DDSB TRAUMATIC RESPONSE: RESPONSIBILITIES

DDSB Ignite Learning

AFTER HOURS, CALL FAMILY OF SCHOOLS SUPERINTENDENT/EDUCATION OFFICER ON CELL PHONE

INITIAL RESPONSE

SAFE SCHOOLS AND OPERATIONS SUPERINTENDENTS

- Key personnel responsible for overseeing the response and communication
- Coordinate and initiate contacts immediately, during and following the event

DIRECTOR AND ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

- Support the response and communications by the Safe Schools and Operations Superintendents
- Connect with the Chair of the Board/Trustees

PRE-MOBILIZATION: CONSULTATION

SAFE SCHOOLS AND OPERATIONS EDUCATION OFFICERS

- Coordinate the emergency response with the Principal
- Communicate with the Unions and nearby schools, including other school boards, independent schools, daycares, etc.

FAMILY OF SCHOOLS SUPERINTENDENT/EDUCATION OFFICER

- SO/EO is responsible for communicating with Principals who coordinates the school response and supports
- Support the school involved in the incident
- Contact the trustee(s) connected to the school(s) involved
- Create the "Issue Note" to be shared with the Trustees
- Contact the Public Inquiries Officer at the Barrie Regional Office of the Ministry of Education

INCLUSIVE STUDENT SERVICES SUPERINTENDENT/EDUCATION OFFICER

- Collaborate with the Chiefs of Psychological Services/ Social Work and the Mental Health Lead to coordinate immediate, short-term and long-term support for the school(s)

MANAGER OF COMMUNICATIONS

- Enacts the communications strategy
- Supports the school with communications
- Liaise with the media
- Informs Senior Administration, Officers, Managers and staff not to attend the school for "regular business," when required. If necessary the school day may be modified

MANAGER OF FACILITIES

- Determines if a facilities response is required and, in consultation with the Associate Director, enacts the plan
- Informs Facilities staff not to attend for "regular business," when required

MANAGER OF TRANSPORTATION

- Determines if a transportation response is required and, in consultation with Superintendent responsible for Transportation, enacts the plan

MANAGER OF HEALTH AND SAFETY

- Liaises with regional partners, if the traumatic event is external to the school
- Liaises with the Manager of Facilities in the event of physical or environmental impact to the school
- Notifies the Ministry of Labour, if critical injury occurred, and leads investigations

MOBILIZATION: BOARD-LEVEL

BOARD TRAUMATIC RESPONSE TEAM

- Key personnel who coordinate and deploy support to the school, including the Director, Associate Director, Superintendents of Safe Schools, Operations, Inclusive Student Services and Families of Schools, the Education Officers of Safe Schools and Operations, the Managers of Communications, Health and Safety, Facilities and Transportation, the Chiefs of Psychological Services and Social Work, and the Mental Health Lead
- Determines the roles and responsibilities
- Plans with the School Traumatic Response Team to determine short-term and long-term actions

MOBILIZATION: SCHOOL-LEVEL

PRINCIPAL/VICE PRINCIPAL

- Follows the *Police/School Board Protocol* and the *911 Emergency Flipchart* for immediate response
- Assists the injured and contact families
- Coordinates with Psychological Services/Social Work to provide immediate, short-term and long-term supports
- Liaises with the Board Traumatic Response Team

SCHOOL TRAUMATIC RESPONSE TEAM

- Determines school roles and responsibilities
- Coordinates and plans with the Board Traumatic Response Team to determine short-term and long-term actions

DEBRIEF(S)

SAFE SCHOOLS AND OPERATIONS SUPERINTENDENTS

- Coordinate debrief(s) to determine what worked well and areas for growth
- Decides who will be involved in the debrief(s)
- If needed, revise resources, e.g., *Traumatic Response Protocol*, *911 Emergency Flipchart*, *Tragic Events Protocol*

Note: Please refer to the section *Members of the Board and School Traumatic Response Teams* for more detail, page 5.

SCHOOL TRAUMATIC RESPONSE:

THE PRINCIPAL/VICE-PRINCIPAL AND/OR "DESIGNATE" IS IN CHARGE AND ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE BELOW

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AFTER HOURS, CALL FAMILY OF SCHOOLS SUPERINTENDENT/EDUCATION OFFICER ON CELL PHONE

IMMEDIATE

CONDUCT IMMEDIATE ASSESSMENT

- Confirm type of traumatic incident to inform next steps
- Obtain essential information and provide it to emergency responders
- Coordinate first aid for injured

CALL FOR SUPPORT

- Call 911—Refer to the *911 Emergency Flipchart*
- Inform the Family of Schools Superintendent/ Safe Schools and Education Officer

INITIATE EMERGENCY PROTOCOLS

- Enact a Lockdown, Hold and Secure, Shelter-In-Place or Evacuation if required—Follow the *Police/School Board Protocol*
- Inform agencies/groups in the school, e.g. daycare, community-use

WAIT FOR EMERGENCY RESPONDERS

- Continue to communicate with emergency responders and Family of Schools Superintendent
- Investigate and gather information for emergency responders
- Continue to support the injured
- Assign staff to meet emergency responders and help with crowd control

WORK WITH EMERGENCY RESPONDERS TO STABILIZE AND INVESTIGATE

- Establish a "Command Centre"; develop and communicate a response plan
- Monitor and continue to care for the injured (follow the *Police/School Board Protocol*)
- Provide information to the Family of Schools Superintendent/Education Officer
- Communicate safety expectations to staff and students
- Collaborate with the police and conduct a school investigation
- Contact families of the injured

SHORT-TERM

INITIATE RECOVERY AND TRAUMATIC RESPONSE

- Coordinate with the School Traumatic Response Team and the Board Response Team to determine immediate, short-term and long-term supports for students and staff
- Review and refer to *Dealing with Traumatic Events: Crisis and Loss*

STAFF MEETING

- As soon as possible, conduct a meeting for staff (if applicable include other staff, e.g., school daycare) refer to *School Traumatic Response Agenda for Staff Meeting, page 27*
- Conduct follow-up information meetings

COMMUNICATION PLAN

- Work with the Police, Communications and Social Work/Psychological Services/Mental Health Lead to determine the information and supports to be shared with staff, students, parents, community and media
- If required, cancel community-use permits

LONG-TERM

DEBRIEFINGS

- Work with the Police, Communications, Social Work/ Psychological Services, Mental Health Lead, Safe Schools, Operations and Family of Schools Superintendents to conduct debriefings with stakeholders, including students, staff, parents, emergency responders, etc.

ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS

- Be aware of similar traumatic events in the community, and the "anniversary" of the event
- Plan for supports for vulnerable staff and students
- Conduct an information session for parents and the community
- Review and refer to *Dealing with Traumatic Events: Crisis and Loss* for additional information and resources

Traumatic Response

Traumatic events should be viewed as part of a continuum that includes incidents that impact a school, such as a suicide, death of a student/staff, or a natural disaster. Although there are similarities, there are differences between a “tragedy or crisis” and a “traumatic event.” According to Kevin Cameron (2011), an International Expert on violence, threat assessment and trauma, the differences are as follows:

- A tragedy or crisis only impacts the immediate school community. A traumatic event usually impacts the school, other schools and the community

- A tragedy or crisis can be contained by the school. A traumatic event requires a systematic approach, including additional support and resources beyond what the school can provide

- With a tragedy or crisis, there is a high degree of predictability about who is most likely to be impacted. During a traumatic event, it is challenging to predict who will be impacted

THE TRAUMATIC RESPONSE CRITICAL PERIODS

The Traumatic Response Model identifies five critical periods of which to be aware. The critical periods include:

Critical Period 1 –
Two weeks following any high profile traumatic incident

Critical Period 2 –
A month and a half prior to and after significant “family” holidays (e.g., winter break)

Critical Period 3 –
A month to a month and a half prior to the anniversary of the event

Critical Period 4 –
When another similar high profile traumatic incident occurs

Critical Period 5 –
Circumstances unique to each school community that depend on how well staff are equipped to deal with their own trauma, and their willingness to address these issues

Responding to a Traumatic Event

A traumatic event may consist of one event or a series of events that significantly upset an individual, family, classroom, school, and/or community. Effective traumatic event responses need to be timely and planned. Consider the following factors when determining the appropriate response:

- Nature of the event
- Age(s) of individuals affected
- Dynamics of the school community
- Wishes of the immediate family(ies)
- The family(ies) cultural, ethnic and religious needs

A School Traumatic Response Team responds to traumatic events which have occurred on school grounds and in the school community. Traumatic events may include the loss of life and/or serious injury, motor vehicle accidents, a violent act against a student, parent, staff member or other persons known to the school community, or threats to the safety of the school environment. It may also include natural disasters, e.g., tornadoes or fire, large scale acts of violence, or threats of violence.

The primary goal of traumatic response is the de-escalation of the effects of an unexpected trauma, and of the "overwhelming" experience for staff, students and parents involved. Managing a traumatic situation in a sensitive and timely fashion is an essential aspect of intervention. The School Traumatic Response Team serves a critical function. Each member of the school team has a key role in addressing the needs of students and staff during a traumatic event.

In most situations, the School Traumatic Response Team will consist of the Principal, Vice-Principal, key school staff, Psychological Services staff and Social Work staff, and may work in conjunction with the Board Traumatic Response Team.

(Adapted from: J.K. Cameron and G. Woods (2000). Threat Assessment Training Guide, Canadian Threat Assessment Training Board. Lethbridge Community College Lethbridge, Alberta)

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD AND SCHOOL TRAUMATIC RESPONSE TEAMS

The members of the Board Traumatic Response Team include:

- Director and Associate Director
- The Superintendents of Safe Schools, Operations and Inclusive Student Services
- The Family of Schools Superintendent and Administrative Officer
- The Safe Schools and Operations Administrative Officers
- The Managers of Communications, Facilities and Transportation
- The Chiefs of Psychological Services and Social Work
- The Mental Health Lead

Note: It is important that if a member is away that a designate is assigned, and the Director and Associate Director are informed.

The members of the School Traumatic Response Team include:

- Principal
- Selected staff (e.g. Teacher-in-Charge, Guidance, SERT)
- School Social Worker
- School Psychological Services staff
- Staff with First Aid qualifications and Violence Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA) and Traumatic Events System (TES) training

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Role of the Safe Schools and Operations Superintendents

- Key personnel responsible for coordinating the response and communications
- Initiate the Board Traumatic Response Team
- Coordinate the list of who needs to be contacted: immediately, during and after the traumatic event. This will include who will be called and who will make the calls
- Enact the e-mail chain that includes all of the members of the Board Traumatic Response Team, the School Principal and Senior Administration
- Liaise with the Director, the Associate Director, the Family of Schools Superintendent, the Superintendent of Inclusive Student Services, the Chiefs of Psychological Services and Social Work, the Manager of Communications, the Mental Health Lead, the Manager of Facilities, the Manager of Health and Safety, the Manager of Transportation and the Board/School Traumatic Response Team
- Determine, in conjunction with the Principal, what members of the Board Traumatic Response Team or others should be on site to support the response (e.g., Manager of Communications, Safe Schools Officer, Chief Psychologist, Wellness Specialist, additional administrators)
- Create an email group for ease of communication

Role of the Director and Associate Director

- Support the response and communications by the Safe Schools and Operations Superintendents
- Connect with the Chair of the Board and Trustees

Role of the Family of School Administrative Officer/Superintendent

- Provide leadership and support for the school affected
- Liaise with the Safe Schools and Operations Superintendents
- Liaise with the Trustees associated with the school
- Create the “Issue Note” to be shared with Trustees
- Work with the Manager of Communications to determine the school communication plan, including:
    - The script for secretaries receiving calls to the school
    - The speaking points for teachers to use with the students in their class(es)
    - Communications to parents, e.g., information on the website, a letter to go home, and/or a Synrevoice message
- If there is an on-line component to the traumatic event, contact the Technology Department for assistance

Role of the Inclusive Student Services Superintendent/Officers

- Work with the School Traumatic Response Team to support students who are medically fragile or vulnerable
- Collaborate with the Chiefs of Psychological Services/Social Work, Mental Health Lead, and Wellness Specialist to coordinate immediate, short-term and long-term supports for students and staff

Role of the Safe Schools and Operations Administrative Officers

- Work with the Principal, emergency personnel and Manager of Health and Safety to coordinate the emergency response and follow-up
- If required, communicate with schools that are nearby, including those in the Durham Catholic District School Board, French Language Board, independent schools, daycares
- Support the Family of Schools Administrative Officer/Superintendent and the Board/School Traumatic Response Team throughout the process
- Communicate with the Unions, in consultation with the Safe Schools Superintendent, when needed

Role of the Principal/Vice-Principal

- Oversee and lead the School Traumatic Response Team
- Have the authority and responsibility for the actions taken by School Team Members
- Conduct a thorough investigation, obtain all available facts, and determine the seriousness of the situation. If there is police involvement, follow the *Police/School Board Protocol*, and work in partnership with the police

- Initiate a Lockdown, Hold and Secure or Shelter-In-Place
- Inform agencies/groups in the school, e.g., daycare, community-use
- Call 911 or other emergency services, as required
- Identify and obtain assistance for the injured
- Notify the families of the students involved, in particular, the injured
- Communicate with school staff
- Work with Human Resources to ensure that there are supports for staff, e.g., Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP)
- Liaise between the School Team and the Board Team. The Principal will contact his or her Administrative Officer or Superintendent to inform him or her about the traumatic event. The Principal will determine with the Family of Schools Administrative Officer/Superintendent who will contact the Chiefs of Social Work or Psychological Services to ensure that there is immediate support at the school (follow the resources *Dealing with Traumatic Events: Crisis and Loss* and *ASIST*)
- Complete all necessary paperwork (e.g., Violent Incident and Insurance forms)
- Implement Bias-Aware Progressive Discipline, when appropriate

Role of the Manager of Communications

- Coordinates and implements the Communications Plan (refer to C*risis Communications*, page 28)
- Works with the Principal and the police to determine the information to be shared with students, staff, parents and the community
- Creates “Speaking Notes” for staff
- Coordinates the response to the media
- Assists the Family of Schools Superintendent with the creation of an “Issue Note” to be shared with Trustees
- Assists with staff meetings, community information sharing and debriefings
- Monitors DRPS new releases, media reports and social media
- Updates Safe Schools, Operations and Family of Schools Superintendents regarding media issues

