

# WINDHAM SCHOOL DISTRICT

## CRISIS/ GRIEF MANAGEMENT

**Statement of Purpose:**

The purpose of this plan of action is to provide the means for an organized and systematic school wide response to a crisis. It is designed so that a policy and process is in place that will ensure that the Windham School District (WSD) is an environment where students and faculty have the best opportunity to understand, grieve, and commemorate a crisis involving loss, and return to normalcy. This plan of action is the means by which the WSD seeks to provide an authentic and sensitive response to a crisis within the context of relatively normal school operations. Last, it takes purpose from the sense (value) that the WSD is a community that is dedicated to fully sharing the responsibility of helping one another at a time of loss.

**Crisis Management Reference Guide****1. Administration contacts family for information surrounding incident:**

- Offer condolences
- Inquire what the school can do to assist
- Discuss what students should be told

**2. Formation of a Crisis Management Team:**

- Superintendent
- Assistant Superintendent
- Administrators
- School Counselors
- School Psychologist
- School Nurse
- School Resource Officer

**3. Additional Members who may be contacted:**

- Fire Personnel
- Police
- Community Faith Leaders (i.e. St. Matthews, Windham Presbyterian Church, Windham Bible Chapel, etc.)
- Center for Life Management (CLM) 603-434-1577
- NH Disaster Behavioral Health Response Team (DBHRT) 603-271-2231

**4. Complete Critical Incident Assessment Tool (next page)****5. Distribute checklists to Superintendent, Principal and Crisis Team (following pages)**

**CRITICAL INCIDENT ASSESSMENT TOOL**  
**WHS - WMS - Center - GBS**

**Crisis Team Members Present:**

**Date:**

1. Incident:  
Date & time of occurrence:  
Location:  
Name(s) of decedents:  
Official cause of death:
2. Who were the responders to the incident? (i.e police, fire, school personnel, others)
3. Who has been contacted so far: (Superintendent, Principal, Other Schools, etc.)
4. Are there siblings and have they been notified? What schools do they attend? Have school personnel been notified?
5. Who is aware of the incident so far? (students, parents, media, etc.)
6. Were there witnesses to the incident? If yes, who?
7. If the incident involves a student(s), what school and community related activities are/were they involved in?
8. Are there any past events that may impact this incident?
9. What behavioral health supports are available? (i.e. CLM, DBHRT, churches, etc)
10. Recommendations:
11. Key Contacts and Phone Numbers:

New Hampshire DBHRT 603-271-2231 can provide consultation about appropriate handout materials, support services and interventions that might be appropriate at this stage.

### **CHECKLIST FOR SUPERINTENDENT**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Contact law enforcement to verify death and circumstances
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Notify key District Administrators and School Board Members
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Notify District Crisis Response Team and Identify a School Psychologist who will respond to the school
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Work with Principal to write statements/letters for release to faculty, parents and students (SEE ADDITIONAL FORMS FOR SAMPLES)
5. \_\_\_\_\_ Serve as media spokesperson or appoint designee. If requested, provide media with written statements and/or meet with media
6. \_\_\_\_\_ Provide support to school(s)
7. \_\_\_\_\_ Remind staff not to have contact with the media
8. \_\_\_\_\_ Develop a District/School Plan for faculty, staff and student participation in memorial activities
9. \_\_\_\_\_ Refer to established District Plan for Memorialization

### CHECKLIST FOR PRINCIPAL

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Contact and mobilize school based Crisis Response Team
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Reach out to family
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Notify faculty and staff depending on the day and/or time the incident occurred and conduct a faculty meeting (**see reverse page**). Address use of cell phones and Facebook by students to minimize rumors and inaccurate information
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Determine how classes will be run (See Classroom Procedure Sheet)
5. \_\_\_\_\_ Alert local behavioral health resources (CLM, DBHRT) to school situation and plans
6. \_\_\_\_\_ Work with Superintendent to write statements/letters for release to faculty, parents and students (SEE ADDITIONAL FORMS FOR SAMPLES)
7. \_\_\_\_\_ In coordination with Superintendent plan strategy to respond to requests from parents for information
8. \_\_\_\_\_ Provide support and clear information for secretaries to respond to the community
9. \_\_\_\_\_ Develop plan for student/staff dismissal the day of the reported incident
10. \_\_\_\_\_ Relay information about visiting hours and funeral services to staff, students and community as it becomes available
11. \_\_\_\_\_ Refer to established District Plan for Memorialization \*
12. \_\_\_\_\_ Meet with school based Crisis Response Team throughout crisis period
13. \_\_\_\_\_ Assemble Crisis Response Team and debrief
14. \_\_\_\_\_ If needed, designate a staff member to coordinate volunteers and donations
15. \_\_\_\_\_ Hold a staff meeting at the end of the day to allow faculty to review the day, share information, resources, stress/grief reactions and coping strategies (APPENDIX H)

## **NOTIFICATION OF FACULTY AND STAFF**

### **Incident occurs in the evening or over the weekend:**

Faculty will be called via phone chain that night (or Sunday night if during the weekend) informing them of a 7:00am faculty meeting in the auditorium the next morning. The Crisis Response Team will meet at 6:30am prior to the faculty meeting.

### **Incident occurs in the afternoon during school:**

The Crisis Response Team will meet as soon as possible followed by an informational Faculty meeting at 2:20pm that afternoon,

----or----

The Crisis Management Team will meet at 2:20pm followed by a Faculty meeting the next morning at 7:00am (this will require the use of the phone chain if an announcement can not be made before the end of the school day).

### **Incident occurs early in the school day, before lunch:**

The Crisis Management Team will meet as soon as possible followed by faculty notification during the fourth block of the day. Teacher will be asked to come to the Auditorium for a brief informational meeting during their lunch.

### **Incident requires near immediate notification:**

If circumstances warrant an immediate announcement, members of the Crisis Response Team will go to each classroom and notify teachers.

### **Preliminary announcement required:**

It may be necessary, in some cases, to make a preliminary announcement indicating the school's intention to verify any rumors that may be circulating and having an impact on normal school operations.

## NEEDS OF VARIOUS GROUPS

Following a critical incident impacting a school, it is necessary to assess the needs, including behavioral health needs of specific groups. The response to this event should take into account these various needs.

