and problem solving

- Effective collection, evaluation, interpretation, and use of data

- Patience, commitment, and strong leadership

School climate can be enhanced by a data-driven, multi-tier framework that provides a continuum of behavioral supports and interventions to improve student behavior and achievement. A three-tiered framework would comprise the following:

1. School-wide or universal interventions and supports focus on developing expected behaviors and social-emotional competence, and on preventing problem behavior (e.g., Suicide Prevention Program, Bullying Prevention Program, positive behavior supports, character education programs, and a health curriculum also integrating emotional well-being).

2. A second tier of interventions targets groups of students who are at elevated levels of risk or exhibiting problem behavior (such as bullying). These groups of students can be identified more easily, and their needs or behavior can be addressed more effectively when a school-wide foundation is in place (e.g., small-group interventions to teach emotional regulation skills, anger management, problem solving, and social skills).

3. A third tier of interventions targets individual students, including traumatized youths, who are at even more elevated levels of academic and social-emotional behavioral need and risk (e.g., individualized school-based and/or community based counseling).

While interventions for students who are at elevated levels of risk address their needs and problem behaviors, they should also **build the skills that support thriving in life and resiliency in crisis.** Using an evidence-based, multi-tiered behavioral framework has been found to improve school climate by reducing problem behaviors like bullying, drug abuse, and poor attendance, while making students feel safer and improving academic performance. Implementation of a school-wide framework provides a structure for schools in which to customize and organize the varied practices and programs they need to provide to their students based on data on student needs and local resources. Further, **such a framework may help schools to better identify students struggling**

with trauma post-event, and select appropriate interventions to help them to recover.

One approach to integrating school safety and crisis management into an MTSS framework is the M-PHAT model (Reeves Kanan, & Plog, 2010). M-PHAT stands for:

- Multi-Phase (prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery)
- Multi-Hazard (accidental death, school violence, natural disasters, terrorism)
- Multi-Agency (school, police, fire, EMS, mental health)
- Multi-Tiered (an MTSS framework)

For more information, see PREPaRE: School Crisis Prevention and Intervention Training Curriculum. The PREPaRE curriculum was developed by the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) as part of NASP's decade-long leadership in providing evidence-based resources and consultation related to school crisis prevention and response. PREPaRE training is ideal for schools committed to improving and strengthening their school safety and crisis management plans and emergency response. For more information, visit www.nasponline.org/professional-development/prepare-training-curriculum

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports: A multi-Tiered Framework That Works for Every Student

Framework for Safe and Successful Schools

www.nea.org/assets/docs/PB41A-Positive_Behavioral_Interventions-Final.pdf

Positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) is a multi-tiered framework that is utilized to achieve important behavior changes. It requires adopting and organizing evidence-based behavioral interventions into an integrated continuum that enhances academic and social behavior outcomes for all students. NEA (2014) supports safe and orderly environments and views PBIS as an education initiative that benefits every student.

Promoting Social and Emotional Competencies

Social and emotional learning is important to enable individuals to learn to understand and manage their emotions and relationships, and to make good decisions. Social-emotional learning can help individuals stop and think before they react, control their response to stress, develop supportive and caring relationships, persist through challenges, seek help, and pay attention to their and others' needs and feelings. These and other social and emotional competencies can help individuals prepare for and respond to emergencies. Students are more likely to develop such competencies when they have good relationships with adults, and when the adults model these competencies (REMS TA Center, n.d.). For more information, visit the website of the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL: www.casel.org).

Social and Emotional Learning

NEA Resolution B-66 — The Association supports the use of evidence-based instructional methods and adequate staffing of specialized professional support personnel (school counselors, social workers, mental health workers, nurses, and/or psychologists) to provide services that promote healthy social and emotional skills in all students for their lifelong learning process.

Natural Opportunities to Promote Social-Emotional Learning and Mental Health
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/practicenotes/naturalopportunities.pdf

Allow for the Consideration of Context

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to creating safe and successful schools. To be most effective, schools should assess the structures and resources already in place and determine what additional resources are needed. Schools should provide universal, secondary, and tertiary interventions that are most appropriate and culturally sensitive to their unique student populations and learning communities. Additionally, decisions

regarding appropriate security measures, including the use of School Resource Officers (SROs), should be determined by each school's leadership team and not via universal mandate.

Acknowledge That Sustainable and Effective Improvement Takes Patience and Commitment

School districts will vary considerably in their readiness to change and in their ability to accept the suggestions included in this guide. Recognizing that sustainable change takes time to improve acceptability and allow for full implementation will help set districts up for success rather than setting unrealistic goals. Efforts for change should not be abandoned if goals are not immediately met, as frequent programmatic changes lead to more resistance to change among school personnel in the future.

Positive and Preventative School Discipline

All school staff play a role in the effective development and implementation of school discipline policies. Discipline practices should function in concert with efforts to address school safety and positive school climate. When positive discipline is incorporated into the overall MTSS, students feel respected and supported, positive behavior is continually reinforced, and school climate improves. Additionally, this structure allows for the use of restorative practices that seek to build positive relationships within the school community.

In contrast, overly harsh and punitive measures, such as zero tolerance policies, lead to reduced safety, connectedness, and feelings of belonging, and have historically been unsuccessful at improving student behavior or the overall school climate. Additionally, utilizing SROs or other security personnel primarily as a substitute for effective discipline policies is inappropriate, does not contribute to school safety or students' perceptions of being safe, and can perpetuate the school-to-prison pipeline (National Association of School Psychologists, 2013).

School discipline is effective when it:

- is viewed within the context of a learning opportunity and seeks to teach and reinforce positive behaviors to replace negative behaviors;
- is clear, consistent, and equitably applied to all students;
- employs culturally competent practices;
- safeguards the well-being of all students and staff;
- keeps students in school and out of the juvenile justice system; and
- incorporates family involvement.

Schools play a critical role in developing the academic, social, and emotional skills that help children learn to interact in a respectful manner, resolve conflict peacefully, and mature into contributing members of their communities. To effectively develop these competencies, however, students must feel supported, connected to their educators and staff, encouraged to do well, and physically and emotionally safe – all part of the conditions necessary for learning (Morgan, Salomon, Plotkin, & Cohen, 2014, p. 26).

The School Discipline Consensus Report: Strategies from the Field to Keep Students
Engaged in School and Out of the Juvenile Justice System, p. 26

SPEAK UP – SAY SOMETHING

www.sandyhookpromise.org

Encourage students to report threats to safety by teaching the difference between tattling and reporting potentially dangerous situations. Instill the message that "friends do tell." Emphasize to students that threats heard in person, written down, or posted online should be reported. Clear reporting policies and safe school hotlines help protect confidentiality, and troubled students should have access to mental health support.

School Climate and Discipline: The Challenge and the Opportunity

Although national rates of school violence have decreased overall, many schools struggle to create and sustain the nurturing, positive, safe, and equitable learning environments that we know are needed to improve student outcomes. Research clearly shows that discipline policies and practices that remove students from engaging in instruction – such as suspensions, expulsions, and inappropriate referrals to law enforcement – generally fail to help students improve their behavior and fail to improve school safety.

Suspended students are less likely to graduate on time and more likely to repeat a grade, drop out of school, and become involved in the juvenile justice system. Reports from the 2011–12 Civil Rights Data Collection show that students of certain racial or ethnic groups tend to be disciplined more than their peers (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

Chairwoman of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Catherine Lhamon, stated that, "Educators and principals make difficult, yet appropriate, decisions involving the use of school discipline each and every school day. And yet, in some of our schools and districts, the unfair and unnecessary use of suspensions and expulsions undermine this essential work. Students must be in school to be successful."

Student misbehavior can be better addressed and true discipline more effectively achieved through measures that keep kids in school rather than putting them out of the street.

More Information on School Climate and Supportive School Discipline

In January 2014, the U.S. Departments of Education and Justice released joint guidance on promoting positive school discipline policies (see http://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov). This guidance was promulgated by decades of research and data collection on the increased use of suspensions, most being for minor and non-violent incidents of misbehavior. The findings confirm that certain students have been disproportionately disciplined more harshly and more frequently than other students. Beginning as early as preschool, data reveal that African American students, especially males, American Indian/Alaska Native students, and students with disabilities disproportionately face the most extreme forms of discipline, resulting in serious, negative educational consequences. The U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) Civil Rights Data Collection: Data Snapshot (School Discipline).

Guiding Principles: A Resource Guide for Improving School Climate and Discipline (https://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/school-discipline/guiding-principles.pdf) describes the key principles and related action steps that can help guide state and local efforts to improve school climate and school discipline. At the district level, reforms include adding social and emotional learning to curricula, implementing positive behavioral intervention and support frameworks, building and sustaining community partnerships, replacing suspensions with educational alternatives, and assembling multidisciplinary intervention teams to help struggling students and their families. The new guidance specifically states that, "Trained school-based support personnel – which may include school counselors, school psychologists, behavioral interventionists, school social workers, mental health providers, and school nurses – can be critical to the effective implementation of tiered supports."

School-based health and mental health personnel are explicitly mentioned and acknowledged for the important role they play in improved school climate and the implementation of positive, preventative approaches to discipline. This guidance is extremely important to school leaders in minimizing the

unintended consequences of unreasonable and unjust school disciplinary practices. This guidance also endorses and encourages a comprehensive, coordinated approach using evidence-based practices and multidisciplinary teams of support personnel offering tiered interventions and supports.

Every school district and school should develop a consistent code of conduct that reinforces values such as respect, fairness, tolerance, and personal responsibility. The code should clearly outline unacceptable behaviors, including bullying, and consequences for violations. Bullying behavior includes not only physical aggression, but also verbal and cyber threats, name calling, rumors and menacing gestures. All staff, including support personnel, should receive training on how to identify bullying and other destructive behaviors and how to respond.

Defining and, hence, understanding "bully" and "victim" behavior is complicated and challenging (Freiberg, 2010). Scholars sometimes define "bullying" as intentional acts that are carried out by a person or group who has more power than the target of this behavior. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention defines it as follows: "Bullying is any unwanted aggressive behavior(s) by another youth or group of youths who are not siblings or current dating partners that involves an observed or perceived power imbalance and is repeated multiple times or is highly likely to be repeated. Bullying may inflict harm or distress on the targeted youth including physical, psychological, social, or educational harm" (Gladden, Vivolo-Kantor, Hamburger, & Lumpkin, 2014, p. 7). However, educators "on the ground" often have difficulty discerning intent and/or power relationships. Each state's anti-bullying laws have a unique definition of bullying. "Bullying," no matter how it is defined, is about inappropriate behaviors, including both words and deeds. We use the terms bully and perpetrator as well as "victim" and "target" interchangeably. **It is most helpful to avoid labels and talk about "mean, cruel and/or bullying behaviors."**

Restorative Justice Practices and Principles in Schools

Restorative Practices are a framework for **building community** and for **responding to challenging behavior** through authentic dialogue, coming to understanding, and making things right. This research-based program increases students' understanding of behaviors and attitudes that lead to violence, and teaches and models how to **resolve conflict peacefully and create a culture of respect and focus on learning.**

With appropriate training and skilled facilitators, schools and educators can employ restorative circles in their classrooms. Such circles build community, using and teaching restorative concepts and skills to assist students in addressing situations in which harm has occurred. Participants hear others' viewpoints, and accept responsibility for actions that have occurred. Accountability is an essential element of this process.

These methods have been successful in creating calmer, more focused classrooms in which the overall proportion of time dedicated to managing behavior is reduced. This means more instructional time becomes available. It also means that students (and educators) have happier, more peaceful experiences during their school days. Skilled facilitators can assist students in addressing situations in which harm has occurred, while enabling participants to hear other views, and accept responsibility for actions that have occurred. Accountability is an essential element of this process. (International Institute of Restorative Practices, online at www.iirp.org.)

See NEA and Partners Promote Restorative Justice in Schools

http://neatoday.org/2014/03/24/nea-and-partners-promote-restorative-justice-in-schools

http://schottfoundation.org/restorative-practices

www.otlcampaign.org/restorative-practices

Suicide Prevention

Suicide is the second leading cause of death among 15- to 19-year-olds, and the third for 10- to 14-year-olds (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: see www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/index.html). NEA places a high priority on assisting its members in promoting effective suicide prevention programs and appropriate professional development at the state level. It has developed resources to help school personnel advocate for model policies (state legislation, school board resolution, etc.) in their school districts. Research has consistently shown a strong link between suicide and depression, with 90 percent of the people who die by suicide having an existing mental illness or substance abuse problem at the time of their death. Recognizing the warning signs of depression, mental illness, and other indicators of suicidal thoughts and behaviors is key to prevention. It is essential that this information be disseminated when advocating for improved suicide awareness and prevention efforts in school districts and communities. http://neahealthyfutures.org/get-informed/mental-health/advocacy-resources-for-suicide-prevention

Former U.S. Surgeon General, Dr. David Satcher, called suicide a "public health crisis" and advanced the National Strategy for Suicide Prevention in 2012. Since then, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has funded the development of **products, services, and resources to assist schools and communities in suicide prevention and meet the emotional needs of those affected by disaster.**

The key to prevention is reducing incidents and managing behaviors before they escalate. Awareness, knowledge, and practices that promote sound mental health can greatly reduce and often prevent a crisis. While educating students is the primary mission of every school and every educator, this is only possible when schools provide students a safe and supportive learning environment. A strong emphasis on prevention is a central component of any comprehensive school crisis plan. Prevention needs to be multifaceted and comprehensive. It is an ongoing, long-term effort to promote a positive school climate, facilitate healthy student development, prevent problems, and respond as soon as problems are identified.

Prevention includes:

- Addressing specific topics that may lead to a school crisis (e.g., gangs, violence, bullying, fights, anger management, suicides, depression, substance abuse, domestic violence)

- Implementing primary prevention programs (e.g., support for personalized learning, positive behavior interventions and supports (PBIS), comprehensive school counseling programs, expanded school mental health)

- Identifying at-risk students

- Linking school-based mental health counseling to community services

- Providing staff training programs (e.g., Mental Health First Aid and Trauma Sensitive Schools) to assist staff with identifying vulnerable students, responding appropriately, and making appropriate referrals

Staff Training on Suicide Prevention

Educators need more guidance on recognizing the signs of suicidal thoughts and speaking to students who may be at risk. There also needs to be a clear referral process in place. School personnel should refer immediately to a school-employed mental health professional whenever they suspect suicidal ideation. English educators, in particular, need to be alerted to the fact that journals can contain suicidal references that MUST be followed up on.

National Education Association (NEA) offers resources on suicide prevention as well as advocacy tools to promote suicide prevention training for school staff. http://neahealthyfutures.org/get-informed/mental-health/advocacy-resources-for-suicide-prevention

Students also need to be reminded that they should seek trusted adults when they are concerned about the safety of a fellow student or anyone in the school community. Because students are more likely to hear from peers about other peers at risk for suicide or self-harm, ensure that concerned students know how, when, and where to seek help, especially after school hours or during school holiday breaks.

Schools should integrate prevention activities in schools, such as annual depression screening, to ensure that students at risk are identified and provided with appropriate intervention.

NASP Facts & Tips

Preventing youth suicide: www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources/school-safety-and-crisis/preventing-youth-suicide

Threat assessment at school: www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources/school-safety-and-crisis/threat-assessment-at-school

Threat assessment for school administrators and crisis teams: www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources/school-safety-and-crisis/threat-assessment-at-school/threat-assessment-for-school-administrators-and-crisis-teams

For more information, see American Association of Suicidology: www.suicidology.org

After a Suicide: A Toolkit for Schools www.sprc.org/sites/sprc.org/files/library/AfteraSuicideToolkitforSchools.pdf

Model School District Policy for Suicide Prevention http://b.3cdn.net/trevor/10a65fa42e6ebddc24_qem6bvseu.pdf

Both the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (Lifeline) and the National Disaster Distress Helpline (Helpline) administer and enhance the nationwide network of crisis centers that provides counseling for individuals in emotional distress or suicidal crisis 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. People who are in crisis or are concerned about someone else in crisis can call the **Lifeline at 800-273 TALK (8255),** and be rapidly connected to the nearest crisis center within the network to receive help.

The Helpline, 800-985-5990. The Helpline is a resource for people who need crisis counseling after experiencing a natural or man-made disaster or tragedy. It is also available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. This toll-free and confidential service immediately connects callers to trained and caring professionals from a crisis counseling center nearest to them.

The Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC) builds national capacity for preventing suicide by providing technical assistance, training, and resources to assist states, tribes, organizations, SAMHSA's grantees, and others to develop suicide prevention strategies. The SPRC also acts as Executive Secretariat for the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention, a public private partnership that works to advance the National Strategy for Suicide Prevention.

We know that suicide is preventable and that suicide prevention works. "Suicide and emotional turmoil can destroy lives and shatter families and communities. Yet when people in crisis get help they can recover, and lead full productive lives. That is why these programs are so essential." *Acting SAMHSA Administrator, Kana Enomoto.*

PART TWO: PREPARE

This section focuses on how to help district and school staff make prevention and preparedness a top priority. It includes the key elements of an emergency and preparedness plan, tips on forming crisis response teams, types of emergencies a crisis plan should address, communications, training, and recovery. Effective preparation requires planning for worst-case scenarios and involves a continuous cycle of planning, practicing, and evaluating actions aimed at an effective response to an incident. The goal is to minimize psychological and physical harm as incidents occur and to have a system in place for immediate and effective response and recovery. The preparation and prevention phases occur at the same time and are ongoing.

I. OVERVIEW

Types of emergencies and crises that plans should address

Prepare step-by-step plans for responding to the range of possible emergencies and crises, whether they are caused by humans or by nature and are expected or unexpected. Examples include natural disasters, medical situations, violent incidents, large-scale fights on school grounds, suicides, the death of a student or staff member, a missing student, chemical releases or spills, communicable disease outbreaks, bus transportation accidents, traffic problems, utility outages, and civil unrest. These plans may need to be modified depending on the school (e.g., urban, rural, elementary, secondary) and any hazards unique to your community. Are there major roadways, airports, railroads, factories, water treatment plants, nuclear power plants or government facilities nearby? Are animal disturbances, such as bear or rabid animal attacks, possibilities? Are natural disasters, such as hurricanes, floods, wild fires, severe winter weather or tornadoes, likely?

Emergency. An urgent situation that calls for immediate action such as a school shooting, tornado, gas leak, or fire.

Crisis. An unfolding situation that has reached a critical phase with the distinct possibility of a highly undesirable outcome such as a hostage situation or terrorism.

Planning principles

A comprehensive School Emergency Operations Plan (school EOP) is based on principles that address a wide range of threats and hazards.

- **Planning must be supported by leadership at the district and school levels.**
- **Planning uses assessment to customize plans to the building level** taking into consideration the school's unique circumstances and resources.
- **Planning considers all threats and hazards** addressing safety needs before, during, and after an incident.

- **Planning provides for the access and functional needs of the whole school community** including children, individuals with disabilities and others with access and functional needs, those from religiously, racially, and ethnically diverse backgrounds, and people with limited English proficiency.

- **Planning considers all settings and all times** accounting for incidents that may occur during and outside the school day as well as on and off campus (e.g., sporting events, field trips).

- **Creating and revising a model emergency operation plan is done by following a collaborative process** that is flexible enough to be used as a framework by all school emergency planning teams to meet their unique needs and concerns.

- **Planning should include local law enforcement** as part of joint-planning efforts. This ensures that everyone has the same understanding of how crises should be responded to, minimizing confusion or potentially contradictions in crisis response efforts.

U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, Office of Safe and Healthy Students (2013), *Guide for Developing High-Quality School Emergency Operations Plans.* https://rems.ed.gov/docs/rems_k-12_guide_508.pdf

In addition to pulling together the most up-to-date interdepartmental guidance and resources on developing emergency plans, the Department of Education has funded the Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (REMS) Technical Assistance Center. The REMS Technical Assistance Center offers a variety of additional resources to assist schools, school districts, and institutions of higher education with their emergency management efforts. Resources include publications, links to additional sources of information, partner organizations, and other general emergency management information.

http://rems.ed.gov
http://rems.ed.gov/docs/creatingplans.pdf

A New Model: Five Preparedness Missions

National preparedness efforts, including planning, are informed by Presidential Policy Directive (PPD-8), which describes the nation's approach to preparedness. This directive, which was signed by the president in March 2011, represents an evolution in the nation's collective understanding of national preparedness, and is based on the lessons learned from terrorist attacks, hurricanes, school incidents, and other experiences. PPD-8 defines preparedness around five mission areas: Prevention, Protection, Mitigation, Response, and Recovery. The following graphic illustrates the relationships among these mission areas.

