



**Willamette**  
EDUCATION SERVICE DISTRICT

# Crisis Response Team Manual

**With grateful acknowledgment to Lincoln County School District and Susan Graves for their time and effort in preparing this manual, the accompanying video and for allowing WESD to borrow liberally from their product. We all benefit from their generosity.**

# WESD CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM

This manual will focus on our Crisis Response Team (CRT) procedures for times when there is a **serious loss in the school community** such as the death of a student or teacher from an accident, suicide, illness, etc. While we don't experience serious losses in our schools regularly, it is important to be prepared so we respond in a planned and caring way when there is a death in the school community. Our tri-county plan and trained Crisis Response Team (CRT) help students and adults in the grieving and healing process.

The procedures in this manual coincide with a 20 minute, 4-part staff training video covering 1) Administrator Roles & Responsibilities; 2) Classroom Strategies & Guidelines; 3) The Support Room; and 4) The Memory Activity. If you would like to watch the video you can go to <https://vimeo.com/168241575>.

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### MASS CASUALTY INCIDENT

These Crisis Response Team procedures generally deal with a single event loss. In the event of a mass casualty incident the district may use a nationally recognized crisis intervention program and team such as *NOVA* (National Organization for Victim Assistance) or the US Department of Education's "Serve" program to assist with recovery activities. In addition, the National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement ([www.cincinnatichildrens.org/school-crisis](http://www.cincinnatichildrens.org/school-crisis)) provides technical assistance and consultation to schools at no charge to assist with minimizing the negative impact of disasters on the functioning of students and staff after a crisis or loss.

## ADMINISTRATOR ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

The school administrator is in charge of the Crisis Response Team activities in his or her school.

The following are suggested procedures/activities based on best practice (not all activities may be utilized, based on specifics of the incident).

- **VERIFY THE FACTS** Upon learning about a loss, the first step is to verify the facts with an official source, such as the police or hospital. Use the “Crisis Information Sheet” on page 6 of this guide to help facilitate this.
- **NOTIFY THE SUPERINTENDENT’S OFFICE** Immediately contact the Superintendent’s Office. The Superintendent or Designee will notify the WESD Crisis Response Team Coordinator, who will assist you with your CRT efforts.
- **CONTACT THE WESD CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM COORDINATOR** Determine the size of the Crisis Response Team you will need and at which district location(s). The Coordinator will then assemble the CRT for your district.
- **NOTIFY YOUR STAFF** If you learn of the loss during non-school hours and time permits, use your school phone tree to notify staff with basic information before they arrive at school. In this phone call you can also direct them to check their email for more information. Schedule a staff meeting to take place before school starts.
- **NOTIFY THE BUS COMPANY** Our bus drivers are the first to see many of our students each day.
- **NOTIFY PRINCIPALS OF OTHER SCHOOLS** Determine if the deceased has family members in other schools and be sure to notify the principals of those schools so they can make appropriate arrangements in their schools. Administrators of other schools should notify their staff to be on alert. We never know who might be affected by the loss. Look for ways to support the grieving school: flowers, food, care packages, cards, etc.
- **ARRANGE FOR SUBS** Consider arranging for subs for key teachers and other staff who may be needed on the CRT, or for those who are most affected by the loss - like those who had close relationships to the deceased or are grieving another loss. Make sure your staff has necessary relief throughout the day.
- **MAKE A SUPPORT ROOM PLAN** Choose an appropriate location and have adequate supplies. Follow the *Support Room Guidelines* on page 12 of this manual.
- **IDENTIFY YOUR INTERNAL SUPPORTS** Communicate to the Crisis Response Team Leader who he/she can connect with while on site - counselors, other CRT trained staff, etc.
- **MAKE A PLAN TO MONITOR HALLS AND COMMON AREAS** You may find students needing support who do not initially go to the Support Room. Keep staff visible in common areas to greet and connect with students.
- **PREPARE FOR BEFORE-SCHOOL STAFF MEETING** Prepare packets for teachers which include 1) staff meeting handout, 2) written announcement to share with students, 3) “Classroom Guidelines & Strategies/Supporting Your Students” sheet.
- **WRITE A STUDENT ANNOUNCEMENT** This should be read to all students, in their classrooms, at the same time. Do this early in the day, first period if possible. Remember privacy laws and only give the necessary facts. Be sure to notify staff & classes who are not at school that day like those on field trips, at athletic events, etc. Determine if extra-curricular activities will take place. Notify athletic coaches or other staff as appropriate.
- **HOLD A BEFORE-SCHOOL STAFF MEETING** Hold an early morning staff meeting announcing the loss and allow a few minutes for staff to digest the news.
  - Discuss plans for the day.
  - Distribute the written announcement to be shared in classrooms, along with the “Classroom Guidelines/Supporting Your Students” sheet.
  - Discuss guidelines for the Support Room.
  - Determine if there are any teachers who would like assistance talking with their students about the loss.If a staff meeting is not feasible, this communication can be written and sensitively given to staff members simultaneously during the school day. Do not make this announcement over the intercom. Announce plans for an after-school meeting.

