

Policy

CRISIS INTERVENTION AND POST-INTERVENTION PLAN

Introduction

A “crisis” is a situation or period in which things are very uncertain, difficult, or painful, and when action must be taken to avoid complete disaster or breakdown. The goal of this intervention plan is:

- A. To make all professional and support staff aware of the potential secondary trauma that can occur as a result of a crisis; and
- B. To provide professional and support staff with a means of diffusing highly charged reactions and preventing them from precipitating a secondary crisis.

The superintendent shall ensure that all personnel involved with students have access to the crisis management plan and are familiar with district procedures for aiding students during and in the aftermath of a crisis. The school crisis intervention plan shall identify types of crisis and address prevention and intervention strategies that incorporate a team approach. The district response to crisis shall:

- A. Reducing the effects of traumatic stress;
- B. Providing services to students to assist them in dealing with the crisis and to help them as a means of preventing post-traumatic stress disorders;
- C. Maintain a cohesive school community by handling a crisis in an effective manner;
- D. Demonstrating preparedness to protect and help students and staff when a critical incident has occurred.

Crisis

The following examples constitute situations that may result in a crisis and require intervention:

- A. Drug overdose of a student;
- B. Accidental, suicide or intended death of a student;
- C. Accidental or intended death of a professional or support staff member or a suicide;
- D. Serious automobile or bus accident (on or off campus);
- E. Student disaster involving loss of life and affecting members of the student body;
- F. A disaster involving major property damage to the school buildings and possible student or staff injury and/or loss of life (fire, explosion, tornado, hurricane, earthquake, and/or unforeseen catastrophe);
- G. Hostage situation;
- H. Other (bomb threat, building intruder, hazardous materials, severe weather).

School Crisis Team

When a crisis situation occurs, the principal will utilize the resources available through the members of the crisis intervention team. The team shall include the principal, the assistant principal(s) if assigned to the

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building, the school nurse, the guidance counselor(s), and other members of the school's student assistance team or the district staff as deemed appropriate and necessary by the principal. The school psychologist will be contacted by the principal or his/her designee if he is not immediately available.

Roles and Responsibilities of the District and School Crisis Team

A. The superintendent shall:

1. Be the spokesperson for the district and the media contact;
2. Responsible for notification of board members;
3. Authorize the release of information to the public based on Freedom of Information Act and right to privacy laws;
4. Authorize purchase and payments for resources needed;
5. Makes decisions regarding re-starting of school activities.

B. The principal shall:

1. Notify superintendent immediately subsequent to the crisis;
2. In the absence of both the superintendent and principal, notify department chairperson for guidance
3. Notify the parents of injured and deceased students;
4. Notify the nearest relative of injured and/or deceased professional or support staff;
5. Contact police, rescue squad and/or fire department as appropriate;
6. Implement school-based crisis team plan and documentation;
7. Notify professional and support staff and keeps staff updated;
8. Emphasize facts and squelches rumors;
9. Remain highly visible;
10. In the event of a student death, stop the notifications on student activity (scholarship reports, testing, placement, attendance) from being sent to the home of a family whose child has died;
11. In addition, remove personal items from desk and lockers to save for the parents and rearranges seating, classes, programs, etc., as indicated by the crisis;
12. Identify faculty and staff in need of counseling
13. Arrange for procedures for excused absences in the event of a funeral memorial service;
14. Delegate to the relief/designee specific areas of responsibility;

C. The assistant principal or relief/designee shall assume any responsibilities delegated by the principal;

D. The school nurse shall:

1. Attend to injuries;
2. Advise principal of immediate lifesaving needs;
3. Follow-up and monitor student injuries.

E. The school counselor:

1. Identify students who are seriously emotionally affected by the events of the crisis;
2. Immediately notify additional counselors if needed;
3. Organize counseling sessions;
4. Inform constituent schools and area consortium schools so they can provide support for students affected in their schools-Maintains a list of students counseled;
5. Call parents/guardians of students counseled to provide continued support for the students who are very stressed;
6. Provide long-term assistance for students suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder;
7. Work with the student assistance team to complete stress debriefing and to continue to monitor students at risk emotionally.