Role of the Manager of Facilities

- If there is a facilities element associated with the traumatic event, the Manager of Facilities coordinate the response and communicates updates with the Associate Director, Superintendents and, if requested, Trustees
- Coordinates the use of the Communication Room. The Communication Room can be used to support a traumatic event in the following ways:

- In the event of a traumatic event that occurs “after hours”, an administrator can inform the staff in the Communications Room at monitoring.support@ddsb.ca or at 905-665-8932
- In the event of an “after hours” emergency such as a fire, staff in the Communications Room become the first point of contact. Information is then sent to emergency services and to on-call personnel. Staff in the Communications Room also have a list of contacts and provide updates as they become available
- Can be used to provide support for an investigation, e.g., one involving the police. Cameras at the school can be viewed remotely from the station. This would be useful if there was an incident at one of the schools in the northern part of the Board, and emergency services needed information on the situation prior to arrival

Role of the Manager of Transportation

- Arranges emergency transportation, if required
- Deals with any disruption of busing associated with the traumatic event
- If required, coordinates an evacuation with emergency services and the municipality

Role of School Staff on the School Traumatic Response Team

- Manage multiple inquiries and demands during a traumatic event (as such, staff members on this team should have clear and factual information)
- Identify and refer students and staff who need additional emotional support to the Psychological Services or Social Work staff assigned to the school

Role of the Chiefs of Psychological Services and Social Work

- In consultation with the Superintendent of Inclusive Student Services and the Board Traumatic Response Team, the Chiefs determine the immediate, short-term and long-term supports needed, and the level of support that is required
- Assist with coordination and deployment of staff to support the school during a traumatic event
- Ensure that there are immediate, short-term and long-term supports for the school
- Deploy Psychological Services and Social Work staff to the school.
- Collaborate with the Principal and the Communications Manager to ensure that the information and resources shared with staff, students and parents are appropriate
- Ensure that supports are provided to other schools who may be directly or indirectly impacted by this event
- Work in collaboration with the Mental Health Lead and the Wellness Specialist

Role of the Mental Health Lead

- Provides support to Manager of Communications, as required, regarding messaging related to the event and response
- Collaborates with the Chiefs of Psychological Services, Social Work and the Wellness Specialist to coordinate Board and system response to traumatic event
- Supports post-incident planning as required, provides connections to community resources, plans for critical periods and supports the School Traumatic Response Team

Role of Social Work Staff/Psychological Services Staff

- Work with the Principal and the School Traumatic Response Team to determine immediate and subsequent supports.
- Facilitate access to resources.
- Assist the Principal with implementing the immediate, short-term and long-term supports
- Provide information to school staff and students about what to expect cognitively, physically, emotionally and socially from students, as a result of exposure to a traumatic event
- Coordinate and implement “triage” support for students
- Provide individual and group counselling and/or support for families
- Support school personnel with classroom strategies
- Facilitate further support from community agencies and the Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) through the Wellness Specialist, when necessary
- Identify/assess individuals requiring more intensive follow-up support in collaboration with school staff

Role of the Manager of Health & Safety

- If the traumatic event is external to the school(s), e.g., environmental, liaises with Regional Partners (Durham Emergency Management Office) and coordinates emergency response with the Safe Schools and Operations Administrative Officers
- Where the traumatic event has impacted the environmental or physical condition of the school, liaises with the Manager of Facilities and assists with the appropriate response
- If the traumatic event results in a critical injury and/or requires notification to the Ministry of Labour, follows prescribed steps outlined in the OHSA and take a lead role in any resulting investigations

Role of Community Agency Professionals

- The services of Community Professionals may be required for additional support. The Chief of Psychological Services and Social Work, in consultation with the Principal, will determine if there is a need to utilize other community supports, e.g., Victim Support Services, Community Mental Health

Role of the Wellness Specialist

- Provides information as needed on supports available to staff, e.g., Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP)
- EFAP is available to assist school staff after a traumatic event has occurred. Staff will be reminded of the service that is available and that they must initiate this referral. If the Principal believes it is necessary for an EFAP representative to attend at the school to provide support, then the Principal will make the arrangements in consultation with the Wellness Specialist

RESPONDING TO A TRAUMATIC EVENT - SCHOOL TRAUMATIC RESPONSE TEAM

Please note: It is important to refer to the following resources on dealing with a tragic event when addressing trauma at your school. A Tragic Event involves a situation wherein death, or the possibility of death, and its associated 'loss' are experienced. Loss involves the person's specific emotional and behavioural response to a tragic event. It is not just the incident itself that renders an event tragic, but also the emotional reactions that such an event engenders: anguish, sadness, confusion and anger.

Schools Teams can derive directions and resources regarding how to navigate a tragic event from two DDSB documents:

1. The School Response to Tragic Events: A Quick Reference Guide is practical and immediate reference tool to assist schools in the event of a tragic event; it provides best practice guidelines to Administrators and other school staff. A draft version is located in the 911 document.

2. The Dealing with Traumatic Events: Crisis and Loss document, which provides more detailed information about effective responses to loss and grief; it provides extensive resources to assist school in communicating about a tragic event, dealing with media, responding to parent/guardians, having classroom discussions, being culturally sensitive, commemorating students and staff, etc. It can be accessed via the DDSB Staff Portal, and is notated as 'Crisis and Loss' on the pull down menu.

The following represents a generalized plan that can be adapted for use with a traumatic event that affects a school. The plan includes the following recommended actions:

- Gather the facts
- Contact emergency services, including police and fire
- Contact agencies in the school, e.g., daycare, community-use
- Contact your Administrative Officer/Superintendent (who will contact the Safe Schools and Operations Superintendents to activate the Board Traumatic Response Team)
- Activate the School Traumatic Response Team
- Communicate with staff
- Set up counselling opportunities
- Talk with students
- Inform parents/school community
- Gather and share important additional information, such as funeral arrangements
- Review your response
- Remembrance activities

The information that follows provides further explanation for the bulleted list shown above:

Gather the Facts/Contact Emergency Services

The Principal confirms that a traumatic event has occurred using sources of reliable information, such as:

- Immediate family
- Police
- School board personnel
- Community resource personnel, such as a mental health worker
- Witnesses
- Injured people

(Adapted with permission from: Responding to Critical Incidents, A Resource for Schools, Copyright 2002 Province of British Columbia. All rights reserved. Reprinted with permission of the Province of British Columbia.)

When necessary, the Principal contacts the police and/or emergency services (911) and assists the injured.

The Principal will follow the Police/School Board Protocol and if required, put the school into Lockdown, Hold and Secure or Shelter-In-Place.

The Principal will inform agencies/groups in the school, e.g., daycare, community-use.

The Principal collects information about the traumatic event, including:

- Verification of the details
- Identification of individuals involved, and contact their parents/guardians
- Evaluation of the impact of the event on school staff and students with the assistance of Psychological Services and/or Social Work and, if necessary, responds to the immediate safety needs of students and staff

The Principal consults with the families affected to determine their wishes concerning information to be shared with staff, students, the community and media.

Contact your Administrative Officer/Superintendent

The Principal contacts his or her Family of Schools Administrative Officer/Superintendent. The Family of Schools Administrative Officer/Superintendent will contact the Safe Schools and Operations Superintendents who will activate the Board Traumatic Response Team.

In consultation with the Family of Schools Administrative Officer/Superintendent, the Principal arranges for school staff(s) to be informed of the incident (e.g., staff meeting).

