



South Shore

Regional Centre for Education

**Emergency
Management Planning
&
Critical Incident
Response Guide**

South Shore Regional Centre for Education
Revised September 2013

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INTRODUCTION

Definitions

- An emergency is ***an abnormal situation which, in order to limit danger to property or environment, requires prompt action beyond normal procedures.*** (Nova Scotia Emergency Management Organization, 2011) Examples may include fire, explosion, dangerous individuals, bomb threats.
- A critical incident is defined as ***“an event that has a traumatizing impact on the school population, parents or the community, to such an extent that the school’s mandate of education cannot be fulfilled.*** (South Shore Regional Centre for Education, Crisis Intervention Policy #261) Examples could include sudden death (suicide or death of a peer, teacher, principal, parent or significant other), or incidence of violence in the school or community which results in the disruption of normal school functioning”.

Overview

It is recognized that schools are normally safe places for students and staff. The probability of an emergency, especially in the form of targeted violence, is extremely low. However, the consequences of such an event are immeasurable. In the face of an emergency or critical incident, it is important to maintain a safe and orderly environment as much as possible while providing support for students and staff. It is therefore essential that schools are prepared.

Why are formal protocols necessary?

Formal protocols for protecting and supporting students and staff can be effective in reducing physical, psychological and social effects in emergency or critical incident. While formal protocols are necessary, they are merely cornerstones for actual response to an emergency as situations are quite dynamic. Critical thinking skills play an important role for individuals taking charge, and common sense will often prevail in making adjustments to response plans. Following an event, a review of actions taken always provides an important opportunity to assess the effectiveness of protocols and any opportunities for improvement.

The South Shore Regional Centre for Education (SSRCE) is committed to alleviate impacts as much as possible.

The authority to implement protocols includes, but is not limited to:

- Nova Scotia Education Act, S. 39(2) It is the duty of the Superintendent to...(g) maintain a safe, orderly, and supportive learning environment in all schools in the school district or the school region
- Nova Scotia Fire Safety Act, S. 17...every owner of land or premises, or part thereof, and every person shall take every precaution that is reasonable in the circumstances to achieve fire safety...
- Nova Scotia Occupational Health and Safety Act, S. 13 (1) Every employer shall take every precaution that is reasonable in the circumstances to (a) ensure the health and safety of persons at or near the workplace.
- SSRCE Crisis Intervention Administrative Procedures #261, S. 2.1 All schools shall have a school-based Critical Incident Team in place at all times. S.2.2 By September 30 of each

year, the school-based CIT shall updated the Emergency Response Chart and review procedures with all staff.

Mandate

Each school must have Emergency Management and Critical Incident Response Plans which are shared with all staff and practiced. Plans need to be reviewed at the beginning of each school year and any adjustments made no later than September 30. Planning activities include:

- Mitigation and prevention
- Preparedness
- Response
- Recovery

Guide, Chart and Checklist

- ***Emergency Management Planning and Critical Incident Responding Guide*** – This guide is prepared to assist schools with planning for emergencies and responding to critical incidents. It outlines generic procedures that include steps to be taken in response to an emergency, and includes materials to help school staff understand and carry out their support functions during and after an event. This guide is fluid and circumstances may dictate an alternative to standard practice by the person-in-charge to ensure the safest course of action. This information contained in this document is a guide for schools to tailor to meet the needs of each individual school. The Table of Contents outlines the structure and components of the guide.
- ***Emergency Response Chart*** - The content of this hands-on quick reference flip chart is attached as Appendix A to this guide. This chart is intended to be kept in highly visible, accessible locations, usually in the school office, near the PA system, and telephone.
- ***Emergency Planning Checklist*** - To help with school preparedness an annual checklist with what needs to be done has been has been developed and is included as **Appendix A** in the forms section of this guide.

SECTION I – MITIGATION AND PREVENTION

Mitigation and Prevention

Mitigation and prevention includes all activities, initiatives, and programs designed to mitigate and prevent harm or damage from occurring. Activities may include such things as:

- Threat Assessments, eg:
 - o Supervision and evaluation of student activity
(the form *Identification Checklist for Individuals at Risk*, Appendix B, may be helpful considerations for individual assessments).
 - o Student behaviour programs
 - o Trained staff with diffusion skills
 - o Knowledge of parental or family disputes
 - o Screening of unknown visitors
- Bullying/harassment programs, eg:
 - o Promotional campaigns
 - o Trained staff
- Crime Prevention Through Environment Design Audits (CPTED), eg:
 - o Building access
 - o Video surveillance
 - o After hours building security
 - o Identification of high crime situations
- Practices, eg (Refer to Page 16 for details):
 - o Evacuation
 - o Lockdown
 - o Relocation

Before An Emergency

Regional Centre for Education Teams

Overall planning begins with the establishment of a Regional Emergency Management Team (REMT) and Regional Critical Incident Response Team (RCIRT).

- **Regional Emergency Management Team (REMT)**
The REMT objectives are to interpret provincial guidelines and best practices and develop as much of the overall plan as possible, and then to guide schools in developing individual plans. The team is comprised of cross-functional departmental representatives, such as Operations, Programs and Student Services, Human Resources, and the Superintendent's Office/Communications. There may be times when participation from external resources such as police, fire or other emergency representatives may be beneficial in planning activities.

- **Regional Critical Incident Response Team (RCIRT)**
The RCIRT is a response team put into action in response to a Regional Centre for Education-wide critical incident or to assist schools as determined to be required by the Superintendent or Director of Programs and Student Services. The team is comprised of the Superintendent and/or Director of Programs and Student Services, a Coordinator from Programs and Student Services, a Principal, two school counselors, a school psychologist and other personnel, including external resources as appropriate.

Response activities will vary, but may include:

- Verify the facts and details of the incident, in consultation with school Principal.
- Arrange liaison contact with appropriate emergency response authorities.
- Establish a central base and communication plan (social network messages, media releases, spokesperson, prepared statements, letters to parents).
- Provide necessary details to any other affected schools or departments (ie, Transportation).
- Provide assistance and act as a resource and support for school teams or in lieu of a school team depending on the magnitude of the event.
- Provide follow-up for the duration necessary for affected schools to resume normal activities.
- Consult with School Administrators to determine plan of action and necessary resources, such as:
 - reassignment of personnel
 - substitute teachers
 - transportation
 - type of supports
 - meetings
 - media/public relations
 - addressing safety issues if necessary
 - countering rumours
 - arranging support services for response team

School Teams

School planning starts with the formation of School Emergency Management Team (SEMT) and School Critical Incident Team (SCIT), which may be combined as one team and identified using a *School Team Membership* form, **Form A**. Their overall objectives are planning for emergencies and responding to critical incidents. The *Emergency Planning Checklist*, **Appendix A** can be used to assist with these activities. School team members should be comprised of the Principal, staff who are directly responsible to provide critical incident response, representatives from the Occupational Health & Safety Committee, and representatives from any co-tenants. There may be times when participation from external resources such as police, fire or other emergency representatives may be beneficial in planning activities.

- **School Emergency Management Team (SEMT)**

The role of the SEMT is to develop a comprehensive Emergency Response Plan. This team will ensure that the school is prepared for emergencies. Team responsibilities include:

- Become familiar with relevant provincial and Regional Centre for Education policies and procedures
- Review the SSRCE Emergency Planning and Critical Incident Responding Guide
- Complete tasks required to develop a school-based response to emergencies such as: developing Emergency Plans, keeping an updated phone tree, planning practices, etc.
- Ensure that the Emergency Response Chart is reviewed and placed in visible central locations
- Ensure the complete Emergency Response Plans are reviewed with all staff including teachers, program support assistants, administrative assistants, custodians and janitors, cafeteria workers, substitutes and volunteers
- Distribute the School Emergency Plan to appropriate organizations

- **School Critical Incident Response Team (SCIRT)**

The role of the SCIRT is to develop a response plan for incidents that require critical incident response, and to enact that plan should it be deemed necessary. This team is to be organized at the beginning of each school year and may also be part of the Emergency Planning Team. SCIRT members should be: the Principal or designate, a minimum of 2 staff members when possible, guidance counselor when possible, school psychologist, and other external resources such as local Clergy, Public Health, Early Response Service members, or other individuals with training in critical incident response.

The essential characteristic of SCIRT members:

- Compassion, friendliness, and approachability
- Leadership and decision-making ability
- Ability to follow through with decisions
- Availability and flexibility (off hours)
- Effective listening skills
- Respect and confidentiality
- Clarity about the way to take care of oneself during and after a crisis

Response activities will vary, but may include:

- Meet as soon as possible after the incident to verify facts and determine what level of response, if any, is required:
 - School-based response: the type of crisis and range of impact can be managed by school-based staff - for example, guidance, school psychologist, teachers

- Regional response: the type and level of response requires additional support from others such as guidance and school psychologists from other schools
- Community response: the type and level of response requires additional supports from community agencies as well as SSRCE staff
- o develop a plan of action
- o meet with the staff as soon as possible to discuss plan and its implementation
- o monitor classes where assistance is necessary
- o provide direct assistance to individuals and classes
- o identify any individuals students and staff who may be “at risk” or need additional support; maintain a list
- o identify any individuals students and staff who may need to go home; call home if necessary
- o be alert to absent students
- o provide follow-up:
 - meet with staff at the end of the first day to discuss the day’s progress
 - the team should meet daily for a few days following the incident to critique and determine further action, if necessary
 - the team should meet at the end of each day for debriefing

Plan Components

It is not reasonable to create a comprehensive plan to cover every possible emergency. The person-in-charge will assess the situation as it happens and utilize one of four all-hazards response measures:

1. **Evacuation** (leaving the building in response to a danger inside the building)
2. **Lockdown** (securing and concealing individuals in response to a danger inside the building)
3. **Hold and Secure** (controlling access to the building in response to a danger external to the building)
4. **Relocation** (moving away from the building to another location)
 - * *plus any other "Hazard-Specific" (for any known specific hazards to any school, not covered by any of the above measures)*

Key focus areas in developing details in each of these areas include:

- Keeping the safety of people a priority in selecting procedures.
- Competency and authority for as many staff as possible to assess and take action quickly in response to a situation.
- Access to communication systems and methods to communicate response throughout the school and external instructional areas and call-out for external assistance
- Responsibilities of various school personnel
- Recovery activities

Evacuation

The objective of an evacuation is to ensure that everyone leaves the building in a safe and timely manner. The established fire evacuation plan will form the basis for all evacuations and will only be varied as circumstances dictate. The generic *Evacuation* section from the Emergency Response Chart, **Form B**, may be adapted to your specific school. Include any other documents describing Evacuation plan details.

The evacuation plan provides guidance:

- on describing circumstances under which an evacuation should be initiated
- on the means for announcing the evacuation
- on the means of safely evacuating the building
- for determining the circumstances for re-entering the building following an evacuation
- on actions to take if the building cannot be re-entered after an evacuation

Considerations:

- Although the general signal is a fire alarm, in some situation a verbal announcement may be more effective for giving specific instructions.
- Include instruction for both instructional and non-instructional times (assemblies, lunch, etc.) and evacuation routes.
- Ensure that there are specific plans included for students who have special needs.
- Evacuation routes should include an alternate route in case the planned route is unsafe.
- Evacuation route maps are to be posted visibly in each classroom.
- The plan is to be practiced a minimum of 6 times per year: three in the first half of the year and three in the second half, with the first practice in the first week of school.

- **Relocation**

The objective of relocation is to move students and staff to a pre-determined location away from the school in a safe and timely manner. The generic **Relocation** section from the Emergency Response Chart, **Form C**, may be adapted to your specific school. Include any other documents describing Relocation plan details.

The relocation plan provides guidance:

- on pre-identification of the primary and alternative relocation sites
- on understanding the circumstances under which a relocation should be initiated
- the means for communicating a relocation
- specific procedures to be taken to ensure student safety during relocation
- a system to account for students prior to departure from the school site, on arrival at the relocation site, and on release to parents/guardians
- the circumstances for students to be released to parents/guardians, on their own, or other means of transportation

Considerations:

- Location is to accessible, in close proximity and large enough to house all staff and students.
- A formal agreement should be made with the relocation site and reviewed each year. Refer to **Sample Relocation Letter Agreement, Appendix C**.
- Transportation of students needs to be determined first to the site and then home; consultation with SSRCE Transportation Department may be necessary.
- Transportation of staff to home, if a situation arises that staff cannot access their cars.
- If possible, this plan should be practiced at least once per year. If it is determined that the risk to students outweighs the benefits of practicing the relocation, then it may be conducted with just staff. If practice with staff without the support of emergency services is not safe or practical, the relocation plan must be clearly communicated.

- **Lockdown**

The objective of a lockdown is to isolate students and staff in a secure location in response to a threat of violence within the building. The generic **Lockdown** section from the Emergency Response Chart, **Form D**, may be adapted to your specific school. Include any other documents describing Lockdown plan details.

