



# **Transformative Leadership Academy**

## **School Crisis Management Plan**

Adopted  
February 2021

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# I. POLICY

## Intent and Definition of Crisis Management

**Intent** - Crisis Management is a central component of comprehensive **School Safety**. The most important consideration in both Crisis Management and Safe Schools efforts is the **health, safety and welfare** of the students and staff. A comprehensive Safe Schools Plan places a strong emphasis on prevention using strategies which range from building design to discipline policies and programs which improve school climate.

**Definition** - Crisis Management is that part of a school division's approach to school safety which focuses more narrowly on a time-limited, problem-focused intervention to identify, confront and resolve the crisis, restore equilibrium, and support appropriate adaptive responses.

## School Board Policy Statement

The Transformative Leadership Academy Crisis Management Plan operates within the framework of the Transformative Leadership Academy Board policy.

## Crisis Management Planning

### A. Definitions

1. "Crises" shall include but not be limited to situations involving the death of a student, staff member, or a member of a student's immediate family by suicide, substance abuse, illness, or accident. The director s shall have the authority to determine what is a crisis incident and to convene the Crisis Management Team.
2. "Critical incidents" shall include situations involving threats of harm to students, personnel, or facilities. Critical incidents include but are not limited to natural disasters, fire, use of weapons/explosives, and the taking of hostages. Such incidents require an interagency response involving law enforcement and/or emergency services agencies.
3. The individual school "Crisis Management Plan" shall be a written plan with explicit intent to protect and sustain life, reduce emotional trauma, assist in emotional recovery from trauma, and minimize personal injury and/or damage to the facility.

### B. Crisis Management Team

An Individual School Crisis Management Team shall be established at each school to meet the demands of crisis incidents.

1. Membership: The crisis team shall consist of an immediately accessible core group who have the knowledge and skills to act in any emergency and shall include the director, administrative assistant, one or more selected teachers, and a person to record events/minutes of meetings. Additionally, the Police Department, Mental Health Services, Fire Department, and County

Emergency Rescue Services shall be asked to consult with the school team. A roster of team members will be posted in each school administration office.

2. **Purposes:** The Crisis Team shall implement and adapt appropriate action from the Crisis Management Plan to address the specific events of the crisis. Roles and responsibilities of team members and consultants will be established in the school's written Crisis Management Plan.

### **C. Crisis Management Plan**

Each school Crisis Management Plan will include provisions for Pre-planning, Intervention/Response, and Post-emergency activities, including the establishment or designation of the following:

1. Explicit procedures for each crisis incident.
2. Crisis headquarters and command post outside the school facility in the event evacuation is necessary.
3. Chain of command in the event a key administrator is not available.
4. Spokesperson to the media. This person will be the director or designee and is responsible for gathering and confirming all pertinent information about the incident and for informing the school division's public information officer prior to any media release. The spokesperson will also designate a media reception area when deemed appropriate.
5. Network of key communicators. It is the responsibility of these key individuals to convey approved information to others. This network may include phone trees to notify staff of emergency incidents and special meetings which may occur before or after school hours, and various counselors designated to support groups such as students, faculty, and parents.
6. Communication plan within the school and to the community. The best means of communication may vary with the crisis. However, the plan must provide for communicating with teachers as soon as possible. When appropriate, well-informed representatives should be ready to go into classrooms. Avoid giving news via assembly or public address systems as results can be unpredictable when giving shocking news to large groups of students. To ensure accuracy and avoid rumor, information to students must come directly from internal memoranda or statements written specifically for that purpose and approved by the director. News is best given to students in class so they can ask questions of a person they know. Questions from parents should also be addressed from pre-approved fact sheet.
7. Critical Incident Management. Critical incident response will be in accordance with the Memoranda of Understanding executed between the Transformative Leadership Academy and the Departments of Police, of Fire, and of Emergency Services.
8. Arrangement for support services. One individual from the Crisis Management Team will be designated to contact the school board office and to contact, as needed, other community resources such as Mental Health Crisis Services. The school board office will arrange for assistance as needed from additional school psychologists, school social workers, and other guidance counselors and to contact Mental Health Crisis Services. School arrangements should include the designation of meeting spaces, provisions to request on-call services to meet unexpected demand, and provision of long-term follow-up.
9. Bring closure to the crisis. This activity will vary depending on the crisis. But it is imperative to recognize officially the end of the crisis and the beginning of the healing process.

10. Evaluation of the crisis plan. Response to each crisis incident will be reviewed and evaluated at the conclusion of each crisis. Crisis Management Team annually will evaluate the plan and its effectiveness and make modifications as needed.

**D. Crisis Management Inservice**

The Crisis Management Plan shall be reviewed annually with the full school staff and shared with all transient staff, nurse/clinic attendants, secretaries, cafeteria staff, custodians, and bus drivers. Schools are encouraged to provide in-service on specific crisis related topics such as substance abuse code violations, neglect and abuse, and suicide prevention.

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# II. Transformative Leadership Academy

## CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLAN

### Overview and Rationale

#### *Overview*

Transformative Leadership Academy has developed procedures for dealing with existing and potential student and school crises. The Comprehensive Crisis Management plan includes Intervention Procedures, Crisis Response Procedures, and Critical Incident Procedures. An important component of the Plan is a set of interagency agreements with various county agencies to aid timely communication and help coordinate services between the agencies and individual schools or the entire school division. Intervention Procedures provide a systematic process for identifying, referring, and assessing students who may be suicidal or represent a potential threat to others. Crisis teams established in each school provide immediate intervention with referred students. Team members have been trained to assess the seriousness of the situation and respond according to specific guidelines. The team gathers information from other sources, chooses a team member to interview the referred student, develops a plan, directs the student and family to appropriate help, appoints a case manager, and provides follow-up. Additionally, schools regularly provide in-service training to faculty and staff about recognizing students in crisis and on referral procedures.

Crisis Response Procedures guide staff in responding to more frequently occurring crises such as deaths of students or teachers and other traumatic events which can affect the school community for days. These procedures are intended to be time-limited, problem-focused interventions designed to identify and resolve the crisis, restore equilibrium, and support productive responses. The crisis team uses crisis response procedures to help administrators:

- gather information;
- establish communication with the family;
- disseminate accurate information to faculty and students;
- intervene directly with students most likely to be affected;
- increase the available supportive counseling for students and staff; and
- guide students in helpful ways to remember the deceased.

Critical Incident Procedures help school personnel handle potentially dangerous events such as an armed intruder in a school and other life-threatening event. The school division has developed a Plan which emphasizes a coordinated interagency approach. A Code Blue has been established in all school buildings to provide a uniform method of warning staff and students of high-risk situations involving imminent danger to life or limb.

### Interagency Agreements

Transformative Leadership Academy has entered into agreements with various county governmental agencies, including mental health, police, and fire departments. The agreements specify the type of communications and services provided by one agency to another. The agreements also make school division personnel available beyond the school setting in the event of a disaster or traumatic event taking place in the community.

### ***Rationale***

Transformative Leadership Academy Crisis Management Plan procedures provide benefits for students, parents, and the school division. The procedures provide an organized, systematic method for helping students. Staff members know under what circumstances and how to refer a student for help. Crisis Team members operate within specific guidelines to make collaborative decisions, sharing the responsibility of these often difficult, stressful situations. Parents and other members of the community are assured that the school division has established procedures which provide for needed intervention with troubled students and better prepare schools to respond to crises.

The school division benefits through increased legal protection. Systems that have not established crisis management procedures have been found liable for their absence. While no set of policies rules out the potential for legal problems, establishing guidelines on the best professional practices provides a margin of protection against liability.

The interagency agreements have fostered stronger collaborative relationships and have led to improved communication about students and family events that could impact the schools.

## **Crisis Planning and Response Team**

### ***Assigned Roles for School Division Staff During a School Emergency***

#### **Director**

- Direct all operations of the division in the management of the emergency.
- Gather information from all aspects of the emergency for use in making appropriate decisions about the management of the emergency.
- Assess the emergency and assign tasks based on the overall needs for managing the emergency.
- Direct all activities of division and school staff in the management of the emergency.
- Stay in contact with the leaders of the emergency service agencies and the law enforcement agencies working with the emergency.
- Authorize the release of information to the public.
- Keep School Board informed of emergency status.
- Plan and initiate arrangements for food for building personnel.
- Coordinate transportation as needed.
- Arrange for the payment of monies needed to respond to emergency situations; authorize purchases and payments for such resources.
- Collect and disseminate information to the media. Be aware of deadlines, the need for information accuracy, and other issues related to the media and the performance of their jobs.
- Plan and coordinate press interviews to help the news media meet deadlines.

- Create and disseminate press releases.
- Respond to rumors through the dissemination of accurate information.
- Organize a network of key people (police, fire, health) within the community through which accurate information can be disseminated.
- Be aware of the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act and provide all appropriate information based on those requirements.
- Plan and coordinate the use of the Division's cable television channel for live and taped presentations. Press conferences can go out live; updates for the public can be taped and aired as needed.
- Coordinate information to be shared with school and division personnel during and after the crisis.
- Act as a liaison between the media and division personnel whose attention must be focused on the immediate problems of managing the crisis without constant interruption.

**Administrative Assistant**

- Handle overflow telephone calls at the emergency site.
- Coordinate and direct communication between the emergency site and county and state agencies.
- Obtain and direct the placement of generators when power must be restored for a temporary period.
- Coordinate and direct the acquisition of water when there is a disruption of water and sewer services.
- Coordinate and direct contact with emergency medical services, local police and sheriff's departments, fire departments, and the highway patrol.
- Coordinate and direct search-and-rescue operations when needed.
- Supervise the use of the school computer system for communication with the district office and electronic bulletin board system.



## Annual Start-Up Procedures

1. Confirm membership of the crisis team.
2. Decide on a coordinator and substitute for synchronizing suicide intervention, critical incident, and postvention procedures.
3. Plan at least two crisis team meetings. It is mandatory that crisis teams meet prior to the beginning of the school year and one other time during the school year to review procedures, especially critical incidents, and check equipment such as crisis boxes.
4. Inform faculty of crisis members. Print intervention, crisis response and critical incident procedures in the faculty handbook.
5. Review critical incident communication codes with faculty and staff.
6. Update faculty phone tree.
7. The team needs to not only review procedures annually but should go through at least two scenarios using the Postvention Steps form. **The key to successfully handling an incident is the preparation before the event.**
8. Meet with new staff members annually to inform them of intervention, crisis response critical incident procedures, emphasizing the referral process for crisis intervention.
9. Hold a general faculty/staff in-service on intervention, crisis response and critical incident procedures every several years.

# III. TRANSFORMATIVE LEADERSHIP ACADEMY CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLAN

## **Crisis Response Team**

### *Responsibilities*

The Transformative Leadership Academy Crisis Response Team, under leadership of the director, is responsible for the following:

1. Establishing a protocol for dealing with crises and critical incidents.
2. Establishing a systematic approach for identifying, referring, and intervening with students identified as at-risk for suicide or other destructive behaviors.
3. Orienting staff to procedures and training to fulfill designated roles, including conducting drills.
4. Providing information to students, staff, and community on Crisis Management referral procedures.
5. Aiding during a crisis in accordance with designated roles; providing follow-up activities.
6. Conducting debriefing at the conclusion of each crisis episode to critique the effectiveness of the building's Crisis Management Plan.
7. Conducting periodic reviews and up-dating of the Crisis Management Plan; conducting related updated staff training.

### *Duties of Members of Crisis Response Team*

Duties of members of the crisis response team are as follows:

- A. The **Director** will coordinate and supervise emergency management activities at the school. Assignments include:
1. Continuity of administration.
  2. Development of a comprehensive school emergency management program.
  3. Designation and training of a school Crisis Team.
  4. Designation of an Emergency Operations Center or command post (may be changed by responsible county public safety officials.)
  5. Monitor developing situations such as weather conditions or incidents in the community that may impact the school.
  6. Keep county officials, division staff and school personnel informed of developing situations and initiate emergency notifications and warnings.
  7. Direct emergency operations until public safety officials arrive on scene. Serve as a liaison to public safety personnel once they arrive on the scene.
  8. Implement evacuation procedures and measures to control access to affected area.

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9. Authorize the release of information to the public.

10. Coordinate use of building as public shelter for major emergencies occurring in the county.

11. Provide damage assessment information to the Superintendent of Schools. In major emergencies, damage assessment information will be forwarded to the Emergency Services Coordinator for determination of local emergency status and request for federal assistance.

12. Coordinate disaster assistance and recovery.

**B. The Crisis Team** is trained in intervention and postvention procedures. Team members include the director, counselor, teachers, school nurse and school social worker – assign the appropriate staff. The Team has responsibility to:

1. Develop and implement procedures for prevention, intervention and postvention at all grade levels.
2. Establish a systematic approach to identifying, referring and assessing students at risk of suicide or other behavior that would endanger themselves or others.
3. Disseminate information to students, staff and community on referral procedures.
4. Provide training for teachers and staff. Conduct drills.
5. Assist the Director in controlling emergency situations.

**C. Teachers** are responsible for implementing appropriate procedures to protect students. These responsibilities include:

- a) Evacuation – Prepare classroom emergency kit. Direct and supervise students en route to pre-designated safe areas within the school or to an off-site evacuation shelter.
- b) Student assembly – Maintain order while in student assembly areas.
- c) Student accounting – Verify the location and status of every student. Report to the director or designee on the condition of any student that needs additional assistance.
- d) Establish a partner system to pair teachers and classes so that some teachers can assist with other tasks such as first aid, search and rescue, or community relations.
- e) Remain with assigned students throughout the duration of the emergency, unless otherwise assigned through a partner system or until every student has been released through the official “student release process.”

**D. Administrative Assistant** – The administrative secretarial staff has primary responsibility for emergency communications including exchange of information with school administration staff, community emergency responders (fire, police, EMS, emergency services coordinator) and internal communication within the school building. Primary responsibility for record keeping also lies with this position.