### **Common Needs of Everyone Affected:**

- Information about the event
- Permission and a place to grieve, as necessary
- Emotional Support

### **Administrator Needs:**

- Information about the deceased
- System for contacting necessary crisis resources
- Strategy for responding to staff, students, parents, community and media requests

### **Faculty Needs:**

- Information about the school's response plan
- Preparation for the student's reactions
- Guidance in structuring the school activities
- Involvement in the identification of high-risk students
- Information about resources within the school and community

### **Student Needs:**

- Outreach, especially to those most affected by the incident
- Information about resources within the school and community

### **Parent Needs:**

- Knowledge that their children are safe
- Information about the school's response
- Information on preparing for their children's reactions and questions
- Opportunity to be of service in appropriate ways

### **Community Needs: (depending on event)**

- General information about how the school is managing the incident
- Opportunity to be of service in appropriate ways

## DEBRIEFING

Person(s) completing the review:

Date:

**1. Identify your role in responding to this incident.**

**2. What services were provided and to whom?**

**3. What went right? What worked?**

**4. What may not have worked? What could have been improved?**

**5. Did the school policies and procedures assist or impede the response and delivery of services?**

**6. What did you learn from the event?**

## **CHECKLIST FOR CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Identify roles and assign tasks
2. \_\_\_\_\_ In consultation with Principal, contact community behavioral agencies for support and assistance if needed
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Identify personnel to oversee students in the support center
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Identify areas for individual support and locate an area for a support center (have age appropriate materials available i.e. crayons, paper, support materials, etc.)
5. \_\_\_\_\_ Provide crisis updates to community based behavioral supports regarding the response plan
6. \_\_\_\_\_ Identify and monitor at-risk students
7. \_\_\_\_\_ Identify and monitor at-risk faculty (may need assistance in classroom and/or substitute teachers)
8. \_\_\_\_\_ Contact counselor and nurse at schools where siblings/relatives of the identified student are enrolled
9. \_\_\_\_\_ Review special considerations in managing the impact of the incident (especially in the instance of a suicide) to avoid copycat behavior
10. \_\_\_\_\_ Provide stress management and self-care techniques for faculty (see Self-Care Suggestion sheet)
11. \_\_\_\_\_ Schedule daily meetings to assess the current status of the crisis and the effect of the interventions
12. \_\_\_\_\_ Assign a member of the Crisis Response team to monitor social media sites utilized by students and staff (APPENDIX G).
13. \_\_\_\_\_ Evaluate continuing needs for support services. The grief process differs for each individual. Promote peer support, as it is a natural support for teenagers.
14. \_\_\_\_\_ Continue to assess students, especially those most closely impacted or otherwise at risk.
15. \_\_\_\_\_ Discuss possible commemoration (a temporary memorial in school - such as a wall where students can post messages). Any in school memorial should be removed after a few days and anything remaining could be given to the family. Whatever long-term

commemoration is decided upon needs to be consistent for every student/faculty member who dies (whether in a car accident, from a terminal illness or by suicide).

## **SELF CARE SUGGESTION**

### **Take care of your physical needs:**

- Hydrate – drink enough water to increase urination in order to remove adrenaline from your system. Adrenaline dehydrates the body.
- Eat well – increase protein and decrease carbohydrates during times of change. Increase vegetable and fruit intake.
- Stay sober – it is recommended that you do not use alcohol or non-prescription drugs during high stress.
- Exercise – do not exercise more than you normally do. If you do not exercise regularly, exercise gently. Plan to make exercise part of your regular routine.
- Sleep – healing takes place during sleep. If there is difficulty falling asleep, consider restful and meditative activities that will assist you in getting to sleep. Try herbal teas, showers, hot baths, prayer, soothing music, etc.

### **Take care of your emotional needs:**

- Get grounded – sit comfortably and really feel your feet on the floor. Notice your butt in the chair. Observe your heart rate and your breath. Notice what happens as you pay more attention to your system.
- Talk to friends, family, counselor or cleric. Do not isolate. Carry a list of friends you care about, who support you no matter what and who are available to talk at any hour and vice versa.
- Write a journal. Follow spiritual practice, if you have one. Review your personal beliefs about meaning and purpose.
- Have fun, laugh. Laughter is a powerful elixir. Many people feel uncomfortable laughing or having any fun when life is feeling chaotic. This discomfort is common; however it is equally normal to find yourself laughing as part of healing and coping.

### **Learn to help yourself before helping others:**

- Continue to learn about normal reactions to change.
- Remember that you are responsible for your own attitudes and reactions. Recognize that feeling overwhelmed by change and chaos may signal a need for consultation or support.
- Recognize your own warning signs of stress – buddy up and commit to checking in with your partner. It may be difficult to assess your own reactions, especially as your personal trauma history may be triggered.
- Manage your work load – take breaks and set manageable goals for yourself

## **DAY OF FUNERAL**

Depending on the family's wishes, help disseminate information about the funeral to students, parents and staff, including:

- Location
- Time of the funeral (maintain normal school hours if funeral is during the day)
- Guidance regarding how to express condolences to the family
- What to expect (i.e. whether there will be an open casket)
- Policy for releasing students during school hours to attend (i.e. students will only be released with permission of parents/guardian)

Arrange for Guidance Counselors and community mental health professional to attend the funeral

Encourage parents to attend the funeral with their child

Parents and caretakers may be asking you if it is appropriate for their child to attend the wake, funeral or other burial services. There is no clear cut answer, however various factors such as the student's wishes, the parent's knowledge of their child's development, temperament and capabilities should all be considered when making the decision regarding their attendance. (APPENDIX I)

**\*\*Recognize that the day of the funeral may be difficult. Have additional supports available.\*\***

## **SCHOOL'S ATTENDANCE AT THE SERVICE**

The family of the deceased wishes for attendance at their loved one's service, needs to be considered. The family may openly invite and encourage the school's and students' attendance and participation. On the other hand there may be factors, including cultural, that may lead them to not want the presence of students. Gain knowledge of the facts of the Service including the length, what will occur and whether there will be a casket, cremation, etc. If there was a sudden, traumatic or violent death, the emotional response by adults attending may be overwhelming for certain age children. Sitting through a long service may be too much for younger children. Refer to APPENDIX J for information on memorials/services.

