

**Staff Crisis  
Intervention  
Guide**

*USD 248*

# CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLAN

## MISSION STATEMENT

The Board of Education and Staff of USD 248 acknowledges the necessity to prepare a Crisis Management Plan in the event that a crisis should occur. Our children have a basic need for security and safety. Any event which threatens that feeling of safety and security shall be considered a crisis. There are unlimited possibilities for crisis situations that could impact the district. Those include, but may not be limited to the following situations:

•suicide •violent acts •natural disaster •death •trauma •accident

## CRISIS MANAGEMENT FLOW CHART



**Superintendent**



**Building Level Administrator**

Community Liaison	Counseling Liaison	Staff/Adm. Logistics	Media Liaison	Medical Liaison	Parent Liaison	Staff Obligations	General Considerations
-------------------	--------------------	----------------------	---------------	-----------------	----------------	-------------------	------------------------

↑  
1 per Building

↑      ↑  
1 per Building      1 per Building

**Liaison's Responsibility:** To develop and implement specific steps for management intervention in a crisis or potential crisis, and to communicate with administrators for approval.

# **DISTRICT LIAISON**

(Superintendent, or Building Principal or Designated Other)

## ***OBJECTIVES***

One or more persons may be selected to handle the areas of Law Enforcement, Funeral/Clergy and Family depending upon the size and layout of each building.

### **A. Law Enforcement**

In-service personnel about district policies, security and who to contact for assistance in the event of a crisis.

### **B. Funeral/Clergy**

To develop and communicate school policies in regard to funerals and memorials.

### **C. Family**

To support and assist parent liaison.

## ***IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURES***

### **A. Law Enforcement**

1. When appropriate the administrator will contact the Girard Police Department by calling the dispatcher at 724-6217. (In lieu of the absence of the Superintendent, the Building Principal or Designee will make contact.)
  - a. At the time of the call a meeting location for the school and responding representative should be established.
  - b. A school representative should be identified to meet the responding law enforcement officer(s).
2. A floor plan of each building should be available and include the location of any chemicals kept in the building. (Ex: Science lab, cleaning materials, etc.) (Refer to Appendix 1)
3. Isolate dangerous areas.
4. If possible, begin a stalling process if a threatening individual is involved.
5. Begin an orderly evacuation procedure.

### **B. Funeral/Clergy**

1. State in policy and student handbook that no funeral will be held in a school facility due to the extreme emotional impact on students. (Appendix B)
2. If possible encourage the family to hold the funeral during non-school hours so more people may attend.
3. If needed "Crisis Team" may be available to consult with family and clergy as to appropriate memorial. (Refer to Appendix B for Special Considerations)
4. Multiple deaths due to disaster may be aided by President of the Girard Ministerial Alliance.

5. Inform funeral home of school policy.

### **C. Family**

1. Work with Parent Liaison or Building Administrator.
2. Express condolences to family.

## **COUNSELING LIAISON**

(Counselors)

### **OBJECTIVES**

1. To have a building level person identified who will serve as a counseling liaison.
2. To familiarize building staff with assessments of suicide levels, crisis counseling techniques and psychological first aid principles. These are to reviewed every three years.
3. To establish a process whereby building level liaisons and an administrator decide whether a situation requires district or regional counselors' assistance.
4. To communicate with building liaisons in a crisis situation.
5. Have appropriate resource materials on hand for teachers working with students involved in a crisis. (Refer to Appendix G and H.)
6. To identify students who may be affected by the crisis situation and offer to help them.
7. To arrange group counseling session(s) for students, teachers, and or parents, as required by the situation.
8. To familiarize school employees with referral procedures and facilities regarding mental health.

### **IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURES**

1. Identify a counseling liaison person in each building.
2. Conduct in service training for staff to familiarize them with the following:
  - A. Counseling liaison role in intervention plan
  - B. Assessment of suicide levels and intervention techniques
  - C. General crisis counseling techniques
  - D. Psychological first aid principles: Grief, bereavement
3. Establish a criteria for requesting district or regional crisis help, and a process for calling together those who are necessary to make such a decision.
4. Have hand-outs duplicated and ready to distribute to staff/parents liaison. (Appendix E, F, G, and H.)
5. Maintain contact with all the building level liaisons throughout the crisis.
6. Check permanent records and talk with people who may know those involved in the crisis for names of those who may be indirectly affected by the crisis.
7. Establish a place, time and date for group counseling session(s), if needed.
8. Provide areas of privacy for individual and small group counseling.