- **CARE FOR STAFF** Support your staff by providing tissues, comfort foods, and beverages in the staff room. Determine if a separate Support Room should be opened just for staff members.
- **FOOD PROTOCOL** Identify a point person to coordinate food for the Support Room and/or Staff Room and to oversee all food donations. Sometimes, big-hearted community members will reach out and provide food for the grieving school. Follow these food guidelines:
  - **Support Room:** Have bottled water and healthy snacks such as fruit, crackers or granola bars available.
  - **Staff Room:** Comfort foods of all sorts are allowed in the Staff Room. This is sometimes a good place to distribute any foods that are donated.
  - **Other Areas:** Follow district guidelines
  - **CRT Members:** Check to make sure they have lunches. Sometimes they come so quickly they don't have time to make their own arrangements. Some districts provide lunches through their cafeteria services, some districts will order sandwiches. Let them know where they can get water and/or coffee if desired.
- **CONTACT THE FAMILY** of the deceased to express the sympathy of the school and to arrange a home visit the same or next day if possible. Cards or flowers are usually welcomed. Learn about their plans for a funeral or memorial service. Invite them to attend the school's Memory Activity (if one is planned).
- **PREPARE A PARENT LETTER** to send home with students explaining the loss and telling them how the school is responding. Attach the "Supporting Your Students" handout which includes suggestions for dealing with their child's questions or feelings of grief and sadness. Be sure to have the letter translated into Spanish if needed.
- **WRITE A STATEMENT** Work with the Superintendent's Office to write a statement to be used for phone inquiries and email it to your staff, the district office and other district sites. Include who, what, when, current status and how the school is responding. As usual, consider privacy laws when designing this statement.
- **PROVIDE BULLETIN BOARD** Consider designating a bulletin board in the school where students and staff can get accurate, updated information about the loss, the Support Room, the Memory Activity, and information about the family funeral or memorial service. Be sure to regularly monitor the board to protect against vandalism – pick a place that is open and visible to front office staff.
- **HOLD AN AFTER-SCHOOL STAFF MEETING** Hold a short staff meeting after school to debrief the day's events and to plan for the coming days.
  - Debrief: Discuss what went well and what could be improved upon.
  - Find out who needs extra support - both students and staff - and make appropriate arrangements. Consider using a Sticky-Note Activity in which staff members write the names of students who they think might need additional support. Collect the sticky notes and read the names out loud, asking for staff volunteers to check in with those students. The same activity can be done with staff members putting down staff members' names. Instead of reading staff names out loud, the principal can discreetly assign appropriate staff to check in with them.
  - Determine what additional support is needed and available for the next several days.
  - Share information about the family memorial service and solicit help for planning the school memory activity.
- **CONSIDER BUILDING SAFETY/SECURITY** As always all staff, visitors, parents and CRT members from other schools should sign in and wear a visible ID Badge. Keep media representatives out of the building unless a specific, isolated media area is designated. Increase common area supervision indoors and outside if needed.
- **RISK MANAGEMENT/LEGAL COUNSEL** Determine if your district's legal counsel needs to be informed about the situation to help guide you in any way.
- **MEDIA** The Superintendent's Office may designate a person to go to your school and interface with the media. If not, refer all media inquiries to the Superintendent's Office.
- **PLAN THE MEMORY ACTIVITY** Work with your CRT and any interested staff to plan a Memory Activity. Follow guidelines on pages 18-19 in this manual.

- **BEYOND THE FIRST DAY/WEEK** Although the first day and week are usually the most intensive for CRT activities, there are a few things to keep in mind over time.
  - Watch for staff or students needing support beyond the initial grieving period.
  - Arrange for referrals to school or community mental health professionals.
  - Determine if there is a need for a parent information meeting.
  - You will eventually need to make arrangements with the family to return the personal belongings of the deceased.

## CRISIS INFORMATION SHEET

Use this form to help you verify the facts & gather additional information about the student/staff & family.