An incident or emergency takes place in time. There is a "before," a "during," and an "after" progression in linear order. Actions schools and communities take to prepare for incidents or emergencies are in the realm of protection and mitigation. During an incident, efforts move immediately into protection and response, and the earliest stages of recovery begin. After an incident, the mission moves to recovery. All of these missions operate in a cyclical manner, as the efforts to heal from such incidents lay a foundation of prevention, building resilience for individuals and communities together, and mitigating the negative effects of such experiences. Following are brief descriptions of the five missions (U.S. Department of Education, 2013, p. 2):

Prevention
The capabilities necessary to avoid, deter, or stop an imminent crime or threatened or actual mass casualty incident. Prevention is the action schools take to prevent a threatened or actual incident from occurring.

Protection
The capabilities to secure schools against acts of violence and manmade or natural disasters. Protection focuses on ongoing actions that protect students, educators, staff, visitors, networks, and property from a threat or hazard.

Mitigation

The capabilities necessary to eliminate or reduce the loss of life and property damage by lessening the impact of an event or emergency. In this document, "mitigation" also means reducing the likelihood that threats and hazards will happen.

Response

The capabilities necessary to stabilize an emergency once it has already happened or is certain to happen in an unpreventable way; establish a safe and secure environment; save lives and property; and facilitate the transition to recovery.

Recovery

The capabilities necessary to assist schools affected by an event or emergency in restoring the learning environment.

These mission areas generally align with the three time frames associated with an incident: before, during, and after. The majority of Prevention, Protection, and Mitigation activities generally occur before an incident, although these three mission areas do have activities that can occur throughout an incident. Response activities occur during an incident, and Recovery activities can begin during an incident and occur after an incident. To help avoid confusion over terms and allow for ease of reference, this is referred to as "before," "during," and "after." - See more at: www.rems.ed.gov/K12IntroandPurpose.aspx#sthash.QV0HD2R2.dpuf

The Sequence of Crisis Management

Effective crisis management does not begin with the critical incident response. It encompasses five integrated phases or missions of preparedness: prevention, protection, mitigation, response, and recovery. Activities within each of the five phases are developed and overseen by a school crisis team that is trained in the types of crises, systems, procedures, and unique needs that arise as the result of a crisis. Extensive review of the research reinforces that crisis management is a continuous process in which all phases of the plan are being reviewed and revised. **Good plans are never finished.** They can always be updated based on experience, research, and changing vulnerabilities. Districts and schools may be in various stages of planning. This guide provides you with a planning and assessment overview, offers the resources available to implement the planning process, and directs you to the tools you can use to review and improve existing plans.

Schools and school districts should identify a list of possible emergencies and crises and determine special issues, based on vulnerability assessment, and tactics to address each one. For example, earthquakes in some communities might be likely, yet unpreventable. However, school districts might be able to mitigate structural damage or injuries by requiring specific building enhancements. **It is important to note that there is no one-size-fits-all crisis plan** because not all schools are alike. However, planning for a crisis is a common process that all schools should follow, modifying parts of the guide as needed.

Levels of alert for increasing response times and mitigating damage:

- **Monitor** – raising awareness of an emergency or potential crisis to avert the potential crisis and/or prepare to respond

- **Standby** – securing resources to respond if the situation worsens

- **Emergency** – deploying resources to respond

II. GETTING STARTED – CREATE A PLAN

An Emergency Preparedness and Crisis Response Plan is a written set of guidelines to help schools prevent, prepare for, and respond to emergencies and crises. The goal is to make school safety a priority and to ensure that a secure, orderly environment for learning is part of the daily school routine. The plan is a living document that needs to be maintained and adapted as hazards, threats, and needs change over time. It should detail actions to help schools prepare for and respond to emergencies and crises, as well as emphasize prevention by instilling a culture of respect and addressing potential hazards and vulnerabilities that may face a school community.

SAMPLE PLANNING TEMPLATES:
https://wvde.state.wv.us/counselors/documents/
wvcrisisresponseplantemplate2014final.pdf
See the sample template from the West Virginia Department of Education (2014).

The time to plan is now. An unprepared school will experience chaos when a crisis hits. Knowing what to do can help keep students and staff out of harm's way during emergencies and ultimately save lives. Your state or district may require you to have a coordinated plan in place already. The opportunity to review, revise, and improve upon this plan will always exist.

Ready Rating: A FREE Service from the American Red Cross

Two self-assessment tools are available online through the American Red Cross's Ready Rating Program. The program features two powerful template generators so that you can customize and download an Emergency Action Plan (EAP) template for your organization.
See www.readyrating.org/How-It-Works

Ready Rating is a program that helps businesses, schools and organizations become prepared for disasters and other emergencies. Ready Rating members have access to one-of-a-kind tools, resources and information for evaluating and improving their ability to withstand disaster, maintain operations, and protect lives and property. Whether you are taking your first steps or have a fully functioning emergency management program, Ready Rating can help you achieve a higher level of preparedness.

A district level plan should be based on a thorough assessment of possible hazards and threats. It contains the district's safety policies and instructions for handling emergencies and crises, and for supporting staff, students, and families.

A school level plan aligns with the district plan and also addresses unique hazards and threats that may be faced by the school, identifies staff roles and responsibilities during emergencies and crises, and addresses building-specific procedures such as lockdowns and evacuations. School plans should be updated regularly, and everyone should practice emergency procedures in the plan regularly.

The district and schools should closely coordinate their plans, under the National Incident Management System (NIMS), a structure for managing a coordinated emergency response that is used by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Learn more about NIMS online here. Schools and districts should also work with local law enforcement as part of joint-crisis planning efforts to minimize confusion or potentially contradicting crisis response efforts when it comes time to put a plan in action.

Stop the Bleed

www.dhs.gov/stopthebleed

The "Stop the Bleed" campaign is a recent initiative of the National Security Council at the White House. It is intended to train average Americans to stop severe bleeding and save lives.

Severe bleeding can lead to death in five minutes or less, which may be before a doctor or EMT can arrive. The person standing or sitting next to a bleeding victim may be the ONLY one who can make the difference between life and death. Bystanders can take three simple steps until appropriate medical care is available: compress, tourniquet, compress again.

Creating a Plan for Your District

Who's at the table?

Whether designing a district- or school-level emergency preparedness and crisis response plan, the team should designate an individual and a backup person or co-leader to spearhead the work and ensure deadlines are met. Plans should be updated and practiced regularly.

The team for a district-level plan

District leaders should coordinate with community experts and partners as well as local emergency responders to create a plan. It may be useful to set up a private online group site for the team's ongoing communication, providing that it is kept up-to-date.

Team members include:

- District staff (superintendent or designee, transportation chief, communications director, personnel director)
- Local NEA or state affiliate representative
- Parent representatives
- Local emergency responders
- Community partners and experts
- School-employed mental health professionals (school counselor, school social worker, school psychologist) and other specialized instructional support personnel (school nurse, occupational therapist, etc.)
- Education support professionals (paraeducator, food service, custodial)
- Building services or facilities manager

> Inclusion of building services is important in planning for new construction, maintenance and renovations that could enhance safety, including utilizing Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED). CPTED focuses on the proper design and effective use of the structural environment to reduce crime opportunities and promoting positive social behavior. Find more information on CPTED below and online at www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/youthviolence/cpted.html

Institutions of Higher Education

As with the district-level planning and teams, institutions of higher education (IHEs) ¬– colleges, universities, and their various co-located campuses and annex buildings – require close collaboration among community partners to ensure effective coordination efforts and the integration of emergency management plans. The unique needs and considerations of IHEs are addressed in their own guide (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, Office of Safe and Healthy Students, 2013). NEA strongly encourages all IHEs to support the same standards for health and safety for the young adults and staff on their campuses.

For information and resources on developing emergency management plans and for supporting efforts of local education agencies and institutions of higher education, go to http://rems.ed.gov

> **TIP:** Community Partners: District-level plans should also include development and implementation of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with key response partners in the community, as well as business and operations continuity plans. This includes tapping outside community assistance in assessing damage and providing off-site delivery of education if necessary. Mutual aid agreements between districts may also be useful, where districts agree to share resources in the event of a mass disaster that overwhelms a given district's resources. Other county and local child-serving and community-based organizations will also have or need to build upon their own emergency preparedness plans. NEA and affiliate role: Coordinating with these other entities could greatly enhance your crisis response at all phases. **Strengthening the connections and relations among state local and community partners is an important function of the state and local affiliate staff. NEA encourages staff to work with their school, district, and state education leadership to emphasize and facilitate these partnerships.**

Key elements of your district-level plan

When developing a district-level plan, the following are some key topics to think through and address. Remember that each school and community is unique and must consider their specific staff or student issues. Planning teams can use a variety of assessment tools to evaluate the risk associated with potential threats and hazards.

- **School safety assessment.** Effectively identifies unique hazards and threats that need to be addressed in the emergency plans. This should include schedules for inspecting each school building and assessing potential vulnerabilities in school organization and culture, including physical and psychological safety. It also includes identifying staff with applicable skills and assessing equipment and supplies.

  Examples include:

  > Site assessments – examine the safety, accessibility, and emergency preparedness of the school's building and grounds.

  > Culture and climate assessments – evaluate the degree of positive relationships between students and staff.

  > School threat assessments – analyze communication and behaviors to determine whether or not a student, staff or other person may pose a threat.

  > Capacity assessments – examine the capabilities of students and staff as well as the services and material resources of community partners.

- **Crisis response team personnel identification.** Specific roles and responsibilities assigned to district staff in emergency situations.

- **Policies and procedures.** School district safety policies, research-based violence prevention programs, intervention procedures and threat assessments. This includes information about immediate response protocols (including lockdown, evacuation, shelter-in-place, etc.) See additional information and guidance below and in the **RESPONSE** section.

- **The shared commitment to preventing crises demonstrated through the creation of a culture of respect, and a safe and orderly learning environment.** See the **PREVENT** section for recommendations on school-wide programs and policies (and links to resources).

- **Mental health preparedness.** Steps to address mental health needs include:

  > Creation of school mental health crisis planning and response teams

  > Identification of community mental health resources

  > Identification of psychologically vulnerable students and staff

  > Scheduled exercises or drills, education of the mental health school response team

  > Annual training of staff on procedures, practices, policies, and protocols, as well as training and orientation of new staff

Be sure to see the Addressing Mental Health in School Crisis Prevention and Response handout for more information on page 58 (Appendix).

> **TIP:** The National Association of School Psychologists provides guidance on Conducting Crisis Exercises and Drills at www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources/school-safety-and-crisis/conducting-crisis-exercises-and-drills

- **Communication channels.** Clear communication channels for students, families, staff, and the community to report threats or suspicions to avert potential violence. School districts and schools should put threat assessment teams in place to evaluate threats and to provide mental health support and outreach to students and staff in crisis.

- **Comprehensive communications for internal and external audiences.** Equipment, policies, and procedures for contacting emergency services, staff, parents and students, and responding to media inquiries. Be sure to have an alternative backup

plan for communication if electricity or phone lines are not working. Also have on hand hard copies of policies to grab and take, and an updated hard copy of the plan itself in case the electronic version is inaccessible.

> **Equipment** – laptop computer, cellphones, two-way radios

> **Policies** – confidentiality of student records, release of students to parents or guardians, release of student photos

> **Procedures** – use of the Incident Command System, mental health referrals, spokesperson identification, media protocols, student and staff emergency contact information, phone trees, etc.

*Schools and districts must establish clear guidelines about the use of cellphones and social media to share information and monitor the traffic of messages to counter misinformation.

- **Technology** – new technologies can be both an asset and a problem. While the use of cellphones, text messaging, and other technology can help get the word out quickly, it also spawns rumors and unverified information, panicked reactions (e.g., parents coming to the school to pick up children). It can interfere with emergency response and jam overall cell service.

- **Alert response procedures.** Clear, written step-by-step instructions for notification of and response to various crises. Include checklists for use during varying degrees of danger levels:

> **Monitor** – raising awareness of emergency or potential crisis to avert potential crisis and/or prepare to respond

> **Standby** – securing resources to respond if the situation worsens

> **Emergency** – deploying resources to respond

- **Command post.** A location to which district- and school-level crisis response team members should report, equipped with communication equipment such as phone lines, walkie-talkies, computers with access to the Internet, televisions, and fax machines.

- **Community resources.** Strengthen and leverage relationships with community support agencies, public health, mental health, safety, law enforcement and the media. This is particularly important in more rural or isolated school districts that should consider ways to coordinate with other state and local partners as needed in a crisis.

> **TIP:** Schools are becoming more resourceful in developing relationships with local and community partners with whom resources can be shared and better utilized. Maintain a list of social service agencies that you can refer students and families to in times of need and make them your partners in serving your community. Coordinated community partnerships can be your greatest asset in preventing, responding, and recovering from any crisis.

- **Equipment and supplies.** Supplies such as building floor plans, backup generators, walkie-talkies, cellphones, etc., and a regular maintenance schedule to ensure that equipment works when needed.

- **Healing assistance.** Protocols for assisting all those affected by crisis, including students, staff, and families. Procedures for using school and community-based mental health resources.

- **Recovery after the crisis** – both operationally and in human terms. Written plans for post-crisis healing activities such as staff and student counseling; classroom lesson planning; and where to reassemble students and staff if the school building is unavailable.

- **Training and practicing.** Training needs, dates, and types of training to be offered, and practice schedules for schools.

- **Regular meetings for school and district teams.**

Incident Command System

The Incident Command System (ICS) is a standardized management tool for meeting the demands of small or large emergency or nonemergency situations. It is a key feature of the National Incident Management System (NIMS). The ICS is designed to enable effective and efficient domestic incident management by integrating a combination of facilities, equipment, personnel, procedures, and communications operating within a common organizational structure.

ICS represents "best practices" and has become the standard for emergency management across the country by all levels of government—federal, state, local, and tribal—as well as by many private sector and nongovernmental organizations. It is widely applicable across disciplines in organizing both near-term and long-term field-level operations for the broad spectrum of emergencies. Each district and school crisis response team should organize specific roles and responsibilities according to the ICS. These roles include incident commander, safety officer, communications director, and liaison officer, planning, operations, logistics, and finance chiefs. For more information on ICS, visit the Federal Emergency Management Agency and NIMS.

Crisis response and emergency planning teams

Schools and districts may give them different names (safety teams in the building versus crisis teams at the district level, for example), but a team and its leader(s) need to be established at both the school building and district levels. Establishing a chain of command for these teams in advance will help everyone know who is in charge and what the roles and responsibilities are when a crisis strikes. When assigning members to the crisis planning and/or response teams, keep in mind that some staff will be caring for children and will be unable to take on other responsibilities. Therefore, backup personnel should always be identified.

- **The district crisis response team** is an organized group of school district personnel and community experts or partners, such as fire, law enforcement, EMS, and mental health agencies, who prepare plans for responding to emergencies and dealing with crises, and provide support to schools during a crisis. It often is led by the safety and security director or the superintendent, and may be known as the crisis intervention committee or workgroup, or something similar.

- **The school crisis response team** is a group of school personnel who have the knowledge and skills to act in any emergency or crisis in a school. It is typically led by the principal.

There will likely be similarities and differences between the district and school crisis response teams. Factors such as the size of the district or school, the type of crisis, and staff skills will influence how the response teams are formed. The team developing the plan for preparation and/or response is not necessarily the same group who will provide response, although there may be some overlap.

The best approach is to review the ICS roles and think about how to tap district and school staff to meet the needs that are unique to the size of your district and school as well as the crisis or emergency. For example, it may be necessary to combine responsibilities in smaller districts.

It is also important to understand that in most cases, police and/or fire personnel will largely take over once they arrive on site. It is essential to establish relationships and include local representatives from police, fire and emergency response agencies in the planning process. District incident command leaders will work closely with them as an emergency or crisis unfolds, coordinating the response and disseminating up-to-the-minute information to staff, students, parents and other stakeholders.

The bottom line: The more collaborative planning school and district leaders do in advance, the better prepared they will be to respond when an emergency or crisis strikes.

The District Crisis Response Team

Members of the district crisis response team include:

- School district superintendent or senior administrator
- School district safety and security director
- School district communications director
- School district department directors
  - > Student services – including or in addition to
  - > School Health Services: psychologist, social worker, nurse, counselor, etc.
  - > Technology
  - > Transportation
  - > Food services
  - > Facility use and maintenance
  - > Risk management/legal counsel
  - > Human resources
- NEA local association representative/state affiliate
- Community mental health agency representative
- Community victim assistance representative
- Public safety officers/law enforcement

Responsibilities of the district crisis response team in PREPARING for a crisis:

- Create the district-level emergency preparedness and crisis response plan – a written document that spells out a school district's safety policies and instructions for handling emergencies and crises, and supporting staff, students and families.
- Prepare guidelines for individual school crisis response plans and oversee the implementation of individual school crisis response plans.
- Arrange training for school crisis response teams, including mock training exercises. Make sure practices are appropriate for the developmental level and emotional needs of students.
- Establish connections with community experts and local emergency responders such as mental health agencies, hospital personnel, law enforcement officials, fire departments, media outlets, etc., and maintain corresponding contact information.

- Gather resource materials on emergency preparedness and crisis response.
- Gather equipment and supplies.
- Identify key staff to review and approve school crisis response plans.
- Ensure public safety agencies receive copies of district/school crisis response plans.

Responsibilities of the district crisis response team in RESPONDING to a crisis:

- Provide school crisis response teams with support and backup during a crisis, and dispatch resources to schools as necessary.
- Stay in contact with leaders of emergency responders.
- Have a designated person or team to perform psychological triage*
- Manage the release of information. Verify factual information, authorize the release of information to the public and coordinate communications with the public and media.
- Report immediately to evacuation sites or hospitals if students or staff members are being sent there.
- Meet and talk with parents/caregivers of students and spouses of school staff.
- Authorize the purchase of services or materials needed for recovery after a crisis.
- Provide an evaluation after the crisis with an after-action report to the superintendent and a plan for follow-up.

*An additional responsibility of the district mental health crisis response team is to meet the immediate needs of your students and staff through **psychological triage**. Have designated staff be part of your school mental health crisis team (school counselors, social workers, and school psychologists) to assess how students and staff are coping and match them to the appropriate mental health crisis intervention response:

a. Natural social support

b. Psychoeducation (helps to inform about psychological issues) or bibliotherapy, (to help validate the experience, prevent feelings of isolation and promote coping skills)

c. Psychological intervention

Creating a Plan for Your School

Who's at the table?

Team members for a **school-level plan** are selected largely from school staff. Their work should be coordinated with the district's plan. Team members should include the full array of school staff, education support professionals, and specialized instructional support personnel (SISP). **Schools should reinforce that everyone has a role in keeping schools and students safe and therefore everyone should be appropriately trained and involved in prevention, preparedness and response.**

Members should include:

- Principal
- Assistant principal
- Representatives from the teaching staff
- Education support professionals (paraeducators, food service representatives, custodial staff)
- School-employed mental health professionals (school counselor, school social worker, school psychologist) and other specialized instructional support personnel (school nurse, occupational therapist, etc.)
- School/building association leaders and/or NEA affiliate representative
- Front office professional
- Parent representative (e.g. PTA leader); may be more appropriate for input/consultation)
- Security personnel and school resource officers
- High school student leader(s) (if applicable)
- Technology specialist
- An appointed liaison to the district communication office

Key elements of your school-level plan

Many schools use commonly available templates to begin creating their crisis response plan. These templates provide a starting point and should be customized for each school, taking into consideration the district's plan as well.

When developing a school-level plan, these are among the major topics to think through and address. Keep in mind that certain rural or isolated schools might have different needs and should plan ways to cooperate with other schools as needed in a crisis.

