

CODIFICATION REFERENCE NUMBER: 8468

DATE: October 10, 2008

CRISIS INTERVENTION AND VIOLENCE PREVENTION

I. DEFINITION AND GOALS

A crisis is an event of limited duration that is typically unpredicted and overwhelming for those who experience its wrath. This alteration in the status quo is unwanted and frightening, and it often leaves a person with a sense of vulnerability and helplessness. The “danger” of a crisis is that it can be devastating. The effect can be debilitating and long term. This is what we seek to avoid in crisis intervention. An appropriate, planned response can be stabilizing, as well as growth-producing, bringing about positive change. In a crisis, the very foundations upon which an individual has built his or her life are leveled, presenting the “opportunity” to rebuild a more substantial foundation.

Thus, the goals of crisis intervention are:

- To stabilize the system in order to prevent the already distressful condition from getting worse;
- To maintain structure and order in the school routine;
- To facilitate the expression of grief in a controlled and organized way;
- To restore a feeling of security and control; and
- To use the opportunity of the crisis to promote health and growth within the individual and the school community.

II. BEFORE A CRISIS OCCURS

A. A School Emergency Operation Plan will be developed for the district and each building, as directed by the superintendent of schools in collaboration with the Bernards Township Police Department. Based on State guidelines, the will include:

- A description of the site;
- Number of personnel and students;
- Building operations and control;
- Responsibilities;
- Continuity of leadership;
- Administration and logistics; as well as
- Basic Plan development and maintenance.

The Basic Plan will include provision for:

- Alert;
- Warning;
- Communications;
- Emergency services;
- Evacuation;
- Facility shutdown; and,
- Evacuee reception.

B. A District Crisis Management Team (CMT) shall consist of the following members: The Director of Special Services, at least two representatives from each school building, and when determined necessary by the Superintendent and his/her designee the following: School Doctor, transportation coordinator, and others as deemed appropriate. Each building shall also designate a Building Crisis Intervention Team including administrators, medical staff, counselors, and teachers.

C. A Community Emergency Response Advisory Team will be developed by the Superintendent and will include representatives from local law enforcement, county emergency services, clergy, health department, and the Somerset Hills YMCA. This team will establish guidelines for the communication of information; for providing out-of-school support for students and families; for working with the media; and for providing additional services as determined by the Superintendent.

D. An Emergency Communication Plan will be developed by each building Crisis Management Team. It will include:

- Emergency phone chains to facilitate contact with CIT members, emergency services and community agencies, and parents (see Appendix “A”);
- Emergency Communication System (e.g., adequate telephone lines, including one private line with an unpublished number);
 - ✓ Cell phones;
 - ✓ Two-way school intercom system;
 - ✓ Bullhorn;
 - ✓ Walkie-talkies;
 - ✓ Portable computer with access to the student database;
 - ✓ FAX machine;
 - ✓ “Panic button” directly connected to police or fire department;
 - ✓ cell phones for key people at the district level.
- The Emergency Communication Plan for each building is described in detail in the School Emergency Operational Manual in the Alert Warning and Communication Annex.

- E. A Plan for Emergency Transportation Needs, Traffic Control, and Crowd Control** will be developed by each building principal, in conjunction with the transportation coordinator and local police. This plan for each building is described in detail in the School Emergency Operation Plan Manual in the Evacuational Annex and the Evacuate Reception Annex.
- F. A Media Plan** will be established by the Superintendent and the building principals, in conjunction with the Community Emergency Response Advisory Team. A list of media contacts will be included.
- G. Training** will be provided to all school and district staff. Training may include “The Assigned Roles of All District Staff,” “Use of Emergency Kits and Equipment,” “Role of the Media,” “Updating of Communication Plans,” and “Crisis Scenarios and Practice Drills, Including Emergency Evacuations and Lockdowns.”

III. WHEN A CRISIS OCCURS:

- A. If the crisis occurs **at school or at a school-sponsored function**, the principal or his/her designee will do his/her best to insure the safety of all students:
 - Determine the seriousness of the situation;
 - Call 911 and put into place the School Emergency Operations Plan (if warranted);
 - Get assistance for victims;
 - Notify the Superintendent of Schools
 - Notify the families of the people involved;
 - Gather facts about the incident;
 - Assemble the Crisis Management Team and plan an appropriate response.
- B. If the crisis occurs during **out-of-school hours**, the building principal will:
 1. Verify information with police and clarify facts surrounding the crisis;
 2. Contact the Superintendent and the Director of ~~Education and~~ Special Services.
 3. Contact parents/guardians of individuals involved (obtain consent for release of information, express condolences, clarify plans for funeral and family’s wishes, provide family with local mental health resources);
 4. Notify the Crisis Management Team Members;
 5. Plan faculty meeting prior to school opening or, if death is learned about during school day, schedule faculty meeting at end of the day (refer to appendices B, C, D and E for samples);
 6. Notify faculty and other school staff via telephone chain:

7. In consultation with the Superintendent of Schools:
 - plan strategy to disseminate information to parents (See Appendices F, G & H);
 - prepare to respond to requests for memorialization.