### STUDENT/STAFF INFORMATION

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student/Staff Member's Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Grade

\_\_\_\_\_  
Age

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of School

\_\_\_\_\_  
Principal

\_\_\_\_\_  
Teacher/Advisor

### VERIFY FACTS

Upon learning about a loss, the first step is to verify the facts with an official source, such as the police or hospital.  
**(Include date, time, medical care provided, who confirmed the facts, etc.)**

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

### FAMILY INFORMATION

Include any special circumstances or concerns.

Parents/Spouse Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Do they have any siblings or relatives attending or working in any of our schools?

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Relative

\_\_\_\_\_  
Relationship to deceased

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of School attending

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Relative

\_\_\_\_\_  
Relationship to deceased

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of School attending

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Relative

\_\_\_\_\_  
Relationship to deceased

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of School attending

### OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

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

## INFORMING STAFF

**TELEPHONE CALL** If time allows, all staff should be notified by phone the day or evening before the school day intervention is planned. Remind each staff person making the phone calls to go on to the next person on their list if they have to leave a message. When possible, personal phone calls are preferred, but depending on time limitations, this call may be made through a district's mass-phone call system. A supplemental staff email can also be sent with more detailed information.

Considerations:

- Identify yourself. If leaving a recorded message, also give date and time of message.
- Begin with a statement of regret
- Provide basic and specific information about the event—who died or was hurt, when, and the circumstances, if known. Stick to the verified facts; do not speculate or engage in rumors or enlarge the information in any way.
- Inform the person about the before-school staff meeting including the time and place, and that their attendance is required.
- End with encouragement to be supportive of one another.

### ~ SAMPLE STAFF PHONE CALL ~

This is \_\_\_\_\_ from (District/School name).  
I'm sorry to have to call you with sad (or tragic) news.

Tonight we learned of the death of one of our students, Jane Doe, who was in Mr. Turner's 5th grade class at (School). She died in a two-car crash on Hwy 20 earlier this evening.

There will be a required staff meeting prior to school tomorrow at 7:30 in the media center to prepare for the day. In the meanwhile, please check your school district email for more details about this tragic news including who to call with questions if needed.

Times like these remind us of how important it is to come together to value, support, and care for each other.

**EMAIL** Send a staff email with more detailed information. Repeat information shared in the phone call but elaborate with additional instructions/information as appropriate. Be sure to include who they can contact (include phone number) if they need to talk.

### ~ SAMPLE STAFF EMAIL ~

Staff Members,

Tonight we learned of the death of one of our students, Jane Doe, who was in Mr. Turner's 5th grade class at Taft Elementary School. She died in a two-car crash on Hwy 20 earlier this evening. The driver of the vehicle, her mom, fell asleep at the wheel and sustained minor injuries. There was nobody else in the car. The occupants of the other car survived with minor injuries.

We are currently putting together support for Taft Elementary. This support will include a staff meeting prior to school tomorrow at 7:30 in the media center. Additional administrative support, certified and classified substitutes will be available in the building on an as needed basis. There will be a staffed Support Room for students and support in the staff room for staff. Further information will be shared at the staff meeting.

Several of Jane's cousins attend school at Taft High and at Oceanlake Elementary Schools. There will be standup staff meetings tomorrow at 8:00 a.m. at both Taft High and Oceanlake. There will be a district person at each of these schools to assess if support will be needed.

Attendance at the staff meetings is required.

Taft Elementary's principal is acting as the point person with the family, medical support and Law enforcement. Please do not call him/her for details so he/she can focus on those tasks. However, Ruth Jones has agreed to be the staff contact and can be reached at home at 541-994-xxxx, or cell 541-921-xxxx if needed.

Times like these remind us of how important it is to come together to value, support, and care for each other.

## STAFF MEETING HANDOUT

**WRITTEN HANDOUT** Prepare a written statement to give to each staff member at the morning staff meeting. If there is not time for a staff meeting, because you found out about the death or illness after school started, this written statement can be hand delivered to each staff member. When including details of the death, include only what is known about the loss since details are easily distorted.

Also distribute the handouts entitled, "Classroom Guidelines & Strategies" and "Supporting Your Students". Encourage staff members to review this for classroom discussion ideas, helpful student activities, and other ways to support students.

### ~ SAMPLE WRITTEN HANDOUT FOR STAFF MEETING ~

November 29, 2011

What Happened: Yesterday, Jane Doe, one of our students from Mr. Turner's 5th grade class died. She died in a two-car crash on Hwy 20 last night. The driver of the vehicle, her mom, fell asleep at the wheel and sustained minor injuries. Both of them were wearing their seatbelts. There was nobody else in their car. The people in the other car survived with minor injuries.

