

Calgary Science School
Critical Incidents Handbook

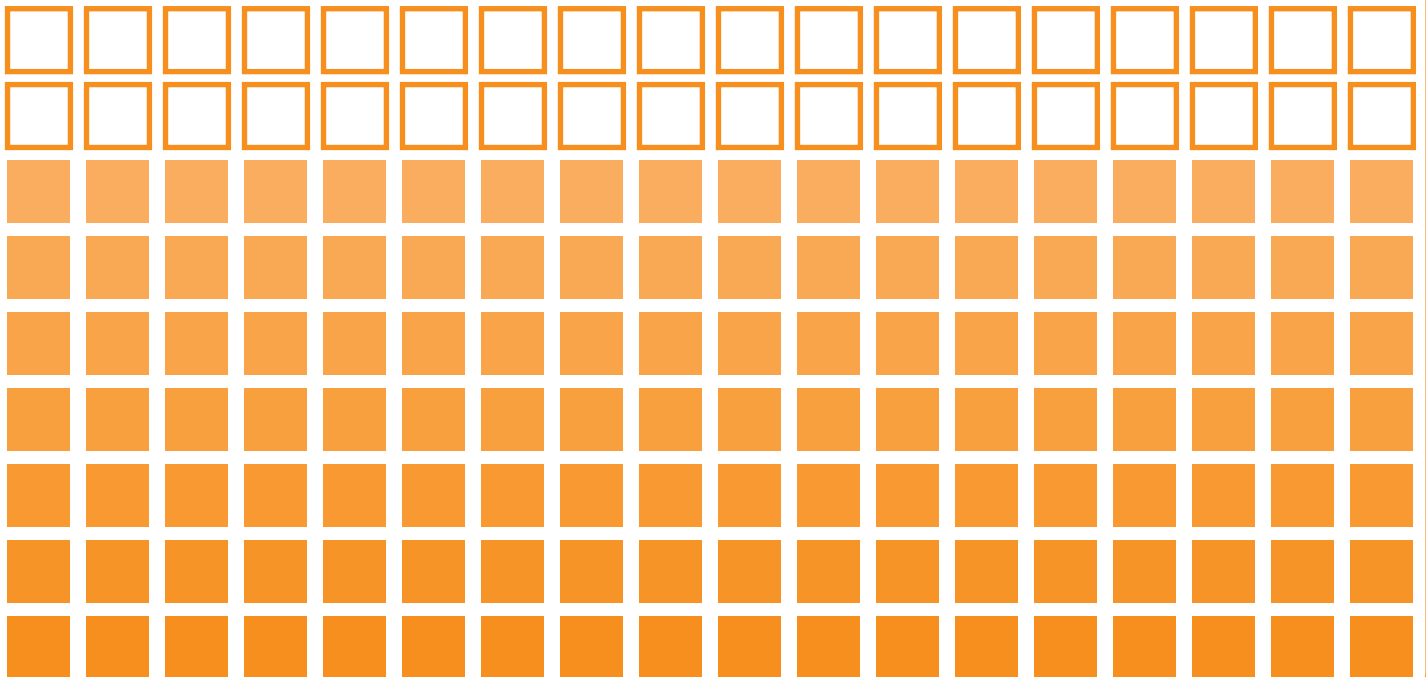
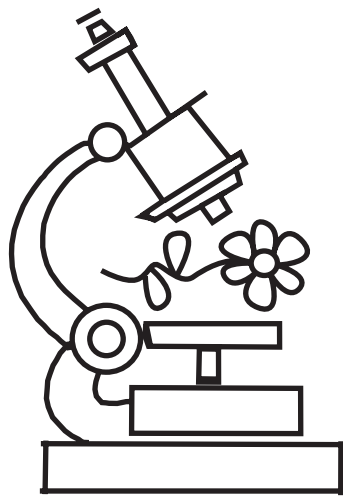


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SECTION 1: CRITICAL INCIDENTS

1:1 WHAT IS A CRITICAL INCIDENT?

Throughout the year, schools may face a variety of critical or tragic events. These events may directly involve school personnel and/or students within the community. These events usually have an extremely stressful impact sufficient enough to overwhelm individuals to the point of interfering with their ability to function in the short term and/or long term. Critical events can include a sudden death, suicide attempt or completion, accidents such as bus, car, truck, acts of violence, perceived threats of violence or disasters. These types of events cause such trauma that the impact is significant on the individual and often the community as a whole.

1:2 FIVE IMPORTANT ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT CRITICAL INCIDENTS

1:2:1

It is important to recognize that the school population is emotionally and psychologically vulnerable after a tragic event or sudden death and may be “at risk”.

1:2:2

It is important to recognize that if the sudden death of a peer is not acknowledged, fellow students interpret this as evidence that their own thoughts and emotions about the event should not be discussed.

1:2:3

In the case of suicide, it is important to recognize that other students may identify suicide as a solution to their problems. For example: if the person who died by suicide was admired and he/she could not cope, others begin to doubt their own ability to cope. Conversely, if the person was seen to have ‘problems’, others begin to compare their own problems and see death as a possibility for themselves. Suicide becomes a viable option especially for students who have poor problem-solving skills. Therefore, it is necessary to provide a detailed outline and step-by-step method of handling a suicide or sudden death and to prevent a contagion effect.

1:2:4

It is important to present the known facts as clearly and unbiased as possible as well as in a calm and supportive fashion.

1:2:5

It is important to identify high-risk students and offer them an opportunity to appropriately express their feelings and to be referred for further counselling.

SECTION 2: IN SCHOOL RESPONSE

2:1 PRIMARY OBJECTIVE

To ensure the personal safety of all individuals.

2:2 OVERVIEW OF THE EIGHT STEP PROTOCOL

Step 1 - Gather the Facts

Step 2 - Contact with the Superintendent, Principal or designate to media

Step 3 - Initiate Administration Responsibilities

Step 4 - Communicate with Staff

Step 5 - Talk with Students

Step 6 - Inform Parents

Step 7 - Funeral Information

Step 8 - Remembrance Activity

Note: This protocol should be implemented in varying degrees depending on circumstance. This document is not prescriptive but to be used as a guideline.

2:3 THE EIGHT STEPS IN DETAIL

Step 1 - Gather the Facts

- Principal confirms the critical incident with appropriate sources of reliable information: immediate family, police, school t personnel and/or community resource personnel.
- Principal collects information on the critical incident, including verification of the details, identification of individuals involved, and/or evaluation of the emotional status of school and, if necessary, responds to the immediate safety needs of students and staff.
- Principal consults with the families affected to determine their wishes concerning public announcements and information for school staff and students.

Step 2 - Contact with the District

- Principal informs Crisis Response team.
- The Superintendent, Principal or designate is the media contact person and all inquiries should be directed to these persons. The above persons handle all media requests for information and arranges for the preparation of press releases, if necessary. The decision of the family with regard to the release of information must be taken into consideration.
- The Superintendent, Principal or designate contacts the Crisis Response Team Members (listed on page 38) and meets with Principal and Team Leaders. The transportation department will be notified of the critical incident.

Step 3 - Initiate Administration Responsibilities

- The Principal notifies the rest of the staff including secretarial, janitorial, bus drivers and other support staff (including any subs for the day), at a special staff meeting to discuss the incident. If the critical incident occurred during an evening or weekend, a scripted telephone fan-out message with brief details of the incident can be used to call staff to a meeting before the next school day. The Principal should not discuss the incident on the telephone unless it is already widely known in the community. Care should be taken about using the telephone fan-out and making sure the message is received.

- Ensure that each person understands the message about the staff meeting by asking them to repeat the message back to the caller.
- Avoid leaving a message on an answering machine/voice mail or with a child.
- Reassign telephoning responsibility for people who may be most affected by the incident.

Tasks for the Principal before the start of the school day, if possible:

- Determine further details of the event.
- Ensure the predetermined media contact person is provided with detailed information necessary to effectively carry out the role.
- Determine the family's wishes regarding personal property if the incident has been a sudden death or suicide and ensure that personal property is secure. For example, replace the lock on the individual's locker if the incident has been a student death or injury.
- Decide what course of action will be used to deal with potential "shrines" created by classmates of the deceased after a sudden death. It is important to establish a protocol on this matter. Allowing a "shrine" in one instance, but not the next, may raise questions of fairness and favoritism that can escalate emotions and introduce conflict unnecessarily.
- Assess whether substitute teachers will be needed and advise the appropriate person to contact them.
- Identify members of the school community that may be most affected by the incident and plan support for these people.
- Assess need for additional counselling support in the school and ask the counsellor to assist in making the necessary arrangements.
- Plan a meeting to inform staff. See sample school staff meeting agenda Appendix IX.
- Prepare a written statement for the staff meeting.

Tasks for the Principal during the school day:

- Supply a brief, written statement for office staff to use in referring incoming queries or media calls. A script helps to ensure callers are redirected to the official media contact person.
- Contact other nearby schools which may be affected and ensure that Crisis Response Team and Superintendent have accurate information so that they can inform all schools in the in the area.
- Lower the flag **when appropriate**. This is a potentially contentious issue, particularly in the case of a suicide. This issue needs to be discussed by the staff as part of the advanced planning for a critical incident.
- Prepare the letter to parents if one is needed. See Appendix XII of this resource guide for sample letters.
- Plan a short staff meeting at end of the day to assess the day and provide an opportunity for staff to inform team of any concerns, regarding students, etc.
- Plan for an optional session for staff at the end of the day in order to debrief the events of the critical incident.

Step 4 – Communicate with Staff

- Inform all staff of the critical incident at an emergency staff meeting prior to the start of the school, if possible. In addition to teachers, be sure to inform secretaries, custodians, teacher assistants and bus drivers of the meeting. See Appendix IX for sample agenda. After the meeting, inform all staff who were unable to attend the meeting.
- At the staff meeting, assure staff that the team’s plan will be followed. All members of the school staff should attend. Include the following topics in the meeting:
 - Advise staff to deal with students to the level of their comfort and training.
 - Provide education and information to staff as to how they can support students.
 - Reassure staff that they will be supported in their efforts to give comfort to students and that additional help is available to anyone who needs it, staff or students.
 - Remind staff of items in the Critical Incident Handbook which may be useful over the next few days and provide them with written directions for the day as soon as possible during or after the meeting.
 - Introduce any people from the Crisis Response Team or the community support staff who are in attendance at the meeting and may be present in the school providing support to staff or students.
- Develop a plan for the day with the staff:
 - Maintain a regular school schedule, if possible.
 - Cancel special activities, if necessary. For example, exams may need to be rescheduled.
 - Carefully state the information in writing, if possible, that should be given to students during class discussion and provide resource materials as needed.

- Inform the staff of the counselling services that are available to staff, students and parents.
 - Identify students who are close friends or relatives of the deceased or injured and make plans to inform them with additional sensitivity and support.
 - Identify students at risk, (those who are vulnerable to stress or change in routines), and make specific plans for each student. This task can be assigned to a key staff member such as a counsellor, special education teacher or teaching assistant.
 - Ensure that the staff members who are absent get information.
 - Plan to assist substitute and regular teachers with classroom discussions.
 - Plan to inform students who are absent. In the case of students who might be at risk, telephone their parents immediately.
- Additional staff meetings may be needed:
 - Keep staff informed throughout the day by calling short update meetings during breaks.
 - Assign someone to gather and accept information about students and staff needs throughout the day.
 - Provide all staff with information about staff meeting and debriefing after school.

Step 5 – Talk with Students

- Be sure there is a teacher in each classroom as the students come in for the day or the first period class.
- Give information on the critical incident in a low-key and factual manner, including
 - What happened.
 - When and where the events occurred.
 - Who was there at the time of the incident.
 - What happened after the event.
 - Who might be seriously affected by the incident because of their relationship with people directly affected by the traumatic event.
 - What is going to happen next? In the case of a sudden death, try to have information available on the funeral arrangements.
 - How each student in the room might react differently, which is O.K.
- Give the students opportunities to react, discuss, and ask questions.
 - Allow time for the students to express their feelings and validate their feelings as normal reactions. These feelings may include anger, sadness, frustration and confusion. Keep in mind that reaction times may vary.
 - Give students permission to express what they uniquely feel, now and throughout the day. Listen and be empathetic.
 - Consider using activities to help students process their grief, such as art, poetry or creative journal writing.
 - Let students know that people react differently to crisis and help them understand that these reactions are normal.

Once the talk seems to be over, begin the regular class routines with flexibility to respond to more questions throughout the day. Teachers will need to be prepared to hear some unusual questions and to handle these questions in a matter-of-fact manner. They will need to model, by their behavior, that the critical incident is serious while at the same time show warmth and understanding for all students. Teachers should watch carefully for individual students who are having a hard time coping to ensure they have access to help. It is better to (over-refer) than (under-refer). Teachers should not try to second-guess the level of grief of a student or staff member, as people respond to trauma and grieve differently.

Following a critical incident, children may report other traumatic events in their lives such as child abuse. All staff should be clear on the protocol for reporting child abuse and neglect and be prepared to take action to get help for the student in areas, which may seem unrelated to the current trauma situation.

Step 6 – Inform Parents

Send a letter home with the students to inform parents of the incident, if appropriate. Sample letter formats provided on Appendix XII, can be adapted for use. In general, parents who are well informed are better equipped to support their children at home. Information shared in such a letter should be carefully worded to ensure that personal and family privacy is respected. As this letter is a written record, disclosure of personal information is covered by FOIPPA. Personal information should only be disclosed to the extent that is permitted under FOIPPA.

Step 7 – Funeral Information

- In the case of a death, inform staff and students of plans for funeral arrangements. Many types of critical incidents involve sudden deaths: accidents, suicides, natural or physical disasters, or sudden acute health events. The schools will need to provide information to the entire community about formal occasions such as funerals or memorial services.
 - Decisions about allowing funeral attendance should be governed by the wishes of the family of the deceased. Student and staff attendance at the funeral can provide support for the family if that is the family's choice. Students should be informed of the family's wishes regarding attendance at the funeral service.
 - Funeral attendance of students must be a parental decision. Children should attend funerals with their parents whenever possible. If students are attending without a parent, it must be with parental permission so that parents are aware that their child has attended a funeral.
 - The funeral service can help peers understand and accept the death of a friend or colleague.

Step 8 – Remembrance Activity

- Family wishes should guide planning of a remembrance activity after a critical incident that involved the death of a student or staff.
 - Schools and districts are cautioned against holding a large assembly to honor the deceased immediately following the critical incident because of the potential for group hysteria and glorifying death in the case of a suicide. If a large assembly is planned then appropriate supports should be available for those students who require them.

- Students or staff may wish to express their grief or sympathy by contributing something in the name(s) of the deceased: a scholarship fund, school landscaping, a school plaque, books for the library, construction of a showcase, or some other appropriate tribute. Caution should be taken if establishing a permanent or highly visible memorial to remember a student who completed suicide.
- Staff may need to provide leadership to students wishing to establish an appropriate remembrance, as judgment of peers may be impaired following a traumatic event. Students and friends, however, should be consulted with regard to appropriate memorials.

SECTION 3: THREAT RESPONSE

The following guidelines should be used when a student discloses that they are contemplating suicide, or that they are planning to harm another person. Prefaced with the understanding that when a person is at risk of harming themselves or others, or is threatening to harm others, professionals aware of the threat are required to act to keep those in danger safe.

It is recommended the following steps be taken:

3:1 SUICIDAL IDEATION

3:1:1

If a student says that he or she is thinking of committing suicide, it is important to take the statement seriously, even if school staff do not see the student as being at high risk for suicide.