Activate the Board and School Traumatic Response Teams

The Safe Schools and Operations Superintendents activate the Board Traumatic Response Team.

The Principal contacts the members of the School Traumatic Response Team and calls them together for a meeting. The School Traumatic Response Team will work in collaboration with the Board Traumatic Response Team to develop and implement an appropriate plan of action that takes into consideration the wishes of the family or families, the needs of the school and the *Police/School Board Protocol*. In brief, during the initial meeting the team should:

- Review the School Traumatic Response Team Checklist (included in this Appendix)
- Determine immediate, short-term and long-term plans of action
- Clarify roles and responsibilities
- Determine a communications procedure that ensures confidentiality is maintained while allowing necessary information to be shared with school staff. Privacy issues should be clarified
- Arrange or deploy school-based support through Psychological Services and Social Work

The Principal collaborates with the Police and the DDSB Communications Department to decide what information can and should be shared. If an incident occurred during an evening or weekend, a scripted telephone or email message can be used to contact staff prior to the first school day. The Principal should:

- Ensure that each person understands the message
- Not leave a message on an answering machine/voice mail or with a child
- Ensure that the people who are most affected by the traumatic incident receive a phone call that includes offers of support
- Include information about the staff meeting and the School Traumatic Response Team
- Consider attaching in an email the document “Leading a Classroom Discussion after a Traumatic Event,” found in Appendix B, for staff to review before the staff meeting

As soon as possible, the School Traumatic Response Team should:

- Liaise with the Board Traumatic Response Team and share any additional details about the event (follow the resources Dealing with Traumatic Events: Crisis and Loss and ASIST)
- The principal ensures that the media contact person, e.g., a Superintendent or the Manager of Communications, is provided with the up-to-date information necessary to effectively carry out the role

- When necessary, the principal determines the family's wishes regarding personal property and ensure that personal property is secure (when necessary, follow the *Police/School Board Protocol*)
- In collaboration with the Police and/or the Communications Department, the principal prepares a written statement to be used at the staff meeting. Also, decide whether information will be posted on school website(s) and/or if a letter will go home with students informing parents about the traumatic event
- The principal works with the Communications Department to create "Speaking Notes" for the administration and staff to use when addressing queries or media
- Plan the staff meeting, including requesting the participation of the Board Traumatic Response Team members (e.g, Social work, Psychological Services staff, Mental Health Lead)
- Access support for the school through the deployment of Psychological Services and Social Work, and the Mental Health Lead to assist in making the necessary arrangements
- Decide on any revisions to the short-term and long-term course of action, including counselling for students and staff, and, if applicable, share information about the funeral plans or memorials
- Assess whether additional administration, staff and/or clerical staff are needed. The Family of Schools Superintendent or Administrative Officer should make arrangements (when possible, bring in staff familiar to the school)
- Identify members of the school community that may be most affected by the incident, and plan immediate support for those people
- Follow-up after class with staff to identify students and staff in need of additional support
- If it is safe to do so, consider having staff in key locations as well as checking the halls, bathrooms and change rooms to direct students and staff to the counselling locations
- Arrange for staff to be available to respond to individual classrooms to bring students requiring additional support to counselling locations
- Determine locations (e.g., guidance office, library, SERT room) where students and staff counselling will occur. Determine informal gathering location for staff (e.g., staff room, meeting room)
- If necessary and it is safe to do so, arrange for other supervision needs (e.g., hall supervision in emotionally charged locations such as the locker of the deceased student)
- Consider arranging for food in key locations (e.g., counselling rooms, staff gathering room, main office)
- Following the *Police / School Board Protocol,* if requested, coordinate space at the school for police use
- Ensure that the media is redirected to the media contact, e.g., the Superintendent

- If applicable, consider a temporary location where students could place memorial items (e.g., flowers, stuffed animals, cards)
- Maintain contact with the Board Traumatic Response Team

Communication with Staff

Inform all staff of the traumatic event by holding a staff meeting as soon as possible. Be sure to include all staff, e.g., teachers, secretaries, custodians, ECEs, EAs in the meeting. Take attendance during the meeting, and make arrangements to inform staff who were unable to attend.

The staff meeting should be well planned and should reassure staff that short-term and long-term plans are in place. All members of the School Traumatic Response Team should attend, as well as members of the Board Traumatic Response Team, when necessary.

The staff meeting should:

- Provide an update of information specific to the traumatic event
- Include time for questions and answers, the expression of feelings, and for mutual support
- Provide information and resources to staff to assist in discussing the traumatic event with students (see Appendix B)
- Review the expectations/agenda for the day
- Outline the short-term and long-term plan
- Share information on possible reactions to trauma for children, youth and adults and how to respond appropriately
- Outline the supports that are available to staff and students and how those supports can be accessed through EFAP (staff) and Psychological Services and Social Work (students)
- Discuss the “look fors” when identifying vulnerable staff and students, and outline the procedures for notifying the designated person of those staff and students potentially requiring additional support

Note: Refer to *“School Traumatic Response: Staff Meeting”*, page 27, for a more detailed outline of items to include in the staff meeting agenda.

Additional staff meetings may be needed to:

- Keep staff informed by conducting short meetings. Meetings are preferable to e-mails since they allow for questions and observation of demeanour
- Gather information and feedback about student and staff needs, and address those needs throughout the process
- Provide all staff with information about plans for any follow-up debriefing meeting(s)

Counselling Opportunities

Plans for the designation of counselling areas in the case of a traumatic event should be part of the School Traumatic Response Plan. When a traumatic event occurs, there is not sufficient time to carefully discuss how this support will be organized. Specific rooms or areas of the school should be designated in advance for supporting the people who are grieving or experiencing high levels of stress following a traumatic incident. In addition, a potential "Command Centre" should be identified to be used if there is an event that involves the police and/or EMS (refer to the *Police/School Board Protocol*).

Counselling suggestions:

- School teams should coordinate with their allocated Psychological Services and Social Work staff
- If necessary, students will be invited to visit the counselling areas to get support to deal with their emotional reactions to the traumatic incident
- It is important that support be available to students, at the moment they need it, in a private and supportive setting
- Small group counselling sessions may be helpful if personnel assigned to the school have experience and training in counselling. Non-trained staff should not engage in counselling
- Staff should have written information and resources to provide to students (see Appendix B.) Also consider community-specific resources, such as the "Youth Services Guide"

Talk with Students

Be sure that there is a teacher in each classroom to greet and support the students as they arrive following a traumatic event.

After a traumatic event, the first classroom teacher should lead a class discussion with students to:

- Provide factual information and minimize rumours
- Allow students to ask questions, and to express feelings, needs and concerns
- Re-establish routines; return the class to a calm and focused learning environment
- Begin to establish a sense of routine, safety and comfort
- Foster healthy coping responses and encourage social connections
- Share supports that are available to students
- Identify students requiring additional supports (to be referred to the Social Work/Psychological Services support staff on the School Traumatic Response Team)

Note: Refer to *Leading a Classroom Discussion After a Traumatic Event: Guidelines for Staff* (Appendix B)

Make arrangements to support teachers who have requested additional help for leading the classroom discussion.

After the classroom discussion, staff should continue to support students appropriately, showing warmth and understanding. Teachers should also continue to watch for individual students who are having a hard time coping, and should make the appropriate referrals so that the student may access additional support and access to counselling. It is better to “over-refer” than “under-refer” to Social Work and Psychological Services staff. Teachers should not try to second guess the level of grief of a student, as people respond to trauma and grief differently. It is important to remember that this traumatic event may bring back emotions of other unrelated traumatic events that occurred in a person’s life.