General Information: Our principal spent most of the evening supporting Jane's mother and father at the hospital. Jane is an only child, but has several cousins at both Taft High and Oceanlake Elementary Schools. Both of those schools have been alerted of the loss.

Schedule Changes: We are cancelling today's pep assembly and will run classes on their normal schedules. There will be a staff meeting after school today at 3:30 in the Media Center to debrief today and plan for the rest of the week. Our afterschool program will run on its normal schedule.

Support for Staff: We've brought in Roger Stewart as administrative support to free up your principal to be available for today's special needs. Grief affects us all in different ways. Some of you may need extra breaks today and others may just want help leading a classroom discussion. Check in with Mr. Taylor after this meeting if you'd like assistance with your class today. Certified and classified substitutes will be available as needed. There will also be support in the staff room.

Student Announcement: Attached is an announcement that should be read to all students, in their classrooms, during the beginning of first period. This will minimize the chance of their hearing the news haphazardly from poorly informed or misinformed sources. It will also help staff identify students who may need additional support.

Support for Students: The Support Room will be staffed and ready for students at 9:00 in the Media Center. If you are concerned about a student or if a student asks to leave your classroom because s/he is upset about this death or trauma, the Support Room is the appropriate place for the student to go. If a student didn't know Jane you should still allow him/her to go to the Support Room if requested. There may be another death or loss troubling this student. If students are not really using the services, they will be sent back to class. Please do not encourage students to go home for the day. We will work with those kinds of decisions/issues in the Support Room.

The Media & Public Information: We are preparing a written statement that office staff will use for phone inquiries. We will also email this statement to you so we can all remain consistent with the information we are giving out without violating any privacy laws. We are setting up a bulletin board in the front lobby where students and staff can get accurate, updated information about the loss, the Support Room, the Memory Activity, and information about the family funeral or memorial service. The Superintendent's Office has sent us a representative, MaryJo Kerlin, who will handle all media inquiries.



## INFORMING STUDENTS

How and from whom students receive difficult news greatly affects how they will respond to the loss.

**WRITE A STUDENT ANNOUNCEMENT** This should be read to all students, in their classrooms, at the same time. Do this early in the day, first period if possible. This will minimize the chance of their hearing the news haphazardly from poorly informed or misinformed sources. It will also help staff identify students who may need additional intervention.

Avoid announcements in assemblies, other large groups, or over the intercom system, since it is too difficult to monitor each student's reaction. Those experiencing the greatest impact may slip away and get lost in the crowd.

Limit the announcement to verified facts. Remember privacy laws and only give the necessary facts.

### ~ SAMPLE STUDENT ANNOUNCEMENT ~

(Modify to make age-appropriate)

Today we received tragic (or sad) news. We were informed that one of our students, \_\_\_\_\_ died by \_\_\_\_\_.  
(give basic, appropriate information without too much detail)

When events like this happen, it is not unusual for students and staff to react with shock, sadness, fear, anger, or other strong feelings. These reactions may rise and fall today and for several days to come.

Some of us will want to have quiet time alone and others may want time to talk. Some of you who didn't know \_\_\_\_\_ may want to return to your schoolwork sooner than others will. We must all practice patience and show respect for everyone's reactions.

We can take some time to talk about what has happened.

When most of you are ready to continue schoolwork, those who still need time to talk or think may go to the Support Room located in \_\_\_\_\_. You will need to sign out of the class or get a pass from your teacher as you leave, then sign into the Support Room and give your pass to an adult when you arrive. The Support Room is a place for you to be with your friends to talk about what has happened. It is important that all students are with an adult because we are responsible for you and this may be a tough day. If you wish to talk alone with someone, let one of the adults in the Support Room know.

The school day will remain on schedule, but teachers in any class may modify regular classroom activities in order to allow you to talk about this event. Students are expected to be in rooms with adults present.

## CLASSROOM GUIDELINES & STRATEGIES

As a classroom teacher you will help your students respond to the death or tragedy. First, gather your class together and read the announcement. Use the written information provided and share only factual information. Encourage students not to share rumors or gossip. The language we use is critical and it's helpful for teachers to say that the person has died rather than using vague terms like "left us" or "passed away", which can be confusing to some students.

**SHARING FEELINGS** Convey that your classroom is a safe place for them to express their feelings about the loss. How you react will be important to them. It's helpful to express your own sadness without losing control of either yourself—or the class. Sometimes we don't realize how strongly we will be affected, either by this loss, or because it triggers memories of another death or loss in our past. Crisis Response Team members or subs will be available in the school in case you need help with the discussion or a break.