3:1:2

On hearing a disclosure of suicidal ideation, school staff should first ensure that the student is safe. If a suicide attempt seems imminent – for example, if the student has the means of committing suicide at hand, or says that he/she has the means at home, or in some other place, he/she should be kept under observation until parents or trained professionals can assume his/her care.

3:1:3

A professional who has had training in assessing the threat of suicide should be involved. The Calgary Science School Counsellor or Psychologist should be called. If these individuals are not available the local Calgary Health Region - Mental Health Office, Calgary Child and Family Services or the Emergency Department at the hospital should be called.

3:1:4

Parents or legal guardians must be called, even if the student says that he or she would prefer not to have them alerted. Parents will need concise information about these concerns, and about assessments other professionals have completed. Parents/guardian must be called because they are the legal guardians of their children and have the authority and responsibility to ensure that needed care is provided to their children.

If the student fears for his or her safety if parents are alerted, thinking that the parents will harm them because of the knowledge, then Calgary Child and Family Services must be called.

3:1:5

Before sending home by any means of transport, it will be important to be sure that there is some responsible person at his/her destination who understands the situation, the concerns of the school and is able to take responsibility for keeping the student safe until the threat is resolved and the student deemed to be in no danger.

3:1:6

Once mental health professionals are involved, whether they are Calgary Science School staff or Calgary Health Region - Mental Health Office therapists or other resources, the school should have access to pertinent information regarding the outcome of their interventions. Consultation with mental health professionals should occur to determine whether the student is safe and able to return to school, and whether any specific precautions are needed at school to ensure ongoing safety.

3:2 THREATS TO OTHERS

3:2:1

If a student makes a threat against the safety of another student, or person in the school or community, it is important to take the threat seriously, even if school staff does not see the student as high risk for harming others.

3:2:2

If the principal feels that anyone is in danger, the Calgary Police Services should be called immediately,

3:2:3

The threat must be assessed by professionals who have the training to be able to do so. It will be important to identify who this might be in advance of an incident so that the assessment can be made in a timely manner. Calgary Health Region - Mental Health Office would be the first resource for this. Mental health professionals should be aware of and responsible for the need to warn people being threatened. Schools should ensure that this will be done.

3:2:4

The parents or legal guardians of a student **must** be alerted to the situation, even if the student does not wish to have this happen. Parents are the legal guardians of their children and have the authority and responsibility to keep them safe, and ensure the provision of needed services to do so.

If the student fears for his or her safety if parents are alerted, thinking that the parents will harm them because of the knowledge, then Calgary Child and Family Services **must** be called

3:2:5

Before sending the student from school by other transportation, it is essential to be sure that there is a responsible adult who is willing, able and available to take charge of the student when he/she reaches the destination. Every attempt should be made for the parent/guardian to pick up the student.

3:2:6

The Transportation Department should be notified of the incident.

3:2:7

Before the student returns to school consultation should occur with mental health professionals to determine whether the student is safe and able to return to school, and whether any specific precautions are needed at school to ensure ongoing safety.

3:2:8

If it is determined that a student presents a serious threat against others in the school then it may be necessary to consider an alternative educational program.

3:3 BOMB THREAT

These guidelines are written in accordance with CRPS policies (See Section 6):

- EBCC Bomb Threats
- EBC Emergency Plans

When addressing any incident that involves an emergency and threat to the well being of school occupants, the police advise that an administrative assistant be assigned to keep an operative log of the events that transpire, prior to the arrival of emergency services. A copy of the Emergency Operation Log form can be found on page 16.

3:3:1

If you have reason to believe that a device or package looks suspicious:

- Do not touch or move it.
- Do not assume that it is the only threat.
- Immediately move students to another part of the building.
- Notify the office immediately.

3:3:2

If you receive a bomb threat via note or direct communication, notify the office immediately.

3:3:3

If you receive a bomb threat through a telephone call, refer to the **“Bomb Threat Checklist”** on page 11.

3:3:4

Alert police immediately, using 911. Ensure that copies of school floor plans are available to police and cooperate in the search procedures.

3:3:5

The principal or designate will make the decision about school evacuation. Evacuation is conducted by following the procedures for a fire drill, ensuring that alternate evacuation routes are used to avoid the bomb area, if known. Students will be instructed to leave all school bags and electrical devices behind.

3:3:6

Announce that cell phone use is prohibited.

3:3:7

The Principal will inform the Superintendent, providing details. If appropriate, the Crisis Response Team will be contacted and informed of the situation.

3:4 EVACUATION PROCEDURES**3:4:1**

The principal or designate will make the decision about school evacuation. Evacuation is announced using the PA system or by following the procedures for a fire drill. Students will be instructed to leave all school bags and electrical devices behind.

3:4:2

Teachers should make a quick visual check of the classroom and immediate hallway for anything out of the ordinary, before evacuating students in their charge.

3:4:3

Teachers will take Class List and/or Emergency Folder with them. The Class List and/or Emergency Folder should include copies of Evacuation Attendance Slips. (See page 17).

3:4:4

Shut doors and leave the lights on.

3:4:5

Evacuate directly to the field area. The principal or designate will redirect students to an alternate safe location if necessary.

3:4:6

Teachers will complete the Evacuation Attendance Slips and messengers will bring the slips to a designated location to be determined by the school.

3:4:7

Cell phone use is prohibited.

3:4:8

The Transportation Department will be notified and arrangements made if it is necessary to transport students off school property.

3:4:9

The Principal, in consultation with RCMP and/or Emergency Services, will determine when the building is safe to enter and will give the signal **“All Clear, Please Return to Class.”**

BOMB THREAT CHECKLIST

- a) When is the bomb going to explode?
- b) Where is it right now?
- c) What does it look like?
- d) Did you place the bomb?
- f) What is your address?
- g) What is your name?

EXACT WORDING OF THE THREAT: _____

Sex of Caller:

Accent or Dialect:

Age:

Length of Call:

Phone number at which call was received:

Phone number called from (if known):

Time:

Date:

Caller’s Voice: Calm – Angry – Nasal – Excited - Slow – Rapid – Soft – Loud – Normal – Laughter – Crying – Deep – Distinct - Slurred – Stutter – Lisp – Ragged – Disguised – Clearing Throat – Familiar – Deep Breathing – Accent – Cracked

Background Sounds: Static – Clear – Street Noises – Music – Motor – Animal Noises – Voices – PA System – House Noises – Booth – Local – Long Distance – Factory Machinery – Office Machinery – Cell Phone

Threat Language: Foul – Well Spoken (educated) – Irrational – Message read by threat maker – Taped – Incoherent

Remarks: _____

EMERGENCY OPERATION LOG

INCIDENT:		
Date	Time	Event/Activity
Signature:		Date:

EVACUATION ATTENDANCE SLIPS

SCHOOL EVACUATION	SCHOOL EVACUATION
Class Response Slips	Class Response Slips
Homeroom Teacher:	Homeroom Teacher:
Supervising Teacher:	Supervising Teacher:
Students Absent from Roll Call:	Students Absent from Roll Call:
Students Missing:	Students Missing:
Signature:	Signature:

SCHOOL EVACUATION	SCHOOL EVACUATION
Class Response Slips	Class Response Slips
Homeroom Teacher:	Homeroom Teacher:
Supervising Teacher:	Supervising Teacher:
Students Absent from Roll Call:	Students Absent from Roll Call:
Students Missing:	Students Missing:
Signature:	Signature:

3:5 SCHOOL LOCKDOWN/HOSTILE INTRUDER

3:5:1

If there is a hostile intruder on site the Principal may wish to secure the building by making the announcement “**This is a Lockdown**”.

3:5:2

Contact the police through 911 regarding the nature of the problem.

3:5:3

For all **staff in classrooms**:

3:5:3:1

Check the hallway for any students and bring them into the room.

3:5:3:2

Ensure that your door is locked and have students sit or lie on the floor away from the door and windows. Turn off the lights.

3:5:3:3

Check attendance. Add any students to your list that may be in your room.

3:5:3:4

DO NOT use the classroom telephone, EXCEPT to report severely injured students or staff and/or intruder information.

3:5:3:5

Stay in the room until receiving an all-clear signal. **This is an All Clear.**

3:5:4

For staff not in classroom:

3:5:4:1

Go to the closest most secure location and lock the door.

3:5:4:2

If there are students in the area, bring them into the room.

3:5:4:3

Make a list of every student with you.

3:5:4:4

DO NOT use the classroom telephone, EXCEPT to report severely injured students or staff and/or intruder information.

3:5:4:5

Stay in the room until receiving an all-clear signal. **This is an All Clear.**

3:5:5

For classes outside the building:

3:5:5:1

Go to the predetermined evacuation site.

3:5:5:2

If there are students in the area, bring them with you.

3:5:5:3

Make a list of every student with you.

3:5:5:4

DO NOT use the classroom telephone, EXCEPT to report severely injured students or staff and/or intruder information.

3:5:5:5

Stay in the evacuation location until receiving an all-clear signal.

3:5:6

Upon receiving an **All Clear** signal

3:5:6:1

Remain in classrooms until notified otherwise.

3:5:7

Implications for facility use:

- All classroom doors should remain locked at all times.
- Students should never be left behind in locked classrooms without staff supervision.
- Teachers and support staff are required to have their school keys with them at all times so that entry into a classroom that they are using, or supervising, can easily occur.

3:5:8

Tips for Dealing with a Hostile Individual

• Assess the Situation:

- Who is involved (student, parent, stranger, supporters)?
- Characteristics of offender – age, gender, size, history, appearance.
- What stage of the anger cycle is the offender at (anxious, verbally hostile, physically threatening, violent, recovery)?
- Presence of weapons – what kind of weapon if any.
- Reactions of other bystanders.
- Circumstances – location, timing, escape routes, dangerous equipment, communication systems.
- Accessibility of support – for intervener, for offender.
- Extent of danger to intervener, offender, others.
- Assess your own psychological, emotional and physical state.

• **Intervention Response:**

DO	DON'T
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remain calm, appear to be in control. • Take steps to protect students. • Show empathy – listen and understand. • Be sincere and professional. • Use assertive (directive) language. • State clearly expectations and consequences. • Call the offender by name if possible. • Summon assistance if required. • Be aware of surroundings, including other people and exit routes. • Allow the anger to subside – no one can remain violent or angry for long. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Match anger with anger. • Confront directly either physically or verbally • Appear threatening or punitive. • Hurry the situation – recovery takes time. • Remain alone if help can be accessed. • Physically detain offender if he or she tries to leave. • Try to be a hero.

• **Follow-up Activities:**

- Report and record incident in detail
- Impose appropriate consequences
- Debrief everyone.
- Modify response plan if necessary and inform others.
- Review communication process.
- Provide ongoing support as needed.

3:5:9

Tips for Dealing with Hostile Groups/Gangs

• **Assess the Situation:**

- Who is involved (student, outside intruders, gang members)?
- Characteristics of offender – gang symbols, age, gender, history.
- Presence or absence of weapons – what kind of weapon if any?
- Where is the aggression directed (school officials, other students, outsiders, property rather than people)?
- Who are the leaders?
- Immediate dangers – what kind and to whom?
- How best to get the assistance needed.
- Communication avenues which must be used.

• Intervention Response:

DO	DON'T
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call for in-school assistance and emergency services if necessary. • Call police if weapons are present. • Clear the area of as many people as possible. • Implement crisis management communication plan. • Remind everyone of possible legal ramifications (objective statement) • Forestall violence if possible. • Realize the potential for group violence to expand quickly. • Secure the school and other students if necessary • Allow offenders to leave if they try. • Video the situation/group, if possible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deal with hostile groups alone. • Underestimate the seriousness of group aggression. • Take sides. • Confront directly either physically or verbally. • Try to restrain or detain any of the offenders. • Cut off exits or escape routes – let them leave. • Stand together as a group of staff – spread out. • Try to be a hero.

• Follow-up Activities:

- Report and record incident in detail
- Review process with any outside group that assisted.
- Debrief everyone.
- Review crisis management plan.
- Evaluate communication processes.
- Provide ongoing support as needed.
- Review implication of youth gangs if they are a problem.
- Communicate with parents as appropriate.

3:6 NATURAL DISASTERS (Earthquake, Blizzard, Forest Fire, Flood, Train Derailment)

- **Call 911**
- **Await further instructions.**
- **Remain where you are if it is safe to do so.**
- **Assess the Situation:**
 - Gather the facts quickly.
 - Review the school board and school evacuation plan.
 - Determine how communications will best be handled with students, staff, parents, public and media.
 - Review the authority structure for emergencies, and the role of the school and staff in the total Community Response Plan.
- Response to media will be made by Principalt, if appropriate.

• Intervention Response:

DO	DON'T
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact municipal emergency services. • Keep everyone indoors until advised otherwise. • Close all doors and windows. • Make the school available for emergency use as required. • Have available a battery operated radio, flashlight, telephone and megaphone (two-way radio if possible). • Consider students' safety and welfare first. • Keep calm. • Work with the media and authorities to ensure accurate information is released. • Provide security for school records, equipment and facilities. • Be prepared to provide leadership. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Panic - remain calm and in control. • Guess as to the amount of damage or injuries or deaths – await accurate information. • Allow frantic parents/citizens to disrupt emergency measures operations. • Release specific information unless authorized.

• Follow-up Activities:

- Record and report as required.
- Debrief including community agencies involved.
- Review school and community emergency response plans.
- Provide ongoing support and services as required.
- Assist in the longer term disaster relief efforts as appropriate.
- Bring closure by communicating the school's willingness and ability to provide valuable collaboration during emergency.

3:7 DISMISSAL PROCEDURE – FOLLOWING TRAUMATIC EVENT

3:7:1

The Principal, in consultation with the Superintendent, the CPS and/or Emergency Services will make the decision for early dismissal.

3:7:2

Once the decision to dismiss has been made, the Principal will:

- a) Relay dismissal instructions to every classroom by the most rapid and efficient means.
- b) Review dismissal procedure previously provided to parents to ensure it is followed. This procedure provides guidance from parents who have made special arrangements for child-care in the event the parents are not home.
- c) When a student is released to an individual other than a parent, a signed statement from that person including the child's name, pickup time, pickup person's name, final destination and phone number at final destination must be obtained.
- d) Principal may request assistance from support staff members and/or other agencies to ensure that students disperse from the building in a manner that will minimize hazards and reduce congestion.

3:7:3

Inform parents when and how children may be picked up. Use the school's pre-arranged communication procedure.

3:7:4

Prepare a statement for the media and a fact sheet to respond to telephone inquiries.

3:7:5

Teachers should stay on school property until all students have been picked up or until notified otherwise.

3:7:6

CRPS staff will assess the needs of students and staff and ensure that the necessary supports are available.

3:7:7

The School Response Team will debrief and plan any required follow up.

3:7:8

Complete the **Crisis Response Report**. (See Appendix VI)

SECTION 4: CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM (CRT)

4:1 PURPOSE OF THE CRT

To provide psycho-educational services to mitigate the impact of a traumatic event. Crisis intervention will be provided as necessary. The targeted group is school-related individuals who are affected by a traumatic event.

A traumatic event is any event outside the realm of normal human experience that is markedly distressing (e.g., sudden death, suicide). Intense emotions are stimulated by the event but the release of the emotion may be blocked.

