



CRISIS

EVENTS

RESPONSE

PROTOCOL

FEBRUARY 2001

## Role of the Crisis Events Team

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The role of the Crisis Events Team is to respond to the crisis event in a manner to return the situation to normal as quickly as possible so that the needs of those affected by the event are addressed to prevent long term distress.

Areas of responsibility for the crisis events team:

- Suicide                                      in school                      outside school
- Death (Accidental and Natural)      inside school              outside school
- School or Community Disaster

## School Crisis Events Team

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The School Crisis Events Team consists of the school principal, vice principal, guidance counsellor and other staff members selected by the principal. The size of the school teams should correlate with the student population. The chart below is offered as a guide. The numbers listed are suggested minimum requirements.

The principal and guidance counsellor should receive inservice on debriefing skills, suicide awareness and intervention, and grief counselling.

Each school must review the crisis events response procedures at the opening of each school year and update the School Team list.

<b>Size of School-Based Teams (Minimum Numbers)</b>	<b>Student Population</b>
3 staff	under 200
4 staff	200 - 300
5 staff	300 - 500
6 staff	500-1000
7 staff	over 1000

## **Crisis Events Advisory Committee**

### **Members:**

It is recommended that each District develop a committee made up of :

- Student Services Supervisor and/or Coordinator of CERT (if different)
- District Psychologist
- Guidance Counsellor(s)
- Principal(s)/vice principal(s)
- Transportation supervisor
- Facilities manager

### **Duties of Committee:**

1. Review the CERP from time-to-time and update procedures
2. Provide leadership and coordinate resources outside the school.
3. Offer suggestions on how to implement the school and District plan.

## **Crisis Events Coordinator's Role**

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1. Provide inservice for the District and School Crisis Events Response Team.
2. Act as a contact person for the school principal and Director.
3. Coordinate District and Community Resources by contacting and arranging for extra counsellors and other professionals from:
  - other schools
  - Support Services to Education
  - Mental Health
  - District Student Services
4. Student Debriefing - participate in debriefing and counselling sessions with the students as required.
5. Staff Debriefing - coordinate and participate in debriefing sessions with the school staff. Conduct staff debriefing as needed.
6. Information - Develop and provide background information and materials to staff and parents regarding various aspects of the intervention including grief counselling: what to expect from students and staff following a crisis event.
7. Keep the superintendent up-to-date on the implementation of the District plan. Provide a written report to the superintendent summarizing the crisis events

## **Crisis Events Team Responsibilities School Team**

### ***I - Principal's Role***

The principal's responsibility is to provide leadership during a crisis. Although the principal has school, district and community teams for support, **it is recommended that a principal's alternate be designated and trained** due to the enormity of the responsibility and in case the principal is not in the school at the time of the crisis.

- 1. Contact the District and Community Teams** - the principal is responsible for requesting outside assistance as required following a crisis event. He/she is responsible for scheduling an emergency meeting of the school team to determine a plan of action. The principal should contact the District coordinator of CERT for assistance in accessing the District and Community Teams, if necessary.
- 2. Remain Visible** - During a crisis it is essential that the school provide firm, compassionate direction through the noticeable presence of authority.
- 3. Address the Media** - The Superintendent or designate, usually the principal, will act as spokesperson to the media. Teachers should only be interviewed when both the superintendent or designate, and the principal have given permission. Students should only be interviewed with written parental permission.

In dealing with the media consider the following:

- do not refuse to speak to the press, however arrange interviews when you will be available; you **can** ask media to leave the premises until you are ready to speak with them
- be proactive; contact them before they contact
- develop a written statement
- stress the positive action being taken by the school

- 4. Keep the Staff Informed** - through meetings and written comments to ensure that the staff is fully up-to-date with regards to the facts. Encourage them to squelch rumours.
- 5. Contact the Parents Affected** - It is important to contact the family of the student involved in the crisis, not only to express the school's condolences, but to also learn of the family's wishes regarding the funeral or any other arrangement.
- 6. Have the crisis event team available** to talk to parents who call the school. If the incident is creating a lot of community concern, schedule a parent meeting involving the various services and agencies.
- 7. Contact the Police** - If a death or an event leading to a death takes place in the school, the principal must inform the local police.

- 8. Announcing the Event** - The principal is responsible for scheduling a staff meeting prior to announcing the event to the students. This allows the staff a chance to compose themselves. The staff should be given very specific instructions on what to tell the students. Staff members who require support in announcing the event should be provided with the necessary support. When the event occurs during school hours, the principal will convey the information to the staff prior to announcing it to the students.
- 9. Follow-up Meetings** - The principal is responsible for monitoring the well being of the teaching staff and for ensuring that follow up debriefings are scheduled as required for the staff. These should be conducted by support personnel outside the school from the district or community teams.
- 10. Have replacement teacher(s)** for the teaching guidance counsellor or teacher(s) involved in the event.