While at first glance, schools may appear to provide an obvious setting for a funeral or memorial service because of their connection to the community and their ability to accommodate a large crowd, it is strongly advised that such service **not** be held on school grounds, to enable the school to focus instead on maintaining its regular schedule, structure and routine. Additionally, using a room in the school for a funeral service can inextricably connect that space to the death, making it difficult for students to return there for regular classes or activities.

In situations where school personnel are able to collaborate with the family regarding the funeral or memorial service arrangements, it is strongly advised that the service be held outside of school hours. If the family does hold the service during school hours, it is recommended that the school remain open and that school buses not be used to transport students to and from service. Students should be permitted to leave school to attend the service only with parental permission (regular school protocols should be followed).

If possible, the school should coordinate with the family and funeral director to arrange for counselors to attend the service. In all cases, the Principal or another Administrator should attend the funeral.

#### **ONGOING/POST MEMORIAL SERVICE**

- Continue to monitor stress or grief reactions in both students and staff
- Provide support as necessary
- Update plans and phone tree as needed to prepare for the future
- Schedule an After Action Meeting to review the response to the critical incident, the school's emergency plan and to capture any lessons learned from the incident (APPENDIX K)
- Note the date for anniversary planning. Designate a staff member to notice milestones that may come up as the year moves along and plan how to manage these times with students and staff.

#### **ANNIVERSARY**

Recognize that the anniversary date may evoke stress or grief reactions from involved parties. Provide support or check in with the students or staff who may have been significantly impacted.

# Sample Letters

- Notification of Faculty and Staff
- Sample Notification Letters
  - Faculty Letters
  - Phone Statements
  - Parent Letters

## SAMPLE NOTIFICATION LETTERS

### Confidential Faculty Memorandum, Death of a Student

To: Windham High School Faculty and Staff  
From: Crisis Response Team/Principal  
Date:

We are saddened to learn of the death of XXXXXXXX, who died yesterday as a result of XXXXXXXX. This is a loss for the XXX family, our school and the community.

The Crisis Response Team met this morning *before school hours* to plan for the school's response. As we look to the hours and days ahead, we need to keep the following in mind:

General: (*Pick and choose statements below*)

Any information released to the public will be through the District's Public Information Officer/Superintendent.

No student is to be released without parental permission or unless accompanied by an adult.

We have contacted XXXXX for assistance as we deal with this loss. Guidance Counselors XXXXXXX will be here on XXXXXXXXX to help students, parents, and staff members. Also, our school psychologist and special services counselor will be here as well. Further, we have contacted the Center for Life Management who will send XXXX to further support our students.

If you know of any students or staff members that may need support during this time, please encourage them to contact one of these counselors. Attached to this memo is a list of behavioral traits that may be cues to an individual having difficulty. If you notice that anyone appears to be in crisis or having difficulty, please notify our own guidance staff or the additional counselors immediately.

If students begin discussing memorials for XXXX, please refer them to the administration. Many students did not know XXX and school wide events will not be appropriate for them, nor will permanent structures on the school grounds. It is important to make every effort to maintain as normal an instructional program as possible, since familiar routine will be a comfort for many.

**\*\*\*Make certain that every student has the "Parent letter" with him/her as he/she leaves school.**

## Sample Faculty Letter, Death of a Student

To: Faculty and Staff

From: Crisis Response Team/Principal

Date:

We are all saddened to learn of the death of XXXX and XXX, who were involved in an automobile accident on XXXX last evening. This is a loss for their families, our school and the community. In your classes first period this morning, I am requesting that you read the following so that information is shared with all students in the same manner:

Last night, XXXX were involved in an automobile accident on XXX road.

This is a loss for both the XX and XXX families, our school and the community. Our condolences go out to their families as they struggle to deal with this tragic event. At the same time, we recognize that the death of someone within our school raises questions and concerns for many people in our school. The loss of two students so young may be difficult to understand. If you wish to speak with someone, please sign out of your class and sign in at the guidance office. Guidance counselors, school psychologists, and social workers are available all day, including after school hours.

Future announcements will be made as more information becomes available about funeral arrangements for XXX and XXX.

### ***Another Option***

Many of you have known XXX as a (funny, vibrant, quiet, athletic, etc..) member of our school community. For those of you close to XXX, you know that for the past several months he/she has been valiantly battling cancer/heart disease. Early this morning, we have learned that XXX has died, leaving behind her sister and brother. This is a loss for XXX family, our school and the community.

Sample Faculty Letter, Suicide

To: Windham High School Faculty and Staff

From: Crisis Response Team/Principal

Date:

There are many differing values and beliefs among the students and their families in your classrooms. Please keep in mind that your own personal values and beliefs must be subrogated to theirs as you discuss this topic. If you are uncomfortable with this issue, contact your guidance department for assistance.

Use the suggestions provided in the training materials, such as using reflective questions or encouraging the student to discuss the situation with his or her parent/guardian to address sensitive questions.

The family has asked that we share the following information with students about the death of their son/daughter, XXXX:

“Yesterday, XXX died by suicide. This is a loss for the XX family, for our school and for the community. Funeral services will be held on XXX at XXXX time. Calling hours will be from XXX to XXX on XXX. The death of someone within our school raises questions and concerns for many people in our school. If you wish to speak with someone, please sign out of your class and sign in at the guidance office. Guidance counselors, school psychologists, and social workers are available all day, including after school hours.”

### Sample Phone Statement for parents regarding suicide or murder

In the event of a school suicide or murder, parents should be told prior to the students whenever possible. A telephone chain can be used for the purpose of informing parents before the start of school on the first day of the crisis.

Here is a sample statement that can be modified and read to each parent over the phone:

“Mr. \_\_\_\_\_, the school principal has asked members of the \_\_\_\_\_ to contact all parents to let you know that \_\_\_\_\_, an eighth grade student, died suddenly last evening. The death has officially been ruled as (suicide/homicide) OR no official determination has been made at this time regarding the death although we do know that the death was sudden and unexpected. The school will have a behavioral health response team in place today to help students, parents and faculty deal with this tragedy. You will receive more information from the school as plans develop. We encourage you to share this information with your child before you send him/her to school today. You can be assured that the school will be doing everything it can to help our students deal with this tragic loss. If you would like to talk to someone about this tragedy, please call \_\_\_\_\_ during the school day.”

Staff who makes these calls to parents should understand that they are not to discuss the circumstances of the death (beyond what is already stated in the letter) or address rumors. The point of the call is to simply inform all parents of what has occurred before their children arrive at school. Parents who want more information or seem to need to talk in more detail should be encouraged to call the school later in the day.

