National Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention

When the Unexpected Happens: Are You Prepared to Respond and Support Recovery from Tragedy or Crises in the School & Community

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Project Directors' Consortia, August 3, 2010

Are You Prepared to Respond and Support Recovery from Tragedy or Crises in the School & Community?

When: Tuesday, Aug. 3, 10:15 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

Description: Response and recovery to tragic or crisis events at school or in the community requires quick action and continued follow-up to support students, staff, and parents. This session will illustrate best practices and lessons learned when supporting safety, mental health and trauma during and after an event – discussing the importance of clear protocols, roles of partners, and resources available.

Agenda/Objectives

Project Directors will:

- Discuss and explore best practice for readiness to support students, staff, and families in response and recovery to unexpected tragedy or crisis events.

- Consider their initiative's current readiness for response and recovery.

- Recognize systems to support infrastructure of comprehensive prevention, preparedness, response and recovery, including National Incident Management System (NIMS) and Incident Command System (ICS).

- Explore key factors for successful response and recovery, including coordination and integration among partners, following protocols, cultural considerations, and evaluation and revision after a response.

- Learn from a SSHS project director's experiences with response and recovery to a student death.

- Obtain a set of resources that support effective response and recovery, including support for trauma and loss.

Definitions

- *Crisis:*

"A traumatic event or emergency condition that creates distress, hardship, fear or grief."

Examples of common school crises include:

- Student death due to accident, illness, suicide, or homicide

- Staff death due to accident, illness, suicide, or homicide

- Catastrophic events involving students or staff (e.g. fire, bus accidents, criminal acts)

- Presence of intruders on school premises

(Source: Alaska Department of Education and Early Development)

Definitions (cont')

- ***Disaster:***

"A natural or civil emergency that substantially damages or impairs a community. Examples of natural disasters are hurricanes, tornadoes, floods and earthquakes. Other disasters that may affect school districts are fires, safety incidents such as shootings, and terrorist attacks, among others." (Source: Council of Educational Facility Planners International)

Definitions (cont')

- ***Emergency:***

"An occurrence that impairs or has the potential to impair the operation of a grant site. This includes but is not limited to incidents or events causing or potentially causing the following:

- Serious injury to persons

- Extensive property damage

- Disruption of classes

- Disruption of administrative functions"

    (Source: Southern Polytechnic State University, Policy and Procedure Manual)

National Incident Management System (NIMS)

- Developed by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (2004)

- Provides a common set of concepts, principles, policies, protocols, terminology, and organizational processes

- All federal departments and agencies are required to adopt NIMS and the Incident Command System (ICS).

Phases of Emergency Management

Prevention & Mitigation **Preparedness**

Recovery **Response**

Incident Command System (ICS)

- A structure designed to be used across agencies and disciplines to manage emergencies
  - Division of Labor
  - Span of Control
- Functions
  - Incident Command (the managers)
  - Planning and Intelligence (the thinkers)
  - Operations (the doers)
  - Logistics (the getters)
  - Finance/Administration (the payers)
- Each function area has a designated "team leader."

Cultural Considerations

- Identify culture-related needs of community.

- Gather information regarding composition of school/district community.

- Obtain community resources to meet diverse needs.

- Consider possible solutions to cultural problems that may arise.

- Understand the meaning of suffering, pain, and death relevant to the norms of the community's cultural groups.

Multiple Hierarchical Levels

- School Crisis Team (Building Team)

- District Team (District Resources)

- Community and/or Regional Teams (Community Groups)

Advantages of Hierarchical Team Approach

☐ Allows for a comprehensive approach to crisis prevention and intervention

☐ Builds specific crisis response capacity

☐ Focuses on teamwork/support

☐ Increases innovation/creativity and better decisions

☐ Improves communication and information flow

☐ Strengthens crisis preparedness and coordination of response and recovery

Potential Team Membership

- School Administration and Key Staff
- Police
- Fire
- Public Health
- Hospitals
- Regional Emergency Management Agencies/FEMA
- Mental Health Providers
- Social Services
- Clergy
- Media
- Elected Officials
- State/Regional Homeland Security
- Emergency Medical Services (EMS)
- Red Cross
- Victim's Assistance/Advocates

Team Focus

- Crisis Prevention
  - Reduce the incidence or severity of crisis events
- Crisis Preparedness
  - Ensure response readiness for crises that are not, or cannot be, prevented
- Crisis Response
  - After a crisis event, minimize crisis impact and restore equilibrium.
- Crisis Recovery
  - Repair crisis damage and return to baseline (or pre-crisis) operation/functioning.