4:2 TEAM MEMBERSHIP

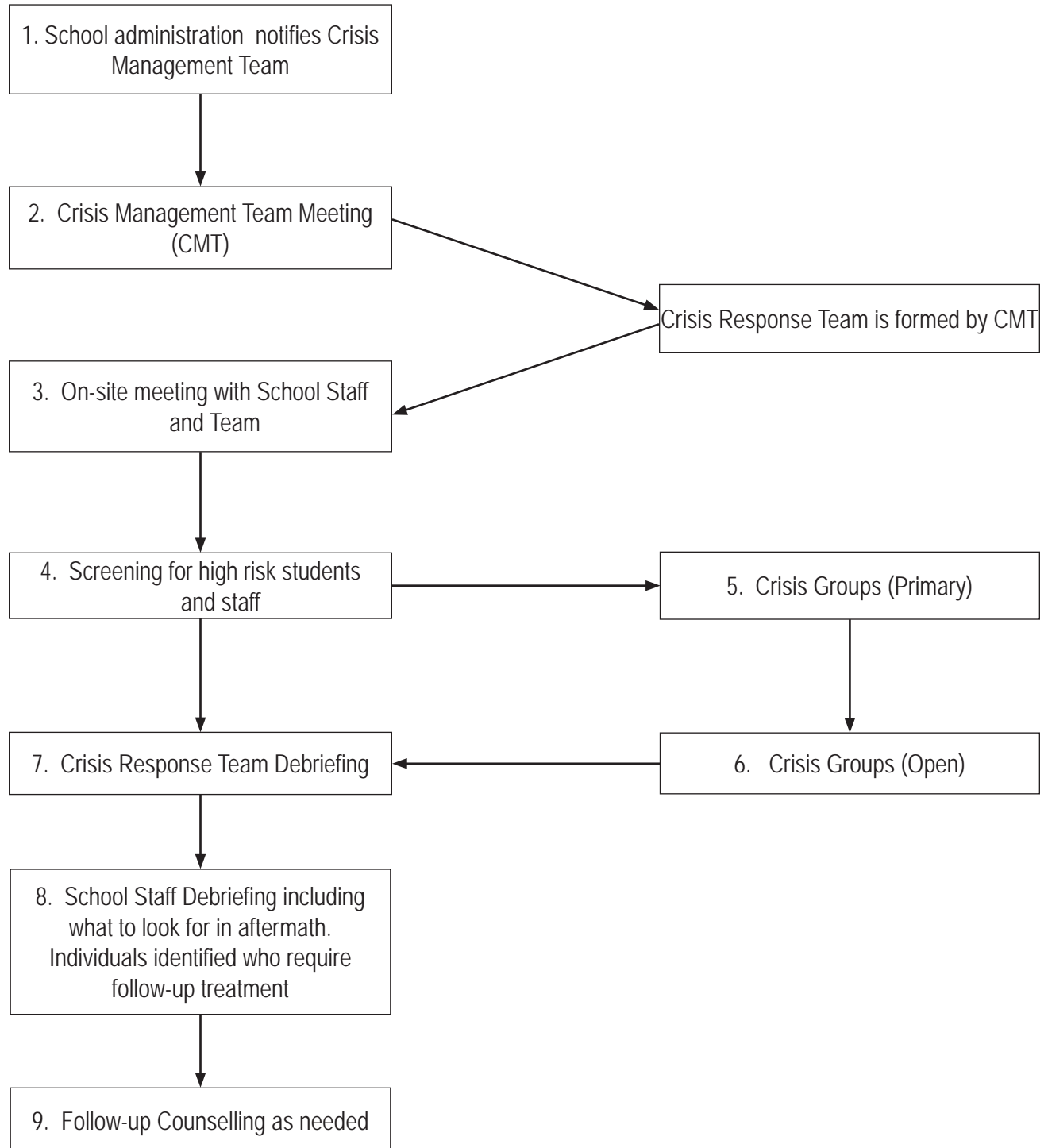
It is a multidisciplinary team drawing from professionals in health, mental health, family and community support services, provincial social services and education.

Team members have the right to "pass" in response to a particular call, should the crisis have a personal effect on their lives or on people close to them.

4:3 CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM PROTOCOL

4:3:1

Summary of the Crisis Response Team Protocol



Refer to pages 22-28 for detailed information about the protocol.

4:3:2**Notification:**

School administrator will notify the Superintendents.

4:3:3 Crisis Response Team Meeting

The team leader will call appropriate members of the Team to a meeting to prepare a response. Not all team members may be asked to respond to a crisis. The team will be configured according to the needs of the community and schools as determined by the nature of the crisis. At this meeting, team members will share information about the traumatic event and assigned roles.

• Information to be brought to the team:

- Names of the people directly affected by the tragedy.
- Any available information about the victim or victim's family, for example, the number and names of siblings, their ages and where they attend school, the victim's school timetable, relatives that attend the same school, especially those that may be at school that day, any sports teams the victim played on, girlfriend/boyfriend, special friends or people with whom the victim was in conflict, if they are transported by school bus and/or if siblings travel by bus.
- Facts about the tragedy – verify these with the CPS and/or family.

• Roles to be assigned:

- Screeners
- Crisis Group Leaders and Co-Leaders
- Crisis Counselling

4:3:4 CRT Meeting with School Staff

• Meeting led by the Team Leader includes all school staff, including administrators, secretarial staff, janitors, bus drivers and volunteers currently working in the school.

• The Team Leader will:

- Introduce the team and their roles.
- Review the statement prepared by the Principal to be given to students.
- Discuss with staff the factual information that will be given to students by the Team, explaining the importance of giving clear information to dispel rumors and speculation.
- Explain the importance of giving information in classroom settings rather than over the PA system or Email, it is more personal and will allow teachers the opportunity to identify 'high risk students'.

- The Team Leader will ask school staff to provide a list of students who might be most affected by the crisis, or who are vulnerable and at risk of trauma because of their own life situations. Students should be identified if they:
 - Were involved in the traumatic event.
 - Witnessed the traumatic event.
 - Are related to the people involved in the traumatic event.
 - Are close to people involved in the traumatic event.
 - Have been at odds with people involved in the traumatic event.
 - Played on sports teams with people involved in the traumatic event.
 - Rode on the same bus as people involved in the traumatic event.
 - Were in groups (church groups, school activities, clubs, etc.) with people involved in the traumatic event.
 - Are marginalized, isolated, involved in difficult family situations, and therefore may be at risk, or
 - students with a history of suicidal thought or attempts.
 - students with a history of anxiety, depression or emotional illness.
 - students who recently suffered a loss.

- The Team Leader will outline what will happen during the day:
 - Each teacher will meet with his/her class and read the prepared statement (if not already done).
 - Students identified as high risk will be sent to a designated area where they will be seen by a screener.
 - Location and times of specific group meetings will be announced.
 - Follow-up arrangements will be made for counsellors to be on site for the next few days, if necessary.

4:3:5 Team Organization

Each Team Member will find the space that they have been assigned, organize it appropriately and collect needed materials. The Team Members will proceed at a measured pace, taking time to meet with all people on the school staff, and conduct themselves in a manner that will allow an orderly, calm response.

On-going communication during the day will be facilitated by the Team Leader who will keep in touch with team members, school administration and school staff.

4:3:6 End of the Day Meetings

- The Team will meet with school staff and administrators in order to:
 - Normalize the experience of school staff and let them know that there are resources available to support them should they need help.
- The Team will meet at the end of the day to:
 - Attend to the mental health of the team members.
 - Communicate any plans or arrangements that need to be made for follow-up.
 - Put closure on the day.

4:3:7 Community Meeting

Schools alone are not responsible for or able to manage all the needs of a community in a time of crisis. In keeping with this philosophy, a community meeting will be called by the Crisis Response Team at an appropriate time after the initial intervention. The Team Leader, in consultation with the school administrator and community contact people, will decide timing and contents of the community meeting.

The intention of the community meeting is to support families and community members in dealing with the tragedy. It is important to support parents to deal with the crisis responses of their children in accordance with their particular family and spiritual values and traditions. There is a positive affect of providing families with the information and tools that they need to be able to attend to their families. It restores a sense of control to families in the midst of uncertainty, fear and anger. It also reinforces the reality that schools are not solely responsible for managing crisis response for the students of a community. The meeting is not intended to be a means of communicating critical information to the media.

Some communities may decide to identify community contact people in advance of any tragedy, to ensure that they will be available and aware of the Crisis Response Team and its role in supporting schools when they are impacted by community crisis. Others may need to identify people at the time of a traumatic event. Regardless of how this is done, a community contact will be made, provided with information about the traumatic event, and asked to organize communication about a meeting and a venue for it.

Schools may be asked to send notices of the community meeting home with students to facilitate the process.

The purpose of the community meeting is:

- To provide accurate information about the traumatic event, and dispel rumors and speculation about it.
- To inform community members about what action has been taken to date, and is planned for the future.
- To identify local resources available to support community members and their families.
- To provide information and direction to parents of students in the schools about what to watch for or to do in order to keep their children safe.
- To gather information about community needs and help plan how they might best be met.
- To stress the interdependence of community as a source of hope for the future.
- Overall, to redirect negative feelings into healthy, solution-focused actions.

This meeting is more than an information meeting. The facilitation of such a meeting requires an understanding of how systems function in crisis, and skillfully managing groups of people in distress. It will be facilitated by one of the members of the Crisis Response Team.

4:3:8 Follow-up Team Review

After each use of the Crisis Response Protocol the school staff should meet to review the events while they are still recent, preferably within two weeks. This will serve several purposes: improve the plans, raise staff skills about the use of the protocol, and tie up loose ends and concerns following the critical incident. The meeting should include:

- A review of how well the protocol guided the actions of staff. Identify improvements that can be made in the school plan for future situations.
- Re-evaluate the effectiveness of actions taken as part of the plan. Appropriate changes can be made for next time, including additional training, if needed.
- Assure school staff that counselling is available for those staff that still need to deal with their own feelings about the critical incident.
- A plan to write letters of appreciation to all that helped.

The type of aftermath that will occur will depend on what crisis or trauma has occurred.

The type and nature of follow-up will depend on the critical incident. The Team Leader, in consultation with the team and community contact(s), will decide what needs to happen next, and who can best be involved.

4:4 DETAILED INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROTOCOL

4:4:1 Definitions of Screening, Crisis Groups and Follow-up Counselling

Screening	Crisis Groups	Follow-up Counselling
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-on-one brief assessment (approximately 5 minutes) of individual functioning to determine if traumatization exists. • Assessment based upon current emotional/psychological functioning (i.e., hysteria, suicidal, denial) and current social/emotional supports. • Referral to “open” crisis group or crisis counselling as appropriate. • Ongoing process that starts prior to the initial Crisis Group and runs concurrent with ongoing Crisis Counselling and Crisis Groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crisis Groups are single session, structured group discussions focusing on a recent traumatic event for people who were affected by it. • Not counselling • Used to normalize feelings, thoughts, and psychological responses. • Teaches coping methods. • A one-time only preventative intervention for people who might otherwise be traumatized by an incident. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counselling to assist in coping with the long-term impact of a traumatic event (e.g., is suicidal due to loss of friend). • Focus on personal issues that existed before the traumatic event but are aggravated by the event. • Address thoughts and feelings in relation to the incident that impair functioning after one of the first two interventions has been employed. • Referrals to appropriate agencies will be made as necessary.

4:4:2 The School Meeting with School Staff and Team

- The purpose of the orientation meeting of all staff is to define process, share facts, and identify “at risk” individuals.

- The **procedures** for this meeting are as follows:
 - Gather all staff together including caretakers, secretaries and bus drivers.
 - Team Leader introduces Team Members and their roles (Screeners, Crisis Group Leaders).
 - Read aloud the statement that will be shared with students regarding the traumatic event. Prepare with staff the factual information that will be shared. Explain that this is important in order to dispel rumors and discourage speculation.
 - Explain the importance of sharing this information in classrooms rather than over the PA system: more personal and therefore more likely that teachers will recognize potential “high-risk students”. These are students who:
 - Have a history of suicidal behavior.
 - Have a history of emotional illness, anxiety or depression
 - Have recently suffered a loss due to death, divorce, or the break-up of a relationship.
 - Were close friends of, or at odds with, the deceased.
 - Are family members of the deceased.
 - Witnessed the traumatic event.
 - Briefly outline what will happen and what services are available.
 - Each teacher will meet with their class and read the prepared statement.
 - Teachers will identify all “high-risk students” and send them to a designated area where a screener can see them.
 - Teachers will arrange for someone to accompany these students to where the screeners are located.
 - Crisis Groups: Primary Groups will start at (state designated time) and an Open Group will be available at (state designated time).
 - Arrangements can be made to have counsellors on-site or referrals can be sent to appropriate agencies for further support.
 - Give detailed overview of Crisis Groups (refer to Section 4:4:4):
 - Goals
 - To mitigate impact of traumatic event.
 - To accelerate return to normal activities and energy levels.
 - To normalize a wide range of reactions to an abnormal event.
 - Psycho-educational in focus; not therapy
 - Procedure
 - Seven-stage process that deals with the facts of the incident, individual thoughts and feelings, and allows emotional ventilation.
 - Identifies and normalizes a wide range of reactions, immediate and in the near future.
 - Ends by teaching coping strategies. Students will be given a handout (see Appendix I and II) and offered individual support if needed.
 - Length: 45 minutes–1 hour

- Group Composition:
 - No more than 30 per group.
 - At least one teacher to be present.
 - No more than four adults per crisis group.
 - Two Crisis Response Team (CRT) members to lead process.
 - Not appropriate for someone emotionally out of control or facing legal charges in connection with the event.
- Encourage teachers to share their thoughts and feelings within the group as this helps students to open up.
- Describe what will happen if someone is uncomfortable and wants to leave the group.
- Basic Rules:
 - No one enters after Crisis Groups start.
 - Participants are encouraged to share but have the right to be silent.
 - Participation is voluntary.
- Room Set-up in a circle.

- Make the following decisions:
 - Assign rooms for Crisis Groups.
 - Match CRT leaders to a teacher and group.
 - Assign a secretary to help CRT with questions, photocopying, announcements, etc.
 - Write out the list of any “high-risk students”.
 - Identify who will be invited to participate in Crisis Groups (i.e., just one grade or every classroom?)
 - Set time and location for school staff debriefing.

- Follow-up
 - Return to normal school activities and normal routine as soon as possible as this helps calm people.
 - Today, allow students to leave if they choose, do not judge intentions (i.e., “just want to get out of class”).
 - Allow each student the right to decide whether or not they attend the funeral.
 - Recognize that some student/staff ability to function will be reduced over the next few days; lower your expectations of self and others.
 - Continue watching for “high-risk students” and refer to counselling.
 - As a staff team, you can decide how to send condolences to family and whether or not a memorial service is appropriate.
 - Can decide later if some kind of permanent memorial is to be established (i.e., scholarship, picture).
 - Provide information handout to teachers Appendix III: “Classroom Pointers for Teachers”.

4:4:3 Screening Students / Staff Members

The human response to a traumatic event varies from individual to individual. Those individuals who are currently traumatized are not appropriate for participation in the Crisis Groups (CG). As such, individuals, who are presenting as “traumatized” or “in crisis”, or who have been identified during the on-site meeting with the team and staff as possibly traumatized, will be screened by the counsellor appointed to do so. The purpose of the screening process is determining if students are appropriate for CG participation or require Crisis Counselling.

(Note: Pending successful crisis counselling the crisis counsellor may recommend a student, who was originally screened out of the Crisis Group, for participation in an upcoming Open Crisis Group.)