**LEAD A DISCUSSION** Here are some possible talking points:

- "How many of you had already heard about \_\_\_\_\_ before you got to school today? What did you hear?"  
Give students time to respond. After a few students have talked, point out that everyone heard something different, and that everyone is curious and wants more information.
- Share the factual information you have received. Encourage students not to share rumors or gossip.
- "People have a lot of different kinds of reactions and feelings at times like this. What are yours?" (Let the students share for a while and listen carefully. Be supportive and responsive to what you hear.)
- "Some of you may be thinking about similar incidents from your past." (Let them share memories/experiences.)
- "Here's what we think will happen next." (Offer details of the planned memory activity and funeral arrangements)
- If appropriate, talk about how students can welcome back classmates who will return to school after a death in the family. (Try not to avoid the person, don't be overly concerned but try to be available for them to talk if they wish.) Helping students plan ahead for these encounters will give them coping skills and confidence in dealing with difficult situations.

**THE SUPPORT ROOM** At the conclusion of the classroom discussion, usually after 15-20 minutes, you can begin to move on to the day's lesson. Most students will be able to make this transition, but a few may need additional time or support before they are ready to return to regular classroom activities. Encourage them to go to the Support Room, giving them a Support Room pass and having them sign out when they leave your classroom. In some cases, you may want to ask for a CRT member or other staff to accompany them to the Support Room.

**ELEMENTARY AGE RESPONSES & ACTIVITIES** Children understand and process death differently as they mature. For example, elementary children deeply affected by a loss may be tearful and distraught one minute and playing the next. They sometimes move in and out of grief quickly. You can help children express their caring and sadness by having them draw pictures or write cards for the family. At the staff meeting after school, give these to the CRT team or principal who will screen all the cards and messages before they are shared with the family.

**TEEN RESPONSES & ACTIVITIES** In contrast, teens have greater maturity and often respond with strong emotions to the death of a classmate or teacher. It's not unusual for teens to feel and express guilt, sadness, or anger about a death. Their emotions are already in high gear and a loss will often exaggerate their feelings and responses. Don't be surprised by tearful or angry outbursts or withdrawn and unusually quiet behavior. In classroom discussions following the announcement you can have students share memories and favorite moments with the deceased, reflect on their own and others' feelings, and talk about responses to similar incidents. You may consider having the class journal, write poems or essays, or write and illustrate cards for the family. At the staff meeting after school, give these to the CRT team or principal who will screen all the cards and messages before they are shared with the family.

**CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT** It's important to maintain structure, stability and predictability in your classroom. Provide extra support and encouragement while maintaining your expectations for behavior and performance. You may notice some students having a hard time later in the day who need to go to the Support Room hours after the initial discussion. The Support Room staff monitors students closely and will return them to class when they are ready.

**FOLLOW-UP** Throughout the day make note of any students who appear especially affected by the loss. Give these names to your principal or CRT leader at the after-school meeting so they can be monitored in the days to come. In the days and weeks following the crisis, watch for behavior changes, such as irritability, absenteeism, acting out, high-risk behavior, headaches, or stomachaches.

## SUPPORTING YOUR STUDENTS

### Support for Younger Children

- Answer questions honestly in language s/he can understand.
- Share your own reactions and feelings, including crying if appropriate.
- Share similar experiences you may have had.
- Ask what s/he may be angry about or afraid of.
- Describe the funeral service ahead of time and ask if s/he wants to attend.
- Give lots of hugs and reassurance.
- Expect some regressive behaviors from when they were younger. These will stop on their own in time. Try to look for the feelings beneath the behavior.

### Support for Teenagers

- Express sympathy directly—"I'm sorry this happened to you."
- Be available to listen.
- Respect his/her need to be alone.
- Give hugs or flowers, cook a favorite food, lend a teddy bear.
- Find out if s/he wants to do "routine" activities or wants a break.
- Tell her/him about any support groups of peers who are also grieving.
- Ask if s/he wants to keep a journal or diary.
- Ask him/her about addressing a letter of "regrets and appreciations" to the person who died.
- Describe the funeral service ahead and ask if s/he wants to attend.

### **When Professional Help Is Needed – Warning Signs:**

Any of these signs may be present in initial states of grief. Pay special attention if they persist over time. If you have concerns about a student or staff member, notify your school counselor, administrator, or Crisis Team member.

