

Warren County School Crisis Intervention Plan

Guidelines for a Proactive Building Response to a
Traumatic Event

August, 2011

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* These may be included in a teacher packet.

Traumatic Event Crisis Intervention Plan

A traumatic event can be described as a sudden, unexpected event that has an emotional impact sufficient to overwhelm the usual effective coping skills of students and/or staff, and that causes significant psychological stress in usually healthy persons.

Crisis intervention is emotional first-aid, not therapy. The goals of intervention are to:

- Clarify and stabilize the situation.
- Mobilize resources.
- Return to normalization of routine for as many as possible, as soon as possible.
- Restore adaptive functioning.
- Facilitate healing and access to on-going help for those in need.

Assumptions about the needs of our students and staff following a traumatic event:

- To effectively process a student's grief, he/she will need a safe and secure environment.
- Coming to grips with one's own vulnerability and mortality often heightens the need to belong.
- A controlled and predictable environment facilitates the healing process.
- Each person must be free to choose how they wish to deal with their emotional needs.

Traumatic Event Management Check Sheet

Incident _____

Date: _____

Establish Awareness of Incident

- ___ 1. Principal has been contacted regarding incident.
- ___ 2. Superintendant contacted.
- ___ 3. Team notified and time set for Team meeting.
- ___ 4. Team leader or designee attempts to contact family (survivor interview).
- ___ 5. Staff notified by team members. Staff notified of time of Traumatic Event Briefing for all staff.

Develop Plan

- ___ 1. Team meets, completes rapid assessment guide, and determines scale of response.
- ___ 2. Locations identified and specific duties assigned.
- ___ 3. Identify required outside support. Contact.
- ___ 4. Plan and conduct Traumatic Event Briefing. Have extra Teacher packets available.
- ___ 5. Prepare student announcement (if appropriate).

Implement Plan

- ___ 1. Dispatch team members to designated locations.
- ___ 2. Make student announcement (if appropriate).
- ___ 3. Implement other services outlined in the plan, based on scale of response (Safe Room, classroom presentations, small group discussions, one-on-one interventions.)
- ___ 4. Mid-day team meeting to monitor and adjust plan, and to set agenda for end-of-day meeting.

Bring About Closure

- ___ 1. Conduct end-of-day staff meeting.
- ___ 2. Distribute staff assessment.
- ___ 3. Develop Day Two Plan with Team Members. Include plan for follow-up for any at-risk students.
- ___ 4. Team members debrief.

Team Members and Contact Numbers
2011-2012

Traumatic Event Scale of Response

Level 1:

Situation confined to an individual or small group.

Level 2:

Class or grade level effected.

Level 3:

Multiple grade levels and potentially entire building impacted.

Level 4:

Multiple buildings and sizable portion of district impacted.

Level 5:

Catastrophic incident with widespread and profound impact on entire school community.

Targeting potential intervention needs:

Large Group Briefing (When, where, who):

Classroom Presentations (Which classes, who):

Safe Room (When, where, who):

Small Group Discussions (Which groups, when, where):

Individual Support (When, where, who):

Traumatic Event Team Members Assignment Sheet

Intervention	
Name	Assignment

Administration and Support	
Name	Assignment

Traumatic Event: Survivor Interview

Name of Family Member _____ Phone # _____

Person Completing Form _____ Date/Time of call _____

1. **Express Concern:** We heard about what happened and wanted you to know how concerned we are. We can't even begin to imagine how hard this must be for you.

2. **Ask how the school can be of assistance:** We want to help you however we can. Is there anything that we can do at this time? Do you have family and/or friends close by to support you?

3. **Clarify facts:** Here is what we have heard (very briefly share available details). Is this accurate? Is there anything else that we should know?

4. **Share school response:** Our building crisis response team will meet to develop a plan for our school. Of course, we will carefully secure any personal items.

5. **Obtain funeral and/or memorial service details (if possible):** Please let us know about the funeral arrangements. Is there anything that we should know at this time?

6. **Reiterate concern and availability to be of assistance:** Again, we are so sad about what has happened. Please let us know if there is anything that we can do to help you.

Safe Room Checklist

- 1. Pads of paper
- 2. Various colors of construction paper
- 3. Crayons/Markers
- 4. Pens/Pencils
- 5. Water
- 6. Envelopes
- 7. Plain white paper
- 8. Blank cards
- 9. Scissors/glue
- 10. Access to large paper, for murals, etc.

Other options, if available:

Snacks

Books on ways to handle death or other personal crisis

Magazines for collages

Traumatic Event Briefing Outline

The purpose of a traumatic even briefing is to consult with and inform staff, allow for psychological decompression, and offer suggestions for stress management. The following five steps should be included:

1. **Assemble staff** prior to the start of the school day (if at all possible). Thank everyone for attending.
2. **Provide facts regarding the traumatic event.** State to the best of your knowledge factual information that is available.
3. **Highlight and normalize common reactions.** Call attention to typical cognitive, physical, behavioral and emotional symptoms.
4. **Outline the building intervention plan and priorities.** Review Teacher Crisis Pack materials and have extra copies available. Introduce any visitors to the building.
5. **Review importance of stress management strategies,** for themselves as well as students.