The screening process consists of:

- One-on-one brief assessment (approximately five minutes) of individual functioning to determine if traumatization exists.
- Assessment based upon current emotional / psychological functioning (i.e., hysteria, suicidal, in denial) and current social / emotional supports.
- Referral to “open” crisis group or crisis counselling as appropriate.
- Ongoing process that starts prior to the initial Crisis Group and runs concurrent with ongoing Crisis Counselling and Crisis Groups.

4:4:4 Primary Crisis Groups

This is a **preventative** intervention for people who might otherwise be traumatized by the stress of a critical incident. It is a **single-session**, structured group discussion focusing on a recent traumatic event and distress experienced. It is not psychotherapy. The intervention consists of a seven-stage process intended to help persons affected by a crisis to normalize feelings, thoughts and psychological responses. It teaches coping methods designed to assist the individual in processing their thoughts and feelings concerning the critical event. Through a psycho-educational process, it teaches information intended to mitigate current and future distress.

Participants:

- Individuals selected for participation during the on-site meeting with Staff and Team members
- It may also include those individuals who have been screened as being suitable for a primary group.
- A team consisting of a leader and a co-leader, assigned prior to arriving at the school, facilitates each group.
- A teacher is asked to be present in the room and may participate as a group member.

Stages:

- **First: Introduction:**
 - Introduction of Team Leaders
 - Goals
 - Explanation of process
 - Rules of session including confidentiality, voluntary participation, respect for the opinions and feelings of others.
- **Second: Fact Stage:**
 - Group is given all the known and substantiated facts concerning the crisis. It may be the official statements as presented by the police, administrator, or other relevant officials.
 - Each group member is encouraged to describe the traumatic event from their own perspective *on a cognitive level* and to include what happened from their point of view, where they were, and how they became involved in the trauma.
- **Third: Thought Stage:**
 - Participants are given the opportunity to describe their first thoughts upon learning of the event.
- **Fourth: Reaction Stage:**
 - Participants are asked to identify the most traumatic aspects of the event and their emotional reactions to the event beginning with their first reaction or gut feeling and the worst part of the event.
- **Fifth: Symptom Stage:**
 - Team leaders give a description of possible distress signs: cognitive, physical, emotional and behavioural, occurring at the incident, during the first 24 hours, and days later.
 - Participants are encouraged to share their symptoms through time and back to the present. The intent is to bring the group back from the emotional reactions to the cognitive level.
- **Sixth: Teaching Stage:**
 - CG leaders educate the group as to normal reactions and adaptive coping mechanisms, giving information on stress reactions and management, normalize common symptoms as “pretty common”.
 - Answer any questions.
 - Pass handouts to participants (Appendices I & II).
- **Seventh: Re-Entry:**
 - Clarify how to seek extra help if necessary, how to help one another, and help oneself.
 - Encourage returning to regular schedules, getting sufficient rest, eating healthy and refraining from use of alcohol and drugs.
 - Prepare group for termination and reentry to normal activities.

4:4:5 Open Crisis Group:**Participants:**

Individuals affected by the trauma who were excluded from the Primary Crisis Groups may be invited to participate in an Open Crisis Group. These students include those excluded by decisions made during the on-site meeting with School Staff and Team. *e.g. if the intervention is at a school and a specific grade was targeted for the Primary Crisis Group, then affected students from other grades might be invited to the Open Crisis Group.*

Individuals who may have been traumatized to such an extent that they were recommended for crisis counselling and who have completed such counselling may now be invited to participate in an Open Crisis Group. Teachers are invited to attend and may participate as members of the group.

The Process:

The same process as used in the Primary Crisis Group.

4:4:6 Suggested Script to use with both the Primary and Open Crisis Group

• Our names are _____, and we are the team that will be conducting this session. Our purpose in being here is to help you deal with the incident, which occurred _____ (yesterday). From what we understand, it seems to have been a very difficult incident. We are here to try to help. Hopefully by participating in the group you will be able to express and understand your feelings better. We know that getting things back to normal happens more quickly when people are given the opportunity to discuss what happened and that it takes longer if you try to do this alone.

Optional:

- Have any of you been in a crisis group before? Have any of you ever had a bad experience in a group – where you saw someone deeply hurt or you yourself were deeply hurt?
- Here is the approach we will be using. We want you to have a chance to discuss the incident freely among yourselves and with us. For some of you this will be quite easy. For others it may be more difficult, but we will try to help if you are having difficulty. We want you to have clearer heads and feel a little better, and we think we can help you to do that during this session.
- Some of you may not want to be here or may feel you do not need this session. Participation is voluntary and if you do not want to stay, you are certainly free to go now. However, please remember that even if you don't need help, others do. By staying, you may be able to help some of the people in this room simply by your presence.

- We need your help for this session to be successful and productive. We want all of you to stay for the whole session. We don't know how long it will take, but it may be up to one hour. We also need your patience. Interruptions are hard for other group members as well as for us. When you have something to say, please say it to the whole group. If you have to go to the washroom, please do so quietly and return. If you become upset and feel you have to leave, a member of the team will accompany you and we hope with a brief break that you will be able to come back. If you go too far in what you say or feel that you are losing control, we will provide support and ensure that you are not embarrassed before your peers.

Optional:

- Is there anyone in this room that you believe does not belong? Is there anyone from the news media here?

- We regard this discussion as **confidential**. The only exception to this rule is if we are concerned that someone's safety is in jeopardy. We ask that you speak freely about this incident, noting that all of us will honour the principle "that which is said in this room, stays in this room". However, no one needs to talk if they do not wish to. Please do not make judgments about what anyone else says and speak for yourself.

- You may ask any questions you wish. We will end this session with some practical information on common reactions to stress and things you can try to help you cope. We will also stay at the end of the session if you want to speak to us alone.

- Let us begin by reviewing some of the facts of the incident. (Read official statement).

4:4:7 Crisis Response Team Debriefing

Team members will meet at the agreed upon time and location to debrief the crisis response, discuss interventions, and bring closure to the process.

The debriefing format will allow for general comments and observations but also may include the following:

- Two minute Check-in.
- Evaluate the seven-stage process of the Crisis Groups.
- Questions to consider:
 - What discoveries were made? Was there learning at a personal or specific situation level?
 - Are there individuals identified at risk or requiring follow-up services? Is there specific post-intervention planning required for the general population, ie. a Community Meeting?
 - Is there any unfinished business? Are there any concerns left unvoiced? Do team members feel a sense of closure with the process?
 - Provide opportunity for critique of the process. Are there any recommendations for changes to the protocol or specific guidelines and procedures? Ensure these are documented for future consideration and approval. **This step may be done later.**
 - Feedback may be given with permission. BE SENSITIVE.

- The team will determine who will document the event and what will be included (see Appendix VI – Crisis Response Report).

4:4:8 Voluntary Staff Debriefing Meeting

The purpose of this meeting is to assist school personnel in bringing closure to the Crisis Response process that occurred that day. School staff is invited to meet with the CRT in order to:

- Review the events of the day.
- Ensure that school staff know all individuals referred to community services.
- Ensure that an evaluation will be done, and by whom.
- Ensure that a Crisis Response Report is completed.
- Ensure that school staff is aware of what to look for in terms of student and staff aftermath behavior.

Upon completion of the CRT debriefing, school personnel will meet with CRT members at an agreed upon time and location to assess the situation, discuss concerns, express feelings/emotions and receive feedback. Should any school personnel request an individual session, that person will be referred to the appropriate resource.

Should there be a need to arrange for the CRT to return for a second day, this will be arranged before the school staff debriefing meeting has been completed.

4:4:9 Follow-Up Counselling

Follow-up counselling is meant to deal with identified issues that are often related in part to individual/personal issues that existed before the traumatic event but became manifested as a result of the event. Thoughts and feeling are addressed in relation to the incident that are impairing functioning after one of the first two interventions has been employed. This counselling is intended to assist individuals in coping with the long-term impact of a traumatic event, for example a person who is suicidal due to the loss of a friend. Referrals for follow-up counselling will be made as necessary to appropriate agencies or arrangements will be made for on-site counsellors to be available.

4:5 CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM LIST

TITLE	NAME	PHONE NUMBER
Team Leader - Principal or Assistant Principal		
Superintendents Calgary Science School		
Family School Counsellor		
School Counsellors		
Calgary Police Service		
Calgary Health Region - Mental Health Office		
Physician		
Calgary Health Region - Public Health Office		
FCSS		
Region ____ Child and Family Services		
_____Victim Services		
Trustee Liaison		
Ministerial Association		

SECTION 5: APPENDICES

Appendix I	Critical Incident Stress Information Sheet
Appendix II	Common Reactions And Things You Can Do
Appendix III	Classroom Pointers For Teachers
Appendix IV	Crisis Response Team Checklist
Appendix V	School Evaluation Of Crisis Response Team
Appendix VI	Crisis Response Report
Appendix VII	School Staff – Critical Incident Checklist
Appendix VIII	School Administration Meeting Agenda - Sample
Appendix IX	Crisis Response Team School Staff Meeting Agenda-Sample
Appendix X	Announcements To The Student Body - Sample
Appendix XI	Suggested Format For Class Discussion
Appendix XII	Communication With Parents/Guardian - Sample
Appendix XIII	Guidelines For Dealing With The Media
Appendix XIV	Dealing With Grief
Appendix XV	Preparation Of A Memorial Celebration/Service
Appendix XVI	Bereavement

APPENDIX I - CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS INFORMATION SHEET

You have experienced a traumatic incident (any incident that causes a person to experience unusually strong emotional reactions which have the potential to interfere with their ability to function). Even though the event may be over, you may now be experiencing or may experience later, some strong emotional or physical reactions. It is very common, in fact quite normal, for people to experience emotional aftershocks when they have experienced a traumatic event.

Sometimes the emotional aftershocks (or stress reactions) appear immediately after the traumatic event. Sometimes they may appear a few hours or a few days later. And, in some cases, weeks or months may pass before the stress reactions appear.

The signs and symptoms of a stress reaction may last a few days, a few weeks or a few months and occasionally longer depending on the severity of the traumatic event. With understanding and the support of loved ones, the stress reactions usually pass more quickly. Occasionally, the traumatic event is so painful that professional assistance from a counsellor may be necessary. This does not imply craziness or weakness. It simply indicates that the particular event was just too powerful for the person to manage themselves.

These are some very common signs and signals of a stress reaction:

PHYSICAL	COGNITIVE	EMOTIONAL	BEHAVIORAL/ ACTED OUT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fatigue • nausea • muscle tremors • twitches • chest pain* • difficulty breathing* • elevated BP • rapid heart rate* • thirst • headaches • visual difficulties • vomiting • grinding teeth • weakness • dizziness • profuse sweating • chills • shock symptom* • fainting <p>* contact physician</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • blaming someone • confusion • poor attention • poor decisions • more or less alertness • poor concentration • memory problems • hypervigilance • difficulty identifying familiar objects or people • increased or decreased awareness of surroundings • poor problem solving • poor abstract thinking • loss of time, place or person orientation • disturbed thinking • nightmares • intrusive images 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • anxiety • guilt • grief • denial • severe panic (rare) • emotional shock • fear • uncertainty • loss of emotional control • depression • inappropriate emotional levels • apprehension • feeling overwhelmed • intense anger • irritability • agitation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • change in socialization • change in speech patterns • withdrawal • emotional outbursts • suspiciousness • change in usual communications • loss/increase appetite • alcohol intake up • inability to rest • antisocial acts • nonspecific bodily complaints • acting threatened • screaming at friends • startle reflex intensified • pacing • erratic movements • change in sexual functioning

APPENDIX II - COMMON REACTIONS & THINGS YOU CAN DO

For Yourself:

- WITHIN THE FIRST 24-48 HOURS, periods of strenuous physical exercise, alternated with relaxation will alleviate some of the physical reactions.
- Structure your time — keep busy (but avoid extreme fatigue).
- You're normal and having normal reactions — don't label yourself crazy.
- Talk to people — talk is the most healing medicine.
- Be aware of numbing the pain with overuse of drugs or alcohol; this will only mask symptoms and may result in a substance abuse problem in addition to grief issues.
- Reach out — people do care. Say "yes" when people reach out to you.
- Maintain as normal a schedule as possible
- Spend time with others.
- Help your peers as much as possible by sharing feelings and checking out how they are doing.
- Give yourself permission to feel rotten and share your feelings with others
- Keep a journal, write your way through those sleepless hours.
- Do things that feel good to you
- Realize those around you are under stress
- Don't make any big life changes
- Do make as many daily decisions as possible which will give you a feeling of control over your life, i.e. if someone asks you what you want to eat — answer them even if you're not sure.
- Get plenty of rest
- Reoccurring thoughts, dreams, or flashbacks are normal — don't try to fight them — they decrease over time and become less painful
- Eat well-balanced and regular meals (even if you don't feel like it.)

For Family Members & Friends

- Listen carefully
- Spend time with the traumatized person
- Offer your assistance and a listening ear if they have not asked for help
- Reassure them that they are safe
- Help them with everyday tasks like cleaning, cooking, caring for the family and minding children.
- Give them some private time
- Don't take their anger or other feelings personally
- Don't tell them that they are "lucky it wasn't worse" — those statements do not console traumatized people. Instead, tell them that you are sorry such an event has occurred and you want to understand and assist them

Information adapted from: Jeffrey T. Mitchell, Ph.D, President, International Critical Incident Stress Foundation, Inc. - 5048 Dorsey Hall Drive, Ste 104, Ellicott City, MC, 21042, ph: 410-730-4311, fax: 410-730-4313

Common Reactions: You may experience one or more of the following reactions

PHYSICAL	EMOTIONAL	CHANGES AT WORK
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • headaches • chest pains • dizzy spells • restlessness • a lack of energy • heart palpitations • neck or back pain • a change of appetite • insomnia/nightmares • a shaky feeling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • irritability • anger/rage • heightened level of suspicion • flashbacks • easily startled • anxiety or helplessness • inability to concentrate • denial • losing trust in those you trusted • over-protective with children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • make small errors • forgetfulness • decrease in quality of work • reluctance to go back to work • tendency to over-work (busy work) • repetition of work tasks already done • distraction • daydreaming • missing points or details mentioned in discussions/meetings

Things You Can Do: One or more of the following tips may help you get through the period following the traumatic event:

PHYSICAL	EMOTIONAL	AT WORK
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • participate in moderate exercise. • avoid excess caffeine or alcohol. • maintain your normal routine as much as possible - do not isolate yourself. • maintain regular activities outside of the home (i.e. work, errands, appointments, volunteer work, sports, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • encourage/explain to others your need to talk about the event without their advice, or minimizing of the event. • talk about the specifics of the event with your friends and family — tell them it's important for you to talk it out • write down your thoughts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • encourage yourself to go back to work/school. • talk about it with co-workers or peers. • ensure the physical surroundings have been returned to original appearance.

Information adapted from: Jeffrey T. Mitchell, Ph.D, President, International Critical Incident Stress Foundation, Inc. 5048 Dorsey Hall Drive, Ste 104, Ellicott City, MC, 21042, ph: 410-730-4311, fax: 410-730-4313

Compiled by: Warren Shepell Consultants, Trauma Response Service

APPENDIX III - CLASSROOM POINTERS FOR TEACHERS

Note: If, for any reason, you feel unable to cope with classroom responsibility at this time, admit it. Discuss your needs with the school principal and the CRT.

