

ASCA WEBINAR SERIES



AMERICAN
SCHOOL
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Effective Crisis/Trauma Response

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ASCA WEBINAR SERIES

Learning outcomes:

- Upon completion of this webinar, participants should be able to:
 - Discuss scenarios to understand the depth of response and what schools need in the recovery phase of a traumatic event.
 - List key tasks to complete in the wake of a crisis situation
 - Locate valuable resources to prepare your school for recovery



What this training will not be:

A solution to every traumatic crisis that takes place

The NASP PREPaRE training

PREPaRE is far more in-depth and is very worthwhile for more information.

A thorough look at how to support students one-on-one or in groups



Who are you?

Please indicate with which age group you work?

- 1.Elementary school
- 2.Middle school
- 3.High school
- 4.K-12
- 5.K-8
- 6.Other



Demographics:

Where is your school located?

- A. Urban
- B. Suburban
- C. Rural

What is the size of your district?

- A. Less than 5000 students
- B. 5000-15000 students
- C. 15000-30000 students
- D. Larger than 30000 students



Who are we?

Jon Widmier is the Director of Student Services for Jefferson County Public Schools, in Colorado. The Student Services Office in Jeffco oversees 170 counselors and 38 social and emotional learning specialists that support 85,000 students. Student Services covers mental health crisis response for the district.

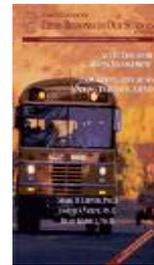
Andy Tucker is the Director of Student Support for Boulder Valley School District in Boulder, CO. A former teacher, school counselor, and building administrator, Andy now oversees the work of the school counselors and the social and emotional learning and well being of all district students and staff. He also leads the district's trauma response team.



Best practices/resources

- [PREPaRE model](#)- National Association of School Psychologists
- <http://www.schoolcrisisresponse.com/>
- [Preventing Suicide: A Toolkit for High Schools](#)

P R E P a R E
 Prevent Reaffirm Evaluate Provide and Respond Examine



Cri-sis

kri-sis/

noun

- A time of intense difficulty, trouble, or danger.
"the current economic crisis"
- A time when a difficult or important decision must be made
- The turning point of a disease when an important change occurs, indicating either recovery or death



Google definition of crisis



What's a crisis to you?



Levels of crisis

Level 1: Minimal-Level Crisis Response

- Handled by: Teaching staff, principal, building mental health provider*
- Characteristics: one child involved or small group
- Situational; Unexpected
- Example: Child injured on playground with bystanders there

Level 2: Building-Level Crisis Response

- Handled by: Principal, building mental health provider*
- Characteristics: Impacts larger number of students/families within school. Impacts school staff, but can be handled on building level
- Example: Parent dying of cancer

Level 3: District-Level Crisis Response

- Handled by: Principal, building mental health provider and District Crisis Team*
- Characteristics: Impacts community; newsworthy within community; unusual tragedy
- Example: Suicide of student; student abduction; death of faculty; violence



Do you have a district-level crisis/trauma response team?

- A. Yes
- B. No



Who should be on your Crisis response team?



Building Level Team

Principal
 Assistant Principals
 Mental Health Team
 Nurse
 Facilities

District Level Team

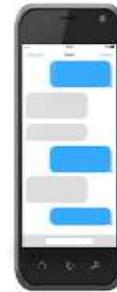
Coordinator
 Security staff
 Mental health staff from other schools in district
 Community mental health support

Beware the self-deployed help



Scenario

You receive a text message at 8:30PM from your principal. She tells you that a student at your school was found unconscious in his car and taken to the hospital. She asks you what to do.



Building Team or District team?

Reach out to get more information through credible and reliable resources (i.e. family, law enforcement, security and emergency management)

Social media can also be a good source of initial information.

Based on information gathered, determine which team is most appropriate.





Scenario continued...

After asking more questions and checking sources, you determine that the student is a star athlete at your school. Some claim that the student is not deceased. Some state that he has died and that the cause of death is suicide, while others call the death an accidental overdose.



Verify Death if not contacted by family member

Handled by: Principal or trauma response team lead or district liaison with the coroner's office
Who to contact: Family, law enforcement, and/or coroner



Scenario continued...

By the next morning, you learn that the student died from what appears to be an opioid overdose. There is no determination on whether the overdose was accidental or intentional.



Notify administration

Follow all communications protocols for your district.

People who need to know what is going on:

- Principal
- District Crisis Coordinator
- Communications Director
- Security
- Community Superintendent
- Superintendent

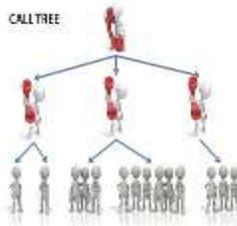
Share as many details as possible.



