



# Supports for Staff



In the event that a Traumatic Event occurs at Durham District School Board the following resources and supports are available to staff.

Immediately following and for the first few days after a traumatic event:

**Durham District School Board Traumatic Events Response Team:** This is a team made up of DDSB personnel from the DDSB Psychological Services and Social Work departments, who will deploy in response to a Traumatic Event. The goal of this team is to provide short term support, in the immediate aftermath of a traumatic event, to those staff and students who are struggling to manage the impact of the event. The roles and responsibilities of the team will be communicated to staff shortly after a traumatic event has occurred.

**Durham District School Board Psychological First Aiders: (DDSB PFA Available in 2018)** DDSB Psychological First Aiders are staff members who have completed the on-line course. DDSB Psychological First Aiders help to identify both staff and students who may be struggling as a result of traumatic event, and then provide short term support and direction on how to access more intensive and professional supports that may be required.

**DDSB Employee and Family Assistance Program, the Durham District School Board Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) Provider Morneau Shepell: 1-844-880-9142**

Ongoing or Outside Supports:

**Distress Centre Durham (24/7 Phone Distress Helpline): 905-430-2522 or 1-800-452-0688** The Helpline is a good community resource to provide referral information pertaining to appropriate inquiries from the callers. The Helpline is available to the callers 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and 365 days a year! Callers discuss issues and feelings related to:

- relationships
- mental health issues
- loneliness and or isolation
- pain
- fear
- hopelessness
- despair
- addiction issues
- sexuality
- abuse / violence
- suicide

**Ontario Shores Crisis Hotline: 1-800-263-2679** - This is a 24-hour phone support line that can be utilized if you are experiencing a mental health crisis.

**Crisis Access Linkage Line: 1-800-742-1890** - This is a 24-hour phone support for people of all ages by mental health specialists. The Crisis Access Linkage may link with a mobile crisis team if person is in immediate crisis. They also provide follow up support and community linkage.

**Durham Region Health Connection Line: 1-800-841-2729** - This is a non-crisis line on which you speak to a registered nurse

**Emergency: 911** - If you require emergency services, please visit your closest hospital emergency room or **dial 911** on to reach Emergency Medical Services (EMS).



# Supports for Administrators



In the event that a Traumatic Event occurs at Durham District School Board the following resources and supports are available to staff.

An important consideration when dealing with a traumatic event is identifying and implementing supports for students, staff and the “caregivers”, including administration. Administrators are expected to manage the traumatic event as well as taking care of others during and after the event; both in short-term and long-term. Often there are little to no supports in place for the administrator to help them deal with the emotional and psychological toll of the event. As compassionate caregivers administrators, support staff and school staff need to be aware of the impact on their own well-being (“vicarious trauma”) when dealing with a traumatic event.

Support of administrators needs to occur as they progress through the stages of recovery; both in the short-term and the long-term. While dealing with an emergency, administrators run on “instinct”. Once the situation stabilizes, emotions return, including any feelings of distress associated with the event. Administrators need the time necessary to talk through the traumatic event with a professional. In addition, connecting with and talking to a “trusted” colleague helps the administrator continue the process of addressing his or her negative emotions. Having a colleague check to ensure that the administrator is looking after himself or herself is an effective well-being strategy. Taking action allows the administrator to restore a sense of control and counteracts the feeling of powerlessness. Interacting and working with others in a positive way allows administrators to regain control and begin to heal (*Recovering from Trauma*, Psychology Today, McGrath 2016).

Below is a list of exemplary practices based on recommendations from *Crisis Support for Principals and Vice Principals (Provincial Table Group)* that will be used as a set of processes or guidelines to support Principals and Vice Principals.

- Sharing of /or assistance with daily procedural duties either by Superintendent or a colleague from another school during and immediately following a Traumatic Event or Crisis
- Regular Check-ins to both Principals and Vice Principals by Supervisory Officer and Colleague or Social Worker or Psychologist or Staff Wellness Specialist during and immediately following a Traumatic Event or Crisis
- Check-in with Administrators prior to critical periods following an event (example anniversary) by the Supervisory Officer and possibly Colleague, Social Worker or Psychologist or Staff Wellness Specialist
- Reallocation of support funds if necessary to support needs during and after a traumatic event (Staffing, hospitality, external support)
- Debriefing of Administrators following the traumatic event by Superintendent and Traumatic Events Response Team
- Training for Administrators in crisis and Trauma response