## 9. A. Mental Health

1. Familiarize school employees with referral procedures and facilities.
2. Make supportive community counseling information available to family and staff. (Refer to Appendix A)

## **STAFF-ADMINISTRATION LOGISTICS**

### ***OBJECTIVES***

1. To facilitate the “Crisis Team” by providing assistance in the area of communication and building mechanics.
2. Brief school staff regarding securing the doors.
3. Establish a phone tree. (include secretaries, paraprofessionals, custodians, cooks, bus drivers, etc.) Indicate on the phone tree the liaison positions.
4. Insure timely communications with staff.
5. Help identify students who may be affected by crisis.

### ***IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURES***

1. Establish a crisis Team Center (Alternate Room)  
Supplies: Tables/Chairs, Medical/First Aid Kits, Coffee/Tea, Cups, Tape Typewriter/paper, Pens/Pencils/Papers, VCRRecorder/Tapes, Computer/Word Processor
2. Provide alternate classrooms for students if needed.
3. Secure additional secretarial staff if needed. (Superintendent)
4. Develop an emergency telephone line that is not a published school number. (Superintendent)
5. Develop an alternative communication system in the event telephone was not accessible. (Team)
6. In the event of a death, remove student’s name from mailing list, roll sheets, communications, etc. Designate a person to remove student’s personal affects from desk and locker to keep in a safe place for the family (Building Principal or Designee)
7. Discuss with the transportation director how parents and the school administrator will be notified in the event of a bus accident. (Superintendent & Transportation Supervisor)
8. Distribute the phone tree to all personnel and notify staff in case of an emergency. (Building Principal)
9. A faculty meeting should be held as soon as possible. This will help dispel rumors for staff and students. (Building Principal)
10. Contact with the counseling liaison should be maintained throughout the crisis. (Superintendent & Building Principal)

11. Plans for make-up work or forgiveness for assignments not completed due to attending the services should be made and discussed with staff members so that a consistent plan is used. (Building Principal)
12. Plan and practice ways in which the building can be cordoned off. (Building Principal & Custodian)

## **MEDIA LIAISON**

### ***OBJECTIVES***

1. In order to promote consistency during an emergency, the following district media guidelines have been established:
  - A. The media will be located in the specified area of each school or in an assigned room as close to the main entrance as possible. (HS - FACS Room / MS - PE Room / Elementary School - Conference Room)
  - B. Each building will have a designated media contact person. It is recommended that this be the building principal.
  - C. Interview with staff and students will not be allowed within the school building at anytime. Interviews will not be allowed on school grounds, during school time.
  - D. Names of students and staff involved in an emergency will not be released at anytime by school personnel.
2. Staff and students should be informed of the district guidelines pertaining to the media.
3. School personnel will direct all media to the Principals office in the building to obtain official media identification and will send to specified area. (Assigned Person)
4. A main entrance should be identified and utilized at each school.
5. If appropriate a prepared statement should be read by one secretary during all phone correspondence. This should include directions on how students will be picked up. (Building Secretary)

### ***IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURES***

1. Identify the school media contact person and review the job description. (Building Principal and/or Superintendent)
2. In-service all staff and students on the district media guidelines. These guidelines should be given to all staff in written form. Any questions pertaining to an emergency should be referred to the building media contact persons.
3. Locate a main entrance and plan a procedure for securing the entry way.
4. Identify personnel to be located at each outside entrance.
5. Discuss means for securing the doors and procedures to direct persons to the

designated entrance. (Custodians)