1. Establish procedures for emergency communications with school administration staff in compliance with school system plans.
2. Establish internal emergency communications including provisions for two-way communications with classrooms and with classes on the playground or other sites.
3. In an emergency, establish and maintain communications with school administration.
4. Establish and maintain communications with county emergency services coordinator, as needed in major emergencies.
5. Initiate and maintain incident log.
6. Receive and maintain student accounting forms. Take appropriate action to notify medical or search teams through 9-1-1.
7. Report status of school and students to school administration as specified.

## **Crisis Response Procedures**

### ***Intent***

Crisis Response Procedures are intended to guide staff in responding to more frequently occurring crises such as deaths of students or teachers and other traumatic events which can affect the school community for days. These procedures are intended to be time-limited, problem-focused interventions designed to identify and resolve the crisis, restore equilibrium, and support productive responses.

### ***Procedures for General Crisis Intervention***

Unanticipated events, such as suicides, school bus crashes, natural disasters, or multiple injuries or deaths, can quickly escalate into a schoolwide catastrophe if not dealt with immediately and effectively. Knowing what to do if such a crisis occurs will minimize the chaos, rumors, and the impact of the event on the other students. As a reminder, for the purposes of this manual, crisis is defined as:

**A sudden, generally unanticipated event that profoundly and negatively affects a significant segment of the school population and often involves serious injury or death.**

The following procedures should be implemented if a schoolwide crisis occurs.

### ***Immediately Following Notification of Crisis***

The school administrator or designee should implement the following procedures when the school is notified of a near-death or fatal crisis:

- A.** Tell the person providing the information not to repeat it elsewhere in the school. Explain the school's need to verify the information and have any announcement of the event come from the designated school administrator. If there is concern regarding the likelihood of compliance with this request, it may be useful to keep the reporting person in the office (or have that person come into the office if he or she called the information) until appropriate steps can be taken.
- B.** Tell office staff members NOT to repeat or give out any information within or outside school until specifically instructed to do so. Have them direct all inquiries to the administrator or designee until told otherwise. In schools using student office help, it may be useful to request that only adults answer the school telephone for the remainder of the day.
- C.** In case of reporting student death, verify the reported incident by calling the police liaison or coroner.
- D.** DO NOT DISTURB THE AFFECTED STUDENT'S FAMILY.

The timing of the notification of a crisis may alter the order of the initial steps taken. For example, if the school is notified in the morning, all procedures should be implemented on that day with emergency faculty meetings scheduled for lunch and after school. If notification is received at night or on the weekend, ask the person providing the information not to spread the information further until the situation is verified, and proceed with #3. Continue through the remaining general crisis intervention procedures, instructing office staff as appropriate (#2) the following school day.

### ***Following Verification of Crisis***

The following actions are listed in a priority order. Several things will happen simultaneously. It is critical, however, that #1-10 occur BEFORE THE PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT (#11) IS MADE.

Once verification of a crisis has occurred, the administrator and/or crisis response team designee(s) must attend to the following:

1. Notify the Director or other appropriate division administrators of the event.

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2. Convene the Crisis Response Team. Do not unnecessarily alarm others, use the coded message developed for these situations (i.e., “CRT members, please report to room 5,” or “A CRT meeting will convene in room 5 in 10 minutes.”)
  3. Have an administrative assistant or other designee notify the school’s social worker, psychologist, and/or counselors. If the affected student was in a special education or other special program, notify the appropriate program coordinator.
  4. Assign Crisis Response Team members in the building to locate, gather, and inform closest friends of the deceased/injured and provide support. Pull this group together before the general announcement is made. If significant others are absent or out of the building, assure that a knowledgeable, supportive adult gives the news to them. With parent or guardian consent, have these absent students transported to the school if practical and appropriate.
  5. Prepare a formal statement for initial announcement to the entire school. Include minimum details and note that additional information will be forthcoming. Also prepare statements for telephone inquiries.
  6. Decide on a time for an emergency staff meeting and notify staff in a manner which does not unnecessarily alarm others. Invite designated outside professionals to join the meeting to help staff members process their own reactions to the situation.
  7. Identify students, staff, and parents likely to be most affected by the news (e.g., due to their relationship to the deceased/injured, recent or anticipated family losses, personal history with similar crisis, recent confrontations with the affected student). These persons are targeted for additional support.
  8. Determine if additional district/community resources are needed — or are needed to “stand by” — to effectively manage the crisis, and notify them if appropriate.
  9. Assign team members in the building to:
    - a. Provide grief support for students in designated building areas. Try to have more than one area available for this purpose. Have the adults on duty in these areas keep lists of students they see. Make sure the parents/guardians of these students are notified regarding the impact of the event on their children.
    - b. Review and distribute guidelines to help teachers with classroom discussion.
    - c. Stand in for any substitute teacher in the building or for any staff member unable or unwilling to deal with the situation during the announcement and subsequent discussion.
    - d. Coordinate and greet all auxiliary support services staff members and take them to their assigned locations. Provide a sign-in/out sheet for them.
    - e. Assign a counselor, psychologist, social worker, or other designated staff member to follow a deceased student’s class schedule for the remainder of the day if that will be helpful to teachers in those classes.
  10. Station staff/student support members as planned prior to making the announcement.
  11. Announce the crisis over the public address system or by delivering a typed statement to every classroom before the end of the period. Include locations of in-building support.
  12. ***Once the announcement is made, assigned staff members will perform the following:***
    - a. Monitor the students leaving the building without permission. Redirect them to support services. If unable to intercept, notify a family member expressing the school’s concerns.

- b. Notify parents of students closest to the deceased/injured and ask them to pick up their children at the end of the school day. Implement the plan previously developed to handle masses of parents who will pick up their children.
- c. Notify feeder schools regarding siblings or other students predicted to be strongly affected.
- d. Collect deceased student's belonging from his/her locker or other sites at the end of the day.
- e. Officially withdraw a deceased student from the school attendance rolls.

### **Crisis Control Center Emergency Kit**

The following items shall be maintained in the designated School Crisis Control Center and carried to any alternate site which may be designated:

1. Responsibilities checklist — who does what.
2. Keys to all doors in the school facility.
3. Blueprints of school building(s), including utilities.
4. Map of evacuation route(s).
5. Faculty/staff roster
6. Crisis response equipment (air horn, thermometer, whistle, first aid kit).
7. Student roster including home and emergency phone numbers.
8. Master schedule.
9. Name tags and sign-in sheet for crisis response team members and community resource people.
10. Sample statements/letters for use in notifying faculty, students, and parents about crisis incident.

### **Classroom Crisis Response Bag**

Each classroom should be equipped with a crisis response bag. The bag should be hung on the wall inside the classroom. At a minimum, the bag should contain:

1. a flashlight
2. spare batteries
3. class rosters for each class using the room
4. emergency evacuation plans
5. latex gloves
6. first aid supplies (bandages, gauze, etc.)
7. pen and paper
8. names and telephone numbers of crisis intervention team members
9. list of assigned roles for school personnel and division personnel

### **Crisis Checklist**

#### **DAY 1**

In the event of a serious accident, sudden death, or similar events:

- Direct staff and others not to repeat information until verification is obtained.
- Notify director.
- Convene Crisis Response Team and assign duties.
- Notify building support staff, such as counselors, psychologists, and social workers.
- Inform closest friends of the affected student and provide support.
- Prepare formal statement or announcement.
- Announce time and place of emergency staff meeting.
- Identify other/additional students, staff, and parents likely to be most affected by news.
- Assess need for additional community resources.
- Make official announcement.

\_\_\_\_\_ Hold emergency staff meeting.

\_\_\_\_\_ As needed, assign team members and other staff to monitor grounds; notify parents, support staff, and feeder schools; provide support to staff; collect student belongings and withdraw student from school rolls.

### **Day 1 Staff Meeting**

At the first staff meeting during a school crisis:

- A. Review the facts of the crisis and dispel rumors.
- B. Help staff members process their responses to the situation.
- C. Describe the feelings that students may experience and suggest how teachers might handle specific situations.
- D. Provide guidelines for helping students who are upset.
- E. Encourage teachers to allow for expressions of grief, anger, etc., in the home room or class in which the announcement is received or in other classes throughout the day. Emphasize the acceptability/normalcy of a range of expressions. The guiding principle is to return to the normal routine as soon as possible within each class and within the school. The structure of routine provides security and comfort to all members of the school community.
- F. Encourage staff to dispel rumors whenever possible.
- G. Request staff to meet 30 minutes early the next morning to review procedures and debrief. If the crisis occurs on a Friday, call the meeting for the following Monday morning.

### **DAY 2**

\_\_\_\_\_ Gather faculty members and update them on any additional information/procedures.

\_\_\_\_\_ In case of death, provide funeral/visitation information if affected family has given permission.

\_\_\_\_\_ Identify students in need of follow-up support and, in accordance with the school's crisis response plan, assign staff members to monitor the most affected students:

- a. coordinates any ongoing counseling support for students on campus;
  1. announce ongoing support for students with place, time, and staff facilitator; and
  2. notify parents of affected students regarding community resources available to students and their families.

### **Immediately Following Resolution of the Crisis**

\_\_\_\_\_ Convene crisis response team for debriefing as soon as possible:

3. discuss successes and problems; and
4. discuss things to do differently next time.

\_\_\_\_\_ Allow staff opportunity to discuss feelings and reactions.

### **Long-Term Follow-up and Evaluation**

\_\_\_\_\_ Provide list of suggested readings to teachers, parents, and students.

\_\_\_\_\_ Amend crisis response procedures as necessary.



Write thank-you notes to out-of-building district and community resource people who provided (or are still providing) support during the crisis.

### **Evacuation Partner School/Facility**

If it becomes necessary to evacuate the school building(s), the Director, in consultation with the School Superintendent, may decide to transport the students and staff to another county school. The designated partner school is listed below. This partnership is reciprocal so that if an emergency occurred at the partner school, this school would host students from that school.

This partnership is designed to avoid the problems and liability of dismissing and sending young children home early without proper supervision. This decision will be influenced by many related conditions at the time of the incident — including the time of day, season of the year, urgency of the evacuation, and weather or civil conditions in the community.

The receiving school will use the gymnasium, cafeteria, library or other common area to house the evacuated students for the remainder of the school day. Bus schedules must be adjusted to accommodate these circumstances.

### **Crises Requiring Limited School Involvement**

#### Crises Occurring During Summer or Holiday Periods

If a school administrator or other crisis response team member is notified of a crisis during the summer (or when affected students are off-track if they attend year-round schools), the response usually will be one of limited school involvement. In that case, the following steps should be taken:

1. Institute the phone tree to disseminate information to Crisis Response Team members and request a meeting of all available members.
2. Identify close friends/staff most likely to be affected by the crisis. Keep the list and recheck it when school reconvenes.
3. Notify staff or families of students identified in # 2 and recommend community resources for support, as appropriate.
4. Notify general faculty/staff by letter or telephone with appropriate information.
5. Provide update at faculty meeting held prior to students' return to school.
6. Be alert for repercussions among students and staff. When school reconvenes, check core group of friends and other at-risk students and staff, and institute appropriate support mechanisms and referral procedures.

Crises that occur during vacation or when students are off-track require fewer responses from the school.

### **Caring for the Caretakers**

#### ***Debriefing***

The demands of responding to a crisis are intense and place the caretakers, regardless of training or previous experience, under a great deal of stress. It is strongly recommended that crisis team members who have been involved in a crisis have the opportunity for “debriefing,” preferably with a trained crisis team from another school. For team members, the debriefing is an opportunity to express feelings and receive emotional support; for the other team, the debriefing is an opportunity to learn and to become better prepared for crises.

### **Symptoms of Reaction to Crisis or Disaster in Adults**

#### ***First Reactions:***

1. Numbness, shock, difficulty believing what has occurred or is in the process of occurring. Physical and mental reactions may be very slow or confused.
2. Difficulty in decision making. Uncertainty about things; it may be difficult to choose a course of action or to make even small judgement calls.

#### ***Ongoing Reactions:***

1. Loss of appetite, difficulty sleeping, loss of interest or pleasure in everyday activities.
2. Desire to get away from everyone — even family and friends.
3. Emotional liability; becoming irritable or upset more quickly than usual.
4. Feelings of fatigue, hopelessness, helplessness.
5. Digestive problems; headaches or backaches.
6. Difficulty accepting that the crisis has had an impact or accepting support from friends and the community.

### **Some Things That Can Be Helpful for Crisis Team Members and Other School Staff**

- Take time to relax and do things you find pleasant. Getting away for a few hours with close friends can be helpful.
- Stick with your regular routine for a while; avoid making changes, even if it appears to be a positive change.
- Get regular exercise or participate in a regular sport; activity soothes anxiety and helps you relax.
- Keep your days as simple as possible; avoid taking on any additional responsibilities or new projects.
- Tap sources of assistance with your workload — have students, instructional assistants, or volunteers help grade papers, take care of copying, or help with other time-consuming tasks.
- If symptoms of stress persist beyond a few weeks or are severe, seek professional help.

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# IV. CRITICAL INCIDENT/EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

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## Overview

### *Intent*

Critical incidents and emergencies involve threats of harm to students, personnel, and/or facilities and require immediate and effective responses.

### *Interagency Agreements*

Transformative Leadership Academy has entered into agreements with various county governmental agencies, including mental health, police, and fire departments. The agreements specify the type of communications and services provided by one agency to another.

## Identifying and Responding to Imminent Warning Signs

Unlike early warning signs (outlined in Section V, beginning page 65), imminent warning signs indicate that a student is very close to behaving in a way that is potentially dangerous to self and/or to others. Imminent warning signs require an immediate response.

No single warning sign can predict that a dangerous act will occur. Rather, imminent warning signs usually are presented as a sequence of overt, serious, hostile behaviors or threats directed at peers, staff, or other individuals. Usually, imminent warning signs are evident to more than one staff member—as well as to the child’s family.

### *Imminent warning signs may include:*

- Serious physical fighting with peers or family members.
- Severe destruction of property.
- Severe rage for seemingly minor reasons.
- Detailed threats of lethal violence.
- Possession and/or use of firearms and other weapons.
- Other self-injurious behaviors or threats of suicide.