The lockdown plan provides guidance:

- on describing the circumstances under which an lockdown should be initiated
- on the means for announcing the lockdown to all occupants in the school and external instructional areas.
- on the means of notifying and maintaining communication with emergency responders and other relevant parties
- on the means of taking secured locations within the building, especially:
 - during regular class time
 - during transition times
 - before school begins
 - during change of classes
 - lunch/recess
 - end of the school day
- for determining the circumstances for ending the lockdown, usually with assistance from emergency responders. :

Considerations:

- For detailed strategies involved in conducting school Lockdowns, refer to **Conducting School Lockdowns and Hold-and-Secure**, **Appendix D**.
- Implementation is to include all staff, students and visitors.
- The plan is to be practiced a minimum of 2 times per year with the first practice taking place prior to the end of September.

- **Hold-and-Secure**

The objective of a hold-and-secure is to maintain the safety of occupants by controlling who enters and leaves the building. A hold-and-secure is initiated in response to a threat of violence or other dangerous situation outside of the building. The generic *Hold-and-Secure* section from the Emergency Response Chart, **Form E**, may be adapted to your specific school. Include any other documents describing Hold-and-Secure plan details.

The hold-and-secure plan provides guidance

- on describing the circumstances under which a hold-and-secure should be initiated
- on the means for announcing the hold-and-secure to all occupants in the school and external instructional areas.
- on the means of notifying and maintaining communication with emergency responders and other relevant parties
- on the means of securing the building and controlling access to and from all areas, especially:
 - during regular class time
 - during transition times
 - before school begins
 - during change of classes
 - lunch/recess
 - end of the school day
- for determining the circumstances for ending the hold-and-secure, usually with assistance from emergency responders

Considerations:

- For detailed strategies involved in conducting school Hold-and-Secures, refer to *Conducting School Lockdowns and Hold-and-Secure*, **Appendix D**.
- Implementation is to include all staff, students and visitors.
- The plan is to be practiced a minimum of once per year.

- **Hazard-Specific**

The objective of hazard-specific planning is to prepare for events that require additional actions beyond those covered by the four all-hazard responses (evacuation, relocation, lockdown and hold-and-secure), if necessary. The generic *Hazard-Specific* section from the Emergency Response Chart, **Form F**, may be adapted to your specific school. Include any other documents describing Hazard-Specific plan details.

The hazard-specific plan provides guidance on understanding the circumstances under which a hazard-specific plan would be required, such as:

- bomb threats (a sample *Bomb Threat Call Checklist*, **Appendix E**)
- bus accident
- civil disobedience
- custodial disputes
- expansion plans to accommodate external groups seeking shelter
- off-site emergencies (field trips)
- sudden and severe weather
- sudden death or severe injury
- toxic hazard material releases

Communicating, Training and Practicing the Plan

The best developed plans will not succeed if not shared, understood, and practiced to prepare staff and students to respond appropriately.

- Communication and Training
Schools need to determine the best means of sharing information in the plans. Most will take opportunities during staff meetings, in-services, and other information channels (email, impromptu discussions, and hard copies). Communications provides an opportunity for problem-solving to take place for plan improvements. It is important that staff are informed of plans as early in the year as possible – preferably before the end of September, with second review later in the year, possibly January.

Staff also needs to be able to understand the emergency plans and share appropriate and necessary information to students. For detailed strategies involved in preparing students for Lockdown and Hold-and-Secure practices, refer to ***Conducting School Lockdowns and Hold-and-Secure***, Appendix D.

- Practicing the Plans
Practices should be progressive in that successive practices incorporate varying circumstance under which an emergency may occur. For example, the first time a lockdown is practiced may be during normal classroom time, and then the next practice may take place during lunch or class changes; or adjust evacuation practices by simulating that primary route(s) is not accessible.

All practices are to be recorded using the ***Emergency Management Plan, Record of Drills and Actual Events***, Form G (* except evacuations, see below)

- o Evacuation – fire safety regulations require evacuations are practiced a minimum of 6 times each school year, with 3 in the fall term and the first one in the first week of school, and 3 in the spring term. * *Records are maintained in the school's Fire Safety Maintenance Log – Fire Drill Record.*
- o Relocation – to a predetermined site should be practiced at least once per school year with the results recorded. If it is determined that the risk to students is too great to practice a relocation, it may be conducted with staff only. If practice with staff without the support of emergency services is not safe or practical, then the plan must be clearly communicated and can be practiced as a table-top exercise.
- o Lockdown – to be practiced a minimum of twice per school year with the results recorded. The first practice is to held prior to the end of September.
- o Hold-and-Secure – to be practiced a minimum of once per school year with the results recorded.

For detailed strategies involved in preparing students for Lockdown and Hold-and-Secure practices, refer to ***Conducting School Lockdowns and Hold-and-Secure***, Appendix D.

SECTION II - RESPONDING

Immediately

The Person-In-Charge would ideally be responsible for determining the initiation of an emergency plan. However, it is extremely important to recognize that the administration office will usually be the first to become aware of an emergency and the Person-In-Charge may not always be present at that critical moment. Other staff that may work in the office, especially school Administrative Assistants or other staff that may be in the office, have the knowledge, and are given the authority and support to take initiate any emergency response plan.

This can occur as a result of an emergency becoming recognized internally, or under the advisement from external agencies, such as police or fire services. Once it is determined that a response plan must be initiated, refer to the Emergency Management Plans for immediate actions. **The first basic instantaneous actions are communicate the initiation of any plan, ensure the safety of students, staff and visitors and to contact emergency responders. Speed is essential to minimize the risks to students and staff. It is always far better to act on instinct and err on the side of caution than to wait until a danger is confirmed.**

Regional Office Notification

The regional office is to be notified as soon as possible when an emergency has occurred anywhere in the region. The RCIRT will be activated as necessary to assist schools. In addition, all actual emergencies are to be recorded using the *Emergency Management Plan, Record of Drills and Actual Events*, **Form G**.

School

The SCIRT should be relieved from their regular roles and responsibilities temporarily so that they can carry out the plans and respond quickly and efficiently to the needs of students and staff.

Chain of Command

In a school emergency, the general Chain of Command is as follows:

1. **Principal or his/her designate** assumes the responsibility for directing the response to a school emergency or critical incident. Also referred to as the **Person-in-Charge**.
2. In their absence, it is the **principal's responsibility for ensuring that the designate is aware** of emergency management and critical incident response plans.
3. In situations that require **emergency response** such fire, police, EMO, then the coordinator of that service will have authority for dealing with the emergency. The Person-in-Charge will work collaboratively and follow direction from the authority having jurisdiction.

General Responsibilities and Actions

School Principal (or designate)

- Decide and initiate the appropriate emergency response plan
- Contact Superintendent or Director of Programs and Student Services and maintain liaison with the Regional Office as possible
- Gather facts - confirm/clarify details of the event before responding
- Coordinate the response
- Arrange meeting with the SCIRT as soon as possible after the conclusion of an emergency. Utilize the *School Critical Incident Team Meeting Agenda*, Appendix F
- Contact the families or those involved as soon as possible. Utilize the school phone tree or similar system of mass communication to the school families. Refer to *Telephone Tree Samples*, Appendix G.
- Arrange for staff meeting as soon as possible
- Arrange resource personnel to assist as necessary
- Arrange for additional staffing if necessary; for example, substitute teachers and/or office assistance
- Work with Communication Manager to prepare notices to staff and/or parents
- Reorganize school activities as necessary
- Designate a staff member to be an observer of events
- Keep staff updated
- Identify staff in need of support, including self
- Emphasize facts to alleviate rumours
- Remain highly visible
- Arrange for staff debriefing at the end of the first day and each following day as necessary
- If death is involved, arrange for removal of name from the active roster, computer, etc. and remove personal items from locker or desk (*not immediately, but a few days following the event*)
- Meet with the SCIRT to determine follow-up
- Return to normal routine as soon as possible
- Recognize your reaction to the event

Guidance (or designate)

- Contact resource persons and assign space to offer support if required
- Reschedule guidance oriented activities
- Develop list of students who may be “at risk”; for example, students who have suicidal ideation may be at high risk if a suicide has occurred or someone who has just experienced tremendous loss may be at risk if a death occurs
- Inform feeder and area schools of the event and potentially affected students
- Maintain a list of students who have been counseled
- Call parents of students who are extremely affected
- Meet with resource persons to determine continued support

Other Staff

- Attend all staff meetings
- Inform your class as directed
- Monitor attendance and notify the office of missing students
- Direct students to areas of comfort if appropriate
- Identify students in need of support especially those who are having a major reaction; send a list of students you feel need to be monitored to the office
- Arrange to have really distraught students escorted to one of the designated areas
- Allow students to discuss the event and their reactions to it recognizing that there will be many different responses; some teachers will be uncomfortable with this and should request assistance from the SCIRT
- Postpone testing
- Class activities need to be short and structured at all levels; students may not be as focused
- Resume normal activities as soon as possible
- Recognize your reaction to the event and remember there is support for you, too
- Have staff member act as observer of events

Time Line for Critical Incident Response

Day One

Note: During the first day the staff and student reactions are very intense. The first hour of the day often is the most tense and emotional. The school staff should be visible in the school throughout the day especially during break times.

- SCIRT arrive at the school at least 30 minutes before the staff meeting to finalize plans and define roles and responsibilities.
- Staff meeting occurs about 30 minutes before the first students arrive.
- A list of students, staff or grade levels impacted should be generated.
- Ensure that such things as tissue, food and water be made available in designated areas.
- Plan is followed as designed for the day.
- The person answering the phone may have a written message to use when answering questions. Refer to Communications Protocol section.
- If a letter is to be sent home to parents, this could be prepared in collaboration with the SSRCE Communications Manager.
- Staff meeting concludes the day (Utilize the *Staff Meeting Agendas*, Appendix H)

Day Two

- The day should begin with a brief staff meeting. At this time staff should be updated and the plan for the day is discussed. As much as possible, this day should begin a return to normal routines and structures.
- Prepare any further statements to be made to the students. This is especially important if there has been serious injury, staff and students will want progress reports.
- Psycho-education may be offered to students who have been identified.
- Students who required support should be monitored.
- Again, a brief staff meeting should be held at the end of the day.
- SCIRT to meet to determine further plan as necessary.

Day Three

- Things should be back to routine.
- Announce any further information as needed, such as memorial service, funeral arrangements, or progress reports.
- A brief staff meeting should be held to check in with staff.
- A meeting should be held for the SCIRT to debrief.

Follow-Up and Monitoring

The situation should be carefully monitored by both SCIRT and RCIRT with continued assistance as determined. The effects of some tragic events have long lasting results for some members of the school community. Access to support services for some students and staff may need to be provided

Communication Protocols

Correct Terminology for Lockdown and Hold-and-Secure

Recent incidents have been reported by media as schools being placed in lockdown when they were actually in hold-and-secure. It is important that the situation is reported accurately as the term lockdown suggests a level of danger to building occupants that may not exist.

Definitions:

Lockdown - Implemented in response to an immediate danger inside the school. Occupants move into a secure location and remain out of sight until the situation is resolved.

Hold-and-Secure – Implemented in response to a potential danger outside the school. Occupants are permitted to move about the building without restriction but no one is permitted to enter or leave until the situation is resolved.

Using the term lockdown incorrectly or when a hold-and-secure is in effect may imply a level of danger to building to occupants that does not exist. This may result in parents/guardians responding to the school impeding police response and placing everyone at risk. Psychological trauma for everyone involved may be created and a misbelief that schools are not safe.

School Level

1. Situation at school (fire, internal threat, external threat, death of student or staff member, missing student, etc.)
 - Assess situation and determine plan of action
2. Inform staff and students of the situation and give as much detail as reasonably possible
 - This can help to quell panic and misinformation being spread via texting and social media updates
3. School contacts regional office (541-3000) – ask for Superintendent or alternate
 - Regional office action (see below)
4. Phone tree activated (if applicable) – give as much detail as reasonably possible
5. Work with Regional Office staff to deliver messaging (if applicable) to parents and inquiring public
6. Reference the “Communication” section of your school emergency management plan for messaging templates
7. Follow-up letter to families after the situation is resolved (in the days following)

Regional Level

1. Situation at school
 - School contacts regional office 541-3000 (Superintendent)
 - i. If Superintendent is not available, reception locates a Director and/or the Communications Manager
2. Senior team meets to determine next steps and who is involved
 - Transportation, custodial staff, OHS, etc.
3. Senior team connects with other authorities involved (police, fire, EHS)
4. Development of external messaging and spokesperson (with other authorities, if applicable)
 - Communications Manager posts to website, Twitter and contacts local media
 - Give messages to the reception desk staff and Executive Assistant to the Superintendent and other relevant departments
5. Senior team selects appropriate staff to go to the school/site – staff member delegated to keep the Communications Manager up to date on any changes
6. Communications Manager continues to develop messages; updates website, Twitter and media contacts

Verifying facts and/or express condolences regarding out-of-school events

Summarize your comments/questions in writing before picking up the phone. Be sure to:

- Express condolences if you have already verified (through reliable sources) that a death has occurred.
- If calling to verify news of an event, do not be invasive in asking for details simply ask for confirmation of the incident.
- Determine the wishes of the family regarding what information may be released to teachers / students (e.g. some families do not want public acknowledgement).
- If a death has occurred, determine the wishes of the family regarding school involvement in the funeral or other memorial activities (flowers, charitable donations, etc.).