6. Prepare a statement and identify parent liaison to read this statement during all phone conversations. (Team)

### ***MEDIA CONTACT GUIDELINES***

1. Determine who the media contact person will be if the principal is not in the building. (Principal Designee)
2. Prepare a general statement that may be read to the media in an emergency. Use the exact formal statement. Include in the statement that follow-up interviews will be scheduled as the facts are known.  
General Statement ...“We request your inquiries be made through the Superintendent’s office - 724-4325, for details in case of a crisis. The Superintendent’s office is located in the Northeast corner of the High School Complex.”
3. Copies of the district media guidelines and copies of the General Statement should be duplicated and sent prior to the beginning of each school year.
4. Always express sorrow/concern on behalf of the school.
5. If asked inappropriate questions by media, do not give an answer or get angry.
6. Consider a response to “What has been done since the death?” This question will occur.
7. Briefly state the known facts of the situation, but do not give names of the victims or persons responsible. Do not go into depth or say more than is needed.
8. Do not speculate about motives or feelings.
9. If civil authorities are involved, refer to them questions that require their expertise.
10. Review what is being done to respond to the situation.
11. Identify the support being provided to the students, their families and staff. Emphasize that the primary goal is to help the students through the crisis situation. Let the media know that the school will try to maintain or quickly return to its normal routine and schedule.
12. Try to emphasize the positive aspects of the situation, such as the response of staff and students and how well people are coping.

# **MEDICAL LIAISON**

(School Nurse)

## ***OBJECTIVES***

1. Identify school personnel from each building who have had CPR and emergency first aid training.
2. Medical teams will be selected for each school from the qualified personnel. These teams will be responsible for CPR, first aid and notification of the emergency medical services.
3. A medical team should be responsible for calling any emergency vehicles when needed. The team member should meet the emergency vehicles and direct them to appropriate entrance.
4. A medical team member will be responsible for notifying the parent liaison to call parents of injured students when necessary.
5. Medical team personnel should be able to assess if an individual's condition appears to be self-destructive and then contact the appropriate counselor.
6. A member of the medical team will be selected to monitor emergency medical supplies that will be accessible in each school building.
7. The team coordinator will be responsible for communications with the medical facilities following the emergency.

## ***IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURES***

1. Identify staff that have had CPR and emergency first aid training; if sufficient number of staff are not certified in these areas identify and train volunteers in each building.
2. Select the members of the medical team and designate a team coordinator. The team coordinator will be responsible for designating individual team member assignments. Consider the need for more than one medical team and coordinator, depending on the size and lay-out of the building. Provide in-service training for team members in CPR and emergency first aid. This training should be updated bi-annually.
3. Select a team member to call the emergency vehicle, to meet the vehicle and to direct them to the appropriate entrance.
4. Designate a team member to notify the parent liaison when it is necessary to call parents of injured students.
5. Team members should meet with counseling liaison to establish procedures for crisis counseling.
6. Assign a team member to monitor the emergency medical supplies on a regular basis. Decide where the emergency medical supplies will be located and consider if

more than one emergency kit is needed in the building.

7. The team coordinator should become aware of the appropriate people to contact at the medical facilities for progress reports about injured persons. Any information obtained will be reported to the media contact person. (Refer to Appendix D)

## ***PARENT LIAISON***

(Building Principal Designee)

### ***OBJECTIVES***

1. To respond to the needs of the specific parents whose child or children are directly involved in a crisis.
2. To develop a process of communication for all parents of students in the building.
3. Educate/inform parent groups on the Crisis Plan". (Refer to Appendix E)

### ***IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURES***

1. Identify and contact parents of the victims of the crisis and provide on going support for the family.
  - A. Notify staff of other schools where siblings may be involved, so staff can work appropriately with parents and/or siblings.
2. General guidelines for dealing with parents of students in the building.
  - A. Discourage parents from coming to school to pick-up their children and if they insist then determine how can this best be accomplished. Designate a place for parents to meet to receive information.
  - B. Directly and honestly tell parents the facts as you know them and assure them that the school is doing all it can to assure the safety and well being of students. Maintain contact with media liaison to insure consistent information.
  - C. Discuss under what circumstances a written communication might be sent to parents and how this could be accomplished.
  - D. Plan a follow-up meeting for parents if determined necessary. (Refer to Appendix F)

## ***STAFF OBLIGATIONS***

(Building Principal)

### ***OBJECTIVES***

1. To insure student safety and contain or evacuate students according to plan.
2. To maintain appropriate communication with the students.

### ***IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURES***

1. The following procedures should be in place to insure student safety.
  - A. Plan and practice evacuation of all parts of the school building under a variety

of circumstances.

- B. Identify personnel to control crowds of students in various parts of the building.
2. Present prepared statement as written.
- A. Do not extemporize.
  - B. Facts dispel rumors.
  - C. Make no assumptions about the crisis event.
  - D. Do not:
    - 1. Observe a moment of silence.
    - 2. State that the death was a suicide.
    - 3. Allow crisis event to interfere with class objective.