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## Tips for Adults

Reactions/Behavior	Responses	Examples of things to do and say
<p><u>High anxiety/arousal:</u> Tension and anxiety are common after disasters. Adults may be excessively worried about the future, have difficulties sleeping, problems concentrating, and feel jumpy and nervous. These reactions can include rapid heart beat and sweating.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Use breathing and/or other relaxation skills.</li> <li>▪ Take time during the day to calm yourself through relaxation exercises. These can make it easier to sleep, concentrate, and will give you energy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Breathing exercise: Inhale slowly through your nose and comfortably fill your lungs all the way down to your stomach, while saying to yourself, “My body is filled with calm.” Exhale slowly through your mouth and empty your lungs, while silently saying to yourself, “My body is letting go.” Do this five times slowly, and as many times a day as needed.</li> </ul>
<p><u>Concern or shame</u> over your own reactions. Many people have strong reactions after a disaster, including fear and anxiety, difficulty concentrating, shame about how they reacted, and feeling guilty about something. It is expectable and understandable to feel many emotions in the aftermath of an extremely difficult event.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Find a good time to discuss your reactions with a family member or trusted friend.</li> <li>▪ Remember that these reactions are common and it takes time for them to subside.</li> <li>▪ Correct excessive self-blame with realistic assessment of what actually could have been done.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ When talking with someone, find the right time and place, and ask if it is okay to talk about your feelings.</li> <li>▪ Remind yourself that your feelings are expectable and you are not “going crazy,” and that you are not at fault for the disaster.</li> <li>▪ If these feelings persist for a month or more, you may wish to seek professional help.</li> </ul>
<p><u>Feeling overwhelmed</u> by tasks that need to be accomplished (housing, food, paperwork for insurance, child care, parenting).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Identify what your top priorities are.</li> <li>▪ Find out what services are available to help get your needs met.</li> <li>▪ Make a plan that breaks down the tasks into manageable steps.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Make a list of your concerns and decide what to tackle first. Take one step at a time.</li> <li>▪ Find out which agencies can help with your needs and how to access them.</li> <li>▪ Where appropriate, rely on your family, friends, and community for practical assistance.</li> </ul>
<p><u>Fears of recurrence and reactions to reminders:</u> It is common for survivors to fear that another disaster will occur, and to react to things that are reminders of what happened.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Be aware that reminders can include people, places, sounds, smells, feelings, time of day.</li> <li>▪ Remember that media coverage of the disaster can be a reminder and trigger fears of it happening again.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ When you are reminded, try saying to yourself, “I am upset because I am being reminded of the disaster, but it is different now because the disaster is not happening and I am safe.”</li> <li>▪ Limit your viewing of news reports so you just get the information that you need.</li> </ul>
<p><u>Changes in attitude, view of the world and of oneself:</u> Strong changes in people’s attitudes after a disaster are common, including questioning one’s spiritual beliefs, trust in others and social agencies, and concerns about one’s own effectiveness, and dedication to helping others.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Postpone any major unnecessary life changes in the immediate future.</li> <li>▪ Remember that dealing with post-disaster difficulties increases your sense of courage and effectiveness.</li> <li>▪ Get involved with community recovery efforts.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Getting back to a more structured routine can help improve decision-making.</li> <li>▪ Remind yourself that going through a disaster can have positive effects on what you value and how you spend your time.</li> </ul>

## Tips for Adults

Reactions/Behavior	Responses	Examples of things to do and say
<p><u>Using alcohol and drugs, or engaging in gambling or high-risk sexual behaviors:</u> Many people feel out of control, scared, hopeless, or angry after a disaster and engage in these behaviors to feel better. This can especially be a problem if there was pre-existing substance abuse or addiction.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Understand that using substances and engaging in addictive behaviors can be a dangerous way to cope with what happened.</li> <li>▪ Get information about local support agencies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Remember that substance use and other addictive behaviors can lead to problems with sleep, relationships, jobs, and physical health.</li> </ul>
<p><u>Shifts in interpersonal relationships:</u> People may feel differently towards family and friends; for example, they may feel overprotective and very concerned for each other's safety, frustrated by the reactions of a family member or friend, or they may feel like pulling away from family and friends.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Understand that family and friends are a major form of support during the recovery period.</li> <li>▪ It is important to understand and tolerate different courses of recovery among family members.</li> <li>▪ Rely on other family members for help with parenting or other daily activities when you are upset or under stress.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Don't withdraw from others because you feel you might burden them. Most people do better after disasters turning to others.</li> <li>▪ Ask your friends and family how they are doing, rather than just giving advice, or telling them to "get over it." Offer a supportive ear or lend a helping hand.</li> <li>▪ Say, "We're crabby with each other and that is completely normal, given what we've been through. I think we're handling things amazingly. It's a good thing we have each other."</li> </ul>
<p><u>Excessive anger:</u> Some degree of anger is understandable and expected after a disaster, especially when something feels unfair. However, when it leads to violent behavior, extreme anger is a serious problem.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Find ways to manage your anger that help you rather than hurt you.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Take time to cool down, walk away from stressful situations, talk to a friend about what is making you angry, get physical exercise, distract yourself with positive activities, or problem-solve the situation that is making you angry.</li> <li>▪ Remind yourself that being angry may harm important relationships.</li> <li>▪ If you become violent, get immediate help.</li> </ul>
<p><u>Sleep difficulties:</u> Trouble falling asleep and frequent awakening is common after a disaster, as people are on edge and worried about adversities and life changes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Make sure you have good sleep routines.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Go to sleep at the same time every day.</li> <li>▪ Don't have caffeinated drinks in the evening.</li> <li>▪ Reduce alcohol consumption.</li> <li>▪ Increase daytime exercise.</li> <li>▪ Relax before bedtime.</li> <li>▪ Limit daytime naps to 15 minutes, and do not nap later than 4 pm.</li> </ul>