Before delivering a message to students and staff

- If a death has occurred, determine the wishes of the family.
- Identify people directly affected (e.g. best friends, next of kin).
- Identify people at-risk of having intense emotional reactions.
 - These may include those who participated in any way with a suicide or accident, those who knew of suicide attempt or potential attempt and did not try to stop it; those who might feel guilty about things they said or did to the deceased prior to the death; those who had recently punished or threatened to punish the deceased for some misdeed.
 - People who have difficulties dealing with emotions may also be at high risk, or those who identify with the victim's situation, have a history of suicidal threats or attempts, or are desperate and now consider suicide a viable alternative. They may need to be told privately.
- Have identified people meet in a quiet location. Before giving the information, decide how and what they are to be told, who will tell them and how you might deal with their reactions. Contact their parents as well and inform them of the incident.
- Create a message that conveys the facts and dispels rumours. Carefully word the content of the message and provide written copies to teachers to use in their classrooms and send home to families.
- Inform the staff first, since you will be relying on them to assist students coping with the news. Whenever possible, do this in person and provide teachers with a written statement to read to their class. Include facts and plans.

Delivering the Message

General

- Ensure that the families' right to privacy is respected.
- Avoid the use of the public address system or an assembly to inform students of a critical incident.
 - It is harder to control students in a large group, it is not possible to gauge individual student reactions, and it is difficult to meet the needs of students in such a large group.
 - Holding an assembly may seem to glorify events that should not be glorified, such as a suicide.
 - Reduce potential for creating a highly charged emotional climate by informing students in their regular classroom setting.
- Deliver the message simultaneously so that all students in the building will hear about it at the same time.
- After delivering the message simultaneously in the classroom, allow sufficient time for students to begin to discuss their feelings, as many students will need the opportunity to talk about their reactions.
- Teachers who are not comfortable with such discussions are encouraged to ask for a counsellor or trained person to be with them. Be as truthful as possible when responding to the questions of students, but keep in mind that early information available about a traumatic event may not be accurate.
- Use some discretion regarding details of the incident. Students experiencing intense emotional reactions may need to be escorted to other area(s) where Guidance Personnel and/or Critical Incident Team members are waiting to assist.
- Suspend class changes, if necessary, to allow students to remain together to deal with their reactions.
- Assure students that they will be kept informed, as information is available.

Informing Staff

It is important that all staff hears about the event as soon as possible and that the same message is received. Developing a phone tree to use in such cases is advised. During the day avoid the use of the public address system except in cases of emergency. Once staff are aware e-mail can be used for updates.

Informing Students

It is important to inform students as soon as possible. Delaying a formal message may make the situation worse, as rumor can add another dimension to the existing problem. With increased communication things such as personal cell phones, Social Networking Sites and MSN, students quickly receive information from each other.

See **Appendix I** for *Sample Messages for Students* as support in developing appropriate messages to deliver.

Informing Parents/Guardians

- **Events In-school or out-of-school during functions/trips**

Parents will want information when an emergency or critical incident occurs in the school community that affects their children. Depending on the nature of the event, the entire community may be affected. Special communications to parents can be extremely helpful in gaining their support and in reaching satisfactory closure to the incident for students. In some cases communication by telephone may be advisable. In other cases where the number of contacts precludes telephone contact, a letter is more useful.

- **Facts** - Report the facts you have been able to verify, and that are appropriate. In many cases you should consult with the family of those included in the incident to honour their wishes. Have a written statement and refer any other questions to the appropriate source.

- **Phones – The Message**

- Summarize your message in writing before picking up the phone. Prepare a script similar to the one used to announce the event to students, which covers the facts of the critical incident.
- Report the facts that you have been able to verify. Do not speculate.
- If you want them to come to the school, tell them which entrance to use and the name of the staff that will meet them.
- Reassure parents that the school is responding to the critical incident and describe the response activities.
- Be sensitive to possible emotional reactions by a parent and use active listening skills to calm an upset parent.

- **Phones - The Lines**

- During emergency, expect jammed phone lines.
- You may need to designate lines.
- You may consider using the Regional Centre for Education Office as an Information Center.
- Keep one of your lines open to the Regional Centre for Education Office at all times to provide them with updated factual information. Staff there can be assigned to release factual information to parents calling in. This strategy can reduce frustration and anxiety for parents who might otherwise keep getting a busy signal from the school.

- **Phones - General**

- The person doing the telephoning should be comfortable with the role and ideally have experience or training in counselling.
- Personally contact the parents of any student who has had a difficult time coping with the traumatic event and give information about community mental health resources which parents may wish to access for their children.

- **Accommodating –**

- **Make plans to accommodate parents** who come to the school following a critical incident. During major crises or disasters when parents may arrive in great numbers at the school it is important to designate an area (e.g. cafeteria or gym) where they can meet with staff immediately to obtain information. In these cases you may need staff to direct traffic.
- **Leaving** - Parents or other concerned community members may gravitate to the school in response to an event. They may wish to take their children home or may be looking for information or help with their own emotional responses to the incident. If parents arrive to collect students, have students sign-out.

- **Pre-Arrangements and Supports** - Plans should include advance arrangements for how to deal effectively with these adults. It is a good idea to pre-arrange a space to accommodate these individuals. Support materials for parents on how to help students deal with trauma can be made available and information about community resources can be provided.
- **Addressing parents as a group**
 - Involve community agencies as appropriate (e.g. RCMP, Mental Health Early Response Service).
 - Discuss the facts and dispel rumours.
 - Enlist parent support in dealing with the aftermath of the incident and re-establishing normalcy.
 - Provide parents with the information they may need to help their children cope.
 - Use this meeting to display the school's commitment to helping the children recover and preventing similar incidents in the future.
 - If there is a possibility that the school may be legally liable have the Regional Centre for Education Lawyer present. Do not confirm or deny culpability.
- **Letters** - Depending on the impact of the incident, a letter may be sent home (see samples). Information to be included should be:
 - Checked carefully with the police or other relevant experts.
 - Clearing the content of the communication to parents with the Superintendent, Director of Programs and Student Services or Communications Manager is advised.
 - Care needs to be exercised in following Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIPOP) requirements and the wishes of the families involved, if applicable.
 - This letter could include the following information:
 - the nature of the critical incident and appropriate details,
 - what the students have been told,
 - possible grief/stress reactions that parents may expect in their children,
 - suggestions of how they might respond to their children's reactions,
 - in the case of a death, the funeral arrangements, and
 - resources available to parents.
 - Future commemorative activities may also be outlined at this time
 - Under certain circumstances, such as the death of a staff member, the school may be closed in order to allow all students and staff the opportunity to attend the funeral service. This decision must be made in consultation with the Superintendent. This could also be included in a letter to parents.

See **Appendix K** for *Sample Letters for Parents/Guardians* in developing appropriate letters.

Places of Comfort

The goal of crisis intervention is to help students and staff identify their own strategies to deal with the reactions to the event. Providing a space in the school where students can go to deal with their grief is important. This space should have art supplies, food, tissues and an adult with whom the students are comfortable. Students can come to the room to make cards, write messages to those impacted directly by the critical incident and/or be together to support each other. If the students wish to create a memory wall or table they can do so in this room.

Counselling Centres

Setting up a counselling center(s) following an incident is an effective way to support students, particularly those considered a high risk.

Considerations

- **Staff –**
 - Staff the center with people who can provide counselling support. This consists of school psychologists, community personnel with experience in counselling and/or school counsellors.
 - Staff providing counselling in the center should organize themselves to maintain continuity in spite of the “drop-in” process, so that adults may consult with each other about identifying high-risk students as well as for general support and help.
- **Immediacy** - Provide a Counselling Center all day the first day that news of a critical incident such as a sudden death is disseminated.
- **Awareness and Communication** - Ensure that all students are aware of the counselling centre. This centre should be easily accessed during the day.
- **Structure –**
 - Small group counselling sessions are helpful for some if personnel assigned to the center have experience and training in counselling.
 - Ensure that more than one counsellor/facilitator is in the center at all times. Other staff should be available for relief purposes. Counselling in the center may be with individuals or small groups.
- Staff in the center should have written information to give the students, such as normal stages of grief and guidelines for how to arrange support from mental health workers.
- **Caution** - Large groups of students should not be allowed to congregate at the center.

Suggestions for Staff in the Counseling Centre

- **Important*** If the incident was a suicide or if the students mention suicide in response to another type of traumatic event, reinforce that suicide is always an unwise decision, without moralizing. Remember that a well thought-out plan to commit suicide is a significant danger sign that should signal immediate action for staff and/or family. Seek immediate assistance, and do not leave the student alone until you have it.
- Accept all responses from students and permit them to express their reactions in a way that is individually appropriate. A critical incident may bring up painful memories or unresolved emotions from the past.
- Listen to the students express their feelings without making judgments. Be empathetic and encourage them to discuss how they are feeling.
- Be genuine.
- Discuss the facts and discourage rumours. Ensure that confidential information is not revealed in discussions in the counselling center.
- Provide opportunities for students to discuss feelings of guilt related to the tragedy. They may need reassurance that they are not responsible.
- Help students who may become fearful for their own safety and that of family members or peers. Critical incidents can spark disclosure of child abuse or discussion of other ways that students are at risk.

Grief Support Group

In some instances, schools may decide to set up a grief support group which will meet on a longer term

basis following the death of a student or other person in the school community. Other schools may choose to call on community agencies to provide this service. The following suggestions are designed for schools that wish to establish their own grief support groups. When SCIRT decides to set up a group of students to meet together, they might want to consider focusing on some of the following topics:

- Assuring the students that it is normal to have feelings of anger, guilt or fear,
- Planning acceptable activities to respond following a death such as appropriate ways of communicating with the family of the deceased,
- Encouraging students to recall personal memories and in particular positive experiences involving the person who died,
- Sharing feelings about how this death connects to other losses in their lives,
- Discussing the stages of grieving, and
- Encouraging students to involve their peers who may need support and/or counselling.

Teachers in the Grieving Classroom

- Read any prepared communication prepared by Administration in a straightforward manner.
- Announce any changes in the school schedule or policy.
- Acknowledge and accept that students will have strong feelings about the incident and may need to leave the room to speak to SCIRT member.
- Explain the support services available in the school. Identify the location of the Counselling Drop-in Centre (s) and the personnel from the school and community available there.
- Take a few minutes to acknowledge feelings about the incident. Anticipate a wide range of emotions and encourage students to share their thoughts and feelings with you and each other. Some students may not react at all while others may begin to cry. Further information can be found in *Advice for Teachers*, **Appendix L**.
- Allow time for any discussion that students might want to have.
- If questions come up that you cannot answer, write them down and let the students know you will get back to them later.
- Tell students if they hear rumours, they could check them out with you, the school administration, or a member of the SCIRT. Discourage students from calling the family for information.
- Most responses are acceptable and should be encouraged. Teachers should be alert, however, to any behaviour that seems extreme or unusual.
- Ask students to support each other and understand that everyone reacts differently.
- Some people have trouble sleeping or eating or thinking of anything else after a death, these are normal reactions. If concerning, students should be encouraged to speak to a SCIRT member.
- When it seems appropriate begin regular class work. There should be some sense of a normal routine. Continue with regular classes the rest of the day, but allow additional discussion as needed.
- Tests and major reviews should be postponed.
- Let students know that they will be informed about funeral announcements or further information as it becomes available.
- Allow students to organize memorial activities if they want. Students need to do something concrete.

Helping Ourselves during a Crisis (Adapted from *Stress Management Tips*, Wendy Rafuse)

“All stressful situations cause physical and emotional reactions. Each person reacts to these situations in

his or her own way.” *Something Major has Happened*

Emotions that are often experienced during a stressful situation include: fear, worry, impatience, isolation, sadness, anxiety, and helplessness. Physical signs are headaches, trouble sleeping, fatigue, and difficulty talking about the event with members of the family or others.

Caring for children is stressful even under the best circumstances. Dealing with your own responses and your students’ reaction is at times overwhelming. When we encounter extreme stress our body “dumps” a lot of chemicals into our system to be “flushed” out. By taking care of ourselves we help to keep stress at a more manageable level. The following techniques can help this process.