**When warning signs indicate that danger is imminent, safety must always be the first and foremost consideration. Action must be taken immediately. Immediate intervention by school authorities and law enforcement officers is needed when a child:**

- Has presented a detailed plan (time, place, method) to harm or kill others — particularly if the child has a history of aggression or has attempted to carry out threats in the past.
- Is carrying a weapon, particularly a firearm, and has threatened to use it.

In situations where students present other threatening behaviors, parents should be informed of the concerns immediately. School communities also have the responsibility to seek assistance from appropriate agencies, such as child and family services and community mental health.

## **School Threat Assessment Response Protocol**

### ***Mission Statement***

The purpose of this protocol is to provide a mechanism to assure that threats of violence in a school environment are addressed, whenever possible, before they occur. The protocol is intended to identify credible threats of violence and address those threats and the individual making the threat before the threat is carried out.

*NOTE: This protocol is applicable during any school-sponsored event or function, whether the event or function be on school property or not.*

### ***Procedures***

The following procedure is separated into several sections in order to reflect those instances where a threatened act of violence may be received by specific individuals.

- A.** Any student, upon receiving information that a person is threatening to commit an act of violence, shall:
  - a. Assume threat is serious;
  - b. Immediately report the threat to a parent, guardian, school staff, administrator or law enforcement officer;
  - c. Be available and cooperative in providing a statement of information, with the understanding that the information source (student) will remain anonymous to the greatest extent possible.
- B.** Any parent or guardian, upon receiving information that a person is threatening to commit an act of violence, shall:
  - a. Assume threat is serious;
  - b. Immediately report the threat to a school staff member, school administrator or law enforcement officer;
  - c. Be available and cooperative in providing a statement of information, with the understanding that the information source (parent or guardian) will remain anonymous to the greatest extent possible.
- C.** Any school staff member, upon receiving information that a person is threatening to commit an act of violence, shall:
  - a. Assume threat is serious;
  - b. Immediately report the threat to a school administrator their designee;
  - c. Be available and cooperative in providing a statement of information, with the understanding that the information source (the staff member) will remain anonymous to the greatest extent possible.
- D.** Any school administrator, upon receiving information that a person is threatening to commit an act of violence, shall:
  - a. Assume threat is serious;
  - b. Cause the student making the threat, if said student is on campus, to be immediately removed from the classroom and segregated into a secured area pending further investigation.
  - c. Immediately notify the designated law enforcement officer assigned to the school and provide the officer with complete information regarding the information received.
  - d. Require the school staff member, if this is the source of the information, to provide immediate written statements regarding the information received.
- E.** The designated law enforcement officer, upon receiving information that a person is threatening to commit an act of violence, shall:
  - a. Assume threat is serious;

- b. Immediately conduct an assessment interview of the subject making the threat. The assessment interview will include at least one administrator .

NOTE: The primary purpose of the interview is to engage in an assessment of the available information, in an attempt to determine the veracity of the threat, in order to decide what level of follow-up action is needed and appropriate.

- A. Once the assessment is complete, the law enforcement officer and administrator shall convene privately to discuss the threat and consider options for follow-up action.
  - a. If it is agreed the threat is credible:
    - i. The law enforcement officer shall immediately consult with the Jefferson County Commonwealth's Attorney.
    - ii. The school administrator shall take administrative action in accordance with School Board policy.
    - iii. The student's parents or guardian shall be notified in accordance with School Board policy.
- B. If it is agreed that the threat is not credible, the school administrator shall assume responsibility to institute any further action deemed necessary.
- C. Once the situation has been assessed and action taken, the school director assumes the responsibility for reporting to the Superintendent.

### **Follow-Up Considerations**

The Threat Assessment Response Protocol shall be periodically reviewed to assess its effectiveness. Changes should be made, as needed, based on actual experiences.

### **Suggested Procedures for Handling Fights in School Settings**

- Walk briskly – don't run
- Get help along the way
- Assess and evaluate:
  - the number of schools involved
  - the size of students involved
  - any weapons that are involved
  - proximity of individuals who can assist
- Recognize that there may be several subtle things going on simultaneously that are being tangibly expressed in the conflict. Is there gang involvement? What other alliances might exist?
- Dismiss the audience
- Identify yourself to the fighters
- Call the student by name
- Stay away from the middle of the conflict
- Remove glasses
- Give specific commands in a firm, authoritative voice
- Defer to rules, not personal authority
- Separate the aggressor and the victim
- Avoid physical force if possible

- Remove participants to neutral locations
- Obtain identification
- Get medical attention if necessary
- Describe incident in writing
- Debrief relevant teachers
- Provide protection and support for victims
- Provide counseling – not simply the day after the event, but as long as necessary
- Report incident to law enforcement and other child serving agencies who may be serving the youngster

### **Lockdown Procedure Transformative Leadership Academy**

In cases of an emergency requiring lockdown, the following procedure will be followed by staff and students.

1. Director or his designee will announce over the public address system that a lockdown is in effect.
2. One of the secretaries will be directed to call 911 and notify the police of our emergency and the need for immediate police assistance.
3. The following announcement will be made:

a. Class in Session (no lunches in progress)

*“Students and Staff” – It is necessary at this time to begin a school wide lockdown. All students are to remain in class. Students in the hall report immediately back to your room. Teachers lock your classroom door. No one is to leave the classroom until an all-clear announcement is made by an administrator. Ignore a fire alarm. If we need to evacuate the building, an announcement will be made.*

b. Class Change in Progress

*“Students and Staff” – It is necessary at this time to begin a school wide lockdown. All students and teachers report immediately to your next class. Teachers be at your classroom door and lock as soon as the students have arrived. Ignore a fire alarm. If we need to evacuate the building, an announcement will be made.*

c. During Lunch Bells

*“Students and Staff” – It is necessary at this time to begin a school wide lockdown. Students in the cafeteria are to report immediately to the (gym or auditorium –whichever is appropriate). Teachers lock your classroom doors. Students outside of their classroom at this time are to report back to your class immediately. No one is to leave their classroom or designated area until an all clear announcement is made by an administrator. Ignore a fire alarm. If we need to evacuate the building, an announcement will be made.*

During the lockdown announcement, the administrator and head custodian will lock the exit doors.

4. Teachers are to do the following:
  - a. Lock your door.
  - b. Tell the students that we have an emergency and you don't know what it is.
  - c. Get the students to go to an area of the room that is away from the door and away from the windows.
  - d. Have students stay there until an announcement is made. Members of the crisis team will come to your room and update you.
  - e. Communications among administrators will be by walkie-talkie to assess situation and plan next course of action.
  - f. The school nurse and attendance clerk will report immediately to the main office during lockdown announcement.
  - g. Security Monitors will report to the nearest classroom and maintain radio contact with administrators.

## **Hostage Situations/Barricaded Captor**

### ***Overview***

- A hostage situation is any situation in which a person or persons are forced to stay in one location by one or more individuals. Weapons are usually in the possession of the hostage taker(s) and hostages are threatened with some degree of bodily harm should they not comply with the directives of the hostage taker(s). Certain demands are usually made of outside officials in return for the release of the hostages.
- All hostage situations are dangerous events.
- A hostage taker might be a terrorist, fleeing felon, disgruntled employee (past or present), employee's spouse, drug or alcohol abuser, emotionally disturbed person, trespasser, and on occasion, a parent, student or citizen who is usually angry about some situation and decides to resolve it by taking hostages and making demands to achieve some resolution.
- Likewise, the dynamics of a hostage situation vary greatly, and no two incidents will be the same.

### **Plan of Action: - Buildings**

Upon notification of a hostage situation within any activity, event, school, or building under the control of the Transformative Leadership Academy, the following procedures should be implemented:

- **Director:** The director /administrative head or designated individual will assume command of the situation until the arrival of the Jefferson County Police Department at the scene. Security officers should work closely with the director /administrative head/designee to ensure that this plan of action is safely achieved. School radios should be utilized when it is established that the hostage taker does not have one. If he does, radios should not be used.
- **Containment:** Appropriate actions should be taken to isolate the hostage taker and the victims under his control. It is important that no additional individuals be exposed to the hostage taker.
- **Evacuation:** Using a pre-arranged signal, immediately evacuate the building and ensure that egress of students and personnel is done in a manner that they do not go near the area controlled by the hostage taker. All individuals should proceed to a prearranged location out of sight of the building



so that the possibility of injury from gunfire is minimized. Students are to remain under the supervision of Transformative Leadership Academy officials.

- **Re-entry:** Ensure that no individuals enter or re-enter the building.
- **Contact 911:** Immediately have a staff member contact 911 and give all available information to the dispatcher who will relay the information to the Jefferson County Police Department. Ensure that the caller remains on the line with the 911 dispatcher until police actually arrive at the scene. This will ensure that accurate, detailed information is relayed to responding officers and school officials can respond to requests of the police department.
- **Monahans Police Department:** Upon response of the Monahans Police Department, control of the scene will be assumed by that Department.
- The director or building administrator should maintain contact with the Police Department and report to the Command Center when it is operational. *It is important that the items such as building keys and detailed building plans be made available to the police department.* Important information such as camera and monitoring locations, hearing and broadcast devices, motion sensors, location of radios, availability of phones, *et cetera*, must be conveyed to the police department. Anecdotal information regarding the cause of the incident, identity of the hostages and hostage takers, and their location in the building is of great importance.
- **Media:** The Director will handle all press matters as well as the dissemination of information to students and parents at the scene.
- **Closure:** Upon the arrest of the hostage taker and the release of the hostages the control of the school or building will be returned to Transformative Leadership Academy.

### **Employee Victim-Hostage**

- A situation may arise in which you become a hostage.
- Other individuals, such as students, employees, and citizens may become hostages at the same time.
- Remember that each incident involving hostages is different. Variables such as hostage takers, hostages, motivation for the act, and location of the incident make each occurrence unique. Sound judgment, good decision making, knowledge of school and police procedures in handling such incidents, and training are the items that will be of greatest assistance to you should you become a victim.
- **Responsibility:**
  - The major responsibility of individuals who have become hostages is to remain calm and act in a manner that will preserve their life, as well as the lives of other hostages.
  - If in fact the other hostages are students, Transformative Leadership Academy personnel have the additional duties of ensuring that these children are aware of the behavior that will be required of them so they will be safe and do not inflame an already volatile situation.
  - Initially, you may be the person who is thrust into the role of negotiating with the hostage taker(s). Always remain calm and request that the situation end by the release of the hostages or the escape of the hostage takers from the area. At all times, remain neutral regarding the reasons given by the hostage taker(s) for taking this action. Your concern is safety and the release of the hostages. Further, responses of the hostage taker may be irrational or illogical, depending upon his/her mental condition and/or the stress of the situation.
- **Monahans Police Department:**
  - Be prepared to wait, as the resolution of hostage situations traditionally takes time. Be assured that Transformative Leadership Academy and the Monahans Police Department are acting on your behalf and are acting as quickly as possible.
  - The Monahans Police Department Crisis Negotiator will contact the hostage taker and begin the process of negotiating an end to the situation. If requested to talk to the negotiator, the Transformative Leadership Academy's employee should do so. Answer all questions as fully as possible. At this point, the negotiator has the major responsibility to successfully end the situation.
  - At the conclusion of the situation, the Monahans Police Department will request that you talk at some length with a police officer so that all pertinent information can be recorded.

## **Tornado/Severe Weather**

Each school should develop a tornado drill annually. Procedures for both *Tornado Watch* and *Tornado Warning* will be practiced.

Each school should develop a map to determine *areas of shelter* to be used during a tornado emergency. Areas of large roof expanses (gyms and cafeterias), and areas with considerable glass should not be used as shelters. The safest shelter areas are interior windowless rooms and hallways that have load-bearing walls and are on the lowest possible level. Upon request, Risk Management & Security staff will assist school staff in conducting a building assessment.

### ***Tornado Watch -***

**(No funnel clouds have been sighted but weather conditions exist that are conducive to their formation.)**

#### **Director**

1. Advise teachers and staff via the P.A. system that a *tornado watch* is in effect.
2. Advise teachers to review the “drop and tuck” command and designated *areas of shelter* with students.
3. Designate staff to monitor NOAA and television broadcasts for additional information.
4. Bring students located outside of the building or in classroom trailers into the main building.
5. Advise the custodian or building engineer to be prepared to shut off the main gas supply valve in the event of a *tornado warning*.
6. Ensure that a plan is in place to assist special needs students and staff.
7. Have an alternate plan of communication ready should there be a loss of power (e.g., bull horn, phone tree, runners, etc.)

#### **Teachers**

1. Review the “drop and tuck” command and designated *areas of shelter* with students.
2. Close windows and blinds.
3. Be prepared to “drop and tuck” under desks if the immediate command is given over the P.A. system or if there is an immediate need to do so.

### ***Tornado Warning -***

**(A funnel cloud(s) has been sighted or indicated on radar. The approximate location and direction is usually broadcast during the warning.)**

#### **Director**

1. Advise teachers and staff of the *tornado warning*.
2. Advise all teachers to escort classes to their pre-designated *areas of shelter*.
3. Notify pre-designated staff to keep a look out in order to “spot” tornado funnels. Depending on their position, these staff may need a means to make immediate contact with the Director if a funnel cloud is sighted.
4. Be prepared to give the “drop and tuck” command via the P.A. system if danger is imminent. Occupants may need to “drop and tuck” under desks if they have not yet been moved to *areas of shelter* in the school.
5. Parents picking up students should be advised of the *tornado warning* and persuaded to stay with their child.
6. Have immediate access to the contents of the “Emergency Management Kit” and distribute flashlights as necessary.

### **Teachers**

1. Escort students to the pre-designated *areas of shelter*.
2. Take a class roster and account for all students.
3. Ensure that students sit quietly against a wall on the floor and that they understand the “drop and tuck” command.
4. Close all fire doors and gates along the corridor to minimize injury from flying debris.

### **Director**

1. Shut off main gas supply valve.
2. Be prepared to shut off all other utilities if necessary.

### ***Building Is Struck by a Tornado -***

#### **Director**

1. Ensure utilities are shut off.
2. Call 911 and give a situation report.
3. Determine who was injured and administer first aid.
4. Carefully evacuate damaged areas.
5. Take roll and conduct a search for missing students and staff, if safe to do so.
6. Account for and release students to parents only after a complete roll call has been reported.
7. Maintain a list of all injured students and staff. Keep an accurate record of the hospitals to which any were sent.
8. Establish a means to disseminate information to parents and media.

