



Lansing School District®

Crisis Response Guidelines

DEFINITION OF A CRISIS

A crisis is an overwhelming event or cluster of events which can happen to an individual, a group or an entire community. A situation becomes a crisis when a person's previous coping abilities are not effective or the person needs to develop new ways to handle a situation. A crisis may range from extremely extensive and life-threatening to serious but not life-threatening. It is accompanied by the following:

- A rise in emotional energy, turmoil or confusion
- A disturbance in thinking and reasoning processes
- A disturbance in the way one perceives the environment

Some examples of crises are:

- Death of a student, school employee, or family member of either
- A suicidal completion, attempt or ideation by a student or school employee
- An accident, fire, sexual assault or other violence, or threat of violence
- Use of a weapon or public threat to use a weapon
- An overwhelming national event that creates significant stress for large numbers of staff and/or students (e.g. war or natural disaster)
- The initial awareness of a terminal illness of a student or school employee
- An extreme psychological disorder that places a student at risk to him/herself or others

CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM STRUCTURE

Building Crisis Response Team

The Building Crisis Response Team should include, but not be limited to the building administrators, counselors, social-emotional support staff, teacher-in-charge, special education mental health staff, school nurse, and other support staff.

RATIONALE FOR GUIDELINES

From time to time, events occur which may be emotionally traumatic to individuals or to the entire school population. These events are best handled in the school district by recognizing the traumatic event and dealing with its emotional and other effects. The following guidelines have been drafted to assist school personnel to deal with traumatic events for individuals, groups of individuals or the entire school population. They are intended to assist school personnel in assessing the needs of people touched by the crisis, implementing appropriate interventions, identifying additional resources for those who need them and returning the school's focus to learning as soon as possible

District Crisis Response Team

The District Crisis Response Team will consist of Student Services Specialists. Team members will be sent to a school when additional assistance is requested through the Office of School Culture. Team members will provide support by assisting the Building Crisis Response Team as it assesses the level of impact, develops and implements appropriate interventions, requests additional assistance as needed, debriefs during and after crisis.

District Coordinating Committee

A District Coordinating Committee comprised of the chairperson or designated member of each building team will convene as needed to plan and meet annually to review district needs. The Office of School Culture will convene the meetings.

BUILDING CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM - ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Principal

- Communicate with the Superintendent
- Direct all media to Superintendent/
Communications Department - Eldon McGraw
- Request assistance from District Crisis Response Team if needed
- Initiate the Crisis Response Team Meeting
- Notify police department, fire department or LSD Department of Public Safety, if a firearm or fire is involved. (A legal requirement)
- Conduct staff meeting to inform and direct faculty and staff
- Offer condolences to the families affected by the crisis
- Arrange for possible use of substitute teachers/secretaries
- Monitor crisis response activities

Crisis Response Team Leader

- Conduct a Crisis Response Team meeting to:
 - Gather facts
 - Determine the level of impact
 - Develop a response plan that fits the crisis
 - Delegate responsibilities
- Aid in evaluating and communicating needs of teachers and staff
- Monitor crisis response activities in coordination with the Principal

Mental Health Staff*

- Set up and staff Safe Room
- Assess student needs for professional outside treatment
- Contact Ele's Place for consultation
- Provide one-on-one intervention to staff and students
- Develop and run specialized support groups for students
- Refer students and staff as needed to community resources
- Communicate with parents of students needing referral to community resources

School Nurse

- Communicate with area hospitals and/or health department
- Assess and treat acute physical reactions resulting from crisis
- Collaborate with mental health staff and team leader on intervention implementation and follow-up

Teachers

- Assist in rumor control
- Clarify facts to students
- Coordinate classroom activities
- Assess and refer to appropriate school resources, including counselors, SAP/BIMs, and social workers or crisis intervention team

Clerical and Ancillary Staff

- Communicate needs of parents and students to principal and Crisis Response Team members

Secretary

- Answer telephone calls (have prepared statement as authorized by the Crisis Response Team, principal or designee)
- Record on paper or electronically all in-coming calls related to crisis - including name, phone number of caller in case call is disconnected before appropriate personnel receives it
- Prepare and assemble special announcements/mailings

Assigned Public Safety Officer

- Assess need for control
- Monitor halls, classrooms, bathrooms, locker rooms, etc.
- Keep the building floor plan current and readily available
- Support the Crisis Response Team as necessary in providing supportive interventions and follow-up

*Mental Health Staff includes Psychologists, Social Workers, Counselors, Student Assistance Providers, etc.

CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM CHECKLIST

Tasks	Completion Date
Verify Facts, notify Supt. or designee and request District level assistance if needed	
Activate Emergency Calling Tree/ Convene Crisis Response Team	
Identify family contact person	
Assess impact and develop a plan for the day	
Contact staff (Phone, e-mail, text)	
Inform other affected buildings	
Identify building spaces for planning, safe room for students, safe room for staff	
Write Announcement to students	
Morning staff meeting	
Distribute announcement, suggestions for class discussions, and procedures for Safe Room use	
Set up Safe Rooms	
Write and send letter to parents	
Inform ancillary staff, e.g. bus drivers, cafeteria staff, custodians, volunteers, teacher aides, substitutes, etc	
Midday meeting to assess plan implementation	
Plan a community/parent meeting, if needed.	
Plan school response, e.g. memorial, gift to family, etc.	
Crisis Response Team meeting to assess the day and plan for the following day	
End of school day staff meeting for support and status update	
Crisis Response Team debriefing - after two weeks	

APPENDIX A - Sample Classroom Announcement (Elementary)

I have some sad news to share with you today. On (Day of the Week), (Name of Student) died as a result of _____ (share age appropriate details). (Share about the connection to the school (i.e. grade of student, classroom, teacher, activities, interests, etc.). If you would like to make a card or letter for the family, we will have material available (identify Safe Room in the building). You can give them to your teacher or someone from the school will deliver them to the family.

To help us handle this news, I ask that you respect each other's feelings. We all have our own way of handling our feelings. You might feel the need to cry, get angry, become sad or frustrated, while others may smile as they remember something pleasant or funny, others may do nothing. All of these reactions are okay. If someone else's reaction is upsetting to you, let an adult know so they can talk with you.

Are there any questions?

Answers to Potential Questions

Q:What Happened?

A:We do not yet have all the details (give known facts). You may hear lots of different stories about what happened. The only people who know are _____ OR it is still under investigation by the authorities. It is important that you do not spread stories that you hear from others.

Q: Why did (name of student) die?

A: There are three reasons why people die: 1) they may die from older age, 2) they might die from severe illness, or 3) they may die from a really bad physical injury. In this case, _____ (describe which this applies to).

After Questions

After questions are complete, facilitate a deep-breathing exercise where students are able to close their eyes (shut the lights off if students say they are comfortable with this), play soft music, and breathe deeply by pushing the stomach out as you breathe in for 10 seconds and breathe out for 10 seconds. Do this 5 times before taking a small pause. Begin the classroom day.

APPENDIX B - Sample Classroom Announcement (Secondary)

I/We have had a difficult time deciding what to say to you today about the recent incident(s)/tragedy that many of you may have heard about. As adults, we are suppose to have all the answers and control our feelings well. But the truth is, sometimes things happen that are overwhelming, creating emotions that make us feel vulnerable. We have no real understanding of the reasons for this tragedy/incident and we are deeply affected by it, just as many of you are. You will hear lots of reasons for and discussions about it from your friends, classmates, teachers, families, and the media, but no one will have all the right answers. Regardless, we want you to know each of you are a valued part of this school community and we want you to know that we care.

Even though I/we do not know why it happened, we do know many of the details of the incident and how our staff and students have acted. To help us with this, let me make some suggestions that we can discuss a bit:

- We need to respect each other's emotions, no matter how differently we feel or act. Each of us has our own way of seeing, feeling about, reacting to, and coping with crisis and loss. It is okay to cry, laugh, smile, be upset, or to do nothing. Whatever you feel is appropriate. In that feeling, let's be mindful of others always.

If you are having problems throughout the day with being able to focus, you may be comforted to know that the intensity of your feelings will gradually fade as time progresses. You will always remember what has happened, but it will not always be as painful as it is today. For those who need support throughout the next few days, it is available. If you wish to have some support (list support staff in the building, including the crisis response team and Safe Room). We also plan to notify your parents and others in the community.

One/two resource(s) that might be helpful to anyone are:

The Listening Ear (24-hour crisis hotline)

517-337-1717

Ele's Place for Grieving Children

517-482-1315

Although things are difficult now, they will return to normal eventually. We have set aside time for discussion now and will resume classes when we finish.

After discussion is complete, facilitate a deep-breathing exercise where students are able to close their eyes (shut the lights off if students say they are comfortable with this), play soft music, and breathe deeply by pushing the stomach out as you breathe in for 10 seconds and breathe out for 10 seconds. Do this 5 times before taking a small pause. Begin the classroom day.

APPENDIX B - Sample Parent Letter

Date

Dear Parent/Guardian:

The building Crisis Response Team was in place today as a result of (Give known facts) _____. (Provide additional information known about the individual or incident and its connection/impact to the school community.)

Our Crisis Team was activated to meet the needs of students and staff. Comprised of counseling professions who are trained in recognizing the effects of tragedy and/or trauma, the team was available to provide support and assistance to those in need.

Sometimes an event like this will remind people of other losses in their lives such as divorce, death of a family member or loved one, fire, serious illness of a family member or a significant life change that was stressful. The most important thing to do is listen and give students a chance to talk about how they are feeling, thoughts, and fears. This is their way of coping and healing from difficult experiences. They may also need reassurance concerning family safety and security. This might be done by sharing with them how much they are loved and the support they have in their family, or by continuing with daily routines to remind them things are okay. You cannot promise them that there will not be traumatic events in their lives, but you can share what your family plans are for emergencies to remind them a plan is in place.

The following list of community resources are available for assistance, if the need arises. Please call one of them at your convenience:

- Child and Family Charities 517-882-4000
- Crisis Services as Community Mental Health 517-346-8460
- Child Services as Community Mental Health 517-346-8318
- The Listening Ear (24-hour crisis hotline) 517-337-1717
- Ele's Place for Grieving Children 517-482-1315