- Prevention. The shared commitment to preventing crises demonstrated through the care and commitment to the safety and well-being of the entire school community.

  It is essential that schools take a prevention-based approach to crisis planning. School crisis team training should address crises as physical and mental health and safety risks within the context of the school culture (Reeves, Brock, & Cowan, 2008).

- Questions to consider in the plan. Document how the following actions will be addressed and by whom:

  > Inform substitute staff of school emergency procedures.

  > Alert school staff about the nature of an event with rational, clear, level-headed information – must be accurate and verified.

  > Notify school crisis response team members, school staff, students, parents and the community of information about a crisis.

  > Support educators with backup staff to cover classes.

  > Release students to parents and guardians and have an accountability system for verifying names.

  > Manage crowds and movement during a crisis, including evacuation procedures.

  > Manage the media's access to information.

  > Provide student and staff transportation to evacuation or relocation sites, if necessary.

The Standard Reunification Method

See: http://iloveuguys.org/srm/SRM%20Parent%20Handout.pdf

Provides school and district safety teams with proven methods for planning, practicing, and achieving a successful reunification.

> Address needs of all students, including those with physical or cognitive disabilities, or limited English proficiency.

> Communicate between every room and the school office.

> Arrange for visitor accountability, such as sign-in and escort procedures.

> Account for school staff and students leaving without keys/wallets/identification.

> Deal with funerals or memorial services.

> Debrief all members of the crisis team after the emergency or crisis. What worked? What didn't?

- **Important locations.** Consider building the following locations into the plan:

> A command post on campus and one off campus to which school crisis response team members should report, equipped with communication equipment, such as phone lines, walkie-talkies, computers with access to the Internet, etc.

> Evacuation sites and reunion areas where students, staff, parents and caregivers can meet, if necessary.

> Designated areas in the school for staff and students to receive help before, during and after school.

> Alternative sites for conducting school if an emergency renders schools unusable.

> Utility hookups and emergency exits.

> A media operations area to which reporters may be confined during a crisis. The location should be close enough to the school for access to information, but away from emergency response efforts.

> An excellent example is the Crisis Response Box of the California Attorney General's Crime and Violence Prevention Center and the California Department of Education's Safe Schools and Violence Prevention Office.

www.cde.ca.gov/ls/ss/cp/documents/crisisrespbox.pdf "The box" is a unique product of the California Attorney General and the State Superintendent of Public Instruction's Safe Schools Task Force, developed to help schools, local law enforcement, and emergency services personnel prepare for a school emergency.

- At-your-fingertips information. Consider placing the following information in a clearly marked section of the plan:

> The chain of command to ensure continuity of operations.

> Roles and responsibilities of school crisis response team members.

> Steps for action in various emergencies.

> A list of school personnel trained in first aid and CPR.

> Equipment and supplies.

> A list of activities to help students discuss and deal with grief, fear, confusion, anger and other feelings that arise from crises.

> Media resources — a school information fact sheet.

> A list of internal and external emergency contacts.

> Student/staff rosters that include students with special needs and a description of required medicine and care.

> Parent/guardian student release authorization forms.

> Staff emergency forms with their children's school identified in case the staff member is incapacitated (if applicable).

> District, local, state and federal emergency contact information.

The school crisis response team

Members of the school crisis response team may include:

- Principal
- Assistant principal
- Facility manager/ head custodian
- Food service personnel
- Front office professional
- NEA/local affiliate building representative
- School nurse
- School-employed mental health professional (e.g., counselor, social worker, psychologist)

- Security officer
- Technology specialist
- Other identified staff as available
- Liaison to district communication office

Responsibilities of the school emergency planning team in PREPARING for a crisis:

- Create the emergency preparedness and response plan for the school – a written document that aligns with the district plan, identifies staff roles and responsibilities during any variety of crises, and addresses building-specific procedures such as lockdowns and evacuations. School plans should be updated regularly and be practiced by all participants. Be sure to provide accommodations for students and staff with disabilities.

- Make sure students know how to respond in an emergency. Students should know how to evacuate the building and how to behave in a lockdown. It will likely be impossible to control or prevent students from reaching out to their parents if they have cellphones. Educators could help students craft a simple message verifying safety and offering basic facts.

- Communicate with parents about the major elements of the school's safety plan, how the plan will be used in case of an emergency, and how the school will notify parents. Identify multiple modes of communication.

- Provide training for response team members, including on-site drills with public safety officials. When planning exercises, think carefully about who should be present. When is it appropriate for police and fire to practice in the building without staff? When should staff be present for drills? When should students be involved in the drills? Should media be allowed to observe practice exercises? Ensure parents/guardians are informed of the need to practice crisis preparedness drills.

> **Drills:** See best practices published by the National Association of School Psychologists at www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources

- Provide information from the school-level to the district-level crisis planning and response teams, including copies of the school crisis response plan, floor plans, location of shut-off valves, master keys, bell and bus schedules, staff and student rosters with identification of special needs students, and evacuation routes and locations. These items should also be included in school emergency or "Go Box" kits. (There will be differences between a school's emergency kit and what each classroom educator may need and want to have ready to grab for a lockdown or evacuation, see below).

> **What goes in your "Go Box?"**
> www.cde.ca.gov/ls/ss/cp/documents/crisisrespbox

- Develop a method to notify school crisis response team members and the rest of the school staff of an emergency both during regular school hours and when school is not in session.

- Additional communication policies should be considered for students in middle and secondary schools, who have more independent and sophisticated methods of communication. Many of them will have their own cellphones and are capable of gathering information and monitoring the situation as any adult. **Keep students in the loop, not in the dark, or they will develop their own lines of communication.** Have protocols in place for them to be appraised of emergencies and recommended precautions.

- Gather needed equipment and supplies, such as walkie-talkies, radios, flashlights, office supplies, and a bullhorn.

- Each classroom should consider having its own "Go-box" or go backpack at the ready to meet the immediate needs of students in a lockdown or shelter-in-place scenario. Even a few hours can be calmly spent keeping the children safe, hydrated, and moderately distracted with some simple activities. The contents of each box would vary depending on the age-range and needs of the students.

Responsibilities of the school crisis response team in RESPONDING to a crisis:

- Initiate emergency notification.
- Launch and direct the emergency response, including evacuation and parent notification.
- Secure the school and search for affected or injured individuals.
- Arrange medical care for injured individuals.
- Communicate with the district-level crisis response team.
- After immediate crisis intervention needs are met, determine whether additional interventions are needed. Work with the district-level crisis response team to mobilize resources and oversee school and community mental health services provided to students and staff.

III. TRAINING CRISIS TEAMS AND SCHOOL STAFF

Although school staff members have a general understanding of child development and possess instructional skills, many are not familiar with children's reactions to trauma and stress, and how they relate to a child's development. Also, many educators do not know how to apply their instructional abilities to support children and teach them positive coping skills during a crisis. Most school staff members are not aware of the basic principles of an incident command structure, nor do they know how to maintain an organizational focus during a crisis. Therefore, training conducted according to the School Crisis Response Initiative aims to cover the following areas:

- Crisis theory as applied to children and adults.
- Children's reactions to traumatic events and children's grieving and bereavement.
- Crisis response organizational model with emphasis on the roles and responsibilities of school crisis response team members and implementation protocols of the crisis response.

- Health and mental health triage, or identification of students/staff with different levels of risk and needs.
- Principles of memorialization.
- Classroom interventions.
- Support room interventions.
- Mechanisms that enable staff to provide support for one another during a crisis.

Optimally, full-school crisis response teams participate together in training that includes group activities. The focus should be on working as a team and achieving balance between leadership and full participation by team members. Team members realize that the group process allows for deliberation from multiple vantage points and permits compromise that respects potentially competing priorities, such as ensuring order and security, providing the school community with accurate information, and promoting emotional recovery and optimal coping.

Ongoing Consultation

Ongoing consultations with school crisis response teams promote further teamwork and help team members form functioning district teams and regional resource groups and establish and solidify collaborative relationships with local agencies, including mental health and juvenile justice agencies.

Orientation and Training: Everyone Plays a Part in Safe Schools

Once safety plans are developed, the whole school community and relevant first responders need to be oriented on these protocols and to practice them. Training should reinforce concepts in the school/school district emergency management plan, including general knowledge about potential emergencies, warning signals, evacuation routes, staging areas, and shelter locations. At a minimum, all staff and students should receive annual training and practice opportunities on emergency preparedness and response procedures.

The plan should identify who will provide training and what training is necessary so that everyone understands his or her role in a crisis. Be sure to

include the full array of school staff and education support professionals. **Everyone plays a role in keeping their schools and communities safe.**

Ensuring that everyone in the school community is familiar with the plan involves:

STAFF: Offer presentations on school safety during regular staff meetings. Be sure to orient new staff to the plan and include any part-time or substitute staff. New staff or those who may be absent must be trained at a later date. Provide written support materials and a staff contact who can answer questions. Make sure each classroom has a copy of step-by-step emergency response procedures. Arrange for substitute educators to receive copies when they arrive at new schools.

STAFF WITH SPECIAL DUTIES: Counseling and nursing staff should be specially trained in "psychological first aid for schools" and how to recognize and refer for longer-term mental health needs or trauma. Educators with students who need special accommodations receive training in those modified procedures. Food service, maintenance, and administrative staff receive training on their roles during incidents.

STUDENTS: Present brief, age-appropriate explanations and discussions on the how and why of safety protocols during regular class time. All staff should be trained on evacuating disabled students, with more specific information given to classroom educators and paraeducators who regularly work with certain students.

PARENTS & COMMUNITY:
Enhancing Community Resources

The plan for school crisis preparedness and response cannot and should not be developed by the school system in isolation. Members of a diverse group of disciplines and professions who represent the full range of community resources should be involved directly in both planning and implementing the school crisis response plan. Through an organized, collaborative, and capacity-building planning process, the community can anticipate the majority of needs that may arise in a school crisis and then draw on the membership of the crisis response team and resource

groups to identify available resources. A successful, effective school crisis response plan must benefit not only the school and its local community, but also the school district and the larger community. Only when all elements of the larger community are involved can a successful school crisis response plan be developed, implemented, and maintained.

Communicate components of the plan to parents and guardians, and other appropriate stakeholders with letters or emails explaining the crisis response procedures and the reason for them. Parents of students with disabilities or other special circumstances should receive individual communications regarding any accommodations. For new protocols, a meeting or training for parents may be appropriate. **Public safety agencies should be provided with copies of each school and district emergency preparedness and crisis response plan and building schematics.** Your schools should also coordinate plans with nearby community services and resource centers, especially if those locations could be alternative evacuation sites.

> "Adequate training of all school staff, particularly support staff, is vital to the success of any school safety or crisis response plan."
> – Jean Fay, Amherst Public Schools Paraprofessional

PRACTICE. Test the plan. Will this plan work when you need it most? What if you're not there? Are there gaps in the plan?

Types of Training Exercises
There are three kinds of training exercises:

- **Drill** – primarily used to practice and perfect a single emergency response.

- **Tabletop exercise** – usually key personnel and relevant community partners come together and analyze an emergency scenario. Tabletops test and build the ability of people to communicate, coordinate and cooperate with one another.

- **Full-scale exercise** – simulates a full-scale response to an emergency, as if the incident really occurred.

Best Practices for Schools in Active Shooter Drills

In recent years, many schools and districts have adopted a variety of drills and protocols for encounters with armed assailants or active shooters. There are differing views on the value of this type of drill. The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) and the National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO) have released new guidance on conducting active shooter or other armed assailant drills in schools (NASP & NASRO, 2014). The new guidance addresses factors that schools should consider when planning such drills and how the drills might fit into a larger comprehensive approach to school safety and crisis response.

Emergency/Crisis Response Actions

Different emergency situations will require different reactions. Common emergency responses include:

- **Lockdown** – Occurs when there is an immediate or imminent threat to occupants and movement within that will put students and staff in jeopardy. Lock all exterior doors and move students and staff to securable locations. Lock or secure classroom doors. Special considerations should be given for class transition times, outdoor activities, and students who are off site.

- **Shelter-in-place** – Contain staff and students indoors, often in specific locations, due to external threats such as chemical spills, sniper attacks, extreme weather, or intruder on school grounds. Some schools may call this Drop, Cover, and Hold.

- **Reverse Evacuation** – For use when conditions inside the building, or specific parts of the building, are safer than outside (i.e., notice of person with a weapon in the area or dangerous animal sighted on or near school grounds).

- **Evacuation** – When conditions outside of a school are safer than inside. Move all students and staff from the building in an orderly fashion to a predetermined evacuation site. Determine how students and staff will be reunited with their families. Ensure that this information is up-to-date.

- **Bus evacuation drills** – When conditions outside the bus are safer than inside the bus, such as if there is a fire or a suspicious package.

IV. USING SOCIAL MEDIA IN A CRISIS

We must address the challenges presented by the use of cellular and digital technology, as well as social media platforms, such as Twitter, Facebook, Snapchat, and YouTube that make controlling information more difficult. The ability to instantly share personal commentary on a developing situation or crisis and its aftermath, as well as pictures and videos, has forever changed the way news, information, and stories are broadcasted and perceived.

As more people use mobile technology, we must carefully consider how social media applications can be incorporated into effective crisis management, as well as how to diffuse the expected buzz on social media. Using social media platforms for crisis management provides citizens with a greater role in preparing for and managing crises. The relationships developed via shared social media can also strengthen a community's ability to work together, promote resilience, and aid in coordinated recovery.

For communications to be successful, time must be invested on the front-end to establish a social media presence for the school or organization, which will help create an audience that will be receptive to information when a crisis occurs. By building a network of social media followers (e.g., families, like-minded organizations, and community members) and nurturing the relationship by consistently sharing content and engaging them on an ongoing basis, a line of communication will have been established. However, social media should supplement, and not take the place of, direct parent notification.

Effective Usage and Planning with Social Media

Across each phase of crisis management, social media tools can be used for (1) information dissemination, (2) disaster planning and training, (3) collaborative problem solving and decision making, and (4) information gathering. During the **crisis preparedness** phase, the focus is on preventive activities that seek to reduce known risks that could lead to a crisis. Recognizing that not all crises can be averted, there would be an equal focus in this phase on crisis management planning and training of the crisis management team.

During **crisis response,** the focus will be on the speed and effectiveness of the initial response. There will be a need for quick situational awareness to help authorities respond effectively after the crisis hits. The effective use of social media tools will be critical during this phase to engage community networks in order to gather, analyze and disseminate information in a timely manner.

Information dissemination through social media tools is effective for providing reliable information quickly to the public so they can better prepare for and respond to crises. This is probably the most relevant use of social media for schools. However, issues of access, technological know-how, education, age, language, and culture may affect the reach and penetration of social media platforms.

Collaborative problem solving and decision making move at a faster pace thanks to these platforms. Crowdsourcing through social media facilitates collaborative problem solving and decision making by integrating various streams of information from mobile and web-based technologies. Social media can be used to uncover where the needs are in the community and also provide a means to fulfill them. For example, social media can be used to gather information and coordinate donations to solicit after a crisis, such as how many bottles of water, cans of food, or blankets, are needed. Donations should be coordinated with ICS and emergency responders.

With the availability of mobile technology and the popularity of social media platforms, **information gathering** has been taken to a new level. On-the-scene footage, citizen journalism and disaster assessment are central to information-gathering for coordinating crisis response. But it can move from being readily available across multiple platforms to quickly seeming overwhelming as a crisis unfolds.

To ensure the most successful usage of social media:

1. **Ensure that your Crisis Plan includes social media protocols and team responsibilities.** Make sure your communications plan addresses the use of your social media channels, appropriate hashtag usage, monitoring, and who is responsible for staffing those channels.

2. **Create or update your Triage Response Plan.** Crises can escalate quickly and you need a plan that defines who is in charge of monitoring social media channels and parent/community listserv messages. A social media response triage is an "if this, then that" flow chart that will help you make wise decisions on whether an event is escalating to the point where it needs a response. See Affect Social Media and CKSYME Media Group for additional resources regarding social media.

3. **Monitor social media channels** for useful information (i.e., for collaborative problem solving and decision-making purposes), for the spread of misinformation, and for any secondary issues.

Some school districts have employed any variety of free and available online monitoring systems or software. There continues to be some controversy around how much monitoring of social media is allowed in the name of student privacy. This will likely continue as privacy concerns are increasing. Still many would contend that such early detection mechanisms need to be in place so that early signs of a brewing crisis can be discovered. This will require an active platform where social networks, blogs and forums are regularly monitored. Active dialogue and engagement with community and other groups on social media are also needed so that these relationships can be leveraged during a crisis.

Established clear and consistent guidelines for the review and use of social media tools for crisis management are needed. Information can be quickly shared, intelligence quickly gathered, and rumors and misinformation dispelled as quickly as they are introduced. This will require a designated person or system to monitor the social media sites and listservs commonly used by students, staff and parents in the community. Since this is an ever-evolving medium, it is important to stay up-to-date on what are the most popular sites used by student versus adult users. At present, Facebook is the most popular platform for adults, while photo-driven platforms Snapchat and Instagram are favorites with students.

V. COMMUNICATIONS AND MEDIA RELATIONS

Accurate and consistent information and updates are critical for restoring order and supporting the school family. The strength of your plan's communications and media strategies will help ensure everyone has the most up-to-date information. Be sure to confirm and reconfirm information as needed.

1. Determine who and how the school or district will provide information during a crisis about:

   - What happened?
   - Who is in charge?
   - Has the situation been contained?
   - Are the victims being helped?
   - Why did this happen?
   - Did you have forewarning?
   - Where do parents reunite with children?

2. Develop tools for communicating information

   - An emergency website, linked to the district homepage, with regular updates and links to resources.
   - An email list to stakeholders who must be contacted regularly, such as staff, media, parents and elected officials.

   - Alternate systems of communication in case cell towers are inoperable, electricity is out, or for students and families who may be homeless or do not have regular access to computers.
   - Translation services.
   - Electronic message from school and district offices to provide the latest information.
   - A daily fact sheet.
   - Letters or emails to parents and staff at affected school and other schools in district. Frequently asked questions and answers that can be distributed to media and put on the crisis website.
   - In an active crisis, consider using Twitter, Facebook and other social media for regular updates.
   - In small districts, consider state affiliate for communications support.
   - In general, the state and local affiliate can assist in communication and other resources and support.

3. Develop media response and outreach strategies

   - Identify tactics for answering media questions, sharing accurate and up-to-the-minute information and developing positive working relationships with the media.
   - Know who to contact and how to reach all local media.
   - Develop template news releases and advisories that can be quickly filled in and updated with information.
   - Follow all district policies and state laws when releasing information to the media.
   - Determine when to talk to the media, and identify an experienced spokesperson to field media questions and requests. As there may be a public information officer (a specific ICS role), it is key that all staff and students should know to refer media inquiries to this designated person. (Provide media training for staff as needed; have a backup district spokesperson identified.)

- Craft key messages about school safety and talking points specific to the emergency or crisis; include talking points about school bus or van safety.

- Identify who will provide guidance to educators on media interviews.

- Establish policies regarding media presence on school grounds and in buildings.

- Manage media coverage of bench-mark dates, anniversaries, etc.

- Create a letter or email that encourages media responsibility.

VI. DESIGNING SAFE SCHOOLS

Each day, schools and school districts are responsible for providing a safe and healthy learning environment for students. Understanding how to design and maintain school buildings is an important part of supporting that environment. Mitigation, or the capabilities necessary to eliminate or reduce the loss of life and property damage by lessening the impact of an emergency, is just one way schools can work to maintain a safe and healthy learning environment, as outlined in Presidential Policy Directive 8, our nation's approach to preparedness. Through planning and research, schools and school districts can work to understand how the safety of the school building directly impacts the health, safety, and educational experience of students and staff.