Traumatic Event: Sample Student Announcement

Today we received tragic (or sad) news. We learned that one of our students/staff members, (name), died (or was seriously injured) by / as the result of / due to (give basic appropriate elaboration without too much detail, confirmed facts only.)

When things like this happen, people have all different kinds of reactions, such as shock, sadness, fear and anger. Those reactions may rise and fall throughout the day, and even for days to come.

Some of us will want to have a quiet time alone and others may want time to talk with friends or adults. Some of you, who did not know (name), may be ready for teachers to return to academics sooner than others. We just need to practice patience and respect for each other.

Your (teacher/advisory teacher/first bell teacher) will spend a little time discussing this today. There are plans in place for those who need additional support.

As a reminder, we need to respect the thoughts and feelings of each other. Everyone has the freedom to choose how they will cope with this tragic event.

Please be here for one another. I know we will get through this difficult time together.

Classroom Presentation Guide

The purpose of a classroom presentation is to provide information, minimize unwanted student responses, normalize grief and trauma reactions, and suggest appropriate behavior.

Staff will be informed if/when classroom presentations should take place, depending on the scale of the crisis. If you are asked to guide a classroom discussion and would like assistance, contact a member of the crisis team. A team member or administrator will assist you.

Five steps should be included:

- 1. Introduce discussion:** As some of you may already know, _____. This is very difficult for all of us. When something like this happens, it is hard to know what to say or how to act. It is important, however, that we spend some time talking about this incident and answer any questions that you might have.
- 2. Clarify the facts:** This is what we know so far: _____. We do not know anything else. As we find out more information that you need to know, we will share it with you (may want to emphasize the importance of not starting rumors – see #4).
- 3. Normalize common reactions:** What did you think and feel when you first heard about this? What are you thinking and feeling now? I am not surprised that you feel this way, or have these kind of thoughts. Sometimes I feel and think this way. These are very normal reactions. If they are really bothering you, it usually helps to talk to someone about what you are thinking and feeling.
- 4. Identify appropriate behavior:** When you have felt upset in the past, what kinds of things have you done to help you feel better? What have you seen other people do to help themselves? Here are some of the things that I have seen other people do _____. Sometimes people begin to spread rumors. This is not helpful to the family or close friends. If you hear anything different from what we have talked about, please let us know and we will check it out.
- 5. Conclude discussion:** Are there any questions before we end? If at any time during the next several days you want to talk to someone, please let a teacher know. For the remainder of the bell I would like for us to _____. (Consider modifying lesson plans depending on student response.) Inform students of building resources that are available and tell them they will be informed of new information.

Our Goal: Effectively Mitigate Potential Negative Effects of Crisis

Potential Effect

Antidote

Anxiety

Reassuring approach

Chaos/Helplessness

Structured Coordinated
Intervention Plan

Exaggerated Emotions

Healthy thinking;
Acknowledgment of
normal grief reactions

Psychological Tension

Opportunity to share
feelings, ask questions

Loss of Control

Information

Normal Reactions to Abnormal Events

Cognitive Symptoms

Confusion

Disorientation

Memory Loss

Difficulty performing tasks

Trouble making decisions

Behavioral Symptoms

Withdrawal

Excessive humor/laughing

Hyperactivity

Excessive talking

Prolonged silence

Physical Symptoms

Sweating

Headaches

Dizziness

Upset stomach

Shaking

Emotional Symptoms

Feeling numb/detached

Guilt

Anger

Sadness

Fear

Stress Management Strategies that WORK!

Take a break from your worries by doing something fun, relaxing, interesting, etc.

Examples: watch TV, draw, write in a journal, go out with friends, play with a pet

Do something physically active.

Examples: take a walk, play basketball with friends, lift weights, ride a bike

Talk with someone who will listen and try to understand how you're feeling.

Examples: talk with close friends or family members, your youth pastor, your teacher or school counselor

Take care of your health.

Examples: get plenty of sleep, eat healthy food

Stress Management Strategies that DON'T WORK!

Strategies that increase stress

Examples: Misbehaving at school or at home, lying, destroying property.

Strategies that hurt others:

Examples: starting rumors, blaming others, fighting.

Strategies that are dangerous to your health:

Examples: Smoking, drinking, taking drugs, cutting.

Referral Behaviors

Refer students who:

Witnessed the incident or are a close friend of the victim.

Display unusually disruptive behavior.

Appear confused or disoriented.

Make threats to harm others.

Verbalize thoughts of suicide.

Cry uncontrollably.