Some schools, particularly at the middle and high school level have chosen to send letters home to parents informing them of the school’s postvention activities. Some sample letters that can be adapted to a variety of situations are included in the next few pages.

Sample Phone Statement for parents regarding suspected suicide (only used when the official cause of death has not been determined)

Here is a sample statement that can be modified and read to each parent over the phone or sent home via letter depending on the circumstances:

“Mr. \_\_\_\_\_, the school principal has asked members of the \_\_\_\_\_ to contact all parents to let you know \_\_\_\_\_, an eighth grade student, died suddenly last evening. Although we do know the death was sudden and unexpected, no official cause of death has been determined. Authorities are continuing to investigate the death and no foul play is suspected. The school will have a behavioral health response team in place today to help students, parents and faculty deal with this tragedy. You will receive more information from the school as plans develop. We encourage you to share this information with your child before you send him/her to school today. You can be assured that the school will be doing everything it can to help our students deal with this tragic loss. If you would like to talk to someone about this tragedy, please call \_\_\_\_\_ during the school day.”

What parents are being called?? Who is the one calling? Is it an alert now message?

What is the official name of our team?

Who do parents contact with concerns about call/letter....???

## Sample Parent Letter regarding student homicide

Dear Parent,

A tragedy occurred this past weekend in our community. \_\_\_\_\_, a first grade student at \_\_\_\_\_ school died unexpectedly last night. A local resident has been arrested and charged in this case. Our focus in the schools will be to support those children and faculty who have been affected by this tragedy. We have gathered both our professional staff members and local mental health professionals to assist students and faculty immediately with the availability of individual and group services.

We also need your assistance. Please observe your own child for any signs which indicate the child may need assistance in dealing with this tragedy. Perhaps a change in eating habits, sleeping problems, stomach discomfort, etc. may be some indication that help is needed. If this occurs, please contact your child's principal so that we may offer some counseling or discuss how we can best support your child as soon as possible.

We offer our sincere condolences to the \_\_\_\_\_ family in their time of need. Several other families have been affected by \_\_\_\_\_ death. I suggest that we concentrate our efforts on helping our neighbors cope with their grief. Local religious groups and community agencies are also available to assist those seeking help. A list of phone numbers for these resources is attached to this letter.

Sincerely,

School Superintendent

What happens if there has been no arrest and investigation is ongoing?

Can we add this statement to all letters regarding death....

“We also need your assistance. Please observe your own child for any signs which indicate the child may need assistance in deal with this tragedy. Perhaps a change in eating habits, sleeping problems, stomach discomfort, etc. may be some indication that help is needed.”

Contact Principal??? Or Counselor with mental health issues??

Who will be on the list of resources for parents??

Sample Parent Letter regarding student sudden death

Dear Parents,

Over the weekend, the school experienced the sudden death of one of our students. We are deeply saddened by this loss.

The school has a behavioral health management procedure in place to help your children with their reactions to this tragedy. Our school guidance department and administration have been working closely with counselors from \_\_\_\_\_ to talk with your children and answer their questions.

Your child may have some unresolved feelings that he/she would like to discuss with you. You can help your child by listening carefully, not overreacting, accepting his/her feelings and answering questions according to your beliefs. It is important to let them know their feelings, concerns and reactions are normal and that they will experience a number of emotions over the next few days and weeks.

If you have any additional questions or concerns feel free to contact me directly at the school.

Sincerely,

Principal

# Support Center

- Support Center
- Working with Traumatized Staff
- Addressing Parental Concerns

## **SUPPORT CENTER**

After a critical incident, an Assistance Center may be set up. It is a place where parents and faculty members can receive information, resources and support. Behavioral health professionals should be present to help parents and faculty cope with the critical incident. It provides a place for the adults to come together for peer or individual support.

The Assistance Center can also help provide factual information, preferably in regular updates and before such information is given to the media. It also provides the opportunity for parents and faculty to ask questions and seek advice.

In an incident that would involve the closure of a school building, the Assistance Center should be geographically located away from the area of the event itself so as not to re-traumatize adults or children who may have witnessed the original situation that created a need for such an intervention.

The Assistance Center can be a point of resource and referral. Parents and faculty can have access to written materials. Helpful handouts should include information regarding children and trauma to grief, strategies for self-care and a list of local service providers (SEE ADDITIONAL FORMS).

An Assistance Center can be utilized to provide parents or guardians with relevant workshops and/or post-event activities.

### **\*\*Working with Traumatized Staff\*\***

It is important to remember that faculty may be traumatized by the death of a student, fellow staff member or a critical incident. Following the death of a member of the school community or a major critical incident, it is recommended to put supports in place for those people who were closest to the event or people who died. Reassigning paraprofessionals or bringing in substitute teachers can allow the teacher time needed to grieve or to leave the classroom when becoming overwhelmed.

When teachers are asked to make phone calls home to share traumatic information with their students' families, they may become distressed and in need of support. Having behavioral health professionals in the building to check in with teachers between phone calls is quite helpful.

Behavioral supports need to be available for staff as well as students. Teachers rarely want to turn their classes over to another individual but will appreciate supports being in place should they become distressed or overwhelmed with grief. Placing behavioral health professionals in classrooms can give teacher and staff the support they might need to get through some difficult conversations that may come up with their students – especially classes where a deceased student was formally a member.

## ADDRESSING PARENTAL CONCERNS

There are two different groups of parents to be considered: the parents of the deceased or victim and parents of the other children in the school.

### **Parents of the Victim**

It is appropriate for the victim's parents to be contacted by a representative of the school. The school should express condolences and sympathy in a formal and if possible, face to face manner. Often the school will designate one contact person to interact with the family to verify information and minimize intrusion. Returning the contents of a locker and other possessions is another task that requires attention.

Parents should be consulted about any planned memorial activity.

The school may also play a role in referring parents to counseling resources and support groups. By directing a parent to such resources, the school sends a positive message of concern and care.

### **Parents of Other Students**

The needs of other parents should also be addressed. Parents may be invited to meet with school administrators individually or to a general informational meeting. These meetings should focus on: providing up to date accurate information, prevention measures to be taken by the school, common reactions to critical incidents, suggested coping measures for adults and children and available school and community resources.