Security Measures

No matter how carefully designed a school is to ensure safety, the school is not safe unless the school community uses its safety features as they are intended every day. There are some basic security measures that all schools may consider:

Limit access to one main monitored entrance. One of the most important security measures a school can take is to have only one main entrance where people may enter and which is monitored at all times (with all other outside doors locked – check fire code regulations for how doors should be secured). This will ensure better control of visitor traffic. Modified entry plans should be in place for times when there are a large number of visitors, as on election days or for assemblies. While this limited access could be seen as a necessary evil, it can also serve as a way for a school to consistently connect with students, parents/caregivers, and visitors. A friendly face or even voice upon entrance is critical for a welcoming community. A known, clear, and workable "one door access" policy only works if it is enforced. Staff and parents are repeatedly reminded of this to avoid putting students in confusing situations.

Visible visitor name badges are another measure to increase security while welcoming visitors. Visitor badges allow staff to immediately identify a visitor. Staff members need to be encouraged to greet all visitors in a friendly fashion and ask them if they need any help. Even frequent visitors (e.g., parent volunteers) are expected to wear visitor badges.

Prevention Programs

The best way to prepare for a crisis is to make prevention and school safety the highest priority. As you assess and develop crisis preparation plans to include potential threats and vulnerabilities, prevention programs should be identified and incorporated into your plan and daily school operations. Please refer to the PREVENT section of this guide for research-based guidance and best practices.

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)

How we design, utilize, and maintain our school grounds and buildings can add to or hinder their level of safety. The following concepts can be used to enhance the safety of our schools.

Natural Surveillance – "See and be seen." This environmental design includes the design and placement of physical features to maximize visibility. If people know they can be seen, they are less likely to engage in disorderly, violent, or illegal activity. Physical features could include landscaping with low-lying shrubs and flowers, good outdoor lighting for people leaving the building after dark, surveillance cameras, and posted notices about the presence of cameras and security staff.

Natural Access Control – "Who gets in and who gets out." This environmental design includes the use of walkways, fences, lighting, signage, and landscaping to clearly guide people to areas where you want them to go. For example, the school could have a well-marked, easily identifiable entryway, along with a limited number of entrances and mandatory visitor escort policy.

Territorial Reinforcement – "This is our space." This CPTED idea clearly defines school boundaries. It denotes pride and ownership through features such as fencing, landscaping, and signs (e.g., well-labeled roads and paths directing vehicle and foot traffic) to discourage non-school-related traffic from passing through school grounds.

Proper Maintenance – "Fix broken windows." This environmental design involves the repair, replacement, and general upkeep of a building.

For example, removing litter and graffiti promptly; fixing broken windows or doors; and good landscaping. It is well known that "signs of disorder" can attract disorderly behavior.

Thoughtful "Crowd Control" and reducing opportunities for student disorderly behavior. To improve safety and minimize the potential for student violence, the school needs to determine where and when disorderly behavior occurs. The most common examples are congested areas or when students have unstructured time (e.g., hallways, lunch rooms, just before or after school). Routines or schedules can be switched to decrease congestion (e.g., stagger class schedules, encourage students to take different routes through the building), and/or staff can be assigned to monitor these areas. For isolated areas, especially those that seem to attract students, video surveillance may be used.

The principles of CPTED can potentially benefit schools by:

- Creating a warm and welcoming environment
- Fostering a sense of physical and social order
- Creating a sense of ownership by students
- Sending positive messages to students
- Maximizing the presence of authority figures
- Minimizing opportunities for out-of-sight activities
- Managing access to all school areas

For additional information, watch the CPTED Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (REMS): Designing Safe Schools webinar on demand.

VII. HOW LOCAL, STATE AND FEDERAL LAWS MAY AFFECT YOUR PLAN

From the start, it's important to consider how various government regulations affect a district's or school's emergency preparedness and crisis response plan. For example, does your state require annual crisis response training or bully prevention education for staff? Does your school district require regular fire and other emergency drills?

To better understand and include such issues, take a closer look at these examples and consider others specific to your state or local area:

- Federal laws. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a federal law that affects the release of student information. There is a growing concern over student privacy, particularly in the age of data collection and digital marketing. This is an evolving and important topic to watch as schools grapple with the value of data collection and the need to preserve student privacy.

- State laws. California public schools are required under state law to prepare a safe school plan to address violence prevention, multi-hazard emergency preparedness, traffic safety, and crisis intervention.

- School district policies. To comply with the state law, Los Angeles Unified School District regulations require that each site administrator ensures that a safe school plan is updated annually. Plans must include prevention programs and emergency procedures.

VIII. SAFE ROUTES: TRANSPORTATION AND SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

When students are on school buses, whether they are traveling to or from school or out on field trips, the school is responsible for these students. Schools need to have plans in place for how to handle bus accidents or buses that are off campus with students when an incident occurs at the school. For effective response, the school needs to coordinate with the transportation department and/or contractor to ensure that bus drivers and monitors regularly participate in training and drills.

For example, bus drivers can be trained on such topics as evacuating young passengers or basic first aid. Student bus riders need to receive instruction and practice bus evacuations a few times each year. In addition, the Crisis Response Team would do well to include in its emergency management structure the designated staff members (and alternates) who travel to meet a bus off campus or who meet students as a bus arrives at the school during or after an incident.

See the School Bus Safety Sheet for more information on page 81 (Appendix).

IX. PLANS FOR RECOVERY

Another major component of the emergency preparedness and crisis response plan is to identify ways to help students and staff heal after a crisis and return to learning. The National Association of School Psychologists has numerous resources to address and respond to students in different circumstances and crises. See www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources/school-safety-and-crisis

Your recovery plan should do the following:

- Identify how to provide support and counseling for students and staff to facilitate individual and collective grieving.

- Specify the conditions under which activities and regular instruction may be suspended to discuss the crisis. Simply canceling class may not be the most productive or supportive response.

- Line up extra substitute educators to be on call.

- Provide additional resources to all staff who will be dealing with troubled students in need of extra attention.

- Provide care-for-the-caregiver support.

- Create a timely means for informing parents and the community of new information.

- Plan for the first day back at school.*

- Address funerals or memorial services.*

- Consider how anniversaries of a disaster may provide an opportunity for planning a special remembrance.*

    * Tip sheet available online here. (NEA Healthy Futures & New York Life Association, 2013)

X. HOW DOES YOUR EXISTING PLAN MEASURE UP?

Do you have a plan already? Update your plan regularly to take into account best practices, changes in facilities and staffing, and an active roster of students. Here's a helpful checklist to get you started.

Does your plan:

- Identify safety policies, multi-hazard threats, and intervention procedures?
- Incorporate the structure and tenets of the National Incident Management System (NIMS)/ ICS?
- Have a process for informing parents about the plan's key elements and procedures prior to an emergency?
- Work when used in practice runs? Re-evaluate after practice. Require that the crises teams meet after drills and other training to discuss strengths, weaknesses and areas needing improvement.
- Determine procedures for canceling school, early dismissal, and using the school as a shelter for lockdowns, evacuations, and relocation? Take into consideration whether the school uses the designated community emergency shelter.
- Provide steps for aiding victims and "normalizing" the school environment in the aftermath of a crisis?
- Include ongoing collaboration and input from public safety and other response partners?
- Provide a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with response partners?
- Include a mechanism for police to notify the school of certain critical incidents, such as the death of a school-aged child, the death of a school employee, or a significant event that, in the opinion of police, may impact children and school staff?
- Include threat assessment procedures and guidelines? This must include suicide prevention procedures as "threat to self or others."
- Determine how school staff will be notified of troubled students who may pose a threat to safety? This should be consistent with the mental health

referral process that should also be established and regularly utilized.

- Identify ways students, parents, staff, and community can report threats and suspicious incidents such as providing a specific contact name, phone number, and email address? The ability for anonymous reporting could also be considered.
- Outline notification procedures, including assigning someone responsibility for making calls to families?
- Provide for an annual update of the plan?

XI. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES IN PREPAREDNESS:

Education Facilities Clearinghouse:
www.ed.gov/category/subject/safety

Developing a Comprehensive Approach to School Safety: Address the safety of school buildings by incorporating the principles of crime prevention through environmental design.

G. Victor Hellman, Ed.D., ASBO International's *School Business Affairs Magazine* Access online at: www.efc.gwu.edu/safetycenter

Education Facilities Clearinghouse:
State Departments/Resources

States each have their own Departments of Education and many have specific departments for school facilities maintenance and/or construction. Each state has a link to some general information about how many students and schools it has and links to pertinent websites. Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (REMS) has state resources for each state. Access online at: www.efc.gwu.edu/main-library/state-trial

FEMA Incident Command System (ICS) Resource Center www.fema.gov/incident-command-system

For an example of a school district that exemplifies preparedness, consider including Lincoln County in Oregon: www.lincoln.k12.or.us/dept_programs/safety.php.

PART THREE: RESPOND

Knowing how to respond in a crisis is key to restoring order and supporting the school community. Part Three of this guide identifies action steps for the first hours of the crisis as well as ongoing responses. These steps include strategies to manage operational issues, such as ensuring student and staff safety, and the setup of communication systems and activities. These responses will often be part of the plans developed in Part Two, and are organized below for quick reference in the midst of crisis.

Day One – The First Hour

Nine Things to Do Immediately

1. **Assess the crisis.**
   - What must be done immediately to protect lives?
   - Different kinds of crises will require different kinds of responses; should the school go on lockdown, evacuate immediately, or close off areas of the building or grounds?
   - Are people injured?
   - Is medical attention needed?

2. **Call for assistance.**
   - Contact police and fire/rescue agencies.
   - Contact leadership and the crisis team at the district central office.
   - Contact local and state union leadership, Uniserv directors, etc.
   - Have alternative communication plans in case cell service is unavailable.

NEA and State and Local Affiliates

Your colleagues at NEA have experience in handling crises, and their support is just a phone call away. NEA can put you in touch with national experts as well as experienced colleagues in state affiliates to provide the help and resources you need. State affiliate staff, such as UniServ representatives, and state and local affiliate leaders, such as state and local presidents, can help school communities prepare for, respond to, and recover from crises or emergencies.

3. **Mobilize a command post.**
   - Initiate the site-based emergency plan.
   - Activate incident command team and protocols.
   - Call for school buses, if needed.
   - Plan for how to control increased traffic, anticipating that parents will come to get their children and possibly interfere with the emergency response.
   - Determine if actions (e.g., lockdown) must be taken at neighboring schools.
   - Note: if police are needed on-scene, they will set up their own command post.

4. **Gather supplies.**
   - Collect the school's "Go Box" with essential supplies, such as walkie-talkies, portable radios, flashlights, office supplies, class lists, key phone

numbers, and school site plans, including the location of shut-off valves.

- Bring important items from the school health room (e.g., first aid kits; epinephrine; medications for asthma, diabetes, seizures).

- Collect staff and student directories with home phone numbers and emergency contact information, as well as a parent/legal guardian list for students.

5. **Communicate to key internal audiences.**

- Develop a preliminary statement that includes what has happened, and what is the immediate response.

- Develop a script for people answering phone calls.

- Disseminate accurate information to staff, building representative, district leadership, union/association local and state affiliate, district communications department, and other schools.

6. **Communicate with families.**

- Initiate a crisis plan parent notification system.

- Determine how, when, and where families will be reunited.

- Provide a script for students to text to parents with facts (as known) and guidance on what parents are to do.

7. **Begin external communications.**

- Contact local and state NEA, state and local affiliate leaders.

- Communicate with appropriate state and local agencies.

- Contact the school district attorney, if there is one, in case a legal situation arises out of the crisis.

8. **Manage media relations.**

- Establish a media briefing area.

- Work with law enforcement to set a designated area and perimeter for media.

- Identify the spokesperson (site-based or district official). Public Information Officer is the term

used by the Incident Command System (ICS). See PREPARE for more details.

- Develop an initial media release. See sample on page 80 (Appendix).

- Consider creating a letter or email that encourages media responsibility. A sample letter is available on page 71 (Appendix).

- Provide school and district fact sheets that include basic information about the school and school district, such as the number of students and staff, location and grade levels served. See Information to include in a School Fact Sheet on page 64 (Appendix). Crisis resources from the National Association of School Psychologists are available here: www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources/school-safety-and-crisis

- Hold a press briefing in conjunction with law enforcement.

- Control rumors by getting facts out as soon as information is verified.

- Take into account personal communications tools, such as cellphones and text messaging, which allow students to contact media and others directly.

9. **Establish a network to account for missing and injured.**

- Determine who is safe and who is not accounted for.

- Establish a liaison with local hospitals, if necessary.

10. **Contact mental health support or a Mental Health Crisis Team (be aware of certain circumstances that may trigger reactions or copy-cat scenarios, such as suicide). See additional information on suicide here [**www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources/school-safety-and-crisis/preventing-youth-suicide/preventing-suicide-guidelines-for-administrators-and-crisis-teams **] and in the PREVENT section.**

- Contact the district or state crisis response team.

- Request counselors and other trained mental

health professionals from neighboring schools. Mental health professionals employed by the school affected may be victims of the crisis, and should not always be involved in assisting others. "Outside" mental health professionals should work alongside the school-employed mental health professionals to determine most appropriate interventions to provide and who will provide those interventions. School-employed mental health professionals know their students best.

- Contact local mental health agencies or centers.

- Contact state and national agencies who can provide immediate support to students and staff.

Day One – The First 12 Hours

Continue to address priority needs, including facilities and people management.

- Secure building and grounds. Work with law enforcement to secure the perimeter of the school.

- Reunite families. Have a list of all students and check them off when they are picked up by parents or a legal guardian. Parents should receive information on how their reactions shape students reactions and behaviors. This is especially true for younger primary grade students. Later, information on warning signs and where to get help should be distributed to parents. See NASP Care for Caregivers www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources/school-safety-and-crisis/care-for-caregivers

- Contact local hospitals. Establish a liaison between the school district and the hospitals to get ongoing reports of victims' general conditions.

- Get top district officials to the scene. The superintendent and/or top administrators, along with key communications department staff, should tour the scene as soon as it is safe. Decide whether the superintendent will make a media statement.

- Develop a rotation plan for personnel – who will replace who and how often? (Depending on the situation, 12-hour shifts are not unreasonable.)

- Plan for food, drinks, and clothing needs for those on site for an extended period of time.

Plan for a communications command center to be operational in the next day or two.

- Determine the best location based on the crisis site. Consult with the school principal, the facilities manager, and security and law enforcement.

- Review the list of supplies for the command post, such as cellphones, walkie-talkies, copier, fax machine, computers, printers, televisions, and radios, and gather anything else that is missing or might be needed for the situation.

- Assign a volunteer coordinator who will solicit communications experts and volunteers, if needed, to help with media relations, answering phones, making copies, etc.

- Assign someone to monitor press reports and social media posts, helping to respond to rumors and correct them if needed.

Establish communications channels for internal and external audiences.

- Initiate a phone tree and email to staff, students, and parents. A face-to-face staff meeting is ideal, if possible. Carefully craft a script with what is known and not known to share with students and families, if this has not already been done or if updates are needed.

- Create a recorded message on a district voice messaging system and update regularly as new information becomes available. Include a phone number where people with questions can reach a "real" person.

- Update the district and school websites (and social media sites as appropriate) with information about the crisis. Cross-reference

hotline numbers and provide links to other resources, such as mental health support.

- Set up an information hotline staffed by central office personnel or trained volunteers from the educator's association, retired administrators, etc. Provide a script and answers to frequently asked questions. Have operators log calls and keep track of new questions that arise.

- Develop a fact sheet template to be used throughout the crisis. Send the fact sheet electronically to internal and external audiences daily at a set time, such as 10 a.m. See Information to include in a Daily Fact Sheet on page 65 (Appendix).

- Send a group email to the staff at the affected site and all other central and school sites in the district with the latest information about what happened and what is being done. Provide information on how to get updates through the website and hotline.

- Deal with rumors. Make sure all central and school-based staffs have accurate information that they can share in the community to stop rumors. Recognize how technology – such as cellphones and text messaging – can accelerate the spread of rumors. Monitor social media, and address inaccurate information and rumors in a non-confrontational way.

- Provide scripts for office personnel on answering questions or giving directions to the staging area or other important locations.

- Work with law enforcement to set a time for affected staff to collect personal belongings that they were not able to retrieve following the crisis, if necessary.

Prioritize stakeholders.

Address internal audiences first, such as:

- Staff at the affected site, other schools, and the central office. Include substitutes and retired staff.

- Students and parents at the affected site.

- Students and parents at neighboring schools.

- Families district-wide.

- School board members

- Key community leaders, such as elected officials and clergy.

- Provide service to local media first, then national and international if needed.

Manage media relations: asking and answering difficult questions.

The media will want ongoing information. Be available, open and honest.

- Designate a spokesperson who can serve throughout the crisis. If the school district has a communications office, it's ideal for the director to serve as spokesperson. (As mentioned above and discussed in the PREPARE section, the ICS will assign a Public Information Officer as part of the Incident Command element of the ICS team.) Determine carefully whether the principal, superintendent, school board members, or state affiliate will make public statements and who is most appropriate. Consider:

  > Is the official emotionally ready and able to give a statement?

  > Does the community/media expect a high-level official to take an active, visible communications role?

  > What are the legal considerations and long-term implications?

  > Which official is appropriate? Who has the most information and represents the district best in the public arena?

- Prepare officials for their roles:

  > Provide talking points in writing.

  > Prepare a list of frequently asked questions and answers.

  > Practice responding to questions, especially difficult ones.

  > Determine a specific length of time for the interview or media conference. Begin and end on time.

> Have the communications director in charge and/or designated spokesperson (introduced as such), manage the question-and-answer period and decide when the interview should end.

• Meet with media spokespeople from law enforcement and the fire/ rescue agencies to determine how to coordinate release of information.

• Develop a call log and track media calls, news agency and reporter names, and questions asked.

• Set up a regular schedule of press briefings. During the first few hours, as the incident is unfolding, hourly press briefings may be required, even if there is nothing new to report. That frequency can decrease as the situation stabilizes. However, the more that information is provided to the media, the better the story can be controlled. If the media do not get the information they are seeking from you, they will often find another way to get it. During press briefings:

> Discuss how the identity of victims will be released. Names should not be released until they are verified and the families have been notified. Law enforcement, fire and rescue, hospitals, and families should be involved in this decision.

> Provide information about evacuation. The media are very helpful in getting information out quickly, so families know where their children are and how to be reunited.

> Express sympathy and acknowledge pain and grief suffered by victims, their families, and the community. Connect on a human level. Grant permission to feel the range of feelings associated with a crisis.

> Thank individuals and agencies. Acknowledge the good work of school staff, first responders, and community agencies.

Take care of staff.

Set up a staff meeting as soon as is practical to talk with staff and express support and caring. Practice active listening, allowing staff to safely vent and be heard. It is appropriate to monitor staff (and students') initial crisis reactions for those who may be displaying intense reactions, those closest in proximity to the crisis event, and those emotionally proximal to the event. Responding to acute psychological needs should also occur immediately as the crisis unfolds.

It is critical that mental health services and support be offered and made available to staff as well. NEA and its State and Local Affiliates continue to promote school employee wellness programs that address the stress and exposure to trauma that affects so many of our members.

Make a decision about classes the next day at affected schools, as well as other schools in the district. Release information about the following day as soon as possible.

DAY ONE – EVENING

Meet with first responders and the school/ district crisis response team.

Discuss what worked and what didn't work. Talk about the next steps and how the agencies will work together over the next few days. Determine where and when the agency representatives will next meet. Establish a process to coordinate media response.

Hold a meeting with the school incident command team, school/district crisis team, and communications team to address the following issues (*depending on the situation this could wait for another day or until after the crisis*):

• What lies ahead – what can we expect tomorrow? How will we communicate to key stakeholders?

• Phase out Crisis Response Team members gradually by moving them from a high stress area to a low stress area of responsibility. This allows response

team members to decompress gradually.

- What worked well – did we follow our emergency plan? Did it work as expected? How did we communicate? Did we do everything we could to ensure safety?

- What must we improve – what parts of the plan didn't work? Were responses prompt and appropriate?

Plan for issues that will affect students and school staff the next day.

- Will school be open?

- Where will students and staff gather if it is open?

- What actions must we take immediately regarding mental health, safety and security, internal communications, and media?

- Whom do we need to contact in our community, such as elected officials, hospitals, first responders, opinion leaders, district leadership, board members, principals, staff, parents, attorneys, etc.?