8. In consultation with the Superintendent of Schools:
 - Determine if the school has any legal responsibilities in this incident. Will students and faculty be likely to face trials or deposition? If so, how will you prepare them?
 - Prepare to address the media (See Appendix I).
 - Determine need for assistance from Superintendent;
 - Prepare a written statement (consider confidentiality, family wishes, liability of erroneous information);
 - Plan for scheduled media updates.

C. The Crisis Management Team will:

1. Assess the impact of the crisis–
 - When and where did their incident occur?
 - How did it happen (e.g., accidental, intentional, expected)?
 - Which students and staff are affected?
 - How is the faculty responding?
 - How are students indirectly being affected (siblings, friends in other buildings)?

2. Adapt the Crisis Management Plan to fit the crisis (See Appendix J).

3. Assist with announcements and emergency faculty meeting;

4. If appropriate, contact community resources and local clergy to engage their support and assistance;

5. Determine locale and number of **crisis stations** to be distributed throughout the building and assign crisis station counselors; keep accurate records of who has been seen;

6. Appoint one person to speak to classes following the deceased's and the deceased siblings daily schedule;

7. Identify high risk students and follow-up with family contact and referrals. Follow-up with individual counseling sessions as indicated. Document interventions.

8. If siblings of the deceased attend another school, appoint one team member as liaison with that building administrator.
9. Obtain information regarding the deceased student's activities outside the school. Contact these groups to notify them of the event and check their rosters to see if students within the school are also members and might benefit from outreach by Crisis Intervention Team Members;
10. Consider an open forum for parents after school hours. (See Appendix L)
11. Be aware of the emotional needs of the staff, especially yourself, other counselors, and the principal.

D. Funeral/Memorial Service

1. Consider the wishes of the student's family;
2. Consider the age of the attendants;
3. Consider the number of staff attending;
4. Have support personnel available there;
5. Be prepared to provide counseling support when students return.

IV. AFTER THE CRISIS:

A. Debriefing

1. After the first day –

- Allow team members to express feelings. Review team activities for the day and plan subsequent days.
- Provide staff with guidelines and information to help students deal with feelings and express grief.

2. After the first week –

- Convene the team to review events of the week, to determine the need for a continued crisis management plan, and to allow each team member to discuss his/her reaction to the crisis.
- Discuss students at risk and design a follow-up plan which includes using faculty to identify students in need of services.
- Consider distributing questionnaires to students and staff to evaluate crisis response.

3. **After the First Month –**

- Review events since the last meeting and the status of at risk students.
- Review and evaluate the crisis management plan using feedback from students and staff, if available, and revise plan, if necessary.
- Anticipate future events that could reactivate the crisis and plan..

B. Preventing Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Copycats

1. **Post Traumatic Stress Disorder** - Provide opportunities for individuals impacted by the crisis to process the event within the first 3-5 days following the crisis.

- Encourage the expression of feelings, beliefs, and concerns regarding the crisis;
- Address faulty thinking in a non-judgmental manner;
- Acknowledge and normalize reactions through empathetic listening.

2. **Copycats** - Reporting of crisis event should be concise and factual; avoid sensational details. (See Appendix I)

- Avoid repetitive, ongoing reporting of event;
- Do not imply that event was a means of coping or accomplishing certain ends;
- Do not glorify event – minimize public memorials;
- Avoid focusing on positive characteristics of persons who harm themselves or others.

SAMPLE EMERGENCY PHONE CHAIN

POLICE
DEPARTMENT

OR

INDIVIDUAL WITH
FIRST HAND KNOWLEDGE

SUPERINTENDENT

BUILDING
PRINCIPAL

DIRECTOR OF SPECIAL
SERVICES
(as necessary)

SCHOOL BOARD
PRESIDENT
(as necessary)

OTHER SCHOOL
DISTRICTS

MOBILIZE
BUILDING
CRISIS
MEMBERS
INTERVENTION
TEAM

P.T.O
PRESIDENT

DISTRICT-WIDE
CRISIS
TEAM

APPROPRIATE
COMMUNITY
MANAGEMENT
AND CLERGY

OTHER
BOARD
RESOURCES

FAMILIES

STAFF
NOTIFICATION
CHAIN

STAFF MEETING

APPENDIX B

INITIAL STAFF MEETING REGARDING CURRENT CRISIS

The staff needs to be continually informed about the status of the crisis. They need to meet as soon after the immediate response to the crisis as possible. A recommended agenda – with time throughout for questions and answers – includes the following:

AGENDA for Staff Meeting:

1. Update information specific to the crisis.
2. Distribute the school's written statement.
3. Identify the single media spokesperson and review the school's policy for media interaction.
4. Review the events of the day.
5. Acknowledge faculty loss and outline support available for faculty and staff.
6. Share information about the "stages of grief" and review supports available for students.
7. Review professional resources outside the school who are available as backup or consultants.
8. Involve faculty in identifying additional students who may be at risk.
9. Share arrangements for any funeral or memorial services, and encourage staff, as appropriate, to attend in order to provide support to students and their families.
10. Provide staff with procedures to be shared with students who wish to attend the services.

Anyone who works in the school can be affected by the crisis. If any staff are unable to attend the meeting because of their duties (e.g., cooks or bus drivers), arrange for someone to share information with them as soon as reasonably possible.

* Remember to keep the building secretaries informed at all times. Anyone answering the phones, greeting parents at the doors needs to be informed with the most up to date information.

APPENDIX C

SAMPLE ANNOUNCEMENT FOR SUDDEN DEATH

We want to take some time this morning to talk about something very sad.
_____, an eighth grader, died unexpectedly last night.
(name)

At this point in time, we do not officially know the cause of (his/her)
_____ death.
(name)

Death is a difficult issue for anyone to deal with. Even if you didn't know
_____, you might still have some emotional reactions to hearing
(name)
about this.

It is very important to be able to express our feelings about _____'s
(name)
death, especially our loss and sadness. We want you to know that there are teachers and
counselors available in the library throughout the day to talk with you about your reaction to
_____ 's death.
(name)

If you feel you need to talk to somebody, you will be given to pass to go to the library.

SAMPLE FACULTY MEMO

Date:

To: Southlake Elementary Faculty and Staff

From: Wendell Connor, Principal

Subject: Accident on Campus

We have had a serious injury of a student in one of the third-grade classrooms early this afternoon. You may have heard the commotion and seen emergency personnel enter the building. Your students may be anxious and upset. Please only tell them there has been an accident and the police and firemen are here to help. Encourage them to express their fears and scary feelings. The sirens and ambulance may remind them of other accidents in their neighborhood or home. Reassure them that there is no danger to them.

Do not permit students to enter the south hallway at this time. Exit the building and re-enter through the west entrance to reach the cafeteria or gym. If your classroom is located in the south wing, remain in class until you receive further notice.

We will identify the student for you after the family has been contacted and will give you additional information as soon as it is available. There will be a faculty meeting in the media center at 3:35 p.m. with the crisis team and the school psychologist. Please plan to attend.

MEMO TO ALL FACULTY AND STAFF REGARDING SUDDEN DEATH

Please keep the following in mind during the week ahead:

1. Points to Remember about Students During a Sudden Death Crisis –
 - Sudden death is especially difficult because there has been no time to prepare for the loss. It occurs without warning and reactions may, therefore, be delayed.
 - If the circumstances of the loss have also been violent, students may seem preoccupied with both the fact that the death occurred, as well as how it occurred.
 - If there were witnesses to the death, these students may need additional help in dealing with what has happened.
 - If the death was related to an auto accident and there were other students involved, these students may require additional support upon their return to school.
 - Students are experiencing a loss and consequently must grieve the death of their classmate (or faculty member).
 - Students will experience a wide range of emotions; there is no “right way” to feel; each person has a unique response to the crisis.
 - Talking about feelings in open discussions is an appropriate way of expressing grief.
 - Classroom activities may need to be altered, especially in the first few days after the death. If you have questions about a particular activity planned for your classes, feel free to consult with any Crisis Management Team member.
 - Life will return to normal. However, it will take time and vary from individual to individual.

2. If you feel a student needs to see a Crisis Management Team counselor, contact:

_____.

3. If you need to talk to someone or ask a question, a Crisis Management Team counselor will be available all day at _____.

Additional meetings scheduled this week:
(Date, Time, Place) _____
_____.

SAMPLE PARENT LETTER

Dear Parents:

A very sad thing happened today that I want to share with you.

(Share the information honestly.)

(i.e., This morning one of our kindergarten students, (name), was hit by a car outside of his home Southwest Sacramento. According to his family, he ran out into the street and was seriously injured. He died at the hospital. We are all profoundly saddened by his death.)

We have shared this information and had discussions with all of our students (in the classroom/school) so that they know what has happened. Counselors, teachers and other support personnel have been, and will continue to be, available to students, teachers and parents on an ongoing basis. Please call the school, (number), if you want assistance.