### **Fire Procedures**

In the event a fire is detected within a school building, proceed according to the following plan:

1. Sound the **FIRE ALARM** by pulling the alarm system located in the halls or in specific rooms.
2. Close all doors and windows, including any doors separating sections of the building and at stairwells to confine the fire.
3. Evacuate the building immediately to at least 300 feet from the structure and out of the fire department’s operational area.
4. Make special provisions for handicapped students.
5. Specific persons, plus alternates, should be assigned to assist specific handicapped individuals.
6. Evacuate plans for the handicapped should be reviewed and practiced and periodically updated.
7. Initiate roll. Each teacher should leave the room with the roll book to check student names. In order to avoid confusion, all student absences should be recorded.
8. Render first aid as necessary.
9. Notify utility companies of a break or suspected break in lines which might present an additional hazard.
10. Keep access roads open for emergency vehicles.
11. Have fire department officials declare the area safe before allowing students/staff to return to school.

12. Anytime elementary pupils are sent home during the regular school day it is important to place teachers on the buses for the purpose of bringing back those students who cannot be placed in the hands of competent persons. In some cases they may be housed at another school until dismissal time.
13. **NOTE:** The custodial staff, administrators, and other appropriate personnel should be trained to use fire extinguishers to fight small fires. However, they should not endanger their lives in doing so.

### **Arson Cases and Fires**

- School administrators have only administrative investigative responsibility. All fires will be investigated by fire investigators and/or police.
- In support of the investigative efforts by outside agencies, develop a list of events that have recently occurred in the school: disgruntled students/employees, prior fires, rivalry among students or between schools or gang activity.

### **False Fire Alarms**

- All false alarms should be reported to the alarm monitoring facility which will notify the fire department.
- Using a floor plan of the school, locate each fire alarm station on this plan. Each time an alarm is sounded, record the exact location, date, and time of alarm. The purpose is to develop a pattern to the alarms. By establishing a time pattern, one can assign staff to provide greater adult presence in halls and stairwells.
- If false fire alarms are a persistent problem, consider initiating a sign-in/sign-out log in each classroom. Have each teacher record the name, time, and destination of each student leaving the classroom, and the time each student returns. These lists will be a valuable asset in attempting to develop a list of suspects.
- Consideration should be given to installing special covers over the pull stations that will sound a local alarm prior to sending a general alarm. Schools using this type of device have found a marked decline in alarms. Before any such device is installed, check with the fire department to get their approval.
- *Other Considerations:* A very effective tool in reducing false fire alarms is to involve the student body in a program which gives them some responsibilities for “guarding” fire pull stations. Generally, this requires little time and causes very little disruption to the school program. Stationing students at key locations three to five minutes before and after classes change often eliminates false fire alarms.

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# V. INTERVENTION WITH STUDENTS WHO MAY BE SUICIDAL OR REPRESENT A POTENTIAL THREAT TO OTHERS

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## Students Who May Be Suicidal

### *Immediate Action*

If a staff member has reason to believe that a student may be suicidal or represent a potential threat to others the following action is to be taken:

- a) Take all comments about suicidal thoughts seriously, especially if details of a suicide plan are shared.
- b) Immediately report concerns to an administrator.
- c) **Under no circumstances should an untrained person attempt to assess the severity of suicidal risk;** all assessment of threats, attempts, or other risk factors must be left to the appropriate professionals.

### *Response to a Suicide Attempt Not Occurring at School*

When a school becomes aware that a student or staff member attempted suicide, the school must protect that person's right to privacy. Should a parent or other family member notify the school of a student's suicide attempt, the family should be referred to appropriate community agencies for support services. Staff response should be focused on quelling the spread of rumors and minimizing the fears of fellow students and staff. As opposed to convening a Crisis Response Team meeting and alerting the student body, any services provided to the person who attempted suicide must be kept confidential and coordinated with outside service providers, such as a suicide crisis counselor or hospital emergency team.

A Suicide Attempt Becomes A Crisis To Be Managed By School Staff Only When One Or More Of The Following Conditions Exist:

- a) Rumors and myths are widespread and damaging.
- b) Students witness police action or emergency services response.
- c) A group of the attempt survivor's friends are profoundly affected by the suicide attempt and request support.
- d) When one or more of the above conditions exists, the following should be implemented:
- e) Tell the person providing the information about the suicide attempt not to repeat it elsewhere in the school.
- f) If school office staff members heard the report, tell them to repeat or give out any information within or outside school unless they are specifically told to do so.
- g) Have the Crisis Response Team member closest to the survivor talk to the most profoundly affected friends and determine the type support they need.

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- h) Provide space in the school for the identified peers to receive support services. Provide necessary passes to release these students from class to receive services.

### ***School Reentry for a Student Who Has Attempted Suicide***

Efforts to respond to suicide attempts and other traumas should be focused on making the student's return to school a comfortable one. Because families exposed to a suicide attempt experience considerable guilt and fear, they are more likely to disclose that a daughter or son has made an attempt if they know the school has a helpful, nonthreatening manner of dealing with suicide.

Because a student who attempted suicide often is at greater risk for a suicide in the months following the crisis, it is extremely important to closely monitor his or her reentry into school and to maintain close contact with parents and mental health professionals working with that student.

Assuming the student will be absent from one to four weeks after a suicide attempt and possibly hospitalized in a treatment facility, our school will follow these steps:

- a) Obtain a written release of information for signed by the parents. This makes it possible for confidential information to be shared between school personnel and treatment providers.
- b) Inform the student's teachers regarding the number of probable days of absence.
- c) Instruct teachers to provide the students with assignments to be completed, if appropriate.
- d) Maintain contact with the student to keep him/her informed of the latest developments in the school, if appropriate.
- e) Seek recommendations for aftercare from the student's therapist. If the student has been hospitalized, a Crisis Response Team member should attend the discharge meeting at the hospital.
- f) The Crisis Response Team member should convey relevant nonconfidential information to appropriate school staff regarding the aftercare plan.
- g) Once the student returns to school, a Crisis Response Team member should maintain regular contact with him/her.
- h) The school should maintain contact with the parents provide progress reports and other appropriate information, and be kept informed of any changes in the aftercare plan.

### **Myths and Facts About Suicide**

#### **Myth: People who talk about suicide don't commit suicide.**

*Fact:* Most people who commit suicide have given clues of some type of to one or more people. It is not safe to assume that someone talking about suicide will not attempt it; the majority of those who attempt suicide have stated their intent to someone.

#### **Myth: Suicide happens without warning.**

*Fact:* While explicit verbal warnings are not always given, there are clues ahead of time. The difficulty is that not everyone recognizes the signs and symptoms that would alert him/her to the possibility of suicide.

#### **Myth: Suicidal people are fully intent on dying.**

*Fact:* Rather than specifically wanting to die, students who attempt/commit suicide often do so simple because they have exhausted their coping skills and see no other options for relief from pain.

#### **Myth: Once suicidal, a person is suicidal forever.**

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*Fact:*

Preoccupation with suicidal thoughts is usually time limited. Most young people who work through a suicidal crisis can go on to lead healthy lives.

**Myth: Once a person attempts suicide, the humiliation and pain will prevent future attempts.**

*Fact:* Eighty percent of persons who commit suicide have made at least one prior attempt (Hafen & Frandsen, 1986). It is critical that concerned adults and peers monitor a student who has attempted suicide for several months following the attempt. Those students who receive help for their suicidal risk before they made an attempt have a better prognosis than those who were intervened upon following an attempted suicide.

**Myth: Suicidal behavior is inherited.**

*Fact:* As with other patterns of behavior, suicide sometimes seems to run in families. However, suicide is not a genetic trait, so it is not inherited. What can appear to be a family trait of suicide may be because family members share a common emotional environment and often adopt similar methods of coping. In a family where someone has committed suicide, suicide may be viewed as acceptable in times of distress.

**Myth: Suicide occurs more often among the wealthy.** *Fact:* Suicide knows no socioeconomic boundaries.

**Myth: People who attempt or commit suicide are mentally ill/psychotic.**

*Fact:* Many suicidal persons historically have had difficulty in working through problems. Other people who attempt or commit suicide choose it as an option when their previously successful means of coping are not effective, and they are unable to otherwise stop the pain they are experiencing. A history of mental illness does not increase the risk of suicide.

**Myth: Talking about suicide can encourage a person to attempt it.**

*Fact:* On the contrary, initiating a discussion of suicidal feelings may give a suicidal adolescent permission to talk about the pain she/he is experiencing and, by so doing, provide significant relief. It is highly unlikely that discussing suicide would influence a nonsuicidal person to become preoccupied with the idea.

**Myth: People who attempt suicide just want attention.**

*Fact:* Suicide should be considered a “cry for help.” Persons overwhelmed by pain may be unable to let others know they need help, and suicide may seem the best way to relieve the pain. Suicidal behavior may be a desperate move to reach out for much needed help.

**Myth: Suicide is most likely to occur at night as well as over the holiday season.**

*Fact:* Suicides can occur at any time, regardless of season, time of day or night, weather or holidays. Childhood and adolescent suicides, however, are most likely to occur in the spring, and second most likely to occur in the fall. Most childhood and adolescent suicides occur at home on weekends or between the hours of 3 p.m. and midnight (Eyeman, 1987; Indiana State Board of Health, 1985).

**Myth: When depression lifts, there is no longer danger of suicide.**

*Fact:* This is a dangerous misconception. The lifting of depression often accompanies the development of a suicide plan and the final decision to commit suicide. If the improvement in mood is sudden and circumstances have not changed, the risk of suicide remains high.



## ***Students Who May Represent a Potential Threat to Others***

### ***Immediate Steps***

In the event that a staff member has reason to believe that a student may represent a potential threat to others, the actions listed below are to be taken. These steps apply only to situations in which the student is presenting no immediate threat.

- a) Take all comments about doing harm to others seriously, especially if details about how the acts are to be carried out are shared.
- b) Immediately report concerns to an administrator.
- c) **Under no circumstances should an untrained person attempt to assess the severity of the risk;** all assessment of threats, attempts, or other risk factors must be left to the appropriate professionals.
- d) NOTE: It is important to avoid inappropriately labeling or stigmatizing individual students because they appear to fit a specific profile or set of early warning indicators. It's okay to be worried about a child, but it's not okay to overreact and jump to conclusions.

### ***Early Warning Signs***

It is not always possible to predict behavior that will lead to violence. However, educators and parents—and sometimes students—can recognize certain early warning signs. In some situations, and for some youth, different combinations of events, behaviors, and emotions may lead to aggressive rage or violent behavior toward self or others. A good rule of thumb is to **assume that these warning signs, especially when they are presented in combination, indicate a need for further analysis to determine an appropriate intervention.** We know from research that most children who become violent toward self or others feel rejected and psychologically victimized. In most cases, children exhibit aggressive behavior early in life and, if not provided support, will continue a progressive developmental pattern toward severe aggression or violence. However, research also shows that when children have a positive, meaningful connection to an adult — whether it be at home, in school, or in the community — the potential for violence is reduced significantly. None of these signs alone is sufficient for predicting aggression and violence. Moreover, it is inappropriate — and potentially harmful — to use the early warning signs as a checklist against which to match individual children. Rather, the early warning signs are offered only as an aid in identifying and referring children who may need help. School communities must ensure that staff and students only use the early warning signs for identification and referral purposes — only trained professionals should make diagnoses in consultation with the child's parents or guardian.

The following early warning signs are presented with the following qualifications. They are not equally significant and they are not presented in order of seriousness. The early warning signs include:

- **Social withdrawal.** In some situations, gradual and eventually complete withdrawal from social contacts can be an important indicator of a troubled child. The withdrawal often stems from feelings of depression, rejection, persecution, unworthiness, and lack of confidence.
- **Excessive feelings of isolation and being alone.** Research has shown that the majority of children who are isolated and appear to be friendless are not violent. In fact, these feelings are sometimes characteristic of children and youth who may be troubled, withdrawn, or have internal issues that hinder development of social affiliations. However, research also has shown that in some cases

- feelings of isolation and not having friends are associated with children who behave aggressively and violently.
- **Excessive feelings of rejection.** In the process of growing up, and in the course of adolescent development, many young people experience emotionally painful rejection. Children who are troubled often are isolated from their mentally healthy peers. Their responses to rejection will depend on many background factors. Without support, they may be at risk of expressing their emotional distress in negative ways—including violence. Some aggressive children who are rejected by non-aggressive peers seek out aggressive friends who, in turn, reinforce their violent tendencies.
  - **Being a victim of violence.** Children who are victims of violence—including physical or sexual abuse—in the community, at school, or at home are sometimes at risk themselves of becoming violent toward themselves or others.
  - **Feelings of being picked on and persecuted.** The youth who feels constantly picked on, teased, bullied, singled out for ridicule, and humiliated at home or at school may initially withdraw socially. If not given adequate support in addressing these feelings, some children may vent them in inappropriate ways — including possible aggression or violence.
  - **Low school interest and poor academic performance.** Poor school achievement can be the result of many factors. It is important to consider whether there is a drastic change in performance and/or poor performance becomes a chronic condition that limits the child’s capacity to learn. In some situations—such as when the low achiever feels frustrated, unworthy, chastised, and denigrated—acting out and aggressive behaviors may occur. It is important to assess the emotional and cognitive reasons for the academic performance change to determine the true nature of the problem.
  - **Expression of violence in writings and drawings.** Children and youth often express their thoughts, feelings, desires, and intentions in their drawings and in stories, poetry, and other written expressive forms. Many children produce work about violent themes that for the most part is harmless when taken in context. However, an over representation of violence in writings and drawings that is directed at specific individuals (family members, peers, other adults) consistently over time, may signal emotional problems and the potential for violence. Because there is a real danger in misdiagnosing such a sign, it is important to seek the guidance of a qualified professional—such as a school psychologist, counselor, or other mental health specialist—to determine its meaning.
  - **Uncontrolled anger.** Everyone gets angry; anger is a natural emotion. However, anger that is expressed frequently and intensely in response to minor irritants may signal potential violent behavior toward self or others.
  - **Patterns of impulsive and chronic hitting, intimidating, and bullying behaviors.** Children often engage in acts of shoving and mild aggression. However, some mildly aggressive behaviors such as constant hitting and bullying of others that occur early in children’s lives, if left unattended, might later escalate into more serious behaviors.
  - **History of discipline problems.** Chronic behavior and disciplinary problems both in school and at home may suggest that underlying emotional needs are not being met. These unmet needs may be manifested in acting out and aggressive behaviors. These problems may set the stage for the child to violate norms and rules, defy authority, disengage from school, and engage in aggressive behaviors with other children and adults.