- What help do we need, such as volunteers for hotline, phone banks, media relations, family liaisons, etc.?

Develop a longer-term media strategy.

The longer-term media strategy should include when, where, and how designated spokespeople will communicate to the media on an ongoing basis. Appreciate that the media needs a story and your role is to provide accurate, timely information. Messages should include your concern about safety and what you are doing to assure a safe learning environment.

- Understand the cycles of media response, because the needs and desires of the media change as the situation evolves. During the first hours, there is a mad scramble for information, and you can minimize rumors by releasing timely, accurate reports. After the facts are known, the media will begin to analyze the causes and look for different angles, emerging issues, and people to interview. Media will also want to cover special events, such as memorials, the first day back at

school and athletic activities.

- Set a goal to heal and return to "normal" through your work with the media.

- Decide when, how, and where to communicate with the media. Will the media have access to the building? Grounds? Consider sending a letter or email to the media asking for cooperation.

- Monitor the media. Volunteers can monitor television news from the command center or from remote sites. Staff or volunteers should also clip local and national newspapers and monitor news websites.

- Develop media protocols. You may want to develop media request forms to track and organize media inquiries. Decide how to handle interview requests with staff, students, and families. Will a spokesperson appear on talk shows? How will local vs. national media requests be handled? What advice will you provide staff, parents, and students regarding media interviews? How will you work with the school district attorneys regarding media releases?

Schools need to be aware that some news organizations will solicit students and staff to tweet and post to the news organization's social media page. News media have been known to ask students and staff to take pictures and post from inside the school. Again, there should be clear protocols and reminders of social media policies and, as always, a plan to respond when the protocol is not followed.

Hold an executive session.

The executive session should include legal counsel and the district's governing body (e.g., the board of education) to share what happened, discuss legal ramifications of the crisis, and determine next steps.

Stock the communications command center.

Stock the communications command center with appropriate supplies and materials.

DAY TWO

Provide a meeting place for staff and/or different groups involved.

Determine a safe location for staff members to meet informally and as a group. Hold a joint or separate morning debriefing(s) with first responders, school administration, and district officials. **This should be conducted by individuals who are properly trained in crisis debriefing.**

Best practices in crisis debriefing encourages separate debriefing/crisis support discussions in small homogeneous groups (e.g., first responders in one group, school staff in another). See the NASP PREPaRE model about use of multi-tiered approach to providing crisis interventions, not just "debriefing."

Provide mental health support and debriefing through trained mental health and crisis-intervention personnel.

Assure there are sufficient food, healthful snacks, and beverages. Talk to staff about their rights with the media. Practice active listening, allowing staff to vent and be heard in a safe, caring environment. Encourage members of the Crisis Response Team to rest and regroup, with an emphasis on taking breaks away from the incident area.

Mental Health in Crisis Response

The primary focus of crisis response is restoring equilibrium to address immediate and short-term mental health needs of students and staff and, in many cases, parents of involved students. During this phase, schools must contact and use the school and community professionals who were identified in the planning stage to address the specific crisis. The mental health crisis response team will support students and staff in a calm and nurturing manner, teaching appropriate evidence-based coping strategies for solving problems and making decisions designed to restore equilibrium.

Crisis response professionals identify students and staff who need follow-up attention during the recovery phase and begin connecting them with resources to address immediate and short-term needs. In the aftermath of a crisis or disaster, mental health interventions are designed to reduce stress and foster adaptive coping for the survivors (NCTSN/NCPTSD, 2006). www.nctsn.org/content/promising-practices-disaster-behavioral-health-response-and-recovery

Mental Health Triage

In providing care for students in the aftermath of a school crisis, experts in school crisis response recommend that school teams follow the principles of mental health triage. Staff in support rooms should provide mental health triage and make appropriate referrals to the counseling and support services in the school and community.

The principles of triage recognize that in certain settings and under certain conditions it is not possible to provide all needed mental health services to everyone. Instead, decisions must be based on the most efficient use of limited resources to prevent the most harm. In this context, mental health triage during a school crisis means that children in need of immediate evaluation and services by a mental health professional should be referred directly to appropriate community resources and should not receive extensive evaluations or counseling services by school personnel. This requires preexisting relationships with and access to appropriate urgent mental health services for traumatized children and adolescents.

Children who are not in need of urgent mental health services may be offered limited interventions, such as counselor-led discussions in group settings like classrooms and support groups. Evaluations made during the immediate aftermath of a crisis must have specific goals — to identify those in need of urgent services and to expedite their referrals. Until additional resources become available, longer and more in-depth evaluations should be postponed.

Psychological First Aid

Psychological first aid for students/staff/parents can be as important as medical aid. The immediate objective is to help individuals deal with the troubling psychological reactions. There are common reactions that may be expected versus what may indicate a need for more intensive intervention. See our information sheet on Psychological First Aid for more information, or visit

http://nctsn.org/resources/audiences/parents-caregivers/what-is-cts/12-core-concepts

www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources/school-safety-and-crisis/trauma

Psychological First Aid

As also discussed in the RESPOND section, Psychological First Aid (PFA) for Schools is an evidence-informed approach for assisting children, adolescents, adults, and families in the aftermath of a school crisis, disaster, or terrorism event. Link to HANDOUT (Wong & Schreiber, 2008) View our information sheet on psychological first aid on page 72 (Appendix).

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network and the National Center for PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) have developed the Psychological First Aid for Schools Field Operations Guide and handouts available for educators and parents.

www.ready.gov/sites/default/files/documents/files/PFA_SchoolCrisis.pdf (Schreiber, Gurwitch, & Wong, 2008).

www.ready.gov/sites/default/files/documents/files/PFA_Parents.pdf (Schreiber & Gurwitch, 2006).

www.nctsn.org/content/psychological-first-aid (National Child Traumatic Stress Network, n.d.).

The PFA-S Field Manual identifies these Core Actions:

- Contact and Engagement

- Safety and Comfort
- Stabilization
- Information Gathering: Current Needs and Concerns
- Practical Assistance
- Connection with Social Supports
- Information on Coping
- Linkage with Collaborative Services

Crisis Intervention Checklist, Forms, Handouts & Activities for an immediate crisis

The Sonoma County School Crisis Response & Recovery Go-To Guide (Sonoma County Office of Education, 2015a), Resource Guide (Sonoma County Office of Education, 2015b), and other resources are available at www.scoe.org/SOS

Designate a drop-in location for students and families.

Offer mental health support, and provide healthy food and beverages. Give regular updates on activities and events, debriefing staff and students within the first 24 to 48 hours, if possible. Arrange for child care, if necessary.

Attend to families of victims.

Assign a district liaison to work with the families and offer mental health support. Assess other needs, such as seeking local accommodations for close family members who must fly in for funeral services. Publicize funeral arrangements. Check the condition of hospitalized victims.

Take care of other schools in the district.

Determine whether mental health support or additional security is needed at other schools. Provide ongoing updates. Watch for copycat incidents, and work with the media to prevent them.

Consider facility and operational issues.

Work with the district insurance company and facilities staff on any repairs.

Identify a restart date for school.

Consult with law enforcement, health/mental health officials, and facilities staff about when school can resume.

Set up long-term communication channels.

These communication channels need to be available as long as necessary, depending on the crisis and its aftermath. They can include:

- An emergency website linked to the district homepage, which provides regular updates and links to resources for parents and staff, such as signs of post-traumatic stress, how to talk to your child about trauma, etc.

- Email group lists to stakeholders who must be reached regularly, such as staff, media, and elected officials.

- Voicemail messages at school and district offices to provide the latest information. The messages should be updated daily and include information about school activities, memorials, funerals, and donations.

- A daily fact sheet for key stakeholders. Develop a fact sheet template and update information every day at a set time.

- A letter or email to parents at the affected school and other schools in the district providing them with information and resources, including a link to the emergency website.

- A set of frequently asked questions and answers (FAQs). Develop an ongoing list of FAQs that can be distributed to the media and posted on the crisis website. Questions should include what happened, who was involved and how the community can help.

- Consider creating a letter or email that encourages media responsibility.

Revise media protocols as necessary.

Determine what information the media will need based on monitoring of print and broadcast coverage. Make decisions regarding ongoing press briefings: Who will be the lead agency, how often, location, spokesperson, other speakers, etc. Discuss the need for a joint information center with the other involved agencies.

Ensure key media representatives, such as local reporters, are receiving regular press releases and fact sheets. Look for positive stories to share with the media to promote healing.

Assign volunteer responsibilities.

A staff volunteer coordinator can screen volunteers and assign them to appropriate duties: staffing hotlines/phone banks, answering media calls with a focus on facts as opposed to opinion, monitoring the media, monitoring social media, providing food, accepting donations, writing thank you notes, etc. Volunteers must be trained with accurate, updated information.

Develop systems for accepting donations.

People will want to donate cash and/or goods and services following a crisis. When it comes to any donation, it is important to keep good records and be accountable. It may also be advisable to partner with a local nonprofit organization that can collect and disperse donated funds. Some key tasks:

- Check state laws and regulations that govern the collection of donations prior to developing a process for accepting donations.

- Set up a bookkeeping system to track financial donations – where they are coming from, if the donor has a specific use in mind, etc.

- Ensure that donations will meet the needs of the situation; for example, people often want to donate clothing to disaster victims, but those affected typically benefit from simpler methods of obtaining needed items, such as through preloaded debit cards.

- Develop a process for cataloging and storing cards, letters, and gifts.

- Assign volunteers to write thank you notes for donations.

- Be aware of special funds that interested individuals and victims' families may set up.

- Work with organizations that want to set up fundraisers to ensure the activities are appropriate and the funds are being collected and distributed in an accountable manner.

Coordinate efforts with other agencies.

Determine jurisdictional issues, such as who is in charge of a building: Is the building a crime scene? Who makes decisions about when the building can be repaired and reopened? Who releases information about victims and perpetrators? Key tasks:

- Decide when visitors can enter the building. The governor or other elected officials often want to tour the building.

- Make a list of all key agencies and determine communications channels. Agencies include:

  > NEA, state and local educator associations

  > Local, state and federal law enforcement, as well as emergency management agencies

  > Fire and rescue agencies, such as CERT (FEMA's Community Emergency Response Team)

  > American Red Cross

  > Hospitals

  > Local, state, and federal mental health providers, including the National Organization of Victims Assistance

  > Local and state elected officials, including the governor, legislators, city council, and county commissioners

  > Federal government agencies, including FEMA, the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Justice, and the Department of Education

- Ensure state and local agencies coordinate on any donations.

- Determine who will plan memorial events and activities; schools should have a memorial policy already in place prior to any crisis. Sometimes government officials and well-meaning community members want to rush into holding special memorial events. Be thoughtful in planning any formal events, and involve students and their families. Be considerate of religious and cultural diversity. Opinions vary on whether there should be a school-wide memorial event. The developmental level of the students is an important factor in how the school handles memorial events and activities. If there is a memorial event, involve students in the planning and make it brief, respectful, and hopeful. See handout on addressing grief from the National Association of School Psychologists: www.nasponline.org/Documents/Resources%20and%20Publications/Handouts/Safety%20and%20Crisis/WS1H21.Memorials.pdf (additional information in the **RECOVER** section).

FIRST WEEK

Support families by providing information and resources.

School and district leaders can use several strategies to support school families. You can hold a parent meeting at school to answer questions and address concerns; have a mental health expert address post-traumatic stress; and provide handouts on mental health issues and information on long-term mental health resources.

It is also important to provide safe places for students and parents to meet informally. Include planned activities (games, crafts) as well as mental health support. Form parent support groups with the help of mental health agencies. Practice active listening to allow a safe place for grief and anxiety to be vented and heard.

Make sure staff is valued and informed through daily meetings and phone calls.

Involve staff in planning special events, memorials, and back-to-school activities. Make mental health services available, including an employee assistance program, if applicable. Practice active listening and acknowledge pain and anxiety, as well as a healing process that has ups and downs.

Return to routine operations.

It's important for everyone to return to a routine as quickly as possible while honoring those injured or deceased. Determine when to resume extracurricular activities and classes in consultation with law enforcement and mental health and facilities staff.

Continue to provide regular, ongoing communications.

There is no such thing as over-communication in a crisis. Regularly update websites, voicemails, and phone scripts. Maintain a master list of questions and get volunteers to research answers. Continue to provide daily fact sheets as needed.

Manage the ongoing needs of the media as the story evolves.

The media will look for new angles as the crisis stabilizes. While the number of press conferences decreases, individual requests for information and interviews continue. Ask the media to consider what images are portrayed and how that affects potential re-traumatization of victims. Develop protocols about media pools and credentials for special events and memorials to minimize intrusion while ensuring media access. A media pool is a commonly used practice that provides access to a limited group of media representatives who are required to share video and sound with all other media outlets.

Continue to meet and coordinate with appropriate agencies.

Especially in the case of a crime, keep in close contact with law enforcement agencies.

Meet with key stakeholders.

For rumor control, hold face-to-face communications with all district principals and administrators, school board members, former board members, parent leadership, elected officials, and other community leaders so the community receives accurate and timely information.

Research financial resources.

Grants may be available from local and state agencies, state or national unions, the U.S. Department of Justice, and the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Safe and Healthy Schools. These grants can help fund additional nurses, mental health workers, substitute educators, afterschool activities, and consultants. See Project School Emergency Response to Violence (SERV) ed.gov/programs

Back to School – When Students and Staff Return

Support students and families to help them feel safe and to promote healing and a sense of routine.

Getting back to a regular routine will help students feel secure. It will be important to develop a re-entry plan that gradually reintroduces the school routine, such as tours of the building, where students and their parents can return to school for a short time and feel comfortable.

Helping people feel safe is critical. Make sure parents and students know about the presence of any new adults in the building, such as police, mental health counselors, and volunteer door and hall monitors. Encourage parents to be in the school as volunteer support, door monitors, etc. If renovations or construction were needed following the crisis, make sure the building is safe and without strong odors or dust that could create health concerns for re-occupancy.

Decide on the schedule for the first day back to school. Do you want to have a half or full day of classes? Some schools begin with having students meet and talk with the educator whose class they were in when the tragedy struck. Schools also should have school-employed mental health professionals available.

Provide meaningful opportunities to mark the occasion. Consider whether you want to start the day with a moment of silence. Students might write letters to those injured or thank you notes to the first responders.

Reinforce rules about leaving the building, student movement in hallways and staircases, and reporting suspicious incidents. For students who can't return to school, consider offering the option of homeschooling.

Provide support for staff so they feel capable of being caregivers and educators.

Actively listen to staff concerns and issues. Reflect concerns back to staff, providing support and answering questions. Set up a "safe room" where staff can go for a break or to seek guidance from a mental health professional. Have substitute educators available to take over classes if educators need a break. Also, make use of the Employee Assistance Program if the district has one available.

Before school starts, have a meeting with all staff, administrators, and mental health professionals to discuss curriculum and talking points. The school should develop a prepared statement so educators can give the same information at the same time to all students. Before releasing any information about victims, ensure it is verified and the family is willing to disclose it publicly. Avoid use of public address systems or large assemblies to make announcements about crisis situations. Ensure that office staff members know the latest developments and have a script for answering phone calls.

Provide classroom activities for educators to use with students.

Classroom activities should be developmentally appropriate and should help students express grief, feel safe, and look forward to a positive future. Students can express their feelings through art and writing. School mental health professionals may work with staff to incorporate these activities in the classroom.

Take care of staff.

Providing mental health resources is critical for staff as well. Also, have volunteers bring lunch and snacks for staff members.

Take care of the community.

Invite first responders to visit the school and serve them a "thank you" lunch on a day that students are not present.

Consider operational issues that make staff and students feel more comfortable.

For example, consider changing the "look" of affected parts of the building; don't use rooms where violence, injuries, or death occurred; and visually block off damaged areas.

Manage media coverage of the first day back.

Establish policies regarding media presence on school grounds and in the building. Establish a perimeter for photographers and satellite trucks. Set guidelines on still and video cameras in the building. Consider holding a meeting or conference call with the media prior to the first day back to set the tone and parameters for the day. Remember the goal is to establish a normal routine, to heal, and to foster a sense of safety. Host a media tour when students are NOT in school, so reporters have footage to use later. Ensure that staff members are trained on how to talk to the media appropriately.

PART FOUR: RECOVER

The process of restoring the social and emotional equilibrium of the school community by promoting positive coping skills and resilience in students and adults is recovery. Most students and staff do recover with the support and assistance of caring educators and mental health professionals. In all phases of recovery, schools provide the greatest degree of support when their routines and social activities are maintained. These routines and activities provide natural places where experiences can be shared and preserve the sense of belonging and solidarity so crucial to students and staff after a crisis. Recovery includes immediate and ongoing support both short and long term for individuals and the entire community affected by the crisis. (NCTSN).

Continued healing requires addressing the aftermath of the crisis, including how to handle long-term mental health needs and the ongoing process of recovery (after basic needs like food, shelter, water, childcare, clothing, and others are met). In Part Four of this guide, we provide a better understanding of the different reactions and experiences of crisis, grief and trauma, best practices for identifying and addressing grief and trauma triggers, information on handling donations, memorials, anniversaries and other reminders, and long-term communications. It also includes addressing the immediate and more long-term psychological impact on the school and community, tips on evaluating the crisis response, and revisiting a crisis plan after a tragedy.

Over the past few decades, our nation's schools and institutions of higher education have experienced unspeakable tragedies and withstood various environmental disasters. To successfully recover from such tragedies, it is critical that schools build a safe and supportive learning environment that develops students' protective factors before a crisis occurs, and maintain and rebuild the learning environment after a crisis has occurred.

What we have learned from these many experiences and from the educators, families, and communities who have, and continue to persevere through this recovery effort, is that it takes time. Crisis affects people in different ways depending on previous experiences, resilience, and what kinds of support systems are available to them.

Long-Term Mental Health Needs

The ongoing process of recovery

Healing takes time and everyone reacts to a crisis differently. The rate of recovery differs for each person based on many factors, such as age, experience, and closeness to the incident, as well as any preexisting mental health issues. Significant mental health challenges as a result of a crisis may be less prevalent, but everyone touched by a crisis will be affected by varying emotional and psychological responses.

There are some very significant developmental variations in crisis reactions. In particular, younger students (especially preschoolers) will react with behaviors that will not always be clearly connected to the stressor. In addition to developmental variations, it is important to acknowledge cultural differences. Different cultures internalize and externalize grief and crisis in very different ways. This should be considered in evaluating and responding to different individuals and families.

You can access resources on how educators, parents, and other adults can help students, as well as how children at different developmental levels experience grief, on page 58 (Appendix).

It is important also to consider cultural contexts in responses to crisis, trauma and grief. **Culture is closely interwoven with traumatic experiences, response, and recovery.** Culture can profoundly affect the meaning that a child or family attributes to specific types of traumatic events such as sexual abuse, physical abuse, and suicide. Culture may also powerfully influence how children and their families respond to traumatic events, including how they experience and express distress, disclose personal information to others, exchange support, and seek help. A cultural group's experiences with historical or multigenerational trauma can also affect their responses to trauma and loss, their world view, and their expectations regarding self, others, and social institutions. Culture also strongly influences the rituals and other ways through which children and families grieve over and mourn their losses. See http://nctsn.org/resources/audiences/parents-caregivers/what-is-cts/12-core-concepts.

Follow-up Care and Interventions

Reactions and responses to a crisis are both immediate and long-term and may be observed for months or even years after an event. Both children and adults in a school community will have immediate and long-term reactions and responses to a crisis, including grief. These will vary based on

their exposure (i.e., how close they were to the event and to any victims), perceptions of threat or risk, pre-existing vulnerabilities, and the nature of the crisis. A school-based crisis intervention team is particularly well suited to monitor the adjustment of students and staff members for an extended period of time. Ongoing observation by the school-based crisis intervention team allows team members to identify individuals who are in need of further services so they can be referred to community resources. The team may also recognize common needs of students and staff that can be addressed by establishing support groups in the school.