Response

- Maintain a calm presence when providing response.

- Assure health, safety and security.

- Provide factual information.

- Return to familiar environments and routines as quickly as possible.

- Re-establish social support.

- Be sensitive to culture and diversity.

- Recognize signs of students in need of more direct support and intervention.

- Consider communications needed (e.g. to staff, students, parents, community, and media).

Recovery

- Maintain a calm presence when providing recovery.

- Be sensitive to culture and diversity.

- Be aware of normal responses to crisis, and of populations predisposed to risk for psychological trauma.

- Recognize signs of students needing more direct support.

- Attend to care for the caregiver.

- Provide levels of support for recovery, depending on trauma experienced.
    - Re-establish social support
    - Caregiver training and educational groups
    - Psychological first aid, and potentially longer term treatment

Evaluate Response and Recovery and Revise Procedures as Needed

- Conduct brief interviews and/or focus groups
  - Which interventions were the most successful and why?
  - What were positive aspects of staff debriefings and why?
  - Were students, staff, and families needs addressed?
  - What response and recovery strategies would you change and why?
  - Were the communications and media responses effective?

Evaluate Response and Recovery and Revise Procedures as Needed (cont')

- Do other professionals need to help with future response and recovery efforts?

- What additional training is necessary to enable the school and community to prepare for future response?

- Were the communications and media responses effective?

- What additional equipment is needed to support recovery efforts?

- What other planning actions will facilitate future recovery efforts?

Response to Crisis Experienced Ashland, KY

Cathy Wilson
Project Director

RESPONSE TEAM

School Principal

School Guidance Counselor

Director of Student Services

District Social Worker

School –Based Mental Health Therapist

Family Resource Center Coordinator

School Resource Officer

Procedures

- *School Principal notified of accident*
- *When child passed away team meeting was held to discuss protocol*
- *Principal met with all teachers to discuss procedures*
- *Additional support staff in the district were placed at the school*
- *All parents were notified by letter*
- *Resource Center Coordinator and School Social Worker met with child's family to provide support and follow-up*

S.R.O. Response

- *Contacted our state Center for School Safety for available materials*
- *Set up times with each school principal for program on school bus/bus stop safety (K-3)*
- *Set up times for return with Buster*

Recovery

- *Restore learning environment as quickly as possible*
- *Continued staff support available*
- *Continued follow-up visits with family of student to assist with necessary referrals*

Resources

- www.childrensfriend.org
- www.kysafeschools.org

Next Steps

- *Lessons Learned*
- *Revision of Ashland's Crisis Response Manual to include …*

Q&A

References

- **National Center for Mental Health Promotion/ Youth Violence Prevention Resource Pages**

  Preparing for and responding to Crises at School http://www.promoteprevent.org/Resources/briefs/prepare-respond%20crises%20in%20school.html

  Natural Disasters and Terrorism http://www.promoteprevent.org/Resources/briefs/disaster%20relief.asp

- **US Department of Education Resources**

  Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools Emergency Planning Web Site http://www.ed.gov/emergencyplan

  Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (REMS) Technical Assistance (TA) Center http://rems.ed.gov

  Tips for Helping Students Recovering From Traumatic Events http://www.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/recovering/index.html

  FERPA Guidance on Emergency Management and Preparedness in Schools, Resources, School Safety, Parent Guides and Forms http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/safeschools/

References (cont')

- **SAMHSA Resources**

  Coping with Traumatic Events http://www.samhsa.gov/trauma/index.aspx

  HIPAA Privacy Rule: Disclosures for Emergency Preparedness – *A Decision Tool*
  http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/hipaa/understanding/special/emergency/

- **CDC Resources**

  Emergency Preparedness and Response, http://emergency.cdc.gov

- **National Association School Psychologists (NASP) School Safety and Crisis Resources**
  www.nasponline.org/resources/crisis_safety/index.aspx

- **UCLA Center for Mental Health in Schools Mental Health Project**

  Responding to a Crisis button provides a number of resource links
  www.smhp.psych.ucla.edu

Also refer to Resources handouts