## **GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS**

1. *CONFIDENTIALITY* should be maintained by *ALL* USD 248 staff concerning any information that may be obtained during and after a crisis procedure.
2. We recognize a need for in-service. Continued in-service should be available for the building level teams and medical teams each year. District in-service should follow every three years.
3. The local media and funeral homes need to be informed about policies pertaining to the crisis plan.
4. Individual schools should consider back-up people for each of the liaison positions. It is also suggested that each team member be familiar with the other liaison roles so that they could substitute during an emergency.
5. In buildings where fewer staff members are available, classrooms may be combined during the emergency.
6. A procedure should be in place so that each building will review their plan. It is recommended that each school year each building team have one review per year. The effectiveness of the procedures will then be evaluated and a further practice schedule can be decided for the district at that time.
7. Each building level crisis team will meet together and evaluate their response immediately following the crisis.
8. It is suggested that each building develop an emergency code, known only to the staff. The administration could use this code in an announcement to call the team members to a prearranged meeting point, without alerting the entire school population.
9. Where there is no direct communication between the classroom and the office, a process may need to be developed in each school to allow teachers to get help from the office, without leaving their classroom. A suggested procedure may be that each teacher be given three markers, one red, one white, and one blue. The markers could indicate the following:

Red - Medical emergency, come immediately!

Blue - Administrative, come immediately!  
 White - Come when possible.  
 Black - Only from Principal's Office  
 Freeze Schedule - By disc or intercom.  
 Statement, "Please follow Mr. Black's schedule."  
 All classes take immediate role by name.

**COMMUNITY LIAISON  
 APPENDIX A**

**Supportive Community Counseling General Information**

Crawford County Mental Health.....	231-5130
Mt. Carmel Emergency Counseling Service.....	231-5863
Mt. Carmel Counseling Service.....	231-1050
Families and Children Together.....	232-3228
Counseling Hotline .....	232-HELP (4357)

**FUNERAL/CLERGY  
 APPENDIX B**

**MEMORIALS**

1. Sources such as the Suicide Prevention Guide (1986), Lamb and Dunne - Maxine (1987), Hill (1984) and Poland (1989) indicate and strongly suggest that post-vention guidelines include that a physical memorial is not recommended and neither should the school system sensationalize or glorify the death in any way.
2. Because of School policy, school cannot allow memorials. Suggestions in lieu of include:
  - A. Scholarships - Contact Girard Alumni Association.
  - B. Plaques or Tree Memorials - Contact the Girard Ministerial Alliance or City Commissioners. Incidence of teenage suicide has increased dramatically in the last two decades. Lamb (1987) states that suicide is now the second leading cause of death among teenagers and that its incidence has tripled since 1955.
    1. When a student completes suicide, the school community, like the surviving family, often responds with immense grief, anger and distortion.
    2. Post-vention is a term which describes the process of working, with the bereaved after a suicide with the purpose of assisting survivors, maximizing preventative efforts and minimizing contagion effects.
3. There are a number of ways in which adolescents who attempt suicide differ from

adults who attempt. Two of which are: 1. They are more impulsive. 2. They are more likely to be influenced by romantic, mystic and idealistic factors.

4. Crisis theory indicates that the anniversary date of a tragedy or a loss is a difficult time for those who are grieving.
5. Suicidal adolescents often spend considerable energy contemplating how other people would react to his/her death. It is important to note that a suicidal adolescent's imaginary audience may include not only a parent, boyfriend/girlfriend or particular class, but also the entire body at school.
6. Suicides can and often do appear in clusters. A review of the literature indicates that two groups are at risk in the aftermath of a suicide completion. The first group consists of students who have engaged in suicidal ideation regardless of whether or not they were close to the victim. The second group consists of close friends of the victim. For these reasons:
  - a. Suicides can and do appear in clusters.
  - b. Adolescent attempts are all impulsive.
  - c. Imaginary audience may include the student body.
  - d. Anniversary dates are difficult times.
  - e. Survivors of a suicide often respond with immense grief, guilt, anger and distortion.

“Lamb, F. and Dunne-Maxine (1987), *Postvention in the Schools: Policy and Process*. In E. Dunne, J. McIntosh, and K. Dunne - Maxine, *Suicide and its Aftermath* (pp. 245 - 263). New York: Norton Hill, W. (1984) *Intervention and Postvention in Schools. Suicide in the Young*. Boston: John Wright. Wisconsin Dept. in Instruction (1986). *Suicide: Prevention: A resource and planning guide*. Madison: Author. Poland, S. (1989) *Suicide Intervention in the Schools*.

