

School Related Traumatic Event: Crisis Response Policy

The Indian River School District, in accordance with [Nolan's Law 14 Del. Code, Chapter 38, Subchapter 2](#), will establish and maintain a crisis response plan for all school-connected traumatic events. The Indian River School District will identify and establish a district level Crisis Response Team (CRT) and each school will establish their own building level Crisis Response Team.

Definitions:

“School-connected traumatic event” means the death of any student, educator, administrator, or other building employee of a public school or other traumatic event that affects a significant portion of the students and staff at the school.

Crisis Response Team:

To ensure the most effective response to traumatic events, designated district-level and school-based Crisis Response Teams (CRTs) will be established. The CRTs will have a clear and well-defined structure to coordinate and manage responses. The CRTs will include members from the following groups, as appropriate, with specific roles assigned to each:

1. Crisis Response Team Composition

- **Team Leader** (e.g., Superintendent or their designee or Principal)
- **School and Mental Health Counselors**
- **School Nurse**
- **Community Partners** (e.g., Special Outreach Services (SOS) Providers, Delaware Guidance Services, NAMI Delaware, etc.)
- **School Resource Officer (SRO), School Constable and Emergency Responders**
- **Communications Officer** (To handle media and internal communications)

2. Roles and Responsibilities

- **Team Leader:** Oversees the response, liaises with external agencies, and makes final decisions regarding actions.
- **School Counselors and Mental Health Counselors:** Provide immediate grief counseling and assess the needs of students and staff. Facilitate referrals to community mental health services and support long-term healing.
- **Nurses, School Resource Officer (SRO) and School Constable:** Address physical health needs and ensure safety during traumatic events.
- **Community Partners:** Provide additional mental health and crisis response support as needed.

Verification and Determination of Response Level:

Upon notification of a school-connected traumatic event, the appropriate Crisis Response Team(s) must:

1. **Verify the Event:** Confirm the facts surrounding the event (e.g., death, accident, violence) to ensure an appropriate response.
2. **Determine the Response Level:** Evaluate the severity of the impact on the school community. Based on the information, the CRT will determine if a Level 1, 2, or 3

response is needed, ensuring that the response is neither underwhelming nor overwhelming.

- **Level 1:** Immediate, localized response (e.g., death of a student within a classroom).
- **Level 2:** Medium-level response (e.g., multiple affected students or staff).
- **Level 3:** Large-scale, district-wide response (e.g., school-wide traumatic event or significant loss of life).

Information Dissemination and Privacy Protocols:

The release of information about the traumatic event must be handled with care and in alignment with privacy laws. The following procedures will be followed:

1. **Determine What Information to Release:** The CRT will carefully decide what information can be shared and how to present it to minimize further distress.
2. **Communication Strategy:** Information will be communicated clearly and sensitively to students, staff, and families, ensuring transparency while protecting privacy and dignity.

Assessment and Referral Procedures:

In the aftermath of a traumatic event, the CRT will:

1. **Assess the Impact:**
 - Identify students, educators, and staff members most affected by the event through initial assessments and observations.
 - Prioritize those showing signs of acute distress and/or requiring immediate attention.
2. **Referral to Support Services:**
 - Refer impacted individuals to grief counseling and mental health services as appropriate.
 - Work with community partners like the Special Outreach Services (SOS) Providers, Delaware Guidance Services, NAMI Delaware, and the DSCYF Division of Prevention and Behavioral Health for long-term support and services.

Continued Support After 30 Days:

After the initial 30 days of grief counseling funded by the Delaware Department of Education, the CRT will:

1. **Evaluate Ongoing Needs:** Review the effectiveness of the support services provided and determine if additional services are necessary for those still affected.
2. **Arrange Additional Support:** If needed, continue mental health services through community partnerships or private counselors, ensuring no student or staff member is left unsupported.

Behavioral Health Support for Crisis Response Team Members:

The Crisis Response Team members who participate in the response to a traumatic event may experience secondary trauma. The following will be put in place to support these individuals:

1. **Access to Behavioral Health Services:** CRT members will have access to counseling and mental health support to address the emotional toll of their roles.
2. **Peer Support:** The district will foster a supportive environment where CRT members can debrief with one another and share their experiences in a safe, confidential setting.

Training and Preparedness:

To ensure the effective operation of the CRTs, all school staff will be trained in crisis response protocols related to the Delaware Emergency Management Agency (DEMA) framework aligned to support the Comprehensive School Safety Program (CSSP).

The Indian River School District will continue to use the Emergency Operation Plans found within Navigate 360 to support training and preparedness in the event of a school related traumatic event. <https://ems.navigate360.com/login>

This training will be mandatory for all crisis response team members and highly encouraged for other staff members to foster a whole-school, supportive environment during times of crisis.

Review and Annual Evaluation:

This policy will be reviewed annually by the district leadership and the Crisis Response Team to ensure that it meets evolving needs and aligns with best practices. Updates will be made as necessary, and feedback from stakeholders will be incorporated into future revisions.

Adopted 04/28/2025