School administrators should be careful in planning large group meetings after a particularly sensational death as emotions may be running high and there may be potential for such a meeting to get "out of control." Another option is to divide parents into small group discussions in a classroom setting, sharing a consistent message and information.

The school administration should decide if media presence will be allowed, possibly in consultation with the parents.

# Teacher Resources

- Classroom Procedures
- Do's and Don't
- Helping Student Cope

## **CLASSROOM PROCEDURES**

It is the policy of the WSD to respond to a tragedy as sensitively as possible while maintaining normal operating procedures. Students will be informed of the incident/death in their Advisory groups. Teachers will provide an opportunity for students to discuss what has happened. They should provide assistance, support and structure and allow for discussion to the extent to which they are comfortable. Teachers are asked to help process information about the death with their students (SEE ADDITIONAL FORMS FOR SUPPORT MATERIALS).

As students return to their assigned classes, teachers are asked not to introduce new material, but provide work for those who need to remain busy.

If a student is visibly upset, they should be directed to the Guidance Office or other designated area for students.

If a student is missing from class or leaves class, the teacher should notify the Main Office. The student will then be located and brought to the Guidance Office (if not already there).

If a student from another class ends up in your class, the teacher should ask the student to return to their assigned class. If necessary, allow the student to stay and send a message to the Main Office and someone will come for that student.

If a teacher needs assistance or a little time to themselves to regroup they should contact the Main Office.

Established dismissal procedures should be followed for students who are not able to remain in school.

### **\*\*\*CLASSROOM OF DECEASED\*\*\***

Special considerations should be given to the teacher/students/aides who were close with the deceased. Issues such as the person's belongings, desk and locker need to be discussed.

A member of the Crisis Response Team will be assigned to sit in classes following the deceased's daily schedule. The Team member can facilitate discussions about the loss by both the students and the teacher, allowing the teacher to join students in their grief.

## DO'S AND DON'T

**Do:** model your authentic or real feelings, whatever they are at the moment.

**Do:** listen to each student and encourage the class to listen and to talk.

**Do:** reflect or mirror their feelings; it's validating.

**Do:** encourage them to look after one another.

**Do:** challenge their "magical feelings"; e.g., "if only I had...".

**Do:** be inclusive...make sure everyone who wishes to contribute does contribute.

**Do:** accept as normal, students' feelings of ambivalence or even hostility. Acknowledge them, but encourage the student to address them privately. Do not invalidate their feelings.

**Do:** TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF, ESPECIALLY WHEN YOU ARE "OFF DUTY".

**Don't:** worry about having answers...this is a time that the adults do not necessarily have to know.

**Don't:** try to be strong for the kids (it's a cop-out).

**Don't:** forget to ask for support at any time (you will be regarded as enlightened, not needy...we are all needy).

**Don't:** fall into the easy trap of being judgmental about whose grief is worst, who is needier, etc. It separates people.

## **HELPING STUDENTS COPE**

In the aftermath of a sudden death or critical incident, students and others in the community may feel emotionally overwhelmed, which can disrupt the school's ability to return to its primary function of educating students, and can increase the risk of prolonged stress responses. The following strategies can help students balance the timing and intensity of their emotional expression and restore the school's ability to function effectively.

### **KEY CONSIDERATIONS**

The term emotional regulation refers to a person's ability to appropriately experience and express intense emotions such as fear and grief. Most adolescents have mastered basic skills that allow them to handle strong emotions encountered day to day. But these skills may be challenged in the face of a sudden death or critical incident. In addition, young people may not yet have learned how to recognize complex feelings or physical indicators of distress, such as stomach upset, restlessness or insomnia.

It is important for school officials to provide students with appropriate opportunities to express their emotions and identify strategies for managing them, so the school can continue its primary focus of education. It may be useful for school staff to identify and reach out to families of students who are not coming to school.

If the deceased student participated in sports, clubs or other school activities, the first practice, game, rehearsal or meeting after the death may be difficult for the other students. These events can provide further opportunities for the adults in the school community to help the students appropriately acknowledge the loss.

### **HELPING STUDENTS IDENTIFY AND EXPRESS THEIR EMOTIONS**

Youth will vary widely in terms of emotional expression. Some may become openly emotional, others may be reluctant to talk at all, and still others may use humor. Acknowledge the breadth of feelings and diversity of experiences and emphasize the importance of being respectful of others.

Some students may need help to identify emotions beyond simply sad, angry or happy, and may also need reassurance that a wide range of feelings and experiences are to be expected. They may also need to be reminded that emotions may be experienced as physical symptoms including butterflies in the stomach, shortness of breath, insomnia, fatigue or irritability. To facilitate this discussion, students may be asked:

- What is your biggest concern about the immediate future?
- What would help you feel safer right now?

### **PRACTICAL COPING STRATEGIES**

Encourage students to think about specific things they can do when intense emotions such as worry or sadness begin to well up including:

- simple relaxation and distraction skills, such as taking three deep slow breaths, counting to 10, or picturing themselves in a favorite calm and relaxing place
- engaging favorite activities or hobbies such as music, talking with friends, reading or going to a movie in

- exercising
- thinking about how they've coped with difficulties in the past and reminding themselves that they can use those same coping skills now
- writing a list of people they can turn to for support
- writing a list of things they're looking forward to
- focusing on individual goals, such as returning to a class or spending time with friends

Often youth will express guilt about having fun or thinking about other things. They may feel they somehow need permission to engage in activities that will help them feel better and take their mind off the stressful situation.

Students should also be encouraged to think about how they will remember their friend. Ideas range from writing a personal note to the family, to attending the memorial service, to doing something kind for another person in honor of their friend. Be sure to educate students about the school's guidelines regarding memorialization. Acknowledging their need to express their feelings while helping them identify appropriate ways to do so can begin the process of retuning their focus to their daily lives and responsibilities

# Media

- Working with the Media
- Social Media

## **WORKING WITH THE MEDIA**

After a critical incident, the media may be contacting the school for information. There may be a conflict between the interests of the media and those of the school administration following a school tragedy. Usually, from the school's perspective, less publicity is better. Any tendency to sensationalize the event in the media will undermine efforts within the school to focus on the living. This is especially important following a suicide where risk of contagion is present.

The Superintendent or designee is the one person who will serve as the contact person between the media and the school. Advise staff that only the media person is authorized to speak to the media. Advise students to avoid interviews with the media.