- **Past history of violent and aggressive behavior.** Unless provided with support and counseling, a youth who has a history of aggressive or violent behavior is likely to repeat those behaviors. Aggressive and violent acts may be directed toward other individuals, be expressed in cruelty to animals, or include fire setting. Youth who show an early pattern of antisocial behavior frequently and across multiple settings are particularly at risk for future aggressive and antisocial behavior. Similarly, youth who engage in overt behaviors such as bullying, generalized aggression and defiance, and covert behaviors such as stealing, vandalism, lying, cheating, and fire setting also are at risk for more serious aggressive behavior. Research suggests that age of onset may be a key factor in interpreting early warning signs. For example, children who engage in aggression and drug abuse at an early age (before age 12) are more likely to show violence later on than are children who begin such behavior at an older age. In the presence of such signs it is important to review the child's history with behavioral experts and seek parents' observations and insights.
- **Intolerance for differences and prejudicial attitudes.** All children have likes and dislikes. However, an intense prejudice toward others based on racial, ethnic, religious, language, gender, sexual orientation, ability, and physical appearance — when coupled with other factors — may lead to violent assaults against those who are perceived to be different. Membership in hate groups or the willingness to victimize individuals with disabilities or health problems also should be treated as early warning signs.
- **Drug use and alcohol use.** Apart from being unhealthy behaviors, drug use and alcohol use reduces self-control and exposes children and youth to violence, either as perpetrators, as victims, or both.
- **Affiliation with gangs.** Gangs that support anti-social values and behaviors — including extortion, intimidation, and acts of violence toward other students — cause fear and stress among other students. Youth who are influenced by these groups — those who emulate and copy their behavior, as well as those who become affiliated with them — may adopt these values and act in violent or aggressive ways in certain situations. Gang-related violence and turf battles are common occurrences tied to the use of drugs that often result in injury and/or death.
- **Inappropriate access to, possession of, and use of firearms.** Children and youth who inappropriately possess or have access to firearms can have an increased risk for violence. Research shows that such youngsters also have a higher probability of becoming victims. Families can reduce inappropriate access and use by restricting, monitoring, and supervising children's access to firearms and other weapons. Children who have a history of aggression, impulsiveness, or other emotional problems should not have access to firearms and other weapons.
- **Serious threats of violence.** Idle threats are a common response to frustration. Alternatively, one of the most reliable indicators that a youth is likely to commit a dangerous act toward self or others is a detailed and specific threat to use violence. Recent incidents across the country clearly indicate that threats to commit violence against oneself or others should be taken very seriously. Steps must be taken to understand the nature of these threats and to prevent them from being carried out.

(Source: *Early Warning, Timely Response: A Guide to Safe Schools.*)

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# VI. COMMUNICATIONS

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## **Overview**

Communication is a critical part of crisis management. School staff members and students must be told what is happening and what to do. Parents of students and families of staff members must be informed about the situation, including the status of their child or family member. Timely contact with law enforcement and other emergency services is necessary for effective response. School Board members must be kept informed and update information must be transmitted to central office and to other affected schools. The press must be informed and kept updated. Additionally, groups which are a part of the school community (PTA, advisory councils, etc.) and can assist with getting accurate information into the community are important. This chapter focuses on communication – within the school and school division, with parents and the community, and with the media.

### ***When a Crisis Has Occurred***

Notifying faculty and staff of an event or crisis and keeping them informed as additional information becomes available and as plans for management of the situation evolve is critical. Some practices which school administrators have found to be helpful include the following:

#### The Telephone Tree

A telephone tree is a simple, widely used system for notifying staff of a crisis event when they are not at school. A very carefully crafted statement, specifying what is and is not yet known, should be drafted before the telephone tree is activated.

#### The Morning Faculty Meeting

An early, brief faculty meeting provides the opportunity to give accurate, updated information about the crisis event/situation itself and to review with staff procedures for the day, including the availability of intervention resources.

#### The End-of-Day Faculty Meeting

A brief end-of-day meeting provides the opportunity to review day one, update information, and plan for day two. Misinformation or rumors can be addressed before staff members go home or into the community where they are likely to be asked about the situation.

## **School Communication**

### ***Dealing with Rumors***

Establishing reliable communications networks is critical for dealing effectively with a potentially detrimental phenomenon always present in crises: rumors. People are going to talk about an emergency and, when accurate information is not available, rumors begin. Without facts, people begin to speculate, and the speculations soon come to be thought of as “facts.” Left unchecked, rumors can become more difficult to deal with than the crisis event. They may create a negative perception of the school’s ability to manage an emergency or, even worse, a belief that the school cannot provide for the safety and well-being of the children. The most effective strategy for combating rumors is to provide facts as soon as possible. Some strategies which may be helpful include the following:

- a) Identify and notify internal groups including administrators, teachers, students, custodians, secretaries, teaching assistants, cafeteria workers, and bus drivers. These people are primary sources of information and

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are likely

to be contacted in their neighborhoods, at grocery stores, etc. It is critical that they have accurate information because what they know (or don't know and are speculating about) will be passed on. A faculty/staff meeting should be held before staff members are allowed to go home so that what is (and is not) known can be clearly communicated.

- b) Clerical staff who answer the telephone at the school and at the central office must know which information can be shared and which information cannot be shared. They must be kept informed of inaccurate information which is circulating so they can help "correct" misinformation. Designating a few persons to answer calls helps control the circulating of misinformation.
- c) Use of key communicators in the community will also combat rumors. A telephone tree or a briefing held especially for identified community representatives directly associated with the school will help spread accurate information.
- d) The media can also help control rumors; ask them to provide frequent updates to the public, particularly providing accurate information where rumors need to be dispelled.
- e) After the immediately crisis has passed, public meetings may be helpful. It provides an opportunity for people to ask questions and to receive accurate information. A follow-up public meeting may also be helpful in restoring the community's confidence in the school's ability to manage crises and to provide a safe environment.

### ***Using Technology for Communication***

Technology can be a very effective tool for communication during a crisis. Some common tools that may be used include the following:

- a) **Telephone** - Although the telephone is the most commonly used communications tool in schools, most schools do not have enough lines and, worse, service is typically lost when electricity is lost. In preparing for crises it is recommended that:
  - a. Schools should have at least one line with an unpublished number.
  - b. The telephone company should be consulted in pre-planning; there may be unused lines in the school's control panel which can be activated if needed.
  - c. Use standard jacks and mark them clearly so emergency service personnel can find them; the school floor plan which is part of the school's "emergency toolkit" should have the location of jacks marked clearly.
- b) **Intercom systems** - Most schools have such a system; systems which include teacher-initiated communications with the office and use a handset rather than a wall-mounted speaker are most useful in an emergency. Instructions for use of the intercom system should be posted near the controls in the office area. Additionally, students should be taught to use the intercom system – the teacher may have a medical emergency or be otherwise unable to operate the system
- c) **Bullhorns and megaphones** - Often used at pep rallies and field days, battery-powered bullhorns or megaphones can also be very effective tools for communication in an emergency and should be a part of the school's "emergency toolbox." Procedures governing storage of the bullhorn in the office closet in the gym may not be an option. If one is not available (or out of batteries!) at the school, law enforcement vehicles are sometimes equipped with speakers – another good reason to include law enforcement in the preplanning process.

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- d) **Walkie-talkies** - routinely used in many schools, walkie-talkies provide a reliable method of communication between rooms and buildings at a single site. All staff need to know how to operate the walkie-talkie (even those who don't routinely carry them).
  - e) **Computer telecommunications** - a relatively new tool, the potential capability of existing computers to be used for communication both within the school and to other sites needs to be assessed as part of the preplanning process. E-mail or electronic bulletin boards may be a useful tool for updating information for staff, central office, other schools in the affected area, and possibly for other community agencies.
  - f) **Fax machines** - The fax machine is a potentially valuable tool for both sending and receiving information in an emergency. In the case of off-campus accidents, for example, lists of students and staff members involved, their locations, and needed telephone numbers can be quickly and accurately communicated. Medical information, release forms, and medical authorizations can be faxed, signed, and returned in emergencies.
  - g) **Cellular telephones** - increasingly available and affordable, the role of cellular telephones as a communications tool needs to be carefully assessed. They may be the only tool working when electric service is out and are a particularly useful link to staff members who may be en route to or from the site of an accident or other emergency. They are increasingly being used to link the multiple vehicles transporting students and staff on off-campus trips.
  - h) **"Panic buttons"** - Some schools have installed "panic buttons" connected directly to the police or other emergency services. In some communities, there is an immediate response; in others, the police or fire department call the school to confirm the emergency.
  - i) **Alarm systems** - Bells or buzzers may be sounded in different ways to signal different types of emergencies – for example, fire, tornado, or special alert (with instructions to follow).

### ***Voice and Hand Signals***

Although not involving “technology,” voice and hand signals (and training staff and students to recognize them) are important instruments of communication in an emergency. Some signals which may be used include:

- a) **Waving arms** - waving arms back and forth over head means to follow in the direction led by the teacher.
- b) **Palms down** - moving arms up and down with palms toward the ground will signal students to get down on the ground wherever they are at the time.
- c) **Palms out** - pushing palms out, moving arms forward and back, will signal the students to stop where they are and to stand absolutely still.
- d) **Waving arms side-to-side** - moving arms side-to-side in front of the body will signal students to move away from the center of the playground and to take shelter toward the edges of the playground.

### **Communications with Parents and the Community**

A very important aspect of managing crises is dealing effectively with parent reactions.

Communication with parents and the community is best begun before a crisis occurs. Some useful strategies include the following:

- a) Educate parents about the school crisis plan, its objectives, and the need for it. Such information can be included in the school handout or other informational materials prepared for parents, at parent orientations, or at other informational meetings.
- b) Develop a relationship with parents so that they trust and feel comfortable calling school personnel in the event of crisis.
- c) Develop materials that may be needed including:
  - a. draft formats of letters to parents informing them of what happened,
  - b. possible reactions of their child and ways to talk with them, and
  - c. how the school and school division are handling the situation.
- d) Develop a list of community resources which may be helpful to parents.
- e) Identify parents who are willing to volunteer in case of an emergency, include them in preparation efforts, and include them in training.
- f) In the event of an emergency, parents have very specific information needs. First, parents want to know their child is safe; then, parents want to know the details of the emergency, to know how it was handled, and to know that the children will be safe in the future. The first reactions are likely to involve *fear*. Upon learning of an incident at the school, parents are likely to descend upon the school in search of their child or to telephone, frantically seeking information. Establishing a system for responding quickly to parent needs for information is an important part of pre-planning. *Anger* is another common reaction of parents, particularly in the case of senseless acts of violence. In the event of a crisis or disaster:
  - g) Tell parents exactly what is known to have happened. Do not embellish or speculate.
  - h) Implement the plan to manage phone calls and parents who arrive at school.
  - i) Schedule and attend an open question-and-answer meeting for parents as soon after the incident as possible. The meeting is an opportunity for school officials to listen and respond to parent concerns (which is helpful in combating rumors and other misinformation) and to work on restoring parental trust in the school. In the event of an incident which involved damage or destruction, an open house for parents and other members of the community to see the school restored to its “normal” state helps everyone get beyond the crisis.

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## **Communications with Media**

Media policy varies from one school system to another. Contact is generally channeled through one person. Most news people are sensitive, open to suggestions and interested in doing a reputable job. When dealing with the media, the following suggestions will promote clear communications:

- Deal up-front with reporters. Be honest, forthright and establish good communication with the media before problems or a crisis occurs.
- Do not try to stonewall the media or keep them from doing their job.
- The school should decide what to say, define the ground rules, issue a statement and answer questions within the limits of confidentiality.
- Identify a single information source.
- Advise school staff of media procedures.
- Advise students of the media policy. Let them know that they do not have to talk, that they can say no.
- If the crisis is a death, consult with the deceased student/staff member's family before making any statement. Explain school system policy and assure them that confidential information is being protected.

### ***During a Crisis:***

- Attempt to define the type and extent of the crisis as soon as possible.
- Inform employees what is happening as soon as possible.
- Designate that a central source, such as the crisis communications center, coordinate information gathering and dissemination.
- Instruct all employees to refer all information and questions to communications centers.
- Remind employees that only designated spokesmen are authorized to talk with news media.
- Take initiative with news media and let them know what is or is not known about the situation.
- When communicating, remember to maintain a unified position and uniform message; keep messages concise, clear, and consistent; keep spokesman and alternates briefed.
- Contact the top administrator or designee to inform him of the current situation, emerging developments, and to clear statements.
- Delay releasing information until facts are verified and the school's position about the crisis is clear.
- Read all releases from previously prepared and approved statements to avoid danger of ad-libbing.
- Assign sufficient staff to handle phones and seek additional information.
- Keep a log of all incoming and outgoing calls and personal contacts.
- Relieve key people from their normal duties so they may focus on the crisis.
- Express appreciation to all persons who helped handle the crisis.
- Prepare a general announcement to be given by the director or designee. A straightforward sympathetic announcement of loss with a simple statement of condolence is recommended. Also, a statement that more information will be forthcoming, when verified, can be reassuring to students and staff.



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## Working with the Media

### Don't

- DON'T try to keep the media out or "kill" a story.
- DON'T say "no comment."
- DON'T adlib.
- DON'T speak "off the record."
- DON'T speculate.
- DON'T try to cover-up or blame anyone for anything.
- DON'T repeat negative/misleading words.
- DON'T play favorites among media.