As parents, you may want to talk to your children, too. The death of a (student/teacher) may affect a child in a variety of ways depending on the age of a child, how well the child knew (the one who died) and the child's prior experience with grief.

When reacting to a death, a child may:

- | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Appear not to be affected | be thinking about it privately |
| ask a lot of questions | be frightened |
| be agitated and angry | be sad and withdrawn |
| try extra hard to be good | |

We suggest you listen to your children. If they seem to need to talk, answer their questions simply, honestly and possibly over and over again.

(optional) A Parent Informational Night is planned for (date, time and place). At that time, we can talk further about how to help children in grief.

Our thoughts are with (family name).

Sincerely,

APPENDIX G

SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS AND SCHOOL WHEN DEATH IS A SUICIDE

***This letter can only be used if the police have confirmed information that the death is a suicide AND the district has received consent from the family of the deceased.**

To the School Community:

A very sad thing happened today that I want to share with you.

(Give accurate information, using the word “suicide” for cause of death.)

i.e., Josephine Smith, our librarian, killed herself by poisoning on March 2, 1991 – she committed suicide.

Any person’s death is tragic. However, when that person’s death is a suicide, it is a different and greater tragedy. There can be many factors which would lead an individual to this course of action. We can never know exactly why she killed herself.

We do know that we ask ourselves if there was not something we could have done or said. It appears that many individuals did care about her and reached out to her in their own way. Depression is a curious and confusing state. Sometimes we can break through its shell and at other time no one can.

We will all miss (name) – family, friends, students and teachers. If nothing else, I hope we all realize that we must reach out to one another, to be friends, to listen, to help each other to understand that each one of us is important. As difficult as times may get, our lives have value and meaning. If any of us have thoughts of wanting to kill ourselves, tell someone. If we can do this, we can get help. There are people who know how to help and who care.

Counselors, teachers and other support personnel have been, and will continue to be, available for students, teachers and parents on an ongoing basis. Please contact the counselor or Student Assistance Program Coordinator, (name), or call the school office, (number), for assistance.

A Community Support Night is planned for (date, time and place) for staff and parents.

At that time, we can talk further about how to help our children and ourselves with grief and suicide prevention.

Our thoughts are with (family name) and with each of you.

Sincerely,

APPENDIX H

SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS

Date

Dear Parents:

The school is deeply saddened by the death of Mrs. Harriett Morrison, one of our fourth grade teachers. Mrs. Morrison had been a member of our faculty for seven years. We will miss her. She was found in her home over the weekend and the police suspect the cause of death was homicide. We have no additional information to give you about the shocking event of her death at this time.

Your child's class had the opportunity to talk to a school psychologist from the crisis team today about our loss. You may expect your child to want to talk to you about his or her feelings when they get home from school. As difficult as it is, talking about feelings will help them deal with the death.

The funeral will be on Tuesday, September 19 at 11:00 a.m. at St. Rita's Episcopal Church, 6720 Webster. Smith and Johnson Funeral Home, 1802 North Washington is in charge of the service. We encourage you to accompany and support your child if you want him or her to attend the service. The school office needs a written note from you in order for us to release your child from class.

Please telephone the school counselor or school psychologist if you would like further help or assistance.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Marilyn Brown
Principal

APPENDIX I

EXAMPLE OF HYPOTHETICAL NEWS REPORTS* WITH HIGH AND LOW POTENTIAL FOR PROMOTING SUICIDE CONTAGION

Report with High Potential for Promoting Suicide Contagion:

Hundreds turned out Monday for the funeral of John Doe, Jr., 15, who shot himself in the head late Friday with his father's hunting rifle. Town Moderator Brown, along with State Senator Smith and Selectman's Chairman Miller, were among the many well-known persons who offered their condolences to the City High School sophomore's grieving parents, Mary and John Doe, Sr.

Although no one could say for sure why Doe killed himself, his classmates, who did not want to be quoted, said Doe and his girlfriend, Jane, also a sophomore at the high school, had been having difficulty. Doe was also known to have been a zealous player of fantasy video games.

School closed at noon Monday and buses were on hand to transport students who wished to attend Doe's funeral. School officials said almost all of the student body of 1,200 attended. Flags in town were flown at half staff in his honor. Members of the School Committee and the Board of Selectmen are planning to erect a memorial flagpole in front of the high school. Also, a group of Doe's friends intend to plant a memorial tree in City Park during a ceremony this coming Sunday at 2:00 p.m.

Doe was born in Otherville and moved to this town 10 years ago with his parents and sister, Ann. He was an avid member of the high school swim team last spring, and he enjoyed collecting comic books. He had been active in local youth organizations, although he had not attended meetings in several months.