### Physical Signs:

- Changes in eating patterns—loss of appetite or overeating
- Changes in sleep patterns—insomnia or sleeping much more than usual
- Nausea
- Headaches
- Stomach aches

### Behavioral Signs:

- Aggressive behavior, exaggerated displays of power, anger, rage
- Withdrawal
- Inability to focus or concentrate
- Complete absorption in daydreams
- Compulsive care-giving
- Prone to accidents, self-destructive behavior
- Stealing or other illegal activity
- Use or abuse of drugs or alcohol—often for self-medication due to emotional pain
- Regression--behaviors normally characteristic of a younger child

### Emotional Signs:

- Persistent anxieties
- Desire to die
- Inability or unwillingness to speak of the deceased
- Exaggerated clinging to others
- Expression of only negative OR only positive feelings about the deceased
- Absence of visible grief
- Strong resistance to forming new relationships

## APOYANDO A SUS HIJOS

### Apoyo para los niños pequeños

- Conteste sus preguntas honestamente usando palabras que entiende.
- Comparta sus reacciones y sentimientos, incluso llorar si es apropiado.
- Comparta sus experiencias semejantes que haya tenido.
- Pregúntele qué es lo que le molesta o qué es lo que le da miedo.
- Describa de antemano el servicio funerario y pregúntele si desea asistir.
- Déle muchos abrazos y consuelo.
- Se puede anticipar comportamiento regresivo de cuando era más joven. Ese comportamiento parará por su cuenta después de un tiempo. Trate de encontrar los sentimientos que son la causa del comportamiento.

### Apoyo para los adolescentes

- Exprese su pésame directamente: "Lamento que eso le sucedió."
- Escúchele cuando quiere hablar.
- Respete su necesidad de estar sólo.
- Dele abrazos o flores, prepárele su comida favorita, préstele un oso de peluche.
- Pregúntele si quiere hacer actividades de rutina o si quiere tomar un descanso.
- Infórmele sobre grupos de apoyo de otros jóvenes quienes también sienten el pesar.
- Pregúntele si quiere mantener un diario.
- Pregúntele sobre escribir una carta de lamentos y agradecimientos para la persona que falleció.
- Describa de antemano el servicio funerario y pregúntele si desea asistir.

### **Cuando La Ayuda Profesional Es Necesario – Las Señales**

Las siguientes señales podrán presentarse cuando comienza el pesar. Presta mucha atención si persisten. Si tiene alguna preocupación sobre un alumno o un empleado, avise al consejero escolar, a un administrador o a un miembro del equipo de crisis.

### Señales físicas:

- Cambios de alimentación - pérdida de apetito o comer en exceso
- Cambios con el sueño - insomnio o dormir más de lo usual
- Náusea, Dolores de cabeza
- Dolores de estómago

### Señales de comportamiento:

- Comportamiento agresivo, exhibiciones exageradas de poder, de ira, de furia
- Retirarse
- Incapacidad para enfocarse o concentrarse
- Completamente absorto en las fantasías
- Compulsivamente se cuida a otras personas
- Propenso a accidentes, comportamiento autodestructivo
- Robo o cualquier otra actividad ilegal
- Uso o abuso de drogas o alcohol - a menudo para automedicarse debido al dolor emocional
- Regresión-- características que normalmente son de un niño menor

### Signos emocionales:

- Ansiedad persistente,
- Deseo de morir
- Incapacidad o poco dispuesto a hablar de la persona fallecida
- Aferrarse exageradamente a otras personas
- Expresar sentimientos de la persona fallecida que sólo son positivos o negativos
- Ausencia de pena visible
- Fuerte resistencia a la formación de nuevas relaciones

## SUPPORT ROOM GUIDELINES

The Support Room is a designated room in the school where students and sometimes staff can receive support in a crisis situation. In the Support Room we try to create a safe and caring environment so students will talk to each other or staff and have companionship as they deal with grief together.

**LOCATION** The location should be easy to get to and not have a stigma attached to it. Often the library or another quiet area is used. For the set-up, there should be movable chairs, tables for activities, a comfortable space with a sense of privacy, and soft music in the background if possible.

**SUPPORT ROOM SUPPLIES** Each district/school should have Support Room Supplies. See the suggested supplies list on page 15.

**STAFFING** The CRT Support Room Coordinator will oversee all Support Room functions, including setting up a staffing schedule, review this Support Room Guidelines sheet, and making sure all Support Room Staff wear an official Support Room Name Badge and sign the Nondisclosure Statement (page 13). There should always be a minimum of 2 trained CRT members in the Support Room. At least one of those CRT Members may be from your school. They will provide a familiar face and presence for the kids in a stressful situation. Depending on the number of students coming to the Support Room, you may need additional CRT members. The Support Room Coordinator will review this with the CRT Team Leader and CRT Coordinator.