Notify crisis team (building and/or district)

Handled by: Principal and/or mental health staff

Key is to have a communication protocol in place for deploying a district team, if needed.



Scenario continued...

Given the student's athletic success, the school begins to receive inquiries from other parents and media. Lots of rumors are flying.





Ensure that staff knows how to respond to inquiries and manage the campus for safety

Handled by: Principal, but potentially mental health. For larger incidents, district communications/security personnel.

Securing safety of students/staff is the priority! Once secure, ensuring the public that the school is safe is essential.

Follow evacuation procedures/lockdown/lockout/etc. depending on situation.

Rule of thumb: No one talks to the media without permission from their boss.

Provide a script for media and/or parent inquiries, with facts only, to dispel rumors and ensure consistent message.



Scenario continued...

You learn that the deceased has siblings at two feeder schools.



Notify schools attended by family members of the deceased

Handled by: Principals or whomever has a relationship with people in the other schools



Reach out to and work with the family of the deceased

Handled by: Mental health staff person closest to the family, principal

Ensure that family approves for any communications to be sent and/or provided to students, staff and/or families

The family drives the bus.





Scenario continued...

The family approves of you sharing the details, as they know them, with staff and students.

They share that their son recently had surgery on his elbow and was prescribed opioids. They state that the death was accidental. On social media, rumors abound that the athlete killed himself.



Notify all faculty and staff

Handled by: Principal with help from building and/or district crisis team, Employee Assistance Program

Protocols in place? Email? Text message?

Have an early morning meeting to provide details, support for staff (if possible, in person is always better)





Coordinate notifying students about the death

Handled by: Staff (preferable), any statements written collaboratively with principal, mental health staff, and approved by family

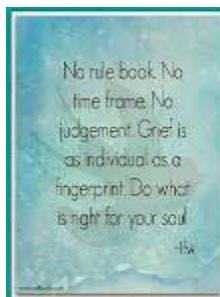
Create a brief statement to share with classes that contains the facts and only information approved by the family.

Share this statement with staff at early morning staff meeting.



Scenario continued...

Two staff members feel uncomfortable sharing the statement with students. One was very close to the student and is very distraught. Another recently lost her mother.





Provide support to staff

Handled by: All team members, possibly Employee Assistance Program or outside resources

Assign member of trauma team to help teachers struggling most to read statement.

Assign one trauma response member, preferably an in-building staff person, to follow student's schedule for the day.

Principal should also have subs in the building for staff unable to work due to trauma response.

Create a "safe room" for staff.

Provide snacks and drinks for staff in staff room.



Provide staff with guidance in talking to students

Handled by: All staff

The goal is to get back to a routine if possible

If students are deeply affected, send them to counseling office (not alone)

If classrooms are deeply affected, coordinate mental health support





Notify families of students about the death and the school's response

Handled by: Principal, sometimes district communication staff

Letter, email, voice mail, messenger

Helpful to have sample letters ready to go.

Always provide resources for students/families (phone numbers for support services, available counselor times, articles with tips on talking to students re: death, etc.)



Scenario continued...

The student's popularity and the social media response indicate that the school will have a large number of deeply affected students coming to school who have very recently found out about the tragedy.





Contact and coordinate with external mental health professionals

Handled by: District Crisis Coordinator

If possible, set this up NOW before the need arises.

Do you need additional help for your students?

Do you need alternate support for your staff?



Identify, monitor, and support students who may be at risk

Provide different areas for students to congregate with mental health staff present

Some one-on-one, some groups

Saferoom activities to express condolences (poster paper)

Document who spoke to whom, and what concerns they have. Share with others in the school with “a need to know.” (Google Docs work great.)



Scenario continued...

Students begin to create a memorial for the student and ask to have a moment of silence during the team's next game.



Implement steps to help students with emotional regulation

Contagion
Memorials
Prevention Programs





Debrief

- At end of the day, convene the crisis teams and debrief what went well and what did not
- Determine which students/staff need follow up
- Determine whether families of students need phone calls
- Encourage self-care for all responders that evening and in coming days
- Determine what supports are needed in the following days
- Monitor for vicarious trauma



Scenario continued...

One week later, you receive confirmation from your school resource officer that the coroner has ruled the cause of death as suicide.

**SOURCES
OF STRENGTH**



Additional responses

Might need to restart much of this process

Check in with students who expressed significant response, especially those who may have had suicidal thoughts in the past.

Be thoughtful about anniversaries and other significant upcoming events (graduation, sporting events, dances etc.)



questions





Contact us

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