If a student or faculty death gains a great deal of attention, an initial press conference with accurate information will set the tone for future interactions with journalists. Immediate family members should be advised that they have the right not to talk to the press. Administrators may wish to limit access to the school grounds as presence of the media may contribute to the distress of vulnerable students.

The school should avoid becoming the principle source of information. Releasing details about the death is the responsibility of the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner and other authorities. The school can focus on the positive steps of the postvention plan to help students, parents and faculty through the crisis and provide information regarding helping resources.

## **SOCIAL MEDIA**

The term social media refers to the various Internet and mobile communication tools (such as texting, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, MySpace and others) that may be used to communicate information extremely rapidly, often to large numbers of people. In the emotionally charged atmosphere that can follow a suicide death, schools may be inclined to try to control or stifle such communication by students – a task that is virtually impossible in any event, since they generally take place outside school hours and property. Schools can, however, utilize social media effectively to disseminate information and promote prevention efforts.

### **KEY CONSIDERATIONS**

Following a sudden death, students may immediately turn to social media for a variety of purposes, including transmitting news about the death (both accurate and rumored), calling for impromptu gatherings (both safe and unsafe), creating online memorials (both moving and risky), and posting messages (both appropriate and hostile) about the deceased.

Although schools may initially consider social media to be outside of its traditional jurisdiction, they can in fact collaborate with students and utilize these tools to disseminate important and accurate information to the school community, identify students who may be in need of additional support or further intervention, share resources for grief support and mental health care and promote safe message – especially in the instance of a suicide.

### **Involve Students**

It can be very beneficial for a designated member of the Crisis Response Team to reach out to friends of the deceased and other key students to work collaboratively in this area. Working in partnership with student leaders will enhance the credibility and effectiveness of social media efforts, since the students themselves are in the best position to help identify the particular media favored by the student body, engage their peers in honoring their friend's life appropriately and safely, and inform school staff about online communication that may be worrisome.

Students who are recruited to help should be reassured that school staff are only interested in supporting a healthy response to their peer's death, not in thwarting communication. They should also be made aware that staff members are available and prepared to intervene if any communications reveal cause for concern.

### **Disseminate Information**

Schools may already have a website and/or online presence (or page) on one or more social media sites; students can help identify others that are currently popular. These can be used to proactively communicate with students, teachers and parents about:

- The funeral or memorial service (schools should of course check with the student's family before sharing information about the funeral).
- Where students can go for help or meet with counselors
- Mental illness and the causes of suicide

- Local mental health resources
- The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline number: 800-273-TALK (8255)
- National suicide prevention organizations such as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (<http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org>), the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (<http://www.afsp.org>) and the Suicide Prevention Resource Center (<http://www.sprc.org>).

Schools should emphasize help-seeking and prevention. Students can also be enlisted to post this information on their own online pages.

### **Online Memorial Pages**

Online memorial pages and message boards have become common practice in the aftermath of a death.

If a student's friends create a memorial page of their own, it is important that school personnel communicate with the students to ensure that the page includes safe messaging and accurate information. School personnel should also join any student-initiated memorial pages so they can monitor and respond as appropriate.

### **Monitor and Respond**

To the extent possible, social media sites (including the deceased's wall or personal profile pages) should be monitored for:

- Rumors
- Information about upcoming or impromptu gatherings
- Derogatory messages about the deceased
- Messages that bully or victimize current students
- Comments indicating students who may themselves be at risk

Response may include posting comments that dispel rumors, reinforce the connection between mental illness and suicide, and offer resources for mental health care. In some cases, the appropriate response may go beyond simply posting a comment, safe message or resource information. It may extend to notifying parents and local law enforcement about the need for security at a late night student gathering, for example.

In some cases it may be necessary to take action against so-called trolls who may seek out memorial pages on social media sites and post deliberate offensive messages and pictures. Most sites have report mechanisms or comparable features, which enable users to notify the site of offensive material and request that it be removed. The administrator of the memorial page may also be able to block particular individuals from accessing the site.

# Suicide

- Dealing with a Suicide
- Safe and Effective Messaging for Suicide Prevention

## DEALING WITH A SUICIDE

If the critical incident involves a suicide death, be sure to use safe messaging. Research has shown that graphic, sensationalized or romanticized descriptions of suicide deaths in the media can contribute to suicide contagion (“copycat” suicides), particularly among youth.

While any sudden traumatic incident can have a profound impact on a school community, death by suicide is more complex and requires special considerations than other types of sudden death. These considerations include anticipating the personal and complex nature of grief following a suicide; watching out for suicide pacts, reducing the risk of suicide contagion and insuring responsible reporting and safe messaging. As a result of this, following a death by suicide it is important to provide information about warning signs of suicide (SEE ADDITIONAL FORMS) as well as the **National Suicide Prevention Hotline 1-800-273-8255**.

Complicated bereavement: Due to the nature of suicide death, friends and family will often be left feeling a range of emotions including guilt, anger, self-blame, regret and rejection, as well as intense grief and shock. They will often replay over and over again in their mind their last interaction with the person and wonder what they could have or should have done differently. Since having known someone who dies by suicide is itself an increased risk factor for suicide, it is important to provide supports to these individuals.

Suicide pacts occur when two or more individuals have an agreement to die by suicide. Following a suicide death or serious attempt, it is important to ask close friends if they have any knowledge of a suicide pact.

Though a rare event, research indicates that the suicide death of an individual may influence others who are at risk for suicide to act on their suicidal impulses. Young people are especially prone to contagion. Reducing the risk of contagion is an important consideration when thinking about memorials for an individual who dies by suicide. Permanent plaques or memorials or dedications such as the high school yearbook may inadvertently increase the risk of contagion. Research has demonstrated that sensational media reports may contribute to suicide contagion. Therefore, it is essential that educators become familiar with safe messaging guidelines and should follow these guidelines when crafting any message to faculty, students, community or the media following a suicide death.

Schools sometimes can be under great pressure from the family to not publicly disclose the death was a suicide, however, it is important to recognize that this wish conflicts with the fact that suicide is a public health issue which needs to be addressed in a forthright manner. One of the biggest risk factors for suicide is knowing someone who dies by suicide. School can help mitigate this risk by being truthful about the suicide death and actively taking steps to reduce risk and promote healing after a suicide death.