## **MEDIA APPENDIX C**

1. The media will be located in the IDL Room at the MS and the Conference Room at the Elementary School.
2. Each building will have a designated media contact person.
3. Interviews with staff and students are not allowed within the school building at anytime. Interviews are not allowed on school grounds during school time.
4. Names of students and staff involved in an emergency will not be released at anytime by school personnel

## **PATIENT CONDITION TERMINOLOGY APPENDIX D**

### **Girard Hospital District #1 - Terminology**

**GOOD**-----Vital signs are stable and within normal limits. Patient is conscious and comfortable; indicators are excellent.

**FAIR**-----Vital signs are stable and within normal limits. Patient is conscious but may be uncomfortable; indicators are favorable.

**SERIOUS**-----Vital signs may be unstable and not within normal limits. Patient is acutely ill; indicators are questionable. Patient may or may not be conscious.

**CRITICAL**-----Vital signs are unstable and not within normal limits. Patient may not be conscious; indicators are unfavorable.

---

8 a.m. to 4 p.m.----- (316) 724-8291 ----- Clinic Contacts:  
Director of Nursing  
Assistant Director of Nursing

8 a.m. to 4 p.m.----- (316) 724-8291 ----- Contacts for Disaster:  
Hospital Administrator  
Asst. Hospital Administrator

Other Hours----- (316) 724-8291 ----- Nursing Supervisor on duty.

## **SUGGESTIONS FOR PARENTS RESPONDING TO A CRISIS**

### **APPENDIX E**

(Team)

If your child is involved in or affected by a tragedy or other type of crisis, there are some general guidelines or suggestions that may help you to better understand and respond to the situation. You know your child best; however, you should be alert to his individual needs, behaviors, feelings and perceptions.

A crisis is generally viewed as a temporary state of emotional upset or disorganization. It's characterized by a person's inability to cope with a particular event or situation using his customary coping strategies and problem solving skills. The impact on an individual depends on the event or situation and on how that person perceives it in relation to his life.

Crises may offer the opportunity for significant learning and growth if resolved and integrated into a person's life and functioning as well as for negative consequences.

Make yourself available and accessible to your child if and when he wants to talk. Be flexible and responsible to his needs.

Try to maintain as much of a routine and sense of "normalcy" as you can, but be tolerant of temporary changes, upsets, and needs. Do not be too demanding or structured.

Communicate/demonstrate your concern, care, support, understanding and acceptance. Do not be judgmental or use words like “should” or “must” with respect to their feelings and behaviors.

By expressing yourself openly and honestly and displaying your confidence (i.e., that things will improve and that life will go on) and coping ability, you can serve as an important role model for your child and increase the likelihood that he will adopt similar behaviors and attitudes.

Listen to your child when he wants to talk and try to communicate that you understand and accept what he has to say. If he does not want to talk, do not force discussion, but let him know that you are willing to listen whenever the need or desire does arise. Do not assume that your child is not reacting or will not react simply because you do not observe an initial reaction.

Do not try to “rescue” your child or force him to feel better. Be patient and allow him to recover at his own pace in his own way.

Do not try to protect or isolate your child from “Threatening” topics or issues, especially those that he is trying or needing to deal with in order to work through and learn from the crisis.

## **SUGGESTIONS FOR PARENT/COMMUNITY MEETINGS**

### **APPENDIX F**

(Team)

The following are some general suggestions and guidelines for meetings that a school or the district may hold for parents or the community following a crisis.

Hold the meeting at a time that is convenient for the parents and in a location where they can feel relaxed and at ease.

If the media wishes to attend, allow them to do so. Make sure, however, that they do not become a distraction or inhibit the sharing of information, ideas, and feelings. Have written background information available for them, especially if sensitive issues are involved.

If appropriate, begin the meeting with an expression of sympathy for the students and their families that were negatively impacted by the crisis.

If needed, briefly review the details of the incident/crisis, the reactions of the students and staff, the district’s/school/s response, the current status of students and staff, and any other information that they might not yet have.

Acknowledge and thank those, especially from outside the district, who helped during the crisis.