- Try to avoid extra amounts of caffeine and alcohol. These just add to the already unusual amount of chemical in our system; it can slow down your body’s recovery.
- Try to get some physical activity within the first 24 hours; this helps your body “flush away” some of the added chemicals caused by stress.
- Try to maintain normal schedules and events; this will allow you some sense of control in a time when you may feel a loss of control.
- Eat balanced meals, limiting the amount of white sugar you eat. Try to eat fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Sleep is very important. Go to bed at your regular time even you don’t feel like sleeping.
- Relax and try to have some fun. Try to maintain what is normal relaxation for you.
- It’s important to talk to those close to you. Talking to people who weren’t there causes you to go into more detail, which can help alleviate stress. It is also important to talk with people who were there to share thoughts and feelings.
- Continue to socialize with people, but also reserve time for yourself.
- If a death has occurred, don’t be afraid to talk about the person and to share memories and experiences with others.
- Allow yourself time to accept what has happened. The time is different for everyone.

SECTION III - RECOVERY

Evaluate the Response

General

Review the handling of the critical incident and follow up with recommendations for improvements to the plan. With each use of the plan, the people involved will discover ways to refine and improve it. A checklist is provided for evaluating the response, *Follow-up Response Checklist for SCIRT*, Appendix M.

Related Sensitive Issues

The nature of a critical incident may create an occasion in which the school community comes face to face with serious social issues, such as spousal abuse, racism, or discrimination based on sexual orientation. Although the topics related to the incident may be sensitive in the community, it is important for the school to honestly validate the issue's connection to the incident as it helps the school community to deal with the critical incident. The follow up procedures may call for the planning of awareness training, around celebrating diversity or eliminating harassment, in the School or Regional Centre for Education.

Suicide Cautions

After a suicide it is important to recognize the death but be cautious of overtly glorifying the event since it may impact students who are at-risk for suicide. The positive attention may be encouraging and copy-cat suicide may result.

Suggested Activities Following a Death

It is important for children to do something concrete after a death. This helps individuals deal with the loss and helps bring some sense of control. Some suggestions are as follows:

- Fly the flag at half-mast
- Observe a moment of silence
- Send flowers to the family
- Attending funeral services or visitations at church or funeral home
- Collect donations for the family of the deceased or a charity in memory
- Create sympathy cards
- Write letters
- Make a garden or plant a tree or shrub in memory
- Hang a picture, painting or plaque in the school
- Create a piece of art, mural, quilt, etc
- Offer childcare if needed
- Prepare and deliver food to the home
- Set up a space in a room in the school where in memory poems, stories, cards, and other reminders of the deceased can be located
- Consider if anything may be needed, on the first anniversary of the event. Although this is a year away, it may be a very difficult time.

SECTION IV – FORMS

Form A - School Team Membership

School: _____ School Year: _____

School Phone: _____ Principal: _____ Cellular: _____

Team Coordinator: _____ **Phone:** _____

Alternate Coordinator: _____ **Phone:** _____

School Team Members

Name	Phone Numbers	Position
	Work: Home: Cell:	
	Work: Home: Cell:	
	Work: Home: Cell:	
	Work: Home: Cell:	
	Work: Home: Cell:	
	Work: Home: Cell:	

Community Team Members

Name	Phone Numbers	Position
	Work: Home: Cell:	
	Work: Home: Cell:	
	Work: Home: Cell:	
	Work: Home: Cell:	

Form B - Evacuation – School: _____

Definition	Everyone needs to leave the building for their safety. Emergency examples: fire, explosion, bomb threat, chemical release in building
Signal	Fire Alarm or PA announcement as appropriate, example: <i>“Attention, Attention, everyone must leave the building immediately and assemble at your fire drill assembly points”.</i> If evacuation is in response to a bomb threat, may include: <i>“Take your bags and backpacks with you”.</i> If there is a need to get far away from the building, include instructions to proceed to Relocation site. Repeat any announcement, if possible.
Steps of Action	
Principal or Designate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decide on the safest means of evacuating the building, using pre-determined fire routes if possible. • Announce an evacuation and any precise directions • Contact or arrange another staff to contact 911 to request assistance as appropriate (if using centrex 9-911) • Contact or arrange another staff to the School Regional Centre for Education Office when possible: Superintendent, Director of Programs and Student Services or Communications Officer, 541-3000 • Direct Staff to assist as necessary • Put on safety vest for emergency responder recognition • Take building keys, cell phone • Leave the building and report to pre-determined assembly point • Ensure that all staff and students have left the building and are accounted for • Liaise with responding emergency services • Determine if students and staff safety requires the need to relocate to another site or announce that students and staff may re-enter the building • Direct all media communication to the Communications Manager
Administrative Assistant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow directions of Principal or designate • Collect the following items <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ List of days class or school trips ○ Staff List ○ Visitor sign-in sheet ○ Student sign-in and sign-out sheet ○ List of that day’s substitute teachers ○ Student Medications ○ The Fire Bag ○ The First Aid Kit ○ Megaphone and/or other communication devices, cell phone • Leave the Building and report to the predetermined assembly point
Teacher and Teaching Assistants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow directions of Principal or designate • If possible, open blinds and close windows • Close doors after last person has left • Take the class attendance sheet • If time permits, confirm presence of students • Supervise students during the evacuation • Assist students with special needs as required • At the predetermined assembly point, take class attendance and report information to principal or designate
Custodial Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow directions of Principal or designate • If possible, check washrooms and other areas to ensure that others have left • Take building keys • Leave the building and report to the predetermined assembly point

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report to Principal for further direction
Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow directions of class teacher • Remain calm and quiet • Leave building and report to predetermined assembly point
All Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow directions of Principal or designate • Leave building and report to predetermined assembly point
Students with Special Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe any special evacuation steps for specific students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify staff assigned to assist student - Identify areas of refuge that may be used - Method of emergency evacuation from area of refuge - Special considerations for any physical movement of student - Equipment items required to be transported

Form C - Relocation – School: _____

Definition	Everyone must leave the building and relocate to an alternate site. Emergency examples: when it is unsafe to re-enter the building or re-entry will be prolonged and it becomes unsafe or unreasonable to wait outside.
Signal	An announcement with precise instructions to suit the situation, either through PA system if prior to leaving building, or megaphone if already evacuated. Identified relocation site: _____
<i>Steps of Action</i>	
Principal or Designate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Announce relocation and give precise instructions • Contact or arrange another staff to contact 911 to request assistance as appropriate (if using centrex 9-911) • Contact or arrange another staff to contact the Regional Centre for Education Office when possible: Superintendent, Director of Programs and Student Services or Communications Officer, 541-3000 • Contact or arrange another staff to contact the Relocation site of impending arrival • Contact School Transportation Department to assist if necessary • Direct Staff to assist as necessary • Put on safety vest for emergency responder recognition • Take building keys, cell phone • Liaise with responding emergency services • Monitor the movement of students and staff • Decide when and how students will be dismissed • Direct all media communication to the Communications Manager
Administrative Assistant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow directions of Principal or designate • Transport the following items <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ List of days class or school trips ○ Staff List ○ Visitor sign-in sheet ○ Student sign-in and sign-out sheet ○ List of that day’s substitute teachers ○ Student Medications ○ The Fire Bag ○ The First Aid Kit ○ Megaphone and/or other communication devices, cell phone • Leave the area and report at the Relocation site
Teacher and Teaching Assistants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow directions of Principal or designate • Perform any pre-determined duties (traffic control if crossing roads) • Transport the class attendance sheet • Supervise students during the relocation • Assist students with special needs as required • On arrival confirm attendance of students
Custodial Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow directions of Principal or designate • Report to Principal upon arriving at the Relocation site
Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow directions of class teacher • Remain calm and quiet
All Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow directions of Principal or designate • Perform any pre-determined duties (traffic control if crossing roads)

Form D - Lockdown – School: _____

Definition	Everyone must take refuge within the building. Emergency examples: violent or potentially violent individuals (student, visitor)
Signal	PA announcement as appropriate, example: “Attention, Attention, initiate lockdown now” Repeat announcement, if possible. Use any secondary means of communicating to external teaching areas (two-way radios, cell phones, etc).
Steps of Action	
Principal or Designate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Announce the lockdown and simply and clearly provide any additional directions. • Contact or arrange another staff to contact 911 to request assistance as appropriate (if using centrex 9-911) • Contact or arrange another staff to contact the Regional Centre for Education Office when possible: Superintendent, Director of Programs and Student Services or Communications Officer, 541-3000 • Direct Staff to assist as necessary • Liaise with the responding emergency services, with a possible central command station available in the administrative office. • Take all action necessary to ensure safety of students, staff and visitors • Direct all media communication to the Communications Manager
Administrative Assistant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the Principal or designate is not immediately available, initiate lockdown • Follow directions of Principal or designate • Lock doors to Administrative Offices • Assist with communication as directed
Teacher and Teaching Assistants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow directions of Principal or designate • If it is safe to do so: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lock the classroom doors, turn off lights ○ Check area immediately outside the classroom for students, staff, visitors and bring them in classroom. If assigned to do so, also check nearby common areas, washrooms, etc. ○ Close drapes/blinds and cover all other windows • Instruct students to take safety positions in classroom for visibility from corridor. • Ensure all students remain in the classroom • Ensure all students remain calm and quiet, turn off cell phones • Check attendance and note anyone missing or students from other classes. • Do not open the door, emergency responders will gain entry at the end of the emergency. • Do not respond to class change or dismissal bells. • If fire alarm sounds, determine if it is safer to remain in secure location or evacuate. If there are indications of smoke or fire, determine the safest route and immediately evacuate to exterior safe area or another safe interior location. • If not supervising students, take refuge in a safe location, unless otherwise directed. • Stand by for further directions
Custodial Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow directions of Principal or designate • Lock doors in all assigned areas • If directed to do so, lock exterior doors, or keep watch at doors to grant access to emergency responders. • If it is safe to do so, check general areas for students not in a secure location. • Assist with emergency communications, both internal and external
Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow directions of class teacher • Turn cell phones off. Do not use unless directed. • If there is no teacher in the room, close and secure the door, take cover and wait

	<p>for emergency responders to find you.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If in an unsupervised area (washroom, locker room, etc) and if it is safe to do so, quickly move to a supervised classroom. Otherwise, take shelter out of sight and wait for emergency responders to find you. • Remain clam and quiet
All Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow directions of Principal or designate • Remain in room and assist as required

Form E - Hold-and-Secure – School: _____

Definition	<p>Students and staff are remain in a secure (locked or barricaded) location in the building for safety.</p> <p>Emergency examples: a fight inside or outside the school, an animal threat, police action in the neighborhood, a hazardous substance release outside the school.</p>
Signal	<p>PA announcement as appropriate, example: <i>“Attention, Attention, the school is now in a hold-and-secure”</i></p> <p>Additional details may follow, example: <i>“remain in the school until otherwise advised”, or “movement is restricted, please remain in your classrooms, and ignore class change bells”, or “please close all blinds and turn off the lights”.</i></p> <p>Repeat announcement, if possible.</p> <p>Use any secondary means of communicating to external teaching areas (two-way radios, cell phones, etc).</p>
Steps of Action	
Principal or Designate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Announce the hold-and-secure and simply and clearly provide any additional directions. • Contact or arrange another staff to contact 911 to request assistance as appropriate (if using centrex 9-911) • Contact or arrange another staff to contact the Regional Centre for Education Office when possible: Superintendent, Director of Programs and Student Services or Communications Officer, 541-3000 • Direct Staff to assist as necessary • Put on safety vest for emergency responder recognition • Liaise with the responding emergency services, with a possible central command station available in the administrative office. • Take all action necessary to ensure safety of students, staff and visitors • Direct all media communication to the Communications Manager • Announce to students and staff when the hold-and-secure has ended
Administrative Assistant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the Principal or designate is not immediately available, initiate hold-and-secure. • Follow directions of Principal or designate • Assist with locking any doors if needed. • Assist with communication as directed.
Teacher and Program Support Assistants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow directions of Principal or designate. • Ensure all students remain calm and quiet, turn off cell phones. • Check attendance and note anyone missing or students from other classes. • If not supervising students, take refuge in a safe location, unless otherwise directed. • Stand by for further directions.
Custodial Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow directions of Principal or designate • Lock doors if determined necessary in all assigned areas • If directed to “secure the building”, begin locking all exterior doors • In the event of an external environmental threat such as a chemical spill, turn off ventilation system and begin sealing all entrances with appropriate material
Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow directions of class teacher • Remain clam and quiet
All Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow directions of Principal or designate • Assist as required

Form F - Hazard-Specific – School: _____

Definition	Hazard-specific plans are only required if any existing plans do not meet a potential hazard. Emergency examples: Bomb threats, school bus accident, after-hours school emergency, missing student, off-site emergency.
Signal/Notification	
<i>Steps of Action</i>	
Principal or Designate	
Administrative Assistant	
Teacher and Program Support Assistants	
Custodial Staff	
Students	
All Others	

