



Fredericksburg ISD

Crisis Intervention Plan

Updated: December, 2023

Introduction

FISD's Crisis Intervention Plan is a guide to facilitate decision making in crisis situations. The extent of the Crisis Response Team's intervention will be determined on a case-by-case basis and in regard to the level of impact the tragedy imposes on students and staff.

Unanticipated events, such as suicides, school bus crashes, death of a student, or unexpected death of a teacher can quickly escalate into a school wide crisis if not dealt with immediately and effectively. Knowing what to do in the event of a tragedy will minimize the chaos, rumors, and trauma on students and teachers. For the purpose of this manual, crisis is defined as:

A sudden, generally unanticipated event that profoundly and negatively affects a significant segment of the school population and often involves serious injury or death.

Every death within the school community does not constitute a crisis. The emotional impact and the amount of bereavement support needed for teachers and students differs with each death. Variables such as the age of the deceased, the cause of death, the status of the deceased within the school and degree to which the death was anticipated, contribute to the amount of grief which will need to be resolved. The school principal, with the assistance of a crisis response team, is in the best position to assess the needs of the school and coordinate the necessary support to address the situation. This handbook was developed to assist school building administrators in the event of the death or serious injury of a student or staff member.

In developing the district crisis intervention plan, the following factors were taken into consideration:

- A school-wide crisis intervention plan helps restore and maintain a supportive, positive learning environment on campus as soon as possible following a traumatic event.
- A comprehensive plan of action allows for good decisions to be made in the midst of a crisis.
- It is important to stabilize the news and dispel rumors as they get started.
- Students & staff are far more likely to accept intervention that is brought to them rather than being advised to seek assistance on their own.
- Staff meetings are important to disseminate accurate information and to provide staff members with an appropriate plan of action.
- Scripts for teachers to read to students are essential in ensuring that everyone receives accurate and helpful information.
- Staff debriefings at the end of the day are helpful to address faculty concerns.
- Parents appreciate research-based information so that they feel equipped to assist their children at home.

Proposed Crisis Intervention Plan

1. Each campus will form a Crisis Response Team (CRT)

A Crisis Response Team is a group trained to act in crisis situations that impact the psychological and emotional well-being of students and staff.

The CRT will provide for the welfare and care of the student and staff and will help provide structure and security following a crisis.

The Campus CRT will be determined prior to the start of each school year.

The CRT will be comprised of 4 to 8 members, depending on campus size and may include:

Administrators, counselors, school nurse, school psychologist, school social worker, school resource officer, and special education support (as needed).

- In the event of a crisis, classroom teachers will be best suited to address classroom discussion and support their students. Teachers may be included on the CRT, but careful consideration should be given to who will cover their classroom duties.
- The faculty members who know the students best should be considered likely candidates for the team. Careful attention should be used in selecting staff who relate well with students and who have the students' respect.

There is no intent that the CRT will be prepared or expected to provide ongoing counseling for any student. The skills to be used by the crisis team are intended for use in containing a crisis situation and to keep the school functioning as smoothly as possible.

2. Verification of Crisis and Determine Degree of Trauma

- Get the facts. Verification is very important and administrators should get the facts before planning the intervention. Give everyone the facts as quickly as possible to dispel rumors.
- Determine the degree of trauma and potential impact on the students and staff. The level of intervention will vary depending on the circumstances surrounding the crisis. Factors that increase the level of emotional trauma include the following:
 - A sudden, accidental death or suicide are unexpected and more traumatic than, for example, a death from a long-term illness;
 - Death or serious injury that occurs on school grounds;
 - When the person believed to be responsible for the death is a member of the school community;

- When the school has experienced other tragedies within a short period of time.

3. Immediate Administrator's Response

- Campus administrator contacts Central Office Staff and determines a plan of action.
- Determine the campus Crisis Response Team's responsibilities during the crisis.
- Prepare for the dissemination of information
 - Letters and handouts for parents & determine how it will be delivered
 - A statement for the phone receptionist
 - A statement to be read by teachers to their students

***See addendum for sample handouts and prepared statements.**

Parent Notification

It is very important to provide information to parents of students at the school affected by a crisis. There is a balance between providing enough information to dispel rumors and protecting the privacy of those involved. It is recommended that parents receive notification. In most cases, this would not contain the name of the deceased, especially when the death involves a student. The name would be used in communications within the school to faculty and to students, when appropriate. The notice would contain a brief description of the cause of death when the facts are known, but would avoid unnecessary details.