### **PRINCIPAL'S CHECK LIST**

- Clarify facts regarding suicide, tragic death, student group conflicts.
- Consider impact of extraordinary incidents on school climate.
- Call District Coordinator of the District CERT.
- Arrange for staff meeting involving CERT.
- Review upcoming events that may need to be cancelled.
- Identify at-risk staff and students.
- Arrange for a quiet place for Crisis Events Response Team to work.
- Arrange for staff debriefing.
- Consider what could be included in your communication to student body and school community.
- Keep daily log of activities.
- Arrange for follow-up staff meeting.
- Prepare final incident response report.
- Have a plan in place for the media.
- If an answering machine/voice mail is in use, change your message so that incoming calls are directed to an appropriate number.

## ***II - Teacher's Role***

While it is recognized that many teachers have not been trained and may not have had much experience in handling crises, they nevertheless have an important role to play during a crisis event.

- 1. Announcing the Event** - Teachers are responsible for giving the details of the event to their class following a staff briefing and for ensuring that the students have the facts. In classes more intensely affected by the crisis there should be a member of the school, district or community team present to provide support for the teacher in announcing the event and to assist in dealing with the students' emotional reactions to it.
- 2. Class Discussions** - Teachers are encouraged to participate in class discussions about the event if they feel comfortable in doing so. The school and district team is available to support them or to lead discussions if requested.
- 3. Immediate Referral.**- Students at-risk such as: siblings, close friends, those displaying intense emotional reactions, eye witnesses to the event, those experiencing other losses such as family problems or recent deaths, previous suicide attempts or obvious signs of depression should be strongly encouraged to seek individual counselling that day.
- 4. Long Term Referral** - The teacher should monitor the students following a crisis. Some students may be delayed in their reactions to a crisis. Others may not be able to work through their feelings. These students may have to be referred at a later date.
- 5. Adjusting Curriculum** - In the aftermath of a traumatic event, students' concentration, memory and ability to learn is impaired. **All testing should be postponed for a few days.** For up to two weeks, assignments may have to be shorter and more structured. In the immediate day or days following a crisis try incorporating activities into the curriculum related to the event.
- 6. Personal Grief** - It is perfectly acceptable for a teacher to convey (intentionally or unintentionally) his/her own personal grief over the crisis. In fact this is often helpful to students in the class who are hesitant or embarrassed about revealing their feelings.

### ***III - Counsellor's Role***

The guidance counsellor must not only participate in the immediate defusing and debriefing with students along with other members of the school, district and community team, but is the key person in monitoring the long term effects of the crisis.

- 1. Debriefing/Defusing** - Participate and assist in coordinating both individual and group sessions with students in the immediate aftermath of the crisis. This should be done in conjunction with someone from the district team.
- 2. At-Risk Identification** - Assist in identifying those students most likely at risk due to the crisis, and who require more intense counselling.
- 3. Referral** - Contact the Coordinator of the District Crisis Event Response Team for students requiring more intense counselling. It is important to be aware or to confirm whether any of these students are currently receiving counselling and if so to alert their counsellor of new developments.
- 4. Individual Counselling** - Provide counselling to students experiencing normal grief reactions who require some individual attention due to such factors as being related or a close friend of the student involved in the crisis.
- 5. Group Counselling** - Certain groups of students such as teams or classes directly involved with the event will often require follow-up group sessions. These groups should not be larger than eight or ten.
- 6. Parents** - It is important to contact the parents of students who are exhibiting intense reactions to a crisis event. All parents who express concern as well as parents of students considered at-risk because of the crisis event should be given materials to assist them.
- 7. Staff Support** - Assist teachers with announcing the crisis event. Participate in class discussions about the event if requested by a teacher.

## **Transportation**

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In the event that a crisis happens during school transportation the following procedures will apply.

1. A list of students and supervisors travelling on all regular, co-curricular and extra curricular trips and their phone numbers will be supplied for the school bus or private transportation and the school administration office.
2. In the event of a serious transportation accident the school principal or designate will establish an information centre at the school.

If an accident occurs on a regular run it may become necessary to establish an information centre at the District Office.

3. A list of the following emergency phone numbers will be posted in a visible location at the front of the bus.

- Transportation Office
- Transportation Supervisor
- District Office Emergency Number
- Emergency Number - 911
- R.C.M.P.
- Municipal Policing Services

4. The bus driver or designate will contact the District Transportation Supervisor and the school principal with the following information:

- the location of the accident
- phone number calling from
- bus number and driver's name
- number of injuries
- brief description of the accident
- requirements for a spare bus