Alternative Report with Low Potential for Promoting Suicide Contagion:

John Doe, Jr., 15, of Maplewood Drive, died Friday from a self-inflicted gunshot wound. John, the son of Mary and John Doe, Sr., was a sophomore at City High School.

John had lived in Anytown since moving here 10 years ago from Otherville, where he was born. His funeral was held Sunday. School counselors are available for any students who wish to talk about his death.

In addition to his parents, John is survived by his sister Ann.

CRISIS CHECK LIST

I. SCHOOL SITE INITIAL CRISIS SCREENING

- A. Identify problem/event and determine degree of impact on school.
- B. Determine if additional support is needed. School Crisis Team may request assistance from District Crisis Team
- C. Review facts and determine what information is to be shared with:
 - faculty
 - students
 - parents/community
 - media
 - contact media liaison
- D. Determine how the information is to be shared with staff/students in order to control rumors and provide factual information.
 - written bulletins
 - classroom presentations/discussions
 - assemblies
- E. Initiate a referral process.
 - Provide referral process, including procedures for self-referral.
 - Maintain Student Referral List. Designate where list will be maintained and by whom.
 - Designate interview locations.
- F. Establish a sign-in and message center for support service personnel on campus.
- G. Identify high risk students. Initiate contacts and appropriate interventions.
- H. Interventions:
 - Individual interviews
 - Group counseling
 - Classroom activities, presentations
 - Support groups
 - Parent meeting
 - Staff meetings
 - Referrals to community agencies

II. DEBRIEFING - on a daily basis

- A. Review process, status of referred students.
- B. Prioritize needs.
- C. Plan follow-up actions.
- D. Provide support to team members.
- E. Provide support to staff.

Crisis Response in our Schools: A Practical Checklist

There has been a dramatic increase in the frequency of crises in our schools. The following checklist was developed to facilitate an effective crisis response in the wake of a tragedy. This list will require modification to address the nature of the crisis situation and should not take the place of competent professional services. By reaching our school families early following a traumatic event, we can potentially prevent the acute difficulties of today from becoming the *chronic* problems of tomorrow. (Lerner, 1997)

I. Fact Gathering

- Notify building principal.
- Clarify facts surrounding the crisis.
- Contact school district administration.
- Contact parents/guardians (of individuals involved/affected).
- Obtain consent for release of information
- Contact police and/or fire department
- Principal consults with assistant principal and/or school psychologist
- Determine the need for assembling the Crisis Response Team

II. The Call to Action

Assemble the Crisis Response Team.

Share facts with team members and assess the impact of the crisis.

- When did the event occur (e.g., during a lunch period, over the summer)?
- Where did the event occur (e.g., on school grounds)?
- How did it happen (e.g., accidental, intentional, expected)?
- How many students and staff are affected by the event?
- Which students and staff are affected?
- How are the students and staff affected?
- How are the faculty responding?
- Should classes be suspended temporarily or assignments altered?
- Should students be released from school?
- How are students indirectly being affected (e.g., siblings/friends at other buildings in the district, etc.)?

Determine if additional support services are needed (e.g., psychologists/social workers/counselors from other buildings.)

- Weigh efficacy of “unknown” professionals.
- Provide identification badges for these outside professionals.

Update school district administration.

III. Notification Procedures

Consider:

- Announcement to students and faculty
- Announcement should not give too many details that could be misinterpreted.
- Location of support personnel (library?)
- Need for students to sign out of class and in with support personnel
- Mailbox memorandum to faculty and staff
- Emergency faculty meeting (first thing in the morning)
- Notification of students in classrooms by Crisis Response Team

IV. Crisis Response Team in Motion

Administrators and security circulate through the building.

- “Pockets” of grieving students should be directed to location of support personnel. Consider letter to be sent to students’ homes – facts, summary, reactions, guidelines, contact #s.

Team members to visit selected classrooms to provide opportunity for discussion.

Teachers should allow opportunity for students to ventilate.

Counseling with individuals and small groups – (psychologists, social workers, guidance counselors)

- Attempt to cultivate a “helping relationship” characterized by empathy, warmth and genuineness.
- Encourage people to express their feelings.
- Be careful not to lecture and allow periods of silence.
- Avoid clichés such as, “Be strong” and “You’re doing so well” Such clichés may only serve to reinforce an individual’s feelings of aloneness.
- Attempt to “normalize” grief reactions.
- Remember that cultural differences exist in the overt expression of emotions.
- Maintaining confidentiality, when possible, is crucial.
- Provide snacks (e.g., juice, cookies, etc.) to students and support staff.
- It is important to remember that we have support while helping others during this difficult time.