Notification should encourage them to focus on the needs of their child and not on specific information about the deceased. This information should include what types of services are available at school to help their child cope with the tragedy. Communication sent home should be reviewed by the superintendent or his designee prior to distribution.

4. Campus Administrators and CRT Leader Determine the Campus Plan of Action

Determine method of informing staff:

- Notify staff via telephone chain or memo.
- Systematically disseminate information to staff during the school day.
- Notify staff via meeting either before or after school (This is the preferred method when the crisis involves the sudden death of a student or faculty member).
- Identify and establish a campus-based Command Center.

Information to be covered with staff during faculty meeting before or after school:

- Share the facts of the event and discuss the potential for impacting the campus
- Discuss the method of informing the students and parents of the event (prepared statements, classroom presentations, and letters home).
- Give teachers information on staff responsibilities and guidelines for helping their students cope with the crisis. (See attached handouts for teachers.)
- Designate room(s) for the support center. Consider an area that will allow for private, one-on-one sessions with counselors or clergy.
- Notify staff of the procedures for identifying high-risk students and how to refer those students for additional assistance. (See attached handout.)
- Discuss special concerns (classes requiring extra attention, areas of the campus requiring additional supervision, plans for honoring the deceased, etc.) Notify staff of plans to keep them continually updated and informed.
- Discuss activities that students may participate in to reduce the impact of the trauma (letters to the family, student banners, journal writing, etc.) Consider the circumstances surrounding the death of the person involved. A suicide may require special attention.
- Discuss the procedures for funeral attendance when applicable.

5. Implement the plan with fidelity

- Utilize a prepared statement for the phone receptionist on each campus.
- Inform the student body of the event using prepared statements and classroom presentations. (see addendum for examples).
- Identify those students /staff in need of additional support and intervention. (See attached handout on Identifying High Risk Students After a Death.)
- Anticipate unexpected emotional reactions triggered by the loss of life. “Old wounds” may reopen in light of the recent loss
- Counselors will be available in the area designated as the support center to assist students who need additional aid.
- Implement a process for releasing students from class to go to the support center.

- Have students sign-in and sign-out of the support center. Keep a list of students who visit the counseling center to be used for follow-up.
- Consider providing water and snacks for the students.
- Create a crisis box equipped with tissue, colors, markers, paper, stress balls, stretch bands, stationery, and other age-appropriate items such as toys, dolls, etc.
- Distribute letters and/or handouts for parents when applicable.
- Schedule an additional faculty meeting to debrief staff.
- Assign a person to send thank you notes and acknowledgements when the crisis subsides.

6. Additional Considerations for the CRT

- Monitor the school grounds for students leaving campus without permission. Redirect students to the support center.
- Notify parents of students closest to the deceased/injured and consider having them pick-up their children at the end of the school day.
- Notify bus drivers, especially those who drive buses of the deceased student.
- Notify other campuses where students may be strongly impacted (siblings, close family)
- Collect belongings from the deceased student's locker or desk.

7. Evaluate the intervention plan and debrief staff

(Typically addressed in an after school faculty meeting.)