Schools who have not been open about a death being suicide, are typically faced with two very unhealthy scenarios. One is that most students know it is a suicide death but the administration/teachers/staff won't acknowledge it or deal with it directly, so students deal with

it amongst themselves. The second is that rumors (such as drugs, murder/conspiracy, etc.) and innuendo replace facts and can spread emotional distress and chaos. These rumors may be far more impacting and unsettling for the entire student body and much more difficult for school staff to contain than truthfully disclosing that the death is a suicide.

There will be some situations where a sudden death occurs and suicide may be suspected, an official cause of death may not be made for weeks pending results of toxicology reports. School officials should rely exclusively on official determination of death and not speculate as to cause of death when providing information to the students or extended school community. Even without an official cause of death, the school can openly disclose the death, and if given approval from law enforcement, assure the community that foul play is not suspected. It will still be important to take active steps to reduce risk and promote healing which can and should be done without mentioning the (suspected) cause of death.

## SAFE AND EFFECTIVE MESSAGING FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION

### The Do's – Practices that may be helpful in public awareness campaigns:

- **Do emphasize help-seeking and provide information on finding help.** When recommending mental health treatment, provide concrete steps for finding help. Inform people that help is available through the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-273-TALK/8255) and through established local service providers and crisis centers (SEE RESOURCES).
- **Do emphasize prevention.** Reinforce the fact that there are preventative actions individuals can take if they are having thoughts of suicide or know others who are or might be. Emphasize that suicides are preventable and should be prevented to the extent possible.
- **Do list the warning signs, as well as risk and protective factors of suicide.** Teach people how to tell if they or someone they know may be thinking of harming themselves. Include lists of warning signs. Messages should also identify protective factors that reduce the likelihood of suicide and risk factors that heighten risk of suicide.
- **Do highlight effective treatments for underlying mental health problems.** Over 90 percent of those who die by suicide suffer from a significant psychiatric illness, substance abuse disorder or both at the time of their death. The impact of mental illness and substance abuse as risk factors for suicide can be reduced by access to effective treatments and strengthened social support in an understanding community.

### The Don't – Practices that may be problematic in public awareness campaigns.

- **Don't glorify or romanticize suicide or people who have died by suicide.** Vulnerable people, especially young people, may identify with the attention and sympathy garnered by someone who has died by suicide. They should not be held up as role models.
- **Don't normalize suicide by presenting it as a common event.** Although significant numbers of people attempt suicide, it is important to not present the data in a way that makes suicide seem common, normal or acceptable. Most individuals, and most youth, who seriously consider suicide do not overtly act on those thoughts, but find more constructive ways to resolve them. Presenting suicide as common may unintentionally remove a protective bias against suicide in a community.
- **Don't present suicide as an inexplicable act or explain it as a result of stress only.** Presenting suicide as the inexplicable act of an otherwise healthy or high-achieving person may encourage identification with the victim. Additionally, it misses the opportunity to inform audiences of both the complexity and preventability of suicide. The same applies to any explanation of suicide as the understandable response to an individual's stressful situation or to an individual's membership in a group encountering discrimination. Oversimplification of suicide in any of these ways can mislead people to believe that it is a normal response to fairly common life circumstances.
- **Don't focus on personal details of people who have died by suicide.** Vulnerable individuals may identify with the personal details of someone who died by suicide, leading them to consider ending their lives in the same way.
- **Don't present overly detailed descriptions of suicide victims or methods of suicide.** Research shows that pictures or detailed descriptions of how or where a person died by suicide can be a factor in vulnerable individuals imitating the act. Clinicians believe the danger is even greater if there is a detailed description of the method.

# Information for Parents

- Parental Consideration for Children Attending Services

## PARENT CONSIDERATION FOR CHILDREN ATTENDING SERVICES

**Consider your expectation and involvement in the service.** Parents need to understand their own involvement as they decided whether to bring their child to a funeral or memorial service. If a parent is going to be involved in the service, they may want to ask a trusted person to accompany their children.

**Consider what the child wants.** If the child is adamant in not attending, this wish needs to be seriously considered. Generally, children appreciate the opportunity to make their own decisions about attendance. They may not be ready for this type of life experience. Ask a trusted individual to stay with the child during the service and connect with them immediately afterward. Although not physically present at the service, they may have questions or feel guilty that they could not attend.

**There is no magic age in which attendance at a service is recommended.** The child's personality and developmental issues need to be taken into account.

Explain the ritual of the service they will be attending. Considerations may include:

- Length and type of service
- Open casket – if there is a body to view, explain that the deceased is not hurting, hungry or cold.
- Cremation – assure the child that the deceased was not in any pain during cremation.
- Projected emotional responses by those attending
- Child's development, temperament, capability to acclimate.
- Child's relation to the deceased.
- Child's wishes as to whether or not they want to attend. It is not recommended to force a child to attend.
- Wake, Religious or Memorial Service, Burial Service – consider who may be there or the amount of people in attendance.
- Spending time with your child after the service is important as emotions may arise after the fact.
- Children are learning from their parent during this process. It is perfectly okay to cry and show emotion.
- Be prepared for many questions after the service. These questions and concerns from the child may not come until weeks later as the child begins to work through their grief. Older children may be hesitant to start the conversation. It is recommended to check in with your child.
- If the child does not go they may feel guilty, disappointed in their self, or feeling as if they let the deceased person down. Be prepared to attend to these needs.

If you or your child does not attend the services, there may be other opportunities for honoring the deceased individual. The child (and parents) might bake for the family, collect pictures of the deceased, or give flowers to the family, hand craft a card with a special message inside, or assist in a Memorial that is occurring in the community such as a fund-raiser for a scholarship, memorial, etc.

# ADDITIONAL FORMS AND HANDOUTS

- Grief and Loss Reactions
- After the Incident
- Children's Reactions

## GRIEF AND LOSS REACTIONS

Children experience loss and grief in their own way.