Identify high risk individuals.

Contact parents/guardians of high risk students.

Provide referrals for outside support (if indicated).

Provide hot line number to parents/guardians for after school hours (if necessary).

Carefully document events.

Consider open forum for parents (after school hours)

Schedule follow-up by support personnel for high risk individuals.

Schedule faculty meeting.

Remain sensitive to how team members are being perceived.

V. Addressing the Media

Develop a response – consider confidentiality, family wishes, liability of erroneous information.

Designate a spokesperson – no one else talks.

Designate alternative spokesperson.

VI. Debriefing

Review the events of the day.

Revise the intervention strategies (e.g., plan for upcoming days).

Monitor reactions of crisis team members – “compassion fatigue.”

VII. Funeral

Consider the wishes of the students’ family.

Consider the wishes of the victim (‘s) family regarding attendance.

Consider the age of the attendants.

Consider the number of staff attending.

Have support personnel available there.

VIII. Memorialization

Consider appropriateness.

PARENT INFORMATIONAL EVENING GUIDELINES

- INVITE** Send a note home to inform parents of the Parent Informational Night.
- FACILITATE** Have enough support people there to facilitate so that there is one support person for every 15 parents estimated to attend.
- INTRODUCE** Introduce the evening as a time for parents to express their concerns and ask questions of the school and counseling personnel in regards to the death that has impacted their children and families.
- SHARE** Divide into circles of no more that 15 participants with a facilitator for each group.
- *Go around the circle one at a time, starting with the facilitator.
 - *Ask that each person share his/her concerns, feelings, questions and experiences in regards to the death.
 - *Do not encourage discussion at this time. The facilitator takes notes to be addressed at the end of the sharing circle.
- BREAK** Take a break after the sharing circle.
- REJOIN** Rejoin as one group for the feedback session.
- FEEDBACK** A designated facilitator addresses the questions and concerns raised by the parents. This may be material about:
- *Family dynamics during the grieving process
 - *Adult grief
 - *Neighborhood and school safety
 - *Suicide prevention
 - *Other topics
 - *Information on how the school is responding
- ENCOURAGE** The facilitator closes the evening with a statement of encouragement and faith in the family’s ability to respond to the individual needs of the family members and with appreciation for the great difficulties facing the families.

VIOLENCE PREVENTION

RESPONSIBILITY:

In accordance with Board Policy, the Superintendent has established the following procedures for the instruction of pupils and staff in violence prevention and for the identification of and intervention with pupils at risk for violence.

PROCEDURES:

A. PREVENTION

1. Each **building principal will assess the safety of his/her building** and grounds in collaboration with the local police department. Procedures to improve safety (locked doors, hallway monitors, visitor sign-in and badges, evacuation and lockdown drills, etc.) will be implemented.
2. Each **building principal** shall develop a School Emergency Operations Plan in collaboration with the local police department. Based on State guidelines, the plan will include a description of the site, lists of personnel and students, building operations and control, responsibilities, continuity of leadership, administration and logistics, as well as Basic Plan development and maintenance. The Basic Plan will include provisions for:
 - Alert, Warning, and Communications;
 - Emergency services;
 - Evacuation;
 - Facility shutdown; and
 - Evacuee reception
 - Character Education
3. The **Superintendent shall supervise the development of K-12 curriculum guides** in those areas related to violence prevention:
 - Dealing with bullying and teasing;
 - Anger management;
 - Stress management
 - Conflict resolution
 - Social and emotional problem-solving
 - Warning signs of violence
 - Responding to threats
4. Teachers, guidance counselors and SACs will continue to identify underlying causes of stress and anger in our students. Recommendations to remediate these issues will be made to the Superintendent as specified in Board Policy #2417.

5. The Superintendent shall direct staff development programs – including violence prevention, social competency training, and mental health services offered in the schools and community.
6. The Superintendent or his/her designee shall work with community groups to provide awareness and parent involvement.
7. District guidelines shall be reviewed annually and any necessary revisions will be made.

B. IDENTIFICATION

1. School personnel, students, and parents should be made aware of the warning signs of potentially violent students:
 - **Social Isolation:** few or no friends, hardly ever speaks to peers during breaks.
 - **Despair:** lack of enjoyment or fun in life and/or hopelessness about the possibility of life getting better.
 - **Anger:** nearly always seems angry and/or feels persecuted.
 - **Threats:** angrily threatens to harm others, particularly if specific plans to harm someone are articulated.
 - **Poor Impulse Control:** emotionally impatient and tends to respond aggressively before thinking or talking.
 - **Defiance of Authority:** repeated pattern of not listening to authority figures; believes rules do not apply to him/her.
 - **Extreme Self-Centeredness:** repeatedly ignores the feelings or rights of others.
 - **Obsession with Weapons:** fascinated with guns, knives, bombs, or other weapons or bring a weapon to school, or is known to carry a weapon. (Also refer to Board Policy M 8467: Weapons and Firearms.)
 - **Obsession with Violence and Death:** regularly talks or writes about violence and death.
 - **Exposure to Violence:** has witnessed serious interpersonal violence, has been physically victimized, or has experienced the recent death of a family member, friend, or classmate.

