

STUDENTS IN CRISIS - ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES

Crisis Definition:

A crisis is an unexpected event which affects the entire school community (or broader population), or individual persons within the school environment. It is any threatening or dangerous situation which involves the physical and/or emotional well being of the student(s). Some examples of crises are the following:

- Suicide or suicidal gestures
- Death of relative, friend, classmate
- Serious injury
- Excessive violence
- Child abuse or neglect (Policy J710)
- Disaster as caused by fire, explosion
- Natural disaster, as caused by flood, hurricane, blizzard

School Nurse

When a student or staff or faculty member requires immediate medical attention as a result of physical injury or sudden illness, the school nurse is notified.

He/she initiates the following procedures:

- Assessment of need
- Administration of first aid, if appropriate
- Notification of building administrator
- Provision of comfort and support
- Provision of supervision (personal or by another school employee) pending arrival of appropriate means of transportation
- Request for assistance from school physician or from fire or police departments or other town authorities/agencies
- Contact with parents/guardian or person designated as emergency respondent in their absence; or, in the case of an adult, the nearest of kin

Building Crisis Team

When a crisis causes mental emotional trauma requiring a response from school personnel, the building Crisis Team is activated. This team consists of a building administrator, the school psychologist assigned to the building, the school counselor assigned to the student, and other personnel deemed appropriate. The Chairperson for Counseling may serve in the absence of the counselor or psychologist. The Director of Pupil Services may serve in the absence of the building administrator.

Procedures

- Immediately after being notified of a crisis, the building administrator calls together the Crisis Team and shares the details. In the event that a crisis occurs outside of school hours, the administrator makes contact with each of the Crisis Team Members.

- The Crisis Team decides on a recommended response to the situation and determines the duties of individual members.
- Should parents/guardians be unaware, one Team member is designated to make personal contact.
- In the case of an individual student in trauma, he/she may be referred for evaluation to a hospital or other agency or to a specialist within or outside the school system.
- Until Team action is taken, the student remains under constant supervision of a school staff/faculty member.
- In the case of an outside referral, the Team designates one of its members to contact the selected agency or specialist and to act as a liaison.
- If the action taken results in referral to a treatment program or any extended hospitalization, the designated liaison monitors the student's course of treatment. He/she anticipates the timing of a re-entry meeting upon termination of treatment, schedules the meeting, and secures appropriate student records from the treatment facility.
- The Crisis Team determines which other students, if any, may be affected and informs the appropriate counselor(s).
- If the crisis has the potential for impacting the entire student body, a meeting is held with school counselor(s) and an action plan is developed. At the end of the school day, the Team meets again to assess the need for further action and to make plans.
- A report of the crisis, together with a summary of action taken, is forwarded to the Chairperson for Counseling/Psychological Services, Principal, Director of Pupil Services, Superintendent of Schools, and when appropriate, the School Committee(s).

Serious Injury or Death

In the aftermath of sudden death (or serious injury) which traumatizes members of the school community, the following steps are taken:

- The building administrator calls together the members of the Crisis Team.
- The building Principal notifies all faculty and calls a special faculty meeting. If outside of school hours, the Principal initiates the chain call system, relaying a brief statement and requesting faculty to arrive thirty minutes early the following day for a special meeting.
- After contact with the appropriate authorities, the Principal prepares a synopsis of the facts known about death or injury, for distribution at the faculty meetings.
- The Principal makes contact with the family to extend sympathy.
- In the case of death, the Principal obtains information from the clergy, funeral director (or the family) about family customs, wishes, plans.
- The Principal notifies other schools in Acton and Boxborough, giving special attention to those schools where siblings of the deceased or injured are enrolled.

- The Principal, or designated member of the Crisis Team, prepares a statement for use by the secretarial staff in responding to inquiries. Media representatives are referred to the Superintendent of Schools as the official spokesperson for the school system.
- The Crisis Team prepares guidelines for teachers to follow throughout the day and team members make themselves available to teachers for consultation and support.
- The Crisis Team determines whether additional support from outside specialists is desirable and makes any necessary arrangements.
- Students follow their normal schedules; time for discussion is allowed in classes and counselors/psychologists support classes previously attended by the deceased or injured.
- In the event of a death or serious injury to a faculty member, a Crisis Team member covers his/her classes and activities for the day and leads student discussions.
- In the event of a death or serious injury of a student, teachers will monitor close friends and encourage them, and any other student who requests counseling, to meet with a counselor. Students may gather in groups of up to 10-12 for counseling; certain rooms are designated for this purpose.
- Counselors or other appropriate personnel notify (by phone) parents of students who are particularly upset during the day.
- The Crisis Team meets at the end of the first day (and again the second and third days, if indicated) to identify any students who may be at risk and consider appropriate action.
- A faculty meeting is held at the end of the first day to review warning signs of depression and suicide, and to announce plans for the next day and for funeral arrangements, if known. (In order to be dismissed from school to attend a wake or a funeral, students must have written permission from a parent or guardian.)
- Members of the Crisis Team attend the wake and funeral and make themselves available to support students.
- A member of the crisis team establishes a communication dialog with a family representative concerning information to be shared.
- When possible, a faculty meeting is held before the start of the school day to update members with the facts and plans for the day.