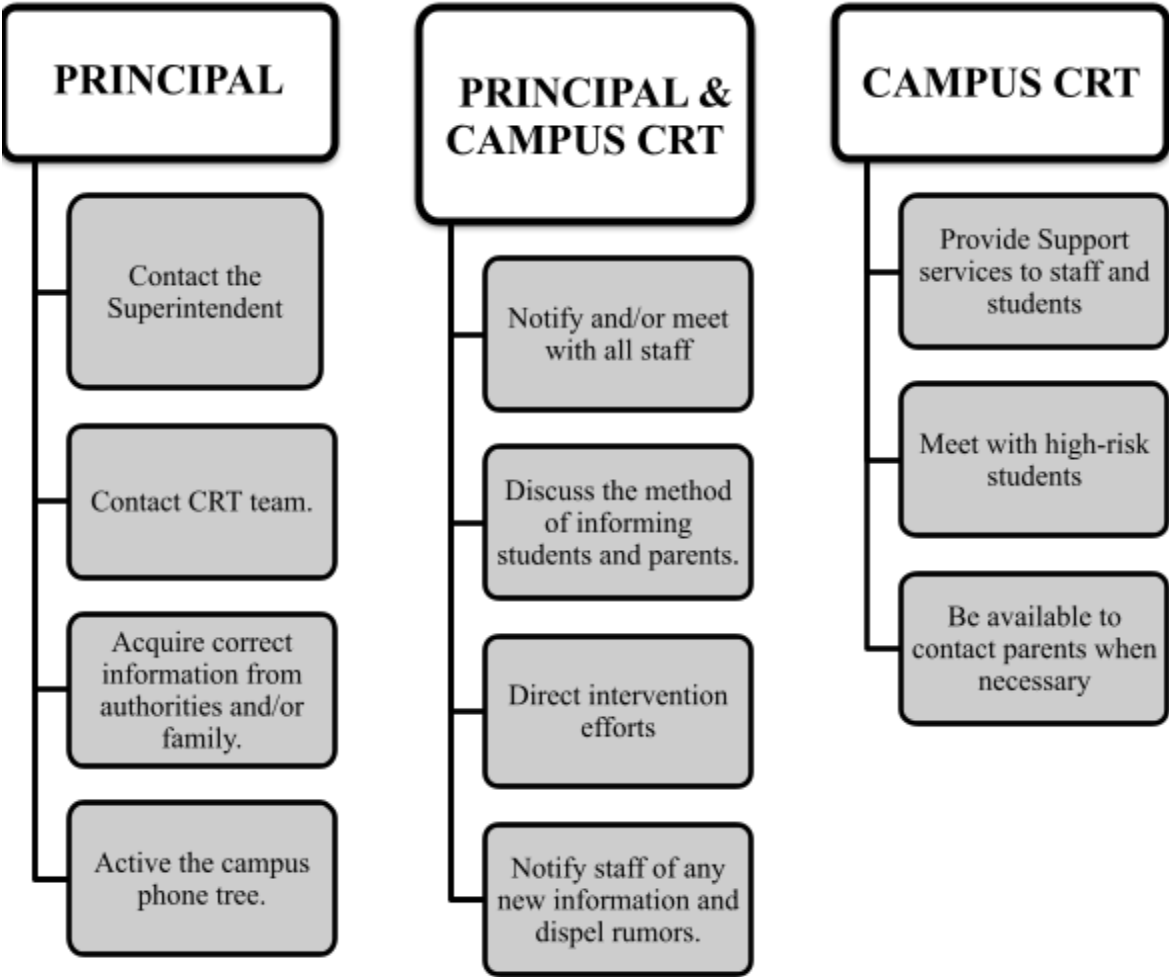
- Request feedback from staff regarding the events of the day.
- Allow teachers the opportunity to raise concerns and ask additional questions.
- Give teachers guidance on returning to a typical class period, keeping in mind that all students will grieve in different ways at different times. We will continue to support all of the needs at the campus.
- Notify staff of any new information.
- Dispel any rumors.
- Inform staff of plans for subsequent days.

- Encourage staff to continue identifying students having difficulty.
- Review teacher strategies for dealing with student reactions.
- Consider bringing in a counselor or a professional to address the faculty based on the circumstances.

8. Central Office Staff and District Personnel

- Assist with written communications
- Assist with reviewing the CRT plan, action items, and step-in as needed.

Crisis FlowChart



CRT= Crisis Response Team

Principal's Role

- Direct intervention efforts
- Provide directions to teachers about how much to set aside the curriculum
 - Tests may need to be postponed in some classes
- Communicate with central office and other campuses affected by the tragedy
- Acquire accurate information from authorities and/or the family
- Contact family of the deceased
- Schedule faculty meetings
- Disseminate prepared announcements for teachers to read to their students
- Inform staff and students about funeral arrangements
- Ensure that memorials are appropriate

Counselor, School Psychologist, and/or Social Worker Roles

- Be available in the designated location
- Locate counseling assistance from community resources
- Contact parents of struggling students with suggestions for further support.
- Follow the schedule of the deceased and visit classrooms of close friends
- Support the faculty (provide counseling as needed)
- Provide follow-up services to students as needed.
- FISSD mental health support will be available to report to the campus in crisis and determine the scope of service that is needed taking into consideration the effects and needs at their home campus.

Teacher's Role

- Provide accurate information to students
- Read prepared announcements and/or scripts
- Dispel rumors
- Answer questions without providing unnecessary details
- Give permission for a range of emotions
- Identify students who need additional support and refer to the counseling center.
- Provide activities to reduce trauma, such as artwork, music, and writing.