Highlight to educational staff that, unless they are in a counselling role with the DDSB, i.e., a guidance counsellor, they should not be engaging in counselling with students. Instead, staff should make the appropriate referral to Social Work/Psychological Services using the procedures determined by the school.

It is recommended that the Social Work/Psychological staff deployed have training and/or experience in dealing with traumatic events.

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

Inform Parents/School Community

The principal works with the Police and the Communications Department to create a message for the website and/or a letter to be sent home to inform parents of the incident. Parents who are well informed, and are provided with the appropriate resources are better equipped to support their children at home (refer to *Crisis Communications, page 28*).

Information shared in such a letter should be carefully worded to ensure that personal and family privacy are respected. In the case of a police investigation, consult with the police and refer to the police statement(s) when preparing the letter.

Gather and Share Information (e.g. funeral arrangements)

Following the *Dealing with Traumatic Events: Crisis and Loss* and/or *ASIST* protocols, in the case of death, inform staff and students of plans for funeral arrangements. Many types of traumatic events involve sudden death: accidents, suicides, natural or physical disasters, or sudden acute health events. While being respectful of the desires of the family, the school may need to provide information to the school community about formal occasions such as funerals or memorial services.

When applicable and appropriate, students and staff should have the opportunity to attend the funeral. Attending the funeral may help to provide closure and acceptance for staff and students. Decisions about allowing funeral attendance should be based on the wishes of the family. Ensure that students who attend the funeral are prepared by informing them about what will likely happen at the funeral. Consider the cultural beliefs of the family. Explain the purpose of any rituals, appropriate etiquette at the ceremony, and other topics as necessary, e.g., How to prepare for an open casket or witnessing a cremation during a service.

Coordinate with Psychological Services and Social Work support staff to ensure on-site supports for students; contact EFAP for on-side supports for staff.

Review Your Response

The School Traumatic Response Team should meet regularly to review short-term and long-term plans based on events that occur. These plans should be flexible enough to allow revisions. These meetings serve several purposes: to improve and update the plans, and to ensure that important tasks are completed related to the traumatic event. Meetings should include:

- An update of important information
- A review of the response, summarizing feedback from staff, students and the community
- Suggestions for improvement
- The sharing of what worked well
- A review of the procedures for the School Traumatic Response Team and the Board Traumatic Response Team
- The availability of counselling for the School Traumatic Response Team
- A plan to acknowledge all who helped to deal with the traumatic event

Remembrance Activities

Family wishes should guide the planning of any remembrance activity after a traumatic incident, e.g., following a student death. Refer to *Crisis and Loss* and *ASIST* protocols for suggestions.

Schools are cautioned against holding a large assembly to honour the deceased. Assemblies or announcements are not recommended to address the death of a student or staff member.

Students or staff may wish to express their grief and sympathy by contributing something in the name(s) of the deceased, e.g., a school plaque or books for the library. Caution should be taken when establishing a permanent or highly visible memorial to remember a student who died. Staff should provide suggestions for students on how to acknowledge or remember a student or staff member.

PLANNING GUIDE FOR ADMINISTRATORS: SCHOOL TRAUMATIC RESPONSE

PROACTIVE STEPS

- Create and sustain a positive school climate to foster an environment in which well-being is supported and, as a result, students and staff are likely to be more resilient to trauma (refer to resources on the Safe Schools Portal).
- Create and train a School Traumatic Response Team. Provide regular training to staff on information that supports a positive school climate (e.g., bullying awareness, reporting, self-regulation).
- Review relevant Policies, Regulations, Procedures and resources, e.g., *Police/School Board Protocol, Safety and Security, 911 Emergency Response guidelines, Dealing with Traumatic Events: Crisis and Loss*, and the *ASIST Protocol*.
- Ensure you have Board, School and Emergency Response contact numbers maintained in a confidential manner for access at school/home.
- Practice required Lockdowns and Hold and Secures. Refer to *Police/School Board Protocol*. Debrief and revise the school process after each practice.
- Determine where you are likely to establish a "Command Centre" with emergency personnel (as per *Police/School Board Protocol*), and the potential rooms in the school for support staff to assist students and staff and/or use by the police, if required.
- Ensure that your School Traumatic Response Team is ready to respond in an emergency.

RESPONSE IN A TRAUMATIC EVENT

WHAT TO DO FIRST

The Planning Guide is by no means exhaustive or sequential, and not all items may apply in your particular event.

TASK	NOTES
Determine the seriousness of the situation. Gather facts from appropriate, reliable sources, particularly any victims, witnesses, and/or the families of those involved. Maintain confidentiality (as appropriate). Determine if others are at risk of imminent harm. Follow the *Police/School Board Protocol* and contact emergency services, including police and fire (call 911) if applicable.	
Identify and assist any victims. Use staff trained in Emergency Response/ First Aid, if safe to do so.	
Notify the families impacted.	
Notify your Family of Schools Superintendent/Education Officer (SO/EO)— seek direction about your immediate response and communication.	
Follow the *Police/School Board Protocol* with incidents involving the police. • If required, put the school into Lockdown, Hold and Secure or Shelter-In-Place • Establish a "Command Centre" • Inform agencies/groups in the school, e.g., daycare, community-use	
If there is an immediate threat of harm involving other schools or locations, ensure that information is passed on to the police.	
If there is a Facilities incident associated with the traumatic event, e.g., chemical spill, ensure that the Manager of Facilities has been contacted.	
Enact the School Traumatic Response Team (see the School Traumatic Response Team Checklist in this appendix). • Coordinate your response and the short-term/long-term plans with the Board Traumatic Response Team (The Family of Schools SO/EO will contact the Safe Schools and Operations Superintendents to begin this process), and with the Police/EMS/Fire (if applicable).	

Communicate the school needs and information to the Safe Schools, Operations and Family of Schools Superintendent. This may include: • assigning additional staff (e.g., Occasional teachers, administrators familiar with the school, clerical) • ensuring that the Board Traumatic Events Team or others are on site at the school (e.g., Safe Schools Education Officer, Chief of Psychological Services or Social Work, Communications Manager, Mental Health Lead, EFAP Counsellors) • determining the staff to be included on the incident e-mail group • determining if there is information about historical context that may impact the situation (e.g., previous trauma)	
If needed and safe to do so, implement an emergency supervision schedule and/or assign "on call supervision".	
With the leadership of the Communications Department, prepare: • The initial communication to staff (if required) • Speaking Notes for staff working with students that includes key locations for support (Consider placing a copy in staff mail boxes and having extra copies in the office to provide to support staff as they arrive) • Speaking Notes for secretaries and administrators responding to inquiries from the public The secretaries should make notes about calls about the incident, including contact information. Students should not provide coverage at lunch on days when the school is dealing with a traumatic event.	
If applicable, meet with staff as soon as possible. If a meeting isn't possible, communicate with staff prior to the first day of school after the incident. If the incident occurred on the weekend, evening, or school holiday/break, communicate by "phone tree" or e-mail.	
With the Communications Department, determine who will respond to the media, and what the response will entail. Media should not be on school property unless approved by the Manager of Communications.	
In the case of a student death, ensure the student is removed from the attendance management notification system (e.g., Synervoice).	
If applicable, secure personal property (Follow the *Police/School Board Protocol*).	
Consider whether the morning announcement routine, period changes (e.g., announcements, morning music) need to be modified. Limit unnecessary school announcements.	
Contact Operations to determine if the flag should be lowered.	
In the case of a death, consider where memorial items may be placed and plan accordingly (e.g., putting out a table in front of the office for those students who bring flowers, locker being decorated by students). If possible, connect with student leaders to organize an appropriate memorial. Consult with the Mental Health Lead and staff from Social Work and Psychological Services.	
Determine locations (e.g., guidance office, library, SERT room) where student and staff counselling will occur. Determine informal gathering location for staff (e.g., staff room, meeting room).	
Determine informal gathering location for staff (e.g., staffroom, meeting room).	
Arrange a place for parent/community members to gather and get support at the school (if appropriate).	
Consider arranging for food in key locations (e.g., counselling rooms, staff gathering rooms, main office).	
Following the *Police/School Board Protocol*, if requested, coordinate space at the school for use by the police.	
With Psychological Services and Social Work, designate staff to rooms to support students/staff who are having difficulty. As well, have staff check the halls, bathrooms and change rooms to direct students and staff to the counselling locations. Support staff should also provide guidance and support for the secretary(ies) when dealing with challenging phone calls. Only staff qualified as counsellors should be engaging in counselling.	