Behave in a way that appears unusual/inappropriate at the time.

Repeatedly ask questions you cannot answer.

Are preoccupied with knowing all the details of the incident.

Indicate that they want to be with their friends or their counselor.

Know the victim yet appear detached, numb, or indifferent.

Talk about having nightmares, not being able to eat or sleep, feeling jittery, confused, unable to concentrate.

Have a history of emotional disturbance.

Sample Parent Letter

Dear (School Name) Parent or Guardian:

At approximately (note date and time) _____, one of our students (note what happened)_____. The information that we have received at this time is that the student (note condition) _____.

Our school's crisis response team is handling the situation in a calm and compassionate manner. Additionally, other mental health professionals from _____ were in the building today. Please be assured that team members will continue to provide support for students and staff as long as a need exists.

We request that you continue to send your child to school. Remember that our school is the safest place for your child in an emergency and that your child's welfare and safety is our top priority.

Finally, should you have any further concerns, please feel free to contact the school at _____. As always, we thank you for your assistance and support.

Sincerely,

Principal

Mid-Day Rapid Assessment Guide

Date _____ Team member completing form _____

Incident _____

1. At this point in time, who have been significantly impacted?
2. What actions have been taken?
3. Where are we with the Safe Room? Are we ready to close it down?
4. What are our anticipated issues this afternoon?
5. What kind of resources do we have on call if the situation changes?
6. How are our impacted staff members doing?
7. What additional information is needed for this afternoon's meeting?
8. What rumors have been circulating around the school and how have we been dealing with this? 21

End of Day One
Staff Meeting Agenda

1. Review day

2. Update information.

3. Highlight and dispel rumors.

4. Secure “at-risk” names.

5. Outline plan for Day Two.

6. Respond to questions.

7. Present stress management tips.

8. Distribute Team Response Evaluation Form (p.23)

Team Response Evaluation Form

Date: _____

1. How well did we establish awareness to all individuals who needed to know?

___ Poor ___ Average ___ Excellent

Comments _____

2. How well did the crisis response team meet the needs of students?

___ Poor ___ Average ___ Excellent

Comments _____

3. How well did the crisis response team meet the needs of staff?

___ Poor ___ Average ___ Excellent

Comments _____

4. After today's crisis response, do you have any suggestions for handling future crises?

Crisis Response Team Debriefing Guide

Debriefing the crisis team members is strongly recommended after students and staff have been released for the day. This will help to minimize negative effects, teach and reinforce skills, and help team members “practice what they preach”. Move through the questions in the order that they are presented.

1. What were your first thoughts about the incident? Of the thoughts that you had, which one surprised you the most?
2. What was the worst moment for you?
3. Was your response to this difficult moment appropriate at the time? If you felt it was not, why not? What would you do differently?
4. What did this incident make you aware of about your own personal experience, feelings and attitudes? What did it make you aware of about your own professional knowledge and skills?
5. What was the most rewarding aspect of the interventions provided?
6. What do you need to do to take care of yourself (today, tonight, over the next several weeks)?

Student Re-Entry Plan

Consider the following strategies and accommodations for a student returning to school after being impacted by a significant event:

1. Prior to student return, consider a **modified classroom discussion**. Suggested talking points:

I want to take a moment to talk about (name). As we discussed, he/she has recently been through a very difficult time. (Name) will be returning on _____ and I think we should take a moment to talk about some things we can do or not do to make his/her return to school as positive as possible.

First, like any other day at school we need to show respect for one another. In being respectful to _____, please don't bombard _____ with questions about what had happened. If he/she wants to talk about it that will be his/her choice to do so.

Remind yourself what it means to be a friend to someone. How do you want to be treated by others? It's perfectly normal to want to be there for a friend in need. If you want to tell _____ that you are sorry about what happened, that's ok. It's ok to share with _____ that if he/she wants to talk, you'll be there for them.

It's also ok if you're not sure what to say. When something like this happens, we may feel unsure of what the right words are to say to someone. Again, this is normal. To say nothing is ok too.

Remember, our school is a safe place to be and we want nothing more than to have everyone here feel that they are safe and that they belong. The best thing you can do is to treat _____ with respect, just as you would want to be treated.

If you have questions, or if you see someone treating _____ in a way that you feel is inappropriate, let a staff member know so they can help.

2. On the morning of the return, consider have a **brief meeting with the student**, possible accompanied by their guardian. Assure them that they are an important person in the school, that their school is a safe place to be, and that support is available to them should they feel the need.

3. Students have the **right to choose how they cope** with the event, so they should have options. Possible accommodations might include: Checking in with the counselor, designating a time-out location, a modified schedule, calling home periodically. But keep in mind some students may prefer a normal school day with no special treatment.

4. It may be advisable to have a **brief meeting at the end of day 1** to see how the day went from the student's perspective. Depending on the student's response, make a plan for subsequent days.