Sample School Crisis Plan: Day 1

Suggested Steps:

1. The administrator and Crisis Response Team may meet prior to the beginning of the school day to review any special plans for Day 1 and to provide the faculty an opportunity to process their reaction to the event.
2. At the start of each class, the students should be given the opportunity to talk about their reaction to the event. Teachers should be aware of any student who is having significant difficulty and refer these students to the designated support location. Teachers should attempt to resume normal class activities as soon as appropriate.
3. The faculty should convene at the end of Day 1 to debrief, provide support for each other, review any new information, and plan for Day 2.

Sample School Crisis Plan: Day 2

Suggested Steps:

1. The Crisis Response Team could meet prior to the beginning of school to review any special plans for Day 2 and to provide an opportunity to process any of their reactions to the event.
2. The support center should remain open to any students needing brief counseling. Continue monitoring students who may need additional help and provide a community resource list as needed.
3. Classes should be back to normal as much as possible.
4. Teachers should be asked to continue monitoring students' reactions and behaviors for signs of grief.

Sample School Crisis Plan: Day 3

Suggested Steps:

1. An announcement should be made to all students stating that the support center will be closed after Day 3, and any special concerns or counseling needs will be handled through FISD's mental health support staff.
2. High risk students continuing to show signs of stress should be recommended for outside professional help. These students' parents should be notified of this recommendation.
3. School personnel should watch for any changes in students, being particularly observant for any signs of agitation or depression in individuals or groups.

Sample School Crisis Plan: The Following Weeks**Suggested Steps:**

1. Attendance staff should examine absence reports in the following weeks after the crisis event to determine unusual absentee patterns. Attendance staff will report any potential concern to the counselors. Counselors will reach out as needed to offer assistance.

Basic Crisis Intervention Checklist

(See Crisis Intervention Plan for Comprehensive Guidelines)

- ☐ **Notify superintendent**
- ☐ **Verify the facts**
- ☐ **Contact staff (phone tree)**
- ☐ **Convene CRT and assign duties**
- ☐ **Announce time & place of emergency staff meeting**
- ☐ **Prepare formal statement & class announcements**
- ☐ **Hold morning staff meeting**
- ☐ **Distribute prepared announcement & additional materials for teachers**
- ☐ **Arrange for coverage/substitutes for teachers most affected by crisis**
- ☐ **Set-up the Support Center**
- ☐ **Write & send letter to Parents (or digitally distribute)**
- ☐ **Schedule debriefing for teachers/staff**
- ☐ **Monitor school grounds for students leaving class**
- ☐ **Collect deceased student's belongings & withdraw from school rolls**
- ☐ **Monitor students & follow-up with the most affected students**

HOTLINE NUMBERS:

AGENCY	NUMBER	WEBSITE
National Suicide Prevention Lifeline	1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255)	www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org
National Hopeline Network	1-800-SUICIDE (1-800-784-2433)	www.hopeline.com
Dept. of Health & Human Services Center for Disease Control & Prevention		http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/index.html

Community Resources:

[COUNSELING RESOURCES](#)

Sample



Parent Letters & Class Announcements

FISD Crisis Intervention Plan

Sample Letter to Parents

Death of student or staff

(Date)

Dear Parents:

I am sorry to inform you that a staff person/student/friend, (NAME), at (SCHOOL NAME) has died (DAY/DATE). *(Insert what information can be shared about the cause and circumstances of the death.)*

An appropriate announcement was made to all students regarding the death. During the day, a crisis team and counselors were available to help students deal with their grieving and answer their questions.

We want you to be aware that your child may show varying reactions to this loss. While some changes could be subtle, some students may display more serious reactions such as difficulty with eating and sleeping, prolonged crying, anger, confusion, excessive sleep, lowered motivation, school refusal and temporary withdrawal from friends and family contact. Any or all of these reactions are normal, but should they become prolonged or very severe, please contact your school counselor or administrator for additional guidance and support. Your openness and willingness to listen to your child as he/she grieves will provide important support.

Funeral arrangements are incomplete. Please contact the school for information regarding student attendance at memorial services. The school staff stands ready to help your child. Please feel free to contact the school if you have further questions or needs.

Sincerely,

Principal

**SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS
DEATH OF A TEACHER**

Date

Dear Parents,

As many of you know, our school has experienced a true loss. The death of _____ on _____ was indeed a shock. We are deeply saddened and he/she will be missed by us all.