Form G - Emergency Management Plan

Record of Drills and Actual Events

Fax or email this record AND FIRE DRILL RECORD to OHS Manager, (541-3012, g Sinclair@ssrce.ca) by June 15th

School: _____ **School Year:** _____

Lockdown (Drills)	Exercise a minimum of two per year with first drill to be held prior to end of September.	
1 st Drill Date:	Comments:	Principal's Signature:
2 nd Drill Date:	Comments:	Principal's Signature:
Additional Date:	Comments:	Principal's Signature:

Lockdown (Actual)		
Date:	Details:	
Date:	Details:	
Date:	Details:	

Hold-and-Secure (Drills)	Exercise a minimum of one per year .	
1 st Drill Date:	Comments:	Principal's Signature:
Additional Date:	Comments:	Principal's Signature:

Hold-and-Secure (Actual)		
Date:	Details:	
Date:	Details:	
Date:	Details:	

Relocation (Drills)	Exercise with pre-determined site a minimum of one per year . (If actual drill is not practical, then staff-only drill, and if not practical, table top exercise).	
Date:	Comments:	Principal's Signature:
Type:	Actual <input type="checkbox"/>	Staff-Only <input type="checkbox"/>
Relocation Site:	Tabletop <input type="checkbox"/>	

Relocation (Actual)		
Date:	Details:	
Date:	Details:	
Date:	Details:	

Evacuation (Drills)	Evacuations (Fire Drills) are to be recorded as normal in the Fire Safety Maintenance Log– FIRE DRILL RECORD
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SECTION V – APPENDIXES

Appendix A - Emergency Planning Checklist

School: _____ Principal: _____ School Year: _____

Activity	Comments	Person(s) Responsible	Date Completed
Develop SEMT and SCIRT	The team(s) coordinates all issues related to emergency planning and critical incident response. Record team on Form A		
Team reviews Emergency Response Chart	by September 30		
Develop/update Phone Tree(s)	See examples on Appendix G		
Develop Evacuation Plan and practice	As in accordance with Fire Safety Regulations. Use Form B as a template, and adjust accordingly. Must be practiced at least 6/year (3 in Fall, 3 in Spring)		
Develop Relocation Plan and practice	Use Form C as a template, and adjust accordingly. Must be practiced at least 1/year (with students if safe, or staff only if safe, or table-top)		
Develop Lockdown Plan and practice	Use Form D as a template and adjust accordingly. Must be practiced 2/year (first one before end of Sept).		
Develop Hold-and-Secure	Use Form E as a template and adjust accordingly. Must be practiced 1/year.		
Develop a Hazard Specific Plans as needed.	Use Form F as a template as needed.		
Review all plans and procedures with all staff	At a minimum annually in September, with a second review recommended in January.		
Develop a means for substitute staff, volunteers or other building tenants to be aware of Emergency Plans.	Develop print material or include in any existing handbooks or school materials provided to substitutes.		
Review any practices or real events	Use Appendix M to guide any reviews and record event on Form G		

Appendix B - Identification Checklist for Individuals At Risk

Students and staff members may experience a difficult adjustment period following trauma or loss in their lives. The nature of the precipitating event alone does not determine the impact. The individual's reaction is affected also by his/her perception of the event, personality and temperament, previous history of trauma and/or loss, and coping strategies.

It should be noted that one or more risk factors or warning signs does not necessarily indicate that an individual requires intervention. It is necessary to assess the number of risk factors and how they interact. Also, monitor the degree of severity and chronology of the warning signs.

Possible Risk Factors

- family turmoil/unstable family situation
- parental separation or divorce
- remarriage of parent
- sense of abandonment by one or both parents
- serious illness of a friend or family member
- death of a friend or family member due to accident or illness
- previous suicide of friend or family member
- murder of a friend or family member
- death of media idol (musician, actor)
- break-up with a boy/girlfriend
- recent move to a new home and/or school
- different racial, ethnic, cultural background from most of peers
- history of physical, mental, emotional, sexual abuse
- history of other trauma (i.e. accident, kidnapping, rape, home lost to fire)
- poor coping skills
- difficulty managing anger
- impulsivity
- lack of problem-solving strategies
- learning difficulties
- poor self-esteem
- history of failure
- unhealthy peer group choices
- poor peer relations (isolated, alienated)
- lack of supportive network of friends and family

...page 2

Warning Signs

- _____ change in sleeping patterns (sleeping very little or excessively)
- _____ nightmares
- _____ change in eating habits (no appetite or bingeing)
- _____ change in personal care (hygiene, grooming, dress)
- _____ change in communication (non-communicative or very talkative)
- _____ change in activity level (lethargic, agitated)
- _____ inability to derive enjoyment from previously enjoyed activities
- _____ withdrawn/isolated
- _____ depression
- _____ apathy
- _____ overt or covert anger
- _____ acting out
- _____ aggressiveness
- _____ irritability
- _____ anxiety
- _____ exaggerated startle response
- _____ overreaction
- _____ emergence of new fears or phobias
- _____ frequent crying
- _____ mood lability (euphoria to tears or anger)
- _____ drop in academic performance poor concentration daydreaming, preoccupation
- _____ absenteeism
- _____ truancy
- _____ running away
- _____ defying authority
- _____ breaking rules at home and/or at school
- _____ substance abuse
- _____ promiscuity
- _____ lying
- _____ stealing
- _____ carrying weapon
- _____ speaking of feeling sad, scared, angry, lonely, helpless, hopeless
- _____ writing that conveys message of sadness, fear, anger, hopelessness
- _____ parting with prized possessions
- _____ suicidal ideation
- _____ suicidal gestures (self-injury, self-mutilation)
- _____ suicide attempt

Appendix C - Sample Relocation Letter Agreement

Agreement Between (school name) and (relocation facility or agency name)

Whereas (school) has developed an Emergency Management Plan dealing with procedure to be followed and facilities to be used during an emergency at the school, and whereas said plan involves the use by (school) of (facility) in the event of relocation following an evacuation, the parties hereby enter into the following agreement:

DEFINITIONS:

In this agreement

- A. SCHOOL means (school name)
- B. FACILITY means (facility name)
- C. EMERGENCY means
- D. Relocation means

NOTIFICATION:

The SCHOOL shall, in the event of a Relocation or potential Relocation, advise the Facility by notifying (name) or their designate. Notification arrangements shall be mutually agreed to from time to time, and shall be reviewed and tested annually.

USE OF FACILITIES:

In the event of an emergency, the Facility agrees to make available to the School such facilities as may be needed, with both parties giving due consideration to the requirements of the Facility.

CONDUCT ON (FACILITY) PREMISES:

The School agrees to take all reasonable precaution against vandalism, mischief or behaviour contrary to federal, provincial statutes and Regional Centre for Education and School policy by any parties who are accommodated in the Facility premises, or who make use of the Facility, its facilities or equipment

FEEDING:

No food preparation or consumption will be carried out on the facility premises in locations or use of equipment for preparation or consumption other than those normally set aside for such activities unless agreed to by the Facility.

RETURN OF EQUIPMENT:

The school will be responsible to remove any equipment or supplies it brought into or had delivered to the Facility and to replace any equipment or supplies belonging to the Facility used or consumed by the School during the emergency.

TERMINATION:

The Facility retains the right to terminate this agreement after giving the School reasonable notification as agreed by both parties.

Signatures:

Principal of School

Date: _____

Manager of Receiving Facility

Date: _____

Appendix D – Conducting School Lockdowns and Hold-and-Secure

Appendix E - Bomb Threat Call Checklist

When is bomb going to explode?

Where is bomb right now?

What does it look like?

What kind of bomb is it?

What will cause it to explode?

Did you place the bomb?

Why?

What is your address?

What is your name?

EXACT WORDING OF BOMB THREAT:

Caller gender: _____ Age: _____ Other: _____

Telephone # at which the call was received: _____ Visual ID: _____

Call received: Time _____ Date: _____ Length of call: _____

Caller's Voice:

- Calm
- Crying
- Slow
- Slurred
- Loud
- Raspy
- Clearing Throat
- Disguised
- Laughing
- Electronically Produced
- Laughing
- Excited
- Distinct
- Whispered
- Soft
- Stutter
- Deep
- Deep Breathing

- Accent
- Angry
- Normal
- Rapid
- Nasal
- Lisp
- Ragged
- Cracking Voice
- Familiar
- Clearing Throat

- Office Equipment
- Clear
- Static
- Factory Machinery
- Animal Noises
- Local
- Long Distance
- Booth

Background Sounds:

- Street Noise
- Cracking
- Voices
- P. A. System
- Music
- Other
- House Noises
- Motor

Threat Language:

- Articulate
- Foul
- Irrational
- Incoherent
- Taped
- Message read by threat maker
- Computerized

If the voice is familiar, who did it sound like? _____

Remarks: _____

Call reported to: _____

Date: _____ Telephone #: _____

Name of person receiving call: _____

Position: _____

Appendix F - School Critical Incident Team Meeting Agenda

The following sample Team Meeting Agenda can be adapted to fit the protocol developed in School Emergency Plan. It can be used to assist with the development of a response action plan.

Share information with the team regarding the facts of the event. No information should be communicated with anyone else until a decision is made about what and how this will be shared with staff, students and/or parents. When a decision about disclosure of personal information is made, care must be taken to ensure that confidentiality is respected.

A. CHECK THE FACTS

- Ensure that as much factual information as possible is obtained
 - names of persons involved and relationship to school, students and/or staff
 - extent of the critical incident
 - details of the event - Who? What? When? Where? Why or How?

B. DETERMINE POSSIBLE IMPACT

- Factors to consider when determining the magnitude of the impact
 - Accident with injury or death
 - Natural disaster with injury or death
 - Student, parent, staff member
 - How many witnessed the event
 - How many were connected to those involved

Note: It is important to determine the impact of this particular incident on individual members of the SCIRT in order to ensure that all members can function objectively. Assess the likely impact of the critical incident on classes and individuals. Consider the impact for anyone in the school community who may have recently experienced a significant death or loss. Are there staff members who may require assistance in leading the classroom discussion? Also, determine whether there are the cultural or religious implications surrounding the incident. How should they be addressed?

C. DETERMINE SUPPORT PERSONNEL

- Determine who will assist with the situation
 1. Regional Centre for Education Critical Incident Team?
 2. Other resource people? Guidance counsellors, psychologists, mental health, clergy, public health, police, etc.
 3. Who will contact them?

Note: It is recommended that the Superintendent or the Director of Programs and Student Services be notified as soon as possible. It is also recommended to notify additional resources that their services may be needed, then call to confirm when a plan is in place. The team could be augmented by a variety of Regional Centre for Education and/or community resources such as guidance counsellors, Clergy, community mental health personnel, school psychologists and other professionals.

D. DEVELOP A COMMUNICATION LIST

- Administration, in consultation with the Superintendent or Communications Manager, will decide
 1. Who will be responsible for communication?
 2. Who will be told and what will they be told?
 3. How will communication be made and when?
 - a. staff
 - b. students
 - c. support staff
 - d. parents
 - e. others
 4. Who will facilitate meetings that may be held?
 5. Who will develop the agenda for the general staff meeting?
 6. What will the boundaries of confidentiality be?
 7. Who will speak to the media?
 8. Who will operate the phones and what will be said to those calling?
 9. Will a letter be sent home and who will write it?

E. OTHER

1. How will you deal with members of the community when they come to the school for support or to get the scoop? Who will do coordinate this?
2. In the event of the death, will there be a memorial service or will students and staff be able to attend the funeral?
3. Will the flag be flown at half mast?
4. Who will prepare students for what to expect at the funeral or memorial service? When will this be done? Remember for many this will be the first experience of this nature.

Appendix G - Telephone Tree Samples

These are sample telephone trees. It is recommended each school customize a list to suit their needs.

Sample 1

Principal Calls: Vice Principal A (name & home phone)
 Counsellor (name & home phone)
 Teachers with unlisted phone numbers (list names & home phones)

Vice Principal Calls:
 Team Member A (_____)
 Team Member B (_____)
 Cafeteria Staff (_____)
 Custodial Staff (_____)
 Secretarial Staff (_____)

School Counsellor Calls:
 Team Member C (_____)
 Team Member D (_____)
 Resource Person A (_____)
 Resource Person B (_____)
 Resource Person C (_____)

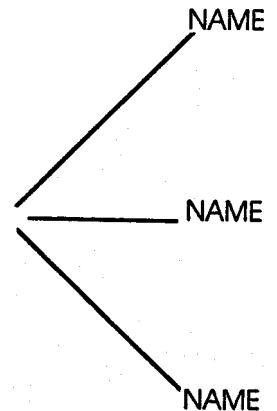
Team Member A Calls:
 Staff Member A (_____)
 Staff Member B (_____)
 Staff Member C (_____)
 Staff Member D (_____)
 Staff Member E (_____)

Team Member B Calls:
 Staff Member F (_____)
 Staff Member G (_____)
 Staff Member H (_____)
 Staff Member I (_____)
 Staff Member J (_____)

Sample 2

“DIRECTIONS: Extend a chart like this far enough to fill in the names and phone numbers of all staff members. Each person then has three people to call when he/she receives a call about a crisis. Distribute to all staff.”