Supporting School Crisis Response Team Members and School Staff

A crisis of any nature often awakens feelings related to a prior crisis that may assume a primary focus for a particular child or staff member. **All members of the crisis teams and school administration need to recognize that this work is difficult and they need to provide adequate support for school staff and other crisis response team members as they work.** Crisis response planning for a community must ensure that appropriate supports are available to attend to the mental health needs of members of the crisis response team. An employee assistance plan (EAP) is one way to provide access to discreet, confidential, cost-free, and short-term mental health services. School systems that do not have an EAP may develop a resource list of several practitioners who are experienced in working with traumatized adults and have agreed to be available for off-site staff support. School districts can also provide their employees with information on how to access services through their health benefits plan.

Generally, this approach requires considerable out-of-pocket expense, which may limit access for staff who need this service. Whether a school system uses an EAP or a less-structured model, schools should make the names and numbers of support professionals and resources available to school staff at the beginning of a crisis.

Psychological First Aid

As also discussed in the RESPOND section, Psychological First Aid (PFA) for Schools is an evidence-informed approach for assisting children, adolescents, adults, and families in the aftermath of a school crisis, disaster, or terrorism event. Link to HANDOUT (Wong & Schreiber, 2008) View our information sheet on psychological first aid on page 72 (Appendix).

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network and the National Center for PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) have developed the Psychological First Aid for Schools Field Operations Guide and handouts available for educators and parents.

www.ready.gov/sites/default/files/documents/files/PFA_SchoolCrisis.pdf (Schreiber, Gurwitch, & Wong, 2008).

www.ready.gov/sites/default/files/documents/files/PFA_Parents.pdf (Schreiber & Gurwitch, 2006).

www.nctsn.org/content/psychological-first-aid (National Child Traumatic Stress Network, n.d.).

The PFA-S Field Manual identifies these Core Actions:

- Contact and Engagement
- Safety and Comfort
- Stabilization
- Information Gathering: Current Needs and Concerns
- Practical Assistance
- Connection with Social Supports
- Information on Coping
- Linkage with Collaborative Services

Common Reactions to Crisis – A Trauma-Informed Perspective

Trauma can change the way those involved look at the world and make them feel less safe and secure. Remember that not only staff and students at the affected school, but also those at neighboring schools and perhaps the entire district may experience stress and have emotional and physical responses to the crisis.

After experiencing a crisis or other traumatic event, most people will go through a cycle of grief and eventually return to a "new normal." Reactions will depend on the severity of the trauma, prior experiences, personality, coping mechanisms, and availability of support. For some, the trauma will become a growth experience. For others, crisis interventions will need to be offered to mitigate post-traumatic stress and potential lifelong, negative implications.

Common Reactions vs. Signs of PTSD

See www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources/school-safety-and-crisis/trauma

Common Reactions to Trauma: Shock or disbelief, fear, sadness, guilt/shame, grief, confusion, pessimism, or anger. In most cases these reactions are temporary and lessen over time.

Warning Signs of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). If any of the following symptoms do not decrease over time, if they severely impact the child's ability to participate in normal activities, or if significant changes are noted, a proper referral to a mental health professional may be necessary.

- Disruption or withdrawal from peer relationships
- General lack of energy or lack of interest in previously enjoyed activities
- Strained family relationships (increased misbehavior, lashing out against family members, refusal to participate in normal family routines)

- Decline in school performance, school avoidance, or difficulty concentrating
- Physical complaints with no apparent cause
- Maladaptive coping (drug or alcohol use, severe aggression)
- Repeated nightmares and reporting strong fears of death, violence, etc.
- Repetitive play that re-enacts the traumatic events
- Low self-esteem, negative talk about self (if this was not apparent prior to the trauma)
- Sleeping (difficulty falling or staying asleep) and eating disturbances
- Increased arousal (easily startling or quick to anger), agitation, irritability, aggressiveness
- Regression in behavior (thumb sucking, bedwetting, clinginess, fear of the dark)

Post-Traumatic Stress. Normal post-traumatic stress reactions should decrease and lessen in intensity over time; PTSD is when the reactions do not decrease over time or change in intensity. Feelings of fear, confusion, and anger after a traumatic event are often very normal reactions and are not necessarily PTSD. But when these symptoms don't go away or get worse, they can disrupt normal daily activities and trigger self-destructive behaviors. If these symptoms increase or persist, a proper referral to a mental health professional should be made as soon as possible.

Learn more from our PTSD fact sheet, found on page 73 (Appendix).

Secondary Traumatic Stress

In addition to being with their students when a critical incident occurs, educators and other school staff are constantly on the "front lines" of our busy, and often stressful, K-12 schools. They hear about students who are suffering from hardships of poverty, exposure to violence, crime in their neighborhood, and strife at home. These caring professionals frequently reach out to students in need and experience a great deal of compassion and satisfaction from being able to support the youth they serve who may be struggling outside the classroom. However, these compassionate educators can also be at risk for a phenomenon called "compassion fatigue," otherwise known as secondary traumatic stress (STS).

STS can influence us in profound ways, both personally and professionally. Essentially, what happens is that in the course of reaching out and helping our students, we as helping professionals can begin to experience some of the same struggles and emotional overload that our students experience. Common experiences for educators who have developed STS include: avoidance of things that they used to regularly do such as socializing and recreational activities, withdrawal from people and gatherings, constant thoughts and worry about events that students have described, feelings of tension and stress, and even loss of appetite or substance abuse. Educators who work with students who have severe or chronic trauma are especially vulnerable to STS. It is important for educators and administrators to understand how STS manifests and the effect it has on a person's ability to maintain a happy and healthy life at school and at home. Research on STS suggests that self-care, personal time off, support of a supervisor, peer support, and therapeutic counseling are ways to mitigate the impact of STS.

To begin addressing STS, several experts across the nation and in the fields of crisis, trauma, and education have been working to research and design interventions and prevention measures to help ameliorate the impact of STS on our nation's educators. NEA is working with these experts to address the needs of our members, including the development of confidential screening, interventions and professional development on STS, self-care, and training on trauma informed practices. See https://traumaawareschools.org/secondaryStress

Addressing Grief

National Education Association (NEA), as part of the Coalition to Support Grieving Students unveiled a full website of resources for schools at www.GrievingStudents.org to help educators and parents support students as they go through the bereavement process.

Every adult in a school building can play a role in this supportive environment. With the proper training and resources, school personnel will be empowered to support students and respond appropriately in times of grief and crisis.

Most everyone will experience grief at some point. Not all grief is traumatic. However, we must recognize that past exposure to trauma, or as a result of a recent crisis, will affect the experience of grief and can trigger different responses and emotions associated with the trauma.

More on Triggers (see Chapter 11 in Briere & Lanktree, 2013): http://keck.usc.edu/Education/Academic_Department_and_Divisions/Department_of_Psychiatry/Research_and_Training_Centers/USC_ATTC/ITCT-A_-_Treatment_Guide/Chapter_11_-_Trigger_Identification_and_Intervention.aspx

Triggers for unpleasant memories and flashbacks:

- **Places.** The specific classroom where the tragedy occurred, the desk of a deceased student or the evacuation site may be painful reminders. Carefully consider how the building will be repaired and remodeled.

- **People.** Classmates and educators who experienced the tragedy together, relatives of victims and first responders can all remind each other of the tragedy. Find ways for staff and students to process the event together and support each other.

- **Sounds.** Helicopters, fire alarms and ambulance sirens often reinforce memories of a crisis. Consider changing the sound of school alarms. Ask news media to keep helicopters away from school events.

- **Similar events.** A tragedy in another community brings back unwelcome memories. Make sure that mental health support is provided when a similar crisis occurs elsewhere.

You can download additional resources for grief, loss, and trauma on the National Education Association (NEA) website.

Psychological Impact of Natural or Manmade Disasters

Natural disasters or manmade catastrophes such as building explosions, bridge collapse, floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, and earthquakes can have serious psychological consequences similar to those experienced during acts of violence. Issues related to the destruction of homes, property, heirlooms, and livelihoods will compound the feelings of loss and powerlessness.

These disasters often multiply normal stress such as finances, and create new stressors from problems caused by the disaster – homelessness, transportation issues, and lack of basic services. When recovering from natural or manmade disasters, it's important to keep the family together as much as possible. Children will pick up feelings of anxiety from their parents, so it's critical to talk about what is happening and how the family will recover together.

> If you are concerned about how students or staff are handling the psychological impacts of disasters and are worried about preventing suicide, please see the end of Part One: PREVENT for more information.

Coming Together as a Community

An extensive network of partners from various service sectors, including police, other government agencies, mental health providers, and social service agencies, should be established and maintained (see PREPARE). Then the necessary steps can be taken to develop the resources not currently available. Although it may take time and an ongoing commitment, maintaining this network has benefits far beyond crisis intervention. The network allows the school and community to address a broad array of prevention and intervention services related to the mental health and safety of children and young adults within the region. For example, some school crisis situations will require the services of police and fire rescue teams. Promoting proactive and collegial relations with the local police will help minimize conflicts around organizational responses and allocations of resources by the police during crises.

In addition, maintaining proactive and collegial relationships will make the interactions and communications between schools and police more effective in non-crisis incidents, such as in criminal investigations and arrests of students on school grounds, or student probation discussions between

juvenile justice personnel and school authorities. An effective working relationship with law enforcement is an immediate payoff of crisis preparedness and helps preserve commitment to the process of crisis planning by all of the community.

Helping Children and Adolescents Cope with Violence and Disasters

Each year, children experience violence and disaster and face other traumas. Young people are injured; they see others harmed by violence; they suffer sexual abuse; and they lose loved ones or witness other tragic and shocking events. **The National Institute of Mental Health provides information and resources to assist community members** to help children overcome these experiences and start the process of recovery. www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/helping-children-and-adolescents-cope-with-violence-and-disasters-parents-trifold/index.shtml

Ongoing Recovery – Reminders

- Establish a routine and strive to achieve a "new normal" to help students and staff recover. While things will never be quite the same, students and staff will come to realize a new equilibrium can be achieved.

- Continue to provide mental health support and encourage participation. Experts should be available for students and staff. Educators should not be expected to provide mental health treatment; however, since educators know their students the best, they should be vigilant for changes in behavior and crisis-related symptoms that do not seem to go away. In those cases, educators should refer the student to the school employed mental health staff.

- Encourage staff to use the district's employee assistance program. Provide in-house or contracted mental health services to help employees deal with personal problems.

- Have guest experts meet with staff and parents about the issues related to post-traumatic stress.

- Enhance communication between home and school and let parents know if their children are exhibiting signs of post-traumatic stress.
- Seek help from other communities that experienced a similar tragedy.

Recovery Logistics

Handling Donations

Often after a tragedy, people from across the country, and even the world, want to express their condolences through cards, gifts, and cash donations. Unfortunately, these donations pressure school districts, associations, and unions into making quick decisions about handling the gifts. Check state laws and local regulations that govern the collection of donations before developing a process for accepting them (unless the contribution is made to a nonprofit organization, the donation is not tax deductible).

Be sure to keep accurate records on donations and immediately design a process for how funds will be allocated. It's also helpful to identify actions that people can take immediately to feel and be useful, such as donating food, clothing or water, housing, etc. Money is not always what is needed most. You can find more tips on how to handle donations on page 62 (Appendix).

Managing Long-Term Reminders

Benchmark events – such as memorials, the first day back at school, the anniversary of the event, the birthday of the victim, and graduation – will likely bring back memories for staff, students, and the community. Other "firsts" – the first major holiday, the first activity the victims are missing, the first day of a new school year – will also trigger memories. Provide mental health support for students and staff to help them through these events.

Establishing Memorials

Often, the school crisis response team must address the content and timing of memorializing the event. Immediate issues, such as how to formally convey condolences to family survivors on behalf of the school, are appropriately addressed by the school crisis response team after receiving as much input as possible from the school community.

Frequently, formal memorialization activities, such as raising funds for a scholarship to honor a murdered educator, are undertaken too soon – sometimes within hours of the crisis. Although loving and therapeutic, memorialization activities that are undertaken too soon may divert energy and attention from the acute psychological and emotional needs of the victims. In addition, early memorialization events may be mistakenly interpreted by victims as indicating closure of the crisis. Victims who face closure of a crisis prematurely fail to take the time they need to grieve, adjust, and cope. For optimal recovery, nothing should discourage victims from continuing the grieving and healing process as long as necessary.

Thoughtful responses and ideas about how to memorialize people will often arise over time. Schools that rely on formal, traditional means of memorialization, such as placing a plaque in a hallway or dedicating the yearbook, should keep in mind that their actions may establish a precedent that may be difficult for the school to follow in the future. At the time of subsequent deaths of students or staff, those most directly affected by the loss may question why similar memorial activities are not instituted for their loved ones. Comparison of memorialization efforts is inevitable and likely to cause contention. This is of particular concern in the case of suicide. To avoid painful comparisons, it is best to encourage the development and implementation of meaningful, symbolic, and respectful memorials for each person who died and whose loss affects the school community.

It is helpful to have an established policy for memorials that applies to all students and staff deaths for consistency. Include students, staff, and families in planning activities. Take into account the developmental age of the students and be attentive to ethnic and cultural diversity issues. Permanent memorials are discouraged over living memorials. For example, a monetary donation to purchase a suicide prevention program or a speaker to discuss mental health, depression, and seeking help, can positively influence surviving students.

See page 66 (Appendix) for more comprehensive advice for memorializing victims and read below for information on managing media coverage of benchmark dates.

Long-Term Communications and Media Strategies

Communication with staff, students, parents, the community, and media is just as critical after the emergency or crisis has passed.

Communications strategies

- Continue to provide regular communications and realize that the need for updated information continues in the aftermath of a crisis.

- Update websites, voicemails, phone scripts, and fact sheets as needed.

- Maintain a master list of frequently asked questions and answers.

- Meet as needed with key stakeholders to identify questions, quell rumors, and provide accurate and timely information.

Media strategies

- Convey a message of resilience, continued healing, and a return to normalcy when working with the media.

- Issue media advisories about memorial events open to the public, anniversary dates, fundraising, or donations, etc.

Managing media coverage of benchmark dates

The media will cover benchmark events, such as the first anniversary. For special events such as anniversary dates, establish a media area to determine where the media will set up cameras so as not to intrude on the ceremony. Create a perimeter for photographers and satellite trucks. Set guidelines on still and video cameras in the building. Decide if you will have a media pool (selected media representatives who share information) or allow all media to attend the event.

It's helpful to meet with the media in advance to establish mutually beneficial guidelines. Ask the media to:

- Refrain from replaying or reprinting images of the crisis. Showing disturbing pictures has the potential to re-traumatize victims.

- Honor the victims and not glorify the perpetrators of violence.

- Respect the privacy of those who do not want to be interviewed.

- Consider a "no fly" zone over an outdoor memorial service.

Be proactive about pitching story ideas to the media that promote hope and healing. Develop a list of students and faculty willing to talk to the media.

For more media and communications tips, see page 67–68 (Appendices).

Evaluating Your Response

What worked? What didn't?

Evaluate each crisis response with a report to the superintendent and a plan for follow-up. For example, did you:

- Notify the appropriate people at the onset?

- Activate resources immediately to meet the needs of the students, families, and staff?

- Provide regular information updates and maintain open communication with educators, other staff, and parents?

- Monitor rumors and maintain timely, accurate information?

- Speak through one spokesperson to provide factual information to the media?

- Develop media messages that communicated ways that parents can support the recovery of their children?

- Provide mental health resources for those in emotional distress and identify and follow up with vulnerable students and staff during the recovery period?

- Identify during the aftermath any cues that could be traumatic reminders of the crisis and monitor behaviors among students and staff?

Revisiting Your Crisis Plan

Thoroughly review your current plan – at the district and school levels.

Keep in mind possible shifts from when the plan was first developed, such as changes in:

- District policies and procedures
- School facilities and grounds
- Availability of evacuation sites and routes
- Emergency phone numbers and resources
- Special skills among staff members
- Bell and bus schedules
- Special needs of students
- Lessons learned from emergency/crisis response
- Community hazards and risks

An emergency preparedness and crisis response plan is a living document that must be reviewed on a regular basis in order to make needed modifications and improvements to the plan. The review process should also include input from public safety representatives and other key stakeholders.

CONCLUSION

National Education Association (NEA) recognizes that the understanding of what takes place in the "before," "during," and "after" stages of any school or community crisis has been evolving in recent years. As a nation we have received many tragic lessons from our experience of school crises and numerous resources have been developed to enhance preparedness, strengthen prevention, and promote recovery. This guide is intended to help you access many of the federally funded resources and guides for technical assistance, along with the best practices developed by leading experts. It also highlights examples of states and districts that have developed their own guidelines, policies and resources.

We have given extra attention to the needs of school employed staff, as well as to the role of the national, state, and local NEA affiliate staff. We encourage our NEA affiliates to promote these best practices and offer these resources, not just in times of tragedy but to be better prepared and more resilient in the face of a wide range of threats to a school community's safety and well-being. NEA promotes a high standard of best practices in education and support services to reach an overarching goal of a safe, supportive, and engaged school environment that strengthens the community within and around it. We hope this guide can assist you in achieving this goal.

APPENDICES

Addressing Mental Health in School Crisis Prevention and Response

Why mental health is important in crisis planning

Traumatic experiences can affect the mental health of staff and students, and their ability to teach or learn. Schools that have a comprehensive system of mental health services and supports already in place will be better prepared to address mental health needs that arise with any crisis.

Failure to adequately address mental health issues may result in secondary trauma or even post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) that can cause inability to focus, poor school performance, substance abuse, inflicting abuse on self and others, and even school violence. **Therefore, it is critical that schools understand and implement best practices to identify and address mental health issues.**

> See Addressing Mental Health in School Crisis Prevention and Response by the West Virginia Department of Education for more information.

De-stigmatizing "mental health"

Many people use the term "mental health" in a way that implies dysfunction when, in fact, having sound mental health should be a goal for everyone. Mental health is defined as a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community (World Health Organization, 2014).

Researchers identify three domains and several indicators of mental health:

- **Emotional well-being** – perceived life satisfaction, happiness, cheerfulness, peacefulness.
- **Psychological well-being** – self-acceptance, personal growth including openness to new experiences, optimism, hopefulness, purpose in life, control of one's environment, spirituality, self-direction, and positive relationships.
- **Social well-being** – social acceptance, beliefs in the potential of people and society as a whole, personal self-worth and usefulness to society, sense of community.

Schools should educate staff, students and families about the importance of maintaining good mental health just as they work to stay in good physical health.

Schools: Helping Make Communities Resilient

A connection to school is one of the most significant protective factors in children's lives, and helps them develop resilience. Resilience refers to our tendency

to cope with stress and is commonly understood as a process rather than a character or personality trait. In addition to developing individual coping mechanisms, children's positive connections to people in school – teachers, administrators, and their peers – can help promote resilience.

Educators contribute local leadership to families and communities when they have been challenged by traumatic events. You provide structure and reassuring routines as well as responsive and supportive relationships. Additionally, educators provide essential, tangible support in the form of services such as school nutrition programs.

The connection to their schools, along with the school's leaders, teachers and counselors, is a key protective factor in the lives of children, as well as for their families and other members of our communities.

Classroom Activities Following a Crisis

Preschool

- Encourage play re-enactment with dolls or puppets to integrate the experiences in their lives.
- Have children draw pictures or create a mural and discuss in small groups with an adult.
- Let the children dictate short stories to an adult on a one-to-one basis to help verbalize fears.
- Play games that involve physical touching, such as "Ring Around the Rosie" and "London Bridge Is Falling Down," to increase a sense of security.

Primary Grades

- Make toys available that encourage re-enactment of experiences.
- Develop skits or puppet shows about what happened.
- Stimulate group discussion by showing your own feelings.

- Brainstorm classroom or family disaster plans.
- Develop projects, such as scrapbooks, that give children a feeling of control.
- Draw pictures and write stories.

Secondary School

- Facilitate group discussions of students' experiences of the disaster. Include a mental health professional to help students express feelings in a safe, constructive environment.
- Have students work in small groups to develop a disaster plan for their home, school or community.
- Develop a class project to help the community rebuild.