Your child's class has had the opportunity to talk with our school counselor today about some of their feelings and concerns. You may expect that your child will want to talk to you about his or her feelings as well. Talking is healthy and will help your child deal with this tragic event.

Attached you will find some additional information that we hope proves beneficial as your family deals with this loss at home.

Funeral services will be announced at a later date. Please contact the school for information regarding student attendance at memorial services. The school staff stands ready to help your child. Please feel free to contact the school if you have further questions or needs.

Sincerely,

Principal

SAMPLE CLASS ANNOUNCEMENT STUDENT DEATH

Teachers, please review the following information. As the primary school contact for students, you serve an important role in maintaining a safe and stable environment during this time of bereavement. Please read the following announcement to your students. Allow a few minutes for the news to sink in, and then ask if anyone has any statements or questions.

“We are sad to learn that _____, in grade _____, died as a result of (type of accident or illness) last night. We do not have any more information at this time.”

(or)

“As more information becomes available, such as funeral arrangements and memorial services, we will pass it on to you. Counselors will be available in a special support room that is for anyone who would like to talk about his or her feelings. Would anyone like to talk about any feeling he or she may be experiencing right now?”

After reading one of the above statements, allow students to discuss the death if they wish. As they talk, keep the following in mind:

- Encourage students to express their feelings and if needed visit the support center.
- Let students know that the next few days and weeks will be a period of adjustment for everyone, including teachers.
- Stress that many feelings may surface in the next few days, including fear, anger, and a sense of loss. Acknowledge these feelings (especially anger) as a normal part of the grieving process.
- Show concern and be willing to discuss the tragedy. Evaluate the students’ reaction in order to refer them for help if needed.
- Modify lesson plans as needed.
- Return to class work when it is appropriate to do so. A balance must be struck between the students’ need to talk and the need to maintain normal routines.
- Take special note of students who appear unusually upset by this discussion. Make referrals if necessary.

SAMPLE CLASS ANNOUNCEMENT

TEACHER DEATH

Teachers, please review the following information. As the primary school contact for students, you serve an important role in maintaining a safe and stable environment during this time of bereavement. Please read the following announcement to your students. Allow a few minutes for the news to sink in, and then ask if anyone has any statements or questions.

We are sad to learn that _____, who__ (job function) _____, died as a result of (type of accident or illness) last night. We do not have any more information at this time

or

We are sad to learn that _____, who__ (job function) _____ died as a result of (type of accident or illness) last night. _____ has talked with the family and this is the information we have at this time: _____

As more information becomes available, such as funeral arrangements and memorial services, we will pass it on to you. Counselors will be available in a special support room that is for anyone who would like to talk about his or her feelings. Would anyone like to talk about any feeling he or she may be experiencing right now?

After reading one of the above statements, allow students to discuss the death if they wish. As they talk, keep the following in mind:

- Encourage students to express their feelings and if needed visit the support center.
- Take special note of students who appear unusually upset by this discussion. Make referrals if necessary.

SAMPLE CLASS ANNOUNCEMENT

SUICIDE

Teachers, please review the following information. As the primary school contact for students, you serve an important role in maintaining a safe and stable environment during this time of bereavement. Please read the following announcement to your students. Allow a few minutes for the news to sink in, and then ask if anyone has any statements or questions.

As many of you know by now, _____ took his /her life last evening. No one single incident or situation causes a person to commit suicide. We will never know all the reasons for _____'s actions.

In the days and weeks ahead, we may experience some confused feelings. Our first reaction might be to feel upset, saddened, and shocked by the death. Some of us will feel angry and frustrated because this is an unnecessary death, a permanent end to a temporary problem. Some of us might feel guilty. We might say, "Maybe I should have done something" or "I knew something was wrong but I didn't know how to help." Unfortunately, when someone decides to complete suicide, this ends the chance of ever improving a situation and eliminates any chance of our being able to help.

It is important to help our friends deal with this loss. We must reassure one another that no situation is completely hopeless and that no one is really helpless and alone. If any of you need to talk with someone, counselors will be available in a designated room that is for anyone who needs support.

After reading one of the above statements, allow students to discuss the tragedy if they wish. As they talk, keep the following in mind:

- Encourage students to express their feelings and if needed visit the support center.
- Do not let the discussion glamorize the act.
- Reinforce that suicide is a tragedy. Do not allow someone to become larger in death than they were in life.
- Suicide does not solve problems. It creates them. Suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem.