NAME _____



Appendix H - Staff Meeting Agendas

Adapted from *Responding to a Critical Incident, Resource Guide for Schools*

Emergency Staff Meeting

The Principal will hold a full staff meeting as soon after notification of the event as possible. If the event occurs after school hours, the staff should be notified of the event by phone. Prepare a script so everyone receives the same message. Staff should be asked not to discuss the event beyond the script. Staff should be asked to attend a staff meeting at least 30 minutes prior to the regular start time.

If the event occurs during the school day, it is advisable to meet with staff before rumours of the event spread. Always notify staff before students so staff can deal with their initial response and be prepared to help the students.

Anyone who is not present should be informed of the incident as soon as possible following the meeting.

- Share all factual relevant information regarding the incident with the staff. Provide as much accurate information as possible, including names of the students or staff members directly involved, time and place of the event, any additional information surrounding the event, and names and grades of the siblings, relatives or close friends of those directly affected who are also in the school.
- Identify and introduce the School and/or Regional Centre for Education Critical Incident Team Members and additional support personnel and briefly outline their role.
- Discuss process to date and plan of action for the immediate and future. Provide a copy of the School Plan.
- Explain to staff what will be expected of them.
- Give directions and model how students should be told.
- Encourage teachers to allow time for classroom discussion.
- Provide all staff with a copy of the protocol for class discussion. (*See handout*)
- Distribute the prepared announcement that will be read to the students.
- Discuss reactions that may be expected both from students and staff.
- Identify counselling staff that will be in the counselling centre. Review process for accessing counselling services within the school throughout the day for both staff and students. Inform staff of any outside agencies available for student or staff counselling.
- Ask for staff to help identify students who may be at risk or need extra support. Make counselling plans for all students who are potentially at risk for suicide or other serious emotional responses to the critical incident. Direct staff to refer students who appear to be emotionally unstable to the counsellors as the day progresses.
- Clarify procedures for handling students who want to leave the classroom.
- Students who are highly emotional should be accompanied to the designated counselling centre.
- Students who wish to leave the school should only be released to a parent, guardian or their designate.

- Assure teachers that there will be relief and/or support for anyone who needs it; this includes if they feel they are unable to read the announcement to the students
- Provide information about community and resource staff and how to access to these services
- Instruct staff not to talk with the media and explain what to say if they are contacted.
- Inform all staff of any changes to the regular school schedule or cancellation of normal school events.
- Make plans for an after school staff meeting.
- Assure staff that they will be kept informed of any relevant information in this update meeting.
- Follow up meeting will provide an opportunity for staff members to discuss classroom experiences and report information back to the group.

After School Staff Meeting

Equally important to the Emergency Staff Meeting the staff needs to be brought together at the end of the first day for a debriefing. The staff has to process the event in terms of their thoughts, feelings and reactions, and will need to know what the plans are for the next few days. The following questions will help lead this type of meeting.

Agenda

1. What went well today and what did you think of the process?
2. What could have been done differently to improve our handling of the crisis and to make it better for you?
3. What was it like for you when you heard about the event and then when you informed the class?
4. What were you thoughts and feeling throughout the day? Did anyone else feel the same way?
5. What are you thinking and feeling as we speak?
6. Have you experienced any physical reactions (e.g. nausea, headache, chest pain, dizziness, trembling)
7. What was the most difficult part of the day for you?
8. Which students did you feel needed the most help? How did you respond to them?
9. What kind of follow-up do you think we need to conduct?
10. What suggestions do you have for tomorrow's school day?

It is very important to end the discussion with the plan for the next day and what teachers can do to take care of self. (*See handout on self-care.*)

Appendix I - Sample Messages

Sample Messages for Students

Announcements of tragedy are like any other form of personal communication; they should be simple, straight forward, and unique. These examples can only give you a general idea. They are not intended to be "Fill-in-the-blank" forms. Staff members who know the student or students involved and the school community can give the personal touch that is needed at such a time.

These messages should be tailored to the specific event and school. The grade level which you are dealing with will also greatly influence the language and amount of detail you share with the students. Many of these messages will be more appropriate for lower grades. Messaging should also be discussed with the family to be sure their wishes are met when explaining the situation and sharing information.

After Suspected Suicide

A tragedy has happened. **(NAME)**, a Grade **(#)** student has died suddenly. Details of **(NAME)**'s death will not be released to protect the privacy of family members. You will be given information about funeral arrangements as soon as possible.

This kind of tragic news is hard to accept. You may experience many feelings over the next few days. Everyone deals with loss differently. It is important to respect the way others grieve. Counselors are available in room **(#)**. Feel free to go and talk to the counselors. They want to listen to your feelings and concerns.

After a Death - Sample 1

We are taking this time to think about **(NAME)**, a Grade **(#)** student at our school who died last night in a car accident. **(NAME)** was traveling with her family on Route 17. We do not know any details about the accident at this time except that the rest of the family is safe and no one else was injured seriously.

(NAME)'s funeral is being held at **(FUNERAL HOME/CHURCH)** on **(DATE)** afternoon. A funeral is a special time to remember a person who has died. The school will let your families know about the specific time and address of the funeral home in a written note that will be sent home tomorrow. Let's take a moment of silence to think of **(NAME)** to remember all the good things about **(him/her)**, and to say goodbye. In our silence we will send **(him/her)** our loving thoughts.

After a Death - Sample 2

(NAME) will not be in school today. **(His/her)** mother was killed in an automobile crash last night. Her car was struck by a truck on Highway 10. **(NAME)** will be very sad for a long time. Perhaps we can discuss some ways **(NAME)** might be feeling and how we can all help **(him/her)**."

After a Death - Sample 3

We have something very sad to tell you today. **(NAME)** was in a car accident last night and passed away in the crash. It was sudden and **(he/she)** did not suffer. This is a very scary thought for many of us, and you may be feeling anxious and afraid for some time. Please talk to any of the teachers or school staff if you have concerns or questions.

We will all have a chance to share our thoughts and feelings about this unfortunate incident. We will also discuss what we can do as a class to help the family of **(NAME)** and to show that they were a very special member of our school.

Each of you will react to this news in your own personal way, and that is perfectly okay. Some of you will feel sad for a short time and then move on, while others of you may find this extremely difficult to deal with. For the next few days, we will have a team of crisis counsellors available to us should any of you find that you wish to speak to someone privately about your feelings and reactions.

After a Death - Sample 3

Our school has suffered a great, great loss. **(NAME)**, the **(SUBJECT/GRADE)** teacher, has been ill with cancer for many months now. We just received word that **(his/her)** suffering has come to an end and **(NAME)** has died. We will be commemorating **(NAME)**'s contribution to our school community. At this time, I'd like each class to discuss the ways they would like to commemorate the life work of **(NAME)**."

After a Death - Sample 4

I'm afraid that I have something very sad to share with you today. I learned last night of the death of someone very special to us. **(NAME)** was a **(student/teacher)** in **(CLASS)**. I don't know a whole lot about the incident at this time, but I will share with you what I know so far about what happened. I will also continue to share with you anything I learn over the next few days."

We will all have a chance to share our thoughts and feelings about this unfortunate incident. We will also discuss what we can do as a class to help the family of **(NAME)** and to show that they were a very special member of our school.

Each of you will react to this news in your own personal way, and that is perfectly okay. Some of you will feel sad for a short time and then move on, while others of you may find this extremely difficult to deal with. For the next few days, we will have a team of crisis counsellors available to us should any of you find that you wish to speak to someone privately about your feelings and reactions.

After a Fire in a Feeder School - Sample

Last night a very frightening thing happened in our community. **(SCHOOL)** was **(destroyed/damaged)** by fire. Many of you attended **(SCHOOL)** when you were younger and some of you may have brothers and sisters who attend there now.

Luckily, no one was hurt in the fire. But schools mean more to people than just a building. We all have feelings about a school that go beyond the actual walls and roof — many hours of your childhood were spent there. You will have lots of memories connected with the building and you should not be surprised if you feel sad or angry about this happening. Your brothers and sisters who attended Elm Street may be quite upset about the changes that this will mean for them, and they may experience fears because the school was a haven of safety for them.

Appendix J - Helping Children Deal with Death - A Handout for Parents

(Toni Campognoni, M.A., Psychologist)

What Do Children Understand about the Concept of Death?

Preschoolers:

Babies and toddlers react to loss even if they do not understand the word death

- They sense change if it is significant.
- Mood or level of irritability may change
- Eating and sleeping patterns may be altered

Starting at age one children can experience separation anxiety as a result of the death of a parent or significant other. They may become more upset about their parents going to work, or somewhere else out of the home. They may not want to leave their parent's side. A child may regress to bed-wetting, thumb sucking, or some other habit from an earlier stage.

A difficulty for pre-schoolers in understanding death is the concept of time – forever. They may ask about when the “loved one” will return. The best responses include factual and simple statements: “Aunt Mary can not come back to see us, she is dead.” Answer questions honestly by providing explanations at the child's level.

Ages Five to Nine:

Children have more of an ability to understand that when someone dies it is final. They may remove death from themselves by thinking that only “old people” die. You may see regression or intensified fears of the dark or of going to school, etc. Continue to keep information simple and honest.

Age ten and older:

Children have the level of awareness needed to understand that not only is death final, but it is usually natural, biological, or accidental. Feelings of vulnerability may accompany the increased ability to understand the meaning of death.

Reactions to loss:

- Problems concentrating
- Difficulties keeping up school performance
- Appear sad or angry
- May withdraw
- May complain of fatigue

Some teens become impulsive; they may try drugs including alcohol. The chances of adolescents and teenagers using unhealthy means of dealing with their grief decrease with encouragement to share feelings.

Guidelines for Talking about Death

Let your language reflect reality. As a society we tend to be death denying and death defying. Our language reflects our discomfort with words like dead, death, dies, and died.

We use terms that may confuse children:

<i>Gone Away</i>	- As if, they will return
<i>Departed</i>	- As if, they will arrive somewhere
<i>Lost</i>	- As if, they may be found
<i>Taken by God</i>	- As if, God would take a child's mom or dad
<i>Left or went away</i>	- As if, they chose to go
<i>Gone to sleep</i>	- As if, they'll wake up or that by going to sleep you may never wake up; we do not want to cause sleep disorders in children by equating death with a long sleep

Start to discuss death in a gentle, less threatening manner. For younger children explain the life cycle by using examples from nature that may include leaves from the tree, spiders, flowers, starfish or sand dollars.

If you have time, like when preparing a child for the death of a loved one who has a terminal illness, have numerous short talks rather than explaining all about death in one session.

There are books you can read with children including "Freddie the Leaf" and those that allow the child to substitute in the name of the dead or dying individual like "Talking about Death".

You may need to explain the difference between living things and inanimate objects or cartoons. In cartoons, the character may come back to life after being hit by a train, falling of a cliff, taking poison, etc. If a doll or toy is broken, they can often be fixed. When people die they won't miraculously return to life, they can't be repaired.

Explaining that someone died because they were sick is not totally correct. Most of us who get sick don't die. We need to teach a child about very serious illnesses and how these are different from colds and the flu.

Be honest about your own lack of understanding. Every individual struggles to find meaning in life and death. No matter how all knowing you try to be, your child will sense that you have your own questions. You will not lose the respect of your child by being honest. It is okay to say, "I'm not sure, but I think _____. What do you think?"

Do not let "I don't know" be the end of the conversation, it can be the beginning.

Your Child's Feelings

Denial:

This is a normal reaction to the news that a loved one has died. *"No it can't be true"*. Denial may unfortunately be encouraged by parents trying to protect their children from the pain of loss. Children should not be denied the opportunity to grieve with the family. Do not try to protect them from death, help them through it. A child may initially be in denial.

They may repeat, "He/She is dead", and then want to go out to play or go to a soccer game.

Grief:

Just as children feel love, they can feel loss. They experience the same range of emotions as adults. Children may experience three stages as part of normal grieving:

- Protest: They cannot believe the person has died and they may feel angry.
- Pain, Despair, Disorganization: With the acceptance of reality comes a flood of emotions and reactions.
- Hope: Children learn to live and not to be fearful, angry or depressed.

Sadness:

With sadness often come tears. Crying should never be discouraged. It is a way to release emotions so that intense feelings can be expressed. Asking a child not to cry, or to be brave is to deny them of their need to release emotions. It is perfectly acceptable to let your child know that you have been crying and you miss the loved one as well.