1. Talk about “death”, “dying” and “dead.” Avoid euphemisms such as “passed away.”
2. Be honest. Discuss the facts of the death. Discourage speculation.
3. Discuss how you feel. Talk about your memories of the deceased. This will encourage responses from your students.
4. Allow your students to express their grief.
5. Listen to what your students say.
6. Watch your students’ actions and reactions. Identify those who may need help.
7. Be supportive and empathetic.
8. Focus on the sadness of the death. Avoid being judgmental or moralistic.
9. Remember the deceased was a human being with human strengths and failings. Discourage glorification of the deceased.
10. Acknowledge anger and consider whether or not counselling may be necessary to help individuals resolve their anger.
11. Accept that some students will not wish to participate in a discussion about death. Respect their wishes.
12. Organize activities that allow expressions of grief, such as art and writing.
13. Be patient. Grieving takes time.
14. Be prepared for disruptions in classroom routine and reduced student achievement. Reset examination and assignment dates if necessary.
15. There is nothing positive about tragedy. Discourage your students from looking for it.
16. Suffering and pain should not be linked with guilt, punishment or sin. Keep them separate.
17. Establish a classroom environment in which students will feel free to ask questions and receive honest answers.

Remember: You are not alone. There are others to help you.

Source: Bereavement and Loss Manual - For Administrators and Teachers: Alberta Education Response Centre 1992

APPENDIX IV - CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM CHECKLIST

The following items are sample actions for a checklist, which can be adapted by the Crisis Team to suit the protocol developed in a particular school.

- Assist principal in preparing hand written instructions for staff to be distributed at the staff meeting or in the hands of staff.
- Compile a list of staff that may require extra support because of their closeness to the deceased.
- Assign a team member to classes where the teacher has requested this type of assistance.
- Gather and maintain a list of students at risk, including those who were absent, and review their needs for further individual attention.
- Assist counsellors in arranging counselling centers and grief groups.
- Recommend to the principal those students who may need to go home or may require additional community mental health resources. Ensure that parents are informed.
- Contact other schools where siblings, teammates, or close friends of people directly affected by the critical incident may be attending. In case of a staff death, all schools in the district should be contacted.
- Assist in organizing the school or staff role in visitation, funeral, or memorial arrangements in the case of a student or staff death(s).
- Meet after school to review the day, inform staff about arrangements for Critical Incident Stress Debriefing and plan for the next day's activities.
- Be available to discuss concerns regarding students or procedures to be followed with any staff member.
- Arrange Critical Incident Stress Debriefing for staff.
- Ensure that school records relating to the student are handled in a sensitive and appropriate manner.
- In carrying out any activities related to using or creating records, consult with the Principal.

APPENDIX V - SCHOOL EVALUATION OF CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM

Feedback from the school staff is important in evaluating the effectiveness of the team's interventions. This feedback can be used for future planning and solving problems. The person completing this form should receive input from the total school staff before completing the form. This can be done after routines are back to normal but within two weeks. Please answer the following questions:

1. Identify the services provided by the team that were effective and why.
2. Identify any problems encountered and any recommendations.
3. Were the student and staff needs met effectively? Please explain your answer.
4. Do you have any other general recommendations for improving the service?
5. Did the Crisis Response Team Members carry out their responsibilities effectively?
6. General comments:
7. Please return this form to:

Thank you for your feedback.

Reference: Bereavement and Loss Manual: For Administrators and Teachers, Alberta Education Response Center. 1992.

APPENDIX VI - CRISIS RESPONSE REPORT

Date of Critical Incident: _____ Location : _____

Type of Incident: _____

Crisis Response Team requested by: _____

Request received by: _____ (CRT Member)

Crisis Response Team members involved:	Roles/Responsibilities:
--	-------------------------

_____	_____
-------	-------

_____	_____
-------	-------

_____	_____
-------	-------

Names of individuals in Crisis Counselling:

_____	_____
-------	-------

_____	_____
-------	-------

Names of individuals in primary and open groups:

Primary	Open
---------	------

_____	_____
-------	-------

_____	_____
-------	-------

Names of individuals referred to other agencies:

_____	_____
-------	-------

_____	_____
-------	-------

Crisis Groups (# of groups facilitated): Primary: _____ Open: _____

Total # of Crisis Group participants: _____ Total # of school staff debriefed: _____

Problems or concerns identified:

General Recommendations:

Report completed by: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX VII - SCHOOL STAFF - CRITICAL INCIDENT CHECKLIST

The following items are sample actions for a teacher checklist.

Teachers play a vital role in helping students or staff deal with their feelings regarding critical incidents such as the death of a student or staff member. If a teacher is uncomfortable in carrying out the actions of this checklist, assistance should be requested from the CRT.

- Attend staff meeting and obtain all possible information.
- Follow instructions in handout received from the Principal and Crisis Team.
- Request a CRT member to lead the class discussion if you feel uncomfortable.
- Allow students to express their feelings openly and facilitate the classroom discussion by modeling listening and sharing feelings and reactions with students. (See Appendix XI for classroom discussion ideas)
- Direct any students who appear to need further assistance to the appropriate support personnel; allow students to go to the designated counselling centers. Arrange for someone to accompany young children or students who are in distress. Keep a list of these students and give to the CRT.
- Provide the names of any students or staff considered to be at risk or in need of counselling support to the Crisis Team.
- Attend after school staff meeting.
- Participate in Critical Incident Stress Debriefing.

All school personnel are affected by a critical incident such as a disaster or the death of a student or staff member and everyone should be clear about his/her role in dealing with a tragic event. The following is a sample checklist for school personnel who are not teachers which can be adapted by a Crisis Response Team to fit the protocol developed in a particular school.

- Ensure that you are informed of appropriate strategies to handle student's questions or comments. Redirecting students or teachers or counselling staff may be an appropriate response.
- Ensure that you are clear on procedures for handling requests or calls from parents, news media and others. Be aware that extra personnel may be in the building, but report anyone who appears to be on school grounds inappropriately to the Principal immediately.

APPENDIX VIII - SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION MEETING AGENDA - SAMPLE

The following sample of a School Administration meeting agenda can be adapted to fit the protocol developed in a particular school.

1. Share information with the team regarding the facts of the traumatic event. No information should be shared until a decision is made about what information is to be shared and the process for notifying staff and students. When this decision about disclosure of personal information is made, care must be taken to ensure that requirements of FOIPP are followed. Under FOIPP, one of the bases for disclosing personal information is called “consistent use.” That is, the disclosure of the information is permitted if it is directly related to the purpose for which it was received, and it is necessary to use it to operate the school or meet other statutory obligations. Meeting the emotional needs of students and staff so that the school can function might be considered a “consistent use.”
2. Determine the impact of this particular incident on individual members of the School Team in order to ensure that all members can function objectively. Assess the likely impact of the critical incident on classes and individuals. Consider the impact for anyone in the school community who may have recently experienced a significant death or loss. Are there staff members who may require assistance in leading the classroom discussion?
3. Determine whether there are cultural or religious implications surrounding the incident. How should they be addressed?
4. Identify school resources. Are there other staff members who might be helpful additions to the team in this situation?
5. Determine whether additional counsellors are required to provide support to the team and work with students. Assess the need to utilize the Crisis Response Team.
6. Develop an agenda for the general staff meeting and prepare a written statement for the meeting about the critical incident.
7. Decide whether it would be appropriate to send home a brief announcement about the critical incident. Sample letters are included in Appendix XII.

APPENDIX IX - CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM (CRT) SCHOOL STAFF MEETING AGENDA - SAMPLE

The following CRT-School staff meeting agenda can be adapted to fit the protocol developed in a particular school.

1. Attendance — anyone who is not present should be informed of the critical incident as soon as possible following the meeting.
2. Provide as much accurate information as possible, including:
 - Names of the students or staff members directly involved,
 - Time and place of the event,
 - Any additional information surrounding the event, and
 - Names and grades of siblings of those directly affected who are also in the school.
3. Introduce the members of the CRT, and any additional support staff or community resource people who are present and explain their roles.
4. Briefly review the school response plan and provide extra copies.
 - Prepare teachers to deal effectively with informing their students of the critical incident.
 - Give directions and model how students should be told.
 - Encourage teachers to allow time for classroom discussion.
 - Provide all staff with a copy of the protocol for class discussions. See Appendix XI for guidelines on leading a classroom discussion.
 - Clarify procedures for handling students who want to leave the classroom.
 - Students who are highly emotional should be accompanied to the designated counselling center.
 - Students who wish to leave the school should only be released to a parent, guardian or their designate.
 - Inform teachers of counselling support plans.
 - Ask staff to help in identifying students who may be at risk or need extra support.
 - Make counselling plans for all students who are potentially at risk for suicide or other serious emotional responses to the critical incident.
 - Direct staff to refer students who appear to be emotionally unstable to the counsellors.
 - Review media policy.
 - Inform all staff of any changes to the regular school schedule or cancellation of normal school events.
5. Set the date and time of a follow up meeting.
 - Assure staff that they will be kept informed of any relevant information in this up date meeting.
 - Follow up meeting will provide an opportunity for staff members to discuss class room experiences and report information back to the group.

APPENDIX X - ANNOUNCEMENTS TO THE STUDENT BODY - SAMPLE

The manner in which a critical incident is announced to the students can have a major impact on the emotional responses of the whole school community. Before making the announcement of a traumatic event, such as an accident or sudden death, which is not already widely known in the school or community, the principal should consider some important issues:

- Ensuring that the families' right to privacy is respected.
- Making the announcement simultaneously so that all students in the building will hear about it at the same time.
- Reducing potential for creating a highly charged emotional climate by informing students in their regular classroom setting.
- Gauging the reactions of the student body to hearing of the tragedy.
- Carefully wording the contents of the announcement and providing written copies to teachers to use in their classrooms.

It is important to inform students as soon as possible. Delaying a formal announcement may make the situation worse, as rumor can add another dimension to the existing problem. Students may feel that a delay communicates lack of concern or sensitivity by the school staff. It is important to communicate that the staff care about the people affected by the critical incident and to model appropriate concern.

Making the Announcement

- Use a straightforward sympathetic announcement of a loss with a simple statement of condolence. In the case of suicide, respect the wishes of the family. Use some discretion regarding any details of the critical incident. Be as truthful as possible when responding to the questions of students, but keep in mind that early information available about a traumatic event may not be accurate.
- Use a classroom setting to announce a critical incident. Do not use the public address system or an assembly to inform students or staff of a critical incident. Some schools opt to use an assembly as a means to announce a critical incident. Many districts and schools have warned against this method of announcing a critical incident for various reasons. It is harder to control students in a large group, it is not possible to gauge individual student's reactions, and it is difficult to meet the needs of students in such a large group. Holding an assembly may seem to glorify events, which should not be glorified, such as a suicide.
- After the announcement in the classroom, allow sufficient time for students to begin to discuss their feelings in their classrooms. Assure students that they will be kept informed, as information is available.

Sample Announcements:

Announcements of tragedy are like any other form of personal communication; they should be simple, straightforward, and unique. These examples can only give you a general idea. They are not intended to be “fill in the blank” forms. Staff who knows the student or students involved and the school community can give the personal touch that is needed at such a time. After the actual announcement, students should be assured that they will have a chance to talk about the critical incident.

After a suspected suicide:

A tragedy has happened. Sal Williams, a Grade 8 student has died suddenly. Details of Sal’s premature death will not be released to protect the privacy of family members. You will be given information about funeral arrangements as soon as possible.

This kind of tragic news is hard to accept. You may experience many feelings within the next few days. Everyone deals with loss differently. It is important to respect the way others grieve. Counsellors are available in room 215. Feel free to go and talk to the counsellors. They want to listen to your feelings and concerns.

After a known fatality:

We are taking this time to think about Anne Rogier, a Grade 4 student at Oakville School who died last night in a car accident. Anne was traveling with her family on Route 17. We do not know any details about the accident at this time except that the rest of the family is safe and no one is injured seriously.

Anne’s funeral is being held at Peaceful Rest Funeral Home on Thursday afternoon. A funeral is a special time to remember a person who has died. The school will let your families know about the specific time and address of the funeral home in a written note, which will be sent home tomorrow. Let’s take a moment of silence to think of Anne, to remember all the good things about her, and to say goodbye. In our silence we will send her our loving thoughts.

After a fire in a feeder school:

Last night a very frightening thing happened in our community. Elm Street Elementary School was destroyed by fire. Many of you attended Elm Street School when you were younger and some of you may have brothers and sisters who attend there now.

Luckily, no one was hurt in the fire. But schools mean more to people than just a building. We all have feelings about a school that goes beyond the actual walls and roof. Many hours of your childhood were spent there. You will have lots of memories connected with the building and you should not be surprised if you feel sad or angry about this happening. Your brothers and sisters who attended Elm Street may be quite upset about the changes that this will mean for them, and they may experience fears because the school was a haven of safety for them.

The police and fire department have informed us that they do not yet know how the fire started, but we will let you know any facts that are communicated to us as soon as possible.

APPENDIX XI - SUGGESTED FORMAT FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

School is a place where learning takes place, where it is safe to ask questions and obtain factual information. Adults frequently attempt to insulate children from the realities of death or other tragic events. But children have the capacity to cope with stronger feelings of loss than many of us realize. If children sense that parents and teachers are hiding something, their suspicions can lead to fears and fantasies that are more problematic for them than the truth. A teacher's expression of sorrow in class conveys to students that strong emotions are natural and that mourning does not have to be hidden away. In addition, when students are allowed to grieve in a supervised setting they can have the comfort and reassurance they need which will serve them well when they must deal with subsequent traumatic situations. When people are able to share their feelings and experiences when confronted with tragedy, they feel less helpless and alone.

Advice for Teachers

The following principles can be helpful when working with students of all ages:

- It is important to acknowledge the reality of the critical incident and state your willingness to talk about it.
- Be simple and straightforward. Discuss death or other tragedy in terms the students can easily understand.
- Give the facts regarding the critical incident in a concrete, clear and accurate manner. If the information to be communicated is contained in a written record, it can only be shared within the limits of FOIPP. There is no one rule to describe when such information can be shared. Each situation will need to be analyzed by the Crisis Team. This topic is explored in the sample School Administration Meeting Agenda in Appendix VIII.
- Express your own feelings in an open, calm way which encourages students to express their grief or fear. Some students choose not to talk; the discussion of the event strikes them as a source of more pain or fear and some have a hard time verbalizing their feelings. These students should not be pressured to talk.
- Be sensitive to possible cultural differences in methods of grieving.
- Project confidence and calmness. Be encouraging and reassuring.
- Listen, acknowledge the loss or fear and have a non-judgmental attitude.
- Be patient. Many times because of their need for reassurance, young children will repeat the same questions. Older children may repeatedly tell about the relationship and reconstruct the loss. Repetitions of this sort are part of the normal grieving process.
- Be prepared for any student(s) who may feel the need to discuss unpleasant features of the relationship. Anger directed toward the deceased person is one of many normal responses to loss.
- Students who may have had recent conflict with the deceased may be particularly affected.
- Assess the meaning of the loss for each child. Pay close attention to those children who have experienced other recent deaths or losses, or, to those who have emotional problems.
- Expect regressive behavior such as fear of being left alone. Expect physical complaints such as stomachaches and headaches

- Be aware that both children and adults find it natural to show their empathy during grieving through physical contact such as hugging or touching on the arm.
- Avoid imposing your own theology and/or personal beliefs.
- Assess which students are in need of additional support and refer them to the designated counselling center for individual assessment and counselling. Have someone accompany them there.