### Do

- Emphasize your good record.
- Be accurate and cooperate as best you can.
- Be prepared for and prepare in advance a response to questions which might violate confidentiality or hinder the police investigation.
- Insist that reporters respect the privacy rights of your students and staff.
- Speak to reporters in plain English — not education.
- When asked a question and you don't know the answer, say so, then offer to find out and call the reporter back.

## Guidelines for Communicating with the Media in Times of Crisis

1. The **primary goal** should be to keep the public informed about the crisis while trying to maintain the privacy of students and ensure as little interruption of the educational process as possible. As soon as possible, **prepare a written statement** that gives the basic facts clearly and concisely. Two or three minutes spent writing down some specific points is valuable. If there is time, try to anticipate what some of the questions will be and prepare answers. News people will always want to know: who, what, when, where, why, and how. Try them out on your colleagues and see if they have any recurring questions. *Use the same facts* in dealing with all media so the story is consistent.
2. If news media personnel arrive on campus while students are in class, **guide** their **activities** so they will not disrupt the educational process. The news media can come onto the campus but should not be permitted to enter classrooms.
3. **Don't presume** to tell a reporter what is or isn't newsworthy. That decision is made by the reporters and their editors. And never — absolutely never — lie to a reporter. Tell the bad news quickly; get it over with. It may be your only chance to set the record straight. It's vital to establish our division as the best source for information on the crisis. If the media think you're hiding something, they're likely to dig hard for information from other sources and play the story more sensationally — and perhaps less accurately. Protecting and enhancing the division's credibility is important.
4. **Talk conversationally**, or you will inadvertently pitch your voice up and sound strained. If you don't understand the question, say so. Parroting the reporter's question is very dangerous on radio or video tape because the tape can be edited to sound like you concur whether you do or not. Suppose the reporter asks, "How are you handling this terrible shock?" Don't respond, "We are handling this terrible shock by

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- ...”
- Instead, respond in your own words to the effect that, “The students are continuing their usual schedules, following a morning assembly where we discussed the situation.”
5. **Answer each question and then be silent.** Stick with the statement. Don’t embellish it and don’t respond to media pressure to chat about it. Just because a TV reporter sticks a microphone in your face or a radio reporter lets the tape run does not mean you have to fill that prolonged silence. Don’t worry. . . your pauses will be removed in the editing process. If you are standing for the interview, don’t back up, even through the microphone seems to be put down your throat. Plant your feet firmly and stand your ground. Suggest that everyone sit down if you need “space.”
  6. Remember that **conflict is news**, and reporters often frame their questions to bring out the conflict or emotion in a story. Guard your students against such intrusions if grief is involved in the response. (However, if the media wants student or community viewpoint, it may be well to arrange for them to talk to your PTA president.)
  7. If a reporter asks **several questions** at once, say something like, “You’ve asked me several questions here. . . where would you like me to begin?” If a reporter interrupts you before you’ve finished answered your question, pause, let the reporter finish, and then continue your answer. Don’t let the reporter get you off track or tell you when you’ve finished your answer. However, don’t go into lengthily detail or run off with the interview either.
  8. Don’t let a reporter’s friendly, sympathetic manner disarm you into giving him/her additional information. Don’t assume any chatty comments **“are off the record”** even if you say they are. Keep in mind that the media aren’t in business to help you with your communication needs: the media are in business to (1) make money and (2) disseminate news. “News” can be defined as any information of interest to the public.
  9. Reporters are under constant **deadlines**, but no deadline is so important that it’s worth making an inaccurate statement. If a reporter says he/she has deadline problems, ask how long you have to get the information, and then try to obtain it within that amount of time. Don’t put reporters off: they will only get more insistent and abrasive if you do so.
  10. It is best not to answer a query with **“No comment.”** Otherwise, the reporters may report you wouldn’t answer questions or may interpret for themselves why you aren’t answering. Instead, say, “I can’t share that information with you right now, but I will call you as soon as I can release it.” (And do call them). Or say, “I don’t know the answer, but I should have it in an hour. Please call me.” If you can’t reveal information at all, tell the reporters why. *Examples:* Relatives of an injured student haven’t been notified yet or revealing the identity of a witness would jeopardize an investigation, etc.
  11. After you provide the written statement to the media or answer subsequent questions, keep a media **log** of whom you speak to and what you give them, whether it is the basic statement or a subsequent update. This allows you to track which medium received what information.
  12. Don’t ask a reporter for **editing rights** or to see the story for approval before it runs. Most news media have specific policies preventing this. Reporters may well interpret these requests as insults or a slight on their competence. Don’t complain to the media if you feel you were treated unfairly. You may simply draw more attention to the crisis. If *major* story details are *inaccurate* in a
  13. newspaper story, you can ask for a correction. But getting a similar correction in a TV or radio story is more difficult and must involve a giant inaccuracy.

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14. The Community Relations Department should be *updated* on any emergency. The Community Relations Department will assist district or building administration in handling interviews with news media and coordinate the flow of information.

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# VII. QUICK GUIDE TO MANAGING CRISES

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## Accidents at School

### **(Minor) Accidents at School**

. . . On the playground. . . In the building or classroom. . . In physical education. . .

### **For minor accidents, injuries**

Have students taken to clinic for assistance by a responsible person.

### **Related information:**

- All staff have been provided with a one-page list of “emergency procedures” of what to do in case of an accident or injury on the playground, or in the building or classroom.
- Classroom emergency procedures are posted on the back of every classroom door.
- Posted in the main office, the gym office, and the clinic are the names of building staff who have completed paramedic training, Red Cross First Aid Training or other special lifesaving or life sustaining training or expertise (i.e., CPR).
- Posted in the main office, the gym office, and the clinic are a list of emergency telephone numbers.
- Post general procedures in the clinic explaining when parents are to be notified of minor mishaps.
- As part of routine medical protocols established by School Health Services, each teacher has been provided information about any student in his/her classroom having special medical or physical needs and the procedures that the teacher may follow in the event of a medical episode. These conditions might include allergies, fainting, seizures, diabetes, etc.

## Accidents To and From School

In the event of accidents involving an employee or student who is on the way to or from school, first determine whether or not help is on the way.

### **If help is not on the way:**

Call police, fire, or rescue as indicated by nature of accident

Notify Director

Notify parents, spouse, or individual on emergency card.

### **If help is on the way:**

- If not reached earlier, continue to try to notify parents, spouse, or named individual.

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- If parents, spouse, or closest relatives are not available, discuss situation with an associate at the place of employment of the parents, guardian, spouse, or closest relative.
  - Send a “calm” staff member to observe situation.

## **Aircraft Disaster**

### **Aircraft crash into or near building:**

- Call police, fire or rescue as indicated by the accident.
- Notify Director
- Utilize emergency exit plan modified to maximize safety of students.
- Students and staff should be assembled in an area as far from the crash scene as possible and should be up-hill and up-wind from the crash.
- Provide for treatment and removal of injured building occupants.
- Account for all building occupants and determine extent of injuries.

### **Aircraft on or near school site but no damage to building:**

Call police, fire or rescue as indicated by the accident.

Call Managing Director of Facilities Services

Notify Superintendent’s Office

Notify Director of Community Relations

- All students and staff should remain in the buildings. Any students or staff outside should report immediately to their classroom or designated area until further instructions are received.
- No evacuations should occur unless subsequent explosions or fire endanger the building.

## **Allergic Reaction**

### **Possible Symptoms:**

General feeling of impending doom or fright, weakness, sweating, sneezing, short of breath, nasal itching, hives, vomiting, cough, restlessness, shock, hoarseness, swollen tongue, severe localized swelling.

### **First Actions:**

- Assess situation, remain calm, make student/employee comfortable.
- Only move for safety reason.
- Send for immediate help and medication kit (in cases of known allergies).
- Follow medical protocol for student, if on file.
- Observe for respiratory difficulty and, if needed,
  - Call rescue squad Telephone number: \_\_\_\_\_
- Notify parent or guardian.
- Administer medication, by order of a doctor, if appropriate. Apply ice pack, keep warm.
- Record on an attached label time and site of insect sting and name of medicine, dosage and time, if appropriate.

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**Preventative/Supportive Actions:**

- Encourage parents and guardians to list health situations on emergency card for their child.
- Encourage employees having health situations affecting them to alert building director and work associates of any difficulties and possible remedial actions.

**Angry Parent\***

*\* strategies may be adapted to use with angry employees and patrons*

- Be courteous and confident
- Remain calm
- Do not touch
- Keep at a reasonable distance
- Listen
- Allow the opportunity to vent
- Meet in a neutral, protected location
- Leave door open or have another staff member join you
- Avoid blame — focus on what can be done
- Ask:
  - “How can I help you get the services you/your child needs?”
  - “How can we work together?”
  - “What kinds of support can we put in place to help your child succeed?”

**Asbestos Release**

**DIRECTOR**

- Evacuate the immediate area.
- Instruct the building engineer to shut down the HVAC system.
- Ensure the affected area is sealed off and doors are closed.
- Notify the Director

**TEACHER AND STAFF**

- Evacuate the immediate area.
- Seal off the area by closing doors when exiting.
- Notify the Director.
- Note all persons who were in the area of the asbestos release.

**Assault by Intruder**

**Checklist**

- Assess the situation.
- If continued danger, institute lockdown.
- Provide first aid.
- Question victim - make reasonable notes for potential court case:

- description of assailant
- report of events
  
- Contact police
- Instruct person answering the telephone to direct all requests to Public Information Office
- Complete police information for charges.
- Prepare a written memo for staff and parents.
- Schedule follow-up programs for staff and students.
- Call emergency staff meeting

### **Specifics**

1. **Assess the Situation:**
  - a. Request police assistance when assailant(s) are outsiders.
  - b. Determine the number of victims.
  - c. Determine the amount of threat still pending - was this an isolated incident which is now over?
  - d. Is there continued danger to the individuals already involved or to any other potential victims?
  - e. Determine the need for first aid.
2. **Move Others to Safety:**
  - a. If the assailant has not been contained and continues to be a threat to others, institute lockdown.
3. **Provide First Aid:**
  - a. Provide first aid for victim(s) via nurse, nurse's aide, trained staff member, or 911. Have someone at the entrance to meet and direct the ambulance staff to the victim and designate a staff member to accompany victim(s) in ambulance.
4. **Question the Victim:**
  - a. Make notes which can be shared with the police upon their arrival. These notes may be helpful in a court case.
5. **Contact the Police**
6. **Notifications:**

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- a. The Director's Office should be contacted as soon as possible.
  - b. The Director will handle all media and community inquiries into the event(s).
  - c. The parents (or spouse) of the victim should be notified as soon as possible.
  - d. Inform staff of situation as soon as possible. A Crisis Team, identified for the school, can effectively deliver information to the other staff members so your time can be used for other decisions/actions.
  - e. The students will be able to deal with the situation by being informed of the facts as soon as possible, rather than receiving their "facts" through rumors.
  - f. The other schools should be given the basic information as soon as possible by the Director since siblings/neighbors will quickly learn of the disturbance.
  - g. The parents of other students in the community will need to learn the real facts, just as their children have learned them, to reduce the rumor factor.
  - h. After the crisis is over, the director may wish to arrange a special press conference to give the media the same information that has been shared with the parents.
- 5. Telephone Answerer:**
- a. Prepare a statement for the individuals who answer the telephones to read. Instruct them that any further inquiries should be made to the Public Information Office. Give them the telephone number for the caller to use as a reference.
- 6. Police Information for Charges:**
- a. The police will need to be sure of details from you as well as from the victim. Assault/Battery are chargeable offenses.
- 7. Written Memo for Staff and Parents:**
- a. As soon as the immediate crisis/danger is over, the staff and parents will need to know, not only what occurred, but why you took the action that you did. Individuals with the correct facts can help to stop rumors and misperceptions.
- 8. Follow-Up Programs**
- a. School guidance counselors will arrange special counseling for students and staff through Pupil Personnel Services.
- 9. Call emergency staff meeting.**

## **Bomb Threat**

### **Bomb Threat/Telephone Threats**

The building director must evaluate the seriousness of bomb threats or other disruptive types of demonstrations using input from all sources; then, the director acts in such a manner that reflects the best safety interests of those under his/her charge.

Bomb and other threats may be originated in writing, in person, over the telephone or related through a second source.

### **Basic Documentation - The individual taking the call should:**

- Keep the caller on the line as long as possible.



- 
- Notify director /building director.
  - Write down all the information obtained in the exact words. Use the record sheet immediately following these instruction pages; place copies of the bomb threat sheet at switchboard and other appropriate phone locations.
  - Find out what time the bomb is due to go off.
  - Document in writing, as soon as possible, other types of threat contacts including:
    - Specific time message is received.
    - Date and day of week.
    - Exact wording of message.
    - Estimation of sex, age, cultural background of person making call.
  - Make note of background noises, tone of voice.

**The building administrator or designee shall:**

- Notify the authorities.
- Consider the safety of students and staff as the prime factor. If advised, direct students and staff to safe areas of the campus. Nothing is to be touched or altered; do not open desks or lockers.

**Do not re-enter building until authorized:**

- Alert staff of situation and implement building search procedure (see below).
- School activities should be continued as normally as possible in designated safe areas.
- The recommendation to close school will be made only after consultation between the Central Office, security and building administrator.
- Submit written reports as appropriate to Director, Department of Facilities following the incident.

## **Bus/Auto Accident on Trips Away From Division**

**Precautionary Measures Before Leaving District**

- School buses, by law, are required to carry first aid kits. Check to see if it is in place.
- Take along in all automobiles a first aid kit on all field trips.
- Take along a list of students in attendance. Include for each a home telephone number, names of parents, parents' work telephone, home address, and any health or medical information.
- Take along a list of emergency phone numbers.
- Take along a list of chaperones and teachers who are in attendance on the trip, their home addresses and home phone numbers, name and work telephone of spouse or nearest relative and medical and health information on each.
- Follow School Board policy and administrative regulation on field trips.

**In the Event of an Accident**

- Remain calm

- 
- If threat of fire exists, move children to safe place.
  - Call emergency vehicles/services: police, fire, ambulance, highway patrol for locality and begin administration of first aid:
  - Notify Director of Administration and Support
  - Do not issue statements to the press. Refer press to the Director.