Anger:

If in the initial stages of grieving your child becomes resentful and angry, do not punish. Do not "guilt them" by saying they should only think nice thoughts about the person who died. Try to be understanding and listen to what is not being said or for what is behind the anger.

Guilt:

Feelings of guilt are part of every death, no matter how the person died. Children who feel guilty may try to blame someone else for the death. Guilt can cause depression, which in children can often be detected by looking at academic performance and participation in after-school activities. Children may wonder what they have done wrong to deserve the present punishment.

The parent can help by continuing to reassure the child that they could not cause the death by "thinking mean thoughts" or "doing something wrong".

Should Children Attend the Funeral?

Yes. It is painful because it places us face to face with the reality of the situation. Both children and adults need the opportunity to say goodbye and to acknowledge what has happened. Including children means that you are not trying to deny that they are experiencing a loss. If they are old enough to sit through a church service and pay attention then they are old enough to attend.

If you are preparing for the death of a loved one, you can discuss what a funeral is and what will happen. Attendance should be encouraged.

If the child does not want to attend, do not attempt to force them. Let the child know that they can go with you to the cemetery to say goodbye some time after the funeral.

Suicide Warning Signs and Ways to Help

WARNING SIGNS:

CHANGES IN BEHAVIOUR

Normally active people may become withdrawn; cautious individuals may start taking unusual risks. Any significant change may be cause for concern.

PROBLEMS IN SCHOOL

A dramatic drop in grades, falling asleep in class, emotional outbursts or other uncharacteristic behaviour may be cause for concern.

THEMES OF DEATH

A desire to end one's life may show up in the person's artwork, poetry and essays, listening to heavy metal music, or preoccupation with an occult group or activity.

A PREVIOUS SUICIDE ATTEMPT

A significant number of young people who commit suicide have attempted suicide before.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Alcohol and other drug abuse appear to be significantly linked to increases risk taking and suicide attempts among young people.

SIGNS OF DEPRESSION

These may include changes in eating and sleeping habits, anxiety, restlessness, and fatigue, feelings of hopelessness and guilt, and loss of interest in usual activities. Alcohol and drug abuse are common ways for people to medicate themselves from depressive feelings.

VERBAL STATEMENTS

Comments such as "You'd be better off without me" or "I wish I were dead" should always be taken seriously.

GIVING AWAY POSSESSIONS

Someone who has decided to commit suicide may give away personal possessions: records, favorite articles of clothing, etc.

POOR COPING SKILLS

The inability to see many options for solving problems and lacking confidence in a brighter future make young people vulnerable.

OTHER

These may include physical complaints, frequent accidents, hyperactivity, aggressiveness, sexual promiscuity, or prolonged grief after a loss.

WAYS TO HELP:

DO

BE A GOOD LISTENER

Be calm. Speak quietly and gently. Listen with your eyes and your ears. Look for nonverbal clues that show how the person is feeling and report what you see. For example, say “you” seem sad,” then wait for a response.

BE DIRECT

Talking openly is the only way you can find out how serious the person is about ending his or her life. Ask “have you ever felt so low that you felt that life was not worth living?”

SHOW THAT YOU CARE

Tell the person that you are always available to talk about things that may be troubling him/her. Use a warm expression and physical contact to reassure him/her that you care.

GET HELP

Seeking professional help is a must! Although simple depression can disappear as quickly as it came, it can develop to the point where a person may impulsively see suicide as the only way out.

DON' T

DON'T MINIMIZE

Avoid offering empty reassurance or dismiss the person's problems as trivial. From his perspective they matter a great deal and are making him/her unhappy.

DON' T MAKE A MORAL JUDGEMENT

Don't act shocked or disgusted. Do not use reverse psychology. Don't tell them they have a lot to live for, argue with them, lecture or punish. If what the person tells you makes you feel angry, control those feelings.

DON'T LEAVE THE PERSON ALONE

If you feel there is any immediate danger, don't leave the person alone and eliminate all access to lethal weapons, drugs, and cars. The easy availability of guns or drugs increases the chances of a passing impulse ending in death.

DON' T IGNORE THE PROBLEM

Just because a person may frequently be manipulative, dramatic, or attention seeking doesn't mean they are not also suicidal.

Appendix K - Sample Letters

Like the sample messages, these letters are meant to be templates that should be tailored to your school and specific situation. In some cases, the wishes of the families involved in a tragedy must be consulted to determine the amount of information shared.

Notice to Parents - School Emergency Preparedness – Sample

DATE

Dear Parents and Guardians,

School safety and security is a priority for the South Shore Regional Centre for Education. We are requesting your support in maintaining our schools as safe places for your children by becoming familiar with our emergency protocols.

Our plan and drills are preparatory measures. Statistics show schools are still among the safest places to be on a day-to-day basis, largely due to the strong commitment of staff, parents and communities. However, emergencies do happen, and because of that, no community or school can be complacent in its efforts to have a safe environment. For this reason we have implemented our plan, so please do not be alarmed by this information.

In an emergency, the administration at your child's school may respond with an evacuation, lockdown or a hold-and-secure, depending on the nature of the situation. An evacuation ensures that everyone in the school leaves the building in a safe and timely manner. A lockdown isolates everyone in the school in a secure location in response to a threat or danger within the building. A hold-and-secure maintains the safety of everyone in the school by controlling who enters or leaves the building in response to a threat or danger outside of the building.

Although it is unlikely that the planning and preparedness will need to be fully activated, the possibility still does exist. Therefore, to prepare our school, including your child, we will be conducting emergency practice drills throughout the school year. These drills will cover a variety of circumstances. In addition to practicing the drills, we will also discuss with students the appropriate actions to take during a number of emergencies. These drills and discussions are intended to prepare your child to act quickly and minimize fear during an emergency.

In the event of a lockdown or a hold-and secure, the Emergency Services (police, fire, or paramedics) will respond to the school. No one will be entering or leaving the school until it is absolutely safe to do so. While it may be your initial reaction to respond immediately to the school, by doing so you may jeopardize the safety of yourself and others. Therefore, if you hear about a lockdown or hold-and-secure that is occurring at your child's school you should follow the directions from the Regional Centre for Education before responding to the school. You may be requested to meet your child at an alternate location nearby.

Please be assured that every effort will be made to keep you informed as to what is happening during an emergency. Our experience has shown that considerable incorrect information can circulate during the critical moments of an event when it does not come directly from the police or the Regional Centre for Education. There are a number of reliable information sources available. Please visit the SSRCE website (CE www.ssrce.ca), follow us on Twitter (#SouthShoreRCE), listen for announcement on local radio, or contact the Regional Centre for Education at 541-3000. It is important to understand that, for safety reasons, some situations may require that limited information be publically available until the situation is resolved. When sharing information with others during an emergency, please consider the impact of incorrect information, especially to anyone personally involved.

We encourage you to become familiar with your child's school emergency plans and discuss school safety with your child. We welcome any questions you have about this or any other issue related to the safety and security of your child's school.

If you have any questions regarding emergency planning at any of our schools, please directly contact the school office.

Sincerely,

(Principal's Name), Principal

Following a Fire – Sample

DATE

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian:

This morning we experienced a fire at **SCHOOL**, damaging **DETAILS**. There were no students or staff injured in the fire, and we commend all of our school community for acting so quickly to ensure the safety of everyone at the school.

As the fire is now under investigation we do not have much information to share with you. However, I do want to provide you with some basic facts about the incident.

DETAILS

We would like to thank our local fire department for their swift and professional response. Their efforts helped up to save the majority of the building and limit damage. We are extremely thankful to them for their dedication.

The fire damage is being dealt with and the clean-up and repair efforts will take some time. At this time we do not know when classes will resume. We will post information on our school and Regional Centre for Education websites, as well as share the information with the media as to when school will resume.

Alternatively, you can say that classes will resume as the damage was contained within a small area and cleanup has already taken place.

Please discuss the details of the event with your children to ensure they are feeling safe and secure. A fire can be a very scary event for some children, and if you feel they may need some assistance in dealing with the event, please let the school know. We have made provisions for school counselors to be available to provide assistance to student should the need arise.

Should you have any questions or concerns please feel free to contact **NAME/ME**. Thank you for your understanding and patience as we work to bring our school back to normal operations.

Sincerely,

(Principal's Name), Principal

Following a Disaster – Sample

Date

Dear families;

Today, **SCHOOL** was the site of a severe **DISASTER (explosion, etc.)**. There were # students and # staff injured **(include something vague about the injuries, or, There were no injuries sustained in the DISASTER)**.

This has been an extremely frightening experience for the entire school. We want you to know that we are doing everything we can to attend to the immediate needs of our students and staff.

At this time I am able to report the following about the event:

- **DETAILS**

In response to the incident, the school has taken the following action:

- **DETAILS**

(Paragraph here about plans for school operation)

(Example) SCHOOL will remain open during repairs and renovations. Alternative classrooms have been set up to accommodate students and staff. When there is a crisis in a school it is best to continue with business as usual. I want you to know that we have taken the necessary precautionary measures when deciding to open the school to students and staff.

SCHOOL will be closed until further notice while investigations, repairs and renovations take place. We will keep families posted through the media and phone calls as to when classes will resume.

When situations such as these occur, it is important for us to help students understand and deal with any fears or anxieties they may have related to the event. During the next few days and weeks I encourage you to monitor what your son or daughter or may be hearing, watching or reading in the media associated to this event, and review the details with them. This will provide your child the opportunity to discuss the events with you, which may help to alleviate their fears and concerns.

If you have any questions or concerns please feel free to contact **NAME/ME**.

Regards,

(Principal's name), Principal

Following a Death – Sample 1

DATE

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s),

The recent death of **(NAME)** a grade ____ student at our school has had a major impact on staff and students at **(SCHOOL)**. Our crisis intervention team has been called together to respond to the needs of our school community at this difficult time.

Funeral arrangements have been completed for **(NAME)**. The service will be held on _____ at ____ **a.m./p.m. at (site of funeral)**.

We understand that some of our students will wish to attend the service. If your child plans to attend the funeral, we would appreciate a note or phone call informing us that you have given permission for him/her to do so. We recommend that a parent or other adult relative accompany students. Transportation is the responsibility of each family.

Classes will be held as usual for those students who will not be attending the service.

Sincerely,

(Principal's Name), Principal

Following a Death – Sample 2

DATE

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian:

We have suffered a tragedy at our school. On **DATE**, one of our students, **NAME**, died suddenly and unexpectedly. **(You may want to include details, such as “in a car accident”, etc. Depending on the circumstances it may not be appropriate to include this information)** In addition to our grief over the loss of this member of our school community, we are sensitive to the fact that such an event has an impact on other students.

In response, the school has implemented a plan that allows students an opportunity to talk about their thoughts and feelings with trained professional staff. We expect that some will seek out this help, while others may not. Those who do will be given an opportunity to express their feelings and grief. This is not intended to take the place of outside professional counselling or religious care.

Anticipating that your child may have a reaction to this event, we have some information available to you at your request that could be helpful as you respond to your child’s concerns. If you should determine that your child needs further professional counselling, please feel free to contact the school for phone numbers of local agencies that are available to assist you.

Please do not hesitate to contact the school regarding your requests or concerns at **555-1234**.

Sincerely,

(Principal’s Name), Principal

Following a Critical Incident – Sample

DATE

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian:

Recent **EVENTS (details here)** in the community have been very stressful and challenging for all of us at **SCHOOL**. The devastation suffered by our school and entire community will be felt for much time to come. I want to thank you for your cooperation and understanding while we work to bring normalcy to our students and staff at **SCHOOL**.

We are all very concerned with the impact this event will have on students. Our thoughts go out to the families dealing with this situation personally.

I want to provide you with an update on the event, and how it is affecting our school community.

- **CONFIRMED DETAILS (that are appropriate to share)**
- **STATUS OF STUDENTS AND STAFF**

In response to the situation we are implementing the following plan and resources at the school level:

- **RESOURCES**
- **CHANGES IN OPERATIONS**

We need to be attentive to the emotional needs of our students at this time. We are asking you to please watch for signs of stress in your children. If you observe any of the following signs, or are concerned about your child's behaviour, please contact **NAME** at **NUMBER** so we can assist.

- Regressive behaviour (acting like a younger child)
- Difficult sleeping
- Lack of emotional expression
- Appearing depressed, excessively sad or crying all the time
- Being unusually quiet or withdrawn
- Apathy, being uninterested in things they usually enjoy

- Complaints of headaches or stomachaches or other symptoms of illness without physical signs
- Acting out, aggressive behaviour
- Outbursts of anger, irritability or sudden change in mood
- Poor concentration, restlessness
- Changes in relationships with friends or family

I hope you find this information helpful. The school will keep you updated on any new information related to the incident. Right now our focus is on our students and staff, and bringing a level of normalcy back into their lives with a regular schooling schedule.