**SIGN & SIGNING IN** Hang a Support Room sign on the door. Support Room Staff members will greet all students at the door and have them sign in with their name, classroom and the time they arrived. There is an example of a sign-in/out sheet on page 14 of this manual.

**HYDRATION & SNACKS** Have bottled water and healthy snacks such as fruit, crackers or granola bars available. Be aware of scheduled lunch periods so students don't miss lunch.

**LISTEN** As a trained CRT member you are there to help students express their feelings and to understand that grief affects people differently. Your job is to listen, ask questions, and validate students' feelings. Often you'll be working with small groups, and sometimes talking with students individually. As adults in the Support Room we need to listen more than talk, to let kids say what's on their minds. Avoid giving long answers and explanations. Most often they need a good listener who can help them talk it out. Some kids need time alone to think quietly and others want to gather in a small group to talk about the person who died or about previous losses they have experienced. It's not unusual for students to talk about deaths of family members or pets, or things they have heard about or seen on TV.

**ADDITIONAL SUPPORT** Discreetly keep an on-going list of students who may need additional support beyond the Support Room. Share this list with the CRT Support Room Coordinator or CRT Team Leader at the after-school meeting.

**ACTIVITIES** Use the supplies from your Support Room Supplies list (page 15) and set out some activities for students to do in the Support Room. In elementary schools many students like to draw pictures of the deceased or of activities they shared. Often they write and illustrate cards for the family, or list happy memories they shared. In a middle school and high school Support Room students also like to make cards or write letters to the family expressing their sympathy or sharing good memories. They may also want to write poetry, essays, or journal entries or contribute to a list of helpful things to do for the family. In some Support Rooms a banner is made from Post-It note messages attached to butcher paper. You might make a Question Wall or Feelings List so everyone can contribute.

**SCREEN CARDS** Collect all the cards and pictures to take to the after school staff meeting. Don't be surprised if some of their messages are not appropriate for the family to receive. The CRT Team Leader, Support Room Coordinator and CRT Team members will screen them before sending them on to the family or displaying them at the Memory Activity.

**RETURNING STUDENTS TO CLASS** While in the Support Room keep track of time so that at the end of each class period you can encourage students who are ready to return to class and resume the regular school day and have them sign out. Students can always return later in the day if they need more time or support.



School \_\_\_\_\_

**WESD Crisis Response Team  
Nondisclosure Statement**

The members of the Crisis Response Team affirm their belief in the worth and dignity of the individual and believe that it is their professional responsibility to fully respect the right of privacy of those who are involved in Crisis Response Team calls.

Confidentiality of personally identifiable information includes, but it not limited to:

- Student or staff names
- Names of the student or staff members’ family
- Personal identifiers such as address, social security number, etc.
- Any other information which might identify the student or staff member

Confidentiality will not be breached by the Crisis Response Team Member except:

- Where there is a clear and present danger to the client or to other persons
- When child abuse is suspected, triggering a mandatory report
- To consult with Crisis Response Team coordinators (i.e. school principal, designated team leader, WESD Crisis Response Team Coordinator, Mental Health supervisor) when it is in the interest of the student/staff member
- When the student/staff member waives this right in writing
- During confidential Crisis Response Team debriefings for staff development purposes

When Crisis Response Team members respond to a school’s crisis call, they are acting in volunteer roles and are therefore required to follow that school’s policies and procedures and defer to the decisions of the building administrator.

Professional ethics and confidentiality are most important. Crisis Response Team volunteers are expected to comply with all rules and regulations set forth by the district.

**My signature below certifies that I have read, fully understand and agree with the information above and agree to abide by these procedures. My signature also indicates that I understand that the goodwill of the Crisis Response Team depends upon, among other things, keeping information confidential.**

Printed Name	Initial	Date



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## SUPPORT ROOM SUPPLIES

Each district/school is responsible for Support Room Supplies needed for the Crisis Response Team efforts. Schools are responsible to reorganize and replenish these supplies after they are used, in order to be ready for the next time they are needed.

### COMFORT & ACTIVITIES SUPPLIES

- Tissues
- Water
- Snacks (fruit, granola bars, BRAT, etc.)
- Colored Construction Paper or multicolored copy paper
- 1 sheet of butcher paper
- Pens/Pencils
- Markers
- Colored Pencils
- Crayons
- Colored Post-it Notes
- Manipulatives (Play Dough, Floam, magnets)
- Optional - Other craft supplies
  - Mod Podge
  - Rocks
  - Pipe Cleaners
  - Glue Sticks
  - Scotch Tape
  - Scissors
  - Stuffed Animals
  
- Photograph of the student



Sample Support Room Supplies

## **INFORMING PARENTS**

Prepare a Parent Letter to send home with students explaining the loss and telling them how the school is responding. Attach the sheet "Supporting Your Students" to the back of the letter. Provide the letter in Spanish if appropriate.