The Class Discussion

There is no right way to talk about death or tragedy. The following statements are only examples to guide your class discussion of the critical incident. This sample script can be changed to better fit the situation or the students' needs. Classroom discussions will vary in length depending upon whether the critical incident occurred at school where students may have witnessed some aspect of the event, the age of the students, and their emotional involvement with the injured or deceased. Some discussions may be as brief as a few minutes, while others will continue for an entire class period.

Beginning script

1. Something very sad has happened. Laurie Evans, a Grade 7 student, has died in a car accident. This kind of sad news is hard to accept. You will probably have many feelings in the next while. You could be sad, angry, confused, depressed, afraid, or have no feelings at all for some time. When I've felt like this, it has helped me to talk to someone. Sharing my feelings made it easier, although not less painful, to deal with the tragedy. If you'd like to talk about the situation, I'd be glad to take time to do that. I'll try to answer any questions as well as I can.
2. Encourage children to share their own memories related to the critical incident.

Responding

3. Acknowledge that a wide variety of feelings are normal. There is no one right way to react to a tragedy. Feelings will vary from student to student and will change over time. Some possible responses include:
 - "Some of you feel angry that Laurie died. What can you do with your angry feelings?"
 - "It's okay that some of you are very scared or angry as a result of hearing about this fire at the elementary school and some only a little sad or scared."
 - "Because Laurie died, you may be reminded of others that you cared for who have died"
 - "It's okay to forget Laurie sometimes when you work and play."
 - "It's okay to cry, it's all right."
4. Acknowledge that you don't possess all the answers. Often there is more comfort from an honest, "I don't know why," than from an attempt at explanations that don't sound credible.
5. Acknowledge the various cultural or religious beliefs that may be expressed.

Concluding

6. Focus on the strengths and supports the students have:

- Support that comes from sharing feelings of grief or fear with others.
- Student's support network, such as family significant adults, teachers and counsellors.
- Have each student think of someone he/she can go to for support.
- Student's individual strengths which provide self-support.

7. Talk about the natural healing process. "Over time the pain of missing Laurie won't hurt so much. That's the way it should be. It doesn't mean that you love Laurie any less."

8. "Class is almost over, and it seems there's more to talk about. Perhaps we can set aside some time tomorrow."

9. Give information about the designated counselling center. "Designated counselling areas where you can go to talk about your feeling are available. The designated counselling center will be located in the nurse's office for the next three days. You can use the designated counselling center whenever you like. The people in the center want to help you. They will listen to your feelings and concerns. They want to try to help you."

10. It is helpful to channel the feelings of the class into appropriate expressions of concern. It may provide comfort for students to feel they have participated in some overt act to express their feelings and reach out to grieving families affected by the critical incident. Teachers will need to use their own judgment to guide the appropriateness of student activities, and the activities may need to be cleared with the school principal or counsellor.

Statements to Avoid

11. Avoid euphemisms for death such as "passed away", "gone to sleep" which may confuse or frighten the child.

12. Avoid the general statement, "If you need anything, tell me..." It is better to say "Would it help if I...?" Students may find it difficult to verbalize their own needs and will require assistance to find a way to describe the support they want.

13. Avoid saying "I know just how you feel." It is more empathetic to say "You may be having a lot of feelings right now..."

14. Avoid blaming or judging.

The class discussion in the event of a suicide

Most students over eight years of age are old enough to understand the suicidal act. Children and teens often have romantic fantasies about death, which must not be encouraged. Be truthful, but not dwell on the details of how the student took his or her own life.

This type of sudden loss may bring with it a heavy overlay of guilt, shame, self-doubt and self-blame as well as feelings of anger, betrayal and rejection. Teachers should be prepared to encounter and validate these expressions. Bereavement and mourning can be more intense and extreme in the case of a suicide. School counsellors, who have been trained in suicide prevention, should have a key role in providing support to staff and students.

If the family has agreed that the death was a suicide, it is appropriate to use that term. If not, the class discussions will need to be conducted as for a sudden death.

Possible script following a suicide

1. “A very sad thing happened today. Terry Stone, a Grade 9 student has committed suicide. Details of the death will not be released to protect the privacy of his family. This kind of news is hard to accept. You will probably experience many feelings within the next while.

You may feel sad, angry, confused, numb, depressed or even guilty. This was Terry’s choice and it is important to remember that he is responsible for making the decision to kill himself.”

2. “You are not responsible.”

3. “This kind of death does not need to happen. Studies suggest that at the moment of suicide, individuals think death is the only way out. Although it may not seem possible, feelings and circumstances can change. Many people when they feel unhappy or unloved think about hurting themselves. But there are better options. There are people who can help.” Students can be reminded about the counselling centers currently operating in the school, as well as the ongoing support that is available through the school counsellor or community services.

4. “Some people who commit suicide believe that people will care more about them after they are dead, than when they were alive. This is not the case.”

5. At the end of the discussion, help students understand the importance of talking to someone when they feel despondent. Elicit suggestions from the class as to whom they would talk to, and ask each individual student to privately think of those people to whom they would turn.

6. Students should be reminded to anticipate rumors and misinformation and that they should not automatically believe anything they hear.

7. For younger children and pre-adolescents, it is important to confirm the fact that any death, including suicide, is final and irreversible.

Communication with individual students

Certain students may require individual attention. Students who are considered high risk need to be identified and offered help at the time of the incident. It may also be necessary to provide these individuals with support on an ongoing basis. Check in with students who would be considered to be high risk on a regular basis, particularly at high-risk times. High-risk times include anniversaries of a previous death, birthdays, holidays, expected graduation date of the deceased student and the high-risk student's own birthday.

The following descriptors are helpful identifying a high-risk individual:

- Participated in any way with a suicide or accident.
- Knew of suicide attempt or potential attempt and did not try to stop it.
- Feels guilty about things they said or did to the deceased prior to the death.
- Had recently punished or threatened to punish the deceased for some misdeed; did not take a suicide threat seriously, or had been too busy to talk to a victim who asked for help.
- Were mentioned in a suicidal note.
- Identifies with the victim's situation, has a history of suicidal threats or attempts, or is desperate and now considers suicide a viable alternative.

APPENDIX XII - COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS/GUARDIANS - SAMPLE

Parents will want information when a critical incident in the school community may be affecting their children. Depending on the nature of the traumatic event, the entire community may be affected. Special communications to parents can be extremely helpful in gaining their support for the school and in reaching satisfactory closure to the incident for students. In some cases communication by telephone may be advisable. In other cases, where the number of contacts precludes telephone contact, a letter is more useful.

Suggestions for communications with parents by telephone

- The person doing the telephoning should be comfortable with the role and ideally have experience or training in counselling.
- Prepare a script similar to the one used to announce the event to students, which covers the facts of the critical incident.
- Be sensitive to possible emotional reactions by a parent and use active listening skills to calm an upset parent.
- Personally contact the parents of any student who has had a difficult time coping with the traumatic event and give information about community mental health resources which parents may wish to access for their children.
- Reassure parents that the school is responding to the critical incident and describe the response activities.

Suggestions for written communication with parents

Depending on the impact of the critical incident, a letter may be sent home with every student in the class or classes involved and, in some cases, with the entire school. Information to be included in the letter should be checked carefully with the police or other relevant experts. Clearing the content of the communication to parents with the Superintendent is advised. Care needs to be exercised in following FOIPP requirements. This letter could include the following information:

- The nature of the critical incident and appropriate details.
- What the students have been told.
- Possible grief/stress reactions that parents may expect in their children.
- Suggestions of how they might respond to their children's reactions.
- In the case of a death, the funeral arrangements.
- Resources available to parents.

Examples of letters and pamphlets, which can be used to plan communication with parent/guardians, can be found immediately following this page.

Communication with parents at the school site

Make plans to accommodate parents who come to the school following a critical incident. Parents or other concerned community members may gravitate to the school in response to a critical incident. They may wish to take their children home or may be looking for information or help with their own emotional responses to the incident. Plans should include advance arrangements for how to deal effectively with these adults. Experienced schools report that it is a good idea to pre-arrange a space to accommodate these individuals. Support materials for parents on how to help students deal with trauma can be made available and information about community resources can be provided.

Sample Letter #1

Date

Dear Parents/Guardian:

We have suffered a tragedy at our school. On December 12th one of our students, Ari Nadden, died suddenly and unexpectedly. In addition to our grief over the loss of this member of our school community, we are sensitive to the fact that such an event has an impact on other students.

In response, the school has implemented a plan, which allows students an opportunity to talk about their thoughts and feelings with trained professional staff. We expect that some will seek out this help, while others may not. Those who do will be given an opportunity to express their feelings and grief. This is not intended to take the place of outside professional counselling or religious care.

Anticipating that your child may have a reaction to this event, we have some information available to you at your request, which could be helpful, as you respond to your child's concerns. If you should determine that your child needs further professional counselling, please feel free to contact the school for phone numbers of local agencies that are available to assist you.

Please do not hesitate to contact the school regarding your requests or concerns at 555-1234.

Sincerely,

Rachel Moore, Principal

Sample Letter #2

Date

Dear Parents/Guardian:

It is with sadness that I inform you of the death of a Grade 2 student in our school. Bill Wong died from injuries suffered in a car accident, which occurred last evening.

Students will have varied reactions to the death of a peer. A wide range of reactions is normal in the grief process and can vary from withdrawal, to crying and anger. I encourage you to openly discuss with your child their reactions and feelings regarding the death of Bill.

Special counselling services have been made available to students today and will continue to be available throughout the week and longer, if needed.

If you think your child needs additional counselling support, please do not hesitate to contact the school office at 555-1234.

Sincerely,

Rachel Moore, Principal

APPENDIX XIII - GUIDELINES FOR DEALING WITH THE MEDIA

During crisis situations, schools may find that the news media are planning to report on the events as they occur. All requests for information about the events surrounding a critical incident must be referred to the Superintendent, Principal, or appointed designate. Superintendent's Delegate. The Principal or designate is directly responsible for communicating with all media. A brief prepared statement directing media inquires to the Principal should be written and available for secretaries or other persons who may be answering telephone inquires or any other requests for information by the media. School personnel should check with the Principal before speaking to reporters. It is not a good idea to speak to the media "off the record." The media may not interview students on school premises unless the interviews are approved by the Superintendent or his/her designate.

APPENDIX XIV - DEALING WITH GRIEF

Assisting Staff to Deal with their Grief

1. Phone staff to give them time to deal with the death before they arrive for work, if possible.
2. Utilize time during the morning, first staff meeting, to acknowledge (verbally and non-verbally), personal and collective grief, (break the conspiracy of silence), and to allow staff to indicate how they can obtain and provide support for themselves/others. If deemed appropriate, the community crisis team should be convened in advance to be at the school in order to assist staff with the grieving process.
3. Consider setting up an informal meeting time for staff to express anticipatory grief when student or staff member is dying or close to death through terminal illness. Staff may participate, or not participate, according to their needs.
4. Educate staff by presenting material relating to personality styles and grieving. Give permission to staff to grieve differently.
5. In dealing with grief, keep in mind that when grief reactions are disproportionate to loss, the individual may be grieving for something other than the immediate loss.
6. Try to develop "living" memorials rather than "dying" memorials.
7. Consider looking at grief from different dimensions: physiological, emotional, cognitive, social, spiritual. Preparing reflections or questions that address grief from different dimensions may assist staff to cope.

How Grief Affects People

Grief encompasses a broad range of feelings and behaviors that are common after a loss. Although grieving is a very individual process with no right or wrong way to grieve, there are certain behaviors that can be seen in individuals who have experienced a loss. They can be described under four (4) general categories:

FEELINGS	PHYSICAL SENSATIONS	COGNITION (THOUGHTS)	BEHAVIOR
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •sadness •anger •frustration •guilt •anxiety •fear •shock •helplessness •fatigue •loneliness •relief •numbness •yearning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •tightness in throat and chest •hollowness in stomach •shortness of breath •sighing •weakness •lack of energy •dry mouth •sensitivity to noise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •disbelief •confusion •preoccupation •sense of presence •hallucinations •loss of interest •poor concentration and memory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •sleep disturbances •appetite disturbances •absentminded behavior •social withdrawal •dreaminess •neglect of self •poor work performance •over use of alcohol and drugs •delinquency •avoiding reminders of the loss •restlessness •promiscuity •crying

Personality Types And Grieving

INTROVERT	EXTROVERT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • want to deal with loss internally • non-verbal • doesn't talk about feelings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • wear their emotions on their sleeve • verbal, need to talk out feelings to resolve them
INTUITIVE	SENSATE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • deal with grief through their imagination • internal process • can bring closure in an abstract sense 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • need to do something • have to feel, touch, talk • need something concrete (e.g. donation) to bring closure
THINKING	FEELING
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • need to use logic • need to find rationale for loss; reason it out 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • experience loss through feeling, "my gut says"
JUDGING	PERCEIVING
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • need closure to grieving 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • need to keep the door open; closure not necessary

Keep in mind that individuals grieve differently.

APPENDIX XV - PREPARATION OF A MEMORIAL CELEBRATION/SERVICE

The funeral (memorial) is an important rite of passage. It confirms that a beloved person will no longer be part of the familiar environment. Children (as well as adults) should be invited to express their love (friendship, grief) through the ceremonies of death ... (anyone) old enough to have some understanding of what is happening should be allowed to take part. They should never be forced to attend, or shamed into attending to prove their love.

(Grollman; 1987)

This active participation in a memorial service assists the school community to share its collective grief over the loss of one of its valued members. The invitation to participate in the memorial allows individual students and staff to bring closure to the death by publicly acknowledging its finality. Although the preparation and possible themes are presented in following sections, any memorial provides the opportunity for:

- affirmation of the loss.
- recognition of the need for mutual support.
- acknowledgement of shared memories of the deceased which are carried in the hearts and minds of those who are left.

Guidelines for School Based Services

1. Select a staff member to contact the family to discuss the memorial service. Respect the family's wishes and invite them to attend. Respect their decision not to attend if they so choose. Inquire whether they have a preference with respect to clergy assisting with the memorial. Ascertain if further communication of plans for the memorial is desired and comply with family requests.
2. Select a committee to organize details of the memorial. This may consist of a blend of students and staff when appropriate.
3. Committee decisions:
 - Symbol or theme of memorial (may wish to invite targeted students/class to participate in choice of theme/symbols.)
 - Prepare written outline of service to be presented to administration for approval.
 - Oversee preparation of materials.
 - Where appropriate, notify staff, students, parents, and the family of the deceased.
 - Make provisions for students/staff not wishing to attend.
 - Choose appropriate music.

Suggested Format for Memorial

1. Opening song or hymn
2. Greeting
3. Reading(s)
4. Reflection
5. Activities relating to the chosen theme of the memorial.
 - a) Possible Themes:
 - New Life
 - Symbols: cocoon — butterfly, seed — plant, bulb — flower
 - Students can build a poster tribute to the deceased or write intentions/ good-byes on reproductions of these symbols and place them on the poster.
 - b) Saying Goodbye:
 - Allow students/staff to say goodbye in a variety of ways (songs, poems, stories, statements).
 - Students who wish could prepare a goodbye message before the memorial and place this message in a fireproof container during the memorial before a ritual burning of the goodbye messages.
 - A display can be prepared which includes objects, which were significant to the deceased.
 - c) Journey:
 - Possible symbols: candles, balloons, dove.
 - Activities might include a lighting of candles, or releasing of balloons, etc. at this point in the ceremony.
6. Closing Remarks:
 - should affirm loss and acknowledge:
 - a) need for mutual support;
 - b) death as part of life;
 - c) need to return to our daily routine as soon as possible.
7. Closing Song

*INVITATION TO THE
MEMORIAL SERVICE*

Date:

Time:

Location:

We Remember

Born: _____

Died: _____

Think of Me

Think of Me

For only when I am forgotten

Am I truly gone

Jason Chapman

Sample Letter #1 to Parents - Memorial Service

Date

Dear Parents/Guardian:

It is with deep sadness that I inform you of the events which have been planned as a result of the death of _____. The community and our school are in shock after the loss of such a vital member of our community.