If you have any questions or concerns please contact ***NAME***.

Sincerely,

(Principal's Name), Principal

Appendix L – Advice for Teachers

- It is important to *acknowledge* the reality of the incident and your willingness to talk about it.
- *Be simple and straightforward.* Discuss death or other tragedy in terms the student can easily understand. For younger children and pre-adolescents, it is important to confirm the fact that any death, including suicide, is final and irreversible.
- *Give the facts regarding the incident in a concrete, clear and accurate manner.* Express your own feelings in an open, calm way that encourages students to express their grief or fear. Some students choose not to talk; the discussion of the event strikes them as a source of more pain or fear and some have a hard time verbalizing their feelings. These students should not be pressured to talk.
- *Be sensitive to possible cultural differences in methods of grieving.*
- *Be encouraging and reassuring.* Project confidence and calmness.
- *Listen, acknowledge without judgment.*
- *Be patient.* Many times because of their need for reassurance, young children will repeat the same questions. Older children may repeatedly tell about the relationship and reconstruct the loss. Repetitions of this sort are part of the normal grieving process.
- *Be prepared for any student(s) who may feel the need to discuss unpleasant features of the relationship.* Anger directed toward the deceased person is one of many normal responses to loss. Students who may have had recent conflict with the deceased may be particularly affected.
- *Assess the meaning of the loss for each child.* Pay close attention to those children who have experienced other recent deaths or losses, or, to those who have emotional problems.
- *Expect regressive behaviours such as fear of being left alone.*
- *Expect physical complaints such as stomachaches and headaches.*
- *Avoid imposing your own theology or/and personal beliefs.*
- *Assess which students are in need of additional support* and refer then to the designated counselling center for individual assessment and counselling. Have someone accompany them there.
- *Encourage children to share their own memories* related to the incident. “What are some of the things you want to remember about Westlake School?”
- *Acknowledge that a wide variety of feelings are normal.* There is no one right way to react to a tragedy. Feelings will vary from student to student and will change over time.
- *Acknowledge that you don’t possess all the answers.* Often there is more comfort from an honest, “I don’t know why,” than from an attempt at explanations that don’t sound credible.
- *Acknowledge the various cultural or religious beliefs that may be expressed.*
- *Focus on the strengths and supports the students have to get the help they need:* the support that comes from sharing feelings of grief or fear with others, the student’s support network, such as family, significant adults, teachers, and counsellors. Have each student think of someone he/she can go to for support, and the student’s individual strengths that provide self-support.

- *Talk about the natural healing process.*
- *Students should be reminded to anticipate rumors and misinformation and that they should not automatically believe anything they hear.*
- *Give information about the designated counselling center.*
- At the end of the discussion, *help students understand the importance of talking to someone* when they feel despondent. Elicit suggestions from the class as to whom they would talk to, and ask each individual student to privately think of those people to whom they would turn.
- It is helpful to channel the feelings of the class into appropriate expressions concern. It may provide comfort for students to feel they have participated in some overt act to express their feelings and reach out to grieving families affected by the critical incident. Teachers will need to use their own judgment to guide the appropriateness of student activities, and they may need to be cleared with the school principal or counsellor.

Suggestions for Providing Comfort

- Children need concrete terms and explanations not vague responses. Don't be afraid to say the word "death". Do not say "gone to sleep", for example.
- Understand that mourning is appropriate for all ages.
- Be supportive.
- Be aware of your own feelings.
- Be a listener.
- Allow children to release their emotion; understand that this will be done in a variety of ways at different age levels. Children are more likely to respond with behaviour, especially those who have difficulty verbally.
- Help students name feelings.
- Help students understand that they are not alone.
- Expect a lot of questions; answer only with facts; avoid speculation; it's okay to say you don't know.
- Seek help from SCIRT if you're uncomfortable or you anticipate an unusual reaction.
- Children may feel frightened because they feel powerless; therefore support and routine are necessary.
- Children worry about themselves and other loved ones dying.
- Sometimes children feel that somehow could they have reversed the death or are in some ways responsible.
- Children need to do something physical and concrete.
- Assure children they will survive although

Class Discussion

School is a place where learning takes place, where it is safe to ask questions and obtain actual information. Adults frequently attempt to insulate children from the realities of death or other tragic events. Children, however, have the capacity to cope with stronger feelings of loss than many of us realize. If children sense that parents and teachers are hiding something, their suspicions can lead to fears and fantasies that are more problematic for them than the truth. A teacher's expression of sorrow in class conveys to students that strong emotions are natural and that mourning does not have to be hidden away. In addition, when students are allowed to grieve in a supervised setting they can have the comfort and

reassurance they need which will serve them well when they must deal with subsequent trauma related situations. When people are able to share their feelings and experiences when confronted with tragedy, they feel less helpless and alone.

There is no right way to talk about death or other tragedy. Classroom discussions will vary in length depending upon whether the critical incident occurred at school where students may have witnessed some aspect of the event, the age of the students, and their emotional involvement with the injured or deceased. Some discussions may be as brief as a few minutes, while others will continue for an entire class period.

Statements to Avoid

- Avoid euphemisms for death such as “passed away,” “gone,” or “sleep” which may confuse or frighten the child. Avoid the general statement, “If you need anything, tell me...” It is better to say “Would it help if I...?” Students may find it difficult to verbalize their own needs and will require assistance to find a way to describe the support they want.
- Avoid saying “I know just how you feel.” It is more empathetic to say, “You must be having a lot of feelings right now...”
- Avoid blaming or judging.

Suggestions Following a Suicide

This type of sudden loss may bring with it a heavy overlay of guilt, shame, self-doubt and self-blame as well as feelings of anger, betrayal and rejection. Teachers should be prepared to encounter and validate these expressions. Bereavement and mourning can be more intense and extreme in the case of a suicide. School counsellors and psychologists, who have been trained in suicide prevention, should have a key role in providing support to staff and students.

Most students over eight years of age are old enough to understand the suicidal act. Children and teens often have romantic fantasies about death that must not be encouraged. Helper adults should be truthful, but not dwell on the details of how the student took his or her own life.

****** If the family has agreed that the death was a suicide, it is appropriate to use that term. If not, the class discussions will need to be conducted as for a sudden death.***

How Teachers Can Help a Grieving Child

- Let the student know you are aware of the death in their family.
- Visit the funeral home if you feel comfortable doing this.
- Attend the funeral, and sign the quest book so the student will know you were there.
- Send a card or note to the student.
- Be aware of the changed family structure and the resulting problems caused by the death.
- Be available to the student. Your presence speaks more than words.
- Offer extra help to catch up on assignments and set specific time to meet.
- Students need routine, but they also need compassion about deadlines.
- Let the student talk about the death. Bring up the name of the deceased in

conversation as an opener.

- Listen without judging.
- Recognize physical, emotional, behavioural reactions in grieving.
- Remember that holidays, birthdays, and anniversaries of the death are especially difficult.
- Avoid clichés such as “time heals”, “be brave”, and “you’ll get over it”.
- Remember that you are in a privileged position to help the student because of your relationship with him/her.

The Grief Process: Grief is a natural and normal life process. It is a physical, emotional, spiritual and psychological response and is the work we must do to come to terms with loss. Grief is not a single emotion, but rather it is a constellation of feelings that can be expressed through a variety of behaviours and thoughts. Because there are many ways to express grief, there are many ways to resolve grief.

Grief is the healthiest way to accept a loss and put it into perspective. It helps us to face the reality of loss, to recover, and to grow through the experience. The expression of grief may differ with each individual, yet follow a broad common framework. It is important to understand the process of grief.

No matter what type of loss is experienced, the same process is generally gone through each time, although the length and intensity of the experience will differ. The stages of grief are not necessarily in a particular order. An individual may flow back and forth between stages. There is no set time for an individual to spend in each stage. To reach a level of acceptance may take months or years.

Stages of Grief: Everyone goes through the grief process at different speeds. It can take a few months or years depending on the relationship with the deceased. The stages of grief cannot be rushed. It is important that individuals allow the feelings to emerge. Expressions of grief vary from person to person.

◆ Denial: *“It can’t be or this can’t be happening to me!”*

This is a period of rejecting the idea or not believing what is taking place. This is a temporary defense to help insulate us while gathering other defenses and resources to cope.

◆ Anger: *“Why _____?”*

Anger manifests in many ways and can be directed or misdirected at anything or anyone including the person who died. If guilt is a part of the response, anger will generally be more intense. Accept anger as a part of grief. Anger may need to be channeled in the proper direction.

◆ Bargaining: *“What if _____ or if only _____?”*

Bargaining with outside influences (God, physician, minister, etc.) exchanging something or some deed for someone we want to keep. This is an attempt to postpone the inevitable.

◆ Depression: *“What’s the use?”*

Depression is natural during grief. Some feel like life is out of control or overwhelming. Others feel like withdrawing from activities and people. Fatigue, headaches, sleep disturbances, nausea, changes in eating habits and recurring dreams are symptoms. There

may be strong feelings of isolation and sometimes guilt. Highs and lows are evident as reality sets in.

◆ Acceptance

This is the final stage when the past is not dwelt on and the future holds hope. It's a time when the loss is accepted and individuals move on with life.

Possible Reactions to Grief

Emotional

- Fear of abandonment
- Peacefulness
- Confusion
- Spiritual connection
- Guilt
- Numbness
- Helplessness
- Despair
- Feeling of being lost
- Anger
- Sadness
- Sense of unreality
- Hopelessness
- Bitterness

Physical

- Tightness of the throat
- Increase/decrease in activity
- Dry mouth
- Sleep disturbance
- Shortness of breath
- Decreases resistance to illness
- Muscular tension
- Weight changes
- Fatigue
- Appetite Changes
- Lethargy
- Over sensitivity to noise
- Lack of interest in personal hygiene

Behavioral Reactions

- Searching for what is lost
- Detachment from surroundings
- Lack of concentration
- Disorientation regarding time and place
- Spontaneity
- Withdrawal from personal activities
- Dreaming of the deceased
- "Seeing" the deceased
- Forgetfulness
- Avoiding reminders of the deceased
- Preoccupation
- Apathy
- Blaming
- Treasuring objects that belonged to the deceased

Age-Specific Reactions (*From School Crisis Survival Guide, page 71*): It should be remembered that children who are grieving might show a variety of physiological symptoms and psychological and behavioural responses. Since there are varying theories on the child's concept of death, it is helpful to ask the student for his/her own interpretation of what happened in order to deal with the issues at the most appropriate level of understanding.

Age 6-10: primary method of expression is play/art/music

- Reduced attention span
- Radical changes in behaviour (out of character)
- Fantasizing event with savior at the end
- Mistrust of adults

Age 10-12 in girls, 12-14 in boys: more childlike in attitude

- Anger at unfairness
- Excitement of survival
- Attributes symbolic meaning to events (omens)
- Self-judgmental
- Psychosomatic illness

Age 13-18 in girls, 15-18 in boys: similar to adults

- Judgmental
- Mortality crisis
- Move to adult responsibilities to assume control
- Suspicious and guarded
- Eating and sleeping disorders
- Alcohol and drug abuse
- Loss of impulse control

Note: Many funeral Home websites have information about the grieving process.

Appendix M - Follow-up Response Checklist for SCIRT

This checklist can be used when evaluating the response.

- SCIRT Meeting held
- Plan of action developed using the SCIRT agenda
- Plan developed to notify staff
- Staff Meeting organized and held
- School Plan implemented
- Assistance given to classes as necessary
- Direct assistance given to individuals and classes
- Individual students that may require additional community mental health resources or other support are identified. Parents contacted and list maintained
- Staff that may have required extra support were identified.
- Students and staff were given the option of going home; homes notified
- Team member went to classes where the teacher requested assistance.
- Counselling centers were set up
- Other schools where siblings, teammates, or close friends of people directly affected by the incident may be attending were contacted.
- Regional Centre for Education Office was notified
- Absent students were noted and home contact was made if deemed necessary
- Critical Incident Stress Debriefing was arranged for staff.
- A scripted message was created
- A staff meeting was held at the end of the first day to discuss the day's progress, to inform staff about arrangements for Critical Incident Stress Debriefing and to plan for the next day's activities.
- Staff met daily for a few days following the event to critique and determine further action, if any was necessary; met at the end of each day for debriefing
- Plans were made for the school or staff's role in visitation, funeral, or memorial arrangements in the case of a student or staff death.
- School records related to the student were handled in a sensitive and appropriate manner.

Suggestions for improvement:

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Resources used in developing this Guide

Critical Incident Resource, South Shore Regional School Board, 2002
Emergency Response Chart, South Shore District School Board, April 2004
Emergency Management Planning for Nova Scotia Schools, Department of Education, March 2007
Emergency Management Provincial Guidelines, Department of Education, 2013

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