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The principal shall schedule a faculty meeting. The purpose of the faculty meeting is for the principal to review the facts of the situation in order to dispel rumors. The principal will hand out a written announcement regarding the incident for the professional staff to read and announce in their homerooms. The principal shall review the policy for media contacts and notify staff of communication procedures.

The school counselor shall present the expected psychological and physical symptoms that may be experienced by the school community such as a description of the feelings which students may be experiencing and warning signs of depression and suicidal ideation/behavior. The counselor shall review effective strategies for the staff to use to assist students such as supportive listening skills. He/she shall also review the procedures of the crisis team. Time shall be allowed for staff support and discussion.

Teachers shall be asked to discuss the incident enough to dispel rumors and to discourage glorification of the event. Discussion should be serious, frank and supportive. If necessary, a staff meeting shall be held at the end of the day to review the day and for staff support. Staff shall be encouraged to share their experiences and a report by members of the crisis team shall be presented. Identified "high risk" students shall be discussed briefly, especially with their specific teachers. Staff shall be reminded to be on the lookout for any of the warning signs of depression or suicidal behavior in other students.

The principal or his or her designated member of the crisis team shall make phone calls, along with the guidance counselor, to parents of individual students identified as "high risk" or particularly distraught. Resources within the community shall be shared and appropriate advice given on how to handle their son/daughter.

Day Two

A written announcement is given to the teacher by the principal and read to the students at the beginning of the first period announcing any special procedures for the school day. Certain key staff and students may attend to be a support to family members and to bring psychological closure to the incident.

Crisis team shall monitor the behavior of "at risk" students. Parents/guardians of students who continue to seek counseling shall be informed, and referral contact information provided for three private therapists, or to the local mental health clinic. These conversations should be documented and a follow-up letter sent to the parents. If a death or deaths occur, the principal and a member of the Crisis

Team should visit the victim's family. In addition to expressions of sympathy and support, advice about dealing with the student's close friends can be discussed and any personal belongings of a student returned. Advice can also be given with regard to contacts by the media.

Post-Intervention Follow-Up

This meeting can be held at the end of the first week to discuss the interventions which took place and to provide staff with a time for reflection and support. Staff shall be reminded to continue to monitor the behavior of all students, especially those identified as "high risk."

When a crisis occurs, the mental health climate of the school is often adversely affected. Professional staff should be aware and sensitive to the many questions, concerns and consequences felt by many students who know and felt the impact of the recent crisis in a personal way. Staff should feel free to consult with members of the crisis team, counseling offices within school and outside resources in order to deal effectively with the tragedy.

Guidelines for Handling the Media

A. The superintendent or his or her designee will be the spokesperson;

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- B. The superintendent or his or her designee will develop a written statement to be released to the news media;
- C. The superintendent or his or her designee will announce new changes made after the incident has passed;
- D. The superintendent or his or her designee will stress the positive action taken by the school district and the members of the school board;
- E. The superintendent of his designee will advise key administrators on how to keep their staff informed and control rumors;
- F. All professional staff will be required not to grant interviews to the media;
- G. All members of the media will be directed to the superintendent or his or her designee.

Adopted: 1995
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Key Words

Crisis, Crisis Intervention; Suicide, Suicidal Ideation, Staff Training

Legal References: N.J.S.A. 18A: 6-112 Instruction in suicide prevention for public school staff
N.J.S.A. 18A:1011-1 General mandatory powers and duties
N.J.S.A. 30:9A-12 Youth suicide prevention program

Possible

Cross References: *5020 Role of parents/guardians
 *5113 Absences and excuses
 *5114 Suspension and expulsion
 *5120 Assessment of individual needs
 *5124 Reporting to parents/guardians
 *5125 Student records
 *5131 Conduct/discipline
 *5131.6 Drugs, alcohol, tobacco (substance abuse)
 *5141 Student health
 *5142 Safety
 *6164.2 Guidance Services
 *6164.4 Child study team
 *6171.1 Remedial instruction
 *6171.2 Gifted and talented
 *6171.4 Special education
 *6172 Alternative educational programs
 *6173 Home instruction

*Indicates policy is included in the Critical Policy Reference Manual.