_____ was a very active member in our school. His/her dedication and enthusiastic (fill in information about the deceased, what he/she contributed to the school). _____ was kind, thoughtful, and displayed a sensitivity to others which endeared him to staff and students alike.

We have been very lucky to have the services of counsellors from the District, as well as that of _____, a psychologist with extensive training and experience in bereavement counselling. They have spent many hours here helping students and staff to cope with our loss.

Tomorrow, (date), a memorial service will be conducted at our school. This service will begin at 11:00 a.m. Provision will be made for those who not wish to participate. Please feel free to attend.

Sincerely,

School Principal

Sample Letter #2 to Parents - Memorial Service

Date

Dear Parent/Guardians:

This past Saturday one of our Grade 7 students, _____ was killed with her stepmother in a motor vehicle accident. _____ was well liked, an excellent student and very involved in student activities here at _____. Her death has had a great effect upon our staff and students.

To assist in dealing with _____ death we have had (division name) crisis response team spend the day with us. Several students met with these qualified counsellors to talk about their feelings of grief and sorrow. As well, our administrators and teachers and our school counsellors, have and will continue to provide support and assistance to those students affected by _____ death.

For your information the funeral will be (date) (time) (place). Students may attend _____ funeral with your permission. We strongly recommend the need for your personal support and that you accompany your daughter/son to the funeral.

Please provide a letter if your daughter/son will be attending the funeral.

If you have any further concerns, please contact either of us at (phone number).
Sincerely,

Counsellor

Sample Letter #3 to Parents - Memorial Service

Date

Dear Parents:

You may or may not be aware that the young man who died from (place) was a student at (school). He was a valued member of the school community and his passing has caused problems for many of his fellow students and friends.

In order that the students are supported to the fullest possible extent during this time we have had the crisis support team from the school board at the school available to counsel those students. As well, our school counsellor, (name), has been working with those students most at risk.

If you require any further information please do not hesitate to call the school.
Yours truly,

Principal

Memorial for Suicidal Death (Optional)

The memorial service does not take place immediately following death. There should be a waiting period of four to five days. This enables the CRT to have worked with students who are targeted as high risk/moderate risk.

The memorial signals the close of the school's "official" mourning period, and return to regular routine. The service must:

- acknowledge that a tragedy has taken place
- address the feelings which arise from suicidal death
- focus on what the death teaches, e.g. use beatitudes

This death teaches us: "*to be peacemakers*"..... "*to be humble*"..... "*to be mediators/reconcilers*"

From the Inuit: "*Life is caring, sharing, loving and smiling.*"

It is imperative that the suicide not be glamorized but seen as a tragedy, an act of despair.

Suggested Ending

This is a time to reach out to others, to create new beginnings, to move beyond guilt and anger, and to commit and dedicate ourselves to care for every person with whom we come in contact.

Suggested Poems, Readings, for Memorial after Suicidal Death

The following excerpts (*Bolton, 1983*) have been reproduced with the author's permission and reflect her response to the suicidal death of her son in 1977.

UNTITLED

I don't know why.
I'll never know why.
I don't have to know why.
I don't like it.
I don't have to like it.
What I do have to do is make a choice about my living.
What I do want to do is accept it and go on living.
The choice is mine.
I can go on living, valuing every moment in a way I never did before,
or I can be destroyed by it and,
in turn, destroy others.
I thought I was immortal.
That my family and my children were also.
That tragedy happened only to others.
But I know now that life is tenuous
and valuable.
So I am choosing to go on living,
making the most of the time I have,
valuing my family and friends
in a way never possible before.

(1983, *Preface*)

Funeral Address *(also from Bolton, 1983)*

Since the beginning of time, people have struggled with the complexities of life, with its mysteries, with its frustrations and injustices, with the ambiguity of to be or not to be. Since the beginning of time, many cultures have chosen not to speak of self-destruction; to shroud it in silence and to deny it. And because we as a people so often deny death as a part of life, it has enormous power in our lives. I believe, with all my heart, that those things we can bring to light and deal with will lose their destructiveness and those things which we deny and speak not of claim power in our lives; often destructive power. We must learn that death gives meaning to life so that we can value today and each other and now . . .

To those of you who love and support this family, build no shrines but, rather, replace your grieving and your pain, after a time, with good memories of (name). Speak freely of her to her family and friends and share your remembrances with them. To speak not of her tends to deny her existence; to speak freely of her tends to affirm her life.

Be open to your healing. Let it begin with love from each other. It takes time. Free yourself from denial, bargaining, guilt and anger by experiencing those emotions, so you too can one day get beyond this day.

We can make meaning out of the meaninglessness of (name's) death by recommitting our lives to unconditional love of each other every day of our lives. I believe in an all loving God who is with us in our pain. I do not believe he is all powerful and will bring tragedy upon us, but that he is available to love and support us through life's crises.

We cannot control what happens to us but we can take charge of how we respond. We can choose to survive or we can choose to be devastated. I can no longer change the destiny of my loved one but I can be sure that my life will be more meaningful as a result of this experience. I can survive. Albert Camus said so beautifully, "In the midst of winter, I finally learned that there was in me an invincible summer."

APPENDIX XVI - BEREAVEMENT

Facts and Misconceptions

1. *“I won’t say or do the right thing.”*

Your primary purpose is to give the bereaved person permission to grieve, e.g., “I’m sorry to hear about your loss. This must be a very sad time for you.” “How are you?” “Would you like to talk about how you are feeling?” Be aware of how you look. Your tone of voice may be more important than what you say. Touch the person, write them a note, send flowers, etc. Help them out in practical ways (chores, etc.) Do not take charge of their lives, but help alleviate the load.

2. *“Bereaved persons don’t want to talk about their loss. I dare not bring it up or mention the deceased person’s name.”*

Most likely that’s all the bereaved will want to talk about. Do not be afraid to mention the loved one’s name and to ask about the death (how, when, etc.) Ask how they coped or are now coping.

3. *“I must not make the bereaved person upset.”*

They are upset. Being upset won’t hurt; it’s good therapy. Tears help release pent up emotion and may rid the person of many physical symptoms. It is also good to express anger and guilt outwardly. Listen, reassuring the person that you have time to spend with them. Speak in a soft and reassuring manner and tone of voice, using appropriate words.

4. *“The bereaved person should be kept busy so that he won’t have time to think.”*

The bereaved person needs time to think and grieve. If he is kept too busy or never left alone, this may delay or hinder the grieving process.

5. *“The grieving period is lasting too long; the person should be over it by now.”*

Intensity and duration of grief often depends on the person’s **relationship** to the deceased as well as being determined by our normal ways of responding to loss. Every person’s grieving time varies. It is usually determined by the emotional investment of one’s self or by what the loss meant to the individual.

6. *“Moving away, giving away all possessions of the deceased, putting away pictures, discarding all reminders of the loss, will help the bereaved.”*

Frequently, major decisions made within the first year are not what the bereaved wanted for themselves. It is best to take about one year to make major decisions, if possible (moving, selling house or business, etc.) Giving away possessions is okay, but something should be kept. Things could be put away temporarily if having them around is too painful at the time.

7. *“Everything seems to be fine so I won’t mention anything about the loss/death. Why rock the boat?”*

The bereaved may very likely feel hurt and will sense that you are uncomfortable. Do mention the loss. You don’t need to go on and on, but at least acknowledge it.

8. *“I need to be religious, to believe in God, know the Bible or a particular religion in order to help.”*

Allow the bereaved their beliefs if that is comforting to them. If you are not sure what they are referring to in regards to God or religion, ask. Most are willing to explain their idea, fears and hopes. Many bereaved persons are concerned with “life and death”.

9. *“Everyone expresses grief in the same way and goes through the stages at the same time.”*

Grief is very private and individual. Everyone grieves differently at different stages.

10. *“Once a person has gone through one stage, it is not normal to return to that stage.”*

It is very normal to enter a stage of grieving, resolve it (you think), only to return to that same stage at a later date. This usually lasts for a shorter length of time and may not be quite as intense.

11. *“It is morbid or abnormal for the bereaved to want to sit with or touch the deceased.”*

It is a perfectly normal and healthy way of saying “good-bye” and coming to the realization that the person has died.

12. *“It is best not to use words such as dead, deceased, death, funeral, etc., when speaking of the deceased. It will be more helpful to use words such as expired, passed on, passed away, gone to heaven, departed, etc.”*

It is good and acceptable to use exact terms when referring to death. It is **essential** when dealing with children and death. Terms such as “God took him away”, “Gone to eternal sleep”, “Gone away”, “Gone to heaven”, etc., may confuse and frighten children.

13. “A person who is not expressing outward signs of grieving is either not grieving or doing just fine.”

The person may well be grieving intensely inside but has not given himself/herself permission to grieve. They could feel that they have to be brave for others, or they may not know how to let their emotions out, or it just may be a way of life for the person, i.e., “I have to be strong for others.” Most often, by expressing our feelings openly, we open the door for others. Holding back emotions for fear of upsetting a spouse or a child could prove to be unhealthy. Chances are they are upset and may well be trying to be strong for you.

Visiting the Grief Stricken by *Jack R. Van Ens*

Death is the final enemy with which each of us must grapple. We shy away from the reality. People tell me that they feel terribly ill at ease when visiting someone who is grief-stricken. They don't know what to do after they rap on the bereaved person's door. For those who gallantly contact people pained by death, the following tips may prove helpful.

1. Make several short visits. Bereaved people cannot cope with lengthy conversations. Visitors wear out their welcome when they stay past half an hour. A series of short visits is far better than one extended stay. Come for a 15-minute chat one day. Then pop in for 10 minutes the next.

2. Let the grieving person make plans. Sometimes well-intentioned friends prop the bereaved individual in an easy chair while they scurry around making funeral arrangements. Encourage the person pained by death to do the telephoning to friends, to the funeral director, and to family. These are more than chores to keep the bereaved busy. Such responsibility forces the grief-stricken to focus on death's reality.

3. Encourage people to talk about what happened prior to the death. Listen to them. Let them repeat the details. Be a listening ear as they rehearse where they were, what the doctor said, how they responded to the last gasp of the dying one. The minds need to retrace these happenings.

4. Don't neglect to mention the deceased by name. Our minds are delicate computers. Stored in them are memories of pleasing and embarrassing interactions with the deceased.

5. Include the children in the funeral plans. Death is a very real part of life. Some parents try to shield their offspring from death's reality by hustling them off to a neutral corner. Even a little child needs to be part of the sorrow, held in the arms of a grieving mother or father. He senses that something sad but special is going on. Why should we try to isolate the children from this part of life?

6. Keep pills in the closet. Contrary to the adage, big boys do cry when they feel the separation from loved ones. It is therapeutic for the bereaved to cry and show their pain. Don't deprive them of the therapy by loading them up with sedatives and sleeping pills. A tearful person is far better off than one who has been made into a zombie by tranquilizers.

7. Actualize the death. Hearing about someone's death by telephone or reading the obituary notice is not the same as seeing the corpse. Without facing the body, some bereaved people begin to deny that their loved one has died. Of course, if the body is disfigured in a hideous way, it may prove counterproductive to view it.

8. Show your humanity. Even a parakeet can talk. Humans are able to communicate on levels deeper than the verbal. Hug a hurting person. Wrap your arms around him. When people are in shock, words buzz by them. They bounce off like raindrops on a tin roof. Touch is very important then, because a physical contact can break through. Words only erect verbal walls.

9. Let the bereaved spit at God. When people are robbed of loved ones, they sometimes take it out on God. They ask why God allowed such a person to die. Their fuse is short when it comes to talking about God. They may shake their fist and swear at God, or say that prayer makes little sense to them. The Bible may seem to them an ancient book of religious nonsense. Walk with the bereaved and stick near them. If you put the lid on their frustrations by saying that God doesn't like such hostile reactions, you may find the grievors drifting away from religion. They may not feel accepted or understood. They may begin to think that God is a thousand miles from nowhere.

It's tough to minister effectively to those hurt by death. But following these practical tips can make visits to those who are grief-stricken easier and more effective.

Dr. Jack R. Van Ens is pastor of the Arvada Presbyterian Church, Arvada, Colorado

Caring Friends and Family Support: Information for Caregivers for the Bereaved

Do:

- Be there for the grieving person — physically and emotionally.
- Do help the person care for himself— nutrition and rest are very important.
- Do get him/her to a doctor if there are symptoms of illness.
- Cry with the person.
- Talk about the person who died.
- Discourage a brave front.
- Help him/her to avoid making major life decisions.
- Direct the individual to seek advice from an impartial person whom they can trust.
- Encourage the individual to maintain or take control of their lives.
- Encourage them to talk about their feelings.
- Share your feelings to open the door in the other person.

Do Let the Person:

- **Tell the story:** what happened from the bereaved person's viewpoint, how the person died, how the bereaved person was involved before, during and after, what the funeral was like, etc. It is important that they tell this story, sometimes over and over as it is part of healing.
- **How the bereaved person is now:** feelings, thoughts, reactions since the death and now.
- **Give information about grieving:** enough to let the bereaved person know their reactions are natural and normal. Remember there is no right or wrong way to grieve, nor are there time lines. Grieving people often feel very isolated and feel their reactions (i.e. wearing a piece of clothing from the deceased; "seeing" the deceased in their dreams or even on the street) are atypical or abnormal.
- **Check to see if their pain is causing them to feel suicidal:** do a suicide risk assessment; don't be afraid to bring that subject up, even if the death has been a suicide.
- **Bereaved person's needs for the future:** what is the bereaved person needing to have happen for themselves, what do they need to be doing to make that happen.

Bereavement Support Skills:

- **Listen:** Allow the person to say what they need to in their own way
- **Paraphrase:** "It sounds like you're feeling ..."
- **Affirm:** Acknowledge the person's loss and the difficulties they may be having
- **Reassure:** Let the person know that it is OK to feel whatever they are feeling; OK to be doing whatever they are needing to do; OK to not be feeling or doing
- **Focus:** When the time fits, focus the person to now, what's happening now and what they are needing to do now
- **Silence:** Allow the person time and space to find their own words
- **Action Planning:** What can the person be doing for themselves in the future in order to be helping themselves

*****Allow the person to be where they are.*****

Don't:

- Withdraw
- Control or take over

Don't Say:

- I know just how you feel.
- You should do this or that.
- Why don't you drink or eat something? You'll feel better.
- It was God's will.
- Be happy his/her suffering is over.
- This will bring your family closer together.
- You are so fortunate to have your other children.
- You will get married again.
- Life is for the living.

- You must be grateful he/she is dead (if the relationship was not good)
- God needs little children in heaven.
- You must count your blessings.
- You look so great.
- You're doing so well.
- We all have to die sooner or later.
- He was very old so it's OK.
- It was time for him/her to go.

C.H.I.L.D.

A simple Guide to Helping Children Handle Grief

CONSIDER

When you consider the effects of grief on children, remember first that grief like death has no respect for age.