- **Chronic Truancy: repeated absences from school.**
- **Extreme Mood Swings: feelings shift from very happy to very angry or very sad without an obvious corresponding reason.**
- **Drug Use: possession or use of drugs/alcohol or clean signs of drunkenness or drug-induced behavior.**
- **Excessive rigidity in cognitive and coping strategies.**
- **Poor reality testing.**

One should look for patterns of behavior or emotional responses, not isolated behaviors or single emotional outbursts. These guidelines have been developed to help students, not to stigmatize or punish them.

2. All faculty, particularly those serving on the Intervention and Referral Services Committee in each building, shall assist in the identification of at-risk students and intervention in their behalf.
3. Staff and parents shall be made aware of these identification and intervention guidelines.

C. INTERVENTION

All incidents in which a student makes any type of threat to kill or injure another person **must be reported without delay and without exception to the building principal** or his/her designee. The staff member will contact the administrator directly. A first hand report is critical in gathering relevant information.

To facilitate an appropriate response, such threats are presented in three levels of severity:

1. **LEVEL I Threats** may apply when the threat has any of the characteristics listed below. The threat is communicated:
 - In a joking fashion during a playful activity;
 - As part of television/movie vernacular;
 - As an expression of irritability;
 - By a student who is known to be verbally impulsive but non-threatening;
 - By a student who exhibits limited cognitive or age limited understanding.

In a **Level I** intervention, the principal or his/her designee:

- will speak to the student to discuss the threat;
- will notify the student's parents;
- will consult with the child's guidance counselor and a member of the District Crisis Intervention Team.

The principal:

- may determine that no further action is necessary;
- may initiate a disciplinary action;
- may request further assessment by the Crisis Management Team member. The Crisis Management Team member may gather relevant information from reviewing records, consulting with the student's teachers, interviewing the student, interviewing the parents, or consulting with other professionals as needed;
- will complete a Violence Prevention Report (Appendix M) and will submit it to the Director of Special Services and the Superintendent;
- will provide the referring teacher with follow-up information.

2. **LEVEL II Threats** may apply when the threat has any of the characteristics listed below. The student making the threat:

- Is known to act very impulsively and/or react emotionally;
- Is a scapegoated child who is routinely taunted by classmates;
- Appears isolated, has few friends, or does not fit in;
- Exhibits intense anger at the moment of the threat, whether or not easily calmed;
- Makes pre-planned indirect threats, i.e., notations in school assignments or reports of indirect verbal threats;
- Seems depressed, sad, withdrawn;
- Stalking (follows, sends E-mails, notes, etc.);
- Exhibits self-abusive behaviors with a physical result, i.e., scratches, cuts, and bites;
- Reveals passive suicidal thoughts, e.g., "I wish I were dead;"

- Makes false allegations of a verbal threat;
- Makes incidental remarks about killing or injuring a staff member.

In a Level II intervention, the principal or his/her designee:

- will speak to the student to discuss the threat;
- will notify the pupil's parents;
- will notify the "victim's" parents;
- will consult with the child's guidance counselor and the Crisis Management Team member;
- will notify the Superintendent and Director of Special Services and will complete a Violence Prevention Report
- (See Appendix M);
- may initiate disciplinary action;
- may file a police report;
- will provide the referring teacher with follow-up information.

In a **Level II** intervention, the Crisis Management Team member must interview the student to assess the severity of the threat and will also interview the "victim(s)." He/she will also contact the student's parents.

If a determination is made that the student should be released directly to the parent, the parent will be required to come to school immediately. Recommendations may include counseling, further psychological or psychiatric assessment of the student before the student is allowed to return to school. If this is required, the psychologist or psychiatrist must see the student as soon as possible, and must designate in writing that the student is not in danger of harming himself/herself or others before the student may return to school. If such evaluation is mandated and conducted by a psychologist or psychiatrist designated by the school, the expense of the evaluation shall be covered by the Board of Education. If the parents choose their own psychologist or psychiatrist, they must assume the expense of this evaluation. The student will be placed on Alternate Instruction until the results of the evaluation are provided in writing to the principal.