Hold an initial meeting to inform all staff (refer to sample Staff Meeting Agenda in this appendix). Consider holding a planning meeting with key staff prior to this meeting. • Ensure you coordinate with the police and the Communications Department to determine what can be shared with staff • Determine with the Board Traumatic Response Team who should also be present at the staff meeting. • Provide staff with Speaking Points and information to assist with class discussions (refer to Appendix B). It is important that this information be delivered to students in a personal way, not in an assembly or over the announcements. A designate should be assigned if a teacher requires assistance delivering the information. Occasional teachers should not deliver the information or resources to students. • When appropriate, provide staff with information on seeking support for their well-being.	
Decide who will remain in contact with the families of injured students. When appropriate, personal phone calls should be made to follow-up with the families.	
Arrange for an interpreter, if needed. If appropriate, send expression of condolence/support to the family.	
Work with the police and Communications Department to create a statement for the website and/or a letter to be sent home. • If it is appropriate, send a letter to parents/guardians. Determine if the letter will be shared with other schools and/or Boards. • Consider using other means of communication such as the school "Twitter" account and "Synervoice," if appropriate and available.	
If applicable, provide the Employee Services Wellness contact with a list of all school Occasional staff who will need access to the Employee Family Assistance Program (EFAP) (Typically, this is only available to permanent employees).	
If there is a death, refer to the resources, *Dealing with Traumatic Events: Crisis and Loss and ASIST* found on the Inclusive Student Services, Psychological Services Portal.	
Ensure that EFAP information is readily available to staff. The Employee Services Wellness contact can assist if necessary.	
Update the Family of Schools SO/EO as needed.	

RESPONSE IN A TRAUMATIC EVENT

WHAT TO DO NEXT

TASK	NOTES
Communicate the ongoing school needs and information to the Safe Schools, Operations and Family of Schools Superintendents. This may include assigning: • Occasional staff to release staff wanting to access on-site EFAP counselling • additional administrators • Occasional staff to release staff to attend funeral services If appropriate, speak with the Safe Schools Education Officer to see if additional police presence can be arranged.	
Hold additional staff meeting(s) to let staff know the status of the traumatic event, and the plans for support.	
Advise students, staff, and parents about ongoing counselling services (including EFAP for staff).	
Determine a location, date and agenda for a meeting to share information with parents/guardians and the community. Consult with the police and the Communications Department to determine what will be shared. Ensure you have a plan to deal with the media.	

If applicable, provide information regarding arrangements for funerals and/or memorial activities. Plan additional support for vulnerable people during these activities. • Follow suggestions outlined in the resource, *Dealing with Traumatic Events: Crisis and Loss* • Prepare those planning to attend the funeral by explaining protocols and cultural considerations.	
Work with your Education Officer and the Safe Schools Education Officer to conduct a Violence Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA), if applicable.	
Implement Bias-Aware Progressive Discipline, and Safe Schools Student Safety Plans when applicable.	
Ensure that check-ins occur with students and staff identified as requiring additional support.	
Check in with other members of the School Traumatic Response Team. Be aware of the need to support the responders and of your own well-being needs. Consider counselling opportunities to support the team and yourself.	
Conduct debriefs with appropriate stakeholders. Consult with Family of Schools Superintendent, who will consult with the Safe Schools and Operations Superintendents to determine how the debriefs will occur.	
Consider what follow-up professional training is appropriate for staff and/or students. Update your school emergency plan, as required.	
Send "thank yous" after the traumatic event to those that helped.	

LONG-TERM PLANNING

- Prepare and implement a long-term plan to ensure that the school has appropriate supports, including on-going counselling if required.
- Be cognizant when similar events happen that they may trigger a response by students/staff in the school, and prepare for the anniversary of the event. Additional support may be required during these times.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE DEBRIEF(S)

- Provide an opportunity for people to process what they have experienced.
- Bring together your School Traumatic Response Team by the end of each day to:
  - Share any new information
  - Discuss any concerns regarding individual students/staff members
  - Discuss the plan for next day
  - Discuss information to be presented to staff and/or students about funeral arrangements, staff coverage, and a "memorial ceremony" following the recommendations in *Dealing with Traumatic Events: Crisis and Loss*, and what to expect the next day from community and media.

Conduct a formal de-briefing(s) that involves all stakeholders, including, if applicable, emergency services to discuss and improve the handling of traumatic responses, and to help revise resources.

SCHOOL TRAUMATIC RESPONSE TEAM

CHECKLIST

The following items are listed to assist the Principal/Vice Principal in leading the school Traumatic Response Team, and in implementing a short-term and long-term plan to address a traumatic event.

The checklist is by no means exhaustive or sequential, and not all items may apply in your particular event.

- ☐ **When safe to do so, assist the injured. If necessary, call staff on the team with First Aid qualifications**
- ☐ **Verify the information. Contact emergency responders, including police, fire and ambulance, when required (refer to the *911 Emergency Response Guidelines*). Further investigations should follow the *Police/School Board Protocol***
- ☐ **Contact the families of those involved**
- ☐ **Inform your Family of Schools SO/EO about the traumatic event. They will make arrangements to activate the Board Traumatic Response Team. Seek direction about your immediate response and communication**
- ☐ **If required, put the school into Lockdown, Hold and Secure or Shelter-in-Place. Work with the police to establish a "Command Centre." Inform agencies/groups in the school (e.g., daycare, community use)**
- ☐ **If there is an immediate threat of harm involving other schools or locations, ensure that the information is passed on to the police**
- ☐ **If there is a Facilities incident associated with the traumatic event (e.g., chemical spill), ensure that the Manager of Facilities has been contacted**
- ☐ **Activate the School Traumatic Response Team. Set up a time to meet and plan**
- ☐ **Coordinate your response with the Board Traumatic Response Team. Communicate regularly with the Board Traumatic Response Team**
- ☐ **Refer to Policies, Regulations and Procedures, and resources to inform your planning. Develop information and support sheets for staff and students (in conjunction with the Communications Department)**
- ☐ **Communicate the school needs and information to the Safe Schools, Operations and Family of Schools Superintendents. This may include:**
  - **assigning additional staffing (e.g., Occasional teachers, administrators familiar with the school, clerical)**
  - **ensuring that members of the Board Traumatic Response Team or others are on-site at the school (e.g., Safe Schools Education Officer, Chief of Psychological Services or Social Work, Manager of Communications, Mental Health Lead, Employee Family Assistance [EFAP] counsellors)**
- ☐ **If needed and safe to do so, create an emergency supervision schedule and/or assign "on calls"**
- ☐ **When needed, notify schools of siblings**
- ☐ **With the leadership of the Communications Department, prepare:**
  - **initial communication to staff**
  - **Speaking Notes for staff working with students that include key locations for support**
  - **Speaking Notes for secretaries and administrators responding to inquiries from the public. The secretaries should make notes on calls about the incident, including contact information**