It may be beneficial to have some of the “crisis” personnel or other “experts” attend the meeting to provide general information, answer questions, and facilitate the discussion of feelings, needs, complaints, etc. They can make prepared comments and/or act as resources. This will also give them an opportunity for feedback on the crisis intervention efforts.

Stress that the purpose of the meeting is NOT to debate or agonize over the “whats and whys” of the incident/crisis. Instead, emphasize that everyone is there to provide information, express feelings, help the participants better understand and respond to their children’s reactions and emotions, help reduce the negative impact on the families affected, suggest resources for further assistance, decide upon possible actions to be taken, and discuss ways of preventing such incidents in the future and of lessening their impact/trauma when they do occur.

If the group is large, it may be necessary to break into small discussion groups, with the “resource” persons and administrators acting as leaders/facilitators. The groups can address anything that they feel a need to discuss, but some suggested topics are:

- What are your major concerns at this time or for the future?
- What problems are you or your children experiencing?
- What are your (parents and children) major needs at this time and/or for the future?
- What do you feel the district/school/staff did right?
- What do you feel the district/school/staff did wrong?
- What recommendations or advice do you have for the district/school/staff?

This information can be recorded if desired and processed by the group as a whole or by the discussion leaders afterward.

Thank people for attending and participating. Urge them to communicate any further needs, problems, concerns, etc. to the school administration.

## **TIPS FOR TEACHERS IN DEALING WITH CRISIS**

### **APPENDIX G**

There have been many varied crisis situations which have impacted the school. There will be occasions when administrators, counselors and psychologists can not provide immediate assistance to all who need it during a crisis. Teachers can provide very valuable assistance. The goal of crisis intervention is to provide immediate assistance to all who need. Teachers can provide immediate assistance to restore normalcy and minimize debilitating lasting effects.

### ***VERIFICATION***

Your principal will verify the extent of the crisis and notify you as soon as possible.

Please be very cautious about commenting to students until you are notified of the facts. Tell students that it is important to stay calm and that rumors can get out of hand and that you will give them the facts as soon as possible.

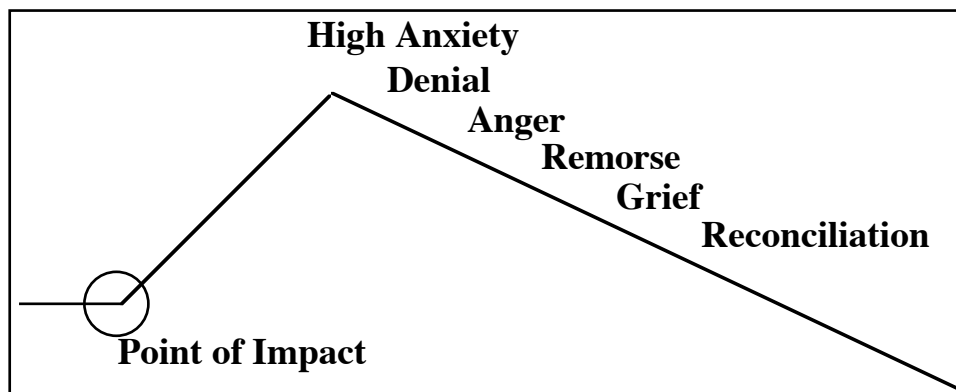
### ***OUR CRISIS REACTION***

Reaction to a crisis can fall into the categories of panic and defeat. It is normal to have lots of anxiety and to want to flee the scene or to feel that the world is not a very secure place. Unresolved issues based on our life history may surface and add to our emotional state. Waves of emotions may flood our thoughts.

### ***WHAT CAN THE TEACHER DO?***

1. After receiving verification from the principals you should openly and honestly acknowledge what has happened. Students need to be told the facts in age appropriate terms. This will help de-escalate the situation.
- 2 Model expression of your feelings and give the students permission to express their feelings. By giving permission to express feelings, they become validated leading to return to normalcy more quickly.
3. It is important that students understand that they may be flooded with waves of emotion and there is not one correct way to feel. Our emotions range through these stages and we can go back and forth through them.

### **Victims Response to Emotional Crisis**



4. Anger and denial are very common feelings. Students may also experience feelings of guilt that are very irrational. This may range from confusion about causality in a young child i.e. dreams or bad thoughts of mine caused this so I should have stopped or prevented this crisis i.e., if I had been there or I should have taken more action. Some students may have valid reasons to feel guilty if they had some knowledge or clues about another person's behavior (these students need to be referred to the counselor).