The experience of grief is not based on our ability to “understand but on our ability to “feel”. We grieve because we have loved and any child who is old enough to love, is old enough to feel grief when someone dies.

As youth confers no immunity from grief, so age confers no complete understanding of it. In the face of death, we are all “as children”. Thus, explaining death to children begins when we dare to consider our own feelings and face ourselves in the real light of our grieving experience.

HONESTY

When talking about death with children “Honesty is the **only** policy”.

Because death is an uncomfortable subject, we try to “spare the children” (and ourselves) by not talking about it. We avoid words like “die” and “dead” and say “passed away” or “expired”. But half-truths and euphemisms intended to “ease the pain”, only make it worse when the child learns he has been told a lie. In times of crisis, children desperately need someone they can trust to give honest answers in simple language.

If you are worried about not having all the “answers”, take heart — you never will. Just remember when you don't have the answers, have the courage to say “I don't know”. Then join your children in finding the facts in **their own way**. You will give them something better than answers; you will give them the guidelines and courage to seek the truth.

INVOLVE

To “**involve**” children, means to provide a variety of ways to discover the realities of death and express the emotions of grief.

Like the atomic explosion that results when the center or nucleus of an atom is split, the experience of death at the center of our lives unleashes enormous energies. As we have learned to harness atomic power in our environment, so too we can harness the explosive energies of grief in our lives.

The power of grief lies largely in its pressurized condition. It makes us restless yet exhausted, hypersensitive yet numb. While tears are our most natural outlet, you can also help children by providing opportunities for active and creative play. Clay, paper, crayons and puppets are just a few useful toys in helping the very young express their feelings. Even when you cannot agree with them, try to help the young child talk about his play and let him know you accept the validity of his feelings.

With the release of pressure, comes the realization of pain; the desire for escape, explanation and perhaps revenge. Understanding the importance of **involvement** in the funeral can help you face the loss, gain understanding and focus the energies of revenge on rebuilding.

The funeral is composed of many helpful rituals you may never have considered. For instance the simple act of viewing the body can help children understand the physical truth about death in a way that words alone cannot explain. If you hesitate to expose your children to this custom, remember that what they imagine about death through TV fantasies would frighten most adults!

For younger children, involvement may mean placing a small bouquet, a photograph, a colored picture or prized possession into the casket to say “good-bye”. Simply printing their own name in the register book helps to say “I was here”, “I’m important too!”

For teens, presenting a brief eulogy or a poem at the funeral, placing a personal letter in the casket, being an acolyte, reader or casket bearer or any number of other creative acts of involvement can be very constructive rituals.

A child learns to grieve as he learns to love — one step at a time. For this reason, bringing children to a funeral before a crisis occurs is good education. Gradually then, they have an opportunity to assimilate the experience of sharing sorrow. Regardless, when tragedy strikes, children need to be involved to share the experience with you.

LISTEN

If we would relate to the grief of children at any age, we must learn to “hear” the whole message of their words and behavior.

When a child asks “why did he die?” our best response may be another question: one that clarifies “our” understanding of “his” question. A statement such as, “I’ve wondered about that myself, and I’m not sure I have the whole answer — what do you think?” acknowledges the validity of the child’s question and gives him permission to share what he really thinks. When we respond in turn, we must take care that our words and actions are consistent with what we mean to say. It requires some practice, but improving the way we listen and respond to each other pays valuable dividends in understanding and gives the child confidence in his search for meaning.

DO IT OVER AND OVER

This last letter reminds us that the healing of grief is a painfully slow process of repetition.

For children as well as adults, the general cycles of grief; shock and dumbness, pain and confusion, exhausted depression and renewed strength, continue in random order until each has been successfully worked through. Typically, the process of healing is interrupted by other changes in life and our grieving may lie dormant for a time. Though months or even years intervene, the unfinished work of grieving often returns in different forms for unexplained reasons. When it does, we are wise to accept it as one of the belated “gifts of grief”. For “good grief” like happiness itself, is not a point of arrival, but rather a mode of travel. That perhaps, is the silver lining that the “child” in all of us must learn to understand about grief.

SECTION 6: RELATED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

6:1 Crisis Management Policy 6.02

Rationale:

Crisis management planning at the Calgary Science School is based on the premise that the physical and emotional well being of students and staff are of primary importance and that the safety and security of students and staff are an integral part of an optimum learning environment.

Policy:

The Board will ensure that crisis management plans commensurate with the needs of the Calgary Science School are developed. The Board, through the school's administrative staff, will oversee the implementation of the crisis management plan.

Principles:

1. For the purposes of this policy statement, the word “crisis” is defined as any unusual situation, falling under or impinging on the jurisdiction of the school that could interfere with the well being of students and staff. This would include, but is not limited to, events such as the interruption of essential services to the school, fire, violence, threats, serious illness or accident involving members of the school community, and crisis in the country or community.
2. Minimizing risk and limitation of harm are fundamental considerations when developing a crisis management plan.
3. Safety rules for classes and the school at large are part of crisis management.
4. While it is impossible to predict the nature and scope of all potential crisis situations, proper planning can facilitate an appropriate response to crisis.
5. Staff must understand that the existence of a crisis management plan does not preclude the use of professional judgment to modify the plan when it is warranted.

Procedures:

1. The Board will promote a culture within the school that encourages consistent consideration for the safety and well being of students and staff in the creation of all plans, policies, and procedures.
2. A Crisis Management Team will be established at the beginning of each school year.
3. The school's Crisis Management Manual will outline the roles and responsibilities of the Crisis Management Team and the procedures to be followed by the school in the event of an incident.

4. Each year there will be staff training and practice in crisis procedures. Appropriate parts of the Crisis Plan will be communicated annually to parents, students and other stakeholders.
5. The crisis management plan will be revised periodically to incorporate new understandings and conditions.

6:2 Student Health and Safety Policy No. 6.04

Rationale:

The Calgary Science School Board recognizes that good health is an essential component of ensuring that students achieve their personal and educational goals. This objective is supported through the establishment of policy and procedures related to the administration of student health matters within the jurisdiction of the school.

Policy:

The Board of the Calgary Science School will ensure that the health and safety of all students is given priority consideration when planning all activities. Furthermore, school staff will ensure that all equipment and buildings are adequately maintained to minimize risk of injury to students.

Principles:

1. Attention to student health matters is a fundamental component of a healthy and nurturing school community.
2. All staff members play a critical role in the identification and amelioration of student health issues.
3. Parents or guardians are recognized as primary caregivers to their child (ren) and must be relied upon to provide timely and accurate information to the school regarding student health concerns that may impact their child's educational program.
4. All information regarding student health matters is subject to Freedom Of Information and Protection of Privacy guidelines.
5. The effective administration of grade specific health curricula will provide students with a framework by which to proactively recognize healthy lifestyle choices.

Procedures:

A. Disclosure of Health and Medical Information

Parents or guardians are responsible for notifying the school of their child's health needs and are expected to provide timely and accurate information about health concerns that could affect the child's behaviour and learning and/or the well being of other students and staff. Health and medical concerns are to be reported annually on the appropriate forms provided.

B. Administration of Medication

1. The administration of medication to students is the responsibility of the parent/guardian and the student's physician.
2. Students are expected to take required medications at home or under the supervision of a parent/guardian.
3. Notwithstanding sections 1 and 2 above, medications may be taken by a student at school provided that:
 - a. The student's attendance depends upon taking medication at school and may require assistance from designated staff to do so.
 - b. A properly completed and signed 'Authorization to Administer Medication and Release' Form is received from the parent and approved by the Principal.
 - c. In the case of prescription medications, an attending physician's signature is also required on the aforementioned form confirming that administration of such medication is within the realm of competence of an adult untrained in medical procedures.
4. An 'Authorization to Administer Medication and Release' Form is only valid for the school year and must be updated by the parent/guardian as required to reflect any changes in administration of a student's medication.
5. Information concerning the administration of medication to a student is to be recorded and stored in the student record file for the duration of the medication period.
6. Students are expected to assume as much responsibility as possible for the safe handling and self-administration of medication.
7. Medications are to be stored at school in accordance with the following requirements:
 - a. Prescription and non-prescription medications must be contained in approved childproof containers clearly labeled with the student's name, common name of medication, dosage and administration instructions.
 - b. All medications are to be stored in a secure facility within the main office, keyed for access by all staff as required.
 - c. A record of medications in storage must be maintained and kept in the storage facility.
 - d. Unused medications are to be returned to the parent/guardian at the end of the school year.
8. Arrangements to administer medication will remain in effect only as long as they are satisfactory to the Principal and staff members responsible.

C. Medical and Health Related Emergencies

1. When a student is deemed to require immediate medical attention due to accident or illness the following procedures are to be followed in conjunction with those detailed in the *Crisis Management Procedures Manual*:

- a. Contact Emergency Medical Services (911).
- b. Contact a parent/guardian or emergency contact person as soon as possible.
- c. Provide emergency first aid as required and ensure an adult remains with the student until relieved by a parent/guardian or emergency medical personnel.
- d. If the nature of the student's condition indicates that moving them will cause further injury, they should be immobilized until emergency medical personnel arrive.
- e. If a parent/guardian cannot be contacted, provide medical assistance as required and notify the parent/guardian as soon as practicable.
- f. Notify the Principal of the incident as soon as possible.
- g. Complete an *Incident Report* as soon as practicable after the event.

2. If a student is transported to a medical facility without a parent/guardian being contacted, a staff member must accompany the student until relieved by a parent/guardian or until the student is discharged from medical care, at which time the attending staff member will accompany the student back to school unless otherwise directed by the parent/guardian.

3. Notwithstanding the requirement to provide the most immediate care to the student, all decisions regarding medical treatment are to be left to the parent/guardian and the student in consultation with medical staff.

4. A student who suffers a minor injury or becomes ill at school is to receive treatment within the parameters of first aid training and resources available to staff members.

5. Any student placed in the medical room is to be monitored by staff.

6. A parent/guardian or emergency contact person is to be notified when a student complains of any illness or injury at school.

7. A student being dismissed from school due to illness or injury must be released to a parent/guardian or designate. Students are not to be dismissed without supervision unless directed to do so by a parent/guardian.

D. Allergies and Chronic Illnesses

1. Parents/guardians are responsible for informing the school of any allergies or chronic illnesses that may impact a student's attendance or performance at school. This information must include:
 - a. Nature of allergy or illness
 - b. Symptoms and/or indications requiring intervention
 - c. Emergency treatment procedures
 - d. Possible side effects or reactions to treatment
 - e. Name and phone number of attending physician.
2. Parents are to be informed that staff members are not specifically trained to administer medication or provide treatment for medical conditions.
3. In accordance with Section B of this policy, any medication or anti-allergen that a student may require must be properly stored and labeled for identification in a secure facility within the school office.
4. Accurate and current records of all students with severe allergies or chronic illnesses that may require emergency intervention are to be maintained in the office and confidentially circulated to all staff members.
5. Notwithstanding the foregoing, allergic reactions and chronic illnesses are to be dealt with in the same manner as Medical and Health Related Emergencies cited in Section C.

E. First Aid Training

1. In recognizing the potential for illness or injury to occur among students and staff, all staff members will receive accredited first aid certification training according to a schedule to be determined by the Professional Development Committee and school administration.

F. Suicide Prevention, Intervention and Postvention

1. The Calgary Science School will develop and maintain plans for suicide **prevention, intervention and postvention**.
 - a. Plans for these three components are to be developed as follows:
 - i. **Prevention** - Curricular inputs which educate students regarding coping and problem-solving strategies for living and which provide students with specific information relating to suicide at appropriate points in their education.
 - ii. **Intervention** - Provision for the early recognition of suicide potential, direct contact with the student involved, and referral to system and outside resources as necessary for assessment and care.
 - iii. **Postvention** - Plans for dealing with students and staff after a suicide (or other major loss) involving one of their members has occurred.
 - b. Plans are to be developed and kept current by the principal in consultation with staff and appropriate resource personnel.
 - c. Plans are to be included in the school's staff handbook and made known to all school staff (certificated and non-certificated) at the commencement of each school year.

2. At least one certificated staff member will serve as a “Suicide Prevention Trainer”.
3. The Suicide Prevention Trainer is responsible for:
 - a. Becoming knowledgeable regarding suicide prevention, intervention and postvention.
 - b. Providing in-service training to school-based staff designated intervenors.
 - c. Responding to requests from staff for consultation pertaining to students or to the subject of suicide in general.
4. At least one member of the certificated staff of every school is to be assigned responsibility for serving as a “Designated Intervenor” to:
 - a. Participate in the “Suicide Prevention Training Program (SPTP)” workshop.
 - b. Serve as a resource person to other staff within the school in matters pertaining to suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention.
 - c. Familiarize all school staff at the commencement of each school year with the following:
 - (i) Suicide prevention awareness materials
 - (ii) Prevention and intervention procedures.
5. Through the initiative of the principal, all certificated and non-certificated staff are to be provided with in-service activities designed to assist them in becoming and remaining familiar with the school’s suicide prevention plans and with the knowledge required to implement them. The services of the school’s designated intervenor are to be used in providing in-service training.
6. Plans for suicide prevention will include measures such as the following:
 - a. Providing instruction regarding the subject of suicide to students as a part of the elementary and junior high health curricula.
 - c. Dealing with suicide in curriculum wherever it is relevant and appropriate to do so.
 - d. Using staff from the Canadian Mental Health Association and other suitable community resource agencies.
7. Plans for suicide intervention will enable staff to become knowledgeable regarding the following subjects:
 - a. Indicators that a student may be (or may become) at risk of considering or attempting suicide.
 - b. Resource personnel:
 - (i) School’s Designated Intervener(s)
 - (ii) Area Office trainer(s)
 - (iii) Mental Health and other community contacts.
 - c. Action to be taken when students exhibit behaviour which indicates that they may become a suicide risk, :
 - (i) Staff are to make their observations known to their school’s designated intervener and principal.

- (ii) The designated intervener (and/or principal) is to consult with parents (and/or Child Welfare Services, if justified), and professional workers as judged appropriate in order to determine what assistance and further action is needed.
- d. Action to be taken when a student is judged to be at immediate risk of attempting suicide or when a student attempts it:
 - (i) Summon emergency medical care if injury has occurred.
 - (ii) Make immediate contact with a parent if possible. If justified, Child Welfare Services may be contacted either in addition to or in place of contact with a parent.
 - (iii) Obtain professional assistance as judged appropriate.
 - (iv) Make plans for ascertaining that the student receives follow-up care.
 - (v) Remain in the student's company until a parent, a law officer or professional assistance arrives.

8. Plans for suicide postvention will address a range of subjects detailed in the Crisis Management Manual (Appendices IX to XVI).

G. Child Abuse

1. Any staff member who has reasonable and probable grounds to believe that a child is in need of protective services shall forthwith report the matter to Child and Family Services.
2. A staff member reporting suspected child abuse shall inform the Principal as soon as practicable.

H. Child Custody

1. The Calgary Science School will observe the terms and conditions of any custody and access agreement or court order that has been provided in writing by a parent/guardian or authorized social agency.
2. A student is only to be released to a non-custodial adult with the expressed consent of the parent/guardian.
3. When a student is released to a non-custodial adult, the following information must be obtained and recorded:
 - a. Student name
 - b. Non-custodial adult's name, address, and phone number
 - c. Street address of destination if other than the student's home
 - d. Reason for student's departure from school
 - e. Time of departure.