Curricular Activities

- **Art:** Have students portray their experiences in various media – drawing, painting, clay sculpture, etc.
- **Civics/Government:** Study government agencies that provide aid to victims. Invite a local government official to discuss disaster preparedness and recovery.
- **English Language Arts:** Have students write about their personal experiences, either in story form, poetry or even journaling.
- **Health:** Discuss emotional reactions to disaster and the importance of taking care of one's emotional and physical well-being.
- **History:** Research past natural disasters and lessons learned.
- **Journalism:** Have students write stories about different aspects of the disaster, such as impacts on the community, human interest stories, or rebuilding efforts.
- **Literature:** Have students read literature and poetry about disasters in other times and places.
- **Math:** Create word problems dealing with disaster impacts, such as gallons of water lost or cubic feet of earth that moved in a mudslide.

- **Psychology:** Teach students about the signs of post-traumatic stress. Invite a guest mental health worker to talk about emotions and behaviors after a disaster.
- **Science:** Conduct research on aspects of a disaster, such as climate conditions that cause tornadoes or geologic conditions that create earthquakes.
- **Speech/Drama:** Ask students to develop a skit or play about coping with disaster.

Emergency Contact List

School District Resources

District security:

Superintendent:

Public information – communications:

Health services:

Counseling:

Employee relations:

Personnel:

School attorney:

Local association leaders:

Other:

Community Resources

Police:

Fire and ambulance:

Social services:

Child welfare/protective services:

Crisis center:

District attorney:

Mental health:

Poison control:

National Weather Service:

Other:

Equipment and Supply List for the District-Level Crisis Response Team

Communication:
- Bullhorns
- Cell phones and extra batteries
- Portable battery-powered radio with extra batteries
- Walkie-talkies
- NOAA Weather Alert Radio battery/crank powered
- Contact information – home and cell phone numbers, email addresses, etc.:
    > Administrators – departments and schools
    > Buildings and schools – including addresses
    > Community experts – counseling agencies, hospital personnel, etc.
    > Emergency responders – law enforcement officials, fire departments, etc.
    > Local media outlets
    > NEA local association president
    > District-level crisis response team members
    > School resource officers

Logistics:
- Student/staff rosters, including students with special needs and a description of needs and any medicine used
- Parent/guardian student release forms
- Aerial photographs and floor plans for all buildings
- Alarm system information
- Bell and bus schedules
- Building construction information
- Backup generators

- Evacuation routes and locations
- Master keys
- Media staging areas
- District-level emergency preparedness and crisis response plan and individual school plans
- Utility shutoff locations
- Chemical inventory – what is stored and where it is stored in the building
- Copy of crisis plan

Miscellaneous:
- First aid supplies
- Flashlights with extra batteries
- Incident command team vests
- Pens, pencils, notepads

First Anniversary of the Crisis

- Recognize the emotion that the first anniversary of a traumatic event creates. It's important to acknowledge the occasion appropriately and foster healing rather than re-traumatization. Special events or quiet acknowledgments are ways to mark the occasion with respect and caring.
- Involve students, staff and families of the victims in planning the event.
- Keep the program brief and age appropriate.
- Send written invitations to families of the victims. Invite parents of current students and alumni who were at the school at the time of the crisis.
- Determine if the event will be open to the public. Consider having a closed event at school for the internal audiences – students, staff and families – and a public event for the community.
- Make mental health professionals available.
- Promote hope through activities like releasing balloons or doves, or a candle-lighting ceremony.

- Respect diverse traditions and religions.
- Consider including:
  > A moment of silence.
  > Reading of the victims' names.
  > Speeches by school staff, students and victims' family members.
  > Music by student groups.

Go Box

The "Go Box" is an "office on wheels" that can be removed quickly from the building in case of evacuation. Stock it as part of the emergency plan and update it frequently, making sure all lists and materials are current. The box should be secure yet easily accessible, and all members of the Incident Command System team should know where it is stored and be assigned the duty of removing it. In a large school, you may want to have several boxes located in different areas of the building.

Items in the Go Box may include:
- Two-way radios
- Portable, battery-powered radio with extra batteries
- Flashlights with extra batteries
- Bullhorn
- Pens, pencils, notepads
- Building master keys
- Clinic box: student medical needs list (marked confidential), first aid supplies
- Student emergency cards with parent contact information
- Parent-student reunification plan
- Class and room lists (where specific students and teachers are located each time period of the school day)
- School personnel list

- Staff home/cell phone directory
- Central office staff phone numbers
- Home phone numbers of key central staff
- Building map/floor plan – architectural blueprints if possible (multiple copies)
- Site plan of the grounds and adjacent facilities, including aerial photos of the school if possible (multiple copies)
- Map of the surrounding neighborhood (multiple copies)
- Locations of emergency shutoffs (water, electrical) inside and outside the building
- Fire alarm shut-off procedures
- Sprinkler shut-off procedures
- Cable-feed shut off (if your school is hooked up to cable)
- Chemical inventory – what is stored and where it is stored in the building
- School emergency procedures, including fire alarm and sprinkler shut-off procedures
- Copy of the school crisis plan

Handling Donations

Often after a tragedy, people from across the country, and even the world, want to express their condolences through cards, gifts and cash donations. Unfortunately, these donations pressure school districts and associations into making quick decisions about handling gifts.

Here are some strategies for honoring and tracking donations:

- Consult with an attorney about state laws and local regulations that govern the collection of donations before developing a process for accepting them. (Unless the contribution is made to a nonprofit organization, the donation is not tax-deductible.) It may be helpful to consult with other districts that have been through similar situations.

- Develop a record-keeping system for cash donations. Establish a separate bank account. Keep accurate records about funds donated for a specific person or project. Immediately establish a process involving key stakeholders to determine how funds will be allocated.
- Identify actions that people can take quickly to meet their immediate need to help. Channel the energy into donations, such as food, water or clothing.
- Identify symbolic displays that allow the community to participate. For example, memorial pins, ribbons and signs can be developed to benefit the victims.
- Determine how to catalog and store gifts. Think about where gifts will be displayed or stored long-term.
- Use volunteers to write thank-you notes to donors.

How Educators Can Help

- Listen and connect to students. Students are most comfortable with the adults they know and will look to them as a source of support. Let them know you are there for them. Encourage them to express their feelings.
- Help students be empathetic. Encourage creation of cards, letters and drawings to express sympathy to victims and thanks to first responders and donors.
- Refer. Teachers are not expected to provide counseling. Refer students to mental health professionals.
- Reassure students that they are in a safe place and tell them how the school is working on safety issues.
- Monitor behavior. Know the signs of children at-risk and get help for those who need it. Communicate concerns to parents and mental health professionals.
- Maintain consistency and predictability. Routines are comforting to students during times of crisis.
- Understand cultural differences. It is not only language, but also culture that may affect how students react to trauma and death. Different cultures have unique beliefs about crisis, death and

burial practices. Grieving and memorial practices also vary by culture. The National Association of School Psychologists has information about cultural issues and trauma online: click here.

- Take care of your own needs. It's OK to ask for support. Take a break if you need to get away. Take advantage of the Employee Assistance Program, if available, or district or community mental health counselors. Talk to your affiliate representative about your personal needs.

How Parents and Other Caring Adults Can Help

- Be available to listen. Let your child talk without passing judgment. Let children know their feelings are normal.

- Stay physically close. Children may need extra hugs and reassurances of love as they recover from trauma.

- Honor children's privacy. Let children take time to figure things out and express their feelings. Don't force them to talk.

- Assure children 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 children 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 children a sense of control over their lives. For example, let them decide what to wear or what to have for dinner.

- Keep children healthy. Make sure your children are getting rest and good nutrition.

- Communicate with the teacher. Parents and teachers should work together to make sure children are recovering from the trauma.

- Take advantage of mental health resources. Don't be afraid to ask for professional help for your children and yourself.

- Group Crisis Intervention: Trained crisis responders work with groups to help process traumas. The victims articulate what they felt, saw, heard, tasted, smelled and touched during the trauma. The goals are to increase safety and security, fulfill the need to retell their experiences and help identify ways to face the future.

- Respond to specific symptoms:
  - > **Guilt:** Explain what is controllable and encourage children to talk positively about themselves.
  - > **Helplessness:** Ask the 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 the child know that the behavior is unacceptable. Explain that the feelings of anger are normal and encourage the child to express emotions in appropriate ways.

Activities for Children

- Encourage children 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.

Information to Include on a School Fact Sheet

About the School District

School District name: _____

Location: _____

Number of schools in district: _____

Cost per pupil: _____

District mission statement: _____

School calendar: _____

Board of Education members, superintendent: _____

About the School

School name: _____

Location: _____

Articulation area: _____

Grade levels: _____

School enrollment number:_____

School colors:_____

School mascot: _____

Motto/mission:_____

Principal: _____

Number of teachers:_____

Facility (when built, remodeled): _____

School programs: _____

Extracurricular activities:_____

Graduates: _____

History:_____

Test scores: _____

Information to Provide in Daily Fact Sheet

School District name: _____

School name: _____

Current date: _____

Contact person: _____

Contact phone/cell phone: _____

Latest information: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Press briefing schedule: _____

Information on making donations: _____

Condolences: _____

Information on funeral arrangements (location, date, time): _____

_____

Mental health support available (organizations, hotlines, etc.): _____

_____

Parent information phone line: _____

Website with updates: _____

Information hotline: _____

Managing Benchmark Dates

Certain dates can trigger reactions of grief, loss, helplessness and hopelessness. Be prepared to offer extra mental health support to students and staff on anniversary dates. For example:

- **Six-month anniversary** may bring unexpected reactions. Teachers and students who have not had time to grieve may have feelings bubble up at this time.

- **First day of new school year** can be an important benchmark in the healing process. Students and staff have been gone all summer, and re-entering school may trigger an emotional response.

- **Graduations** can be a major struggle, especially if a victim was scheduled to graduate. Make sure the tragedy doesn't define graduation, which should be a time of pride and reflection on accomplishments.

- **First anniversary of the crisis** is a critical time. Involve staff, students and victims' families in planning events and activities to mark the one-year anniversary of the crisis. The plan should include media protocols. See First Anniversary of the Crisis for more information.

Managing Memorial Activities

- **Manage spontaneous memorials, which are one way that community members try to be a part of the healing.**
  Often the site of the crisis – the school building or grounds, the roads near the school or a neighboring park – becomes a spontaneous memorial where people leave flowers, posters, pictures, stuffed animals, cards and letters. It's important to decide how to preserve these items, and a volunteer can help catalog them. Consider how long the spontaneous memorial items will remain at the site – a week? a month? At some point the items should be removed to reclaim a sense of routine and normalcy.

- **Monitor organized memorial events.**
  Sometimes government officials and well-meaning community members want to rush into holding special memorial events. Be thoughtful in planning any formal events and involve students and their families. When others take over, the victims experience a lack of control, an inability to grieve and a rush into "closure." Try to avoid a political agenda. Be considerate of religious and cultural diversity.

- **Consider events at school.**
  Opinions vary on whether there should be a schoolwide memorial event. If there is an event, involve students in the planning and make it brief, respectful and hopeful. Rather than having a formal memorial service, consider a series of events and activities that allow students to express their sorrow. For example, students can write letters or draw pictures for the families of victims and first responders.

- **Consider the age of the students.**
  Developmental level is an important factor in how the school handles memorial events and activities. Young children can express their grief through writings and drawings. Older students may want to start a community service project or become involved in school safety committees, conflict management or political action.

- **Be especially careful about suicides.**
  To reduce chances of copycat behavior, it's critical not to glamorize suicides. Psychologists advise not having a memorial to the suicide victim.

- **Be thoughtful about permanent memorials.**
  Proceed slowly. Going too fast doesn't give people time to grieve and diverts attention from meeting the immediate needs of victims. See Permanent Memorials – Issues to Consider for more information.

Media and the First Anniversary of the Crisis

- Depending on the scope of the crisis, realize that the media will be very interested in covering first anniversary activities and events.

- Establish a media area. Determine where the media will set up cameras so as not to intrude on any planned ceremony. Decide if you will have a media pool (selected media representatives who share information) or allow all media to attend.

- Meet with the media in advance to establish mutually beneficial guidelines. Ask the media to:
  > Refrain from replaying or reprinting images of the crisis. Showing disturbing pictures has the potential to re-traumatize victims.
  > Honor the victims and not glorify the perpetrators of violence.
  > Respect the privacy of those who do not want to be interviewed
  > Consider a "no fly" zone over an outdoor memorial service.

- Develop a list of students and faculty who are willing to be interviewed and help facilitate these interviews.

- Develop positive story ideas that promote hope and healing.

Media Protocols at Special Events

- **Determine extent of media access.** Will all media, no media or a media pool (select media who will relay information to other journalists reporting the story) be allowed to cover a specific event, such as the first day back at school?
  > A media pool might consist of one still photographer and print reporter, one videographer and reporter, and one radio reporter. A member of the communications staff or other staff member should escort each media representative to the designated press area.

- **Determine policies on coverage.** Set parameters for media, including designated area, what can and cannot be photographed, and when they arrive and leave the site.
  > If the event or the venue is public, the media cannot be prohibited from attending. However, you can ask the media to stay in a designated area and respect the privacy of individuals.
  > Establish an area where press conferences and prearranged one-on-one interviews can take place.
  > Determine whether media will be allowed access to the school grounds or school building.

- **Credential reporters.** Get names in advance of the event and provide badges. Set up a check-in system and have credentialed media escorted to the designated area.

- **Host a media summit.** Invite reporters and editors to meet with communications staff and district officials to talk about ground rules for covering special events. Invite a mental health professional to provide information about the media's potential impact on re-traumatization.

Media Relations in a Crisis: Immediate Issues

- **Immediacy:** Issue an accurate, factual, basic initial statement as quickly as possible. Find information to include in your media release in the appendices of this guide.

- **Location:** Designate a media area where all briefings will be held. Secure the school perimeter and determine where media will/will not be permitted.

- **Purpose:** Use local media as a quick communications pipeline to key audiences, but don't depend solely on the media.

- **Policy:** Make sure you follow all district policies and state laws when releasing information. Follow your crisis communications plan.

- **Spokesperson:** Designate a spokesperson and speak with one clear voice.

- **Key messages:** Develop two or three key messages that are honest, consistent, responsive and responsible. Strive to be positive and proactive.

- **Accuracy:** Never guess, speculate or predict the future. Don't release information until you have verified its accuracy. Never go off the record.

- **Availability:** Hold regular media briefings and respect deadlines. Avoid saying "no comment." Provide a brief statement and then take a few questions, but stop when they get redundant or head off course.

- **Attitude:** Express sympathy; be calm and respectful. Avoid getting defensive or placing blame.

- **Care:** Respect student and staff health, safety and privacy rights.

Media Relations in a Crisis: Long-Term Issues

- Understand the cycles of media response because the needs and desires of the media change as the situation evolves. For example:

  > **First hours of the crisis:** The media will make a mad scramble for information. Reporters will interview anyone willing to talk, often without verifying accuracy of information. The more information released, the less the media will have to rely on rumor and hearsay.

  > **What and who:** The media will want to know exactly what happened and who was involved – victims and perpetrators.

  > **Why and how:** The media will ask why the crisis occurred and how it evolved. There will be a step-by-step dissection of the crisis.

  > **Analysis of emergency response:** The media will analyze how the crisis response functioned. Did first responders react appropriately? Did the school's crisis plan work?

  > **How could it happen?** As the situation stabilizes, the media will begin to look for causes of the tragedy and whether it could have been avoided. For example, they'll ask if proper security measures were in place.

  > **Second-day stories:** The media will begin to look for a different spin or angles, emerging issues and people to interview. The media will also want to cover special events, such as memorials, the first day back at school and athletic activities. You can find media protocols for special events in the appendices of this guide.

- Consider privacy issues and release of victim and perpetrator names. What are the roles of law enforcement, schools, hospitals and families in releasing names and conditions of victims? The school and district should have a carefully considered and crafted policy regarding release of student and staff photos and yearbooks. Think about laws such as Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act as well as identification of special education students. Recognize that the media may use file photos of students participating in athletic events.

- Manage interviews by developing media request forms and logging all requests for information and interviews. You can find sample media request for interview and request for information forms in the appendices of this guide. Take care of local media first because they are in it for the long haul. Consider the feelings of victims and whether their talking to the media is healthy and appropriate.

Media Talking Points and Frequently Asked Questions

In addition to the below sample talking points, your crisis team should work to create specific talking points in response to individual crises. These talking points are building blocks for you to expand upon and supplement.

- Schools are the safest places for children.
- The school is taking action to promote healing and safety (name actions).
- Parents can help their children heal.
- Parents have a role in communicating with their children and knowing early warning signs.
- Mental health assistance is available (provide information regarding what is available).
- Media can help by avoiding images that re-traumatize victims.
- We all have a responsibility to create safe schools and communities.
- Communities need to know about early warning signs and help report threats.
- All schools need prevention programs.
- We appreciate the support of the community.
- There is a process for accepting and distributing donations (detail what the process is).

> We are not able to prevent crises from occurring but we can control the conditions in which we work through one and we do that through our district's crisis plan. Learn more from the National Association of School Psychologist's media & crisis information sheet.

Sample Frequently Asked Questions

The below are sample questions and answers that may come from the media or other inquiring sources. It is best to prepare answers or talking points for any questions that may come your way, including any possible difficult questions. You should use what is here to start brainstorming your responses, and build upon them based on the crisis at hand.

Q: What happened?

A: Stick to the facts that you have verified: **who, what, when, where**. Coordinate information release with law enforcement.

Q: How much damage was sustained?

A: **NEVER SPECULATE** on dollar amount of damage. Give factual, clear information as it becomes available (e.g., two classrooms have sustained damage in the fire).

Q: How many people were killed/injured/missing?

A: ONLY RELEASE CONFIRMED NUMBERS. Coordinate with law enforcement.

Q: How can I get updated information?

A: Give time, location of next briefing as well as hotline number.

Q: How can I locate a family member, colleague or student?

A: Provide evacuee information numbers.

Q: How can parents and teachers receive information about how to help children deal with trauma?

A: The county mental health agencies have staff available to provide information and assistance on a 24-hour basis. Provide phone number.

Q: How can parents and teachers receive information?

A: Provide hotline number.

Q: How can I volunteer to help or provide donations?

A: Provide information number, and any items needed now.

Q: Why did this happen?

A: NEVER SPECULATE.

Q: What are you doing next?

A: We are assessing the situation and will determine next steps in cooperation with law enforcement. Provide information on how families are being reunited, when classes will resume, etc.

Q: Were any policies or laws violated?

A: We are conducting a thorough investigation into what occurred and how it can be prevented in the future.

Q: When will school resume?

A: The administration and school board are meeting this evening to make that decision.

Q: Where can I get information about assistance to victims?

A: For mental health assistance call, _____. For financial assistance, call _____. For food, clothing and shelter, contact_____.

Open Letter or Email to the Media on Covering a Crisis

Dear Editor:

This week our community was rocked by tragedy. As journalists, you have been on the frontlines reporting about this event, and we know it has been difficult for you as well as for us. This tragedy is not only an immense news story, but also a defining moment in the life of our community.

While we know your job is to cover every facet of this tragedy, we ask you to be considerate of the emotional well-being of our students, staff and community. By your thoughtful coverage of this event, you will play an important role in helping us heal and return to normal. We ask you to:

- **Put the story in perspective.** School is one of the safest places a child can be, and we ask that you present accurate information about school safety to the community.
- **Review the comprehensive guidelines** produced by the Radio and TV News Directors Association for live coverage of crises to ensure you are not jeopardizing the safety of first responders or victims. [http://rtdna.org/content/coverage_guidelines]
- **Be careful when interviewing school staff and students.** Mental health officials and victims' advocates advise that students and staff affected by a crisis receive immediate mental health care. Forcing students to comment on the crisis may create psychological setbacks, according to the National Association of School Psychologists.
- **Help prevent copycat incidents.** Understand that other troubled individuals who are seeking attention may make copycat threats to get a turn in the media spotlight.
- **Evaluate carefully when you need to be on-site.** Please consider establishing cooperative arrangements and pool coverage to limit the number of reporters.
- **Use the story for good.** Consider ways you can use the incident to promote safety, community involvement and responsibility, and publicize the good deeds of those who assisted during the tragedy.