Following the crisis, be alert for those students who are experiencing more extreme reactions in comparison to the norm and refer them to the appropriate counselor.

5. Once students are physically safe they need the opportunity to talk about their feelings concerning their safety and security being threatened.
6. We have a tendency to expect all students to react to bad news with feelings of remorse. Give permission for a range of emotions Recognize the student who says today “I don’t care or it doesn’t bother me” may be crying tomorrow to next week. Students may show their feelings through “Acting out” behaviors.
7. Provide opportunities for students who wish to do so to express thoughts through their writing.
8. Be prepared to provide follow-up discussions as needed in the future or as more information about the crisis may last a long time.

### ***DEALING WITH DEATH***

A death in the school family (either a student or faculty member) is difficult. Statistics indicate that as many as 1 out of 750 students die or are killed each year. The life event history of each person will have a great deal to do with their ability to cope with a death in the school family.

1. Tell students about the death in a quiet and direct manner.
2. Avoid religious platitudes and recognize the varying religious beliefs held by students.
3. Give permission for a range of emotions.
4. Do not offer unnecessary details but do answer all questions.
5. Physical contact may comfort some students.

### ***DO's***

1. Do listen to the students and wait after you’ve asked a question to give them adequate time to respond.
2. Do allow students the opportunity to express any and all thoughts regarding the incident without judging or evaluating their comments.
3. Do be aware of your voice tone, keeping it low, even and warm.
4. Do help the students see that everyone shares similar feelings (i.e., (We’re - not You’re) all stunned that something like this could happen here” or “A lot of us (not you) are feeling angry.”)
5. Do expect tears, anger, resentment, fear, inappropriate laughter (often due to tension

and discomfort) stoicism (apparent non-reaction).6. Do expect some students to become phobic and have overwhelming concerns that may seem illogical to you but are very real to them.

7. Do encourage students to sit in a circle, or to make a more intimate grouping in which to have this discussion.
8. Do stress the confidential nature of the feelings & thoughts expressed in the discussion.
9. Do use your own thoughts and ideas as a means to encourage discussions, not as a means for alleviating your own feelings.
10. Do expect that other feelings of loss may emerge.
11. Do give accurate information about the incident. If you don't know an answer, say so. When possible, squelch the rumors that may exist by either giving the facts or researching what the "facts" are and reporting back.

### ***DON'T's***

1. Don't give "should, ought, or must, statements (i.e., You shouldn't feel like that.", "We mustn't dwell on this.")
2. Don't use cliches (i.e., "Be strong." "it could have been worse.").
3. Don't ask questions without being ready to listen.
4. Don't try to make them feel better; let them know that it's okay to feel the way they do.
5. Don't isolate anyone - each will need to feel a part of the group.
6. Don't expect the students to "get over" grief/recovery process within a certain time.
7. Don't assume a person is not grieving/reacting just because they don't look or act like it. Let them know you are available at any time (i.e., six weeks or three months from now).
8. Don't let students interrupt each other, allow each person to finish his or her own statement.
9. Don't observe a moment of silence during school.

## **GUIDELINES FOR UNDERSTANDING & RESPONDING TO A CRISIS APPENDIX H**

1. Below are some of the emotions you may observe in your students (or in yourself)

following a tragedy:

- Numbness, shock, denial --- After a sudden death, you don;t want to believe it has happened; you had no preparation for its occurrence.
- Confusion----- Why did this happen? I don't understand the circumstances. How could this happen to someone I know?
- Fear ----- Could something like this happen again? Will something like this happen again?
- Grief ----- Sadness, crying, a deep sense of personal loss.
- Anxiety----- A difficulty in explaining or understanding the tragedy; things are not the same at school or in my class.
- Depression----- Emptiness, unhappiness.
- Guilt ----- An irrational feeling of responsibility for the event. What could I have done to prevent it?\
- Anger----- Why did someone do a violent, senseless thing? What could I have done to prevent ?

2. Here are some of the changes in behavior that you may see. Most, if not all of these changes, will be temporary. Children are resilient and do bounce back.