Refusal or failure by a parent or guardian to comply with the school's recommendation to seek an evaluation and/or intervention shall be deemed a violation of child neglect (N.J.S.A. 9:6-1 et.seq.) laws. The principal or his/her designee shall notify the Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS) of the parent's refusal to comply.

3. **LEVEL III Threats** applies to actions or situations requiring immediate intervention. This level pertains to any student who communicates a threat to kill or injure another student or staff member, particularly when the student making the threat:

- possesses a weapon (i.e., gun, knife, bat, box cutter, nunchaku, etc.) at the time of the incident (refer to Policy M 8467: Weapons);
- Claims to possess weapon(s) at home and claims easy access to a weapon;
- Directly threatens to kill or injure a teacher/administrator or peer;
- Makes a direct threat to harm multiple students, teachers, or school personnel, with an implied or expressed plan;
- Makes serious indirect threats through a written list of those targeted;
- Makes obvious threats to destroy school property;
- Displays any behaviors that merit drug/substance abuse testing, as per district policy and procedure;
- Makes a violent threat with a known grudge;
- Has been a victim of severe verbal or physical taunts, harassment, or attacks;
- Has a known history of child abuse, DYFS involvement, or active parental substance abuse;
- Is known to identify with a gang or cult, or displays symbolism of such;
- Has had a previous LEVEL II or LEVEL III episode.

In a **Level III** intervention, the principal or his/her designed:

- will remove a student from class immediately to insure the safety of the student and intended victim(s);
- will contact local law enforcement authorities for their assistance and file a police report
- If weapons are discovered to be involved, police shall be immediately notified in accordance with Policy M 8467.

Once school safety is insured, the principal will:

- conduct a student conference;
- contact the guidance counselor and a Crisis Management Team member;

- contact the Superintendent and the Director of Special Services and file a **Violence Prevention Report** (See Appendix M) with the Director;
- contact the student's parents. The parent will be requested to come to the school immediately and the student, after consultation with the police, may be released directly to the parent;
- suspend the student from school;
- contact the parents of the "victim(s)";
- provide the referring teacher with follow-up information

In **Level III** Intervention, the Crisis Management Team member shall interview the student, interview the victim(s), formulate recommendations, confer with the principal, and make arrangements for immediate psychological or psychiatric evaluation.

Such evaluation is mandatory in a **Level III** intervention, and the student may not return to school until the principal receives a written psychological or psychiatric evaluation stating that the student is not in danger of harming himself/herself or others. If the evaluation is conducted by a psychologist or psychiatrist designated by the school, the expense shall be borne by the Board of Education. If the parents choose their own psychologist or psychiatrist, they must assume the expense of the evaluation. The student will be placed on Alternate Instruction until the results of the evaluation are provided in writing to the principal.

Refusal or failure by a parent or guardian to comply with the school's recommendation to seek an evaluation and/or intervention shall be deemed a violation of child neglect (N.J.S.A. 9:6-1 et. Seq.) laws. The principal or his/her designee shall notify the Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS) of the parents' refusal to comply.

D. CRISIS IN PROGRESS

During the commission of an act of violence, hostage situation, or terrorism, the jurisdiction of the local/State Police authority is recognized. Thus, when aware that such an act is in progress, the principal shall **without delay** dial 911 to notify the police and take action to insure the safety of all students. Board Policy #9320, COOPERATION WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES, will be applicable.

The Crisis Management Team will be immediately convened. The Crisis Management Team will be briefed on the status of the situation and will act in an informational and advisory capacity to the principal, Superintendent, the Director of Special Services, and law enforcement officials. Crisis Management Team members will provide assistance as needed to help maintain order. Efforts should

be directed toward maintaining a sense of control of students, staff, and members of the community.

A Crisis Management Plan will be developed as per Policy #8468 and Procedure #8468.

It should be noted that students who are found to be culpable in the commission of any threat or act as indicated above shall be subject to:

- Criminal law pertaining to such acts and individuals;
- Civil law pertaining to such acts and individuals;
- New Jersey Education Law and Code (Regular and Special Education) as they pertain to such acts and individuals.

VIOLENCE PREVENTION REPORT

Date: _____

Name: _____

School: _____

Address: _____

Grade: _____

Phone: (Hm) _____

(Wk) _____

Parents/Guardian: _____

Assessment of Risk: Level 1, Level 2, Level 3 (Circle and Explain)

Details of Incident: (Include names of students involved.)

Interventions: (Document what was done by Administrators, Crisis Management Team members, Guidance, etc.)

Has a general note been sent home? _____ (Attach a dated copy.)

Follow Up (What will follow-up monitoring include and also who will be responsible?)

Principal Date

Superintendent informed: _____ by _____

Director informed: _____ by _____

CMT member(s) assigned: _____