Factors that need to be considered as you work with the student include:

age of the child/teenager  
their personality  
developmental stage  
temperament  
familial and cultural factors

## GRIEF RESPONSES

- **Emotional Responses**
  - This will differ For each individual. There is NO right way to grieve; everyone has his or her own path with this. One may experience sadness, anxiety, guilt, shock, feeling numb, feeling lonely, worried.
  - A sense of relief may be felt after the death of a loved one or a close individual who was suffering. This sense of relief may not be understood by the child and may lead to guilt.
- **Behavior**
  - Sleep disturbance and differences from the child's typical pattern, sleep interruption, social withdrawal, appetite changes, nightmares, anxiety over activities, going to school, being left alone, avoidant behavior (missing or skipping school, not engaging in friendship, sports or activities, etc.)
- **Physical Manifestations**
  - Common signs and symptoms a child may experience include changes in appetite, feeling of being tired, low energy, lethargic, headaches, stomach aches, hypersensitivity to certain stimuli (loud noises, certain smells, etc)
- **Thought Patterns**
  - Changes in a child's thought process and reactions may occur, including nightmares, fears that did not exist before, confusion, difficulty concentrating for any length of time (in school, homework, watching television), denial about the loss of the deceased, etc.

## AGE CONSIDERATIONS

Developmental factors play a large role in the child's reaction to the death of a loved one, friend, teacher, coach, etc. The following recommendations and information is from the Children's Grief Education Association. For more information please visit [www.childgrief.org](http://www.childgrief.org)

- **AGES 3-5**

- As children learn to utilize our symbolic language of words, they can begin to share feelings verbally. They learn what sad, mad, and scared mean. They communicate about the concrete world: what they can see, touch, hear, taste and smell. The future, the idea of "never", is outside their understanding. They fully expect the return of their loved one.

- **AGES 6-10**

- Around the age of six, children begin to understand that the loved one is not returning. This can bring about a multitude of feelings at the time of other significant changes in a child's life, including entering first grade. Children who do not remember their parent may feel an acute sense of loss as they see peers with their parents and hear their family stories.
- Elementary age children are interested in biological processes about what happened to their loved one. Questions about disease processes and what happens to the body are of keen interest. When asked questions, it is important to clarify what it is the child wants to know.
- Children's worlds are sometimes messy and have a high level of energy. Grief is also messy sometimes. It does not always take a form that makes adults comfortable. Allowing your child to express feelings through creative, even messy, play can be helpful (i.e. finger painting, making mud pies and throwing them, etc). You may want to join in the creative play.
- Peer group support is helpful for children of this age.

- **AGES 11-13**

- Middle schoolers are faced with a tumultuous time of body changes and increased performance expectations. When a death loss is added to that, it increases their sense of vulnerability and insecurity.
- Grades may be affected by the death. It may be difficult to find a balance between studies and emotional distraction, but this is a time to be a bit more careful about

insisting about the completion of schoolwork. With time, middle school children will return to their normal capacity for attention.

- Middle school is also a time when abstract thought begins to accelerate. Children may be considering spiritual aspects of life and death, perhaps questioning their beliefs. Be open to talking with them or support them in finding someone who is comfortable discussing these issues.
- **AGES 14-18**
  - Teens are usually in a place of growing independence. They may feel a need to hide their feelings of grief to show their control of themselves and their environment. Teens often prefer to talk with peers rather than adults when they are grieving.
  - Teens are more likely to engage in high-risk behavior, especially after a death loss. One young person expressed that her mom was always careful and followed all the safety rules, but died anyway. She asked, "Why should I be careful?" If one parent died, be clear about who will care for them and what to expect if you die.

**As with all ages, maintain routines and maintain communication with your child's school to ensure appropriate supports are in place.**

***It is important to remember that as a child grows, they will continue to grieve their loss in different ways as they progress through each developmental stage.***

## AFTER THE INCIDENT

Most people experience normal reactions as a result of a sudden death or traumatic incident. Generally, these feelings don't last long, but it is common to feel let down and resentful many months after the event. Some feelings or responses may not appear until weeks or even months after the disaster.

Some common responses are:

- Irritability/Anger
- Fatigue
- Loss of Appetite
- Inability to sleep
- Nightmares
- Sadness
- Headaches or nausea
- Hyperactivity
- Lack of concentration
- Increased alcohol or drug consumption

Many victims will have at least one of the above responses. Acknowledging your feelings and stresses is the first step to feeling better.

Other helpful actions include:

- Talk about your experiences. Sharing your feelings rather than holding them in will help you feel better about the experience.
- Take time off from cares, worries, and home repairs. Engage in recreation, relaxation, or a favorite hobby. Getting away from home for a day or a few hours with close friends can also help.
- Pay attention to your health, a good diet, and adequate sleep. Relaxation exercises may help if you have difficulty sleeping.
- Prepare for possible future emergencies to help lessen feelings of helplessness and to achieve peace of mind.
- Rebuild personal relationships in addition to repairing other aspects of your life.

If stress, anxiety, depression, or physical problems continue you may wish to contact the post-disaster services provided by your local mental health disaster recovery program.

**Please take this sheet with you today and reread it over the next few weeks and months. Being aware of your feelings and sharing them with other is an important part of your recovery.**

## CHILDREN'S REACTIONS

A sudden death or traumatic incident, whether community wide or involving only a single family, may leave children especially frightened, insecure, or upset about what happened. They may display a variety of emotional responses, and it is important to recognize that these responses are normal. How a parent reacts, will make a great difference in the child's understanding and recovery. Parents should make every effort to keep the children informed about what is happening and to explain it in terms they can understand.

The following list includes some of the reactions parents may see in their children:

- Crying/Depression
- Bedwetting
- Thumb sucking
- Nightmares
- Clinging/fear of being left alone
- Regression to previous behaviors
- Fighting
- Inability to concentrate
- Withdrawal and isolation
- Not wanting to attend school
- Changes in eating and sleeping habits
- Headaches
- Excessive fear of darkness
- Increase in physical complaint

Some things that will help your child recover are to:

- Hug and touch your child often
- Reassure the child frequently that you are safe and together
- Talk with your child about his/her feelings about the disaster. Share your feelings too. Provide information the child can understand.
- Talk about what happened
- Spend extra time with your child at bedtime
- Allow children to grieve about their lost treasures; a toy, a blanket and a lost home
- Talk with your child about what you will do if another disaster strikes
- Let your child help in preparing and planning for future disasters
- Try to spend extra time together in family activities to begin replacing fears with pleasant memories
- If your child is having problems at school, talk to the teacher so that you can work together to help your child

Usually a child's emotional response does not last long. Be aware that some problems may not appear immediately or may recur months later.

**Talking openly with your children will help them recover more quickly from the loss. If you feel our child may need additional help to recover from the disaster, contact your local community mental health agency.**