- Lack of concentration ----- Inability to focus on schoolwork, household chores, or other leisure activities.
- Lack of interest in usual activities --- Their minds are preoccupied with other thoughts and feelings and what would usually be very enjoyable may not have much appeal.
- Greater dependence----- A need to feel protected may result in their wanting to do more with you or not have you away from them for long periods of time; some kids may not want to be alone.
- Problems with sleeping/eating ----- Difficulty going to sleep, occasional bad dreams, or a decreased or increased appetite are common physical reactions to a stressful event.
- Overly quiet/talkative ----- Students may need to talk about a tragic incident over and over again, asking questions that may seem unanswerable but needing to ask them anyway. This repetition is often a healthy way of working through the grief process; on the third hand, a student may not want to talk about it much with you, preferring to discuss it with friends, classmates, parents -- those who may have been closer to the tragedy; or

the student may not want to talk with anyone about it.

3. Here are some things that teachers and parents can do to help a child through this difficult time:

Listen-----Don't interrupt, he/she needs to be heard.

Accept feelings----They are valid feelings for this student, even though your feelings may not be similar ones.

Empathize-----Let the child know that you recognize his/her sadness, confusion, anger, or whatever feelings he/she has about the tragedy.

Reassure-----The student is not responsible for what happened.

Accept-----The student may not want to talk about the trauma right away. Let him/her know you are willing to listen whenever he/she wants or needs to talk about it.

Be tolerant -----of temporary changes.

Maintain-----as much of a sense of routine as possible.

Provide -----additional activities if the student seems to have excess energy.

Don't hesitate to ask for help. Help can be sought from other parents, the school staff, or an outside professional.

\*Adapted from Robert L. Lewis, Ph.D  
Clinical Psychologist, Clayton, MO

THE USD #248 Crisis Intervention Planning Committee gratefully acknowledges the resources that were utilized in preparing this guide. It is not the intent of the committee to assume credit for generating the content of the document but for modifying written information that was obtained through the Education Service Center at Greenbush, Scott Poland, USD #250 Crisis Intervention Planning Committee, Richard E. Nelson, the National Association of School Psychologists, and others not identified as authors.

## **USD 248 CRISIS RESPONSE PROCEDURE**

### ***PURPOSE FOR THE PROCEDURE***

- 1. Protect privacy of the parents and family.**
- 2. Prevent rumor escalation.**
- 3. Discourage imitation of suicide by other students.**
- 4. Aid in returning to a pre-crisis level.**

### **IN THE EVENT OF A CRISIS**

#### ***Protect the family***

- Contain the story and protect the privacy of the family.
- Direct the messenger not to repeat the story.

#### ***Verify the incident***

- Administrator should make calls to verify the incident.
- Instruct office personnel to withhold all information until verified.

#### ***Determine severity of incident***

Administrators and/or Superintendent determine need for:

- Local intervention - District Counselors or
- Crisis Intervention Team
- If determined that a crisis Intervention Team is needed, the Superintendent or Administrator will:

1. Contact the ESC at 724-6281 (M-F 8:30-4:30) Jim Rodman (Home: 724-6402)
2. Define Crisis.

3. Request type of support needed.

### **Notify school staff to implement crisis plan**

- In the event that the incident occurs outside school hours, administrators will activate a phone tree.

### **Convene Building Level Team**

- Establish CRISIS CENTER (Announce location during faculty meeting)
- RVHS - Counselor and Nurse's Offices, Locker Rooms, Teacher's Lounge
- GMS/GHS - Special Services, Board and Coach's Offices, Teacher's Lounges,
- To announce incident to staff, prepare written statement.
- Prepare formal written statement to be read aloud in classrooms.

Conduct a faculty meeting as quickly as possible.

- Reinforce the need for confidentiality to dispel rumors and protect those involved.
- Briefly identify behaviors that may be exhibited.
- Refer staff to Crisis Intervention Guide, Appendix G (Tips for Teachers) and Appendix H (Guidelines).
- Identify students, close friends, relatives within school setting, etc. that may be seriously impacted by the crisis.
- Announce location of Crisis Center.
- Students should not be allowed to leave building unless contact with parent has been made.

However, parent and student shall be informed that it is in student's best interest to stay at school and continue the day in as normal a routine as possible and that help is available within the school setting. It is recommended that:

- An all school announcement NOT be made.
- Teachers not embellish/extemporize following the statement.
- The death NOT be referred to as suicide.
- A moment of silence NOT be made during school.

Proceed with day as normally as possible.

- Provide formal, written updates for faculty/students as needed.

Closure/staff debriefing

- Evaluate events of the day.
- Determine need for further intervention.