## **Chemical Spill**

### ***Inside the building***

- Evacuate the area immediately.
- Check the Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS)\* to determine the urgency of the situation.
- Notify the building director /supervisor/director as soon as possible.
- The building director /supervisor/director will call the fire department if deemed necessary for consultation.

### ***Outside the building***

- Insure that all students are in the building and that they remain there.
- Shut off all outside air ventilators.
- If you are not alerted to the situation by division personnel, phone:
  - Environmental Health & Safety
  - Director of Facilities of Services
- Keep telephone lines clear for emergency calls only.
- Release students to parents or designee only.

## **Childnapping/Lost Child**

### **Checklist**

Telephone police

- 
- Call Director
  - Notify parents of child
  - Identify team to work on the crisis while rest of school maintains routine
  - Obtain full description and pull out school picture
  - Search school building and grounds
  - If childnapping, try to obtain description of suspect
  - When child is found, contact Director, notify teacher, fill out Crisis Team Report
  - Prepare memo to inform staff and parents of incident and actions taken
  - Arrange for counseling for staff and students, if necessary call emergency staff meeting

**Specifics**

- 1. Immediately after it has been determined that a child has been lost/taken, contact the Police.
  - 2. Call the Director to report the incident.
  - 3. Contact the parents of the child involved. Establish a communication plan with them, if necessary.
4. Identify a team to work on the crisis. Designate personnel to deal with phone communications, etc., and other administrative staff to assist as appropriate. If the incident occurs during the school day, classroom routine should be maintained.

**Preventative activities which may help avoid childnapping situations are as follows:**

- School secretary should have at her desk a list of students who are not to be released to anyone except a particular parent or guardian.
- Emergency cards of such students should be tagged.
- Before releasing a child to anyone except a parent or guardian on the list, the school secretary should check with the custodial parent and/or guardian for approval; a record of the time and date of phone approval should be made and kept.
- When parent telephones a request that a child be released from school, the identity of the caller should be confirmed (by a separate call to the parent or guardian, if needed) before the child is permitted to leave. In the event of any doubt, the message and phone number should be written down; a return call should be made after cross-checking the phone number with those on file in the child's folder or on the emergency card.

## **Death**

**Death of a Student or Staff Member**

- Contact Crisis Team members and have a team meeting as soon as possible.
- Notify Director
- Prepare a fact sheet giving accurate, up-to-date information.

- Hold a faculty meeting as soon as possible. Review the procedures for the day, availability of support services, referral process for at-risk students.
- Contact family of the deceased. Preferably an administrator and Crisis Team member should visit the family at their home and offer assistance.
- Hold a faculty meeting at the end of the day to review the day's events.

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## **Disaster**

Destruction of Part/Whole of Building  
(e.g., tornado, plane crash, bomb)

### **Checklist**

- Call 911.
- Obtain information on extent of damage.
- Evacuate using fire horn or move students to safe areas in building.
- Assign one adult to supervise others in attending to injured.
- Assign staff member to assist rescue personnel.
- Arrange for dismissal of students.
- Director will handle all distribution of information.
- Call emergency staff meeting.

If there is no danger outside the building, use alarm horn to evacuate building.

Safe Areas: Identify areas away from problem area and route to be taken by classes in going to safe areas. Designate which classes/groups of students should go to which area.

- A. Attend to Injured:
  - B. Assign free adults to attend to injured, with one adult designated as “in charge.”
- C. Meet Rescue Personnel:
  - a. Have staff members direct rescue personnel to problem area and assist in providing access as needed by rescue personnel.
- D. Director: Notify of plan being implemented.
- E. Information:
  - a. Consider briefly summarizing the situation for all students and adults prior to dismissal or preferably by informing teachers and having them explain to students.
  - b. If time permits, prepare a written memo to parents detailing the situation and how it was handled, including plan for follow-up, to be sent home with students or distributed the following day.
  - c. Call an emergency staff meeting after students leave to explain the situation and any plans for follow-up.

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## **Disaster**

### Danger from Outside Preventing Dismissal/Evacuation

(e.g., hurricane, tornado, sniper, plane crash)

#### **Checklist**

- Gather information.
- Identify safe areas in building.
- Direct staff to escort students to identified areas.
- When situation is “clear,” return students to class.
- Prepare memo/letters to inform staff and parents.
- Director will provide information to media.
- Call emergency staff meeting.

#### **Specifics**

1. Information may be received from a variety of sources:
  - a. telephone call
  - b. radio or television
  - c. visual observation
2. Ascertain specifics such as extent of immediate danger, possible length of time danger may exist.
3. Safe areas:
  - a. Consider large areas at the interior of the building away from numerous windows and outside walls which have a reliable source of lighting. Designate where students should go. Evacuate trailers to main building or safe area.
4. Move students:
5. Use the P.A., if working, or a system of notes sent by messengers, to inform teachers and other adults of the situation and where to bring students.
6. Director:
  - a. Notify of plan being implemented;
  - b. call police and maintain contact as necessary.
7. All “clear”
  - a. Monitor situation to ascertain when danger is removed; direct teachers and other adults to escort students back to class when situation is clear.
  - b. If crisis interferes with normal dismissal, arrange with Director will share information to parents regarding pick-up.
8. Information:
9. < Consider briefly summarizing the danger and its resolution for all students prior to dismissal by P.A. or preferably by informing teachers and having them explain to students.
10. Consider preparing a written memo to parents detailing the situation and how it was handled to be sent home with students or distributing it the following day.
11. Prepare written memo to staff summarizing the situation and how it was handled.
12. Director will handle all distribution of information to the media.

13. Call emergency staff meeting.

## **Fighting**

### **Violence Between Two or More Students (Physical Fighting)**

#### **Goals:**

- Safety
- Effective communication
- Mobilization
- Containment
- Assessment and follow-up

#### **Prevention:**

Have a clear operation plan and be familiar with that plan. Be alert to patterns of stress and agitation in students. Be familiar with information provided regarding managing a potentially dangerous person.

#### **Intervention:**

Intervening and managing physical altercations and/or fights require making a judgement call. There may be several goals at one time and individual circumstances will determine the priorities of your interventions.

Interventions may include:

- Disperse the crowd and ensure the safety of the students.
- Call for help and assistance in managing the incident.
- Focus on diffusing the fight.
- Attend to medical needs.
- Be knowledgeable about intervening with individuals who are dangerous. Refer to additional materials in Resource section.

#### **Postvention:**

- Assess the response and provide follow-up of situation. (Crisis Team)
- (Source: Hanover County Public Schools)

## **Fire/Arson/Explosives**

### **Checklist**

Sound alarm; evacuate building.

- 
- Call 911.
  - Determine if there are any serious injuries.
  - Call: Superintendent  
Public Information Office
  - Arrange transportation for dismissal.
  - Determine building status for return to classes.
  - Follow-up activities.
  - Call emergency staff meeting.
  - **Specifics**
    - 1. Sound alarm. Evacuate building if serious threat of danger. Prior arrangements should be made for the evacuation of any students or staff members requiring assistance.
    - 2. Call 911 and ask for required emergency services.
  - 3. If there are injuries, notify necessary rescue personnel. Provide first aid through school personnel, such as school nurse, nurse's aide, and athletic trainer.
  - 4. Call Superintendent's Office and notify of incident and actions taken.
  - 5. In all probability, school will have to be dismissed and arrangements for transportation will have to be made. Students and staff will have to be informed. A portable bull horn should be available to make announcements to students and staff who have evacuated the building.
  - 6. If the building is damaged, several different steps may have to be taken. Severe damage may necessitate another location for classes which will have to be scheduled through the Superintendent's Office.
  - 7. Prepare written memo for staff to advise of follow-up procedures. Send letter for parents home with students.
  - 8. Call emergency staff meeting.
- (Source: Henrico County Public Schools)

## Gas Leak

Natural gas leaks, with odor in the building, may occur and bring danger of explosion. Natural gas rises and will often be outside because most gas lines are outside the building. Natural gas is mixed with Mercaptan to give it odor. The gas goes up and the odor goes down.

**If a leak is in or near the building:**

Evacuate the building immediately, following your local building evacuation plan. Get students a safe distance from the building.

Turn off the main gas valve.

Location:

Phone Fire Department

Telephone Number:

Phone Facility Services

Telephone Number:

Phone Commonwealth Gas

Telephone Number:

If time permits, phone the Superintendent's Office to alert that office of the current situation. That office will notify the Community Relations Office.



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Keep students at a safe distance until the problem has been corrected.

(Source: Chesterfield County Public Schools)

## **Hostage\***

Armed/Dangerous Intruder

### **Checklist**

- \_\_\_ Contact the police (911).
- \_\_\_ Instigate lockdown procedures; after police arrive, if the danger is confined, orderly evacuation away from the danger may occur.
- \_\_\_ Notify Superintendent.
- \_\_\_ When police arrive, in accordance with pre-planning, they assume control of incident and negotiations.
- \_\_\_ No school personnel should circulate through building; after evacuation, no individuals should enter or re-enter the building.
  - \_\_\_ Instruct person answering the phone to direct all requests to Public Information Office.
  - \_\_\_ Keep telephone lines open for police use (pay telephones as well).
    - \_\_\_ Provide information to police about the building layout and what is known about the background of the hostage-taking.

### **Specifics**

1. Contact the Police:  
Hostage-taking or endangering the safety of others are criminal offenses.
2. Secure All Classrooms (Lockdown):  
The more closely contained the intruder can be kept, the less the danger there is to others and the easier it is for the police to apprehend the individual.  
\* See procedures in Section IV.
3. Notification:
  - The Superintendent's Office should be contacted as soon as possible.
  - The Public Information Office will handle all media and community inquiries.
  - After the crisis is over, the Public Information Office may wish to arrange a special press conference to give the media the same information that has been shared with the parents.
4. Staff to Keep Students in Present Areas:  
Students should not be released for any reason until told to do so by the police.
5. No Personnel Circulating:  
For the same reason as #4, all staff should be protected from involvement in the crisis where possible.
6. Telephone Answerer:  
Prepare a statement to be read by the individuals who answer the telephones. Instruct them that any further inquiries should be made to the Public Information Office. Give them the telephone number for the caller to call.
7. Keep Phone Lines Open:

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The police and other public safety personnel will need access to the phones with highest priority. Even the pay phones need to be available to the police.

8. Provide Police with Maps of Buildings and Grounds:  
Involve those with greatest knowledge of the facilities such as head custodian. Also provide any anecdotal information about reasons for the hostage-taking, precipitating events, etc.
9. I. D. Persons Familiar with the Facility:  
Persons familiar with the entire building should be available to discuss the interior room arrangements, etc. These individuals should be available at the chosen school map location away from the scene.

## **Intruder** or Trespasser

### **Checklist**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Determine the whereabouts of the intruder/trespasser.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Isolate the individual.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Determine the extent of the crisis.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Make reasonable notes for potential court case.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Contact police - 911.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Move other students and staff from area.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Notify superintendent.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Instruct person answering the telephone to direct all requests to Public Information Office.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Complete and submit police information for charges.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Prepare a written memo for staff and parents.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Complete Crisis Team Report.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Call emergency staff meeting.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Schedule follow-up activities for staff and students, including security plan review.

### **Specifics**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Determine whereabouts of the intruder: Use school maps to assist police and staff members in locating intruder.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Isolate intruder from rest of building and students.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Determine extent of the crisis:

Trespass with no safety hazard may be dealt with through informing the intruder of the offense being committed. If trespasser refuses to leave, wait for police to arrest. If the trespasser has previously been warned (placed on notice) trespass charges may be filed without the arrest of the offender.

Trespass with threat to others' safety will require assistance from the police. Trespass charges should be filed.

4. Make notes. Recording what has occurred can provide information important to the police and in subsequent court cases.
5. Move other Students/Staff:  
Staff may be asked to keep their students in certain areas, or to keep them out of certain areas.

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Staff should move students as quietly and quickly as possible when directed to do so.

6. Contact the Police:  
Trespassing is a misdemeanor or felony, depending upon the location of the intrusion.
7. Notification:
  - The Superintendent's Office should be contacted as soon as possible.
  - The Public Information Office will handle media and community inquiries.
  - Keep staff informed of actions. A Crisis Team, identified for the school, can effectively deliver information to other staff members so that the administrator's time can be used for other decisions/action.
  - The Transportation Department can, in extreme emergencies, provide buses for early dismissal. The Transportation Department will notify the Superintendent of the need for this dismissal.
  - The students will be able to deal with the situation by being informed of the facts, as soon as possible, rather than receiving their "facts" through rumor.
  - Other schools should be given the basic information as soon as possible by the Public Information Office since siblings/neighbors will quickly learn of the situation.
  - The parents of the students in the community will need to learn the real facts, just as their children have learned them, to reduce the rumor factor.
  - After the crisis is over, the Public Information Office may wish to arrange a special press conference to give the media the same information that has been shared with the parents.
8. Telephone Answerer:  
Prepare a statement for the individuals who answer the telephones to read. Instruct them that any further inquiries should be made to the Public Information Office. Give them the phone number for the caller to call.
9. Police Information for Charges:  
The police will need to be sure of details from you as well as from others interviewed.  
Trespassing is a misdemeanor or felony, depending upon the location of the intrusion.
10. Written Memo for Staff and Parents:  
As soon as the immediate crisis/danger is over., the staff and parents will need to know, not only what occurred, but why you took the action that you did.
11. Crisis Team Report  
Submit it within twenty-four (24) hours.
12. Follow-Up Activities  
Pupil Personnel Services will provide counseling for students and staff. The building security plan should also be reviewed.
13. Call emergency staff meeting.

(Source: Henrico County Public Schools)

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## **Life-Threatening Crisis**

### **(Major) Life-threatening Injury to Individual**

When a life-threatening situation is perceived to exist, a building administrator or person in charge of a building or office should:

#### **First Actions**

Call 911

Apply first aid and life-sustaining techniques using trained persons on staff.

Names: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Call parent/guardian immediately.