### **PRIMARY CONSIDERATIONS**

- Always use your school or district letterhead for letters.
- Always use a complete date on the letter (month, day, and year).
- Begin with a statement of regret
- Tell the basic, verified facts about the crisis
- Give information about what the school has done and will do to support its students.
- Include your plans for a Memory Activity. (Be sure to indicate whether parents are invited.)
- Provide suggestions about how they can best support their children.

### **OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

- Give information about the funeral or memorial service if known and let them know whether an excused absence or parent permission is needed for attending the funeral
- Tell parents how they can receive updated information
- If a community meeting is scheduled, provide the time, date, place, and planned agenda. These meetings are very helpful if you are dealing with trauma. (Consult with your Crisis Response Team Leader)
- Provide information about any fund-raiser or other organized effort to help the family.

See Sample Parent Letter on next page.



**SAMPLE PARENT LETTER \* ENGLISH**

(SCHOOL OR DISTRICT LETTERHEAD)

Date

Dear Parents and Guardians,

We had sad news at our school today. We learned of the death of one of our students, \_\_\_\_\_, who was in \_\_\_\_\_'s \_\_\_\_\_ grade class. S/he died (briefly give cause of death and time/date).

We helped support our students by setting up a Support Room staffed by specially trained members of our Crisis Response Team. Classroom teachers spent time allowing students to share their reactions to \_\_\_\_\_'s death. Those students needing extra time to talk were encouraged to go to the Support Room. We will provide a Support Room tomorrow if needed.

Our school is planning a Memory Activity for students to formally pay tribute to \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ (time and place). (Parents are welcome to attend.)

This event might raise questions, concerns, or fears in your child. Be sensitive about whether s/he wants or needs to talk. Bring it up if s/he seems reluctant to do so. Ask about his/her reactions and accept the answers without judgment. Answer all questions directly and honestly. Sometimes a child needs to ask the same question repeatedly. Answer patiently and eventually they will get what they need and stop. They may also focus on the upsetting details of the death. Again, please answer those questions honestly, including saying, "I don't know" when that's true. Do not compare death with sleep or any other state of consciousness. Some children can become sleep deprived, fearing they will die if they sleep. Provide comfort with extra hugs and support.

If you have any questions or concerns about this, please feel free to call me.

Sincerely,

*(Principal's Signature)*

Name, Title, Phone Number

**SAMPLE PARENT LETTER \* SPANISH**

Estimados Padres y Tutores,

Hoy tuvimos una triste noticia en nuestra escuela, [*estudiante o empleado*] que estaba en la clase de [*Nombre de maestro*], en el grado [*numero/grado*], falleció a consecuencia del [*causa de muerte y fecha/hora*].

Hemos ayudado apoyar a nuestros estudiantes mediante la creación de una Sala De Atención con personal especialmente capacitado, que forman parte de nuestro Equipo de Apoyo a La Crisis. Los maestros de clases dieron tiempo para que los estudiantes expresaran sus sentimientos sobre la muerte de [*nombre*]. Esos estudiantes que necesitan más atención, fueron apoyados a usar la Sala De Atención. La Sala De Atención estará abierta para el uso de los estudiantes mañana si es necesario.

Nuestra escuela va llevar a cabo una actividad en memoria de [*nombre*] (hora y lugar). (Padres son bienvenidos)

Este hecho puede causar preguntas, miedo, o ansiedad en su hijo(a). Por favor sean prudentes con sus hijos si desean hablar al respecto. Es importante hablar con su hijo(a) aunque este renuente al tema. Explore y trate de entender las respuestas de su hijo(a) sin juzgar. Conteste todas las preguntas directamente y honestamente. A veces los niños necesitan hacer la misma pregunta más de una vez, o se enfocan en los detalles dolorosos. De nuevo por favor contestar las preguntas honestamente incluyendo "no se" cuando sea necesario. No compare la muerte con dormir u otro estado de conciencia. Algunos niños pueden ser de privados de sueño temiendo que morirá si se quedan dormidos. Brindeles ternura con abrazos y apoyo.

Si tiene preguntas o alguna preocupación, por favor comuníquese conmigo.

Atentamente,

*(Principal's Signature)*

Name, Title, Phone Number