*** Take special note of students who appear unusually upset by this discussion. Make referrals if necessary.**

Classroom Guidance for Teachers Crisis Intervention

Because you are a role model and you influence your students, you have the privilege and the burden of helping them through a very difficult time. When a student dies, the needs of affected students can be overwhelming. The following are suggestions on how to initially help students through the first day of loss.

- 1) All teachers will read the Classroom Announcement Script. (The administration will provide a statement.)
- 2) This may last 5 minutes or the whole period. What is important is that you are there, trying to help.
- 3) Acknowledge your feelings about loss so that you can be emotionally available to help your students. You may have difficulty keeping from showing tears---that's ok. By displaying your emotions, you validate theirs.
- 4) Be open and honest with feelings. Create an atmosphere of open acceptance that invites questions and fosters students' confidence that the classroom is a safe and supportive place where they can work through their feelings. Avoid euphemisms and speak honestly and directly, using the words "dead", "dying" and "death".
- 5) Allow for silence.
- 6) If students do not respond to your initial questions or choose to speak up, move onto normalizing for them the different feelings/thoughts/emotions they may be experiencing. (Refer to Common Reactions to a Traumatic Event)
- 7) Look for students that seem to be most affected and refer them to the counseling center or crisis room.
- 8) We can't take students' grief away. Talking will help them move through and normalize their feelings. You don't have to have a response that will 'make it all better.' Listening is the most important thing you can do right now.

Classroom Announcement Script for Teachers Facilitating Discussion during Times of Crisis

I. Introduction

Read the statement provided by the administration.

“This is very difficult for all of us. It is not easy to know what to say or how to act when things like this happen.”

II. Beginning

“Have any of you heard anything different?” (Dispel rumors)

“What questions do you have about what happened or what will happen over the next couple of days?”

III. Normalize

“It is very normal to have questions when something like this happens.”

“It is very normal for people to react differently. Some people may react with sadness while others may show no outward reaction at all.”

“It is helpful for most people to have a chance to voice any questions, concerns, or feelings they may have. Today is a good opportunity for you to do just that.”

IV. Identify Appropriate Behavior

“This is a time when it is not unusual for us to look for reasons why this happened. If you hear stories or rumors that are different from the information we give you, please let us know so we can check them out, correct them, or confirm them.”

“Sometimes we want to be angry or blame others. This is normal but not something we want to do. It simply doesn’t benefit anyone.”

“Sometimes situations like this cause us to ask many questions we never thought of before. It will be helpful for you to talk to your parents or people you trust if the need arises.”

Common Reactions to a Traumatic Event

Grief is a very individual experience. In your classroom, you may see a wide range of reactions and all are normal.

Here are some very common signs and symptoms of a stress reaction after a traumatic event:

<u>Physical</u>	<u>Thinking</u>	<u>Emotional</u>
Nausea	Slowed thinking	Denial
Upset stomach	Memory problems	Feeling numb
Chills	Frustration	Anger
Sleep disturbance	Flashbacks	Anxiety
Low energy	Concentration problems	Depression
Restlessness	Intrusive thoughts	Fear

Things to Remember:

- 1) A “regular” day may be too hard for grieving students. Offer choices of activities, such as letters, journals and discussions. If the students want to, let them write sympathy notes to the parents or to a student who has suffered a loss.
- 2) Remember that your class may remain quiet and depressed for some time after the death, perhaps even a month, and that some students may begin to act out noisily and physically as a method of dealing with their feelings.
- 3) Encourage your students (and yourself) to share their feelings, foster relationships, get extra rest, and to pull back from extra commitments that are draining.

Teacher Handout

Identifying High Risk Students after a Death

Students will exhibit a wide variation in their response to a crisis. Classroom discussions provide an opportunity for students to discuss how they feel in a safe environment. Through these discussions, many students will be able to reach some degree of acceptance of the tragedy and will be able to pull themselves together and function in the school setting. Some students will have difficulty coping with emotions triggered by the crisis and will need additional support. The following risk factors would warrant a referral to the support center:

- Any student who was a witness to the event
- Any student who is related to the victim
- Any student who displays an overly emotional response (i.e. can't stop crying, excessive anger, etc.)
- Any student who was close to the victim but who is showing no visible sign of distress.
- Any student who is expressing feelings of hopelessness and despair.
- Close friends or girlfriend/boyfriend.
- Any student that is having a strong emotional reaction that you recognize as triggered by the loss.

CALL 9-1-1 FIRST in an EMERGENCY