(Source: Chesterfield County Public Schools)

## **Perceived Crisis**

*Perceived crises* are conditions or situations, often community-based, that are perceived as potentially affecting a large number of people. Examples of perceived crisis include racial events, school rivalry situations, events in which a group feels left out or not represented, introduction of new school procedures without adequate warning, real or perceived unsafe conditions such as toxic fumes or food poisoning, gang-related activities, or rumors about people with HIV/AIDS or other contagious conditions. **It is the task of those in charge to defuse any irrational response.**

#### **Prevention:**

- Identify situations in advance that may be perceived crises.
- Establish open lines of communication with students and staff.
- Develop a procedure for dealing with the public and the media.

#### **Intervention:**

- For any health condition, immediately contact the appropriate health authorities.
- Don't panic. Project a sense of calm and control.
- Gather detailed and accurate information about the perceived crisis.
- If necessary, call a team meeting to assess the situation and make decisions on what actions to take.
- Provide appropriate faculty, staff and those individuals or groups affected by the situation with specific information.
- Designate someone who would act as a single point of contact for controlling rumors. Keep lines of communication open; a feeling that secrets are being kept can increase the sense of crisis.
- Have trained individuals available to speak with small groups of students/staff.
- Take all actions that you have determined necessary to prevent a more serious situation from developing.

#### **Postvention:**

- 
- Conduct stabilizing activities as soon as possible to project an atmosphere of normal conditions.
  - Conduct follow-up and assessment activities with team members and other staff.

## **Poisoning**

In the event of the poisoning or suspected poisoning of a student or an employee:

### **Immediate Actions:**

- Call the rescue squad Telephone Number:
- Call the Poison Control Center Telephone Number:
- Administer first aid suggested by poison information center.

### **Preventative Measures:**

- Post in the clinic information from Poison Control Center regarding emergency numbers.
- List in the clinic the names of building personnel who have special paramedic, first aid training, or other special life-saving or life-sustaining training.
- Provide staff information on possible poisonous materials in the building.

(Source: Chesterfield County Public Schools)

## **Power Failure / Lines Down**

If there has been a power failure at a school, or if lines are reported down in the area of the school:

### **Power failure\***

- Notify Virginia Power Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ • Notify Maintenance Section Telephone Number:
- Notify Managing Director, Department of Facilities Telephone Number:

### **Lines down in area\***

- Have an adult in the area of the downed lines to prevent children and other people from going near them.
  - Notify Virginia Power Telephone Number:
  - Notify Maintenance Section Telephone Number:

\* *Note that telephone notification may require use of cellular phone, depending on whether telephone is set up to rely on electricity.*

(Source: Chesterfield County Public Schools)

## **Rape**

When a school is notified that a rape has occurred to a student or staff member, the Crisis Response Team and the school must protect the identify and right to privacy of the rape survivor and the alleged perpetrator. News of the incident should be contained as much as possible. Appropriate response by school staff will be directed at minimizing the fear of fellow students and quelling the spread of rumors. As opposed to convening a Crisis Response Team meeting and alerting the student body, services provided to the victim and her/his family should be kept

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confidential and should be coordinated with outside providers, such as a rape crisis team or hospital emergency room.

**RAPE ONLY BECOMES A CRISIS TO BE MANAGED BY SCHOOL STAFF WHEN ONE OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS EXIST:**

- A rape occurs on campus.
- A member of the rape survivor's family requests school intervention.
- The rape survivor's friends requests intervention.
- Rumors and myths are widespread and damaging.
- Students witness police action or emergency services response.

**When one or more of the above conditions exists, the following should be implemented:**

- Direct the person providing the information not to repeat it elsewhere in the school.
- If the rape occurred on campus, notify the appropriate law enforcement office and/or local rape crisis team.
- If office staff members heard the report, tell them not to repeat or give out any information within or outside school unless they are specifically told to do so.
- Designate the Crisis Response Team member closest to the victim to talk to her/him about the types of support he or she and the closest friends need, and the person(s) the rape survivor would like to provide that support.
- Provide space in the school for the rape survivor and identified peers to receive support services. Provide necessary passes to release these students from class to receive services.

***Rape is a crime of violence.*** For the rape survivor, it often is an experience of fear, loss of control, humiliation, and violence. Rape survivors may experience a full range of emotional reactions. It is extremely beneficial for rape survivors to seek emotional support regarding the assault.

Monitor any school intervention in a rape incident with the following checklist: (Source: California Association of School Administrators)

**RAPE RESPONSE CHECKLIST**

School involvement in incident due to:

G Rape occurrence on campus

G Survivor's family requests school intervention

G Survivor's friends request intervention

G Rumors and myths are widespread and damaging

G Students witness police/emergency services

G Information provider/recipients enjoined not to repeat information elsewhere.

G Steps taken to protect survivor's identity and right to privacy.

G Law enforcement and rape crisis agency notified if appropriate.

G Crisis Response Team member closest to victim designated to talk with student and determine type of support and support provider desired.

G Rape survivor encouraged to seek additional support from community rape crisis agency.

G Space provided on site for rape survivor and identified peers to receive support services.

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G School services coordinated as appropriate and legal with outside service providers.

G Action taken to quell rumors.

G All records related to rape incident and services provided stored in confidential file.

## **Shootings/Wounds/Attacks**

### **Checklist**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Assess the situation.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Call: 911
- \_\_\_\_\_ Police/School Resource Officer
- \_\_\_\_\_ Ambulance
- \_\_\_\_\_ Use emergency signal - all students and staff are to stay in classrooms, secure the door, and stay on the floor.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Establish a command post with several telephones available.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Implement first aid procedures until rescue service arrives.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Notify Superintendent's Office.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Keep a written log of events.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Prepare a written memo for staff and parents.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Implement necessary follow-up activities.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Call emergency staff meeting.

### **Specifics**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Notify the police, and other necessary emergency staff.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Determine if the perpetrator is still on premises - determine number of victims and identify witnesses.
3. The emergency signal to staff and students should convey the seriousness of the situation. Followup announcements will be necessary to keep everyone informed. Prepare a general statement of the facts.
  4. Establish a command post to handle the load of the Crisis Team and to direct the press and concerned members of the community to the Public Information Office.
  5. Implement necessary first aid procedures through trained staff, school nurse, nurse's aide, physical education department, and/or athletic trainer. Direct rescue personnel to injured and give any required assistance. Designate staff member to accompany victim(s) in ambulance.
  6. Contact Superintendent's Office.
  7. Identify a place where a log of events is to be kept. Record all significant events, actions, and individuals that are involved.
  8. Keep staff informed through a memo or emergency staff meeting. Parents may be informed through a letter sent home with students.
  9. Follow-up management should be well-delegated. Crisis counseling for students and staff may be needed, and security concerns should be considered. All staff will assist in restoring building to normal state. Reopen school as soon as possible.
  10. Call emergency staff meeting.

(Source: Henrico County Public Schools)

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## **Suicide**

The school's general response to a suicide does not differ markedly from a response to any sudden death crisis. However, some issues exclusive to suicide require specific attention. School administrators must allow students to grieve the loss of a peer without glorifying the method of death. Overemphasis of a suicide may be interpreted by vulnerable students as a glamorization of the suicidal act, which can assign legendary or idolized status to taking one's own life. The following "DOs" and "DON'Ts" will help school staff limit glamorization of suicide:

**Do** acknowledge the suicide as a tragic loss of life.

**Do** allow students to attend funeral services.

**Do** provide support for students profoundly affected by the death.

**Do not** organize school assemblies to honor the deceased student.

**Do not** dedicate the yearbook or yearbook pages, newspaper articles, proms, athletic events, or advertisements to the deceased individual.

**Do not** pay tribute to a suicidal act by planting trees, hanging engraved plaques, or holding other memorial activities.

### **WARNING:**

A suicide in the school community can heighten the likelihood, in the subsequent weeks, of "copycat" suicide attempts and threats among those especially vulnerable to the effects of a suicide. To prevent further tragedies, students considered to be especially susceptible to depression/suicide must be carefully monitored and appropriate action taken if they are identified as high risk. These efforts require a limited, rather than school wide, response.

## **Suicide Threats**

### **Crisis Intervention Procedures for Potentially Suicidal Students**

#### ***Referral***

Go to Member of Crisis Team

Students at risk can self-refer or be referred to the crisis team by school staff, parent, friend, neighbor, or other person from the community. Students at risk range from those talking of hopelessness, to those writing poems with suicidal intent, to students telling someone of planning to harm themselves. Team members might include directors, psychologists, counselors, teachers, social workers, and nurses. The team member receiving the referral should gather pertinent information from the referral source before contacting other team members.

#### ***Team Consult***

Designate Case Manager, Gather Information

When possible, the available team members gather to designate a case manager, considering the following factors: 1) existing relationship with the student, 2) time and coverage constraints, 3) seriousness of the problem, 4) experience of the members. The team or case manager reviews the student's records and gathers information from staff who know the student.

#### ***Crisis Interview***

Conduct Interview



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The case manager interviews the student on the day of the referral. The case manager determines the extent of suicidal thinking, the potential plan of suicide, the lethality of the plan, and the history of the student's suicidal thinking and attempts. For severe cases, insure the safety of the student through adult supervision.

### ***Team Review***

#### **Team Members Decide Plan**

The case manager returns as soon as possible to the available team members to discuss the case and formulate a plan of action. Depending on the seriousness of the case, the team may wish to consult with other members not initially involved or discuss case with Jefferson County Mental Health. Plans formulated by the team might range from no further involvement, to monitoring by a specific staff member, to referral for counseling within the school setting, to asking the parents to take immediate action with their child.

### ***Outside Contacts***

#### **Parents Notified**

Parents of all interviewed students will be contacted by the case manager on the same day of referral and interview. Parents will be told of the reason for referral, the outcome of the interview, and the plans formulated by the team. When the suicide potential is significant, the case manager needs to ascertain that the parents accept responsibility to follow through with the team's recommendations. If the student is dangerous to self and the parents cannot be located, then the case manager contacts the Crisis Intervention Unit of Jefferson County Mental Health. In extremely dangerous situations, the police may be called first to ensure the safety of the student. Follow-up remains the responsibility of the case manager unless explicitly agreed to by other staff members. The case manager documents the case and shares information with other team members.

(Source: Chesterfield County Public Schools)

## **Vandalism**

- Report all acts of vandalism to police.
- Photograph any willful and malicious destruction of school property (e.g., graffiti, broken windows, etc.).
- For minor damage, simply note the time, date, and type of damage for your records.
- Serious acts of vandalism may be hate crimes or gang-related.
- Clean up and repair the damage as soon as possible to avoid encouraging future acts of vandalism.
- Aggressively prosecute all vandals to convey that you will not tolerate this type of offense.
- Collect restitution by having the offender pay money or provide labor to clean and/or repair the damage he or she has caused.

(Adapted from Safe Schools: A Handbook for Practitioners)

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## **Weapons Situation**

### **Checklist**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Assess the situation.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Notify police.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Gather information.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Isolate individual or suspect.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Do not use force or touch the person or weapon.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Remain calm.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Tell another administrator what the situation is.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Use emergency signal to notify teachers of the threatening situation and have teachers keep students in classroom until all is clear.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Notify Superintendent.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Refer media questions to the Director of Community Relations
- \_\_\_\_\_ After immediate situation is resolved, hold emergency staff meeting before staff members leave for the day.

### **Specifics**

1. Assess the situation.
2. Notify police. Provide as much information as possible. Be prepared to act as a resource and liaison between school and police. If necessary, have a map of the school available for police.
3. Gather as much detailed information as possible. Try to determine:
  - Location, identity and detailed description of individual.
  - Location and description of weapon.
  - Any pertinent background information on individual, including possible reason for carrying a weapon.
4. Isolate individual or suspect. (If weapon is in a locker or elsewhere, prevent access to it.)
5. Confer with police when they arrive. They will advise you how they intend to proceed.
6. If interaction with the individual is imminent, do not use force or touch the person or weapon. Avoid sudden moves or gestures.
7. Remain calm. Try not to raise your voice -- but, if this becomes necessary, do so decisively and with clarity. Your tone and demeanor will strongly influence the outcome of the crisis.
8. Be certain that at least one other administrator (or designee) is aware of the situation, but limit information to staff and students on a need to know basis.
9. Notify Superintendent.
10. Use emergency signal to notify teachers of the threatening situation and have teachers keep students in classroom until all is clear.
11. Refer media questions to the Director of Community Relations.
12. Call emergency staff meeting. It is important that staff members leave with accurate information about the incident and subsequent actions to be taken.

(Source: Henrico County Public Schools)

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### **Handling a Weapon-Wielding Student**

- Evacuate the area
- Evaluate the perpetrator
- Isolate
- Negotiate
- Remain calm
- Get help
- Avoid heroics
- Don't threaten
- Keep a safe, nonintimidating distance
- Avoid abrupt sporadic movements
- Look for a place to dive or jump
- Report incident to law enforcement

(Adapted from National School Safety Center, 1995)

### **Weather**

Tornado, Inclement Weather, Earthquake **Goals:**

- Safety
- Effective communications
- Mobilization
- Containment
- Assessment and follow-up

#### **Prevention:**

- Post and practice mobilization plan.

#### **Definitions:**

Severe Weather **Watch**: Forecast of severe weather in area; normal activities continue; no school-wide announcement; director or designee monitor the situation.

Severe Weather **Warning**: Severe and dangerous weather situation approaching. Be prepared.

#### **Intervention:**

1. Director alerts staff of impending situation. Call emergency numbers as needed; call superintendent. (director or designee)
2. Evacuate classrooms according to plan; provide for handicapped.
3. Move students quickly and quietly to designated area, underground shelter if available or interior hallways on first floor. Avoid windows, auditoriums, gyms, and any wide span or overhead structure. North and east walls are preferable to south and west walls. Sit in fetal position with face and head protected. Review "drop and tuck" command.
4. Get word to all students and staff who are outside or who are in out-lying buildings.
5. Check for and provide care for injured.
6. Secure tool box. (designated duty)
7. Account for all students/staff/others.
8. Determine status for safe return to classes or dismissal. (director or designee)

#### **Postvention:**

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- Assess the response and prepare follow-up of situation. (Crisis Team)