  Work with the police, Communications Department and/or the affected family(ies) to determine the information to be released

- [ ] Notify Student Office Helpers that they will not be required until further notice
- [ ] Inform all staff (e.g., initial email or phone call about the incident. Include information about the upcoming staff meeting)
- [ ] With the Communications Department, determine who will speak to the media and what the response will entail. Media should not be on school property unless approved by the Manager of Communications
- [ ] In the case of a student death, ensure the student is removed from the attendance management notification system (e.g., Synervoice)
- [ ] If applicable, secure personal property (Follow the *Police/School Board Protocol*). Determine the families wishes regarding what to do with personal property
- [ ] Consider whether routines such as the morning announcements and period changes (e.g., announcements, morning music) need to the modified. Limit unnecessary school announcements
- [ ] Contact Operations to determine if the flag should be lowered
- [ ] In the case of a death, consider where memorial items may be placed and plan accordingly (e.g., putting out a table in front of the office for those students who bring flowers, locker being decorated by students). If possible, connect with student leaders
- [ ] Determine locations (e.g., guidance office, library, SERT room) where student and staff counselling will occur
- [ ] Determine an informal gathering location for staff (e.g., staff room, meeting room)
- [ ] Arrange a place for parent/community members to gather and get support at the school (if appropriate)
- [ ] Consider arranging for food in key locations (e.g., counselling rooms, staff gathering rooms, main office)
- [ ] Following the *Police/School Board Protocol*. If requested, coordinate space at the school for police use
- [ ] Work with Psychological Services and Social Work to determine immediate, short-term and long-term supports, and to help plan. Designate staff to rooms to support students/staff who are having difficulty. Have staff check the halls, bathrooms and change rooms to direct students and staff to the counselling locations. Support staff should also provide guidance and support to secretary(ies) with challenging phone calls. Remember only the staff qualified as counsellors should be engaging in counselling
- [ ] Plan and hold an initial meeting to inform all staff (refer to sample Staff Meeting Agenda in this resource)
- [ ] Consider placing a copy of the Speaking Notes in staff mail boxes and having extra copies in the office to provide to support staff as they arrive (with key location information)
- [ ] Ensure all students (e.g., students with first period spare, absent students) are notified about the event and supports by staff
- [ ] Decide who will remain in contact with the families of the injured families. When appropriate, personal phone calls should be made to follow-up with families. Arrange for an interpreter, if needed. If appropriate, send expression of condolence/support to the family
- [ ] Work with the police and Communications Department to create a statement for the website and/or a letter to be sent home
  - If it is appropriate, send a letter to parents/guardians. Determine if the letter will be shared with other schools and/or Boards

Consider using other means of communication such as the school "Twitter" account and "Synervoice," if appropriate and available

- [ ] If applicable, provide the Employee Services Wellness contact with a list of all school occasional staff who will need access the EFAP (regularly only available to permanent employees)
- [ ] Ensure that EFAP information is readily available to staff. The Employee Services Wellness contact can assist if necessary
- [ ] When applicable, ensure other supports are available to staff (e.g., Federation supports)
- [ ] Communicate the ongoing school needs and information to the Safe Schools, Operations and Family of Schools SOs. This may include assigning:
  - additional occasional staff for the next day to release staff wanting to access on-site EFAP counselling
  - additional administrators
  - occasional staff to release staff to attend funeral services

  If appropriate, speak with the Safe Schools Education Officer to see if additional police presence can be arranged
- [ ] Schedule Traumatic Response Team meetings to update and "inform" the short and long-term plans
- [ ] Hold additional staff meeting(s) to debrief and to inform staff on the status of the traumatic event, and the plans for support
- [ ] Advise students, staff, and parents about ongoing counselling services (including EFAP for staff)
- [ ] When appropriate, conduct a parent/community information session. Determine a location, date and agenda for a meeting to share information with parents and the community. Consult with the Police and the Communications Department to determine what will be shared. Ensure you have a plan to deal with the media
- [ ] If applicable, provide information regarding arrangements for funerals and/or memorial activities. Plan additional support for vulnerable people during these activities. Follow suggestions outlined in the resource, *Dealing with Traumatic Events: Crisis and Loss*
- [ ] If applicable, prepare those planning to attend of funeral by explaining protocols and cultural customs
- [ ] If applicable, discuss and plan a "remembrance" activity/memorial, following suggestions in *Dealing with Traumatic Events: Crisis and Loss*. Consult with the Mental Health Lead, and staff from Social Work and Psychological Services. If possible, connect with student leaders to help organize an appropriate memorial
- [ ] Work with your Education Officer and the Safe Schools Education Officer to conduct a VTRA, if applicable
- [ ] Implement Bias-Aware Progressive Discipline and Safe Schools Student Safety Plans, etc., when applicable
- [ ] Complete the appropriate incident reporting forms (staff forms)
- [ ] Complete the appropriate incident reporting forms (administrator forms). Refer to Procedure—*Security and Safety*
- [ ] Ensure that check-ins occur with students and staff identified as requiring additional support
- [ ] Check-in with other members of the School Traumatic Response Team. Be aware of the need to support the responders. Consider counselling opportunities to support the team
- [ ] Participate in debriefs with appropriate stakeholders to discuss and improve the handling of traumatic responses, and to help revise resources
- [ ] Consider what follow-up professional training is appropriate for staff and/or students. Update your school emergency plan, as required
- [ ] If applicable, remove the student's name from the school records
- [ ] Send "thank yous" after the traumatic event to those that helped

SCHOOL TRAUMATIC RESPONSE TEAM

STAFF MEETINGS

Staff should be informed about the status of the traumatic event. A meeting should occur as soon after the traumatic event as possible. Below are guidelines for building the agenda:

AGENDA FOR STAFF MEETING:

- **Introduce members of the School Traumatic Response Team and the Board Traumatic Response Team.**
- **Update information specific to the traumatic event. The information shared should be determined in collaboration with the police and the Communications Department. Remember to refer to the *Police/ School Board Protocol, Dealing with Traumatic Events: Crisis and Loss and ASIST Protocol*.**
- **Include time for questions and answers, the expression of feelings, and for mutual support.**
- **The Family of Schools Education Officer/Superintendent, Social Work, Psychological Services staff, the police and/or the Communications Department should be available to support staff and answer questions. Remember to assume that anything that you share will be picked up by the media.**
- **Provide staff with information and resources (e.g., Speaking Notes) for discussing with students in class.**
- **Review the expectations/agenda for the day. Maintain a regular school day, if possible. Announce that all special activities and community permits are cancelled.**
- **Social Work and Psychological Services staff should share the probable/possible reactions by students and appropriate responses by staff. Written material regarding children's and youth's reactions to grief, and the supports available on how to handle behaviours should be shared with staff. Staff will need to be patient and adaptable when dealing with student behaviours and student needs.**
- **Share with the staff the need to assist with the identification of staff and students who may be vulnerable, including those absent, due to difficulty coping with a recent death, serious illness, closest friends, relatives, etc., to ensure appropriate supports as needed. Outline how staff can share this information in a confidential manner.**
- **Share information about counselling support for students and staff; what support is available at the school. Outline the procedure for students accessing individual support during the school day.**
- **Share the plan for immediate, short-term and long-term supports at the school.**
- **If applicable, share arrangements for any funerals or memorial services, and explain the procedures for staff to attend (make sure to consult with the family).**
- **Explain how Occasional teachers will be supported in classroom discussion, i.e., staff familiar with the students will lead the discussion.**

SCHOOL TRAUMATIC RESPONSE TEAM

RESOURCES

The following documents support the Policy Procedure *Traumatic Response* resource:

DDSB DEPARTMENT	RESOURCES
Special Education	· Procedure—Emergency Evacuation Procedures for Students Requiring Specialized Assistance
Psychological Services/Social Work	· Dealing with Traumatic Events: Crisis and Loss · Tragic Event Quick Reference Flipchart · Policy—Child Abuse · Regulation—Guidelines for Reporting Children in Need of Protection 2018
Mental Health	· DDSB Protocol for Suicide Prevention and Intervention for Students
Safe Schools	· Police/School Board Protocol · Violence Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA) · Responding to Sexual Harassment and/or Sexual Violence Flipchart · Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan (BPIP) · Safe Schools Student Safety Plan · Progressive Discipline: A Bias-Aware Approach · Restorative Practice: Healthy Relationships for Living and Learning · Safe at School Binder · Additional Safe Schools Resources · Administrators 911/Reference Guide
Operations	· Procedure—Guidelines for Supporting Students with Asthma and Creating Asthma Friendly Environment · Procedure—Guidelines for Protecting Anaphylactic Students · Procedure—Checklist of Emergency, Operational and Personnel Procedures · Procedure—Flags
Facilities	· 911: Emergency Flipchart
Health and Safety	· 911: Emergency Flipchart · Nuclear Emergency Plan · Critical Incidents Kits · Procedure—Workplace Violence Management Program
Communications	· Procedure—Handling of Media at the School Level · Administrators 911/Reference Guide
Transportation	· DSTS Operations Manual Section 2-9 Lockdown_Hold & Secure
Employee Services (HR)	· EFAP: www.workhealthlife.com/or 1-844-880-9142 · Mental Health Services in Durham Region: www.durham.ca/departments/health/family_health/parenting/pmd/ppdCommunityResource.pdf OR 1-800-841-2729 (Durham Health Connection Line) · Procedure—Domestic Violence · Workplace Violence Awareness E-Learning Module · First Aid/CPR/AED Training

Crisis Communications

Preparing a Holding Statement:
Balancing the need for credibility and speed in a crisis

When a traumatic event occurs in our school board, we have a maximum of 60 minutes to get a statement out to the media before we would start losing credibility. That is not a lot of time to get up to speed with the details of what has happened, write a statement, and get it approved by the necessary stakeholders, i.e. Director of Education. A *Holding Statement* is a brief account of what the DDSB knows and what actions it is taking in the face of the crisis at hand.

The only way to ensure our Communications team can act with both speed and credibility is to prepare a *Holding Statement* in advance, with blanks to fill in the details of the incident. No matter what type of traumatic event we are facing, e.g., tragic death of a student on school property or a natural disaster, journalists will always want to know the same things: Who? What? When? Where? Why? How? What next?

Knowing this, it is possible to create a template that will work in almost all circumstances.

The Holding Statement will include:

- A factual headline
- The date and time
- The location of the incident
- Basic details that have been confirmed
- Actions that our school board is taking that we are willing to make public
- An expression of compassion or empathy (if appropriate)
- Contact details OR details on further updates

The Holding Statement will not include:

- Details that are unconfirmed or uncertain
- Any kind of speculation
- A response to unsubstantiated rumours
- The apportioning of blame
- Names of victims in case of death

Template

DDSB responds to _____

Date: _____

Time: _____ a.m./p.m.

DDSB can confirm that at __:__ (insert time) today at _____ (insert location) _____ (details e.g. A fire broke out at the school / Charges were filed against one of our teachers / A bomb threat was called into the school).

_____ (what DDSB is doing about it, e.g., An investigation is taking place / or will take place into the cause of the fire / The teacher has been suspended with pay pending the outcome of the investigation / The school has been safely evacuated and police are on site investigating).

The DDSB would like to _____ (strenuously deny the allegations / express our sincerest condolences to the victims) and assure the public that we are (taking this matter very seriously / moving quickly to establish the details).

We have _____ (established a task force / mobilized a response team / set up a call centre) and will provide further updates as soon as the information we receive can be verified.

Our next statement will be issued at __:__ (four hours from now).

Example

DDSB responds to Student Death at ABC Public School

Date: _____

Time: _____ a.m./p.m.

DDSB can confirm that at 11:45 a.m. today at ABC Public School one of our students was found in a hallway with stab wounds. The staff member who discovered the student immediately called 9-1-1 for emergency response. CPR was administered by the staff member and was resumed by first responders upon their arrival.

The student was taken to hospital by ambulance but unfortunately died from their wounds. Durham Regional Police Service (DRPS) is on site conducting an investigation and will be providing an update to media this afternoon.

The Durham District School Board expresses its sincerest condolences to the victim and their family. We are cooperating with DRPS to assist their investigation.

Classes at ABC School were dismissed early this afternoon. Counselling services are available for all students and staff and will remain available at the school as long as required.

The safety of our students and staff remains our first priority. At this time, we understand that this incident was isolated and not related to ABC School. This tragedy could have occurred anywhere. Despite that, we are reviewing all safety policies and procedures to ensure that all necessary steps were taken to ensure student safety.

We will provide further updates as soon as the information we receive can be verified. We would encourage media to contact DRPS for details related to their investigation.

Parents and guardians may direct their questions to the school by calling ABC Public School at 905-xxx-xxxx.

Our next statement will be issued at 4 o’clock this afternoon.

What Makes This The Right Message?

The statement above ticks all the boxes – it tells the media and parents / guardians what DDSB knows at this point and what we do not know, what actions we are taking and how parents / guardians can get in touch if they need to. It shows that we understand the concern that parents / guardians must be feeling, and what precautionary measures they can take.

For now – in those first 60 minutes – the most important thing is to issue a message that demonstrates the three Cs:

- Control
- Credibility
- Compassion

Building a Communication Plan from *Holding Statement*

As further information is gathered during the investigation, a more detailed media statement will be created. It is important to continue to collaborate with the Police to determine the information that can be released; if possible, a joint media release is preferred.

This media statement may be revised if further information is available and will become the foundation to further communication with the media, e.g., A Press conference, interviews, etc.

If it is decided to conduct a Press Conference with a question and answer session, then the conference will begin with the media statement (what we know based on the investigation). It is important that the Board Spokesperson is knowledgeable and confident. If possible, a joint conference with the police is preferable.