Please avoid:

- **A rush to judgment.** It is natural to place blame and to find causes, but instant analysis can lead to simplistic and inaccurate judgment. It's important to acknowledge that multiple factors contribute to tragedies.
- **Sensationalism** through focusing on the morbid details or rebroadcasting dramatic, disturbing photos of the event.
- **Repetitive or excessive reporting of school violence.** In addition to possibly promoting copycat behavior, it distorts the picture of school safety.
- **"How to" descriptions** (e.g., how bombs were made) or presenting violence as a credible solution to problems.
- **Glorifying a person who has committed an act of violence.** Let the public know that perpetrators are often people with serious problems. Focus on the victims rather than the criminals.

Thank you for your cooperation. We appreciate your efforts to cover this tragedy in a responsible, respectful manner.

Sincerely,

State affiliate president

Permanent Memorials – Issues to Consider

- **Develop a thoughtful process.** Take time and allow time for grieving before deciding on a long-term or permanent memorial.

- **Involve families, staff, and students in deciding how best to remember the tragedy and its victims.** A committee composed of parents, students, staff, and community leaders should take time to develop a thoughtful memorial. Remember, in many cases it takes years to establish a permanent memorial.

- **Think carefully about the location of the memorial.** Establish a school or district policy about whether memorials will be allowed in the school building or on school grounds. Keep in mind that establishing a precedent might cause difficulties in the future. Also, remember that memorials in the school serve as a constant reminder of the event to students and may interfere with healing.

- **Consider the type of memorial.** Memorials may be plaques or structures, but they can also include awards, scholarships, plantings or donations of books and materials. Some schools have started a positive community service activity as a memorial to lost students.

- **Be mindful of separation of church and state issues.** Family members might want religious statements or symbols included in the memorial. Manage this issue by involving the broad-based community.

- **Realize there is no such thing as closure.** While the community can move on and heal, the crisis is never forgotten.

Psychological First Aid

Psychological first aid (PFA) for students/staff/parents can be as important as medical aid. The immediate objective is to help individuals deal with the troubling psychological reactions. There are common reactions that may be expected versus what may indicate a need for more intensive intervention.

Step 1: Managing the Situation

A student who is upset can produce a form of emotional contagion – the idea that people can "catch" emotions from those around them. To counter this, staff must:

- Present a calm, reassuring demeanor
- Clarify for classmates and others that the student is upset
- Indicate why the student is upset, if possible (correct rumors and distorted information)
- State what can and will be done to help the student

Step 2: Mobilizing Support

The student experiencing a psychological reaction needs support and guidance. Staff can help in these ways:

- Try to engage the student in a problem-solving dialogue
- Normalize the reaction as much as feasible
- Facilitate emotional expression (e.g., through use of empathy, warmth, and genuineness)
- Facilitate cognitive understanding by providing information
- Facilitate personal action by the student (e.g., help the individual do something to reduce the emotional upset and minimize threats to competence, self-determination, and relatedness)
- Encourage the student's friends to provide social support
- Contact the student's home to discuss what's wrong and what to do
- Refer the student to a specific counseling resource

Step 3: Following-up

Over the following days (sometimes longer), it is important to check on how things are progressing.

- Has the student gotten the necessary support and guidance?

- Does the student need help connecting with a referral resource?

- Is the student feeling better? If not, what additional support is needed and how can you help make certain that the student receives it?

Another form of "first aid" involves helping needy students and families connect with emergency services. This includes connecting them with agencies that can provide emergency food, clothing, housing, transportation, and so forth. Such basic needs constitute major crises for too many students and are fundamental barriers to learning and performing, and even to getting to school.

For more information, see Responding to Crisis at a School (Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA, 2016).

Listen, Protect, Connect – Model & Teach

Psychological First Aid for Students and Educators: Listen, Protect, Connect–Model & Teach is a five-step crisis response strategy designed to reduce the initial distress of students or adults and to help students return to school, stay in school, and resume their learning. It is not a single session recital of events, but a model that can guide the interactions of students and educators over time through the process of their recovery.

Students may need to tell their stories many times in different settings (individually, in a small group, or after significant events that remind them of loss, the trauma, or the anniversary of the tragedy). They may prefer not to tell their story at all, depending on factors regarding the event and the characteristics of the student. School personnel and other adults can use their discretion to apply these guiding principles in a flexible manner.

The two main goals of PFA for students and educators are:

1. To stabilize the emotions and behaviors of students

2. To return students to an improved mental and emotional state after a crisis or disaster ready to attend school and re-engage in classroom learning

Psychological first aid is a Tier 1/Tier 2 intervention. In cases of more severe levels of trauma, Tier 3 interventions by trained mental health professionals show great success. See Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools.

Also, see The 12 Core Concepts: Concepts for Understanding Traumatic Stress Responses in Children and Families by the National Child Traumatic Stress Network, and Trauma: Facts and Tips by the National Association of School Psychologists for further information on PFA.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) affects some people who have witnessed or experienced a terrifying situation or event such as war, assault, or disasters. While it is completely natural to experience fear during a dangerous situation, those diagnosed with PTSD experience debilitating levels of stress, fear, and anxiety even when they are no longer in immediate danger.

> See the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) for more information on PTSD.

Diagnostic criteria for PTSD include a history of exposure to a traumatic event that meets specific stipulations and symptoms from each of four symptom clusters: intrusion, avoidance, negative alterations in cognitions and mood, and alterations in arousal and reactivity. Another criterion concerns duration of

symptoms, while others assess functioning or clarify that symptoms are not attributable to a substance or co-occurring medical condition.

It's important that children and adults get help if they exhibit symptoms of PTSD. Many educators post a list of common reactions in their educators' lounges to inform school staff what to watch for in their students and among themselves. In addition to being informative, having a list posted serves as a form of permission for the full range of feelings that bubble up in the aftermath of crisis. Continue to monitor students and staff for signs of PTSD.

After a trauma, both children and adults may experience:

- **Guilt and self-blame.** Students and staff might feel that they should have done more to help during the crisis or to prevent the crisis. Many will feel guilty that they survived when others didn't.

- **Hopelessness and depression.** A traumatic event changes how people feel about their personal safety, and they may feel helpless and depressed. They may feel out of control, as if they'll never stop crying.

- **Misuse of drugs, alcohol, and food.** People may turn to substances to ease the psychological pain. Loss of appetite or compulsive eating can occur.

- **Sleep disorders, including insomnia or nightmares,** are common reactions to stress.

- **Numbness and withdrawal.** To avoid feeling the pain, people may withdraw from family, friends, and activities.

- **Physical problems.** Stress often manifests itself through headaches, stomach aches, sore shoulders, and other physical problems.

In addition, students may experience:

- **Fear, panic, and over-concern about safety.** When events outside their control occur, children may experience fear that something else will happen.

- **Difficulty with concentration and school performance.** When students are upset, it is difficult to learn. They may have lower grades and more absences.

- **Regression.** Children might return to behaviors that they had outgrown, such as thumb sucking.

- **Anger and acting out.** Often discipline incidents increase in schools after a crisis because students need an outlet for their anger and want to feel in control.

- **Clinging to family members or friends.** Children need to know that their support system is there for them.

- **At-risk behaviors, such as suicide and teen pregnancy,** often increase after a tragedy. Self-destructive behaviors such as cutting may also occur.

Staff may feel:

- **Sense of grief and loss.** Remember that staff throughout the district, and especially in neighboring schools, may have personal relationships with colleagues and perhaps students directly affected by the tragedy.

- **Inability to carry on school routines.** Staff may have trouble concentrating on lessons and carrying out their daily duties. They may need more time off for physical and mental distress. Consider a "safe room" where staff can take a break when needed.

- **Heightened concern about student safety and personal well-being.**

- **Sense of responsibility.** Staff concerns about their responsibility for students and ability to keep students safe may increase.

- **Increased sensitivity.** Staff may be jumpy and overreact to student behaviors and sounds (e.g., alarms, loud voices).

Only a qualified mental health care practitioner can diagnose PTSD. If you read through the symptoms and recognize yourself or someone else, please make an appointment with a mental health professional to assess the risk. **If you or someone else is in immediate danger or crisis, call 911.**

Learn more about what PTSD is, its symptoms, who is at risk, and possible treatments at www.NEAHealthyFutures.org/PTSD.

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.

Release of information:

- Before releasing any information about victims, ensure that it is verified and the family is willing to disclose it publicly.

- Avoid use of public address systems or large assemblies to make announcements about crisis situations.

- The school should develop a prepared statement so teachers can give the same information at the same time to all students.

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.

- Talk about their rights and responsibilities with the media.

- Encourage students to write down or draw their thoughts, feelings and concerns, making sure that the activities are age-appropriate.

- Ask that students cooperate with law enforcement investigations.

- 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.

- None of us is to blame.

- Each of you 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. Wait and gauge staff and student readiness.

Sample Letter or Email to NEA Local Members from State President

Dear members of our association family:

We are deeply saddened by your loss and extend our sincere condolences during this difficult time. Know that you are in the thoughts of millions of NEA brothers and sisters throughout our nation, and we are ready and willing to help you in this time of need.

In the face of this tragedy, you have shown our community and the entire nation what it means to be an educator. We have seen the uncommon courage and selflessness of the teachers and staff at SCHOOL NAME. Our community is truly fortunate to have such devoted educators, and we are proud to be your colleagues.

As a caregiver for your students, we encourage you to take care of yourself while taking care of others. Even though you might not think it's for you, we urge you to take advantage of the mental health support being offered by NAME OF AGENCY. Call PHONE NUMBER to set up an appointment.

The association has set up a series of meetings to school staff, so we can learn your needs and help you through this difficult time. The meetings will be held:

DATE, TIME, LOCATION

We want to show our solidarity and support of you in this difficult time. Our members are honoring the memory of those lost and injured by wearing SCHOOL COLOR ribbons. We vow to work with you to forge an alliance with families and communities to keep our children safe.

In solidarity,

NAME

PRESIDENT, ASSOCIATION

Sample Letter or Email to Parents

DATE

Dear Parent:

As we remember the DATE tragedy at SCHOOL NAME, the victims and their families, we thank you for your ongoing support.

We are deeply proud of the students and staff at our schools, who, with the able assistance of LAW ENFORCEMENT, helped save lives during the tragedy.

We know that you have many questions about what happened and the steps we will take to make our school safe and heal as a community. To answer these questions, we will have a parent meeting at TIME on DATE at LOCATION. We encourage you to attend. In the meantime, if you have any questions, do not hesitate to call us at PHONE NUMBER.

As always, student safety remains a top priority in our district. We will continue to update our safety plans and security measures to protect our students and staff.

Here are some steps we are taking immediately:

LIST SAFETY STEPS

We know that this is a difficult time for your family, and we encourage you to take advantage of the professional mental health services being offered by NAME OF AGENCY. For information or to set up an appointment, call PHONE NUMBER.

In addition to our meeting, we will provide regular updates on the district website at ADDRESS.

Thank you again for your involvement and commitment to our schools. Working together, we will heal as a strong, united community.

Sincerely,

Principal

Superintendent

Sample Media Request for Information Form

Reporter name: _____

Media outlet: _____

Phone number/cell phone number: _____

Deadline: _____

Specific question(s): _____

_____

_____

Message taken by: _____

Date and time of request: _____

Sample Media Request for Interview Form

Requesting an interview with: _____

Media outlet and reporter name: _____

    ___TV

    ___Newspaper

    ___Magazine

    ___Radio

    ___Other

Phone/cell phone number: _____

Date of desired interview: _____

Location and logistics of interview:

    ___In person

    ___By phone

Topic: _____

Anticipated length of interview: _____

Other interviewees: _____

Message taken by: _____

Date and time of request: _____

Sample Template for Initial Media Release

For immediate release

Media contact: _____

NAME_____

TITLE_____

PHONE NUMBER_____

Headline: INCIDENT at NAME OF SCHOOL

(DATE OF RELEASE, TOWN, STATE): At approximately TIME on DATE, TYPE OF INCIDENT occurred at SCHOOL NAME, LOCATION.

Describe action being taken:

Our school and district crisis response teams as well as emergency responders (LIST AGENCY NAMES) are on the scene.

Our major concern is for the safety of our students and staff.

Parents can meet their students at LOCATION ADDRESS starting at TIME.

Insert quote from principal/central administrator.

More information will be made public as it becomes available.

For immediate assistance, please call our information hotline at NUMBER, or visit WEBSITE ADDRESS.

# # #

INSERT BOILERPLATE INFORMATION (a brief paragraph with facts about the school/school district)

School Bus Safety

Rules for School Bus Passengers

School bus rides are often fun and exciting experiences for children, but it is important to make sure all children stay safe and under control. It is especially important for chaperones on bus trips to maintain order because out of control children can pose dangers to themselves, the driver, and other passengers.

Rules for Entering a Bus

1. Do not enter the bus unless it is at a full and complete stop.
2. Wait for the bus in a safe location away from traffic.
3. Always use the handrail when entering the bus.

Rules for Riding a Bus

1. Enter and exit the bus in an orderly manner.
2. Stay seated throughout the duration of the trip.
3. Keep head, hands, legs, arms, and objects inside the bus at all times.
4. Sit with feet on the floor and face forward.
5. Keep aisle free and clear throughout the ride.
6. Do not distract the bus driver

Rules for Exiting a Bus

1. All passengers should walk at least 10 feet from the front of the bus before crossing the street.
2. The handrail should be used by all passengers as they exit.
3. The driver should give a signal before anyone crosses the street.
4. Do not allow anyone to cross from behind the bus.

Students, Staff and Parents: Your Rights with the Media

You have the right to:

- Say "no" to an interview.
- Be treated with respect.
- Select the time and location of the interview.
- Have someone with you during the interview.
- Know the purpose of the story.
- Ask about the questions in advance.
- Request a specific reporter and/or refuse to work with certain reporters.
- Speak to one reporter at a time.
- Release a written statement instead of having an interview.
- Refrain from answering uncomfortable questions.
- Say when the interview is over.
- Ask for a correction if the information is wrong.
- Grieve in private.

*Adapted from Denver Police Department.

The Concept of Death and Handling Grief at School

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 thought or action 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 usually 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 children 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 children.

- Permit children 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 children's behavior and emotions related to grief.

- Encourage projects such as writings, drawings and scrapbooks.

- Help children create and send sympathy cards.

- Provide access to individual and group counseling.

The Coalition to Support Grieving Students unveiled a full website of resources for schools at www.GrievingStudents.org to help educators and parents support students as they go through the bereavement process.

Every adult in a school building can play a role in this supportive environment. With the proper training and resources, school personnel will be empowered to support students and respond appropriately in times of grief and crisis.

You can download additional resources for grief, loss and trauma at the NEA Healthy Futures website: www.NEAHealthyFutures.org.

Volunteer Information and Responsibilities

Answering the phone in the crisis communications center and phone banks

- Volunteers should be equipped with a script on how to answer the phone, daily fact sheets and press releases, and answers to frequently asked questions (information on all of these are included in this guide's appendices). Volunteers should read and become familiar with all materials before answering calls.

- Volunteers should identify themselves as such and stick to the scripted information.

- The greeting for answering the phone is: "[INSERT NAME], Crisis Communications Center, may I help you?"

- If the volunteer is asked his name, respond, "I am a volunteer helping the district fulfill media requests and am not an official spokesperson. If you wish to attribute a statement, I will be glad to take your contact information and be sure that a district spokesperson returns your call."

- If the call is from the public, parents, or staff, the volunteer may answer questions that are factual in nature. Take messages and record questions that need additional research.

Responding to the media

- If the call is from a member of the media, record questions and requests on the double-sided media request form. You can find interview request forms and media request for information forms as part of this School Crisis Guide in the appendices. The goal is to provide the media with fast, accurate information to meet their deadlines.

- After completing the proper form, file them in the designated folders – local, regional, major national and others. Even though the phones will continue to ring, it's important to file the forms as quickly as possible.

- The volunteer may answer questions about factual information, such as how many students are enrolled. If other data is requested, the volunteer should fill out a media request for information or media request for interview form and file it in the appropriate location for communications staff response.

- The priority for responding to the media is local first, regional second, major national third, and international and tabloids last.

- Assisting the communications center coordinator with the following duties:

  > Morning:

    – Finalize the master schedule of events for the day and make it available to all phone bank volunteers.

    – Finalize the daily fact sheet, and fax and email to appropriate lists. Post on the website.

    – Make sure each phone station has updated materials and supplies.

    – Monitor the content of morning newspapers, wire stories and broadcast media.

o Afternoon:

- – Attend interagency communications director briefings and take notes.
- – Prepare and distribute updated schedules and fact sheets, and post on the website.
- – Prepare and copy updated fact sheets for press briefings.
- – Attend all press briefings, take notes and tape comments.
- – Research questions from phone bank and update FAQs.

> Evening:

- – Complete the master schedule for the next day.
- – Remove outdated information from volunteer folders and replace with new.
- – Back up computer files.
- – Participate in end-of-day meeting to ensure media requests have been fulfilled and to discuss issues that arose.
- – Assemble "to do" list for the following day and assign volunteers.

Other duties for volunteers

- • Check incoming faxes and emails.
- • Monitor websites and blogs.
- • Monitor the contents of newspapers, radio, and television reports.
- • Organize and research phone bank and crisis center questions.
- • Inventory and obtain supplies, such as paper, pens, and pencils.
- • Make sure each phone station has adequate supplies throughout the day.
- • Supply copy and fax machines with paper.
- • Catalog letters, cards and gifts.
- • Write thank-you notes to donors.
- • Keep running lists of items that need attention.

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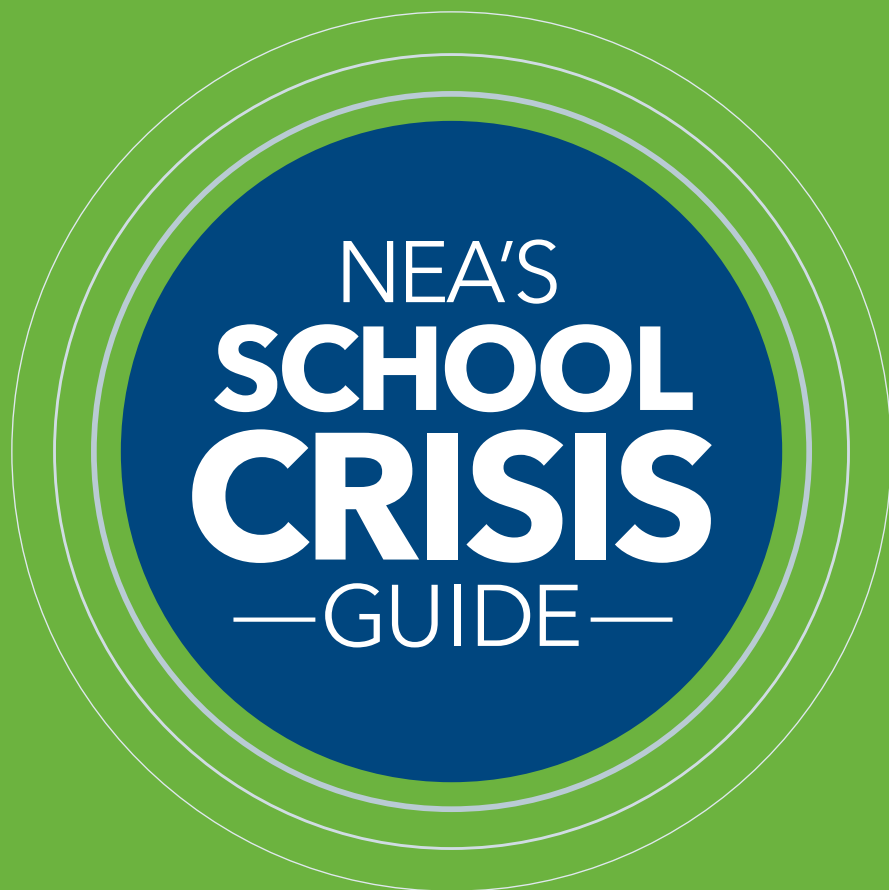
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